Literary Matters

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LITERARY SCHOLARS, CRITICS, AND WRITERS

Aut nuntiare aut delectare

From the Editor

As literary scholars, critics, and writers, our charge is not only to create, but to recreate, to imagine and reimagine; we are "agents of re-" as much as we are agents of the verbs upon whose stems the affixing occurs. We are not satisfied to have a text examined once—we must reexamine it, preferably many times, as the existence of so many literary schools of thought and study illustrate.

One could contend that all academic disciplines are agents of "re-," in the humanities at the very least, and I do not aim to argue against that any more than I intend to agree, for whether this is unique to literary study is not what is important. What is important is the sensibility that underlies this pursuit of the "re-," that we are engaged in acts we recognize will never be resolved, that we are not traveling along some complex equation thinking we will eventually find our way to the other side of the equal sign, able to utter an unequivocal "Aha!" or "Eureka!" on discovering that all has been decoded at last. Because even when we study the texts of living authors who could explain their work down to each and every em dash or ergative if they wished to do so, there are still mysteries, some of them produced intentionally by the writer, some perhaps produced organically by wandering attention or misreading, and some produced because we are not just readers but participants in the process, so we want to go deeper. And the reader-participant will find, if she returns to the work at a point in the future, that it will likely generate more mysteries, provoke new thoughts and feelings—that if she waits long enough, it could seem like a completely different book.

One of my favorite collections of poems, Louise Glück's *Meadowlands* (HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996), encapsulates this for me perfectly. I've read through it no less than a dozen times in the three years since first picking it up, and yet I find myself reaching for it frequently nonetheless, sometimes for inspiration (during both artistic and intellectual endeavors), sometimes because something I see or read reminds me of it and I want to locate the lines life has called me to recollect, and sometimes simply for the pleasure in it. And every time I do reopen it, I find something I never found before. Something new in lines I've read and reread so many times.

It is the sensibility a person interested in literature brings into the pursuit that enables such rediscovery. Why? Well, we know that when the pages are put to print, they become frozen in time, that nothing will have changed from one occasion of opening the cover to the next (a scary thought, really, to envision that when we leave our books on the shelf, they shift sentences around and so forth). Only one truly invested in literary work would see that there is still the potential for more. And this is what makes literary study not just an act of dedication, but of continual rededication. Even when we are picking up a work we haven't read previously, this idea of being "agents of re-" still holds true because someone out there has already offered an attempt to decode the text, yet we are not satisfied with someone else's experience and interpretation, the "cliff notes," if you will—we want to embark for our own sakes, as well as the sakes of those who want to be edified beyond their own understanding of the text.

The author also engages in this process of pairing exploration and re-exploration. Reformation and redemption are major themes in many literary works and are often crucial parts of a character's journey, which means the writer employing such motifs is actively creating a recreation. But the writer's version of "re-" goes beyond content in general. Taking *Meadowlands* again as an example, while all of the poetry is Glück's own—and it is raw, inventive, and original—a significant aspect of the work is the repurposing of characters and concepts from the *Odyssey*. And there is a whole spectrum along which various works undertake to reinterpret or reimagine earlier texts. In addition to these techniques, we can also point to the revolution and reworking that takes place when one literary movement acts as both springboard and opposing force for the next generation or school that develops. Because even literary traditions that depart from popular styles are, in

VOLUME 6.4 WINTER 2013

Inside This Issue

essence, not just actions, but also *reactions* to dominant trends, as much *reconceptions* of what literature is as they are conceptions.

If these points make you wonder whether The New has died out, do not fear, do not fret, because the strength of our discipline—what will give it longevity, what makes it so important—is bound to this very idea that we are all "agents of re-," and for good reason. Because we acknowledge that everything deserves not one, not two, but many passes, that there is never a definite point at which we are "finished" with a text or literature in general, we develop and foster the creativity and flexibility to sustain what we love—the study and creation of literature. In linguistics, there is a concept called *recursion* that explains how users of a language are able to produce an infinite number of unique, felicitous sentences in spite of the constraints imposed by vocabulary and grammatical rules. Without delving further into the technical jargon, I want to suggest that recursion applies to literature as well: if we wish to use everything at our disposal, we can repeat close readings of a great many pieces or adhere to certain patterns without ever running out of groundbreaking insights, singular compositions, and pioneering work.

The feature articles in this issue of *Literary Matters* are emblematic of the many ways "re-" figures in to our calling (and as you look over the titles, you'll quickly see what inspired me to focus in on this critical prefix). Jennifer Croft has contributed a review on Maxine Swann's *The Foreigners* (Riverhead, 2012), a book in which the idea of a character's quest to reinvent herself, to find herself anew, is paramount. Croft demonstrates a keen understanding of the significance of this theme, and travels beyond the book to other works of literature, film, and journalism to assemble a vivid and compelling account of her experience with the novel.

Next comes a piece—an ensemble, really—from John Smelcer: "We Are Still Here: How American Indian Literature Re-visions the American Indian Experience in American History." Smelcer details the challenges for Native American writers trying to find their place within the wider body of contemporary literature, having to balance an authentic selfhood with the archetypes that one is frequently forced either to face or combat, but cannot ignore outright. His essay, both poignant and authoritative, makes clear that cultural conceptions of what it is to be a Native American are in dire need of further reformation. To accompany the essay, Smelcer offers up a series of poems that with wit, cynicism, humor, and heartbreak take a very big step towards revising the idea of what it means—and how it feels—to be a Native American in modern times.

The final feature article, a paper by Joshua Cohen entitled "Transformations into Truth: Shakespearean Reworkings of Ovid," examines several instances in Shakespearean texts of characters undergoing physical transformations, analyzing the greater symbolic import of these scenes through an Ovidian lens. Not only are the characters revitalized by these transmutations, but the shifts themselves are produced by Shakespeare's reimagining of tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Cohen's choice to reanalyze these oft-studied texts from an unexplored angle paves the way for the rest of us to reexplore them as well.

In addition to the feature pieces, you will find many other materials of interest: information about the 2014 ALSCW/VSC Fellowship and a biography of Rose Bunch, the 2013 Fellow; the Call for Papers for the 2014 Annual Conference and announcements about other opportunities to get involved with the Association; an article about recent honors conferred on one of our members; Kasia Buczkowska's stunning report on the Memorial Reading held to honor Seamus Heaney; and another Poets' Corner replete with well-wrought verse.

As you read, please consider submitting the products of your own pursuits of the "re-" that allow us to keep literature alive. I look forward to hearing from you and am eager to receive the work of all those who wish to share it.

Best wishes,

Samantha Madway
Editor, *Literary Matters*

LITERARY MATTERS

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

President's Column:
In Anticipation
By John Briggs

Out of nothing, it seems, an annual conference's call for papers emerges. What has emerged—what you see in the Call for Papers sent across the country a few weeks ago in anticipation of the ALSCW's April conference at Indiana University—is the result of a synergy of ideas and aspirations that characterizes much of the sensibility of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers.

For our Association, the first steps of the task of assembling the call are fairly routine. There are basic guidelines and questions. We desire to hear from members across the spectrum of literary study in the humanities. We ask each year what our members in Classics seek to discuss, and what the questions are for those members in Comparative Literature, in English, in Creative Writing. We ask to hear from independent writers and scholars, from essayists, and from poets. We sometimes wait upon the harps of lyricists.

There is also a deeper call for papers about our calling, for what calls us. This year's emerging program asks questions that arrest, intrigue, and draw us in. The panels form around wonderings. What is real translation? Is it possible? Or does translation have the capacity to save what might be lost untranslated? What new streams of American literature issue from the voices of relative newcomers, or from those who seem new but are not? What do they tell us about the nature of literature? About American literature? Is it possible to make a curriculum for the American states that frees and strengthens the study of literature in schools? What happens when ancient Greek tragedies are understood according to their origins as elaborated choruses rather than plots decorated by choruses? What is compassion in literature—its origins and effects? Is literature in fact a manifestation of compassion that otherwise eludes us, escapes us so quickly we doubt it is real until fiction and poetry somehow recover it? And what happens in the quietness created by the voice of the reader reciting Victorian poetry? What do we find there about the ways in which Victorian poetry defines itself as it reaches for the audience that will hear it? The more experimental seminars of the April program

(continued on page 5)

To contribute to **Literary Matters**, please send articles to literarymatters@alscw.org. Content ranges from columns on neglected authors, to interviews with those working in the literary field, to scholarly analyses of a text, and beyond. Please do not hesitate to contact the editor with any questions you may have.

Submissions for **Issue 7.2** must be received by **March 31, 2014**.

News & Announcements

Review-Copy Database Being Compiled

In response to the enthusiasm among authors and contributors alike generated by the initiation of the Book Review section in *Literary Matters*, a new program is being established. A database of books that have been made available for review by the authors will be published online, and anyone wishing to write a review can access said list to determine whether any of the options are of interest.

For authors: If you have recently published a book, wish to have it reviewed in an issue of *Literary Matters*, and are willing to provide a copy of your work to a potential contributor who volunteers to read it and write a review, please contact the editor of *Literary Matters*, Samantha Madway, at literarymatters@alscw.org. All genres, subjects, styles, and so forth are welcome. *Please note: choosing to include your book in the list does not guarantee that it will be selected for review. This will be contingent on the predilections of those who visit the database.*

For reviewers: If, upon surveying the list, you discover a publication you wish to review, you can contact the editor of *Literary Matters* at the email address noted above, and she will facilitate having the work sent out to you.

This system is being set up to address the many inquiries that have been sent in by both recently published authors and parties interested in writing reviews. It is, however, important to emphasize that the intention of this service is not to provide assured positive reviews to all who make their works available. Honest, insightful evaluation is the ultimate goal.

Please do not hesitate to contact the editor if you have any questions or need clarification about any of the procedures detailed in this announcement.

Local Meeting:
"On J. F. Powers" at the Editorial Institute, Boston University
Boston, February 12, 2014, 5:15 p.m.

Katherine A. Powers—a writer, book reviewer, and former book columnist for the *Boston Globe*—will discuss her recent edition of her father's letters, *Suitable Accommodations: An Autobiographical Story of Family Life: The Letters of J. F. Powers, 1942–1963* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013). Two editors with ties to the Powers family and the Editorial Institute will also share their thoughts: former Book Editor of the *Boston Globe* David Mehegan, who received his PhD from the institute in 2011, and Cassandra Nelson, who edited stories by J. F. Powers' wife, Betty Wahl, for her MA thesis in 2007.

Discussion and wine will accompany the presentations. If you will be coming, please contact either Lesley Moreau at lmoreau@bu.edu or Ben Mazer at benmazer@aol.com. The Editorial Institute of Boston University is located at 143 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215.

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.

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*.

Literary Matters now features a section for book reviews of recent publications. Reviews may range from 500 to 1500 words, and should be critical in the full sense (not only laudatory). The review need not provide an overview of the entire work, but can instead focus on characteristics you feel set the piece apart. Book reviews may be sent to *literarymatters@alscw.org*. Those received by **March 31, 2014** will be considered for publication in **Issue 7.2**.

further these aspirations, these feelings that are somehow investigations. What is the essay and what might it become if it characteristically combines the expression of the self and the obscuration of the self? What is literature if we discover its deepest wells in the phenomenon of wonder? What happens to our study and teaching of the Bible in the English classroom if we read it closely, not as a neutered form of literature (as sometimes we do overmeticulously in courses on "the Bible and literature"), but as something that makes demands on the whole mind and imagination, which cannot be sequestered in complacent faith or indifferent secularity? Finally, what is the invisible in medieval literature? Does it exist? How does medieval literature render it? How can we read it—how should we read it—as a vital phenomenon in a postmodern age with no patience for the idea of the unseen unless it is atomized or reduced to recreational magic?

I see in these wonderings some of the reasons why we are an Association, and why we have not made up ourselves out of nothing. We are the inheritors and makers of ways of reading that open us to literature, give literature life, and give access to life. We are asking some of the oldest questions, perhaps, as well as the newest. We do not gauge our readings according to quasi-scientific or theoretical breakthroughs, or to tests of group identity or selfhood, or to approved styles of social or political revolution. We find in literature what we wonder about. We read in wonder, with wonder, for the sake of resolving what we know cannot be resolved simply. What vain idleness or misguided self-indulgence there is in this—and there must be some, given our human condition—fades before the joys of the endeavor and a confidence that we have embarked on a greater task. As scholars, critics, and writers, we are also teachers of ourselves and others. We come to know that calling the more we rise to such questions.

I look forward to our meeting this April in Indiana because I want that endeavor to live, to let it go on for newer generations as well as my own.

John Briggs
President, ALSCW

A friendly reminder to renew your membership

Dear ALSCW Members and Friends,

It's time to renew your membership for 2014, if you haven't done so already. The ALSCW website is ready to process your renewal at http://alscw.org/membership/renew/index.html. If you prefer to use regular mail, you can print out the form provided on the website and send it with your check or credit card number to the Boston Office.

The Association encourages members to sign up for automatic annual renewal, which you can of course cancel at any time. Automatic renewal is a double gift to the ALSCW. It enables you to provide financial support that is relatively consistent, meaning it is helpful not only in the present but also in the future because it enhances our ability to plan for the years to come. Please consider checking the box for automatic renewal on the membership form. The ALSCW office will keep your credit card number on file, and your dues payment will be processed automatically at the beginning of each year.

Renewing now will ensure that you continue to receive all the benefits of ALSCW membership, including uninterrupted subscription to our flagship journal, *Literary Imagination*, the opportunity to participate in our Twentieth Annual Conference (to be held this year April 3–6 in Bloomington, Indiana), and access to a special discount on select titles from Oxford University Press, as well as the privilege of organizing ALSCW local meetings in your own region. Please consider reaching out to your friends and colleagues. The support of new members is critical to maintaining the vitality of our organization.

We send our many good wishes for a happy 2014,

The Boston Office
650 Beacon Street, Suite 510 | Boston, MA 02215 | 617.358.1990 | office@alscw.org

The 2014 ALSCW/VSC Fellowship

Applications now being accepted

The Association will again offer the ALSCW/VSC Fellowship in 2014 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, allowing the recipient to become immersed in the craft of writing without the distractions of ordinary life. **Applications are due February 15, 2014.**

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 also are 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," which was recently published under the new title, *Ex-Rich Girl Tells All* (CreateSpace, 2012). The 2011 Fellowship went to poet Joshua Weiner, whose time at the Studio Center is chronicled in *Literary Matters* 5.1. Caitlin Doyle, who received the Fellowship in 2012, wrote an account of her experience for *Literary Matters* 5.3. A biography of the 2013 ALSCW/VSC Fellow, fiction writer Rose Bunch, appears in this issue, and she will be contributing a memoir on her stay in Vermont in the near future.

Those who are interested in applying for the 2014 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. Applications may be submitted online through the Slide Room system, which can be accessed at http://vermontstudiocenter.org/apply, or by mail using the application available for download at http://vermontstudiocenter.org/assets/VSCApp2012.pdf.

Please note: mail-in applicants must write "ALSCW Fellowship" on the line asking what specific fellowship(s) applicants wish to be considered for. You must be a current member of the Association to be eligible for the ALSCW/VSC Fellowship. Additional details will be provided as the February 15, 2014 deadline approaches.

Hotel Reservations for the ALSCW's Twentieth Annual Conference

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, April 4–5, 2014
with poetry readings on the night of April 3 and committee meetings April 6

Hotel #1: **The Biddle Hotel and Conference Center, Indiana University, Indiana Memorial Union (site of the conference): (812) 856-6381**
Rooms are on hold for the ALSCW at rates that range from $105 to $159 plus tax. Online reservations can be made at www.imu.indiana.edu/hotel.

- Click "Biddle Hotel"
- Click "accommodations"
- Scroll down to "reserve a room"
- Put in desired arrival and departure dates
- Enter group code: ALSCW
- Click "check availability"
- Make selection and process reservation

There are two shuttle services that run from the Indianapolis Airport to the Indiana Memorial Union. Rates and reservation details can be found on each website. Go to Express Travel at www.goexpresstravel.com or Star of America at http://www.soashuttle.com/locations/bloomington-to-indianapolis/.

Hotel #2: **Hilton Garden Inn, Downtown Bloomington: (812) 961-3917**
Indicate that you are a member of the ALSCW attending the Annual Conference for the special group rate. There is one shuttle service from the Indianapolis Airport: Star of America (see the above link).

Hotel #3: **Courtyard by Marriott, Bloomington: (812) 335-8000**
The code for the special ALSCW rate is "ALS." The website is http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bmgcy-courtyard-bloomington. There is one shuttle service from the Indianapolis Airport: Go Express Travel Shuttle (see the link above).

The various express bus services leave the Indianapolis Airport for Bloomington at two-hour intervals and go to your hotel's door. The trip through farm country lasts approximately ninety minutes. Watch for bicyclists singing Italian arias. Schedules are on the shuttle companies' online sites.

***If you are traveling from out of town, we recommend arriving by the end of the day April 3 and departing April 6. The Indianapolis Airport is the nearest link for air travelers.**

You will soon receive a conference registration form. We'll see you in Bloomington!

Announcing the Meringoff Award Winners

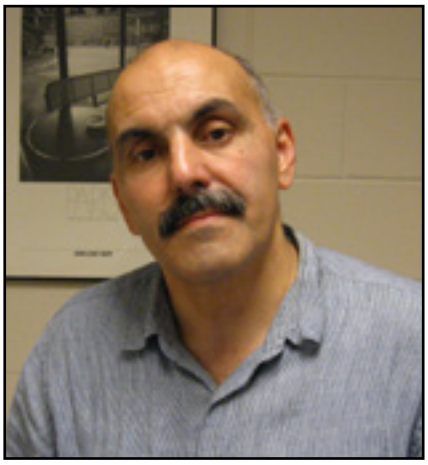
Nonfiction

Alex Brink Effgen of Salem, Massachusetts, has won the Stephen J. Meringoff Award in Nonfiction for his essay "Measured Quantities: Authorship as compared to the Culinary Arts," selected by nonfiction judge John Burt. The award carries with it a cash prize of $2,000 and publication in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.

Alex Brink Effgen is a doctoral candidate at Boston University's Editorial Institute working on the later essays of Mark Twain. Mr. Effgen will be a Graduate Writing Fellow for the College of Arts and Sciences this fall, and currently works in hospitality administration at the convergence of contemporary culinary arts and nineteenth-century cultural discourse: Turner's Seafood at Lyceum Hall in Salem, Massachusetts.

Poetry

George Kalogeris of Boston, Massachusetts, has won the Stephen J. Meringoff Award in Poetry for his poems "Peponi," "Reading ZH," "Language and Darkness," and "Singing Contests," which were selected by poetry judges Greg Delanty and David Curzon. The award carries with it a cash prize of $2,000 and publication in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.



George Kalogeris is the author of a book of paired poems in translation, *Dialogos* (Antilever, 2012), and a book of poems based upon the notebooks of Albert Camus, *Camus: Carnets* (Pressed Wafer, 2006). His poems and translations were anthologized in *Joining Music with Reason* (Waywiser Press, 2010), edited by Christopher Ricks. He teaches English Literature and is the director of the Classics Minor at Suffolk University.

Fiction

Anneliese Schultz of Richmond, British Columbia, has won the Stephen J. Meringoff Award in Fiction for her short story "The Edible and the Beauteous and the Dead," chosen by fiction judge Mark Halliday. The award carries with it a cash prize of $2,000 and publication in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.

Originally from New York State, Anneliese Schultz is a former Bread Loaf Scholar with an MA in Italian and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia (UBC). She now teaches Green Italian at UBC, incorporating sustainability into *la bella lingua*, and is at work on a young adult series set in a climate-changed world. The first title, "Distant Dream," reached Second Round in the 2012 Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award Contest and just won the 2013 Good Read Novel Competition from A Woman's Write.

Anneliese's fiction has been recognized by the *Toronto Star*, *New York Stories*, *Ruminate*; Snake Nation, Wild Leaf, and WriteCorner presses; and the Heekin Group Foundation. It has also been published in several anthologies. Her poetry has appeared in *Witness to Wilderness: The Clayoquot Sound Anthology* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994), *Tree Stories: A Collection of Extraordinary Encounters* (SunShine Press Publications, 2002), *The Book of George*, and *A Verse Map of Vancouver* (Anvil Press, 2009), and her short play, *27 Years*, premiered at Vancouver's Gateway Theatre (2008).

Her story "Child," winner of the 2013 *Enizagam* Literary Award in Fiction, has been nominated for a 2014 Pushcart Prize.

Rowan Ricardo Phillips Honored with Major Poetry Prizes

Poet Rowan Ricardo Phillips has just received two honors for his first collection of poetry, *The Ground* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012): a PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award and a Whiting Award. *The Ground* grabbed the attention of many, earning Phillips other recognition and further nods from groups beyond the PEN and Whiting Foundations. He was the winner of the 2013 GLCA New Writers Award for Poetry, a Pushcart Prize nominee in 2012, and a finalist for both the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Work in Literature (Poetry) and the 2012 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize in Poetry.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An associate professor of English and director of the Poetry Center at Stony Brook University, Phillips is also the author of a book of criticism entitled *When Blackness Rhymes with Blackness* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2010) and the translator of Salvador Espriu's *Ariadne in the Grotesque Labyrinth* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2012), in addition to several other works of poetry, drama, and fiction.

Born and raised in New York City, Phillips is a graduate of Swarthmore College and Brown University, where he attained his doctorate in English Literature. Phillips has taught in Harvard's History and Literature Program and Columbia's Graduate School of the Arts.[1] His poetry has appeared in numerous publications, including the *New Yorker*, *Harvard Review*, *Seneca Review*, the *New Republic*, *Chelsea*, the *Southampton Review*, the *Paris Review*, and *Likestarlings*, and is forthcoming in *Grey*. He is a contributing writer for *Artforum* and lives in New York City and Barcelona.

About the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award

"The PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry of $5,000 is given in odd-numbered years…The Osterweil Award recognizes the high literary character of the published work to date of a new and emerging American poet of any age and the promise of further literary achievement. Poets nominated for the award may not have published more than one book of poetry." Past winners include Peter Covino, Nick Flynn, Richard Matthews, Dana Levin, Yerra Sugarman, and Ishion Hutchinson.[2]

1 Rowan Ricardo Phillips's Faculty Profile, Stony Brook University Department of English, http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/english/people/faculty/phillips/main.html.

2 "PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry," PEN America Center, http://www.pen.org/content/penjoyce-osterweil-award-poetry-5000.

The judges of the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award wrote of *The Ground* that "Rowan Ricardo Phillips…can be sweetly Whitmanesque in his poems, or gravely meditative, or lushly lyrical. In other words, he is a poet capable of voices—plural. Every poem in *The Ground* surprises the reader with its vivid images and rhythms, or its fully present, personal voice, or its lightning-bolt sincerity. And while there is often a hidden tragedy at the center of his poems, there is also great pleasure taken in the idea of survival during a time of chaos."[3]

About the Whiting Award

"Since 1985, the Whiting Foundation has supported creative writing through the Whiting Writers Awards, which are given annually to ten emerging writers in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and plays. The awards…are based on accomplishment and promise. Candidates are proposed by nominators from across the country whose experience and vocations bring them in contact with individuals of extraordinary talent. Winners are chosen by a selection committee—a small group of recognized writers, literary scholars, and editors—appointed annually by the Foundation."[4]

The Whiting Foundation reports that with the resources provided by the award, Phillips intends to dedicate his time to working on his second collection of poems, *Heaven*, his second book-length critical project, *Biographia Literaria*, and his translation, from the Catalan, of the selected poems of Melcion Mateu.[5]

About *The Ground: Poems*

"A poignant and terse vision of New York City unfolds in Rowan Ricardo Phillips's debut book of poetry. A work of rare beauty and grace, *The Ground* is an entire world, drawn and revealed through contemplation of the post-9/11 landscape. With musicality and precision of thought, Phillips's poems limn the troubadour's journey in an increasingly surreal modern world ('I plugged my poem into a manhole cover / That flamed into the first guitar'). The origin of mankind, the origin of the self, the self's development in the sensuous world, and—in both a literal and a figurative sense—the end of all things sing through Phillips's supple and idiosyncratic poems. The poet's subtle formal sophistication—somewhere between flair and restraint—and sense of lyric possibility bring together the hard glint of the contemporary world and the eroded permanence of the archaic one through remixes, underground sessions, Spenserian stanzas, myths, and revamped translations. These are poems of fiery intelligence, inescapable music, and metaphysical splendor that concern themselves with lived life and the life of the imagination—both equally vivid and true—as they lay the framework for Phillips's meditations on our connection to and estrangement from the natural world."[6]

About *When Blackness Rhymes with Blackness*

"In *When Blackness Rhymes with Blackness*, Rowan Ricardo Phillips pushes African American poetry to its limits by unraveling 'our desire to think of African American poetry as African American poetry.' Phillips reads African American poetry as inherently allegorical and thus 'a successful shorthand for the survival of a poetry but unsuccessful shorthand for the sustenance of its poems.' Arguing in favor of the 'counterintuitive imagination,' Phillips demonstrates how these poems tend to refuse their logical insertion into a larger vision and instead dwell indefinitely at the crux between poetry and race, 'where, when blackness rhymes with blackness, it is left for us to determine whether this juxtaposition contains a vital difference or is just mere repetition.' "[7]

To read an illuminating interview with Rowan Ricardo Phillips in which he addresses *The Ground*, the art of translation, his views on poetic form, myth, and more, visit http://www.fsgworkinprogress.com/2012/06/q-a-rowan-ricardo-phillips-with-fsg-poet-lawrence-joseph/.

3 "2013 PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry," PEN America Center, http://www.pen.org/literature/2013-penjoyce-osterweil-award-poetry-0.

4 "Whiting Writers' Awards," Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, http://www.whitingfoundation.org/programs/whiting_writers_awards/.

5 "This Year's Award Winners," Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, http://www.whitingfoundation.org/programs/whiting_writers_awards/this_years_winners/.

6 Rowan Ricardo Phillips's Agency Profile page, Blue Flower Arts, http://www.blueflowerarts.com/booking/rowan-phillips.

7 Rowan Ricardo Phillips's Agency Profile page, Blue Flower Arts, http://www.blueflowerarts.com/booking/rowan-phillips.

Profile: Rose Bunch, Recipient of the 2013 ALSCW/VSC Fellowship

Rose Bunch is the recipient of the 2013 ALSCW/VSC Fellowship. She began her residency at the Vermont Studio Center in early December 2013. She is a Fulbright Scholar, a MacDowell Fellow, a Concordia Foundation Fellowship recipient, a Tennessee Williams Scholar, and a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee. In addition, she was awarded a 2013 Yaddo and Norton Island residency. Her writing has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies including *Tin House*, *Gulf Coast*, the *Greensboro Review*, *River Styx*, *Poem*, *Memoir*, *Story*, *New Letters* and others. She has received awards from *Playboy*, *New Letters*, University of Missouri, Florida State University, and the University of Montana for her work in both fiction and nonfiction.

Her recent publications include her short story "Sustainability," which was featured in *Tin House* and slated as work from their New Voice in fiction, and her essay "Norman Mailer is Coming to Dinner," which won the Dorothy C. Cappon Essay Contest at *New Letters*. Two anthologies featured her work in 2012: *Surreal South*, a collection by Press 53, included "Resurrection," and Akashic Books published "Pissing in Perpetuity" in *Speed Chronicles*, a fourteen-author collection (also showcasing the work of William T. Vollman and Sherman Alexie) which contains stories that all address some aspect of methamphetamine use in America. While globalism and the homogenization of culture are current themes in her work, the subject range is broad, including everything from the environment to hauntings and tweekers. As a MacDowell Colony Fellowship recipient, she began working on a novel incorporating the themes and characters from "Sustainability," a story that reflects many of the alterations globalism and rampant development have wrought through the perspective of an Ozark, rural transplant to the expanding suburban sprawl of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

A native of the Ozarks, Bunch's work is often set in Northwest Arkansas where the rapid growth resulting from the rise of Walmart directly impacted her home, family, and culture. During her time in Bali, Indonesia as a Creative Writing Fulbright Scholar, Bunch's writing explored the increasing dissonance between community and modernity due to rapid development and corruption.

Currently, she is an instructor at Louisiana State University while completing her novel and beginning a nonfiction graphic memoir based on her experiences in Bali.

If you would like to see news of recent honors or awards you have received, notices for upcoming events of interest to ALSCW members, or information about Local Meetings you have hosted/are hosting included in **Literary Matters**, please send materials (photographs, text detailing all relevant information, and so forth) to *literarymatters@alscw.org* by the submission deadline for **Issue 7.2**: **March 31, 2014**.

It is sadness upon sorrow that Seamus Heaney left too soon, yet within his clear-eyed poetry, he dug too deep into the earth's soil and the human soul to leave, ever.

The Memorial Reading for Seamus Heaney (April 13, 1939–August 30, 2013), which took place in The Great Hall at Cooper Union in Manhattan on Monday, November 11, 2013, proved his presence still, most illustriously and powerfully.

Seamus Heaney Remembered:
A Memorial Reading
New York City, November 11, 2013

Heaney's words inhabited the stately hall of 960 seats, all of them filled by members of his poetry-respecting public. A score of writers and musicians sat at round tables on the stage to read in turn from the lectern the poems they cherished by the Irish master.

By Kasia Buczkowska

"It hardly needs saying, and yet one wants to bellow it from the rooftops: Seamus Heaney's scrupulous generosity and grace, his infinite kindness and warmth, and his miraculous art combine to make him one of the most beloved figures any of us will ever know." So it was that Alice Quinn, Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America, entered upon the honored poet, essayist, and translator, and opened the door to his poetry, the readings set to be interspersed with the live uilleann pipe music Heaney loved.

"Exposure," autumnal in season and tone, was read by Frank Bidart, infusing the crowd with the poet's lyric "weighing and weighing / My responsible *tristia*," amidst rain drops that echo "the diamond absolutes."[1] The verse that followed, "Man and Boy," read by Sven Birkerts, brought forth Heaney's lighter notes to engage the audience, and was then counterbalanced by Eavan Boland's reading of "The Singer's House," Heaney's musings on Northern Ireland's troubles and artistic freedom. With "Punishment," Lucie Brock-Broido continued with the poet's somber prayers for the victims of atrocities in modern Ireland.

In Greg Delanty's Cork-accented reading, "The Guttural Muse" sounded the quintessence of Gaelic Ireland, its sturdiness, pulchritude, and irrepressibility. Heaney's countryman then charmingly provoked laughter in the audience with a reminiscence: "I read with Seamus once and joked afterwards, 'I'd love to read with you again, because I get a crowd.' [Laughter] I'm glad you laughed, because he loved to laugh," Delanty said. The second poem he chose, "Human Chain," evoked a certain end, "A letting go which will not come again."[2]

A break in the reading of words came with the musical wistful slow air of "Aisling Gheal" ("Bright Vision"), exquisitely played on uilleann pipes by Ivan Goff. It conjured images of the wuthering highlands, misty meadows, and valleys of shimmering rivers of Heaney's Ireland.

Two poems chosen by Jonathan Galassi, "The Forge" and "A Kite for Aibhín," contrasted the earth-bound anvil and the blue-yonder-bound kite. Their juxtaposition was suitably suggestive of hammering and flying as necessary dispositions for writing. "The Master" and "Colum Cille Cecinit" (Heaney's translation of a medieval Irish poem), which speak to the toil of writing and scholarship, were read with vivid clarity by Eamon Grennan.

Portraits of Seamus Heaney at different ages appeared on a handsome screen behind the readers at the lectern, his radiant face inscribed with rumination, brushed with a tinge of longing even when on the brink of a smile, and informed by kind but knowing eyes.

1 *North* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), lines 21–22, 29.

2 *Human Chain* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), line 11.

"The Skunk," read by Matthea Harvey, came as a whimsical interlude between poems with more public themes. Edward Hirsch preceded his ringing reading of the paramount bog poem "Bogland" by saying that bog was crucial to Heaney as Ireland's "memory bank, storehouse, [a] dark center." "Clearances 3," read by Jane Hirschfield, was a gentle rendition of a memory of mother and son peeling potatoes in silent closeness.

Poet Greg Delanty took the stage to recite two of Heaney's poems and share memories of his friend.

Each individual word of Heaney's from "Digging" and "Follower"—read respectively by Yusef Komunyakaa and Paul Muldoon—was given weight. One could revel in the magnificent words as if they were stones rebuilding, in the poet's reimagining, his world at Mossbawn, the family farmhouse he grew up in. Atsuro Riley, before reading "The Harvest Bow," another one of Heaney's father poems, said that in it and in other works, the honored poet "lovingly looked at and respectfully rendered" the everyday hand artworks of others.

Colm Tóibín's smoky-voiced presentation of "Glanmore Sonnets 1 and 2" unfolded Heaney's evocations of farmland imbued with mystery and sensuality. "Casting and Gathering," also set in Heaney's ever-present Irish countryside, is about a metaphorical fisherman's luck. It was "a happy memory" for the singer-songwriter Paul Simon, who read the poem. He heard Heaney himself read it at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, from his collection *Seeing Things* (Faber & Faber) when it had just come out in 1991. Potent were the lines in the singer's recitation:

> I trust contrariness.
> Years and years go past and I cannot move
> For I see that when one man casts, the other gathers
> And then vice versa, without changing sides.
> (lines 18–21)

For an audience who found treasure in Seamus Heaney's words, the sorrowful old air "Amhrán na Leabhar" ("Song of the Books"), played on Irish pipes by Ivan Goff, was a meaningful musical meditation since it was about the loss of books in a boating accident.

The shattering late verse "The Blackbird of Glanmore," read by Tom Sleigh, speaks tenderly of the poet's dead brother whom he calls "blackbird." Tracy K. Smith's rendition of an early poem, "Personal Helicon"—which tells of a boy frolicking by a well, spellbound by "the dark drop, the trapped sky, the smells / Of waterweed"[3]—evoked the boy's fascination with the slime of the earth and the well's mysterious bottomlessness.

In the ensuing "Squarings 6," about Thomas Hardy, Jean Valentine's soft-spoken voice delighted us with Heaney's

3 *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), lines 3–4.

account of the peculiar way Hardy "experimented with infinity."[4]

> Once, as a child, out in a field of sheep,
> Thomas Hardy pretended to be dead
> And lay down flat among their dainty shins.
> (lines 1–3)

In a brief departure from the Nobelist's own poems, Anne Waldman in a dramatic tone read a fragment of *Beowulf* in Heaney's translation. She said the poet gave a new life to *Beowulf* and rendered the narrative with a "seamless flow."

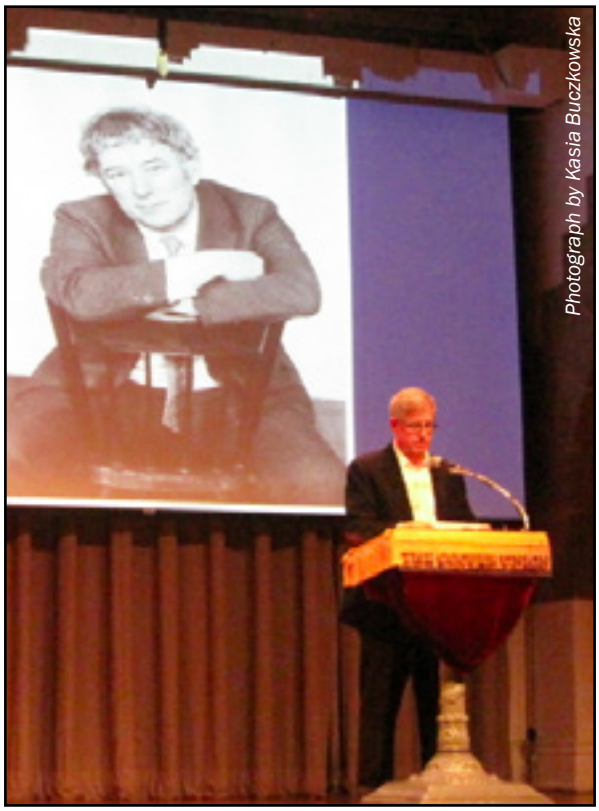
"In this poem," Kevin Young said of "St Kevin and the Blackbird," Heaney "reaches out his arms to us, as he often did, I think, in his poetry and its beauty and insight. I want to thank him for that and his family for sharing him with us."

The evening was crowned by an audio recording of Seamus Heaney reading "Bogland." Serendipity had seated me next to a young Irishman. Upon hearing Heaney's voice, resounding as if coming from his well—"Our unfenced country / Is bog that keeps crusting / Between the sights of the sun"[5]—the Irishman's eyes misted, and all around us the crowd was still, listening with reverence to beauty.

My neighbor was Olaf Vize, a nephew of Liam O'Flynn, the Irish piper with whom Seamus Heaney recorded the album *The Poet & The Piper* (2003), which features his spoken poetry set to traditional Irish music. Olaf, who had met Heaney a few times, said he admired him very much: "He had such a presence. No matter whom he met, dignitary or butcher, his manner would not change. He was a humble man, one of many reasons he was loved."

After the event, Paul Simon said he valued Heaney for being "deeply emotional, insightful, Irish and universal" and having "the gift of language and musicality."

Seven institutions joined together to mount the occasion: the Academy of American Poets, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, the Irish Arts Center PoetryFest, the Poetry Society of America, Poets House, the Unterberg Poetry Center at the 92nd Street Y, and Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



Jonathan Galassi, who read two of Heaney's poems during the event, at the podium

Lee Briccetti, Executive Director of Poets House, said, "Seamus Heaney was one of our time's great poets. His work resides in memory, the land, the musical history, and resources of English. He was beloved and it was fitting and wonderful to have so many of New York's literary organizations gather to celebrate him."

4 *Seeing Things* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), line 5.

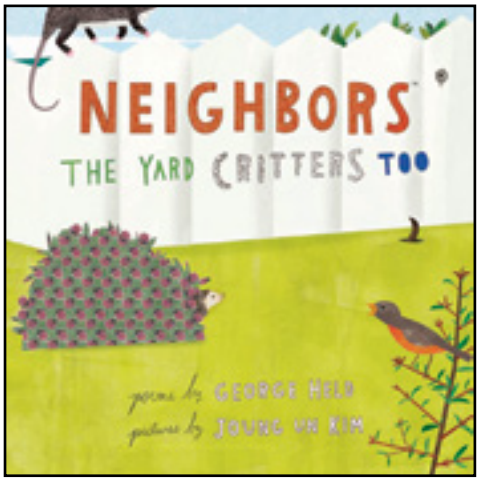
5 *Door into the Dark* (Faber & Faber, 1969), lines 6–8.

Kasia Buczkowska is a writer, journalist, and translator in New York City who writes short fiction in Polish and English. She has published her work in *Literary Imagination*, *Clarion*, and *Przegląd Polski*. Her first book of short prose, *in Prose*, is forthcoming from Un-Gyve Press.

New Publications by Members

George Held, *Neighbors: The Yard Critters Too*, with illustrations by JoungUnKim (New York City: Filsinger & Company, Ltd., 2013)

While most children's picture books feature one main character, this book presents a group of animals, each of which deserves its own poem, its own illustration, and its own place in nature.

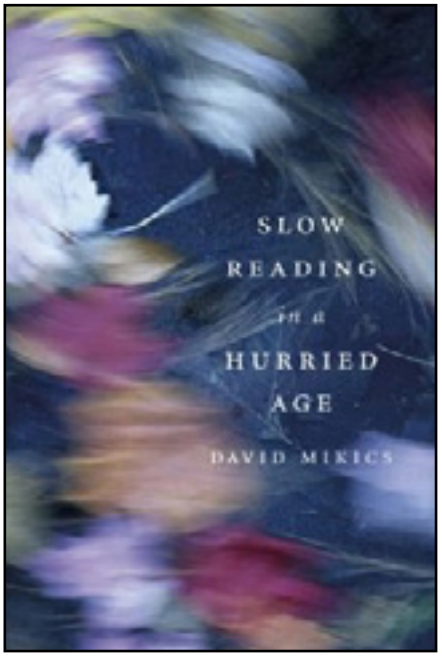


The selection introduces the wild animals a child might see near home—in the yard, city streets, or country landscapes. The short, accessible poems "invite young readers to think about beings that share their world" (*Kirkus Reviews*), and "gorgeous collage illustrations complement the selections perfectly and provide a framework for understanding how the critters coexist" (Rita Meade, *School Library Journal*).

"The verse steers clear of cutesiness" (*Publishers Weekly*). "The vocabulary is sophisticated. The rhymes and sound patterns are complex and vary unpredictably" (*Kirkus Reviews*). "While the slant rhyme and frequently esoteric imagery might not appeal to all children, those with a penchant for quirky poetry will have their curiosity about nature sparked and their eyes and ears delighted. In addition, Held's no-holds-barred approach to writing for kids offers opportunities to learn vocabulary that they might not read in other picture books" (Rita Meade, *School Library Journal*).

George Held has published seventeen volumes of poetry, including a trilogy of chapbooks on nature themes, and his work has been read by Garrison Keillor on NPR's *The Writer's Almanac*. He was a Fulbright lecturer and a professor of English at Queens College, City University of New York.

David Mikics, *Slow Reading in a Hurried Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard/Belknap, 2013)

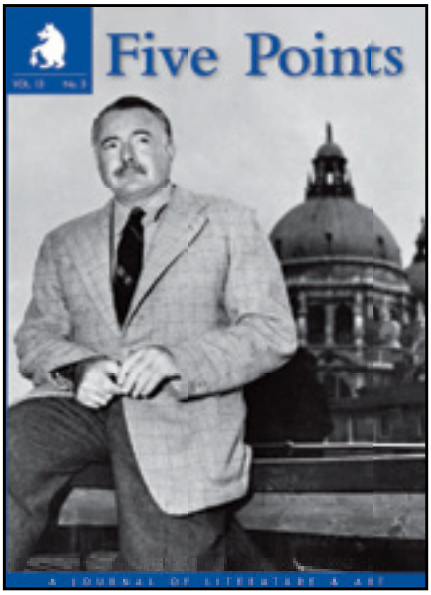


Slow Reading in a Hurried Age is a practical guide for anyone who yearns for a more meaningful and satisfying reading experience, and who wants to sharpen reading skills and improve concentration. David Mikics demonstrates exactly how the tried-and-true methods of slow reading can provide a more immersive, fulfilling experience. He begins with fourteen preliminary rules for slow reading and shows us how to apply them. The rules are followed by excursions into key genres and various mediums, including short stories, novels, poems, plays, and essays.

"Reading," Mikics says, "should not be drudgery, and not mere escape either, but a way to live life at a higher pitch....A good book is a pathway to finding ourselves, by getting lost in the words and works of others."

Mike Mattison and Ernest Suarez, Hot Rocks: Songs and Verse, *Five Points: A Journal of Literature and Arts*, http://www.fivepoints.gsu.edu/

We'd like to thank *Five Points* for providing a venue for a wide range of essays involving song and verse. Hot Rocks seeks to humanize the humanities and explore how verse is created and experienced by people in different ways. We believe an artist's personal story is a vital part of the creative experience and helps people gain a deeper understanding of why poetry and song are necessary to the human condition. Upcoming issues will include a memoir by Chuck Berry's bandleader during a tour in Brazil, the reflections of a rock and roll photographer, and an essay on the similarities between blues musicians and medieval troubadours. We're particularly interested in pieces from the overlapping worlds of poetry and song, but most of all, we seek essays that take chances, lay it on the line, and speak about song and verse from the soul as well as the mind.



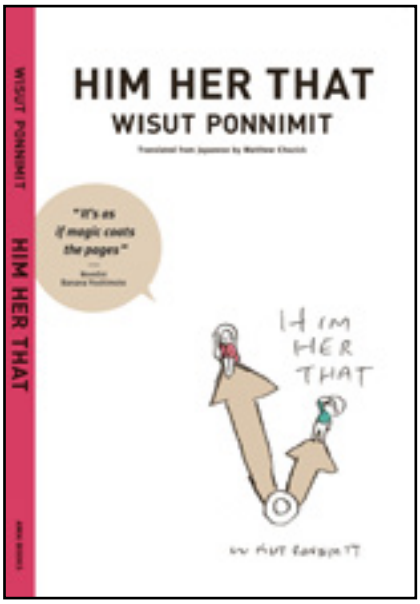
This first installment of Hot Rocks features the essay that inspired us to create the series, which discusses the genesis of new verse practices. This issue also features an essay by AmeriCamera on the creation of their album *Highminded* (2011), a remarkable blend of original poems and songs, and a beautiful exegesis by Michael Kimmage on Lightin' Hopkins's haunting tune "Goin' to Dallas to See My Pony Run."

We are pleased to make AmeriCamera's *Highminded*, vol. 1 available for a free download. You get all the music and poems, plus a booklet version of the album's script. Download the AmeriCamera package from the recording company at https://app.box.com/s/hiw5npulbqjef0yz1wx3, or visit http://americamera2.com/ to access the files through the link provided at the bottom of the home screen.

Simon Perchik, *Almost Rain* (St. Paul, MN: River Otter Press, 2013)

Almost Rain continues the legacy of Perchik's highly personal, non-narrative style of poetry found in more than twenty prior collections. A review from *Library Journal* states that "Perchik is the most widely published unknown poet in America. Though his untitled, idiosyncratic lyrics have been consistently appearing in magazines as diverse as the *New Yorker* and *Exquisite Corpse* for decades, his books have been hard to find....a poet who may well be our era's Emily Dickinson...Often dense, often difficult, Perchik's poems nevertheless lead to strange, unanticipated conclusions that usually reward the pursuit."

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, the *Nation*, *Poetry*, the *New Yorker*, and elsewhere. Some of his earlier collections of poetry include *The Snowcat Poems: To the Photographs of Robert Frank* (Linwood Publishers, 1984), *Hands Collected* (Pavement Saw Press, 2003), and *Greatest Hits: 1964–2008* (Pudding House Publications, 2009). For more information, including free e-books and his essay titled "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities," please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com.



Wisut Ponnimit, *Him Her That*, trans. Matthew Chozick (New York and Tokyo: Awai Books, 2013)

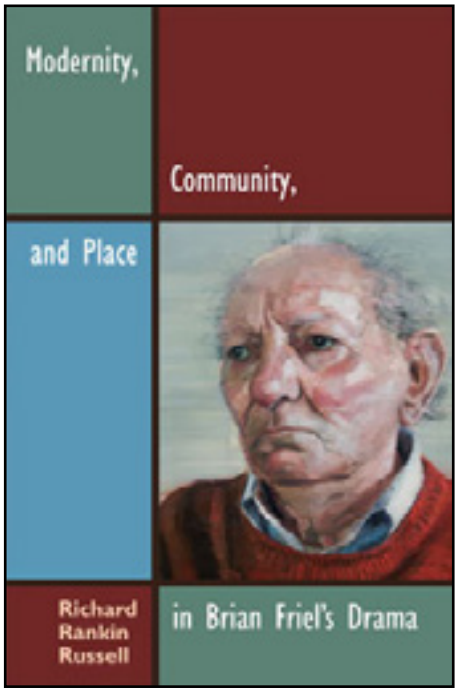
"It's as if magic coats the pages" (Banana Yoshimoto).

It all begins with a feat of imagination in the ocean. Guided by a high-tech scuba helmet, a young woman comes across a machine that allows her to review love affairs from past lives. Welcome to the mind-bending world of Wisut Ponnimit, whose manga are revered in Tokyo for their artistic charm, intellectual depth, and literary humor.

This is the first of Ponnimit's works to be published in English, though he has released over ten books in Japanese and Thai. Based in both Bangkok and Tokyo, Ponnimit holds a coveted Japanese Media Arts Award for outstanding manga by the Japanese Government's Agency for Cultural Affairs. This brilliant comic fantasy includes essays about Ponnimit's art by novelist Banana Yoshimoto as well as by the book's translator, Matthew Chozick.

Richard Rankin Russell, *Modernity, Community, and Place in Brian Friel's Drama* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013)

Richard Rankin Russell is a professor of Irish and British literature at Baylor University. He is the editor and author of numerous books, including *Poetry and Peace: Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney, and Northern Ireland* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).



Modernity, Community, and Place in Brian Friel's Drama shows how the leading Irish playwright explores a series of dynamic physical and intellectual environments, charting the impact of modernity on rural culture and on the imagined communities he strives to create between readers and script, actors and audience. While many critics have noted in passing Friel's affinity for local culture and community, criticism of his work has largely failed to examine the profound implications of his varying environments—ranging from rural and urban places, to public, built spaces, to the personal spaces of the body and mind—and to integrate that interest with a comprehensive theory of his drama. Drawing on the work of thinkers such as the phenomenologist Edward Casey and the environmental and literary critic Wendell Berry, successive chapters analyze Friel's five best-known and most critically acclaimed major plays across roughly a quarter of a century—*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964), *The Freedom of the City* (1973), *Faith Healer* (1979), *Translations* (1980), and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990)—in the context of his place-centered drama.

If you wish to have news of your recent publications featured in the list of new publications by members, please send the relevant bibliographic information to **literarymatters@alscw.org.** ***Those who are interested in doing so may also submit a blurb about the work (around 250 words or fewer) and a photo of the book's cover. Submissions about articles published, journals edited, and so forth are also welcome.***

On Maxine Swann's *The Foreigners*

Review by Jennifer Croft

" 'Venom, like blood, can't be reproduced artificially,' " says an Argentine gigolo toward the end of Maxine Swann's *The Foreigners*.[1] He is the narrator's truest friend over the course of the novel, the straight course in a single-volume roman-fleuve that meanders around the other people the narrator encounters upon her arrival in Buenos Aires, from fellow foreigners like Austrian Isolde and Ukrainian Nadia to local femme fatale in the making, Leonarda. The narrator, at times bedazzled, at times bewildered by her new surroundings, struggles just to stay aloft: "I lay there," she says, also late in the novel during one of her recurrent retreats from society, "heart jumping, blood coursing in my veins, alive, unquestionably alive, if entirely unmoored" (255).

The Foreigners is the story of a thirty-five-year-old woman who begins to faint indiscriminately following her divorce from her husband of nine years. She sees a doctor but finds that there is nothing physically wrong with her. People are concerned; someone suggests she take a trip. She speaks a little Spanish. And so it is in this way that she winds up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on "a grant to study the public waterworks of the city" (8) in the wake of the crippling 2001 economic crisis that left Argentina battling to get its bearings back as well.

As a setting, Buenos Aires is likely to be well received: much has been made of Argentina of late, from Rivka Galchen's novel, *Atmospheric Disturbances* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), to references to Argentine beef and wine and Mia Wasikowska's yearning to travel there in the film *The Kids Are All Right*—"I really want to go to Argentina," she says, "Buenos Aires is supposed to be—"[2] and here, mysteriously, appropriately, what Buenos Aires is supposed to be is never revealed, as Joni is interrupted by one of her mothers. A recent estimate by the city's main newspaper has reported that the population of Americans living in Buenos Aires is around fifty thousand.

The place is hailed by many as the "Paris of the South," a denomination not discouraged by locals, who have, for over a century, attempted to make it into just that. And, to be fair, with its pervasive French neoclassical architecture, arts scene, and café culture, Buenos Aires' claim to Parisianness is substantially stronger than the whole host of other cities that attempt to stake similar claims. (Prague, Budapest, Krakow, and Tallinn all assert themselves to be "the Paris" of the East, or the Center, or wherever.)

But just as sex—no doubt likely to garner much of the initial attention *The Foreigners* will get—is not exactly the point of the novel, neither is Buenos Aires' Parisianness, or Europeanness, and so, ultimately, focusing on these aspects would be a mistake. Swann's poised and stately prose scratches past surfaces and unearths whole troves of fascinating facets of urban life in Argentina that are Argentina's own: the "Palace of the Pigeons;" the gigolos; the sprawling, messy parks; the urgent, tender sensuality of fresh-found love; the *locutorios* (establishments offering internet and phone booths); the smells; the literature; the violence of style, the warmth of darkness, and the escapes to Uruguay; the politics; and, maybe most importantly, its fragmentation, its incompletion. As she says of Buenos Aires' most modish district, Palermo, "You were walking along a smooth Palermo street lined with bars and shops and would suddenly stumble into a wasteland, grass and dirt. Or you looked through a doorway into a huge empty hole. It was an unfinished city, but not only that. It seemed interminable, an interminable job. This was also what I liked" (21).

The novel mentions Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz, who made his home in Buenos Aires—also by accident—from 1939 to 1963. The city's interminability, its scrappiness, was what he liked as well. For him, too, exile was a kind of unmooring. But it is not only the foreigners of *The Foreigners* who experience this: Leonarda, for example, with her fleeting anarchist ramblings, her tendency to destroy everything she comes across, even her chameleon-like costume changes, is just as lost as Isolde, who is failing to climb the social ladder of an adopted arts scene, or Nadia, who is stagnating in a beauty parlor in Barracas. As Gombrowicz tells Karol Świeczewski in a late conversation,

> "humanity is a boat that has broken off from the shore for all time, there are no ports or anchors anymore, just an infinitely fluid ocean under a sky deprived of an immoveable truth. We have

1 Maxine Swann, *The Foreigners* (New York: Riverhead, 2012), p. 211. All further citations refer to this text unless designated otherwise.

2 Lisa Cholodenko and Stuart Blumberg, *The Kids Are All Right*, directed by Lisa Cholodenko, (Los Angeles, CA: Gilbert Films, 2010).

The Foreigners is a distinctively feminine take on the selfsame captainhood, a tale of loyalty toward oneself in a space seemingly devoid of any other law.

The portions of the book dedicated to her sexual reawakening are incredibly rich and subtle, interesting and challenging, as is the rest of the novel, which manages to pull off something few texts have: the profound and graceful sustained intensity of concept with so much space to breathe. Like Swann's 2003 novel, *Serious Girls* (Picador), or the stories in her 2007 collection, *Flower Children* (Riverhead Books), *The Foreigners* takes its time to warm up, calmly acquiring an enigmatic ferocity that makes it increasingly difficult to put down.

> to get used to this loneliness. We have to learn how to navigate these dregs—and if we shall not possess that art, we will always yearn for some kind of haven."[3]

Swann's novel is the story of four women learning to navigate the dregs, and of one woman in particular, the narrator, as she starts her life over, having to take the wheel of it for what feels like the first time in a very long time.

Gombrowicz's best-known work is perhaps his three-volume *Diary* (Northwestern University Press, 1989), the overwhelming majority of which is dedicated to his life in Argentina. In one passage, he muses:

> The captain of a sinking ship knows that in a minute the water will swallow him up—him and his honor, responsibility, duty—that for all practical purposes these no longer exist, that the water is already reaching his calves…why, then, does he recite his captainhood to the last minute of his life, instead of, let us say, singing or dancing? Perhaps because when there is nothing else to cling to, man can only grab onto himself, the principle of identity. "I am I" is a fundamental principle not only of logic but also of the ultimate right of humanity; and when everything disappears, there is only the fact that I was someone; such a person and no other; and loyalty toward oneself appears to be the last law we can still obey.[4]

Argentina's best-known writer, Jorge Luis Borges, writes in one of his last stories that over the course of human history, all plots have essentially been two: the one about the lost vessel in the Mediterranean searching for a beloved island, and the one about the Crucifixion.[5] We have all the lost searching and nostalgia of the former in addition to the sacrificial potency of the latter when, in one of the central threads of *The Foreigners*, Leonarda and the narrator plot to bring down local literature's latest cause célèbre by seducing and subsequently reviling him. " 'Just imagine,' " Leonarda says, " 'that we're hunting him down' " (119). And hunt they do, the process becoming a part of that sexual reawakening as well as the crux of an ethical awakening that helps to teach the narrator who she really is and how to be that self.

With steady elegance and uncompromising forthrightness, Swann has created something so vital it is like blood and venom—something it would be more accurate to say courses than gets read. Something similar occurs in all of Swann's work, most recently her well-known piece "The Professor, the Bikini Model, and the Suitcase Full of Trouble" featured in the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, which is set to be made into a movie next year by Fox Searchlight.[6]

3 Quoted in Michał Paweł Markowski, *Czarny nurt: Gombrowicz, świat, literatura* [Black Waters: Gombrowicz, a world literature] (Krakow: Literackie, 2004), p. 57. Translation supplied by Jennifer L. Croft.

4 Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, trans. Lillian Vallee (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 3:49.

5 Jorge Luis Borges, "The Gospel According to Mark," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Viking, 1998), 397–401, 400.

6 "The Professor, the Bikini Model, and the Suitcase Full of Trouble," Magazine, *New York Times*, March 8, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/magazine/the-professor-the-bikini-model-and-the-suitcase-full-of-trouble.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

Jennifer Croft holds an MFA from the University of Iowa and a PhD in comparative literary studies from Northwestern University, where she wrote her dissertation on duels in twentieth-century literature. Her reviews have appeared in *Words Without Borders*, *Critical Flame*, *Quarterly Conversation*, *World Literature Today*, and elsewhere.

We Are Still Here:

How American Indian Literature Re-visions the American Indian Experience in American History

By John Smelcer

On my office door is a poster of Lakota medicine man Leonard Crow Dog. The caption below his image reads, "We are still here." While American Indian literature of the past several decades has been about many things, it singularly hails with triumphant resolve that we *are* still here. Across Native America—and there are hundreds of federally recognized tribes—we struggle to maintain our own unique cultures. But it's not easy. The clash of two cultures over hundreds of years has taken its toll. The old and the new are frequently inseparable, the lines blurred.

Early novels of the Native American Renaissance (I use the term simply to signal the wider availability of Native writing in mainstream literature), such as N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1968), James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1974) and his haunting *The Death of Jim Loney* (Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979), and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (The Viking Press, 1977), were about returning home, not merely to a geographic place—though that is paramount—but also to a cultural center of gravity: an *Indian* center where the American model of the rugged individual standing alone is supplanted by the indigenous sense of the self as part of a community. Everything we see or hear in media tells us that we must want something else and to *be* something else and somewhere else. We are pulled between two worlds, yet we are sometimes unable to embrace either fully. The literature was and is often about not belonging and the immense pressure of marginalization. Where do I belong? Where is my home? How do I fit in? Characters struggle with trying to become whole (and sometimes they fail). Among all the loss suffered by Native America—loss of customs, ritual, myth, religion, and especially of language—perhaps the most important loss has been the loss of self, as Leslie Marmon Silko writes in *Ceremony*:

> But the fifth world had become entangled with Europeans names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the names of animals and plants—all of creation suddenly had two names: an Indian name and a white name. Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul.[1]

In the decades since those first mainstream writers, many Indian (for that is what we call ourselves) writers go so far as to reimagine history. Abraham Lincoln once wrote that "history is not history unless it is the truth." In attempting to tell the Indian side of American history, many Indian writers try to re-vision the history of America—not a *revision* but a *re-visioning*, a reseeing, of history—a history of America that includes Indians and the Indian perspective.

And history is due for an overhaul.

1 Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 68.

I recently picked up a new children's picture book about the westward expansion of pioneers as they rolled across the Plains States hauling everything they owned in their wagons. Although the book illustrated their hardships

Contemporary American Indian literature attempts to dispel stereotypes and romantic notions that forever "fix" Indians of the past—adorned in buckskins and feathers and red bandanas—as something that was.

(e.g., repairing busted wood-rimmed wheels, being stuck in blizzards, fending off starvation in sometimes gruesome ways, and so forth), it never once mentioned the American Indians they encountered (and eventually displaced) along the way. One gets the discomforting sense that America is trying to rewrite the painful parts of history for new generations by writing the American Indian experience out of the picture.

Consider, too, these iconic images of nationalism: The trope of Custer valiantly fending off thousands of Indians, his long golden hair blowing in the wind, demands a clearer image. In cowardice, Custer wore his hair short during cavalry patrols of the Black Hills for fear of being scalped should he fall in battle. He also wore buckskins, concealing his rank insignia, to avoid being targeted as an officer. So, too, the trope of George Washington as a boy always telling the truth on his way to becoming the paragon of manhood might be replaced with a new, more-accurate "historical" image. Washington rose rapidly through the ranks to general almost entirely on his success during the Indian Wars. He helped open and tame the northeastern frontiers of the New World for Europeans by killing the indigenous people who already lived there—men, women, the elderly, and children alike. Does such a history blacken America's patriotic eye? Most likely, yes, but not irreparably. But if we are to realize fully and completely the history of America, the real history as Lincoln suggested, we must acknowledge the whole picture, the *true* picture, not just the tidy parts we choose to honor in our filtered history books.

Contemporary American Indian literature attempts to dispel stereotypes and romantic notions that forever "fix" Indians of the past—adorned in buckskins and feathers and red bandanas—as something that *was*, replacing them with the reality of American Indians living in America in the twenty-first century, both on and off the reservation. The project of many contemporary Indian writers is to portray honestly and bluntly the context of those issues, triumphs, and crises that define who we are. Oftentimes, the literature is sardonic, searing, and witty, as is the best satirical writing of Jonathan Swift. The following poems are from my unpublished full-length poetry manuscript "Indian Giver," which includes an introduction by my late friend and mentor James Welch.

John Smelcer is a tribally and federally enrolled member of the Ahtna Tribe of Alaska and a member of Tazlina Village Traditional Council. In the mid- to late 1990s, he was the executive director of the Ahtna Heritage Foundation. During his tenure with the foundation, he produced a dictionary of his language for which Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker provided forewords. He is the author of forty-five books, most in Native American studies. With Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki), John coedited *Native American Classics* (Eureka Productions, 2013), a graphic anthology of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American Indian literature. He is a visiting professor of communication and anthropology at Truman State University. To learn more, visit www.johnsmelcer.com.

The Book of Genesis Revised for American Indian History

In the beginning God created Indians
and he saw that they were good
and he loved them for a long time
but then he must have got really mad at them
because they didn't speak english or something
so he created white people and said unto them,
"From this day on you shall
have dominion over Indians"
which was kind of the same thing he told Adam
about the animals that crept or crawled

And God saw that this was good
so he told white people to multiply and go west
and he said unto them,
"Let there be colonization,"
and so there was
and from his words sprang colonialism

who begat expansionism
who begat broken treaties
who begat assimilation
who begat disease
who begat wars
who begat genocide

And God knew that this was good

When he returned from a paid vacation in Rome
God said, "Let Indians be slaves to the Whites"
and so they were the first slaves to pick cotton and tobacco
but then the Whites ran out of Indians
so they imported Black people from far away
and that is all that people would remember
forever and ever, amen

Then one day after he made the dodo extinct
God decided that Indians needed exercise
so he created the Trail of Tears
and then he told Whites to kill all the buffalo
so that Indians would become vegetarians

and so it was
and so it was
and so it was

Then, after he got over a bad cold or something
God looked around and saw that Whites
were everywhere like locusts
and he saw that this was a good thing
so he said, "Let there be reservations"
and lo they came into being
and from his words sprang dislocation

who begat racism
who begat poverty
who begat alcoholism
who begat depression
who begat suicide
who begat genocide

And God knew that this was good
so he created allotments and the BIA and
HUD housing and commodity cheese and rez dogs
and IHS and bingo halls and casinos
and The Church of Infinite Confusion

And on the last day God returned from Walmart
and the Mega-Mall and the cineplex
and he saw that there were no more Indians
upon the land and he knew that this was a good thing
so he created the Lazy Boy and the remote control
and TV westerns and the Washington Redskins

and from his comfortable, reclining throne
he looked out across the world he created
and he saw that it was good
and he called it america which means
"Place where Indians once roamed"

and so it was
and so it was
and so it was

The Sign

In 1492, two Indians stumble upon a billboard
in the middle of a clearing with the words:

Coming soon. America!

"What does it say?" asks the first Indian.
"I don't know," says the second, scratching his head.
"But I'm sure it doesn't have anything to do with us."

Indian Blues

Thomas Two Fists
whittled a guitar from a tree
that had fallen during a storm
and killed a shaman. He carved
the tuning pegs from the bones
of a white buffalo.
For strings,
he used the long gray hair of
old Indian mothers who had lost
their children and grandchildren
to alcohol and drunk driving.
For years,
Two Fists travelled from
reservation to reservation
and powwow to powwow
singing the blues.
Wherever he went,
Indians wrapped themselves in old blankets,

dreamed of forgotten homes and wept
dreamed of forgotten homes and wept.

How to Make Blue Ribbon Indian Fry Bread

"Indians could spend their whole lives
looking for the perfect piece of fry bread."
–Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*

In a large bowl, mix the following ingredients:

Three cups of flour made from the ashes of failed Indian dreams

One cup of water made from the tears of Indian mothers

A pinch of salt, first thrown into open wounds of Indian fathers

Drop the rolled and molded dough into a pan of oil
hot enough to incinerate every Indian future

Remove fry bread when both sides turn brown and blistered

Duke Skythunder Tries a Jedi Mind Trick on Non-Native America

This is not the land you were looking for.
Move along.

The Alternate History of the United States of America

Lester Has-Some-Books builds a time machine
in his uncle's garage and sets it to the day
Columbus discovers America.

Quickly, with the masts of three ships
lurching on the horizon, he sets up a big sign
on the beach:

WELCOME TO SPAIN!

Columbus spies the sign from the bay,
scratches his head, and orders all three ships
to turn around and head back out to sea.

After a Sermon at the Church of Infinite Confusion

At ten, Mary Caught-in-Between
came home from sunday school,
told every animal and bird and fish
they couldn't talk anymore,
told her drum it couldn't sing anymore,
told her feet they couldn't dance anymore,
told her words they weren't words anymore,
told Raven and Coyote they weren't gods anymore,
said god was a starving white man
with long hair and blue eyes and a beard
who no one loved enough to save
when they nailed him to a totem pole.

The Incomplete & Unauthorized Definition of American Indian Literature

"Indian" is not a derogatory word.
It's what we call ourselves. We claim it.

Not all Indians wear long black hair
or faded red bandanas.

I've never seen a Red Man.

Percentage of people who say they are part Cherokee: 50%

Percentage who claim to have an anonymous
great-grandmother who was a Cherokee princess: 100%

Percentage of actual Cherokee princesses in history: 0%

Percentage of the Cherokee Nation compared to the
number of all other recognized tribes in America 0.2%

Percentage of Americans who are enrolled Indians
according to the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs: 0.67%

Fiction by Indians outsells poetry by Indians,
yet poetry is the language of sorrow and heartbreak.

All Indians speak poetry.
No Indian has won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

This is the mathematical formula for deciphering
meaning in Native American poetry:

Where *a* represents *anger* and *s* represents *sorrow*,
let *P* represent *poetry* and *t* represent the duration
(*time*) of marginalization.

Thus, $P = t(a + s)^2$

Indian writers shouldn't drive sports cars.
I traded my yellow Porsche for a pick-up truck
with a quarter million miles
and a rifle rack in the rear window.

Not all Indians come from Horse Cultures.
Not all Indians ride horses.
I've only been on a horse once and it threw me.

Writing by Indians should contain dogs.
Many Indian writers have had at least
one of their dogs run over by a pick-up truck
with a rifle hanging in the rear window.

History is written by the victors.
Indians didn't always lose the battles.
Don't believe everything you've ever read
or watched on television.

John Wayne's real name was Marion, but directors figured
Marion the Cowboy couldn't defeat Indians.

Columbus didn't really discover America
the way you think he did.

The Navajo Nation is as big as Nebraska.

Bingo is Indian Social Security.

Federal enrollment is how the government
counts Indians to predict when we will be extinct.
Not all Indians are enrolled. I am enrolled.

Enrollment doesn't mean anything.

There are 500 tribes in America. No individual speaks
for all of them, barely even for a single clan or tribe.

Some bigshot Indian writers think they speak for everyone.

Does an illiterate white shoe salesman in Idaho speak for you?

American colleges teach American Indian literature
but hire almost no Indian writers at all.
White professors who have never seen a reservation
teach American Indian literature because it is trendy.

Some Indians go to tribal colleges
Where they are taught by white teachers
who want to be Indian. New Age white women
have sex with Indian men so they can become Indian.

You can't become Indian by proximity.

America loves the Indian-sounding names of places,
but they don't want Indians to live there.
It gives them a sense of connection to a land
upon which they have little history of their own.

Sometimes a sweat lodge is just a sweat lodge.

Some American sports teams are named for Indians.
There should be an Indian baseball team called
the Cherokee Crucified Christs complete with
a bleeding team mascot nailed to a wooden cross.

Would that hurt your sensibilities?

All Indians aren't proud and defiant.

When I do something right, my Indian uncle
tells me I've earned an eagle feather.

Only Indians can own eagle feathers.

Nearly all published Indian writing is in English.
Almost no Indian writer speaks their Indian language.
Fewer yet can write in it.

Sii cetsiin koht'aene kenaege', tsin'aen.

Indian children love to dance Indian-style
but they don't understand a word the elders sing.

Indian boys love to beat Indian drums
while Indian girls sway in moving circles.

The hearts of Indian boys are tight-stretched drums.
The hearts of Indian girls are beautiful sad songs.

The government decimated bison
so that Indians would become vegetarians.

The government killed wild horses
so that Indian spirits would break.

The government sent Indian children to boarding schools
so they would forget being Indian. Missionaries built
The Church of Infinite Confusion so Indians would
forget being Indian.

I forget what I was trying to say.

British writers don't have to write about Shakespeare.
French writers don't have to write about Baudelaire.
Blacks don't always have to write about slavery.

Indian writers don't have to write about being Indian
or about dogs killed by trucks with gun racks
on reservations while fancy dancing,
wearing eagle feathers, and beating drums
while mouthing words to songs they do not know.

Audiences at readings by Indians are almost always white.

Many urban Indians write about life on the reservation
even when they've never lived on one because it sells better
than writing about going to Starbucks after shopping at the Gap.

Few Indians have Indian-sounding names. Non-Indians pretending
to be Indians adopt name like “Runs-Beside-Spotted-Ponies,”
‘Walks-With-Wolves,” or “Elk Cloud.”

A publisher once asked me to change my name
to a hyphenated one with a preposition and a spirit animal.

I asked, “How about ‘Johnny Fakes-His-Name-on-a-Weasel’?”

All Indian writers aren't spiritually attuned to Nature.
Most are fearful of getting lost in the woods.

Some Indians write out of anger and despair.
All Indian writers are not angry and depressed.

Native America is drowning in a sea of alcohol.
Indians commit suicide ten times more often than whites.
Day after day, our hearts are turned into cemeteries.

The impoverished state of our lives is not self-inflicted.

Most Indian writers are mixed-blood
who hate the term “Half-Breed.”

I am the son of a half-breed father.

I am an outcast. Even my shadow
tries to hide its face in shame.

Twentieth Annual Conference

April 4–6, 2014, Indiana University–Bloomington

Call for Papers

Panel 1: Literary Translation from German and Slavic Languages

What are the social and political constraints on reception, understanding those terms widely? Are purportedly superseded translations and "translations for our time" legitimate artistic practices or marketing ploys? Why the tendency to disparage earlier translations so strongly? (H. T. Lowe-Porter and Constance Garnett are now often considered downright incompetent, for instance.)

What linguistic and metrical features *must* be carried over? (The fierce unresolved debate about Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* [Bollingen Foundation, 1964] comes readily to mind.) How reputable or trustworthy are translations from languages the translator does not know? (W. H. Auden is a prime example.)

What factors outside artistic merit enter into the reception of translated literature? Similarly, what accounts for the sudden ascendency of some translated works to virtual best-seller status? (Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette* [1st trans. ed., Viking Penguin, Inc., 1942], Giuseppe Di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* [1st trans. ed., William Collins & Co. Ltd. and Random House, Inc., 1960], Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* [1st trans. ed., Signet, 1958], Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* [1st trans. ed., Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970], and *The Reader* [1st trans. ed., Pantheon Books, 1997] are prime examples.) How do judgments of stylistic mastery made by eminent readers (Nietzsche on Stifter, Wittgenstein on Trakl) function as "lenses" for a translator's choices?

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Professor Vincent Kling of La Salle University (kling@lasalle.edu).

Panel 2: Rhetoric and Asian American Poetry

Asian American poetry is often defined simply as poetry by Asian Americans, or—naively—as poetry with Asian American content. Less well known, less well understood, is the rhetorical sophistication of Asian American poets such as Lawson Fusao Inada, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and John Yau manifested in how they craft their poems. That aesthetic forms are closely linked to their historical contexts is the argument of a recent book by scholar Dorothy Wang, *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 2013).

The papers for this panel will examine the linguistic and rhetorical strategies of a major Asian American poet, or trace the use of a particular strategy (e.g., metaphor, irony, parody, etc.) across the work of several poets. Also welcome are papers on Asian poets writing in English, which can lend a comparative perspective to the panel.

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Jee Leong Koh of the Brearley School, NYC (jeeleong.koh@gmail.com).

Panel 3: The Problem of the Chorus in Athenian Tragedy, Then and Now

For the ancient Athenians, a tragedy was first and foremost a chorus. A poet who wished to produce a play "asked for a chorus" and, if selected, he was "granted a chorus." Yet many modern readers, critics, and theatrical directors tend to see the tragic chorus as a source of interludes and peripheral lyrical commentary. Aristotle observes that by the mid-fourth century, playwrights themselves were beginning to downplay the chorus. This panel invites papers that consider the role of the chorus, whether in terms of the Athenian plays themselves, in modern performances of them, or in non-Athenian dramas where choruses are an integral part of the action.

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Stephen Scully of Boston University (sscully_2000@yahoo.com).

Panel 4: The Role and Significance of Literature in the Common Core

Another wave of change is rolling across the K–12 landscape: the Common Core Standards Initiative, already adopted—if not implemented—by at least forty-five states. What will be the place of literature in K–12 curricula based on those standards? What should it be? Are there ways to bring the two together? What contributions can literary scholars, critics, and writers make to the discussion of CCSI and the teaching of literature in schools?

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, John Briggs of University of California–Riverside (john.briggs@ucr.edu). All participants should be familiar with the published English Language Arts Common Core standards and the reading lists in the document's Appendix, which can be accessed at http://www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy.

Panel 5: Compassionate Fictions: Fellow Feeling in Renaissance Literature

When Hamlet responds to the Player's speech with "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba," he raises a question of pervasive importance for Renaissance writers both in England and in Europe: what is the relationship between fiction making and fellow feeling? This panel aims to bring together papers that consider the ways in which early modern writers represented, conceptualized, and problematized compassion. Situated at the intersection of literature, ethics, politics, religion,

and devotional practice, compassion raises a unique set of questions for poets and writers of fiction: What is the role of the imagination and fiction making in the development of compassion as a social, moral, and political category? What is at stake in distinguishing (as many writers in this period do) between compassion, pity, and sympathy? Is some kind of mediation or representation necessary for compassion to take place? Is it easier to feel compassion for fictional people in literature than real people in life? How do literary episodes of compassion vary according to genre? What are the fictional possibilities of mistaken or misdirected compassion? Papers from all European national literature, as well as from English, are welcome.

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Leah Whittington of Harvard University (lwhittington@fas.harvard.edu).

Panel 6: Listening to Victorian Poets: Performance, Interpretation, Discussion

How often in conferences do we listen to the poets we interpret? What happens when the voice of the poet leads the discussion? What happens to the act of interpretation when the poets speak at the table? Questions and topics might include what we can learn about the poems and about ourselves as scholars, critics, and writers—and as readers, listeners, teachers—when we read Victorian poems aloud and take the measure (or the tone) of our critical or scholarly scrutiny from that performance.

Other avenues are possible. Do we become (conduits for? versions of? reenactments of? necessarily interpreters of?) the voices fashioned, imagined, and set to "speaking metrically" by Victorian poets? How do Victorian poets shape their verse for listeners? What can we learn about their habits of listening and our own from the form and pacing of poems read aloud? What other ways of attending to poems can we discover through this process?

More possible topics arise: What can we learn about certain Victorian poets' habits as poets, the ways their poems "behave" (as A. R. Ammons puts it), the ways they imagine meaning and emotional force as available to speakers with captive audiences? Conversely, what can we learn when we listen to Victorian poems that stage scenes of listening? Is there a Victorian poetics of listening that illuminates such questions?

Panelists will be asked to read one or more Victorian poems or substantial excerpts and then discuss their selections.

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Debra Fried of Cornell University (df18@cornell.edu).

Seminar 1: The Sources and Resources of the Modern Essay

Ever since crotchety, amiable, shrewd Montaigne invented the form, essays have proved capable of handling any matter under the sun while also letting—or making—their authors be themselves. Yet essayists also practice the art of disguise, and for all their casualness, press an argument, a style, or a pattern on the reader. The steady, even increasing, popularity of the personal essay shows its viability as an alternative to both the memoir and the novel. Brief papers (fewer than ten pages) are invited on any writer of the personal essay since Montaigne. Proposals that focus on a single author (or at most two authors), that do the work of appreciation and evaluation, and that avoid theoretical jargon will be favored.

Please send a one-page proposal by February 1, 2014 to David Mikics of the University of Houston (dmikics@gmail.com).

Seminar 2: Wonder and Literature

This seminar will be an inquiry into the nature of wonder and its particularly literary manifestations and evocations. Perspectives from various disciplines and their applications to particular works are welcome. Contributors might consider the role of spectacle, the moral/ethical and religious import of wonder in literature, and the place of wonder in literature written for children of all ages. Is wonder a necessary dimension of mythic expression in literature? Of literature itself? Is it a link between literature and religion?

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, David Smith of Indiana University (smithd@indiana.edu).

Seminar 3: The Bible and Literature

Rather than a discussion of biblical influences, this seminar will focus on close readings of biblical texts that make use of literary interpretation to illuminate the Bible. Participants are also invited to discuss the implications of this approach for teaching the Bible in literature classes. Is the "Bible as literature" approach adequate to a genuine encounter with the literary power of the Bible, or to an understanding of its other dimensions? What happens when such courses are framed as "Bible and Literature" courses that use literary interpretation to make close reading the priority?

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Stephen Cox of University of California–San Diego (sdcox@ucsd.edu).

Seminar 4: Imagining the "Invisible" in the Middle Ages

In our paradoxical age of hypersophistication and retro-medievalism, do we really have a grasp of the cultural resources that were available to writers who sought to articulate the invisible and the intangible in the Middle Ages? What kinds of orthodox and unorthodox subjects tend to be missed or unappreciated and what kinds of texts marginalized? More generally, do we know what we are saying when we refer to the "invisible" in romance, or allegory, or other kinds of literary products associated with the Middle Ages?

Please submit direct questions or an abstract to the panel chair, Richard Green of Ohio State University (green.693@osu.edu).

Transformations into Truth: Shakespearean Reworkings of Ovid

By Joshua Cohen

Let me begin by explaining what I mean by "transformations into truth." Some years ago, while thinking about Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I realized that many of the transformations are not simply people changing from their human forms into different shapes. These transformations can also be regarded as changes designed to reveal unseen and usually unknown truths about the real nature of the people being transformed. People are known, for the most part, by roles and identities. Roles are what we put on to *present ourselves to others*. Identities are *who we think we are* based on a collection of categories (racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) by which we define ourselves, though in reality, all of them are actually—to some degree, at least—socially constructed and thus external to ourselves as individuals.

Many religious traditions also hold that beneath these socially constructed roles and identities, there exists an authentic core of selfhood, which constitutes *what we really are*. For most of us, however, such an essential core would be hard to imagine, let alone describe in any coherent way. The best we can say is that sometimes something happens that shocks and momentarily drags us out of our customary roles into some form more authentic to our inner lives—a form that is usually kept hidden, even from ourselves. In the *Metamorphoses*, outward transformation is the medium through which this kind of inner truth is revealed.[1]

In Ovid's tales, the inner truth of the transformed human being is distilled into a single, defining quality. Sometimes the quality is psychological in nature (like the narcissism of Narcissus), sometimes physical (like the flawless beauty of Galatea). Sometimes the quality plays an active role, while at other times, a passive one, in determining the final shape of a character's destiny. Because the shape of the transformation is determined by the nature of the truth it reveals, we can discern some general patterns: for example, flowers tend to enshrine beautiful youths cut down in their prime (as with Narcissus, Hyacinthus, and Adonis); trees can be both fortresses and prisons for fugitive women hounded by sexual fear (Daphne) or sexual guilt (Myrrha); savage animals—lions or bulls—embody unbridled animal passions, as in the fates of Atalanta and Hippomenes, and the murderous Cerastae; and, of course, asses' ears have always appeared as the badge of folly, whether the fool in question is Ovid's Midas or Shakespeare's Bottom.

The reason for looking at Shakespeare through Ovidian lenses is not merely that Shakespeare used a lot of material from Ovid's works—many poets did—but that transformations revealing truth were Shakespeare's stock and trade. Think of Hal's reformation or Hamlet's feigned madness, and how these alterations reshape the men internally, as well as outwardly. Or the male disguises of Rosalind, Portia, and Viola, which somehow reveal more about the women they really are than do the female appearances that usually adorn and conceal them.

Both as poet and as playwright, Shakespeare traded in transformation. And whenever he took things from Ovid, he would transform them

Part of this essay has been excerpted, in slightly revised form, from an earlier article: Joshua Cohen, "Ovid Inverted: Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 20' and the Metamorphoses of a Metamorphosis," published in *Shakespeare Newsletter* 58, no. 3 (Winter 2008/2009): 93.

1 Publius Ovidius Naso, *Shakespeare's Ovid, Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the "Metamorphoses,"* ed. W. H. D. Rouse, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961). All citations are provided parenthetically in the text. References are to book and line(s) of this edition of the work.

> Both as poet and as playwright, Shakespeare traded in transformation. And whenever he took things from Ovid, he would transform them too

too, in surprising and freshly illuminating ways. I will examine briefly three Shakespearean works that draw upon the *Metamorphoses*. Two of them are poems, *Venus and Adonis* and "Sonnet 20," the last a play, *The Tempest*. My aim is not to analyze the texts in detail, but to focus specifically on how Shakespeare in effect transforms the original transformations in order to reveal even deeper truths.

First printed in 1593, *Venus and Adonis* is the earliest published work by Shakespeare to carry its author's signature. In his dedicatory letter to the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare describes the poem as "the first heir of my invention."[2] Its source is Ovid's tale from Book 10 of *Metamorphoses*, but Shakespeare's version is considerably longer and a whole lot sexier. Its sexiness, however, does not derive from steamy descriptions of passionate love-making, but on the contrary, from its sweating, panting, itchy depiction of thwarted desire. In Shakespeare's portrayal of the myth, Venus's passion is entirely one-sided, and it remains tormentingly unconsummated. This is not love that unites souls and renders lovers immortal—if only for a moment—but an obsessive hunger that grows more fiercely consuming the more it is denied satisfaction. The terrible hopelessness of this kind of passion is summed up in a famously ironic line describing Venus's predicament: "She's Love, she loves, and yet she is not loved" (610).

2 William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 223. All further citations of Shakespeare's works are provided parenthetically in the text and refer to *The Oxford Shakespeare* edition. For plays, text references are to act, scene, and line(s) of this edition; for poems, line(s).

Ovid's original tale was also tinged with irony, though of a less bitter sort. While Shakespeare's Adonis rejects her advances with horror and revulsion, Ovid's Adonis accepts her love, but passively, distractedly. All he really cares about is hunting, and there's something comically touching in Ovid's description of Venus donning Diana's buskins to follow her lover on the chase, but having to stop every hundred yards to take a breather. (I imagine Adonis tapping his foot impatiently on the ground and muttering, "Come on already, we've got boars to chase down.") The comedy takes a poignant turn in the end, however, when Venus memorializes her short-lived passion by instituting the yearly rites by which Adonis's death will be eternally reenacted and transforming her lover's body into the delicate crimson flower known as the anemone:

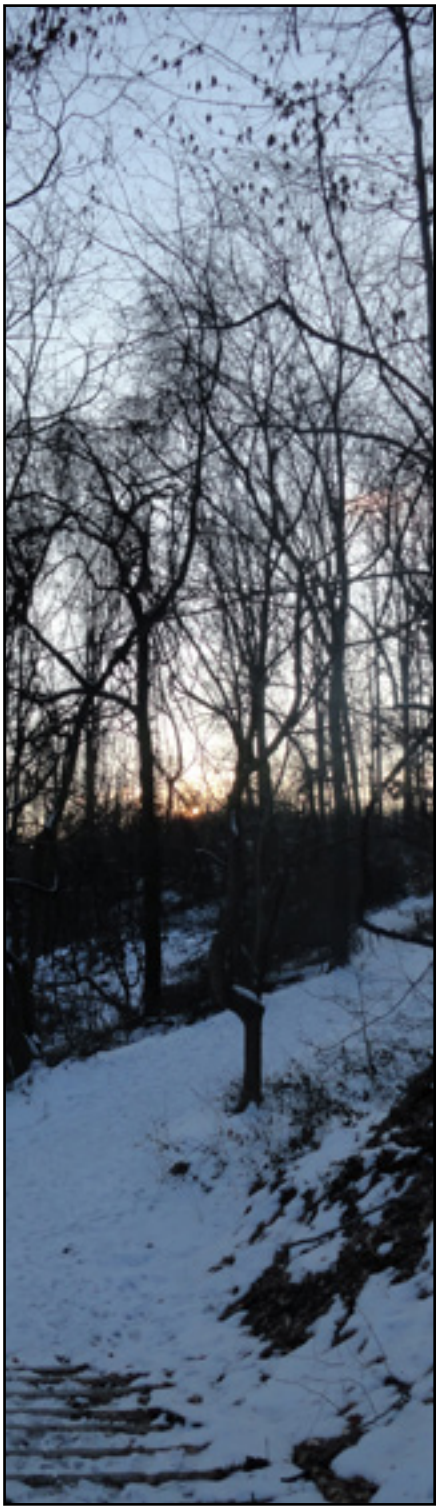
> Of all one colour with the blood a flowre she there did fynd,
> Even like the flowre of that same tree whose frute in tender rynde,
> Have pleasant graynes inclosde. Howbee't the use of them is short,
> For why the leaves do hang so looce through lightnesse in such sort,
> As that the windes that all things perce, with every little blast,
> Doo shake them of [off] and shed them so as that they cannot last.
> (10.858–863)

In spite of its lightly satiric tone, the story concludes in pathos. The truth embodied by Adonis's transformation is the sweetness and transiency of love that has youth and beauty as its object. We desire what is beautiful; beauty, like life itself, is fragile and brief, but all the more poignant and precious for its brevity. So gather ye rosebuds (or anemones) while ye may.

Shakespeare's conclusion also depicts this outward metamorphosis, but more revealing is

the *inward* transformation that takes place a few stanzas before, at the moment when Venus discovers Adonis's body. Now, in the frenzy of her despair at losing what she never possessed to begin with, she decrees that love shall henceforth

> be waited on by jealousy,
> . . . . . .
> fickle, false, and full of fraud
> . . . . . .
> It shall suspect where there is no cause of fear:
> . . . . . .
> It shall be cause of war and dire events,
> Subject and servile to all discontents
> (1137, 1141, 1153, 1159, 1161)



And she concludes with this iron law of desire: "Sith in his prime Death doth my love destroy, / They that love best their loves shall not enjoy" (1163–1164). Venus's realization of the truth of her experience transforms the nature of the love she represents. Sexual passion mutates into a veritable Pandora's box of psychological torture.

"Sonnet 20" (which was probably composed in the late 1590s) portrays a lover trying to reason with his passion. Baffled and disorientated by the realization that he has fallen in love with a beautiful young man, the lover tries to rationalize his infatuation by ascribing it to his friend's feminine qualities—the youth's lovely features, "gentle heart" (3), and bright, irradiative gaze. To support his rationale, the lover develops an elaborate conceit explaining the young man's appeal to both sexes: his friend was actually created female until Nature, Pygmalion-like, fell in love with her own creation, and being female Herself, decided to repair the creature "by adding one thing"—a penis—that would "prick [him] out for women's pleasure" (12, 13). This transformation, however, presents an obstacle to the lover's sexual intentions, and so he proposes a bargain: let him only have his friend's *love*, and women can have the use of his phallus.

The transubstantiation of a female idea into a male body places Shakespeare's scenario in a tradition of female-to-male sex change frameworks stretching back to Ovid's tale of Iphis and Ianthe. In that story, Iphis, a Minoan girl who has been raised as a boy—her true sex concealed from everyone except her mother, her nurse, and, of course, herself—is betrothed at age thirteen to one of her female schoolmates. On the day before the wedding, Iphis and her mother go to

pray at the temple of Isis. Their prayers are answered by auspicious portents: the statue of the goddess seems to move and her horns dart beams of light. As mother and daughter leave the temple, Iphis's strides grow longer, her features more rugged, her carriage more erect and vigorous. So Ovid's original tale ends happily as the Goddess of Love overrides Nature's ban by changing a maiden into a man in order to unite her with her lover.

The plot device of a woman impersonating a man, and arousing in that guise the sexual desire of another woman, was widely employed by writers of the sixteenth century (who often signaled their debt to Ovid by quoting from him verbatim). We find it in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, in Book 3 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and in two of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* (not to mention in the Italian and English prose tales on which those plays were based). In every case except Spenser's, the confusion is happily resolved, not through a literal sex change, but through the substitution of an authentically male surrogate (usually a twin brother) for the desired (disguised) female.

"Sonnet 20" takes this scenario and turns it inside out. Now the situation is a man in love with a man whose (metaphorical) transformation from female to male is no longer the solution, but the problem. As in all the other stories, the lover struggles with his feelings and tries to persuade himself that what he desires is both impossible and unnatural. But his own rhetorical strategy betrays him. How can the speaker be expected to frame his love to natural laws when Nature herself has fallen captive to her own creation, even to the extent of recasting her original design in order to validate her desire? Such is the power of sexual passion that it cuts across the categories and distinctions by which we situate ourselves in relation to others. It is no accident that in all of the stories mentioned, the desire is not so much for a particular man or woman, as for an ideal embodied by that person—the androgynous beauty of youth, that most ambiguous, deceptive, and evanescent of erotic ideals. For the androgynous beauty of youthful men and women, captured at the point in life when desire and identity are in maximum flux, is the perfect form to embody the ambiguous, deceptive, and evanescent nature of desire itself.

THE MYSTERY OF DESIRE POINTS BEYOND ITSELF TO THE MYSTERY OF IDENTITY—AND OF WHAT LIES BEHIND IT.

The mystery of desire points beyond itself to the mystery of identity—and of what lies behind it. The problem that Ovid was able to recognize is that what we desire does not necessarily correspond with who we think we are. That is why so many of the erotic tales in *Metamorphoses* hinge on a crisis of forbidden passion, which result in a transformation that changes the form of either the lover or the beloved. These stories highlight the tension between our socially constructed identities and our inner lives. For Ovid, the solution to all such crises is (for better or worse) to have all of these taboo desires get resolved permanently by transfiguring the objects of said desires into the shapes that best embody them.

Shakespeare's works demonstrate a subtler understanding of the problem, and his conclusions tend to be more provisional. He recognizes, for example, that desire is born in the imagination before attaching itself to a

particular physical object—or, as Theseus observes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "lovers…have such seething brains / Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend / more than cool reason ever comprehends" (5.1.4–6). Shakespeare also sees that "all the world's a stage" on which "one man in his time plays many parts" (*As You Like It*, 2.7.139–140, 142); so much so, in fact, that there really is little difference between the roles we play and the identities we ascribe to ourselves—the one tends to dissolve into the other. Everything we take ourselves to be is as ambiguous, deceptive, and evanescent as everything we may imagine ourselves to desire. Therefore, Shakespeare withholds the resolutions provided by Ovid and the romantic sex comedies of the sixteenth century. As the rest of the sonnet cycle unfolds, the poet/lover pursues, simultaneously, two complementary desires: one, a sublimated, idealized, but sexually charged love for the young man, and the other, an obsessive, tormenting, Venus-like passion for a sensual and promiscuous woman. In "Sonnet 144," his suspicion that his mistress has seduced his friend awakens him to the realization that the two objects of his desire are also, in a deeper sense, projections of contrary impulses that reside within him, which he calls his "angels" of comfort and despair. His entire sense of himself as a man is being pulled in opposite directions: he no longer has a stable identity.

Finally, in "Sonnet 146," the speaker looks beneath desire and identity to what he calls the "soul" at "the center of [his] sinful earth" (1). He realizes that he has been neglecting and starving the soul to feed his baser appetites and his illusions. He tells himself he must change his life. However, the resolve is fleeting—already in the next sonnet, he is back in the "fever" of his sexual obsessions. But at least he has been able to experience a moment of objective self-awareness.

One might regard *The Tempest* as the end result of a long accumulation of such moments of awareness. Here the Ovidian moment comes near the end of the play, in the awesome speech in which Prospero invokes the spirits of the enchanted island he rules—with whose aid he has performed miraculous feats that he describes in phantasmagorical detail—only to reveal in the end his determination to "abjure" his "rough magic" forever before breaking his staff and dropping his book of spells into the sea (5.1.50–57). The original for this poetic tour de force is a comparably impressive invocation by Medea in Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses*, in which the Colchian sorceress calls on the powers of the night and the earth to aid her in creating a potion that will restore old Aeson to the prime of his youth.

If we examine the two speeches *in context*, we will see that while they share much of the same content, their implications are entirely different. Medea's invocation is a prelude to a spell of rejuvenation intended to transform Aeson (the father of her lover, Jason) into the young man he used to be. In the event, the spell is successful, and at the end of a long, gruesome operation (in which all of Aeson's blood is drained out and is then replaced by an incredible boiling concoction made of the most hideous ingredients), the old man emerges as "faire," "fresh," and "lustie" as he had been forty years earlier (7.376–377). And that's the last we hear about him. Has anyone ever wondered what happened to Aeson after his rejuvenation? The most likely answer is *nothing much*. He is merely being restored to an earlier condition and given his life to live over from that point on. But since the young-man Aeson is merely one of many parts the older man has played in the course of his life, reverting to that role requires no real change from familiar patterns and habits of being. Even though circumstances may be a little different, Aeson's future is likely to be, substantially, a recurrence of his past.

Prospero's speech is a prelude to renunciation. It's about leaving behind everything you knew, not getting back to where you were before. I subscribe to the notion that in addition to being Shakespeare's last non-collaborative play, *The Tempest* is also his artistic valediction: the last and ripest statement of his vision into the "wide and universal theater" of human affairs (*As You Like It*, 2.7.136). Prospero cannot be reduced to a simple authorial persona, but he does seem to embody all the parts that made up Shakespeare's artistic life: he is author, actor, director, choreographer, and stage designer rolled into one, and he has refashioned the island he has lived on for the past twelve years into his own personal playhouse.

Over and over in his plays, Shakespeare reminds his audience of the interrelationship between life and theater. It is not merely that theatrical playing "[holds]… / the mirror up to nature" (*Hamlet*, 3.2.21–22) by artificially representing life—the nature of human life is inherently theatrical. It is a platform for continual metamorphosis upon which people are constantly putting on roles and taking them off again, for the most part unconsciously (or, at best, only half-consciously). Now, in Shakespeare's final play, Prospero pursues this line of perception to its necessary conclusion. Life is theater, but the art of theater is essentially an art of illusion, which means that almost everything we think is true about life—and more specifically, about ourselves—is only a transient projection of our imaginations: an "insubstantial pageant" that must finally "dissolve" and "leave not a rack behind" (*The Tempest*, 4.1.154–156).

At the end of his great monologue, Prospero gives up all his powers of illusion so that he can face the void in which the truth might possibly be found. He will break his staff and drown his book. He has already given away his daughter to his oldest enemy's son. Soon he will free all his enemies from the spells that hold them, and unconditionally forgive them all. His final sacrifice will be to set Ariel free. It is a kind of death, this complete divestment of everything that had made up his identity and purpose in life, and he tells Alonso frankly that after attending to his daughter, he means to retire to his dukedom in Milan "where / every third thought shall be [his] grave" (5.1.313–314). But complete transformation is only possible for those who realize that not one of the forms we have ever assumed, or can ever imagine assuming, expresses the deepest truth about our nature or our possibilities. And so at the end of Shakespeare's final play, Prospero allows all his imaginary selves to melt away, so that space will be made for a new life to begin—in some new form never before imagined.

Joshua Cohen is an associate professor of literature at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, where he teaches classes on Shakespeare, opera, *The Legends of King Arthur*, graphic novels, and literary traditions. He has written on a variety of literary and musical topics, and has an article on *The Tempest* slated for publication in *Raritan* (Summer 2013).

Himmler's Nose

Minsk, 1941

As always it's the little unexpected strokes
that hold and won't let go, not the grand
gestures or the overall design. It's the dog
scampering through the scene, its pause
to survey what's in front of it, almost as if
asking, Why are those people in that pit?
Or it's the soldiers, a clump of three or four
standing to one side and conversing about
who or what no one will ever know, maybe
about the weather, or a dirty joke they heard,
or how geeky the real Herr Himmler looks.
Or Himmler himself, the way he turns away,
horrified at the horror he sees, the way he tugs
at his nose, maybe because of an actual itch,
or an unconscious tic before the messiness of
death, his bespectacled eyes dilated by disgust.

-George Drew

Works published in the Poets' Corner are selected by Greg Delanty, former President of the ALSCW (2010–11), who reads the submissions without knowing the identities of the poets.

To contribute poetry—both original pieces and translations are accepted—to the Poets' Corner, send your work to *literarymatters@alscw.org* by the submission deadline for **Issue 7.2: March 31, 2014**.

Catalogue

Since then I've stood on corners, broken hearts, slept
late in summer—fan turned high, room dark. Woke sweaty
from nightmares, moon through the window, its demon
face reflected in my own. Since then I've stood inside
aerodromes waiting for buses, lit fires, burnt each bridge
while fingers dangled over grey water. Bit my skin
just to feel my teeth, taken breath after necessary breath,
no more, no less, and spoken intricate codes meant
to mean nothing. Siphoned off the heat of sense
from whatever worn rhetoric thrummed beneath,
cauterized each thought with hot needles, leaving
the screech of sudden air through sudden trees.

-Susan Levi Wallach

Tutor

On Friday nights, at Temple,

clapping along with the children, the children
endlessly fascinated: your gaunt frame,

your brown suit, your erratic beard.

You shave it.
You grow an odd '*Señor* mustache.'

When I'm twelve, my mother
invites you to teach me Hebrew.

After the lesson, we play chess, she gives you dark beer.

I like the label, the women in Lederhosen,
the occasional sip.

I confuse the rook and the knight.
The knight, you remind me,

moves in an L.

After dinner, I take it into my hands,
the music you bought me

with a picture
of the star—glossed lips and a plaid skirt.

On the sixth night of Hanukkah,
my mother gives me underwear.

You say, *Try them on, Try them on*.

-Daniel Kraines

Daniel Kraines grew up in a German Jewish family and spent part of his teenage years as an exchange student in Hamburg. He received his MFA from Boston University in 2011. Currently, he is finishing a master's degree in modernism and philosophy for the Draper Program at NYU. He has published in *Redivider*, *Salmagundi*, *H.O.W. Journal*, *High Chair*, *Box of Jars*, and *Until Now*. In the summer he teaches at Skidmore College and is cofounder of the East River Reading Series.

Second Fiddle

Mr. Otis has left his home in Georgia,
but why Georgia? And Mr. Brook Benton,
why does he croon about a rainy night
in Georgia? Why has Miz Gladys booked
passage on a midnight train to Georgia?
And then of course there's Georgia Brown.
Why do all these songs cite only Georgia?
Why not Tennessee, or Carolina, or Arkansas?
And why, for god's sake, why not Mississippi?
Why do they all play second fiddle to Georgia?

Must be something about those double g's
snapping fire like Mama's pisselum switch;
must be something about that o and r
lingering like the taste of Granny's buttermilk
on a sizzling Delta day; must be something
about that second syllable dribbling slick
as Aunt Viola's molasses down the chin;
must be something about that trochee
throbbing sweet as one of Georgia's peaches.
Must be something about Georgia. Must be.

-George Drew

George Drew was born in Mississippi and now lives in upstate New York. He is the author of five volumes, most recently *The View from Jackass Hill* (Texas Review Press, 2011), winner of the 2010 X. J. Kennedy Poetry Prize. His sixth collection, *Fancy's Orphan*, will be published in 2015 by Tiger Bark Press. George has published widely, most recently in *Solstice*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and the *Texas Review*.

That Evening

They couldn't pull you back, not that they used
those words. They talked of probabilities,
of pulse, of breaths per minute, rising, falling, then
not rising, only falling, falling. Nothing left
to do, they said, faces grave—though not
as grave as you'd be in a day or two,
I thought, knowing how you'd appreciate
the pun, how we would laugh while waiting for
the elevator, how you'd prove them wrong.

-Susan Levi Wallach

Susan Levi Wallach has an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her work recently appeared in *American Athenaeum*, the *Moth*, and *RiverLit*.

Memoriam

The formula for sleep is two blues, maybe
swallowed with vodka, bottle kept bedside,
repeat at intervals, maybe just the vodka,
maybe in minibottles so you can count them:
limit of five. Maybe you toast a slice of bread
because sweet butter relaxes your stomach—
you remember having toast and butter and milk
that tasted of brandy, the good stuff your mother
would splash in, tipping her glass over yours.

Once you ransacked her closet, looking
for the box that held the tooies and ludes,
vials of Easter candy nestled in cotton
next to the bennies and black beauties
that spun her out of bed in the morning.
"I have to unwind," she'd say as you waited,
her voice a watch spring, tongue winding tight:
you could hear the seconds ticking past.

You slip your stash into tampon boxes, hampers,
anywhere your sons won't poke. One more drink,
another pill, maybe half, hoping you'll remember
in the morning to bury the empties in the trash.

-Susan Levi Wallach

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• You may send up to five poems during each submission period.

• Please submit poem(s) via email as an attachment. When submitting multiple poems, please include all pieces in one file.

• You are encouraged to provide a biographical note (100 words or fewer) with your submission, which will appear alongside your poetry if it is accepted for publication.

• In order to provide a balanced forum for emerging poets, we ask those featured in the Poets' Corner to refrain from sending in further submissions for six months following the publication of their poetry.

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