

Women writers' symposium asserts a newer, contemporary West

What does the West look like through the eyes of women? From October 15 to 17, eight women writers shared their perspectives at the Women Writing West symposium, which brought together more than 500 students and community participants.

The writers, Alyson Hagy, Pam Houston, Teresa Jordan, Page Lambert, Dierdre

McNamer, Maria Melendez, Lee Ann Roripaugh and Karen Volkman, reflected the experience of novelists, short-story and nonfiction writers and poets alike. These women share professional success and the fact that they all have something to say about the Western experience.

"Newer literature about the region is reflecting new voices and challenging archetypes of rugged, masculine individuals," says Jennifer Davis, assistant professor of English and symposium co-coordinator.

"Increasing urbanization is a part of that too. Even the Denver of 10

years ago is not the same Denver as today."

While the three days of readings and open discussions appealed to both genders, the relationships of women to the West struck a particular chord. Approximately 80 percent of CLAS' creative writing population is female, and the symposium offered strong, respectful role models.

"I think our students felt validated," says Davis. "Their input was accepted into the literary process of discovering the West, reflecting their various backgrounds, personal experiences and writing styles."

Several participants from the community were also writers. "We were hard-pressed to select these eight," says Jake Adam York, associate professor of English who also coordinated the event. "We could have benefited from additional contributions at a larger event."

The symposium was held alongside the release of the 10th edition of the CLAS literary journal, *Copper Nickel*, which publishes students and professional writers.

