

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

2-13-2013

Lackey Receives Imagine Fund Award for Research on the American Biographical Novel

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Lackey Receives Imagine Fund Award for Research on the American Biographical Novel" (2013). *Campus News Archive*. 294.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/294

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Lackey Receives Imagine Fund Award for Research on the American Biographical Novel

*Summary: Michael Lackey received a 2013 Imagine Fund Award for work on a new book titled *Truthful Fictions: Conversations with American Biographical Novelists*.*

(February 13, 2013)-Michael Lackey, associate professor of English, received an all-University 2013 Imagine Fund Award for work on a new book titled *Truthful Fictions: Conversations with American Biographical Novelists*. It is the first book of interviews in which authors define their objectives as biographical novelists.

Lackey's interest in the genre piqued while researching a biography on J. Saunders Redding, a member of the Haverford Group featured in his forthcoming book *The Haverford Discussions: A Black Integrationist Manifesto for Racial Justice*. While researching the biography, Lackey looked to Jay Parini's *Benjamin's Crossing* for inspiration, and the biographical novel "took a hold of [him]," raising questions as to the genre's significance and potential. He reached out to Parini, and the two formed a friendship that not only informed Lackey's writing process, but also provided him the opportunity to speak with other biographical novelists. Parini later delivered the University of Minnesota, Morris's [2012 Barber Lecture](#) at Lackey's request.

Upon completion of *Truthful Fictions*, Lackey will have interviewed some of the country's most famous writers, including Michael Cunningham, Anita Diamant, Bruce Duffy, Sherry Jones, Russell Banks, Julia Alvarez, Edmund White, Jay Parini, Lance Olsen, Joanna Scott, and M. Allen Cunningham. Although his original intent was to use these interviews as a resource for his scholarly monograph about the biographical novel, Lackey soon realized that they could also stand on their own as a distinct project.

"To date, there has been no scholarly study clarifying why this genre of fiction has become so popular," says Lackey. "To figure out why contemporary writers are writing these kinds of novels, I contacted some of them, but then I realized: this could be a book. I have been recording and transcribing my interviews so that we can understand why these writers are doing what they do from their own perspectives."

Lackey also aims to identify the cultural and intellectual shift that led to the proliferation of biographical novels in the 1980s. When asked what he believes to be the reason for the shift, Lackey points to the genre's varied achievements.

"Biographical fiction gets at an interior truth about history, an imagined psychological perspective to identify and define the conditions and ideologies that gave birth to momentous historical events."

This project is supported by generous funding from the University of Minnesota's Imagine Fund Awards and University of Minnesota, Morris's Faculty Research Enhancement Fund.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility

in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.