

ALSC NEWSLETTER

The Association of Literary Scholars and Critics

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In This Issue:

The Minneapolis Conference....

Lorraine Clark

The President's Column....

Roger Shattuck

ALSC in the Press

Edward Gurney: a Neglected Poet

The ALSC Net

From the Editor:

The development of the Association reached an important milestone with the first national conference. Lorraine Clark's report covers the program and gives a sense of what it was like to be there, while some important policy decisions made at Minneapolis are reported on other pages.

One especially welcome decision of the business meeting was the election of Roger Shattuck as the 1995-6 President. We are all fortunate to have in the leadership one of the most active and distinguished original members of the ALSC.

Perhaps the most intriguing report in this issue of the newsletter is of the birth of a sister

(Continued on page 11)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND HOLD THIS DATE

- 1996 Conference in Boston,
August 25-27
- Excellent Downtown Hotel
- Full Details of Program, Registration, and Travel Stipends to be announced in Winter Newsletter

THE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Lorraine J. Clark

A surprisingly large crowd of 270 literary critics, writers, scholars, editors and journalists attended the Association's first national convention in September at the Radisson Hotel Metrodome on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis. The occasion was a convivial one, marked by shared excitement, gratitude, relief, and sheer pleasure at the quality and variety offered by the program and at the welcome dearth of polemics against the current state of the literary profession.

All sessions were plenary, and while audience sizes varied—standing room only for the keynote address by Bernard Knox of the Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard, for instance—this contributed a great deal to the strong sense of community which emerged by the convention's end. The program brought together classicists and modernists; the two after-dinner speakers were on the one hand Mr. Knox, and on the other jazz writer and journalist Stanley Crouch, who gave a vigorous presentation on Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* at Bellow's request.

What is more, the writers and critics actually talked to each other: in the final panel, for instance, an absorbing dialogue ensued when poets Mark Strand (Johns Hopkins) and John Hollander (Yale) read from their poetry, and their critics Charles Berger (Utah) and Eleanor Cook (Toronto) then responded.

(Continued on page 3)

Lorraine Clark is Associate Professor of English at Trent University, Canada

The President's Column

One scene remains etched in my mind from a movie watched some years ago. In a field next to the getaway car, Bonnie and Clyde are reading with intense excitement newspaper accounts of their criminal exploits in recent days. Every narrative and descriptive detail rewards them. They cannot get enough of the journalists' gushing prose. I have come to call their behavior the Bonnie and Clyde syndrome. They have not done what they have done, they have not lived, until they have read about it in the papers. Photographs would be even better. Only words and images after the fact can certify reality.

The formation of this Association and our September conference produced a good number of items in the press, national and local, general and professional. Reading them, I find myself reminded of the Bonnie and Clyde syndrome. The straightforward journalistic articles (The New York Times, December 7, 1994, and the Chronicle of Higher Education, October 6, 1995) have done their job well enough. But we cannot look for reliable accounts of our accomplishments and mistakes in the partisan pieces. Either they refer to the "stunning success" of the Minneapolis meeting and urge us to intensify our insurgency. Or they find us anti-intellectual, wrong headed reactionaries trying to turn the clock back forty years. Neither description will help us to stay on course.

I believe that at this juncture the wisest path for us to follow is quietly to consolidate our activities around the goals originally formulated in our statement to prospective members. "Our purpose is to foster appreciation of the literary imagination, of the value of literary study, and of a shared literary culture." Even the outmoded word "appreciation" conveys the proper sense of a high regard for something based on a careful estimate of its qualities and value. We want foreign and classical literatures to remain an integral part of our concern. And we want to keep in our midst writers who share our love of the whole history and range of literature. By carrying out these purposes

faithfully, we shall help all those who "profess literature" and may even make a modest contribution to our beleaguered culture.

* * * * *

A few mundane matters. After much discussion, the officers and the Council approved the late-August date for our next conference in order to obtain the most favorable group rates. September and October in Boston are heavily booked and command much higher prices. The same low rate in January looked less attractive for several reasons.

The blue forms distributed at Minneapolis have brought back to us over a hundred responses, with suggestions (often conflicting), offers of help, and comments of every kind. John Ellis and I thank you for the help. Since many of the items concern planning future conferences, we turned over a full set of the responses to the Conferences Committee: Christopher Ricks (Boston U., English) Chairman; Jenny Clay (U. Virginia, Classics); James Engell (Harvard, English); and Robin Miller (Brandeis, Russian). They have been at work for over a month and will announce the 1996 program in the next Newsletter.

Roger Shattuck

*University Professors
Boston University
745 Commonwealth Ave
Boston, MA 02215*

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Professor John M. Ellis
Association of Literary Scholars and Critics
Crown College, University of California,
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Telephone and fax: 408 423 4315

E-Mail: John_Ellis@macmail.ucsc.edu

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or of the ALSC.

CONFERENCE (Continued from page 1)

The opening panel, "Intellectual Craftsmanship: How to Read a Book," featured close readings of W. H. Auden's "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" (Rosanna Warren, Boston University), passages from Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* and Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (independent writer Sven Birkerts), and passages from Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and *Our Mutual Friend* (Robert Alter, UC Berkeley).

Roger Shattuck of Boston University (the Association's incoming president) began the session by wittily sketching five paradoxical "rules of thumb" for reading well, culled from writers as diverse as Charles Darwin, Ezra Pound, C. Wright Mills (*The Sociological Imagination*), Marcel Proust, and Leo Spitzer. "Read blind," he advised, that is, ignoring who wrote the book, what genre its jacket declares it belongs to, in fact all *a priori* expectations of whatever sort; "read with both eyes open," "reciprocally," in an alternation of inner and outer worlds, imagination and reality, the only salvation from "the abyss of solipsism"; read "coenesthetically," with "one's whole, divided being," including reading aloud whenever possible; take notes and keep files "as if your life depended on it," because reading well involves the cumulative accomplishments of a lifetime's reading; and finally, "don't take advice, especially about anything so intimate as the act of reading."

The papers which followed indeed exemplified such intimate acts of reading, one demonstrating Auden's use of the Alcaic stanza to mourn the loss not just of Sigmund Freud but of an era, others the use of tone, imagery, diction—or "style"—to create the distinctive worlds of Ford, James, and Dickens.

These detailed *explications de texte* indeed provoked a question raised more than once at the conference: whether the organization was simply returning to the aesthetic formalism of New Criticism. But *explication de texte* is hardly the

exclusive domain of New Criticism, whose most enduring and valuable legacy may well be the habit of close reading it has engendered in subsequent generations of literary critics of all persuasions. And there are close readings and close readings: readings that find only, for instance, the same *a priori* politically-charged dialectical oppositions of self-other, male-female, East-West, black-white; or the less predictable, more New Critical sort that yield paradoxes, tensions, ironies, ambiguities of form and meaning usually resolved by the reading.

But close readings can—and in this case, did—yield much more than this: a marvelously evocative rendering of Auden's grief, for instance, a grief which owed none of its power to dialectical oppositions; and equally evocative renderings of Dickens's London and the long shadows of a Jamesian summer afternoon. This was not merely an "aesthetic" evocativeness, moreover, but rather a fidelity to the distinctive worlds of these works, to their authors' ideas and feelings about these worlds, to their unique visions of what it means to live—to think and breathe and have one's being.

Nor in any case did close readings dominate all the panels at the conference. The center panel, on "Dante and the Western Canon," deliberately put an author center-stage in papers examining more generally Dante's theory of sacred language (Steven Botterill, UC Berkeley), his relation to the Twentieth Century (Ricardo Quinones, Claremont McKenna), and his relation to Islamic philosophy (Paul Cantor, Virginia). Dante's poetry itself became the object of attention when poet and translator Robert Pinsky, after explaining his basic principles of translation, read from his compelling new translation of *The Inferno*.

Just what did the convention achieve? The first audience respondent to "How to Read a Book" probably said it best: "Listening to this panel," he exclaimed, "I've had a sensation I haven't had for years at a literary conference: it makes me want to go back to each of these works and RE-READ THEM." In a final summary session, Lee Rust

Brown of the University of Utah expressed the relief of many that instead of being "diagnostic and denunciatory," preoccupied with "polemics against current orthodoxies," the convention had offered "clean air" and "the prospect of a clear common ground."

Questioned at this same session about whether the Association was "against theory," Secretary-Treasurer John Ellis responded that indeed it was not—against "bad theory" (which is to say, theory ignorant of its origins in philosophy and applied indiscriminately to literature), yes, but not "against theory," which indeed should not be ceded to postmodernism. Again, he emphasized how much the Association wants to provide a forum not for complaints against the profession but for new and positive directions in literary study, directions nonetheless fully cognizant of the sometimes healthy skepticism and critical self-awareness promoted by poststructuralist critique.

Lee Brown eloquently summed up the main thrust of this first convention: "Devotion to the validity of the literary imagination is something to be practiced rather than preached. One of the best ways to practice it will be to continue what this conference has started by keeping the finest poets and fiction-writers at the center of what we do. We should bring classical and contemporary literature together inside our common critical horizon. And our standards for viewing them should come to us not as part of some professional apparatus, but as an independent, unpredictable consequence of literature itself." ■

(Members who were unable to attend the conference will be glad to learn that they can get a closer look at what happened there when the proceedings are published in the Spring 1996 issue of the journal Philosophy and Literature. We are grateful to the editors of P&L for their kind offer. The editor of the volume will be P&L Associate Editor and ALSC member Patrick Henry of Whitman College. We hope to be able to send each of our members a copy.)

GRADUATE STUDENTS AND JOBS

One of the most discussed topics at the conference (both in the corridors and in plenary discussions) was the difficult situation of graduate students who must look for academic jobs in an environment largely controlled by an orthodoxy alien to them and their interests. How can the Association help them? There was general agreement that a conventional job market attached to the annual meeting was not possible at this stage, for two reasons. First, we do not yet have the resources to do it. Second, many speakers observed that the sometimes bizarre and even intellectually trivial content of the MLA conference program is due in part to the demands of the job market and the proliferation of short papers whose main purpose is to justify reimbursement of expenses.

A consensus slowly emerged on a cautious but useful first step. If departments that are "amenable to job candidates who are ALSC members" (as Lisa Fishman, a graduate student at the University of Utah, put it) would let us know of their job opportunities, job-seekers could contact the ALSC office for a list of them. It would be quite easy, for example, for the secretary to keep a file of openings that could be sent by e-mail in a matter of seconds to anyone who inquired.

Even where there are no current openings, it would be useful to have on file information about departments where individuals feel free to deviate from the current orthodoxy in their teaching and scholarship. We have some general impressions about departments of this kind, but more systematic information based on the considered judgments of people on the ground would be invaluable.

The system will only be as good as the information that reaches the office; so please, department chairs, let us know about job openings and more generally about your department's literary orientation. ■

A neglected poet: Ivor Gurney

Ivor Gurney was born in Gloucester, England, in 1890, the son of a tailor. In 1911 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, London, and studied there until the outbreak of World War I. Drafted in February 1915, Gurney saw active duty on the front in northern France until he was wounded and gassed in 1917. *Severn and Somme*, his first collection of poems, was published in October 1917; it was followed by *War's Embers* (1919); a third manuscript was rejected.

Gurney was committed to a mental hospital in 1922. Though he remained hospitalized until his

death in 1937, he continued to compose poetry and music, in obscurity. His story gained attention with Michael Hurd's biography, *The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney*, in 1978; but not until the publication of his *Collected Poems* in 1982 did a larger reading public in England begin to realize that a "new" master had appeared, a poet of matchless vigor of expression and metrical subtlety, tender, violent, and wrenching, by turns.

—Rosanna Warren

Smudgy Dawn

Smudgy dawn scarfed with military colours
Northward, and flowing wider like slow sea water,
Woke in lilac and elm and almost among garden flowers.
Birds a multitude; increasing as it made lighter.
Nothing but I moved by railings there; slept sweeter
Than kings the country folk in thatch or slate shade.
Peace had the grey west, fleece clouds sure in its power—
Out on much-Severn I thought waves readied for laughter,
And the fire-swinger promised behind the elm-pillars
A day worthy such beginning to come after.
To the room then to work with such hopes as may
Come to the faithful night worker, in west country's July.

(Ivor Gurney, *Selected Poems*, ed. P. J. Kavanagh
Oxford University Press 1990. By permission of Oxford University Press.)

A SISTER ORGANIZATION: THE AAH

On October 6, the *London Times Higher Education Supplement* carried a long article by Tim Cornwell entitled "Art History Enters the PC Fray." It reported the formation of the Association for Art History, "a direct challenge to the giant College Art Association of artists and art professionals, which critics say is locked into race, gender and class studies." The article goes on to say that the founders of the AAH--Bruce Cole and Andrew Ladis--were "inspired by the success of a literary association.... The Association of Literary Scholars and Critics held its first convention this month in Minneapolis...." Bruce Cole (Indiana University) confirms that the first step that he and Andrew Ladis (University of Georgia) took was to circulate a note to selected colleagues with "some literature about a new academic association dedicated to the study and criticism of literature as art and as a humanistic discipline. We feel that a similar organization for the history of art is needed."

Numerically, art history is a rather small discipline within the academy. But when museum

professionals are added in, the result is a large group of enormous cultural importance.

Response to their initial overtures has been so strong that Cole and Ladis are now proceeding with a more general mailing to their field. Some of the language of that mailing may be of interest: "The CAA has established a ruling orthodoxy of art historical thought...[and has] lost sight of the defining features of art history as a discipline.... 'Cutting edge' scholarship is now trickling down [to] unsuspecting students who take art history courses to learn about art and artists and find themselves faced with political indoctrination.... The general comprehension and appreciation of art, so much a part of our civilization, is in the process of being reshaped and distorted on both the scholarly and popular level." Like the ALSC, the AAH will invite membership "on a wide basis, without regard to political, scholarly, or ideological belief."

We wish the AAH well, and are pleased to have had some part in its origin. ■

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership: We now have 1600 members, 300 more than reported in the last newsletter.

1996 ALSC Conference: to be held August 25-27 at the Swissotel, Boston. The Swissotel has excellent conference facilities and is ideally situated downtown adjacent to the Commons. The program committee will give a full report on its work in the next newsletter.

Call For Papers: A joint conference of the Robert Penn Warren Circle and the Melville Society is planned for August 1-4, 1996, at North Adams, MA. Contact Jonathan R. Eller, Indiana University.

NEH Summer Seminar: ALSC member Gary Saul Morson together with Michael Williams will conduct an NEH seminar at Northwestern University on the topic "News of Nowhere: Utopia

in Interdisciplinary Perspective." Contact Gary Saul Morson, Slavics, Northwestern University.

Weaver Fellowships: The Weaver Fellowship Program supports graduate students who intend to pursue a teaching career devoted to liberal arts education. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 14 S. Bryn Mawr Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

New Books: William A. Glasser, *Reclaiming Literature: A Teacher's Dilemma* (Greenwood Press); Steven Shankman, *In Search of the Classic: Reconsidering the Greco-Roman Tradition, Homer to Valery and Beyond* (Penn State UP); Joris J. Heise, *Literature: Discovering Ourselves Through Great Books* (American Press); Helen Killoran, *Edith Wharton: Art and Illusion* (Alabama UP).

THE ALSC IN THE PRESS

The Minneapolis conference was an important step for the Association in many ways, not least because it produced a much enhanced national and even international presence through press reports at home and abroad.

The story of how this happened began before the conference, when notices about it were sent to some 150 journalists across the country. As luck would have it, this got the attention of Minneapolis based writer Karren Mills, who wrote a well-balanced AP wire story. She quoted several members of the Association, but also gave the responses of MLA Executive Director Phyllis Franklin and of feminists Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore. Mills' story was immediately picked up by dozens of local newspapers across the country. (We learned of 18 just through casual personal contact, so there must have been many more.) The timing could not have been better, for it ran just as the conference was opening.

The story created a climate of interest in the ALSC; many local writers, having seen the wire story, decided to do pieces of their own, using it as a partial source. For example, Olin Chism of the *Dallas Morning News* (October 15) wrote a fine article entitled "Is the Tide Finally Turning on College Campuses?" Chism asked the question: "May we now view Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson as artists rather than soldiers in the cultural wars?" Tom Barry, senior editor of the *Austin American-Statesman* (September 27) wrote in a similar vein: "They want to talk about literature as art. Radical. May their tribe increase." Lauren Kaye of the *Saratogian* (September 29) used the AP story as an occasion to go among local faculty at Skidmore College to ask for their views of the ALSC, but while she reported opinions pro and contra, pride of place in her article went to our member Barbara Black, who said that she had come back from the conference "inspired to teach" by it.

But while there were a great number of them, these were all local stories and thus local events. The national media were still to be heard from. *Chronicle of Higher Education* reporter Mary Crystal Cage was an active presence at the conference, and her story ("Treating Literature as Literature," October 6) proved to be scrupulously fair and for the most part accurate. (Some lapses were pointed out by Tom Clayton in a subsequent letter printed on November 3.) Ninety percent of the article was devoted to a serious exposition of what the ALSC was trying to do. She also sought out current MLA President Sander Gilman for his comment. What is on the "cutting edge" today will be out of fashion tomorrow, said Gilman, a statement with which ALSC members could agree.

More surprising was the appearance on the very same day of a story in the *London Times Higher Education Supplement* (the British equivalent of the *CHE*). Though it was ostensibly about the formation of the Association for Art History (see page 6 for more on that topic), author Tim Cornwell devoted half of his long article to the ALSC as the inspiration for the AAH.

Yet more British coverage was to follow. In the November 17 issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* deputy editor Adolf Wood discussed the ALSC in a column headed "Is the Counterrevolution at Hand?" Still further inroads into the English-speaking world's foremost literary magazines came with publication in the *New York Review of Books* (November 16) of Bernard Knox's conference keynote speech; and this will continue with an article by Council member Lorraine Clark in the next issue of *Books in Canada*.

Meanwhile, journals that serve influential select constituencies were beginning to carry stories about the Association. The winter issue of the *PEN*

(Continued on page 12)

THE ALSC GETS A CONSTITUTION

The start-up phase of any new organization is always chaotic: a few people begin to talk to each other, more join them and informal understandings slowly develop as to who will do what. But for a long time it is never quite clear whether the organization really exists, and (even if it does) how anyone has the authority to act or speak in its name. The most important thing that happened at the business meeting at Minneapolis was the final step in the transition to a solid constitutional structure. A simple and clear set of By-Laws was adopted that legitimizes our affairs by providing for annual elections of the governing body (the Council) and the President. Now at last the authority of the Council and the validity of what we do will derive from the Association's members. The first election cycle begins in early 1996.

The text of the By-Laws proposed by the old Steering Committee for adoption at the membership meeting was printed in the Summer Newsletter, but at a meeting held the day before the conference the Committee decided to recommend three amendments to the published draft.

The first concerned the membership of the Council. We noticed that the draft had made no provision for the President to remain on the Council at the end of his or her term. This would mean that a unique source of knowledge about actions and negotiations on behalf of the Association would suddenly not be available when the Presidency changed hands. To remedy this, new language was recommended for IV, 2, so that it would now read: "The Council consists of nine members serving staggered three year terms, the Officers of the Association, and the immediate past President."

The second change concerned the Nominations Committee. Here we wanted to make that Committee more responsive to the membership by inserting new language in VII, 1, which would

now read: "The Nominations Committee shall solicit suggestions from the membership and from among them shall nominate candidates for each position. Nominations may also be made through a petition...."

The last of the three changes attempted to deal with the fact that there are many federal and state tax regulations which limit what the Association can do just as surely as our own By-Laws do. Rather than incorporate these restrictions directly into the By-Laws, thereby cluttering them and obscuring the provisions that really matter, we recommended that a new sentence be added at the end of I, 1: "This Association... It is a non-profit Corporation under the laws of California (See Appendix.)" This new sentence will allow us to gather together the texts of some of the most important provisions of the relevant regulations and print them at the end of the By-Laws.

Adoption of the By-Laws as amended was moved and seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The ALSC now had a constitution.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The first election cycle is about to begin. The membership will vote to elect the Vice-President (who is also the President-Elect) and three new council members in the Spring, but before that can happen the Nominations Committee must nominate candidates for those positions and also fill half the positions on the standing committees. The By-Laws require the Nominations Committee to solicit suggestions from the membership before it makes its report. Please therefore send nominations, or volunteer your own services for a committee, to the committee chair: Professor David Hertz, Department of Comparative Literature, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405. Fax: 812-855-2688.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES, 1996-97

Officers

President: Roger Shattuck *Boston University*
Vice-President: Robert Alter *UC Berkeley*
Secretary-Treasurer: John M. Ellis *UC Santa Cruz*

Council

<i>Immediate Past President</i>	Ricardo J. Quinones <i>Claremont McKenna College</i>
<i>Term ending September 1996</i>	James T. Engell <i>Harvard University</i> David M. Hertz <i>Indiana University</i> John Hollander <i>Yale University</i>
<i>Term ending September 1997</i>	Felicia Bonaparte <i>CUNY</i> Paul A. Cantor <i>University of Virginia</i> Lorraine J. Clark <i>Trent University</i>
<i>Term ending September 1998</i>	Michael V. Moses <i>Duke University</i> Jeanne J. Smoot <i>North Carolina State University</i> Stanley N. Stewart <i>UC Riverside</i>

Committees

<i>Committee on Conferences</i>	Christopher J. Ricks (Chair) <i>Boston University</i> Jenny Strauss Clay <i>University of Virginia</i> James T. Engell <i>Harvard University</i> Robin Miller <i>Brandeis University</i>
<i>Committee on Curriculum</i>	Norman Fruman (Chair) <i>University of Minnesota</i> John Hollander <i>Yale University</i> Richard Lehan <i>UCLA</i> Mary Ann McGrail <i>Boston University</i>
<i>Committee on Publications</i>	Paul A. Cantor (Chair) <i>University of Virginia</i> J.D. McClatchy <i>Yale Review</i> Willard Spiegelman <i>Southern Methodist University</i> Rosanna Warren <i>Boston University</i>
<i>Committee on Nominations</i>	David M. Hertz (Chair) <i>Indiana University</i> James T. Engell <i>Harvard University</i> John Hollander <i>Yale University</i>

A NET OF OUR OWN

Organizations with large memberships have always found it hard to involve their full membership in policy discussions; conferences are infrequent, and in any case nobody wants business meetings to take up large amounts of time at annual meetings. Now at last the electronic net makes it possible to have a continuous nationwide discussion in which anyone can take part and be instantly heard by everyone else. What makes this possible is an e-mail system in which anyone who is part of a network can send messages to one address which then automatically distributes that message to everyone else in the group.

An ALSC Net has just been set up by our colleague and Council member James Engell at Harvard. He is technically its owner and administrator. To become part of the net, all you have to do is send an e-mail message to "majordomo@husc.harvard.edu" in which you include the magic words "subscribe alsc-l". (Make sure you use the *letter* "l"--not the numeral "1".) You need no subject heading, no signature, in fact no other words at all. To remove yourself from the list is equally simple--the word "unsubscribe" replaces "subscribe". There is no cost.

After you have done this, you will get a notice indicating that you are now a subscriber to the list, and thereafter receive all the messages posted on it. If you want to post a message yourself, you must send e-mail NOT to the address you used to subscribe, but rather to: "alsc-l@husc.harvard.edu".

Lists can be moderated, which means that the owner decides who can subscribe and who can't, and also screens all messages, posting only those that he wants to post; or unmoderated, which means that all who wish to can subscribe, and once they have, can post anything they wish.

We decided on an unmoderated list. There are some risks: eccentric messages posted on our net could be cited by detractors as typical of the Association. But for the moment the advantages of

a completely open forum seem to us to outweigh the disadvantages. There are many decisions to make about the kinds of things we should be doing to advance the values that brought us together. An open, continuous discussion should serve our purposes well and allow us to make real progress. If we find that an unmoderated list is too dangerous, we can always change to a moderated one at any time.

You are automatically assigned a password when you subscribe to a list, but you won't need the password for everyday functions like sending and receiving messages. It will only be needed for things such as changing your e-mail address. One last point. Anyone can get a list of the current subscribers to a list with the command "recipients alsc-l". If that worries you, you can remove your name from the list that will be given out in response to that command (though not in fact from the subscribers) by the command "set conceal yes". ■

TIME TO RENEW!

Dues for 1996 will remain at their 1995 level: \$25, with \$15 for students. We are keeping dues low to encourage younger scholars and writers to join, but hope that some of our older, more affluent members might make an extra contribution to support our work. Income from dues does not by itself cover our operating expenses.

Several members have pressed us to create an ALSC membership directory so that they can organize local meetings, and also to help them identify colleagues who are not members but who might want to be. This would have the effect of making ALSC membership a public fact, and we know that one or two of you have been sensitive on this score. Accordingly, we have included a line in the renewal form on the opposite page that will let us know who wishes to be left out of the directory.

Editor (continued from page 1)

organization, the Association for Art History; details are on page 6. We also hear other rumblings which suggest that another may be on the way, and hope that it will have materialized in time for a report in the next issue.

Critics have always known that the canon is alive and in flux: on page 5, Rosanna Warren presents a neglected poet whose work may be the cause of some further shifting. We should like to make this a recurring feature of the newsletter. Send us examples from your own favorite neglected writers.

The business meeting of the conference marked the final stage of a transition from an informal group of volunteers to a properly constituted organization whose leadership derives its authority from the membership (report on page 8). Another important conference decision was a modest but useful first step to help younger members find their first academic jobs (page 4). But

in both cases, only the membership can make them really work. Don't forget to send suggestions for nominations to the Nominations Committee, and information about jobs to the office.

In previous issues we have tried to keep you informed of the occasional article on the ALSC in the press, but the trickle recently became a flood. Accordingly, we devote an article (page 7) to this very encouraging sequence of events.

Finally, we begin in this issue the practice of noting and announcing anything--conferences, seminars, fellowships, new books (especially by members)--that we think likely to be of special interest to those whose outlook has led them to become members of the ALSC. Once again: send in items you think should be included. Ultimately, the newsletter can only be as useful as the Association's members want it to be. ■

CALENDAR YEAR 1996 MEMBERSHIP DUES FORM

Please fill in and return to John M. Ellis, Secretary/Treasurer, Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, Crown College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Institutional Affiliation: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Dues enclosed (Regular Membership \$25; Students \$15): _____

This is a renewal new membership. Extra Contribution: _____

Do you wish your name to be omitted from the ALSC directory? _____

PRESS (continued from page 6)

Newsletter ran PEN Board member (and ALSC member) Rika Lesser's 700 word article. (PEN is an important international association of writers.) Matthew Davis wrote an excellent article entitled "Revitalizing Literary Studies" for the fall issue of *Campus*, a quarterly the constituency of which is students, and member Sanford Pinsker wrote "First ALSC Conference a Smashing Success," for the winter issue of the National Association of Scholars Newsletter. More are to follow: e.g., by Sanford Pinsker (again) in *Measure*, and by Council member Paul Cantor in *American Enterprise*.

These gains were evidently making some of our colleagues nervous, and the result was two attacks on the ALSC: one by Marjorie Garber (whose two most recent books are on cross-dressing and on bisexuality) in the *New York Times Book Review* ("Back to Whose Basics," October 29), the other by Jay Parini, whose "Literary Theory is Not All Bad," was the back page article of the November

17 *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Garber seemed to have things backwards when she justified her own scholarly preoccupations with the argument that what is despised today will be lionized tomorrow, while Parini confused an aversion to theory with the aversion to one particular theory that arises when one sees little to recommend it either logically or practically. (The December 8 issue contained three follow-up letters from members making the point.) But the details of the objections by Garber and Parini were unimportant. What mattered was that important national magazines should think it worth their while to print extensive discussions of the Association and its purposes almost in successive weeks. It was finally our critics more even than our supporters who had given us a sign that the ALSC was now a part of the national landscape, and here to stay. ■

The Association of Literary Scholars and Critics
Crown College, University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

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