Dear readers,

It is my hope that the passage of time since I last wrote has treated you to pleasant days. With the close of the academic year and the onset of summer, I imagine that many of you have enjoyed a winding down of sorts. But many an ebbing merely gives way to new flows. There is no doubt that this is true for the ALSCW: much has run its course, while all the more is now in the offing. You will see evidence of this throughout the issue.

With reports on some of the gatherings that took place—the Claremont Conference, which was the first of the Association’s Annual Conferences to be held in the spring, as well as the first in many years to bring our guild to the West; and the New York Local Meeting, “Montale Early and Late,” which offered a retrospective of the acclaimed Italian poet, examining the evolution of his work and the varied incarnations yielded by the translators who sought to make his poems accessible to English-speaking readers—we acknowledge a portion of the ways in which the Association has orchestrated gatherings meant to offer fellowship to those who care deeply for the study, practice, and enjoyment of the literary arts. Though the meetings held in Boston and Baton Rouge, and “The Great ALSCW Reading” that took place at the AWP, are not chronicled herein, they, too, were important and successful ventures that have helped to increase the reach of the Association and fortify literary patronage in varied arenas.

And, indeed, all the more numerous are the announcements of the momentous evenings and opportunities that we need only await—the “Principles of Excellence in Poetry” event, co-sponsored by the ALSCW and Poets House, coming about in September; the Stephen J. Meringoff Literary Awards, which have expanded this year to confer honors not only to the best high school student essayist, but also to the top fiction, poetry, and nonfiction writers wishing to apply; the imminent arrival of a new issue of Forum, edited by Rosanna Warren and Lee Oser, which is sure to rouse much discussion from a group as passionate and varied as our membership; the ALSCW/VSC Fellowship, which will, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, offer a month-long residency at the VSC for one writer or translator in 2013; and a call for volunteers wishing to use their time and expertise to benefit New York City’s public schools through the PENCIL Partnership Program. Inside you will also find profiles of those who wish to give back to our own group by way of helping to govern it—it is election season at the ALSCW once again, and there is an exciting slate of candidates contending for the chance to guide the Association as it continues forward at this lively clip—and a sketch of the program for the 2013 Annual Conference, which, though still in the initial planning stages, already promises to be quite a stirring event.

Aside from news of all the developments in the ALSCW’s doings, there are also two feature articles in this issue that promise to capture your attention: a treatment of Elizabeth Bishop’s “At the Fishhouses” by Joyce Wilson, whose paper probes into the poem from analytical and aesthetic perspectives by way of evaluating the various treatments other literary critics have offered over the years; and a speech prepared by Bonnie Costello for the 2012 English Department Convocation Ceremony at Boston University, which employs Bishop’s “The Moose” as a conceit for college education, utilizing the rich, imagery-laden journey and spinning it into an intellectually and psychically meaningful trope. Both pieces caught my interest because of their appreciation for the ways in which poetry is at once a very intention-
and Joyce Wilson, we travel back in time, visit foreign locales, empathize with creatures, and wonder at the modern age. These pieces are as unique as those whose bylines they bear, and succeed in allowing us to escape the present, and thus understand it anew by embracing the emotions and experiences of others.

As I prepare to take my leave so that you may indulge in the pages which follow, I wish to invite you all, as is my custom, to share your thoughts and insights with the readers of Literary Matters. I encourage all forms of submissions, from informal responses to the content of this issue, to analytical essays, to poems, book reviews, and beyond. If you are uncertain as to whether what you have to offer is of an appropriate format or focus for the newsletter, inquiries are most welcome as well. It is my wish that this publication be viewed equally as a source of information and a forum for exploration, so please do not hesitate to send your work in my direction.

I thank you all for your attention, and offer my gratitude to those who contributed their time and efforts to this issue of Literary Matters.

Yours truly,
Samantha Madway
Editor, Literary Matters

Rounding out the issue is the Poets’ Corner, which offers up a vast array of works that are sure to ferry us far beyond the reaches of both page and personal purview, as we can only wish them to do. With poems by Antonello Borra—in both the original Italian, and the English translations by Blossom S. Kirschenbaum—George Economou, Ben Mazer, Daniel Thomas Moran,
Dear friends and members of the ALSCW,

It has been a busy few months at the Association. Most of what has been on the agenda is covered elsewhere in this issue, so you perhaps should consider my column to be more in the nature of a table of contents than a report.

The biggest event of the last few months was our 2012 Annual Conference at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, California, our first meeting on the new schedule, and our first gathering in the West in a few years. Since I report on that conference in another column, let me just say here that I found it a tremendously intellectually rich conference, with a wide range of subjects and a large number of different texts and fields in play. I also found it hugely fun to attend, and I hope the rest of the attendees did also!

The ALSCW will be sponsoring four literary contests this fall, thanks to the generosity of Stephen Meringoff. We will be offering prizes for poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and high school writing. Details about the contest can be found elsewhere in this issue.

A new issue of Forum, our occasional series of reports on special topics in literature and education, is in the works as we speak. Edited by Rosanna Warren and Lee Oser, it will pull together responses to the recent recommendations about educational reform arising from the Council on Foreign Relations’ Independent Task Force report U.S. Education Reform and National Security. Details about the forthcoming Forum 5 are available on page 7 of this issue of Literary Matters.

I am also pleased to announce the nomination of a new Vice President for the ALSCW, John Channing Briggs of the University of California at Riverside, a distinguished scholar of Lincoln and rhetoric, as well as a long-time Director of Riverside’s University Writing Program. We also have three new nominees for our Council, Debra Fried of Cornell University, Jee Leong Koh of The Brearley School, and Francis Blessington of Northeastern University. Profiles of the nominees can be found later in the newsletter.

Finally, plans are continuing apace for next spring’s Annual Conference in Athens, Georgia. I hope to see you there!

Best,

John Burt
President, ALSCW
Volunteers needed for PENCIL’s Partnership Program

Calling all professionals looking to make a difference in NYC Public Schools!

The PENCIL Partnership Program pairs professionals from all fields with public school principals to develop long-term capacity-building projects to improve student achievement. Architects are designing school playgrounds, lawyers are coaching mock-trial teams, composers are teaching songwriting to students, investment bankers are enhancing math curricula, and HR directors are working on staff-retention plans. There are so many ways to use your skills and expertise to help improve our schools.

We’re looking for NYC volunteers to engage in year-long, customized partnerships that match the skills of the professional with the specific needs of a public school. PENCIL’s dedicated team makes the match, helps in the project planning, and provides partnership support every step of the way. We have found that the partnerships that have the greatest impact take a minimum commitment of forty hours over the course of the year.

Need some specific examples? Check out some of PENCIL’s great partnerships at http://www.pencil.org/partnership-program!

For more information, visit www.pencil.org or contact eloubaton@pencil.org.

The 2013 ALSCW/VSC Fellowship

The Association wishes to announce that it will again offer the ALSCW/VSC Fellowship in 2013, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. The ALSCW/VSC Fellowship provides a month-long residency for writers of poetry, prose, or translations at the Vermont Studio Center—situated in the Vermont countryside—to become immersed in the craft of writing without the distractions of ordinary life.

Residents at VSC have private studios in the Maverick Writing building, which is devoted entirely to writing studios—all of which are furnished, equipped with internet access, and networked to communal printing facilities—and live in single-occupancy rooms in one of ten residency houses. In addition to the environment and facilities, Writing Residents are able to take advantage of the two Visiting Writers VSC arranges to have at the Center every month. These Visiting Writers not only give readings and a “craft talk,” but are also made available for individual conferences with residents who have been accepted in the same genre. Past Visiting Writers include professor, poet, and longstanding champion of the ALSCW Rosanna Warren; poet Adam Zagajewski, whose poem, “The Piano Lesson,” graces the first broadside printed as part of the ALSCW Broadside Series; and Jane Hirshfield, another poet to contribute an original piece—titled “For the Lobaria, Usnea, Witches’ Hair, Map Lichen, Beard Lichen, Ground Lichen, Shield Lichen”—to the ALSCW Broadside Series.

The ALSCW/VSC Fellowship was first awarded in 2010 to Kami Corban for her manuscript “Little Lives,” and the 2011 Fellowship went to poet Joshua Weiner, whose time at the Studio Center is chronicled in Literary Matters 5.1. This year’s Fellow, Caitlin Doyle, completed her residency this summer, and will be sharing her experience in the upcoming Literary Matters, Issue 5.3.

Those who are interested in applying for the ALSCW/VSC Fellowship can visit the Center’s website at http://www.vermontstudiocenter.org/ to get more information about the Vermont Studio Center and the programs offered there. Additional details will be provided as the February 15, 2013 deadline approaches.

Literary Matters will soon feature a section for short book reviews of recent publications. If something you encounter moves you, please consider sharing your reaction with the readers of LM. Book reviews may be sent to literarymatters@alscw.org. Those received by November 1, 2012 will be considered for publication in Issue 5.3.
On Friday, August 24, 2012, the Vermont Studio Center (VSC) and the ALSCW co-sponsored the third annual Literature in Translation (LiT) forum. This year’s event featured French poet Emmanuel Moses and his translator, poet Marilyn Hacker. The evening was open to the public and included a talk, a joint bilingual reading, and a question-and-answer session. A report on the evening’s proceedings will appear in Literary Matters 5.3.

Launched in 2009, the LiT Program brings international writers and translators to the Studio Center for concentrated residencies of solitary work, conversation, collaboration, and bilingual public readings. Month-long residencies, as well as public forums featuring distinguished writers and translators, are both a part of the LiT program.

The inaugural LiT Forum took place in September 2010, with Polish poet Adam Zagajewski and translator Clare Cavanagh, and drew an audience of more than ninety people to VSC’s Lowe Lecture Hall (Johnson’s historic opera house). The forum began with Zagajewski reading his poems in the original Polish and the English translations; then moved into a discussion of the collaborative process between poet and translator, and the back story of Zagajewski’s poem “Try to Praise the Mutilated World,” which appeared in the New Yorker immediately following the 9/11 attacks; and ended with a question-and-answer session.

The 2011 LiT forum featured Italian poet Patrizia Cavalli and poet and translator Geoffrey Brock. The pair presented a talk to an international audience on the challenging role of choice and decision-making within each translation. They read not only Brock’s translations of Cavalli into English, but Cavalli’s translations of Brock into Italian. Highlights also included Cavalli reading and discussing samples from her translation of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream into Italian.

In October 2013, the Lit Forum will feature Hebrew and Arabic writing, with poet and translator Peter Cole and writer Adina Hoffman, in the fourth of these annual public forums.

NEW PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS


Richard Swigg, Speaking with George Oppen: Interviews with the Poet and Mary Oppen (McFarland & Company Inc., March 2012)

Richard Swigg, Quick, Said the Bird: Williams, Eliot, Moore and the Spoken Word (University of Iowa Press, April 2012)

Morgan Harlow, Midwest Ritual Burning (Eyewear Publishing, May 2012)

Morris Dickstein, "High Above," review, Times Literary Supplement (May 2012)

Matthew DeForrest, "W.B. Yeats’s A Vision: ‘Dove or Swan’” in W.B. Yeats’s "A Vision": Explications and Contexts (Clemson University Digital Press, May 2012)


Umit Singh Dhuga and Ben Mazer, editors, Battersea Review 1, no. 1 (Summer 2012), http://thebatterseareview.com

Please send announcements about your new publications to literarymatters@alscw.org if you wish to have them featured in the list of new publications by members.
The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics and Writers announces a panel and reception entitled Principles of Excellence in Poetry, which will take place at Poets House in New York City on September 28, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. The event will be free and open to the public. A reception hosted by ALSCW member William Louis-Dreyfus will follow.

The panel, moderated by Edward Mendelson, will include three panelists, each of whom will speak for ten minutes: Christopher Ricks will discuss John Crowe Ransom’s critique of Thomas Hardy’s poetry; J. Allyn Rosser will speak on the poetry of John Donne; and Paul Keegan will discuss Samuel Beckett’s French and English poems. A discussion with the audience will follow the panelists’ brief presentations. This event is made possible through the Poets House Literary Partners Program.

Please visit the event’s website at http://www.poetshouse.org/programs-and-events/other-events/principles-excellence-poetry for additional details. All questions should be directed to the ALSCW Office, which can be reached via email at office@alscw.org or by phone at 617-358-1990.

Poets House is a national poetry library and literary center that invites poets and the public to step into the living tradition of poetry. Founded in 1985 by poet Stanley Kunitz and arts administrator Elizabeth (Betty) Kray, Poets House has created a home for all who read and write poetry. The library was modeled on The Poetry Library at the Southbank Centre in London—England’s national poetry library that is open to visitors. Its poetry resources and literary events document the wealth and diversity of poetry, and stimulate public dialogue on issues of poetry in culture. Poets House seeks to document the wealth and diversity of poetry and cultivate a wider audience for poetry. Poets House includes a 50,000-volume poetry library in New York City, making its collection among the most comprehensive open-stacks collections of poetry in the United States. Poets House also offers acclaimed poetry events and poetry workshops.

About the panel:

Christopher Ricks: The question for each of us on this occasion is how one might set about making good the claim that a particular poem is good (or bad, as the case may be). A disagreement with a respected critic would be a valuable starting point. John Crowe Ransom, a fine poet as well as a fine critic, argued that the rhyming within Thomas Hardy’s “Wives in the Sere” is pompous and pedantic. What would count as evidence that Hardy was in the right, and Ransom in the wrong?

J. Allyn Rosser: Some recent scholars believe that the performative aspect of Donne’s poems undermines any expression of piety in the Holy Sonnets or sincerity in the love poems. I intend to discuss the relation between theatricality, or rhetorical/syntactical play, and depth of feeling.

Paul Keegan: Paul Keegan will speak about Samuel Beckett’s French and English poetry.

Biographical notes on the panelists:


J. Allyn Rosser’s most recent collection of poems is Foiled Again (Ivan R. Dee, 2007), which won the New Criterion Poetry Prize. Her two previous books are Misery Prefigured (Southern Illinois University Press, 2001) and Bright Moves (Northeastern University Press, 1990). She has received awards and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Poetry Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the Ohio Arts Council. She teaches in the creative writing program at Ohio University, where she edits New Ohio Review.


Edward Mendelson is W. H. Auden’s literary executor and is the Lionel Trilling Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. His books include Early Auden (Viking Press, 1981), Later Auden (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), and The Things That Matter: What Seven Classic Novels Have to Say about the Stages of Life (Pantheon Books, 2006).
Forum 5: Response to the Council on Foreign Relations
by Rosanna Warren


This controversial report documents some serious failings in the nation’s public schools, and recommends reforms which are both vague and radical: increasing privatization of the public schools; engineering the curriculum to reduce the proportion of imaginative literature studied (!) in favor of an increase in “information-based” material; and instruction in “strategic” foreign languages (i.e., Arabic, Chinese—though who knows which languages will be considered “strategic” in ten years?). The report presents a vision of education as narrowly instrumental, designed to produce better soldiers and security analysts, better producers and consumers in a digital economy.

The ALSCW does not have a position, as an Association, on the complex questions of how to reform public education in the US (or in other countries where we have members), or of how—or whether—the needs of national security should shape the general education of citizens. But we do consider that, as an Association dedicated to the literary arts, we can offer to the public the reflections of authors who have long-standing experience as educators at a variety of levels.

Forum 5 will offer a range of perspectives, not a single response emitted by a committee. Our contributors will include professor Elizabeth Samet, from the US Military Academy at West Point; Helaine Smith, a teacher in a private high school; Diana Senechal, a teacher in a public high school; Rachel Hadas, a poet; and scholars from the fields of Comparative Literature and Biblical Studies (Robert Alter), Italian (Giuseppe Mazzotta), and English (John Briggs, David Bromwich, James Engell, Virgil Nemoianu, Lee Oser, and Michael Prince). Two of these scholars, John Briggs and Michael Prince, have special expertise in the teaching of composition at the university level, and have run major composition programs in their schools.

We look forward to a set of stirring essays, and we hope, indeed, that they will stir debate within the Association and far beyond it.
THE STEPHEN J. MERINGOFF LITERARY AWARDS

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers announces four awards, of $2,000 each, in poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and high school student writing. Only one entry will be accepted from each person. The entry must be unpublished and postmarked by no later than December 1, 2012. The winners will be announced towards the end of December 2012. There is no entry fee for current members of the Association. All nonmembers wishing to be considered for an award must join the ALSCW. Membership dues are $32 for students and $37 for all other new members. Those who join will receive the annual three issues of Literary Imagination, the Association’s journal, as well as the ALSCW newsletter, Literary Matters. Membership also enables one to attend the Annual Conference and local gatherings. Please see the ALSCW website, http://www.alscw.org, for details about how to join the Association.

- For the Meringoff Poetry Award, each entry can be one poem, or a group of poems, that add up to no more than 150 lines. The judges for the Poetry Award are David Curzon, Greg Delanty, and Elise Partridge.
- For the Meringoff Fiction Award, each entry should be one story, or a chapter from a longer work, totaling no more than 30 double-spaced pages. Mark Halliday, Colum McCann, and Rosanna Warren will judge the pieces submitted for the Fiction Award.
- For the Meringoff Nonfiction Award, each entry should be one nonfiction piece, or a chapter from a longer work, of no more than 30 double-spaced pages. The judges for the Nonfiction Award will be John Burt and Gail Holst-Warhaft.
- For the Meringoff High School Essay Award, submissions should be analytical essays dealing with works of recognized literary merit. Students in grades 9 through 12 are eligible. Each student essay should be nominated by a teacher, principal or school, and whoever nominates the student essay must be a member of the ALSCW. Papers may address style, characterization, rhetorical technique, structure, and so on, and may be about individual poems, short stories, novels, plays, or essays. Papers may also compare a few carefully selected works. All submissions should run between approximately 1,500 and 2,500 words. Please note that we do not seek “term” papers that attempt to assess a number of works under a single rubric. John Leonard and Elise Partridge will judge the entries for the High School Essay Award.

All entries will be judged anonymously. The winning entries will be published in either Literary Imagination or Literary Matters. To enter, please send two copies of your submission: one that includes your name, email address, postal address and phone number, and one without your name or any other contact information.

All submissions should be postmarked by no later than December 1, 2012 and sent to Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers, Attn: Stephen J. Meringoff Literary Awards, 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215, United States.
Norman Fruman, an educator and scholar best known for his biography of the English poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and a long-time member of the Department of English at the University of Minnesota, died on Thursday, April 19, at his home in Laguna Beach, California, of cancer. He was 88.

Professor Fruman’s *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* (G. Braziller, 1971) revealed a darker side of the so-called “Sage of Highgate” than had previously been known, and in which plagiarism of the work of contemporary, mostly German, critics and poets played a prominent role. Although many scholars and other readers were shocked were too well documented to be dismissed or ignored. Among the book’s hundred mostly favorable reviews, many of them in non-academic publications, the *Times Literary Supplement* called it the most important Coleridge study since John Livingston Lowes’ *The Road to Xanadu* (Houghton Mifflin, 1927).

Born in the Bronx, New York, in 1923, Fruman was the son of Russian immigrants, attended Townsend Harris Hall, a free, three-year high school for gifted boys, and then the City College of New York. In 1943, about to begin his senior year at CCNY, he was drafted into the army as an infantry private. A year later, he attended Officer Candidate School, was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, and was sent to Europe as the youngest combat platoon leader in the 42nd Infantry, the famed “Rainbow Division.”

As such, in late 1944, Fruman, just turned twenty-one, took part in the Battle of the Bulge, the last great German counteroffensive in the West. Fruman’s unit was ordered to defend the Alsatian town of Offendorf, thirty miles north of Strasbourg, and to hold the line there at all costs. He and his men did so until they ran out of ammunition, then became prisoners of war. The survivors of his unit, many of whom died in a failed escape attempt along with most of their would-be rescuers, were finally liberated in April 1945.

IN MEMORIAM: NORMAN FRUMAN, 88, COLERIDGE BIOGRAPHER AND EDUCATOR

BY R. H. WINNICK

Back at City College by year-end, Fruman graduated in 1946, received his MA in Education from Columbia Teachers College in 1948, and—after a three-year stint as a writer-editor at The American Comics Group, and later as a freelance writer—a PhD in English from New York University in 1960. The Coleridge biography grew out of his work on his doctoral dissertation.

The dissertation was to have focused on Coleridge’s extraordinary burst of literary production in a fourteen-month span across 1797-98 that produced such masterpieces as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, “Kubla Khan,” the first part of *Christabel*, and “Frost at Midnight.” But in examining Coleridge’s letters and notebooks in relation to his poems, Fruman found a disturbing pattern of misdated poems, misrepresented facts, ideas Coleridge claimed as his own that were clearly the work of others, and frequent, indignant protestations that credit for the ideas and works of others properly belonged to him. As shocked by his findings as would be his eventual readers, Fruman came to the disturbing but inescapable conclusion that Coleridge was, throughout his life and career, a serial plagiarist and habitual liar.

In addition to his years at the University of Minnesota (1978–94), Professor Fruman taught at California State University, Los Angeles (1959–78), where he won the Outstanding Professor Award; as a Fulbright Professor at the University of Tel Aviv; and as a visiting scholar at various universities in France, while also writing many article-length studies and reviews. In 1994, he was one of the leading initiators of the organization now known as the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW). For many years he also served on the board of the National Association of Scholars (NAS), and was the co-founder of its Minnesota affiliate. But in an interview in 2010, Professor Fruman acknowledged that it was the Coleridge book for which he was likely to be best remembered: “It made me both famous and infamous.”

Professor Fruman is survived by his wife of fifty-three years, Doris; by three children, Jessica, Sara and David; and by four grandchildren.

On "Montale Early and Late"
BY ROSANNA WARREN

On Thursday, May 3, the Association co-sponsored a local meeting in New York City at The Italian Cultural Institute on Park Avenue, with the support of the Poetry Society of America. In a program entitled “Montale Early and Late,” Jonathan Galassi and Rosanna Warren presented translations of the Nobel Prize-winning Italian poet Eugenio Montale, spanning his work from the earliest poems to the latest. Galassi read from his recently re-issued and revised Eugenio Montale: Collected Poems 1920–1954 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), and Warren read from her new edition of William Arrowsmith’s translations, The Collected Poems of Eugenio Montale 1925–1977 (W.W. Norton, 2012). Their readings in English were accompanied by readings in Italian by the actor Fausto Lombardi.

Rebecca West, William R. Kenan Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures of the University of Chicago, a specialist in Montale and in modern Italian literature and film, ushered the evening from the rhapsodic to the critical in her discussion of Montale’s dramatic ruptures with his own style in the course of his life, even as she pointed out continuities in his themes and imaginative postures. Her remarks opened the session for vigorous discussion with the audience, which included a minute comparison of lines of the same poem in the Galassi and Arrowsmith versions, allowing readers to ponder the gains and losses of the choices each translator had made.

Eugenio Montale (1896–1981) won the Nobel Prize in 1975. From his earliest volume, Ossi di seppia (Cuttlefish Bones) (Piero Gobetti, 1925), to his last, posthumously published collections Altri versi (Other Verses) (Mondadori, 1981) and Diario postumo (Posthumous Diary) (Mondadori, 1996), Montale constantly redefined the borders of poetry in Italian, and his ever-renewing poetics invite us to contemplate the very nature of poetry.


Poet and translator Jonathan Galassi is the President and Publisher of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He is the author of three books of poems: Left-Handed: Poems (Knopf, 2012), North Street: Poems (HarperCollins, 2000), and Morning Run: Poems (Paris Review Editions/British American Pub., 1988). He has translated numerous volumes of poetry and prose by Montale, as well as the Canti of Giacomo Leopardi (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

Rosanna Warren is the author of four books of poems: Ghost in a Red Hat (W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), Departure (W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), Stained Glass (W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), and Each Leaf Shines Separate (W. W. Norton & Company, 1984). In addition, she has published a book of literary criticism and a volume of essays of translation. She is the Hanna Holborn Gray Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago.

Fausto Lombardi has acted in numerous plays, films, and television movies in Europe and the United States. His many appearances include The Sun Also Shines at Night, directed by the Taviani brothers; Palermo-Milano One-Way, directed by Claudio Fragasso; Only You, directed by Norman Jewison with Marisa Tomei and Robert Downey Jr.; and Heaven, by Tom Tykwer, with Cate Blanchette and Giovanni Ribisi.
2012 ALSCW Elections: Candidate Profiles

Vice President:

John Briggs (BA Harvard, PhD University of Chicago) is a professor of English and Director of the University Writing Program at UC Riverside. He is the author of Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature (Harvard University Press, 1978), and Lincoln’s Speeches Reconsidered (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), as well as other publications on Chapman’s Homer, Shakespeare, Shakespearean catharsis, Lincoln, Bacon and Religion, and the history of rhetoric. He is a winner of the UC Riverside Faculty Teaching Award. He has been a member of the ALSCW since the year after its founding.

Council:

Francis Blessington is a professor of English at Northeastern University and author of Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic (Routledge & K. Paul, 1979) and Paradise Lost: Ideal and Tragic Epic (A Student’s Companion to the Poem) (Twayne Publishers, 1988). He has published two books of poems, Lantskip (W. L. Bauhan, 1987) and Wolf Howl (BkMk Press, 2000), as well as a novel, The Last Witch of Dogtown (Curious Traveller Pr, 2001), and a play, Lorenzo de’ Medici (University Press of America, 1992). He has translated Euripides’ Bacchae (Harlan Davidson Inc, 1993) and Aristophanes’ Frogs (Harlan Davidson Inc, 1993), and is currently translating Euripides’ Helen. In the summer, he works on a farm in Spain.

Jee Leong Koh has 15 years of experience as a secondary school teacher of English. He was, from 2001 to 2003, assistant head of Chua Chu Kang Secondary School in Singapore and has, since 2005, taught English at The Brearley School in Manhattan, where he has created electives in Romantic and Modernist poetry, Chinese short stories, and the fiction of Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri. He is the author of three volumes of poetry, Payday Loans (Poets Wear Prada, 2007), Equal to the Earth (Bench Press, 2009), and Seven Studies for a Self Portrait (Bench Press, 2011). He first joined ALSCW in 2008.

Debra Fried teaches a wide range of English and American literature, with a focus on poetry, at Cornell University. Courses include surveys of English literature (from Beowulf to Hardy); graduate and undergraduate seminars in poetic meter and rhythm; and special topics such as the language of lyric poetry, American Transcendentalism, and filmic adaptations of Henry James. Professor Fried’s work appears in On Puns: The Foundation of Letters (Blackwell Publishers, 1988); Tradition and the Poetics of Self in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Poetry (Rodopi, 2002); and other collections. An abiding interest in ancient Greek and Latin poetry, nineteenth-century neoclassicism, and the history of poetic explication and commentary inform her current project: a study of what counts as a “detail” in poems, and the shifting status of particularity as a poetic value.
The Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers was held on the campus of Claremont McKenna College from March 9 to 11, 2012. Claremont McKenna provided a beautiful venue for the event, allowing us free use of its new Freeberg Forum amphitheater in its striking, just-completed Kravis Center. Claremont McKenna also generously provided one of our two banquets at the Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum, as well as all our daily catering. About a hundred members attended the gathering, our first since we moved the meeting date to the spring, and the West Coast location attracted many members to Claremont, the “city of trees and PhDs.”

The meeting began with two of the four seminar-style sessions, for which papers are circulated beforehand, leading to a more general and less formal style of presentation. Debra Fried moderated a seminar on the use of names in literature, which elicited papers on subjects as diverse as Dylan Godwin’s meditation on “clowns” and “names,” illuminated by the poetic speculations of Allen Grossman about the relationship between morbidity and immortality; Annaline Cely’s paper on names and change of names in the Hebrew Bible, in which she noted how famous changes of the names of Jacob, Abraham, Paul, and Simon, or the derisive names Hosea was instructed to give his children, hold in tension the claims of immanence and of transcendence; Rochelle Goodman’s paper on how Aeschylus parses the name “Eteokles” in contradictory, punning ways; and Gary Roberts’s analysis of the use of actual personal names in lyric poetry, and of the ways poets run together thoughts about “fame” and thoughts about names.

Robert Hanning moderated a panel on the intersection of history and fiction from Vergil through Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Arthurian Vulgate Cycle, to Gibbon and Carlyle, with a wide range of papers. This panel included papers from Amy Richlin on Philostratus’s Lives of the Sophists and Daniel Richter on how genealogy mediates between myth and history. The panel also treated texts from a wide range of places and times, from Sarah Baccianti’s analysis of “history and its readers” in Anglo-Latin and Old Norse historical writing, to Peter Cortland’s scorching critique of Gibbon as a prisoner of his own rhetoric, to Meg Lamont’s treatment of Queen Emma in history and legend, Yelena Lorman’s account of how Khlebnikov and Pasternak rendered their memories of the 1905 Russian Revolution, and Emily Selove’s treatment of the literary life of 11th-century Baghdad.
Our first plenary panel, moderated by Robert Mezey, was themed to honor our California location and concerned the Literature of California. Since Southern California is the home of Hollywood, it was fitting that our first paper was Jillian Saucier’s account of how Franz Werfel, newly escaped from Vichy France and grateful for the shelter he had received at Lourdes, wrote The Song of Bernadette and saw through its production as an Oscar-winning film. David Rothman gave a witty and detailed account of some of the “poetry wars” in postwar California among Kenneth Rexroth, Yvor Winters, and Robinson Jeffers (and their disciples): for all of their differences, and for all of the bitterness of their polemics against each other, they all saw California as a place where poetry could begin anew, and all three combined the roles of prophet and crank in ways that John Perry Barlow, the lyricist for The Grateful Dead, memorably ascribed to Californians in “Estimated Prophet.” Timothy Steele gave a sensitive and detailed appreciation of the poetry of Edgar Bowers, whose thoughtful, plain-spoken blank verse absorbed and transformed some of the genius of Frost and Wilbur and turned it into a critical account of modern living.

Alison Keith’s panel on Roman Elegy cast light on the variety and tumultuous vitality of the poetry of the Roman Empire. Grant Hamby spoke on how Catullus’s poetry become increasingly fraught with contradictory anxieties about masculinity, sexuality, and the instability of the social and sexual order, culminating in the very peculiar marriage poem of #63, and in the subversion of the female voice in the treatment of Ariadne in #64. Vincent Katz delineated the transgressive modernity of the poetry of Propertius, showing his imaginative kinship with such poets as Rimbaud, Creeley, and O’Hara, and noting how his use of surprise, especially of violent surprise, connects him with poets of the 20th century who sought to “make it new” in similar ways. Paul Allen Miller developed a related theme about Propertius, arguing that his sensibility is closer to Tibullus’s than to Ovid’s, and finding in him an associative style that interweaves different themes organically in a soft-spoken, ironic, but also disjointed and hallucinatory, way reminiscent of the poetry of John Ashbery. Mary Maxwell discussed how the poetry of Sulpicia gave a powerful turn to the literary and social dilemmas which entangled the female lyric voice, caught sometimes between modesty and frankness, by giving her poetry a bold sexual declarativeness that must have been especially striking in performance.

The final panel of the day, “The Literature of Medieval England, 1100–1500: Questing for Perfection, Confronting Imperfection,” moderated by John Fyler, brought together traditional and less-traditional texts from all over the Christian and Islamic medieval world. Christine Chism placed Ibn Tufayl’s Hayy ibn Yaqdhan in the context of ongoing debates in the Islamic world about Neoplatonism and perfection. It is a truth universally acknowledged that nobody loves perfection so much as a Neoplatonist, but Islamic neoplatonic philosophical rationalism stands in religion a law for everyday life. Tufayl’s romance narrative asserts that mysticism must accord with reason, but reason alone can only go so far, and poetic intuition must pick up where reason leaves off. Michael Calabrese picked up some of the same themes in his treatment of dream interpretation in Piers Plowman, taking seriously the social critique that informed Langland’s poem without seeing it merely as a kind of footnote to the 1381 Peasant’s Revolt or as a prefiguration of the Reformation. Calabrese saw the ongoing quarrels in which the characters and the narrator engage about how to interpret dreams and wrestle with social problems as doctrinal conflicts which all of the poet’s passionate speculations never quite resolve. Elizabeth Allen treated the curious, episodic The Romance of Fouke Fitz Waryn,
whose unexpected plot twists and strange
details (Fouke has to kill six churlish chess
players, then rescue seven enslaved ladies)
she reads as formal exercises that manifest
thematic concerns and reflect upon the political
predicament of the Welsh borderlands where
the romance is set. Mark Rasmussen rereads
*The Franklin’s Tale* in the light of *Alcestis*
as a tale that seeks to work through the meaning
of hard cases; he sees the recent tendency
to read this tale ironically as a mistake, and
argues that the tale really does celebrate
generosity, but with generosity viewed in the
context of ordinary human limitations as an
extreme virtue whose peculiar requirements
point to its role as an ideal in an intrinsically
imperfect world.

The day concluded with a banquet at the elegant
Marian Minor Cook Athenaeum, on the same
quadangle as the Kravis Center, followed by
readings from three poets of California—Robert
Mezey, Timothy Steele, and B. H. Fairchild.

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The first panel on Saturday morning, “Lincoln
and Nineteenth-Century American Literature,”
moderated by John Channing Briggs, brought
together history and literary history by examining
the writing and thought of perhaps the central
political figure of nineteenth-century America.
The first paper was given by the distinguished
American historian Daniel Walker Howe, who
argued that Lincoln’s thoughts about political
self-government and his thoughts about private
self-control were closely linked to one another.
He noted that the famous first sentence of
the Gettysburg Address describes how the
Republic, like a human baby, was conceived,
brought forth, and dedicated, and that the
new birth of freedom called for at the end of
the speech was something both collective and
individual, in just the same way that Lincoln’s
continual use of words like “improvement” and
“cultivation” refer at once to economic and
individual moral values. David Bromwich gave a
searching analysis of the rhetoric of the Second
Inaugural Address, pointing out its ethos of
shared moral responsibility for slavery by North
and South, and the sternness of its take on the
divine punishment visited upon both regions on
account of their complicity in slavery. Historian
and political philosopher Harry Jaffa was too ill
to give his talk, so moderator John Channing
Briggs gave a paper in his place on Lincoln’s
use of Shakespeare and Shakespearean
rhetoric in his speeches, noting his particular
attraction to moments of agonized conscience,
such as Macbeth’s “Tomorrow and tomorrow
and tomorrow” soliloquy, or Claudius’ “O my
offense is rank!” soliloquy, the power of which
trumped even Hamlet’s most famous lines
in Lincoln’s mind. These speeches not only
enabled Lincoln to think through the meaning
of tyranny—since tyranny cannot be resisted
without a sympathetic appreciation of its
attractive power—but they also enabled him
to grapple with the national bad conscience,
as the nation itself, like Claudius or Macbeth,
struggled throughout the prewar era to free
itself of evils it steadily became more deeply
entangled in.

The second panel of the day, “Literature and
Culture of the Stalin Era,” moderated by Steven
Cassidy, picked up many of the political and
historical themes of the Lincoln panel. Kirsten
Painter delineated the tension between the
contrasting styles of Tsvetaeva and Akhmatova,
the one reaching past boundaries, pressing
through physicality and beyond physicality,
the other affirming boundaries as a means
of intimacy and adopting a rhetoric of fierce
restraint in the face of unbearable emotions.
The two poets provide contrasting styles of
radical modernism, and contrasting responses
to the tragedy of Stalinist repression. Anna
Razumnaya examined closely the interrogation
of Osip Mandelshtam by the NKVD, noting that
the text Mandelstam recited to his interrogators
is slightly different from, and more powerful
than, the text that has come down to us, and
chronicling the collapse of his resistance and his humiliating confessions under pressure. Margarita Levantovskaya described how the Yiddish poet Itzhak Fefer, a doctrinaire supporter of Stalin during the war years, came to be destroyed during the postwar campaign against “rootless cosmopolitanism,” in which Jews were simultaneously stigmatized in contradictory ways as deracinated internationalists (and hence as “formalists” in art, a term of abuse in the Stalin era) and ethnic separatists. Conor Klamann described the crosscurrents in which Andrei Platonov became caught up in the years of the first Five Year Plan—during which, denounced for the “individualism” of his works of the 1920s, and finding his story “For Future Use” singled out for blistering criticism by Stalin himself, he sought safety by writing the short novel The Juvenile Sea, a traditional Stalinist production story, which may have saved his life, but did not get him out of trouble. Steven Shankman discussed Vassily Grossman’s masterpiece Life and Fate, affirming Grossman’s ultimate sense that it is the personal, the face-to-face encounter with another human being, that is both the center of moral experience and the source of an originary generosity among individuals that trumps the brutalities of the political world. This affirmation of the face-to-face as a source of resistance that is always available, even in the line to the gas chamber, ties Grossman to Emmanuel Levinas, who indeed was an admirer of Grossman.

The afternoon began with a panel on Ariosto, moderated by Gordon Teskey. Giulio Pertile described the role surprise plays in the structure of the Orlando Furioso, noting the delight Ariosto took in nesting digressions, in interruptions, and in frustrating the expectations of unity that readers schooled by Aristotle might have brought to the text, disruptions which infuse the book with transgressive energy even as they open it to chaos. Luke Taylor also took up the theme of Ariosto’s digressions, noting that the narrator uses those digressions to characterize himself archly as a distracted lover, as a madcap, or as the helpless victim of an overdeveloped self-consciousness. His digressions are displays of his authorial self control, not evidence of his inability to shape his work, and the restlessness that disturbs the poem shows a turbulent pleasure in variety that is the mark of an active mind at play and evidence of a self-conscious fictiveness that allies Ariosto to Sterne. Mario Murgia pointed out how the 1591 translation of the Orlando Furioso by John Harrington (the inventor of the flush toilet) was forced into corners by the constraints of his rhymes and by the different music of English and Italian meter. One might think that translation would be easier to manage in Spanish, but Urrea’s 1549 translation, criticized by Cervantes, backs into some of the same corners, which Urrea can only get out of by using “Italianized” expressions that don’t really exist in Spanish. Kasey Evans spoke on the relationship between Spenser and Ariosto, noting how Suspicion and Jealousy suffer because their humanity persists even as they become allegories, finally transforming into a kind of incomplete automaton, imprisoned in their lingering humanity as much as in the mechanisms to which they become subject.

The final panel, “Thought and Literary Form,” moderated by Mark Payne, took up the quarrel (perhaps a lover’s quarrel) between literature and philosophy, from Plato through Anne Carson. Debra Romanick Baldwin noted that “philosopher” is always a term of abuse to Conrad, evoking detachment and cynicism, or even an attraction to darkness in such characters as Decoud or Kurtz, but pointed out that, at the same time, Conrad is himself committed to a philosophical point of view, given that the Socratic skepticism so often embraced by Conrad has both a moral and a philosophical weight. Katie Hartsock noted how Anne Carson, a philosophically acute classicist as well as a poet, sees metaphor differently from how Aristotle does. Aristotle’s metaphors are intended to illuminate the
meaning of an argument that is already convincing on other grounds, but often they trouble or complicate that argument. When he illustrates the concept of the Golden Mean by citing the example of Odysseus’ navigation between Scylla and Charybdis, he neglects to mention that the choice is between the whirlpool Charybdis, which would kill everyone, and Scylla, who would eat at least six sailors as they rushed past, so the choice may not be a completely happy solution to the Golden Mean problem. Carson’s metaphors, by contrast, are designed to highlight their strangeness, and Carson sees poetry as the willful creation of errors, errors that shine a new light on the world. Timothy Morton analyzed the complex engagement between Heidegger’s philosophy and Buddhism, an engagement turning on the fraught distinction between the Void as a kind of eternity and the Void as a kind of emptiness.

Steven Cassidy had injured his hand and was unable to give the piano performance he had prepared for Saturday night’s banquet. But Christopher Ricks was ready with recordings of contrasting performances of Samuel Beckett’s play monologue Not I, one featuring Billie Whitelaw, the other featuring Julianne Moore, and he generously led a discussion about the play, and the differences and likenesses between the two performances.

Sunday morning featured the two remaining seminars. “Critical Editions in Scholarship and in the Classroom,” moderated by Archie Burnett, featured papers by Christopher Ricks on “Neurotic Editing,” Saskia Hamilton on “Editing (and Un-Editing) Elizabeth Bishop,” Heather White on Marianne Moore, Christopher Ohge on digital critical editions, Mary Erica Zimmer on Christopher Hill, Jeffrey Gutierrez on Kafka, and Jay Vithalani on great editions.

The “Stephen J. Meringoff Seminar on Ralph Ellison,” moderated by Adam Bradley, featured papers by David Yaffe on Ellison’s rather old-fashioned taste in jazz, by A. J. Gordon on existential thought in Wright and Ellison, by Judy Stratcheurn on the episodes involving the character Cleo—whom Ellison excised from Invisible Man—Nathaniel Mills on Ellison’s Three Days Before the Shooting, Randall Fullington on Hickman’s vision in Juneteenth, and William Bedford Clark on the biases of Arnold Rampersad’s biography of Ellison.

Plans for next spring’s Nineteenth Annual meeting in Athens, Georgia, are already afoot, so stay tuned for details!

A FRIENDLY REMINDER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

Our members are essential to the growth and success of our organization—the papers you present at the Conferences, the articles you contribute to our publications, and the Local Meetings you host and attend all embody the very mission we seek to achieve. We rely on your membership to further our aims as an association, and to continue providing arenas in which you all may gather to further your own. Please take a moment to renew your membership for the 2012 calendar year.

To renew your membership with the Association for 2012, please visit http://alscw.org/Join.html. To pay by check, please mail your completed membership form—available on page 29 of this issue of Literary Matters—along with a check made out to ALSCW to the Boston office: 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215. Whatever level of membership you choose, you will be doing a great service to literature and the humanities by supporting the ALSCW. A complete explanation of membership benefits, rights, and privileges is available at the web address noted above, should you wish to read more about the terms of membership in the Association. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the ALSCW office at office@alscw.org, or by calling 617-358-1990. Thank you for your support!
English Majors spend most of their time analyzing literary texts, something you will rarely do after you graduate, at least in any formal way. I thought about addressing various high-toned topics appropriate to the occasion—life-long learning, the importance of knowledge that is not obviously “useful,” the tooling of the mind for tasks the world has not yet conceived. But one of the reasons I was drawn to literature in the first place is that it has always given me forms and images through which to understand my experience and to connect it to others’. It seemed most appropriate then, in addressing English majors on the occasion of your graduation, to find a poem that could provide an image of the journey you have just made, and its connection to your lives ahead. Don’t worry—this won’t be a close reading, though I have provided copies of the poem for those who don’t know it. It’s more like an appropriation—which is what metaphor or a parable is—a “fetching,” Frost called it, a seeing of one thing in terms of another—in this case, a seeing of college experience in terms of a bus trip (I stress that this is not the author’s analogy, but mine).

The poem I have in mind is Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Moose,” and she first read it at a college graduation in 1974. The work did not start as an occasional poem. She had made notes for it some twenty years before, and decided to finish it when the invitation came (there’s a lesson there: don’t throw away old notes!). On the face of it, the poem seems utterly inappropriate for its elite audience—almost a snub. The people in the poem are unsophisticated and the setting remote; the language is about as far from oratory as you can get in poetry. No Greek gods are named, no great human achievements remembered, no profound moral aphorisms offered to flatter and inspire the new graduates. And indeed, much about the reading was comically awkward. As Bishop told Elizabeth Spires in a Paris Review interview:

The day of the ceremony for Phi Beta Kappa (which I’d never made in college) we were all sitting on the platform at Sanders Theater. And the man who had asked me to give the poem leaned across the president and said to me whispering, “What is the name of your poem?” I said, “The Moose,’ M-o-o-s-e,” and he got up and introduced me and said, “Miss Bishop will now read a poem called ‘The Moos.’” Well, I choked and my hat was too big. And later the newspaper account read, “Miss Bishop read a poem called ‘The Moose’ and the tassle of her mortarboard swung back and forth over her face like a windshield wiper”!

The newspaper reporter had interviewed some students who heard the reading. Bishop recounted to Spires that, when asked what he thought, one replied, “well, as poems go, it wasn’t bad.” Let’s just say that the estimate since has been that, as poems go, it is one of the best.

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I doubt very much that Bishop’s elite audience that day made much connection between the poem and their own intellectual journey, or even their life journey. The poem tells, quietly, of a bus trip from rural Nova Scotia on the way to Boston, though it never gets to Boston. It ends when the bus stops because a moose has come into the middle of the road; or rather, it ends when the bus starts up again after this encounter. The poem begins:

From narrow provinces  
of fish and bread and tea,  
home of the long tides  
where the bay leaves the sea  
twice a day and takes  
the herrings long rides,  
where if the river  
enters or retreats  
in a wall of brown foam  
depends on if it meets  
the bay coming in,  
the bay not at home;

The diction is very simple, and the syntax and rhyme mimic the lapping of the tides. “Home” is a featured word. I admit I have a special attachment to this scene because my father was born in a place very like this—in a tiny fishing village called Pooch Cove, in Newfoundland—his family made the journey to Boston when he was a small boy. And I, too, had a rural childhood, though it was nowhere near the sea. But the images are elemental, not particular. This is anybody’s journey. Even if you were born in New York City, home is, by definition, a “narrow province,” a provincial place. So let this be the beginning of our analogy, our appropriation for today. For going to college is all about leaving home, about preparing to enter the polis, the city. Home is that place of predictability and comfort, a complacency of “fish and bread and tea,” and the tides of our lives pull us away from it—and

we are restless to go, to break out on our own, and they are, much as they love us, ready for us to go. Bishop makes us feel the irresistible pull of departure in her long first sentence (I’ve only read you part of it), which spills over six hypnotic stanzas that carry us away from home—from, on, through, down—until finally, a new sentence begins with “goodbye” (line 37). Goodbye is not just an end, of course. It is the start of something.

Bishop spends a lot of time in the beginning of the poem describing the landscape, which at first offers the familiar and orderly “clapboard farmhouses” and “clapboard churches,” but gradually “the fog...comes closing in” (line 21; 22; 40–42). The images become more fragmented and obscure, the rhythms more staccato, the tone more anxious. “Evening commences,” (line 54) she says. All that is familiar recedes and we find ourselves in, well, a fog. That was certainly my experience of my first semester of college. I was reconsidering so many things I thought I knew and my confidence was almost shattered. I remember my anthropology teacher freshman year striking out a whole page of my paper, the paper I had thought so clever, and writing “Phooey” in big letters in the margin. It was harsh, but it was true—and useful. Bishop’s phrase “evening commences” tells of beginnings, and we might think about how much of learning, especially at the start, is about questioning old ideas—not forgetting them, but reconsidering them and giving up the security and confidence they afforded us. So learning can be a very anxious business—we hear the alarm of Bishop’s speaker as she comments on the darkening landscape: “A pale flickering. Gone. / ...a red light / swims through the dark” (lines 60, 67–68). They are entering the “woods, / hairy, scratchy, splinterly” (lines 80–81); they are entering the unknown—the only place where real learning can occur.

So far, I have been talking about the landscape, and thinking about the transition we make from

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the familiar, complacent world of home to the unsettling, often foggy and formidable world we face when we leave it. But we are not in the landscape. We are in a bus. So how am I going to make this bus ride into a figure for college education?

Well, a bus is a little like a classroom, for one thing—seats in rows, a driver who is supposed to get us from one place to another in a prescribed amount of time (and he often has his back to us—as does a teacher writing on the board or reading the text—his eye on the road more than on the passengers). We get on this educational bus one by one and join a bunch of strangers with whom we form a tentative and partial community. Long bus rides can be boring, of course. And we sleep through about half of it. But I won’t go there. In her poem, Bishop makes us aware of how unnatural the bus is—nothing like the landscape really. “Blue, beat-up enamel” (line 30)—it smells of gasoline, the smell of the man made: the fuel of conventions, of specialized discourse, of rules and measurements that can seem relevant only within their own system, their own sequestered space. Like a bus, college is in the world but not exactly of it. And its lights don’t really shine on the world, only on the road ahead, the road that is built for the bus to move on as it traverses space, a road that we might call human knowledge—full of potholes, loose planks and trembling bridges. And where is it taking us, this human knowledge, created in these very human, artificial institutions? To Boston, the ever-changing human city, which is also in many ways unreal or at least unnatural, governed by systems in and instruments by which we are becoming skilled and empowered.

While we are riding this metaphor, let’s pause to acknowledge that just when things are getting really grim in the landscape of Bishop’s poem, just when we are about to enter the New Brunswick woods, a reassuring figure gets on the bus.

A woman climbs in with two market bags, brisk, freckled, elderly.
“A grand night, Yes. sir, all the way to Boston.”
She regards us amicably.
(lines 73–78)

She’s obviously some kind of surrogate mother figure. Why not, today, call her “Alma Mater.” For all the problems you may have had with the registrar, she says “Yes,” and assures you will get where you are going. She says the darkness, the great unknown you are entering, is “grand.” And it’s because of her amicable presence that the passengers can “lie back” and enter “a dreamy divagation,” a mental wandering, a digression; “a gentle, auditory, / slow hallucination...,” Bishop calls it (lines 85; 87; 89–90). Now, in the frenzy of exams and paper writing, college might not have something dreamlike—in the best sense—about college learning, especially in the liberal arts, which explore not only what was and what is, but also what could have been or might be. This is a collective dream in Bishop’s poem, as it is in the classroom, in the university. And in the course of the dream the poet hears:

In the creakings and noises,
an old conversation
—not concerning us,
but recognizable, somewhere,
back in the bus:
Grandparents’ voices

uninterruptedly
talking, in Eternity:
(lines 91–98)

Who are these grandparents? Well, Adam and Eve, of course; everybody’s grandparents. But
for our metaphor of education as a bus ride, we might call these voices Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, or maybe Wallace Stevens and Elizabeth Bishop, or Plato and Aristotle, or Darwin and Freud—any of those voices talking in Eternity that we listen to in the course of our education. What’s important, I think, is that what we hear is not a lecture or a set of axioms, but an affirming conversation about life and death and in between, one that will go on forever.

But this poem isn’t called “The Bus” or “The Road” or “The Dream.” It’s called “The Moose,” and the last quarter of the poem is devoted to that figure. The Moose is no dream. The bus driver

stops with a jolt,
turns off his lights.

A moose has come out of the impenetrable wood and stands there, looms, rather, in the middle of the road.

(lines 131–136)

Now you might think that my appropriation of Bishop’s tale is breaking down here. Of course, I could salvage my metaphor by saying “the moose” is another name for “the elephant in the room,” that idiomatic expression for the obvious truth that is being ignored or unaddressed. But a moose in the room is something a little different, I think: not an obvious truth ignored, but a kind of epiphany, suddenly beheld.

I hope you’ve all had such ah ha moments on this road when you have sensed or even beheld the moose. It might come from a sudden sense of something real lurking behind all the representations of reality; it might come from an aesthetic experience or a sudden ethical awareness—any sort of moment that left you a bit dazed after class, thinking back on it, “craning backward” (line 163), Bishop says, during the rest of the day. It leaves you with a feeling of joy rather than mastery. It’s not why we got on the bus, but it’s why we’ll never forget the trip. The passengers’ remarks remind us of how inadequate human speech can seem before the sublime. In class discussion, it’s often those moments when we are closest to real insight, or are most profoundly affected by something we’ve read, that we are most tongue-tied, when we sputter and “um” a lot, and can’t finish our sentences:

Some of the passengers exclaim in whispers, childishly, softly, “Sure are big creatures.”
...
“Look at that, would you”
(lines 145–148; 160)

Language is only a kind of pointing. It doesn’t really master the world, or capture the real. But it creates community in joined feeling of reverence and delight before a mystery suddenly, tentatively revealed.

We are all getting off the bus here. Some of you are transferring to another bus called graduate school; others are heading right into the city to apply the skills you’ve gained. But either way, you will be getting on and off of buses all your lives, listening to those voices talking in Eternity—the grandparents, the poets, the philosophers, the scientists—and, I hope, experiencing joy with your fellow travelers when something luminous stops you on the road.

This piece was originally delivered as a speech at Boston University’s English Department Convocation Ceremony, May 19, 2012, and has been adapted slightly to appear in print.

Bonnie Costello is a professor of English at Boston University and the author of many books and articles about modern and contemporary poetry. She also writes frequently about relations between the arts. Her current book project is Pronoun Trouble: Auden and Others in the First Person Plural.
Reading Bishop’s poem “At the Fishhouses,” I became interested in the structure of the poem, whether it consisted of two parts or more. I was also struck by her incorporation of the topic of knowledge, usually an abstract concept, at the end of a poem that otherwise relied on the extensive use of very concrete details. Reading criticism about this particular poem, I found several interpretations that focused on the ending as either a problem or a point of discussion. There were those critics who took up the influence of the metaphysical tradition, and those who focused on an empirical interpretation. The question about the number of parts in the poem continued to be raised.

Does the poem “At the Fishhouses” have two or three parts?

I began with my encounter with an interpretation by Anne Stevenson, who believed that, owing to its ending, the poem “At the Fishhouses” is a failure, or that it is not as successful as other poems by Bishop because of the problems arising from its split structure. In the first book she published on Bishop’s poetry, Stevenson seems well aware of Bishop’s importance in American literature. Praising Bishop’s balance between precision and resonance, or intensity of tone, Stevenson points to Bishop’s alliteration and onomatopoeia of the “s” sounds (“the same sea, the same, / slightly, indifferently swaying above the stones, / icily free above the stones”1) that imitate the hissing of the sea, the swaying rhythm, and the repeated words.2 But by introducing the abstract idea of knowledge at the end of the poem, Stevenson states that Bishop loses intensity. With the introduction of the metaphor of the sea’s motions being compared to knowledge, Bishop writes lines that are no longer resonant. While these lines are finely wrought and not obvious, the metaphor seems contrived. The rhyme of “free” and “be” (Bishop, line 78; 79) and the internal rhyme of “drawn” and “flown” (Bishop, line 82; 83) have the spontaneous quality that readers expect to find in Bishop’s poetry, but Stevenson feels that these lines separate this poem into two passages that never really work together. She writes:

And yet this second passage lacks the resonance of the former one; and the poem at the end, instead of being nearly a great one, becomes merely a well-trained poem by a good poet. (p. 96)

In another passage, Stevenson calls this ending a personification—the “swinging,” the “mouth,” “the rocky breasts” (line 68; 80; 81)—and she also concludes that Bishop is using a conventional metaphor by comparing knowledge to water (p. 100). Stevenson believes, by comparison, that the poem “The Fish” is Bishop’s most triumphant, because the poet’s ideas do not get in the way of the details as they do in “At the Fishhouses.”

While I appreciate Stevenson’s approach to interpreting “At the Fishhouses,” and I myself often separate parts of a poem between the concrete details and abstract ideas to teach my students, I cannot agree with her preference for “The Fish” as a better poem. There is something about “At the Fishhouses” that works on the reader’s imagination and does not let go, something that “The Fish” does not have.

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It occurred to me that perhaps Stevenson was resisting the metaphysical, or religious, implications in the vocabulary of the poem—“immersion,” “believer” (Bishop, line 52)—when she calls attention to its use of personification in a seemingly negative way. But why do I want to read this poem again about a man in a small village of Nova Scotia and a seal and the powerful presence of the sea beside them and the quest for knowledge of the universe, the meaning of life, our time here, our endeavors to understand nature, god, and science? The complexity of the poem engages me and keeps me coming back to re-read it, to check in with it and see how much I might have changed, or grown, or learned since I read it last.

After Stevenson published her book of criticism, the text of which was written while she was a graduate student at University of Michigan, many other books of criticism were written about Bishop, and many more of her poems, essays, and letters were made available. None of the critics after Stevenson dismiss this poem the way she does in her first book.

David Kalstone interprets the importance of the density of detail in the beginning of the poem and concludes that the ending succeeds because of its shift of rhythm and tone. Seemingly unbothered by the influence of the metaphysical, he focuses on the vocabulary of the mystics in the poem (i.e., “believer,” “immersion,” and so forth). The details are seen in anthropomorphic dimensions, in which the patterns in the landscape were created by “strokes of the same master,”3 which cause the caking, plastering, lining, silvering-over, iridescence, sequins and rust of the objects near the fishhouses. He stresses the importance of the balance of the decayed and the jewelled, the artistry and the erosion (p. 10).

Kalstone finds no split with the parts of the poem, from beginning to end, because he believes that knowledge is described in all its aspects of concreteness (dark, salt, clear) “as if broken down into [these] elements” (p. 11). He asserts that these lines exert a transformation upon the speaker, begun early in the poem and continued throughout via experiences tied to the five senses: the air that makes eyes run and nose water, the dipping of the hand in the water, the water that burns like fire. All of these connect the poet with the sea, the narrator with the poet, and the reader with the narrator. The progression of details creates the concrete identification of the reader with the landscape, or the sea. Kalstone states:

With a final fluency [Bishop] leaves her declarative descriptions behind and captures a rhythm at once mysterious and acknowledging limitations—flowing and drawn...flowing and flown. (p. 11)

By engaging with this rhythm, the poem prepares for a momentary freedom in nature. The poet measures her mind against nature, the rhythms of the sea, and in keeping with the pastoral tradition, the landscape takes over the substance of the poem and assumes an individualizing force. It individualizes the narrator.

On the other hand, Bonnie Costello finds that the poem succeeds in the unique juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal patterns of imagery, that it makes a departure from the Romantics in its emphasis on the transient, and in making the reader and knowledge subordinate to nature and subject to the sea’s fluidity and flux. To Costello, the poem is anti-Romantic and anti-metaphysical.

Costello develops her interpretation of the notions of flux in the poem by showing how the eye is led from horizontal images of transience and mutability to vertical images of permanence and stasis. This cross-movement leads to an

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obscure center of meaning from which the beholder is excluded in the way one can often only see the surface of a lake. She delineates the pattern of the literal (horizontal) and the symbolic (vertical), showing how the first half of the poem emphasizes upward movement in the fishhouses—“gangplanks slant up / to storerooms” (Bishop, lines 10–11) and “Up on the little slope... / ... an ancient wooden capstan” (lines 26, 28). Then the middle part uses prepositions down, up, across, down and down. Then the final depiction of the sea moves out and across, the way the sea reflects light but promises depth beneath the surface. The push and pull of these movements in imagery prepare for the lines that follow.4

The poem seems to approach questions of what fate or God is, but instead asks what knowledge is (Costello, p. 115). The question is presented as a speculation about patterns in the sea: “It is like what we imagine knowledge to be” (Bishop, line 78). Costello reminds us that Bishop wrote that the last four lines came to her in a dream. As the definition is figurative and speculative, it creates a metaphor within a metaphor: “like burning brine...like transient life itself....like mother earth, like an unprotected source and destiny” (Costello, p. 115). Costello argues that Bishop subordinates knowledge to nature, unlike Kalstone, who sees the poet as measuring herself against nature. Further, Costello suggests that Bishop makes knowledge subject to flux and perhaps identical with it: knowledge and life are flowing and flown, derived from un-nurturing rock breasts, drawn from an unspeaking mouth. The poem moves from answered to unanswered questions, from mastery to perplexity (Costello, p. 116).

In the late 1990s, Stevenson published a complete revision of her first book on Bishop, in which she reconsidered her interpretation of “At the Fishhouses.” She writes about her indebtedness to the critics who wrote after her, and describes her misgivings about her early publication. She now believes the last lines of this poem express an adult view of knowledge. She writes: “Bishop’s triumph in ‘At the Fishhouses’ was to achieve the hardness of scientific truth without having sacrificed anything of the poem’s spirituality.”5 Stevenson acknowledges that the strength of the poem is in the way Bishop unifies the spiritual and the scientific in her description of and meditation on a place that was so important to her, a place that she remembers as vital to her childhood and identity, and through which she understands the greater world around her in all its complexity.


"Rhapsody on a Winter Night"

The closed world adumbrates the snow.
Midnight deciphers pillows at the window.
Though it was several months ago,
in dead of winter, nothing knows or shows
where the requested intimacy goes.
The silent isolated frames
of meditation have dispersed with names.
The couches crouch in feeble poses,
incognizant of roses.

- Ben Mazer

"It's Like OMG"

My children
use their thumbs
to converse with
invisible people.

They speak
a language
with no words.
A shorthand
of the hands.

Sometimes
I try using
my voice to
interrupt them,

Yet they continue wandering
in a place
with no sound,

Where thoughts become reflexes,
and God exists
as a single letter.

- Daniel Thomas Moran

"At the Citadel"

We crossed the threshold of the mosque, allowed
Because the men had all gone home to lunch.
Expecting to be swallowed up, perplexed,
By facts and details of interior effects,
We met instead a space so vast it seemed
To push us out into a sea of emptiness
Rather than draw us in. We shrank to specks.
The light from ceiling chandeliers was dim;
We could not tell what we should understand
And left respecting every pilgrim's need to pray
To come to terms with such enormity
Where carpet covers stone and cushions knees
Beneath a dome whose special atmosphere
Can summon storms and havens for the soul.

- Joyce Wilson
Daniel Thomas Moran is the author of seven collections of poetry, the latest of which, *A Shed for Wood*, will be published by Salmon Poetry, in Ireland, in 2013. His previous collection, *Looking for the Uncertain Past*, was published by Poetry Salzburg in 2006. He lives in Webster, NH and Boston, MA, where he is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Boston University’s School of Dental Medicine.

Joyce Wilson, editor and creator of *The Poetry Porch*, an online literary magazine accessible at www.poetryporch.com, teaches English at Suffolk University. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Ireland*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Etymology of Spruce* (Rock Village Publishing), and a chapbook, *The Springhouse* (Finishing Line Press), were both published in 2010.

Antonello Borra teaches at the University of Vermont. His volumes of poetry are *Frammenti di tormenti (prima parte)* (Longo, 2000), *Frammenti di tormenti (seconda parte)* (Lietcollle, 2006), *Alfabestiario* (Lietcollle, 2009), and the illustrated, bilingual *Alphabetabestiario* (Fomite, 2011). Translations of his poetry have appeared in English and Catalan, and are being prepared in German. He has translated into Italian, from English, poems of W. S. Merwin and Greg Delanty; from German, poems of Erich Fried; and from Spanish, poems of Roberto Sosa and José Watanabe. He co-translated two autobiographical novels from the German of Johannes Hoesle, and is a regular contributor to magazines and journals in both Italy and the United States. His other publications are books and articles on literary criticism and language pedagogy.

**"EPILOGUE"**

It is youth that understands old age and your repulsion is but a projection an image of the loathing you obtain. I've seen the fall come in and think I shall follow each leaf that winds about the house to where you stutter, the end of the tether where grace walks through the bridal foliage and no one could mistake you for another. After that, they are only leaves to burn. And when the flowers burst upon the rain the roofs shall keep their solemn gentle witness far from the young men who travel far to fill their noses with the autumn air. Daybreak is decent as awakening. And love is gentle, though he is no scholar. What if I filled my notebook with his words sketched suddenly with no least hesitation would she return to him when it came fall or would she sink into a bitter winter not even counting the blossoms that are gone. How many times the autumn rain recurs to wind about the river in the evening or fall like one great ocean in the dawn. No matter, he has had enough of her and leaves his youth in hope of something better. A drop expresses all the flooding water, the wind instills the trees with sentiment, and no one, no one can reverse the patter of the darkness that's enclosed within. It stares across the city in the dawn and cannot wake these shrouds of memory.

-Ben Mazer

Poems by Ben Mazer were originally published in *Poems* (Boston, MA: The Pen & Anvil Press, 2010)

Ben Mazer’s most recent collections of poems are *Poems* (The Pen & Anvil Press, 2010) and *January 2008* (Dark Sky Books, 2010). He is the editor of *Selected Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman* (Harvard University Press, 2010) and *Complete Poems of John Crowe Ransom* (Un-Gyve Press, forthcoming). He is co-editor of *The Battersea Review*.

**"IL TORO"**

“In principio è l’immagine del toro”, inizia il mio vangelo di corride e sacrifici fatti a questo e a quello, alfabeto del sangue dell’Europa, di serenades a Venere e alla luna, di figli mostrui solo per metà, di concorrenza a quelli della croce... Se parlo per enigmi è perché almeno la mia sensualità non è un mistero.

-Antonello Borra

**"THE BULL"**

“In the beginning is the image of the bull,” so starts my gospel of the bull-fighting ritual and sacrifices made to the glory of this or that, an alphabet of Europe’s blood, of serenades to Venus and the moon, of offspring monsters by only half, of competing with followers of the cross...

If I speak through riddles it’s because at least my lust is no mystery.

Poems by Ben Mazer were originally published in *Poems* (Boston, MA: The Pen & Anvil Press, 2010)
"Caesarion"
Translated from the Greek of C. P. Cavafy

Partly to clear up some matters concerning a period, partly merely to pass the time, last night I picked up and read a collection of inscriptions about the Ptolemies. The profuse praise and flattery the same for all of them. Each and every one brilliant, illustrious, mighty, benevolent; every one of their undertakings most wise. Speaking of the women in their line, they too, all the Berenices and Cleopatras, marvelous.

When I’d found what I was after I’d have put back the book if a brief, trifling mention of King Caesarion hadn’t suddenly caught my eye....

Ah, there, you’ve come with that hard to pin down charm of yours. Only a few lines about you can be found in history, so I all the more freely made you up in my mind. I made you handsome and sensitive. My art gives your face a dreamy kindly beauty. And so fully did I imagine you that late last night, as my lamp went out— I deliberately let it go out— I dared to suppose you entered my room, you stood, it seemed, in front of me: as if you were in conquered Alexandria, pale and weary, perfect in your grief, still hopeful that they’d take pity on you, those rogues—who whispered “Too many Caesars.”

-George Economou

* Caesarion was the nickname Marc Antony gave to Ptolemy XV, the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra. In 31 BC, Octavian (Augustus) ordered the execution of Caesarion after the Roman victory at Actium and the subsequent suicides of Antony and Cleopatra. For the Homeric source of Octavian’s advisors’ wordplay in the poem’s last line, see The Iliad, book II, line 204.

"Il topo"

Figlio della montagna delle vostre paure sono un ingenuo anch’io. Quando ancora ero piccolo, ho visto un pipistrello e ho pensato che fosse un angelo del cielo, che annunciava imminente l’agognata scomparsa di tutti i pifferai che ci vogliono male.

Quando potremo vivere dove e come vogliamo, senza dovere sempre fare la stessa fine?

-Antonello Borra

"The Rat"

Son of the mountain of your fears I am an innocent too. When I was still small I saw a bat and I thought it was a heaven-sent angel announcing the imminent eagerly awaited vanishing of all the pied pipers that intend our destruction.

When will we ever be able to live where and how we please, not obliged always to end in the same old way?

George Economou’s most recent book is Ananios of Kleitor (Shearsman, 2009). The same publisher will release his next book, Complete Plus, the Poetry of C. P. Cavafy in English, in January of 2013, the sesquicentennial of the Greek poet’s birth.
"L’ORNITORINCO"

Eccomi qui a nuotare
a occhi chiusi, in sostanza
un piedipiatti all’angolo
di un incrocio arbitrario.
Confondervi le idee,
o le categorie,
questo è il mio imperativo.
Con il becco ho poppato
al ventre del divino:
il cosmo è meno rigido
di quanto voi pensiate.

-Antonello Borra

"THE PLATYPUS"

Look at me swimming here
with eyes shut, substantially
a flat-footed body at the corner
of an arbitrary intersection.
To confuse your ideas,
or your categories,
this is my responsibility.
With my bill I have suckled
at the bosom of the divine:
the cosmos is less hard and fast
than you might think.

"IL MAIALE"

Problemi con il corpo?
ad accettare il fatto
che prima o poi tradisce,
abbandona e ritorna
da sua madre, la terra,
la madre di noi tutti?

Io di certi problemi
non so che cosa farmene:
porto il nome di mamma,
conosco il mio destino
e per questo non faccio
tante storie per vitto,
alloggio e pulizia:
bivacco nel momento
pure se sa di merda.
Non mi offendo di certo
se mi chiamate porco.

-Antonello Borra

"THE PIG"

Doubts about the body?
about accepting the fact
that sooner or later it betrays,
abandons, and goes back
to its mother earth,
the mother of us all?

I for my part don’t know
what to make of such doubts:
I carry the name of my mother,
know my destiny
and on this score do not raise
such a fuss over room,
board, and hygiene:
I spend the night where night falls,
even if it smells of dung.
Be sure I take no offense
if you call me swine.
"L'hippopotamo"

E se ci fosse un posto
per me su in paradiso?
Pensate un po' che scherzo,
soprattutto per quelli
che, abituati a vedermi
sempre sporco di fango,
vedono in me la bestia,
nient'altro che la bestia.
Dio non mi sembra il tipo
che bada alle apparenze...

Beh? e mo' tutti a bocca
aperta inorriditi?
che ho fatto, bestemmiato?

-Antonello Borra

"The Hippopotamus"

And if there were a place
for me up in paradise?
think what a good joke,
above all for those
who, accustomed to seeing me
always filthy with mud,
see me as the beast,
nothing other than the beast.
To me God doesn’t seem the type
to bother about appearances.

Now what? all agape
simply horrified?
what’ve I done, blasphemed?

"L'elefante"

Pensando a quel negozio di cristalli
dove, chissà perché, sarei entrato,
mi ricordo di questi insegnamenti:
beati quelli con poca memoria,
il dolore rimargina e non lascia
cicatrici; beati quelli a cui
mancano le zanne, con la bruttezza
non s'induce nessuno in tentazione;
beati i piccoli, purché non nani,
sebrano avere davanti un futuro;
beati quelli nati dentro a un circo,
la loro ricompensa sa di zucchero,
la catena alla zampa tiene a casa;
beati quelli che, senza vederla,
crederanno alla savana;
beati quanti cercano quel che non esiste,
perché di loro è il nostro cimitero.

-Antonello Borra

"The Elephant"

Thinking about the glassware shop
where who knows why I had gone in,
I remember those schoolroom instructions:
blessed are those with poor memory,
their grief will heal and not leave any
scars; blessed are those who lack tusks
or teeth to flaunt, ugliness never
seduced anyone into temptation;
blessed the little ones, if only they’re not dwarfs,
for they seem to have a future before them;
blessed those born into a circus,
their recompense will taste of sugar,
the chain around their hoof binds them to home;
blessed those who without seeing it
believe in the savannah; blessed
all those who seek what does not exist,
because theirs is our elephants’ cemetery.

All poems by Antonello Borra were originally published in Alfabestiario (Como, IT: LietoColle, 2009). The poems by Antonello Borra were translated from Italian into English by Blossom S. Kirschenbaum.
Call for Papers

The Program Committee for the 2013 Convention:

Margaret Amstutz, University of Georgia
John Burt, Brandeis University
Christopher Ricks, Boston University
Hugh Ruppersburg, University of Georgia
Sarah Spence, University of Georgia
Jeff Stachura, Athens Academy
Elizabeth Wright, University of Georgia

The call for papers for each session is given below; the practice is that at least one participant at each plenary session should derive from this call and that all of the participants in the concurrent seminars will do so. Please note: everybody who participates must be a current member of the ALSCW, and registered for the conference. The 2013 introductory rate for new members is $37 and renewals are $74. Conference registration is $50 (and $40 for students). Plenary sessions are panels of 3-4 papers; seminars are sessions of up to 20 papers, circulated in advance and discussed at the conference.

Proposals of 300 words should be sent as email attachments to Sarah Spence (sspence@uga.edu) on or before October 1, 2012.

Plenary sessions: All the plenary sessions will be held in the UGA chapel, which is adaptable for many types of presentations, including Power Point and the performance of live music.

Session 1: Literary Impersonation

Organizer: Greg Delanty, St. Michael’s College, VT

This session will explore the benefits and possibilities of poetic ventriloquism, which, in the tradition of Pessoa, Nabokov’s Pale Fire, and Kipling’s fifth book of Horace’s Odes, permits sustained acts of impersonation, such as pseudonymous volumes and invented histories. The panel aims to investigate whether literary impersonation allows poets to explore outside the borders of the more conventional styles of writing, and how writing in other voices affords a release from current fashion and personal inhibitions.
Session 2: **Southern Literature on the World Stage**

Organizer: Joel Black, University of Georgia

Proposals are invited which situate southern literature and literary traditions in a global context. We are especially interested in submissions tracing neglected linkages between southern and non-southern works. Besides historical and influence studies, papers are welcome which examine thematic correspondences (e.g., familial and dynastic relations, provincialism, racial oppression and violence), as well as stylistic and artistic parallels (e.g., polyphony, gothicism, the carnivalesque) and studies in literary geography that focus on north/south relations in the Americas and elsewhere.

Session 3: **Two Takes on Verse Composition**

Organizer: Ernest Suarez, Catholic University

I

*Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren and their Circle: The New Criticism and Creative Practice*

It has often been claimed that the New Criticism—exemplified by Brooks’ *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947)—is most effective for considering lyric poetry. Ransom, Warren, Allen Tate, and later John Hollander with other New Critics were accomplished poets who had a profound influence on the proliferation of creative writing programs. We would like to invite papers that consider the interactions between the values, assumptions, and practices associated with the New Criticism and how they relate to creative practice. What do New Critical approaches reveal about creative practice, and how do those qualities manifest themselves in the work of particular critics and poets? How has the New Criticism affected subsequent generations of poets (John Berryman, Donald Justice, James Dickey, Adrienne Rich, Charles Wright, Dave Smith, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Louise Glück or Carl Phillips, for instance)?

II

*Singing the South: Blues and Verse Composition*

In the ground-breaking history *American Literature: The Makers and the Making* (1973), Robert Penn Warren asserted that the blues “represent a body of poetic art unique and powerful” and that “much of the poetry recognized as ‘literature,’ white or black, seems tepid beside it.” The blues are the most indigenous form of southern verse, and have served to integrate poetry and music, influencing a host of poets—including Langston Hughes, the Beats, Sonia Sanchez, and Yusef Komunyakaa—as well as rock lyricists, including Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, Jimi Hendrix, and Stevie Wonder. We invite papers
that consider the artistic and historical dimensions of blues verse composition. We particularly welcome papers with a focus on Georgia artists, including Ma Rainey, Willie McTell, Ray Charles, Little Richard, Otis Redding, James Brown, Johnny Mercer, REM, The Allman Brothers Band, and Widespread Panic.

Session 4: Translating Asia

Organizer: Jee Leong Koh, The Brearley School

“A good translator is an exquisite ambassador,” writes poet and scholar Waqas Khwaja in his introduction to the 2010 anthology Modern Poetry of Pakistan. “Just as the creative artist suggests new ways of looking at the commonplace, the translator opens up to readers a whole new world, a whole new mode of perception and experience, they may hardly have suspected of existing.” The comparison with an ambassador suggests that a translator be conversant not only with the languages of composition and translation, but also with the different cultures. As Khwaja puts it, “How, despite what are seen as virtually insurmountable odds, can translation happen so that it does not undervalue, misrepresent, or (not an unknown phenomenon) utterly dispense with the original?” The panel aims to consider literature from South, East, and South-east Asia.

Sessions 5 and 6: Power and Persuasion in Ovid’s Metamorphoses and Boccaccio’s Decameron

NB: These two sessions will run back to back and conclude with a comparative discussion. The papers will be chosen separately for each session, though some consideration will be given to the compatibility of the two panels.

Organizer: Peter Knox, University of Colorado

The possibilities for deploying the resources of rhetoric and artistic illusion to assert power are topics central to Ovid’s Metamorphoses which recur in the narratives of Boccaccio’s Decameron. Papers are invited that explore these issues in two independent, but coordinated, panels on Ovid and Boccaccio.

Session 5: The debate between Ulysses and Ajax in Book 13 of the Metamorphoses is the most prominent exploration of how a skilled practitioner might manipulate the resources of language to exercise control over an audience. But the potentially deceptive influences of the arts are subjected to a similar exploration in characters such as Arachne, Minerva, Daedalus, and Pygmalion. Readers are challenged to consider whether the text offers an affirmation of the practices of rhetoric and the potential for persuasion in the visual arts, or invites a more nuanced interpretation of the artist’s power over the audience in Ovid and his reception in antiquity or later periods.
Session 6: Characters like the painters Bruno and Buffalmacco, or the itinerant preacher Frate Cipolla, are masterful manipulators of their audiences. To work their effects, they make use of the latest developments in illusionistic art and rhetorical trickery. One major theme of the Decameron, then, is the unscrupulous artist’s deployment of technique to gain kind of power over others. One reader might think Boccaccio admired such characters and emulated them in his own work, while another might see a complex debate in his text about the power of art to impress for good or ill.

Seminars: The seminars will be held in the special collections library at UGA, where participants are invited to consult the holdings.

1. 1863: What does that date conjure for literary scholars, critics, and writers? In the year in which Sam Clemens began writing as Mark Twain, Jules Verne published his first novel, C. P. Cavafy was born, and Thackeray died; there was also the Emancipation Proclamation, the embattled address at Gettysburg, and the opening of the American prairie to the US Homestead Act. In Britain and on the European continent a new era of arts and letters was encountering the consequences of industrial and political revolution in an expanding world. What about the dawn of the age of expositions and world fairs might be brought forth at an ALSCW seminar 150 years later?

2. Can You Read Poetry on a Kindle?: If the invention of the printing press fundamentally changed literature, is the present age a second Gutenberg Revolution? Are we living through another transformation of the modes of creation and reception of literature? On the other hand, have we misunderstood the nature and effects of these eras? What happens to literature when it is created and read online, through instantly conjured archives, amidst perhaps billions of digitized voices? Should something happen? What are the implications of these and other fundamental or superficial changes, especially for the young? This seminar invites papers on all aspects of such questions about literature and technology.

3. Occupying the Margins: Since the advent of history of the book, marginalia have attracted more positive attention than they used to get; readers will consider aspects of the practice of writing in the margins of books and other documents from the classical period to the present, whether official or personal, and whether in manuscript or in printed form. The nature and practice of marginalia will be queried in terms of current and past practices. As we become more aware of the value—for them and for us—of the investment that writers and readers of the past made in marginalia, should we be working actively to reintroduce their practices in ways adapted to modern technology?

4. Editing Diaries: Diaries are highly valuable to researchers seeking to understand the history, religion, economics, politics, and literature of a period. The editing of diaries is a complicated task; what decisions are made and by whom are some of the key
questions to be broached in this seminar. We seek papers on any aspect of the editing of diaries. Paper topics might include: the historical, political, economic, or social forces influencing the editing of diaries; the selection or dismissal of editors of diaries; the particular responsibility perceived or assumed by editors of diaries of victims of tragedy; the conflicts over time between subsequent editors of diaries; the self-editing of diaries and the texts resulting from such decisions; and the unexpected challenges facing the editors of diaries.
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