We are pleased to announce that **Forum 4: Literary Study in Grades 9, 10, and 11: A National Survey** by Sandra Stotsky is now in production!

**see review on page 14**

---

**From The Editor**

With the lull of summer, the vacation season and the slowing of life on university campuses, I had anticipated that this issue would be a short one. As you will notice, I was wrong. The number and variety of items included in this installment of *Literary Matters* attest to the vitality of the ALSCW's engagement with the worlds of literature—of reading and writing and teaching—and to the ceaseless activity that characterizes the Association's membership. Now more than ever our digital format is a benefit, since it allows us to bring all of this exciting news to you in one, jam-packed summer issue.

The ALSCW has indeed been busy. Among the results of its endeavors: a beautiful broadside, featuring Adam Zagajewski’s poem “Piano Lesson” and its English translation by Clare Cavanagh, has been produced and will soon be available; the fourth edition of our special topics publication *Forum* is set for release later this month; and plans are being finalized for this fall’s annual conference—our seventeenth—in Princeton, New Jersey.

This issue of *Literary Matters* features contributions that spotlight these and many other facets the life of the ALSCW. As the Association prepares to release *Forum 4*, a national survey directed by Councilor Sandra Stotsky that (in part) documents the decline of close reading and analytical writing in the high school classroom, Helaine Smith contributes an article

(continued on page 3)
The President's Column:
ALSCW and MLA

By Susan Wolfson

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW) focuses on literary criticism and scholarship, and works to ensure that literature thrives in both scholarly and creative environments. We encourage the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship, as well as wide-ranging discussions among those committed to the reading and study of literary works.

By SuSan Wolf Son

Our conference in Princeton will continue the valuable, and crucial, work of our Association. It will also serve as the occasion to launch my Presidential initiative, our expanded name.

I'm glad not only to be President of the ALSCW but also to have been an active member of MLA for decades, ever since graduate school. In the MLA, and especially at its annual convention, I met my bookshelf, formed valuable professional relationships and found lifelong colleagues, made friends, learned from the meetings I attended and the publications I read, and the several committees on which I served. At conventions, I've auditioned work that developed into publications. I've served on executive committees and have helped arranged convention meetings—special sessions, to division meetings, to a general Forum. I've published in PMLA and have learned from many of its essays, and served several times as an advisory. With a warm invitation from Clare Cavanagh, our immediate Past President, I joined the ALSC in 2000 and presented a paper on Charlotte Smith at the Chicago conference that year, where I was delighted not only to meet Clare, but also to find myself in conversation with classicist Richard Thomas about Virgilian poetry that interested us both. Then, encouraged by Christopher Ricks, I published "Empson's Pregnancy" in Literary Imagination (2004), and rejoined ALSC in 2007, serving on the conference committee for the 2008 gathering in Philadelphia, agreeing to stand for executive office. I rehearse this history to emphasize my productive and pleasurable involvement in both Associations. Several of our longtime members, including Rosanna Warren, Christopher Ricks, Marjorie Perloff, Michael Wood, Phyllis Levin, Adelaide Russo, and our next President, Greg Delanty, are also members of MLA. My hope is that others may find enjoyment in both worlds, not only for the valuable differences but also for what we share, converse about, collaborate on—especially with departments of literature and the humanities in general under pressure to account for their necessity in an era of information-oriented and economic mandates.

I recognize that the founders of the ALSC were energized by opposition to the MLA, but I believe this has been only a first step. This bridging initiative is a venture in expanding our range. Both Associations have evolved over the past two decades. If it seemed, back in the 1990s, that the array was (on the one side) "far reading," "theory," and socio-political critique, and (on the other side) "close reading," "literary criticism," and "literary writing," this difference was never so polarized as to eclipse our shared commitment to whatever kinds of attention improve reading, teaching, writing, editing—enriching our professional conversations and collegial learning from one another. Marjorie Perloff is not only past president of the MLA, but innovated what is now an MLA Convention event: a pan-convention theme to which all association entities, special sessions, and allied associations are invited to contribute. The event she organized was "The Sound of Poetry"—an audition close to the heart of the ALSCW.

I'm honored to be President of the ALSCW. I enjoy its membership, conversations, and the conferences that bring my fields of expertise into contact with fields not ordinarily joined to it—expert scholarship in classical literature and the vibrant world of contemporary creative writing. When I was elected Vice President, I was delighted when Rome Kitman, MLA Executive Director of the MLA, and Russell Berman, MLA President, responded with enthusiasm to my inquiry about exploring positive relations between our two Associations, in which we are all members. The bridging meetings were the fruits of our several conversations. Before I describe these meetings in more detail, I'm pleased to note that conversation is already developing about another bridging initiative for the future MLA convention, tentatively "What is the future of Comparative Literature?" I hope the ALSCW conferences will develop meetings to address this risk, and though I know this will be up to others, I am encouraged by the warm initial conversations that I have initiated with David Damrosch regarding the closing of the University of Toronto's Centre for Comparative Literature, reprinted in pages 24-25. Our "Neglected Authors" column now returns with a look at poet and fiction writer Dick Barnes by Michael Smilinsky, and Roy Winnick, newly elected Councilor for 2011, contributes a fascinating biographical profile on Cofounder and longtime MLA supporter Norman Fruman.

Finally, in this summer issue of LM you will get a sneak peek at the fall conference, organized this year by conference chair David Milics. See pages 16-18 for a preliminary schedule, summaries of panels and sessions, profiles of keynote speakers Paul Muldoon and Joyce Carol Oates, and information about registration and accommodations at Princeton.

Cal For Submissions

Pustelblume: Journal of Translation

Pustelblume is a journal of translation run entirely by Boston University students. We are looking for original translations into English of poetry, prose, or drama; book reviews and essays that deal with translation or translated works; artwork and photography.

Translators must secure the rights for the republication of the original work. Please attach the original along with your translation.

E-mail submissions to pustelblume.translations@gmail.com.

From The Editor (continued from page 1)

reflecting on her own use of these tools in teaching The Odyssey. In her President’s Column, Susan Wolfson summarizes a series of upcoming events to be jointly sponsored by the ALSCW and the MLA. (One of the fruits of this collaboration will be a renewed discussion of the state of Comparative Literature programs; the Association’s concern for this issue is also reflected in the letters from Susan and from new member Leslie Harkema.)

ALLIANCES & COLLABORATIONS

The President’s Column: ALSCW and MLA

By Susan Wolfson

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW) promotes excellence in literary criticism and scholarship, and works to ensure that literature thrives in both scholarly and creative environments. We encourage the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship, as well as wide-ranging discussions among those committed to the reading and study of literary works.

By SuSan Wolf Son

Our conference in Princeton will continue the valuable, and crucial, work of our Association. It will also serve as the occasion to launch my Presidential initiative, our expanded name.

I’m glad not only to be President of the ALSCW but also to have been an active member of MLA for decades, ever since graduate school. In the MLA, and especially at its annual convention, I met my bookshelf, formed valuable professional relationships and found lifelong colleagues, made friends, learned from the meetings I attended and the publications I read, and the several committees on which I served. At conventions, I’ve auditioned work that developed into publications. I’ve served on executive committees and have helped arranged convention meetings—special sessions, to division meetings, to a general Forum. I’ve published in PMLA and have learned from many of its essays, and served several times as an advisory. With a warm invitation from Clare Cavanagh, our immediate Past President, I joined the ALSC in 2000 and presented a paper on Charlotte Smith at the Chicago conference that year, where I was delighted not only to meet Clare, but also to find myself in conversation with classicist Richard Thomas about Virgilian poetry that interested us both. Then, encouraged by Christopher Ricks, I published “Empson’s Pregnancy” in Literary Imagination (2004), and rejoined ALSC in 2007, serving on the conference committee for the 2008 gathering in Philadelphia, agreeing to stand for executive office. I rehearse this history to emphasize my productive and pleasurable involvement in both Associations. Several of our longtime members, including Rosanna Warren, Christopher Ricks, Marjorie Perloff, Michael Wood, Phyllis Levin, Adelaide Russo, and our next President, Greg Delanty, are also members of MLA. My hope is that others may find enjoyment in both worlds, not only for the valuable differences but also for what we share, converse about, collaborate on—especially with departments of literature and the humanities in general under pressure to account for their necessity in an era of information-oriented and economic mandates.

I recognize that the founders of the ALSC were energized by opposition to the MLA, but I believe this has been only a first step. This bridging initiative is a venture in expanding our range. Both Associations have evolved over the past two decades. If it seemed, back in the 1990s, that the array was (on the one side) “far reading,” “theory,” and socio-political critique, and (on the other side) “close reading,” “literary criticism,” and “literary writing,” this difference was never so polarized as to eclipse our shared commitment to whatever kinds of attention improve reading, teaching, writing, editing—enriching our professional conversations and collegial learning from one another. Marjorie Perloff is not only past president of the MLA, but innovated what is now an MLA Convention event: a pan-convention theme to which all association entities, special sessions, and allied associations are invited to contribute. The event she organized was “The Sound of Poetry”—an audition close to the heart of the ALSCW.

I’m honored to be President of the ALSCW. I enjoy its membership, conversations, and the conferences that bring my fields of expertise into contact with fields not ordinarily joined to it—expert scholarship in classical literature and the vibrant world of contemporary creative writing. When I was elected Vice President, I was delighted when Rome Kitman, MLA Executive Director of the MLA, and Russell Berman, MLA President, responded with enthusiasm to my inquiry about exploring positive relations between our two Associations, in which we are all members. The bridging meetings were the fruits of our several conversations. Before I describe these meetings in more detail, I’m pleased to note that conversation is already developing about another bridging initiative for the future MLA convention, tentatively “What is the future of Comparative Literature?” I hope the ALSCW conferences will develop meetings to address this risk, and though I know this will be up to others, I am encouraged by the warm initial conversations that I have initiated with David Damrosch regarding the closing of the University of Toronto’s Centre for Comparative Literature, reprinted in pages 24-25. Our “Neglected Authors” column now returns with a look at poet and fiction writer Dick Barnes by Michael Smilinsky, and Roy Winnick, newly elected Councilor for 2011, contributes a fascinating biographical profile on Cofounder and longtime MLA supporter Norman Fruman.

Finally, in this summer issue of LM you will get a sneak peek at the fall conference, organized this year by conference chair David Milics. See pages 16-18 for a preliminary schedule, summaries of panels and sessions, profiles of keynote speakers Paul Muldoon and Joyce Carol Oates, and information about registration and accommodations at Princeton.

Call For Submissions

Pustelblume: Journal of Translation

Pustelblume is a journal of translation run entirely by Boston University students. We are looking for original translations into English of poetry, prose, or drama; book reviews and essays that deal with translation or translated works; artwork and photography.

Translators must secure the rights for the republication of the original work. Please attach the original along with your translation.

E-mail submissions to pustelblume.translations@gmail.com.

From The Editor (continued from page 1)

reflecting on her own use of these tools in teaching The Odyssey. In her President’s Column, Susan Wolfson summarizes a series of upcoming events to be jointly sponsored by the ALSCW and the MLA. (One of the fruits of this collaboration will be a renewed discussion of the state of Comparative Literature programs; the Association’s concern for this issue is also reflected in the letters from Susan and from new member David Damrosch regarding the closing of the University of Toronto’s Centre for Comparative Literature, reprinted in pages 24-25. Our “Neglected Authors” column now returns with a look at poet and fiction writer Dick Barnes by Michael Smilinsky, and Roy Winnick, newly elected Councilor for 2011, contributes a fascinating biographical profile on Cofounder and longtime MLA supporter Norman Fruman.

Finally, in this summer issue of LM you will get a sneak peek at the fall conference, organized this year by conference chair David Milics. See pages 16-18 for a preliminary schedule, summaries of panels and sessions, profiles of keynote speakers Paul Muldoon and Joyce Carol Oates, and information about registration and accommodations at Princeton.

Call For Submissions

Pustelblume: Journal of Translation

Pustelblume is a journal of translation run entirely by Boston University students. We are looking for original translations into English of poetry, prose, or drama; book reviews and essays that deal with translation or translated works; artwork and photography.

Translators must secure the rights for the republication of the original work. Please attach the original along with your translation.

E-mail submissions to pustelblume.translations@gmail.com.
O’Neill Gives Generously to ALSCW
June 2010

The ALSCW wishes to recognize a substantial donation from Mr. Francis O’Neill. His generous gift will help pay for the operating costs of the Boston office.

Francis O’Neill lives in Virginia where he and his wife and daughter own a farm for the breeding, training and sale of horses. Mr. O’Neill is a writer who started penning poems and short stories as a teen. He is now the author of three novels and is currently working on a new book. Recently, he has discovered a passion for translating early Tuscan poetry, a nod to the formative time he spent in Italy during his youth.

Though born in Charleston, South Carolina, Mr. O’Neill was raised abroad in Italy, Switzerland, and England; the latter is where he attended school, first at the Stowe School and later at Exeter College of Oxford University. It was at Oxford that he developed his love of horses, as well as fly-fishing and fox hunting, activities he continues to enjoy to this day. Since moving to Virginia, he has added and daughter own a farm for the breeding, training and sale of horses. Mr. O’Neill is a writer who started penning poems and short stories as a teen. He is now the author of three novels and is currently working on a new book. Recently, he has discovered a passion for translating early Tuscan poetry, a nod to the formative time he spent in Italy during his youth.

Though born in Charleston, South Carolina, Mr. O’Neill was raised abroad in Italy, Switzerland, and England; the latter is where he attended school, first at the Stowe School and later at Exeter College of Oxford University. It was at Oxford that he developed his love of horses, as well as fly-fishing and fox hunting, activities he continues to enjoy to this day. Since moving to Virginia, he has added flying and big game hunting to this impressive roster.

Keep an eye out for a more extensive profile of Mr. Francis O’Neill by Vice President Greg Delanty in the next issue of Literary Matters.

- Samantha Madway
ALSCW Intern; Boston University

The First ALSCW Broadsides Arrive
July 2010

ALSCW’s limited edition Zagajewski-Cavanagh broadside is now available. The broadsides were signed by the poet and the translator and then received by ALSCW member Dan Wueneschel at the Grolier Poetry Book Shop in Cambridge, MA (photo). See the announcement on the next page for more details.

Twain and Tolstoy: A Symposium
August 20-22, 2010

The Editorial Institute of Boston University will host a symposium observing the centennial of the deaths of Mark Twain and Leo Tolstoy. Scholar from around the country, from the Mark Twain House, and from the State Museum-Estate of Leo Tolstoy will gather to reflect on the legacies of the two writers. All events will take place in the Editorial Institute, 143 Bay State Road. A registration fee of $80 covers the cost of breaks and a symposium dinner on Saturday night. Please contact Alex Effgen (abeffgen@bu.edu) for more information.

The Zagajewski-Cavanagh Broadside is now available. The previously unpublished poem “The Piano Lesson” by Adam Zagajewski is exquisitely rendered in bilingual format with English translation by Clare Cavanagh on 13” x 20” sheet. It is set in Caslon with Optima for display in lettered edition, A through Z (26 sheets pressed), of which 20 are made available to the public.

Forthcoming Projects:
A broadside of David Ferry’s translation of the Golden Bough passage from The Aeneid is currently in production. The next project is an original poem by Jane Hirshfield. If you would like more information about the Broadside Series, it is available on our website at www.bu.edu/literary/publications/broadsides.

How To Acquire One of the Twenty Zagajewski-Cavanagh Broadsides:
The Zagajewski-Cavanagh Broadsides will be given as a gift of appreciation to donors who contribute a minimum of $500 to the ALSCW. Payment can be made with a credit card online at www.bu.edu/literary/donations or by mailing a check to 650 Beacon Street / Suite 510 / Boston, MA 02215. Please indicate in the comments section of the webpage or on the memo line of your check that you are interested in the Zagajewski-Cavanagh broadside.
More News and Announcements

Zagajewski and Cavanagh to Speak at the Vermont Studio Center

September 17, 2010

On Friday September 17th, 2010, the Vermont Studio Center and the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers will co-sponsor the first annual Literature in Translation forum. Polish poet Adam Zagajewski (right) who will be at VSC for the week as a Visiting Writer and his translator, Clare Cavanagh (below), will lead an evening in the Lowe Lecture Hall (the historic Opera House in Johnson, VT) about the art of translation, not only as it relates to literature but to creative work more broadly across genres, media, and cultures. The evening is open to the public and will feature a talk, a joint bilingual reading, and a question and answer session. September will be an exciting month at the VSC, with writers from Guatemala, Mexico, Korea, Cuba, Canada and Lebanon in residence.

If you would like to attend the September 17 forum but are daunted by the prospect of a long drive … don’t be! For information on local accommodations and answers to any further questions please contact Gary Clark, Writing Program Director (gclark@vermontstudiocenter.org), or call the VSC: 802.635.2727.

Local Meeting Boston:
Cassandra Nelson on Beckett

September 29, 2010

Boston University’s Editorial Institute will host another local meeting of the ALSCW on September 29. Cassandra Nelson of Harvard University will be the guest speaker and will present “‘Corrigée si on peut dire’ ['Corrected, if you can call it that']: Textual Variants in Samuel Beckett’s More Pricks than Kicks.”

The meeting is free and will take place at 5 p.m. at 143 Bay State Road / Boston, MA 02215. Please contact Alex Effgen (abeffgen@bu.edu) for more information.

2010 Annual Conference in Princeton

November 5-7, 2010

(August 4, 2010 for hotel reservations)

The sixteenth annual ALSCW conference will be held November 5-7, 2010, on the campus of Princeton University. The Nassau Inn Hotel, located across the street from the university, will hold a block of rooms at a special rate for conference participants until August 4th. Make your reservation today!

For reservations, call the Nassau Inn Hotel at 609.921.7500. Be sure to mention that you’re with the ALSCW to receive the conference rate.

You may register for the conference online at our website or by mailing the registration form found on page 19.

New Publications by Members

Editor’s note: We welcome news of our members’ publications, and will note as many as possible in each issue of Literary Matters. In some issues, however, available space will dictate a limit of two notices per member. When such limitations are necessary, we will print the first two entries in the order in which they were received. Additional entries will be printed—again, in the order in which they were received—in subsequent issues of Literary Matters. The deadline for publication in this column in the next issue of Literary Matters is October 1, 2010.

Leslie Harkema
“Miguel de Unamuno: Two Poems”
(translations)
Image 65 (Spring 2010): 22-26

Diana Manister
review of Ira Sadoff’s History Matters: Contemporary Poetry on the Margins of Culture
Forum, the journal of the College English Association (Spring 2010)

Harrison Solow
Felicity & Barbara Pym
(Cinnamon Press, May 2010)

The 2011 North Texas AGM in Fort Worth invites proposals for breakout sessions related to the conference theme, “Jane Austen: Two Hundred Years of Sense and Sensibility.” The deadline for submissions is October 1, 2010. For more information, please visit the website http://www.jasna.org/agms/fortworth/callforpapers.html
In the introduction to Dick Barnes’s A Word Like Fire: Selected Poems (Handels Book, 2005), the poet Robert Mezey says of Barnes, “He could count William Stafford, Peter Everwine, and Donald Justice as his admirers.” The poet David Ferry wrote, “Dick Barnes was one of the best poets we’ve had in America. Why he wasn’t better known (except to other poets) is a mystery to me. His poems hold the joy and grief of our common experience together, to look right at them in a radiant light. He speaks the purest mother English in his poems.” I’m not sure that Barnes would see his English as pure in any narrow sense; his poems artfully incorporate, for example, the voices of the Mexicans, Native Americans, and Ango farmers that lived in the California desert where he was raised, along with the Latin and medieval English of his formal education. But the result is a singular American voice such that “purity” may not be inappropriate.

Barnes pursued a wide range of creative and scholarly interests. As a professor of English at Pomona College for nearly 40 years, he specialized in medieval and Renaissance literature but also taught Blake, Joyce, creative writing, experimental film, and mystical religious poetry; wrote and produced “fire operas” that were staged in quarries outside the college and featured music, fireworks, and giant puppets; translated the poetry of Jorge Luis Borges with his friend and colleague Mezey; made four films—and wrote poems. “As a poet,” Mezey recalls, “he was patient and hardworking. The if so short, the craft so long to learn—and he developed slowly. I think he knew from early youth that poetry was his calling, but he said to me once that it was many years before he had the kind of confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatis-  

Three of his most common themes are nature, especially the “winds of Eastern California” he loved so much; the world of work; and spirituality, both Christian and Taoist. Barnes wrote mostly in free verse but with a sure sense of meter and a subtle approach to rhyme. “A Word Like Fire,” originally published in Few and Far Between, contains a number of surprising shifts of register, from anxious observation of frailty to divine confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatis-  

In the final two stanzas offer a striking image of the poet in a state of suffering and ecstasy, in which his fever and visionary fire are cooled by “clouds” of “neutrinos”—surely one of the most unusual, and unusually apt, metaphors in American devotional poetry.

A Word Like Fire

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream. Jeremiah, ch. xiii

In my sickness I withered from one shape to another: finally I was a little dry spider.

The doctor put me down somehow into two holes in the wet sand, and went away. I was to wait there until I got well or died, when the sand dried and caved in on me; that would be time for my resurrection in this life or the other. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord, Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock into pieces?

Jeremiah wept to say it, but I find I still have some eagerness for this experience: the doctor goes away but the Lord goes down with each of us into the grave. That was my dream, and I am afraid but have taken a dare from Holy Writ to say it and may the name of the Lord, or his billion names, be praised, I shall praise them forever and ever. I knew what it said, only it seemed incredible, not anything you’d want to say out loud in the world, that has its own enervating problems with their own ineffective solutions, its detestable hopes that are like hopes I have myself or have had (they come away like the nail from the quick); is that what it is to be raked: nailless, eyeless, given to visions, affaire: and what a cool breeze then flows like neutrinos through your empty spaces. I have felt it like clouds of them billowing through.

poem reprinted with permission

In the introduction to Dick Barnes’s A Word Like Fire: Selected Poems (Handels Book, 2005), the poet Robert Mezey says of Barnes, “He could count William Stafford, Peter Everwine, and Donald Justice as his admirers.” The poet David Ferry wrote, “Dick Barnes was one of the best poets we’ve had in America. Why he wasn’t better known (except to other poets) is a mystery to me. His poems hold the joy and grief of our common experience together, to look right at them in a radiant light. He speaks the purest mother English in his poems.” I’m not sure that Barnes would see his English as pure in any narrow sense; his poems artfully incorporate, for example, the voices of the Mexicans, Native Americans, and Ango farmers that lived in the California desert where he was raised, along with the Latin and medieval English of his formal education. But the result is a singular American voice such that “purity” may not be inappropriate.

Barnes pursued a wide range of creative and scholarly interests. As a professor of English at Pomona College for nearly 40 years, he specialized in medieval and Renaissance literature but also taught Blake, Joyce, creative writing, experimental film, and mystical religious poetry; wrote and produced “fire operas” that were staged in quarries outside the college and featured music, fireworks, and giant puppets; translated the poetry of Jorge Luis Borges with his friend and colleague Mezey; made four films—and wrote poems. “As a poet,” Mezey recalls, “he was patient and hardworking. The if so short, the craft so long to learn—and he developed slowly. I think he knew from early youth that poetry was his calling, but he said to me once that it was many years before he had the kind of confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatisfied but undiscouraged . . . steadily improving and growing into a distinctive style of his own.”

Three of his most common themes are nature, especially the “winds of Eastern California” he loved so much; the world of work; and spirituality, both Christian and Taoist. Barnes wrote mostly in free verse but with a sure sense of meter and a subtle approach to rhyme. “A Word Like Fire,” originally published in Few and Far Between, contains a number of surprising shifts of register, from anxious observation of frailty to divine confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatisfied but undiscouraged . . . steadily improving and growing into a distinctive style of his own.”

Three of his most common themes are nature, especially the “winds of Eastern California” he loved so much; the world of work; and spirituality, both Christian and Taoist. Barnes wrote mostly in free verse but with a sure sense of meter and a subtle approach to rhyme. “A Word Like Fire,” originally published in Few and Far Between, contains a number of surprising shifts of register, from anxious observation of frailty to divine confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatisfied but undiscouraged . . . steadily improving and growing into a distinctive style of his own.”

Three of his most common themes are nature, especially the “winds of Eastern California” he loved so much; the world of work; and spirituality, both Christian and Taoist. Barnes wrote mostly in free verse but with a sure sense of meter and a subtle approach to rhyme. “A Word Like Fire,” originally published in Few and Far Between, contains a number of surprising shifts of register, from anxious observation of frailty to divine confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatisfied but undiscouraged . . . steadily improving and growing into a distinctive style of his own.”

Three of his most common themes are nature, especially the “winds of Eastern California” he loved so much; the world of work; and spirituality, both Christian and Taoist. Barnes wrote mostly in free verse but with a sure sense of meter and a subtle approach to rhyme. “A Word Like Fire,” originally published in Few and Far Between, contains a number of surprising shifts of register, from anxious observation of frailty to divine confidence in the quality of his work. Unlike the myriad poets who start fast and soon fade, he kept on, dissatisfied but undiscouraged . . . steadily improving and growing into a distinctive style of his own.”
A Profile of Norman Fruman

By Roy Winnick

Last March, as my continuing journey through Western literature arrived at the British Romantic period, I borrowed a battered library copy of Norman Fruman’s Colegilde, The Damaged Archangel (G. Braziller, 1971). The book so impressed me that I wrote to Fruman at his old academic email address (fruman001@bnum.edu), hoping that, though he is now 86, the note would reach him.

I have just had the great pleasure of reading your Colegilde (I wrote in part). It is a masterpiece of biography, literary criticism, and psychological insight. Lawrence Thompson, on the posthumous third volume of whose Frost biography I collaborated (as a graduate student at Princeton) in the years just after your Colegilde was published, announced as his working principle, as I recall, the combining of sympathy, balance, and critical detachment. Your study of Colegilde does that, in spades. My sincere congratulations.

You have painted a portrait of Colegilde the man and Colegilde the poet that is at once maddening, enlightening, deeply poignant, and profoundly memorable.

A month later, Fruman left a message on my answering machine so gracious that I immediately returned the call. That day and on others following, Fruman shared with me some highlights of his long and extraordinary life, agreeing to let me share them, in turn, with the members of the Association, which he helped found in 1964 and on whose Council he served.

Fruman may be the only major scholar of English literature who was once a professional comic-book writer, but that is getting ahead of his story. He was born in the Bronx in 1923, the son of Russian immigrants Minnie, a skilled dressmaker, and Nathan, a successful photographer who survived the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918–20 only to contract Parkinson’s Disease a year at CCNY when, in 1943, he was drafted into the army. Poverty led to Norman’s birth in the charity ward of of 1918–20 only to contract Parkinson’s Disease a month later, Fruman left a message on my answering machine so graceful that I immediately returned the call. That day and on others following, Fruman shared with me some highlights of his long and extraordinary life, agreeing to let me share them, in turn, with the members of the Association, which he helped found in 1964 and on whose Council he served.

Fruman may be the only major scholar of English literature who was once a professional comic-book writer, but that is getting ahead of his story. He was born in the Bronx in 1923, the son of Russian immigrants Minnie, a skilled dressmaker, and Nathan, a successful photographer who survived the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918–20 only to contract Parkinson’s Disease a year at CCNY when, in 1943, he was drafted into the army. Poverty led to Norman’s birth in the charity ward of

...
interest from our ALSCW-MLA members Adelaide Russo and Michael Wood, and from MLA’s David Damrosh.

In addition to the 2010-2011 conference bridges, another expression of our joint interests is shaping up for the fall 2010 issue of Literary Imagination, on “The Future of Comparative Literature”? (organized by David Mikics, one of the co-authors of The Art of the Sonnet) and from papers presented at a sequence of sessions (organized by me and sponsored by the MLA Division on Poetry) at the MLA Convention in 2009: “Sonnets in Stories,” and “Sonnets, Intimacy, and Loss.” In addition to these critical and historical discussions, this issue will include original sonnets by Paul Muldoon, Susan Stewart, Phillis Levin, Henri Cole, Esther Schor, our Vice President Greg Delanty, and others. Look out for this issue of Literary Imagination—which our membership will believe in time for the fall conference—and for further print collaborations with the MLA. Rosemary Feal has encouraged us to regard the publications of the MLA, PMLA and Profession, as hospitable to proposals for the ALSCW for further joint ventures (perhaps a Forum in Profession on “The Future of Comparative Literature”).

For now, here is a preview of the venture with MLA at the upcoming conferences.

**ALSCW Conference, Princeton, Nov. 5-7 2010**

Friday morning, November 5, 10-11:30:

A discussion and plenary conversation, OUR ASSOCIATIONS: Alliances, Collaborations, Common Ground. President of MLA, Russell Berman, and the Presidents (outgoing/incoming) of the ALSCW, respectively Susan Wolfson and Greg Delanty.

Saturday afternoon, November 6, 3-4:30:

The History and Practice of Reading as Close Reading. Brief papers from Frances Ferguson, Garrett Stewart, Michael Wood, and then a discussion (I’ll chair) among the panel and a plenary discussion.

Sunday morning, November 7, 10-11:15

The “exceptionalism” of Pride and Prejudice.

A roundtable with William Galperin (chair), Michael Gamer, Sonia Hofkosh. This most popular and most beloved novel is encountered by everyone, from common readers, students, a teacher, editors, critics, and filmmakers. A plenary conversation invites an open, wide-ranging comments on all aspects of Pride and Prejudice: its place in the development of the novel, to formal and cultural matters peculiar to this novel, to its extraordinary adaptability, both to critical and popular fashion.

**MLA Convention, Los Angeles, Jan. 2011**

These topics will develop at the MLA convention, where the meetings will begin afresh but also reflect on the conversations begun at our conference.

Allied meeting:

Our Associations

Ronald Levin (chair), Russell Berman, Greg Delanty, Rosemary Feal, Susan Wolfson

Main Forum:

The History of Reading as Close-Reading/Close-Reading as Teaching. Phillis Levin, Christopher Ricks, Garrett Stewart, Susan Wolfson, Michael Wood

Allied meeting:

Pride and Prejudice, continued. William Galperin, Michael Gamer, Sonia Hofkosh

Fruman (continued from page 11)

inside much of academia, he urged Fruman not to offer it to a university press and instead show it to his own publisher, George Braziller. Braziller was skeptical that it was as scholarly and as potentially controversial as Fruman’s would find favor, let alone a wide audience. But when Bostetter and Elisabeth Schneider,Fruman had received from three scholars to whom he had shown his work—Coleridge experts E. E.

It proved a wise decision. When Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel was published, it garnered reviews in academic journals that as predicted, were often hostile—sometimes scathingly so. But a hundred reviews outside of academia were overwhelmingly favorable, including glowing articles in the daily New York Times (a coup for a scholarly biography), the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times and, among international periodicals, the Times Literary Supplement, which called it the most important Coleridge study since John Livingston Lowes’ The Road to Xanadu (1927). An unknown professor from an obscure state university—Fruman was then teaching at Cal State, LA—had set the Coleridge world on its head with his heterodox, often damning, but exhaustively documented portrait of one of the great literary figures of his age.

Fruman’s life as a scholar did not begin or end with his study of Coleridge. Soon after joining the faculty of Cal State, LA, he and the dean of its School of Humanities, Marvin Laser, co-edited Studies in J. D. Salinger (Odyssey Press, 1963), a collection of critical essays on The Catcher in the Rye. With John Ellis and others, reflecting his intense opposition to the widespread politicization of literary studies, he played a key role in the formation of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics (now the ALSCW), and also, for similar reasons, served for four years as president of the Minnesota chapter of the National Association of Scholars. Over the years, he has contributed many book chapters, essays, notes, and reviews to a wide range of academic and other publications.

But it is for his Damaged Archangel that Fruman is likely to be best remembered. After the straitened circumstances of his early life, following distinguished military service, and in the midst of an active and successful teaching career, he wrote one of the most important, eye-opening, and compelling literary biographies of the last century. He taught generations of students to value literature as literature, and showed scholars and biographers how to follow the evidence wherever it leads. All of which merits our enduring admiration, gratitude, and praise.

**President’s Column (continued from page 3)**

"The Once and Future Sonnet" drawing contributions from papers presented at our 2009 Convention, "The Once and Future Sonnet" (organized by David Mikics, one of the co-authors of The Art of the Sonnet) and from papers presented at a sequence of sessions (organized by me and sponsored by the MLA Division on Poetry) at the MLA Convention in 2009: “Sonnets in Stories,” and “Sonnets, Intimacy, and Loss.”
In assessing the state of literary study in today’s high schools, Professor Sandra Stotsky’s Forum 4: Literary Study in Grades 9, 10, and 11: A National Survey (2010) aligns the decline in reading and writing abilities of high school students with a similar decline in the number of classroom hours spent on close reading and analytical writing in grades 9, 10, and 11. While texts such as The Odyssey are still being assigned—although in very few classes—the approach most often taken by teachers is biographical and historical, multicultural, or “reader response.” “Reader response,” by far the most popular, can take these forms: “In your opinion, should Odysseus kill the Suitors?” “How would you feel if you were Penelope at home for twenty years with no word from your husband?” and so on. Forum 4 further suggests that teachers are often ill-equipped to teach their students to read closely and write analytically because they themselves have not been trained to do so. Schools of education and educational associations encourage biographical, political, ethnic and cultural explorations over literary ones. However, Forum 4 has found that such approaches are not mandated and that teachers have a good deal of autonomy both in the choice of works and in the approaches taken. This latter finding is good news, indeed. Knowing that teachers have the freedom to make many curriculum decisions, I offer here examples of how The Odyssey might be approached through close reading and analytical writing. I hope to show that doing so is both surprisingly easy for teachers and very pleasurable for students. Close reading also prepares students for the challenges of college English and Humanities, and helps avoid placement in remedial classes.

I have taught The Odyssey for about 35 years, first to eleventh graders at Hunter College High School, then to sixth graders at The Brearley School. The only substantive difference is in the pace at which we go. In grade 11, we spend about 11 weeks, in grade 11, we spent about 4. What is not different—and entirely at odds with the findings of Forum 4—is the percentage of class devoted to literary study. The percentage the study found was about 30% for book-length works. 4 in both schools where I have taught, about 93% of our time is spent on close reading and analytical writing, the other 7% being filled with essential tasks like taking attendance, collecting and returning work, and dealing with immediate personal needs of students.

I and my colleagues use all our teaching time training students to read closely and write analytically. We ask students to enter college ready to demand work, imbued with an appreciation of the beauties of fine writing and the pleasure of clear thinking and disciplined effort. While smaller classes allow teachers to spend more time on writing, class size is irrelevant for close reading. Larger classes, in fact, tend to generate more ideas.

Teaching The Odyssey

I remember the topic my eleventh grade teacher assigned: “What makes The Odyssey a classic?” I didn’t know what made anything a classic, let alone The Odyssey. Doc Campbell set demanding questions that required close study of Macbeth and Huckleberry Finn but his broad question about The Odyssey stumped me. That, and other experiences, taught me to break things down for myself, which is basically what close reading does. The four passages that follow show how one might lead students through a series of questions to an understanding of a text and the artistry behind it. For teachers, the key to close reading is simply to assume deliberate authorial intent, to ask oneself and one’s students, again and again, “Why is this or that detail present in the passage?”

Close Reading:

Book 11 - Anticleia and Odysseus in the Underworld

In Book 11 Odysseus descends to the Underworld where he encounters his mother, Anticleia. He has been

1 Forum 4, Table 3, indicates that The Odyssey is the third most frequently assigned text in ninth grade. However, the survey also finds that there is no longer anything like a common curriculum nationwide. As a consequence, “third” actually means that only 20% of all ninth graders read The Odyssey (Table 2). Of those readers, still fewer engage in what is called “close reading.”

2 Forum 4 offers statistics for the types of approaches taken by teachers and the frequency of those approaches, but the survey did not gather examples of “reader response” prompts.

3 Such questions as these are not without value, but need to be placed within the larger context of the values the poet is presenting and the historical context of those values. Poems such as Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “An Ancient Gesture” or question, “presenting and the historical context of those values. Poems such as Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “An Ancient Gesture” question, “How would you feel if you were Penelope at home for twenty years with no word from your husband?” and so on. Forum 4 further suggests that teachers are often ill-equipped to teach their students to read closely and write analytically because they themselves have not been trained to do so. Schools of education and educational associations encourage biographical, political, ethnic and cultural explorations over literary ones. However, Forum 4 has found that such approaches are not mandated and that teachers have a good deal of autonomy both in the choice of works and in the approaches taken. This latter finding is good news, indeed. Knowing that teachers have the freedom to make many curriculum decisions, I offer here examples of how The Odyssey might be approached through close reading and analytical writing. I hope to show that doing so is both surprisingly easy for teachers and very pleasurable for students. Close reading also prepares students for the challenges of college English and Humanities, and helps avoid placement in remedial classes.

I have taught The Odyssey for about 35 years, first to eleventh graders at Hunter College High School, then to sixth graders at The Brearley School. The only substantive difference is in the pace at which we go. In grade 11, we spend about 11 weeks, in grade 11, we spent about 4. What is not different—and entirely at odds with the findings of Forum 4—is the percentage of class devoted to literary study. The percentage the study found was about 30% for book-length works. 4 in both schools where I have taught, about 93% of our time is spent on close reading and analytical writing, the other 7% being filled with essential tasks like taking attendance, collecting and returning work, and dealing with immediate personal needs of students. I and my colleagues use all our teaching time training students to read closely and write analytically. We ask students to enter college ready to demand work, imbued with an appreciation of the beauties of fine writing and the pleasure of clear thinking and disciplined effort. While smaller classes allow teachers to spend more time on writing, class size is irrelevant for close reading. Larger classes, in fact, tend to generate more ideas.

Teaching The Odyssey

I remember the topic my eleventh grade teacher assigned: “What makes The Odyssey a classic?” I didn’t know what made anything a classic, let alone The Odyssey. Doc Campbell set demanding questions that required close study of Macbeth and Huckleberry Finn but his broad question about The Odyssey stumped me. That, and other experiences, taught me to break things down for myself, which is basically what close reading does. The four passages that follow show how one might lead students through a series of questions to an understanding of a text and the artistry behind it. For teachers, the key to close reading is simply to assume deliberate authorial intent, to ask oneself and one’s students, again and again, “Why is this or that detail present in the passage?”

Close Reading:

Book 11 - Anticleia and Odysseus in the Underworld

In Book 11 Odysseus descends to the Underworld where he encounters his mother, Anticleia. He has been

absent from Ithaca for 13 years and so he asks her for news of home. His questions fall into five general categories, which we try to identify.

But tell me what happened to you. What death overtook you? Did you have some lingering illness? Or did Athenea the Arethusa visit and was there a god to guide you? And tell me of my father and the son I left behind. Is my kingdom safe in their hands, or was it taken by some other man when it was assumed that I would never return? And what of my good wife? How does she feel and what does she intend to do? Is she still living with her son and keeping our estate safe? Or has the best of her countrymen already married her?

(11. 171-179; Reujs trans., p. 144)

Grouping things into categories is hard for many students. It requires both insight and confidence. The more students worry about omitting something, the more categories they are likely to come up with. My question is purposeful in this regard—indeed independent of its relevance to the passage—because the ability to subsume ideas under broad headings is a skill necessary for writing well-organized essays. When we finally settle on (1) how did you die? (2) how is my father? (3) how is my son? (4) how is my kingdom? and (5) how is my wife? we number those items lightly in our texts and turn to Anticleia’s answers:

“[H]e is still living in your home,” my royal mother replied. “She has schooled her heart to patience, though her eyes are never free from tears as the slow nights and days pass sorrowfully. Your father lives alone on his farm and never goes down to the city now. He has no proper bed with laundered sheets and blankets to sleep on. Instead, he lies down in the winter-time with the labourers at the farm in the ashes by the fire, and goes about in rags. But when the summer and the mellow autumn days come round, he makes himself a humble bed of fallen leaves anywhere on the high ground of his vineyard. There he lies in his misery, with old age pressing hard upon him, and nursing his grief and yearn- ing for you to come back. That was my undoing too: it was that which brought me to the grave. It was not that the keen-eyed Archeress sought me out in our home and killed me with her darts. Nor was I attacked by any of the malignant diseases that so often make the birds waste away and die. No, it was my heartache for you, my glorious Odysseus, and for your wise and gentle ways, that brought my life with all its sweetness to an end.”

(11. 180-203; Reujs trans., pp. 144-145)

As we locate Anticleia’s answers, we discover that Odysseus’ questions are being answered in reverse order. I write hysteron proteron on the board, explain it means “last, first” in questions that required close study of Macbeth and Huckleberry Finn but his broad question about The Odyssey stumped me. That, and other experiences, taught me to break things down for myself, which is basically what close reading does. The four passages that follow show how one might lead students through a series of questions to an understanding of a text and the artistry behind it. For teachers, the key to close reading is simply to assume deliberate authorial intent, to ask oneself and one’s students, again and again, “Why is this or that detail present in the passage?”

Close Reading:

Book 11 - Anticleia and Odysseus in the Underworld

In Book 11 Odysseus descends to the Underworld where he encounters his mother, Anticleia. He has been
While we may be lazing in the dog days of summer at present, our annual conference is already taking shape thanks to the labor and dedication of David Mikics, Susan Wolfson, and the conference committee. As a quick glance at this preview confirms, they are putting together a weekend packed with exciting panel discussions and engaging speakers. The conference will be held November 5-7, 2010, on the campus of Princeton University.

A block of specially-priced rooms will be held at the Nassau Inn Hotel until August 4th.

10-11.30 COMMON GROUND: LITERATURE AND LITERACY, a conversation
Vice President Greg Delanty, St. Michael's College
Vice President Susan Wolfson, Princeton University
Russell Berman, Stanford Univ. & President, MLA

1.20 ANTIQUE EPIC, MODERN NOVEL
(Convener: Joseph Farrell, Univ. of Pennsylvania)
Annie Finch, University of Southern Maine
Tessa Taylor
Herbert F. Tucker, Jr., University of Virginia

2.45-4.15 REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST: SCHOLAR-POETS ON RENAISSANCE AND CONTEMPORARY POEMS
(Conveners: Brett Foster, Wheaton College and Kimberly Johnson, Brigham Young University)
Francis Blessington, Northeastern Unh.
Joanne Diaz, Illinois Wesleyan University
Brett Foster, Wheaton College
Linda Gregerson, University of Michigan
Kimberly Johnson, Brigham Young University
Philip White, Centre College

4.30-6.00 THE COMMON READER
(Convener: David Mikics, University of Houston)
Patricia Hapm, University of Minnesota
Mark Edmundson, University of Virginia
Mark Halliday, Ohio University
Phillip Lopate, Columbia University
Willard Spiegelman, Southern Methodist Univ.

6.15-7 RECEPTION
7-9.30 DINNER with reading by Paul Muldoon

8.30-10.15 CONCURRENT SEMINARS

Teaching Shakespeare: Presenting the Past
(Convener: Ron LeVao, Rutgers University)

Teaching the Writing of Poetry
(Convener: Maggie Dietz, Boston University)

Studies in Victorian Realism: Dickens, Trollope, and Eliot
(Convener: Timothy Pettitson, Wellesley College)

Literary Allusion
(Conveners: Joseph Pucci, Brown University and Hannibal Hamlin, Ohio State University)

10.30-12 WRITING WAR
(Convener: Stacey Peebles, University of North Carolina at Greensboro)
Chris Walsh, Boston University
Jim Frederick, Time Magazine
Stacey Peebles
Elizabeth Sرام, U.S. Military Academy - West Point

1.30-2.45 A READING OF MEMOIRS
Mark Edmundson
Sigrid Nunez
Patricia Hapm

3-4.30 CLOSE READING
Frances Ferguson, Johns Hopkins University
Michael Wood, Princeton University
Garrett Stewart, University of Iowa
President Susan Wolfson (chair)

4.45-6.15 REMEMBERING ROBERT FITZGERALD
(Convener: Maria Fitzgerald, University of Minnesota)
Phillis Levin, Hofstra University
Elise Partridge
Dana Gioia
Tracy Kidder
David Rothman, University of Colorado

6.15-7.00 MEMBERS’ MEETING
7-9.30 DINNER with reading by Joyce Carol Oates
FEATURED SPEAKERS
by Susan Wolfsen

We are delighted, excited to announce not one, but two, featured speakers at the 2010 Annual Conference of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers—all the more apt because with the new, overdue, addition of Winford Writers to our Association’s title, we have two of the most engaging writers to be found. Both are internationally renowned authors (with distinguished university appointments in Princeton University’s Peter B. Lewis Center for the Arts, one of our cosponsors). Paul Muldoon, our treat at the Friday (November 5) banquet, is Howard G. B. Clark ’23 Professor of Humanities, Professor of Creative Writing, and Chair of the Lewis Center. Joyce Carol Oates, our delight at the Saturday (November 6) banquet, is the Roger S. Berlind ’52 Professor of Humanities and Professor of Creative Writing. Both authors are vivid performers at the podium (or from armchair, or on the stage)—as engaging, as charming, as mesmerizing in stand-up as their words are in the books one holds in one’s hands.

Paul Muldoon not only reads poems but talks about their occasions and consequences in ways that seem like living poetry. Maybe his other life, as a musician and lyricist for the rock band Rackett (the name is an homage to Beckett) has something to do with this. In 2007 he became Poetry Editor of The New Yorker, on the heels of his appointment from 1999 to 2004 as Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford. A publishing poet since his early twenties, Paul Muldoon has been hailed by the geographic map, too (much in demand, most recently at the Forum in Rome), her life and passion is her task. The rest is another famously prolific writer, Henry James, is a daily muse: “We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is what we hold in our hands.”

Joyce Carol Oates preverified some of her Wild Nights (imaginative constructions of the last days, and nights, of famous writers) with a dazzling, wary reading of the chapter on Hemingway. We don’t know her plans for us this year, but her wide range of genres—from fiction, poetry and drama, to critical essays and penetrating reviews—promises intrigue and entertainment. As novelist John Barth remarked, “Joyce Carol Oates writes all over the aesthetical map.” Though she travels all over the geographic map, too (much in demand, most recently at the Forum in Rome), her life and passions are concentrated in Princeton, where she teaches, writes every day and often into the night, hikes the local trails, cultivates her garden, dines with friends, imagines the inner life of her cat Cherie, and works and plays in her new house with new husband Charles Gross. A remark from another famously prolific writer, Henry James, is a daily muse: “We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art.”

The banquet are $25 each (thanks to generous subsidies from various constituencies at Princeton) for conference registrants. Please contact Kate Oser (kateoser@gmail.com), our conference coordinator, for information about registration and banquet tickets.

ACROSS THE CONFERENCE: BOOK EXHIBIT
Upon which of the five topics does Anticleia linger?…

Readers, including my students, are eager to skip over the lie to get to the action. But I don’t let them. Why does Odysseus tell this lie? Is he being clever or just having some idle fun? This question is too broad for them, as it would have been for me, but I want to plant possibilities in their minds. Then we break the question down into manageable units: What does he have with him?—‘treasure.’ What might he fear?—‘that the shepherd and his flock will find him at Troy, his reward for the long-drawn agonies of his victory.’ And why does he say the sky was ‘pitch-black’ that night?—‘to show he’s patient,’ ‘sneaky,’ ‘to show he’ll wait quietly for his moment.’…

Immediately after arriving on Ithaca with Phaeacian treasure Odysseus encounters a shepherd to whom he lies about his history and his identity:…

Of the rich-soiled mainland, sloping down to the sea that is the great heart of Ithaca, whom you Achaeans came to Troy with war in your hearts for my sake, shameless creature that I was! (13.232-234, trans.)

Surely this must be great-hearted Odysseus’ son Telemachus, whom his father left as a new-born baby in his home, when you Achaeans came to Troy with war in your hearts for my sake, shameless creature that I was! (13.146-148, trans., p. 44)

We continue. What comparison is Homer making between Helen and Menelau? Does she even wait for an answer to her question? How do we feel as the recipient of so much attention from the most beautiful and famous woman in the world? Is the “admiration” in which she is lost for her “likeness” to her father, or for Telemachus’ own youthful beauty? We don’t know, but we laugh and conclude that we have in Homer’s portrait a woman who is impulsive—we agree that really fits her history—assertive, supremely confident, full of energy, brilliantly flirtatious. Her compliments to men are seductive. And then she turns to the entire company—her husband, chieftly, but also the other Greeks—to castigate herself, “shameless creature that I am.” We don’t know what she really behaves if one feels truly ashamed—perhaps in not quite this way. We learn the word “pre-emptive.” And we go on to the story she tells of Odysseus and its counterweight, Menelaus’ story of the wooden horse, both really about Helen, both examples of a husband and wife broaching topics in public that are impossible to speak of in private. Looking closely at Helen’s entrance lays the groundwork for the insights that follow.

Close Reading: Book 4: Helen’s Entrance

Helen’s entrance into the great hall where Menelaus is entertaining his visitors, Telemachus and Peisistratus, is, like Odysseus’ lie to the Shepherd, something one might have expected to happen sooner. It is also the beginning of Homer’s characterization of Helen in which he seems to have put himself to the question, what was Helen like? What could have caused her to seduce men? Was it simply her “face” that launched those “thousand ships”? Homer introduces Helen to us as a woman of supreme confidence, quick with a range of moods, loving the focus of everyone’s attention, and knowing how to show her attention on all the men around her. Menelaus sees in Telemachus a resemblance to Odysseus but hesitates, out of courtesy, to mention it, Helen enters.

In the midst of her peripety Helen came down from her lofty perfume room, looking like Artemis with her golden distaff. Adraste drew up for her an elegant chair; Nicippo brought a rug of the softest wool; and Philo carried her silver workbasket…on wheels that were made of silver finished with a rim of gold. This was the basket that her lady, Phyllo, brought in and put beside her. It was full of fine-spun wool, and a golden [spindle] spindle with its dark wool was laid across it. Helen sat down on the chair, with a footstool for her feet, and at once asked her husband about everything. (4.120-125, 131-137, Reu trans., p. 42)

In Book 1 Penelope comes down the staircase to the great hall to address her Suitors, what does she have with her?—‘just her ladies.’ And Helen?—‘three attendants and lots of stuff.’ What kind of stuff?”—‘beautiful stuff.’ Be more specific—‘a rug of softest wool; and a gold-embroidered bag; and a silver workbasket; and a gold spindle’…How do these things make her look?”—‘glamorous but domestic,’ “like she’s a good housewife about to weave something.” And does she?—’No.’ So what is the purpose of these things?”—‘they’re like props to the story she tells of Odysseus and its counterweight, Menelaus’ story of the wooden horse, both really about Helen, both examples of a husband and wife broaching topics in public that are impossible to speak of in private. Looking closely at Helen’s entrance lays the groundwork for the insights that follow.

Analytical Writing: Book 13: The Shepherd’s Reply

Forum 4 also reveals a decline in the amount of analytical writing assigned to students. The Odyssey provides excellent opportunities not only for close reading, but also for analytical writing of all sorts. The writing samples that follow suggest some possible approaches that go hand in hand with close reading. In Book 13, just before telling his lie about having killed Orosilochus, Odysseus awakes in a place he does not recognize. Although the Phaeacian sailors have indeed brought him to Ithaca, Athene has cast a mist around his island to test Odysseus’ intellectual reflexes and capacity for self-control—qualities he will need in the task ahead. She appears before him and says: ‘Neither the Phaeacians have played him false and asks where he is.

What is land is this? What people, what men are native to this place? Is it one of the sun-filled islands or is it the coast Of the rich-soiled mainland, sloping down to the sea? (13.232-234, my trans.)

Shepherd-Athene answers him:…

You are ignorant, stranger, or have come from far off, if, indeed, you are asking about this

Close Reading: Book 13: Odysseus’ Lie

Now in Book 13 Odysseus shows us first the shepherd Athene’s young shepherd. He fears the shepherd’s control—qualities he will need in the task ahead. She appears before him and says: ‘Neither the Phaeacians have played him false and asks where he is.

What is land is this? What people, what men are native to this place? Is it one of the sun-filled islands or is it the coast Of the rich-soiled mainland, sloping down to the sea? (13.232-234, my trans.)

Shepherd-Athene answers him:…

You are ignorant, stranger, or have come from far off, if, indeed, you are asking about this
It’s a very funny passage—a great tease, and one topic for analytical writing is exactly that: What are the delaying tactics of Athene’s speech? This little speech is also a tribute to Athene’s Homer’s humor in another way—it suits the persona she has adopted, and thus another possibility for writing is the question: If this speech fits the character of a shepherd? A third approach, not particular to this passage, helps students perceive the underlining organization of a work of any length: What are the logical steps of Athene’s speech?

For analytical writing, two rules are essential: (1) each paragraph must begin with a topic sentence that states what the paragraph will prove, and (2) everything must be supported by details from the passage. In the examples below, my analytical samples appear on the right; the left-hand column explains some of the decisions made as I wrote.

Paragraph 1: What are the delaying tactics of Athene’s Speech?

The shepherd’s speech uses a number of rhetorical and grammatical strategies to tease Odysseus with a promise of that the desired information is immediately forthcoming. The most obvious means of teasing and delay is the use of the pronoun “it” as grammatical subject or direct object in place of “Ithaca” or the use of a descriptive subject complement where the place name might go. These moments tease Odysseus with the expectation of disclosure, but offer instead non-identifying phrases like “a rugged land,” “hardly poor,” “woodland,” and so on. Athene’s teasing takes the form not only of grammatical manipulation but also of digression and repetition. Her first digression, occupying five lines, compares the stranger, who seems not to know the island’s name, to all those who are familiar with its name. This digression prompts a further digression, six lines long, that explains why the land is “known.” Within these eleven lines Athene says almost everything twice. For example, in the same line she says that the land is “not unknown” and “many . . . know it.” Describing the two directions—“toward the east and the west toward the east and the darkness” in which the “many” live, Athene again repeats herself, “east” being a synonym for “sun” and “west” for “darkness” after sunset. In the same spirit of teasing delay, Athene digresses by describing the features of the island, and in her description duplicates everything, naming two crops, two sources of fresh water, two types of grazing land and two features of the topography. She also repeats the idea of abundance in temporal (“always,” “the year round”) and material (“inexpressible abundance,” “in abundance,” “every sort of”) terms. Athene’s tactics seem designed to make the very word Odysseus grow less rather than more attentive as he begins to think the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd seems designed to make the wary Odysseus grow less rather than more attentive as he begins to think the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly. That the shepherd will talk endlessly.
Dear President Naylor, Provost Misak, and Dean Gertler,

I am writing to express my deep concern and distress over the proposed closure of the University’s distinguished and vibrant Centre for Comparative Literature. Even amid the present financial pressures that the University is no doubt facing, it is an extraordinarily draconian decision to close the discipline’s leading program in the country, long-established indeed as one of the leading programs in the world in the years following its founding by Northrop Frye four decades ago. I saw the Centre’s vitality at first hand this past February as Northrop Frye Visiting Professor; I was strongly impressed by the graduate students for whom I gave a seminar, and found that my public lecture attracted (as is typical for Comparative Literature) a large and lively audience from a wide range of fields, a good indication of the discipline’s institutional value even beyond its own walls.

I understand that the plan would be to disestablish Comparative Literature as a degree-granting program, in connection with a consolidation of most literature programs into a single unit. Even if it should prove necessary to effect a consolidation of various national literature programs, this would be all the more reason to preserve as full as possible an identity and institutional role for Comparative Literature. As many universities have found, Comparative Literature serves as a crucial meeting-ground and opportunity for cross-fertilization for students and faculty who work primarily in a national literature. Both intellectually and in terms of institutional health, it is enormously valuable if consolidated literature departments include programs that cut across national and linguistic divisions, countering the danger that the consolidated program will be an uncomfortable yoking together of disconnected specialists, at some savings in costs for support staff but at considerable intellectual and programmatic cost.

At my own university, for instance, even amid our currently severe financial constraints, Comparative Literature has been growing, with faculty from all the national literature departments actively involved in our programs. In my graduate seminars, I typically have fifteen or sixteen graduate students, even though our own program only admits six per year, the others come from six or seven other departments, not only of literature but in a range of other disciplines. This kind of interconnectivity is particularly true with programs, such as Toronto’s, with a strong history of interdisciplinary work.

As with individual departments, so at the national level: the membership of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) has grown steadily throughout the past dozen years, and our annual meeting has seen a tenfold increase in papers delivered, averaging two thousand per year in the past two years. Our participants have come from all around the US and Canada, and from nearly fifty other countries as well, in a reflection of the discipline’s expanding role as a central venue for thinking about cultural processes and interactions in a globalizing world. Speaking as a past president of the ACLA, I feel a sharpened sense of concern at the proposed disestablishment at Toronto when our Association is planning its next annual meeting in Vancouver (our second time in Canada in recent years), where we’ll be hosted by the rapidly growing new program in World Literature at Simon Fraser University, founded just a few years ago by a group of faculty led by Paolo Horta, a graduate of Toronto’s Centre.

In Canada as in many countries, our discipline is thriving when programs embrace the possibilities offered in today’s intellectual landscape. Altogether, this seems a particularly unfortunate time to consider taking apart Canada’s leading program in this vital discipline. This is just the time when Comparative Literature can play an increased and most productive role at Toronto, as it has been doing nationally and internationally. I urge you to reconsider this decision, and to protect and enhance the role of Comparative Literature at the University. Please let me know if I could be of any assistance in thinking freshly about the best ways to move forward with the configuration of literary and cultural studies in this challenging but also promising time.

Sincerely yours,
David Damrosch

Professor and Chair, Department of Comparative Literature
Harvard University / Dana Palmer House 201 / 16 Quincy St. / Cambridge MA 02138

Dear President Naylor, Provost Misak, and Dean Gertler:

With deep concern over this proposed termination, we urge your reconsideration. How unfortunate to disestablish the degree-granting programs! If anything, the Centre for Comparative Literature might be formally elevated to be what it has become: a capacious and generative global village (to evoke another notable member of the faculty at the University of Toronto, Herbert Marshall McLuhan) for all the modern languages, where students and faculty interact, inspire one another, improve one another’s work, and in sum elevate the profile of the university. Comparative literature has been at the forefront of just about every significant development in literary study, most recently, the advent of global literary studies.

At Princeton University, even amid our financial constraints, Comparative Literature is being protected—and more, encouraged, successful, to develop a few crucial, galvanizing senior appointments. This program, far from being consolidated, is actually the amalgamation of joinedly appointed faculty from several departments, including my own (English). In consequence, and by force of its own energy, classes offered by this program typically draw students not only from across the University, but from across the region, from nearby universities. Departments of, Programs in, and Centres for Comparative Literature typically have this kind of appeal, this kind of influence. In our increasingly pragmatic public culture, where economic productivity tends to trump scholarship and critical inquiry, where sports facilities are refreshed while libraries are under stress, where learning and erudition can be ridiculed by a recent former President and recent candidate for Vice President, we need the leadership of major universities, such as the University of Toronto, and distinguished entities, such as the Centre for Comparative Literature, to shape and influence the vital force of the humanities and scholarship in the challenges of the modern world. We urge you to reconsider your decision, and to imagine better ways to manage the resources of your distinguished university amid the crises, but also in light of the prospects, of twenty-first century academia.

Yours sincerely,
Susan J. Wolfson

President, Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (2010)
Professor of English, Princeton University
22 McCosh Hall / Princeton University / Princeton, New Jersey 08544-1016 USA
Welcome, New Members!  
The Conversation Continues to Grow

Between January 21 and July 27, 2010, the following people joined our Association:

Dr. Seemee Ali (Carthage College)
Dr. Barry Ancialet (University of Louisiana, Lafayette)
Howard Axelrod (Brookline, MA)
Mrs. Rebecca Baadrani (Scha Caff, NY)
Gregory Baker (Brown University)
Dr. Jill Baumgartner (Wheaton College)
Dr. Stephen David Beck (Louisiana State University)
Susan Benesich (Washington D.C.)
Professor James Gordon Bennett (Louisiana State University)
Professor Russell Berman (Stanford Univ.)
Dr. Christina Bieber Lake (Wheaton College)
Richard Bonine (Saint Paul, MN)
Ms Katherine Bowers (Northernwestern)
Professor T. Alan Broughton (University of Vermont Emeritus)
Jennifer Burdigt (National University)
MLPC Martha Bush (Cedarville, OH)
Dr. Patricia Carlin (New York, NY)
Paul Conners (Stratham, NH)
Bill Corbett (Boston, MA)
Robert Crimmings (Baltimore, MD)
Professor Maia Crone (Louisiana State University)
Professor David Danrosch (Harvard)
Dr. Richard Samuel Deese (Northeastern)
Professor Joannay Diaz (Illinois Wesleyan University)
Maggie Dietz (Boston University)
John Dillon (Notre Dame)
Ms. Sharon Dolin (New York, NY)
Ms. Colleen Doyle (Boston University)
Ms. Laura Dunbar (University of Toronto)
John Elderfield (New York, NY)
Dr. Rosamry Feal (MLA)
Professor Frances Ferguson (John Hopkins University)
Miss Deborah Fonteza (University of St. Thomas)
Michael Gamer (Univ. of Pennsylvania)
Ms. Elsa Gerarden (New York, NY)
Ms. Ani Gilkar (Boston University)
Dr. John V. Glass III (University of Tennessee at Martin)
Dr. Eileen Gregory (University of Dallas)
Jeffrey Gutierrez (Boston College)
Ryan Haas (Stanford University)
Katherine Hala (Boston University)
Conrad K. Harper (New York, NY)
Katherine Hawkins (Boston University)
Ms. Ava Haymon (Baton Rouge, LA)
Ms. Rebecca Hill (Borough of Manhattan Community College)
Sonia Hofkosh (Tufts University)
Michael Hogan (Boston University)
Professor Julie Houston (Northampton Community College)
Harry Howard (Atlanta, Georgia)
Tim Hunt (Illinois State University)
Mr. R. Mark Jackson (University of North Carolina)
Dr. Kimberly Johnson (Brigham Young University)
Professor Rodger Kamenetz (Louisiana State University)
Mr. Aaron Kerner (Cambridge, MA)
Ms. Nancy Leaman (Southern Connecticut State University)
Jeffrey Levine (Tupelo Press)
Professor Francaise Linnell (UCLA)
Mr. Martin Lockerd (St. Louis University)
Mr. William Louis-Dreyfus (Mt. Kisco, NY)
Christina Lovin (Eastern Kentucky Univ.)
Charles Mahoney (Univ. of Connecticut)
Diana Manister (College English Association)
Kathryn Maris (London, UK)
Dr. Jen McGahan (Louisiana State University)
Dr. Astid Merget (Louisiana State Univ.)
Ms. Janice Miller (Newton North High School)
Dr. Robert Morrison (Queen’s University)
Dr. Timothy Muffitt (Baton Rouge Symphony)
Ms. Lauren Neefe (Stony Brook Univ.)
L.A. Nemrow (Boston, MA)
Dr. James Nolan (Loyola University)

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation under the laws of the State of California. Your gift is tax deductible in accordance with Internal Revenue Service regulations. Thank you for your support!

For more information, visit our website at www.bu.edu/literary or contact us directly at alsc@bu.edu or 617-358-1990.