

Literary Matters



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

Aut nuntiare aut delectare

FROM THE EDITOR

Of late, we, as a group, have had to answer and advocate for our practice in a social climate that more and more frequently asks the question, “Why study literature?” The undervaluation of this pursuit has become apparent in everything from changes in school curriculums that place less emphasis on developing such skills—just consider the ALSCW’s most recent issue of *Forum*, *What is Education? A Response to the Council on Foreign Relations Report, “U.S. Education Reform and National Security”*—to published reports about the decay seen in the quality of students’ writing and reading skills, as well as the reading rates among people of all age groups. Two major publications by the NEA *Read at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (2004) and *To Read or Not to Read* (2007), as well as *Forum* 4 (2010), speak to these issues in great detail. And how many of us have had questions such as “What are you going to do with a degree in English?” hurled at us by people who majored in subjects with a more obvious career path.

For those of us who practice the reading, writing, and analysis of literature, the answer is very simple when considering our own experiences: it is our passion, our first-choice profession. So the better question from our end is “Why not study literature?” But to explain to those who just don’t get the value of poetry or who think English classes should be deemphasized in the education system in favor of studying more science and math, our explanation must be a bit more convincing than “We like it, so you should too.”

The reason I am particularly compelled to bring this up at present is inspired, in part, by the Meringoff session that was held during this year’s conference, which involved sending a convoy of ALSCW members to an Athens, GA high school to answer the very question “Why do we do what we do?” I have no doubt that each representative could proffer different reasons the literary arts are significant, and Sarah Spence has also made a very pointed argument about this in her President’s Column. From my perspective, the study and creation of art are unique in that they both reflect culture and are produced by it, and have no agenda to taint the insight into sociology,

VOLUME 6.1

SPRING 2013

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culture, and the human condition offered by such pursuits. What do I mean by this? Well, a number of things.

For one, what defines something as art, to me, is that the creator intends to make art. It is not about aesthetics or other qualitative valuation, nor is it about clout or connections. Most art is meant to portray life, emotions, and what matters to people. One could claim that political climates are a better gauge of what is most important to a populace, but the fact is, using that as a basis for understanding the ethos of a society is flawed, because there is a battle to be won involved in the stances taken, the issues addressed. Writing literature, studying literature, is not about victory; there is room for alternative viewpoints, constant reanalysis, and reformation.

The piece offered by Debra San, “Stanza Test,” provides a unique perspective on this point. She furnishes Robert Frost’s “Acquainted with the Night,” which was published long before most of our membership was even born, and asks you to consider six versions of the poem—five of which do not accord with the original in

terms of the stanza breaks—and then you are to guess which is the original. Yet the intent of this exercise is not to test your familiarity with Frost’s work, but to provoke thought, to get you thinking about how the poem touches you, how such a seemingly modest change in the form of the piece can change the way it resonates with you. Rather than asking you to pick a winner, she is asking you to see literature as something each person has a personal experience with that transcends the idea of “correctness,” as something one can identify with, even eight-five years after it was written.

Another quality of literature that makes it such a crucial resource in understanding a culture, time period, or the human experience is that it isn’t trying to sell us anything. What publishers are willing to spend money to produce inevitably influences what art we are exposed to. This does, on the one hand, inform us about the values and interests of a society, as the books selected for publication and what genres or styles are favored will reflect popular culture. On the other hand, it limits our exposure to authorial voices that may not be commercially successful. But we still choose what we read based on our interests or predilections, and not because there are magazine ads of celebrity-writers reading a particular book or commercials on TV glamorizing the literary lifestyle. In fact, many of us would not be able to pick out some of our favorite writers from of a police lineup, and this does not detract from the reading experience whatsoever. Almost all products rely on advertising, brand loyalty, or special promotions to survive and generate revenue, whereas with literature, there are places where people can go and borrow books to read them free of charge! (Though the days of the library are growing tenuous, the point remains.)

My ultimate goal here is to argue that literature, and the way it is analyzed, examined, and connected to

other disciplines, is directed at conveying truths—true emotions and true states of human relationships—however screened they may be by odd characters or challenging plotlines or complex language. Not objective truth, but subjective truth. Not answers, but awareness. Because it is art, made by people for the purpose of speaking honestly to the audience about life and asking nothing from them in return, and because analysis and criticism of it seek only to understand it better, we are privileged to commune with commiserating souls or a deeper knowledge of ourselves and our fellows, of our culture or the cultures of others. The value of this is manifested in Nora Battelle’s essay “And Joy Must Flee: On William Wordsworth’s ‘Surprised by Joy.’” Her in-depth examination of this sonnet exhibits the means by which a work of literature can inspire emotion, and how emotion can, in turn, illuminate the piece all the more.

It is my hope that all of these feature articles and the book reviews, poems, and reports presented in this issue help to make real this notion that literature and literary study are of critical importance to all people, not just those of us who have a disposition for it. We need something that exists as a means of validating our experiences, something free of the desire to be victorious, correct, or self-aggrandizing, which allows us to relate to other people so that we can substantiate and sustain our humanity. Literature is that something.

Very best,

Samantha Madway
Editor, *Literary Matters*

LITERARY MATTERS

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Literary Matters is published and distributed quarterly by the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW), 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215. Tel: 617-358-1990; fax: 617-358-1995; office@alscw.org; www.alscw.org.

Literary Matters is provided to all ALSCW members. Membership dues start at \$45 for the first year and are charged on a graduated scale thereafter. Premium Memberships are also available.

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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

BY SARAH SPENCE

The following remarks were delivered during the Nineteenth Annual ALSCW conference in Athens, GA, on April 7, 2013.

I was asked during this year's Meringoff session, which took place at a local high school, to say a few words about the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers—who we are, what we believe in. As I explained there, all those letters—ALSCW—boil down, in my mind at least, to one thing: that the reading and writing of literature matters. We are professional readers and, many of us, professional writers as well, and what that means is that we have dedicated our lives and careers to language and, in particular, to literary language. This strikes many—especially administrators—as odd. Why interpret (or perhaps worse, write) a poem when you could invent Gatorade?

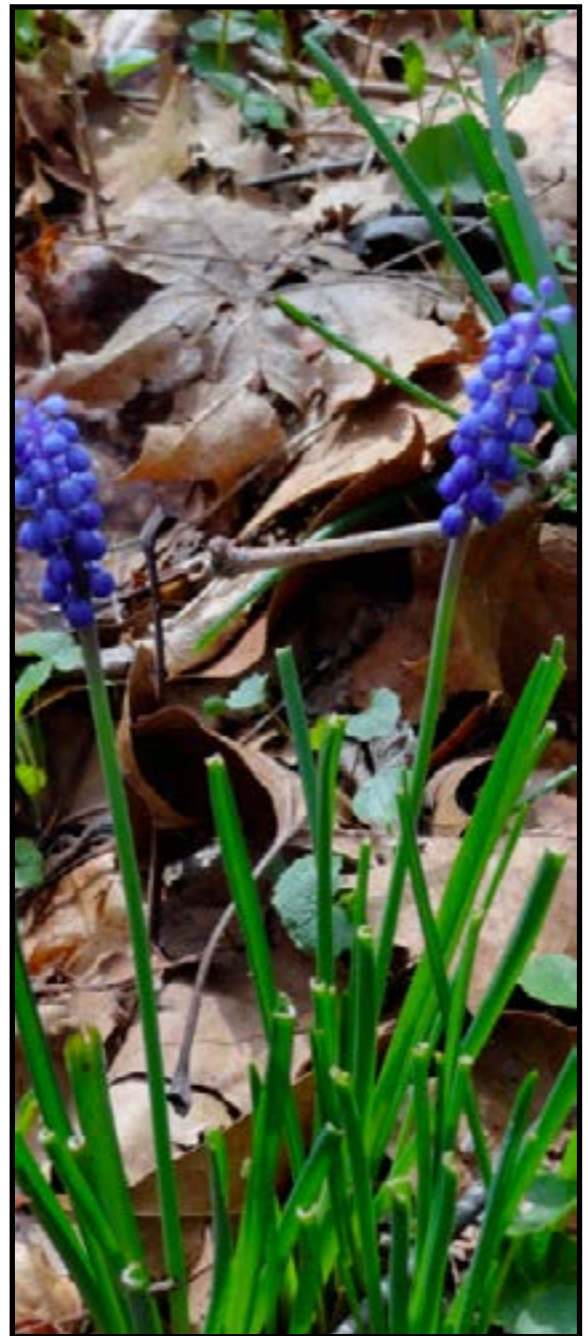
In a review of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* last spring, Ben Brantley wrote that this is

a work that begins with the question posed by a 13-year-old girl in 1809, of just what a carnal embrace is. But...the deeper impulse...
...is the itch to discover what lurks beneath concealing clothes and clouds and dusty layers of accumulated years. Success in these quests is irrelevant, since full and true knowledge of anything is impossible....[as Stoppard himself says] "It's the wanting to know that makes us matter."¹

I would suggest that the very unquenchable quality of that pursuit—as long as our lives—is ironically perhaps not about getting to the solution or finding the answer. We pose the questions: we pose them of texts in the same way we pose them of our lives, and we listen to the questions that texts ask us. Stoppard's play turns more around the question of what a carnal embrace is than around enacting that embrace, or analyzing it. I have noticed in my career-long engagement with ancient rhetoric and lyric poetry that they are both about not touching: the Occitan

(continued on page 5)

¹ Ben Brantley, "The 180-Year Itch, Metaphysically Speaking," review of *Arcadia*, by Tom Stoppard, directed by David Leveaux, Ethel Barrymore Theater, New York, *New York Times*, March 17, 2011, http://theater2.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/theater/reviews/arcadia-by-tom-stoppard-on-broadway-review.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.



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 6.3 must be received by **August 15, 2013.**

News & Announcements


VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR PENCIL'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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

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

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

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

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

BOSTON LOCAL MEETING, FEBRUARY 6, 2013

BY ALLISON VANOUSE

On February 6, members of the ALSCW gathered at the BU Editorial Institute for a talk by Kate Womersley entitled "Beckett's Funny Turns." Beginning with a survey of music hall culture in 1920s Dublin—including bills for performances Beckett may have attended while enrolled at Trinity, a handful of recordings of the typical entertainments, and an advertisement for a musical revue of 1925 tantalizingly titled "Happy Days"—Ms. Womersley's talk drew attention to echoes of the music hall in Beckett's work, early and late.

We were invited to consider the role of the female soloist in "Happy Days" (which was at one point to be titled "Female Solo"), Beckett's insistence on sandpapered shoes for "Footfalls," and the oft-revisited device of the turn. A "turn," of course, is the name for any individual performance in a vaudeville show. It is also the third most-used stage direction in Beckett's plays, after "pause" and "silence." The talk inspired a lively discussion, touching on circus, music, and theater: A turn might be spatial, where one turns to address another actor or takes a turn around a ring, or it might be figurative in any number of ways. A turn might be a return (*da capo*), or one might turn as sour milk turns, or change into something else entirely.

Ms. Womersley, who worked on Beckett and T. S. Eliot while reading English at Cambridge, has come to Harvard for a Master's in the History of Science. Revisiting Beckett, she said, is always immensely rewarding. As the meeting came to a close, a return to the subject seemed its own reward.

Allison Vanouse graduated from Brandeis University in 2009 with majors in English and American Literature, European Cultural Studies, and Theater Arts. Since graduating, Allison has worked extensively as an actress and frequently collaborates on new plays and performance art. Her play *Projection* was published by *Spirited* magazine in 2012 and was produced at 549 Columbus in Boston. She is currently the office assistant at the ALSCW's Boston office.

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 **August 15, 2013** will be considered for publication in Issue 6.3.

troubadours' *amor de lonh* (love from afar); and the heart of ancient rhetoric, the metaphor, are about creating gaps and spaces, questions, not fixing answers. They are both driven by the resonance of juxtaposition.

When a poet writing about the 1571 battle of Lepanto describes that event as "*Felices animae, felicia pectora vestra / queis ante ora virum tot millia contigit orbis,*" he is taking us from Lepanto to Troy to Ithaca as the echoes of *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* inform his understanding of the battle at hand. When Bob Fagles dedicates his translation of *The Aeneid* to his wife, appending the Vergilian epithet, *tendimus in Latium*; when David Ferry juxtaposes a translation of the end of *Aeneid*, II, where the hero loses his wife, to his own poems about the death of his wife, Anne, we see how literature helps us pose the questions that matter the most by resisting resolution.

It has recently occurred to me that science may serve to explain the backdrop of my life: the world I walk through, the body I inhabit. But the arts and humanities—for me, literature in particular—work in the

foreground: how I interact with that world, how I make sense of what I encounter. I test the hypotheses of my field every day, not just in my work but in my life—in how I perceive and how I communicate, how I interact with others—and surely something that present, that central, has got to matter. If, as Stoppard says, it is the wanting to know that makes us matter, we need to take that "know" in the sense of *agnoscere*, not *cognoscere*;² *connaître*, not *savoir*;³ apprehension, not comprehension. Our relation to the literary is akin to that we have with our friends, our significant others, our dinner partners; it is front and center in our lives.

Sarah Spence
President, ALSCW

² "COGNOSCERE, to know a person or thing unknown before... AGNOSCERE, to know again what was known before" (Jean Baptiste Gardin Dumesnil, *Latin Synonyms, with Their Different Significations, and Examples Taken from the Best Latin Authors*, The Reverend J. M. Gosset, trans. [London: Richard Taylor and Co., 1809], p. 150).

³ "*Savoir* and *connaître* are used in different contexts or to describe different degrees of knowledge. *Savoir* is used for facts... *Connaître* is used for people and places and represents a personal acquaintance or familiarity" ("*Savoir vs. Connaître present tense,*" Tex's French Grammar, University of Texas at Austin, accessed May 13, 2013, <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/tex/gr/virr10.html>).

A FRIENDLY REMINDER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

Our members are essential to the growth and success of our organization—the papers you present at the Conferences, the articles you contribute to our publications, and the Local Meetings you host and attend all embody the very mission we seek to achieve. We rely on your membership to further our aims as an association, and to continue providing arenas in which you all may gather to further your own. Please take a moment to renew your membership for the 2013 calendar year.

Please note the new membership rates, effective as of December 1, 2012: The categories have been reduced to four: Premium memberships at \$125 annually; Regular memberships at \$85 annually; Senior memberships (for those 70 and above) at \$60; Reduced-price memberships at \$45 annually (those eligible for reduced-price memberships are members in their first year, students, and those earning less than \$50,000 a year). We have eliminated the category of joint domestic memberships and will simply offer two-member households the regular \$85 rate, in return for which they will receive all the benefits provided by a current joint domestic membership—a single copy of our publications and full member privileges for both persons in the household. The Executive Council voted for this change at its October meeting in an effort to meet our ever-increasing financial demands. Since this is the first time in a very long time that our rates have increased, we trust you will understand the necessity. Membership rates in our Association are still one of the best bargains in the business.

To renew your membership with the Association for 2013, please visit <http://alscw.org/membership/join/index.html>. To pay by check, please mail your completed membership form—available on page 33 of this issue of *Literary Matters*—along with a check made out to ALSCW to the Boston office: 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215. Whatever level of membership you choose, you will be doing a great service to literature and the humanities by supporting the ALSCW. A complete explanation of membership benefits, rights, and privileges is available at the web address noted above, should you wish to read more about the terms of membership in the Association. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the office at office@alscw.org, or by calling 617-358-1990. Thank you for your support!

MERINGOFF MATCHING GRANT 2013

May 23, 2013

Dear Members and Friends of the ALSCW,

Many of you will remember that for each of the last two years Stephen J. Meringoff of New York promised us a \$13,500 matching grant, contingent upon our raising the same sum from our membership. Both years you responded quickly and generously, and we raised even more than the requested amount.

Mr. Meringoff has recently issued the \$13,500 matching grant challenge for a third time. I'm sure you agree that the ALSCW remains a vital and rare association, a place where literary reading flourishes, where scholars studying all periods and varieties of literature find common ground with poets and novelists and writers and readers converse with teachers, students, and professors from around the world. As Immediate Past President, John Burt, has written, "the beauty, the insight into human things and into letters, and the joy of learning and of literary conversation... are all too rare in the contemporary academic world, but the ALSCW always remains capable of reminding us why we sought to follow literary vocations."

Our annual conference this year took place in Athens, GA and was, by all accounts, a rollicking success. Blues musicians shared the stage with Ovidians; seminars on Marginalia, the year 1863, Diaries, and Reading Poetry on a Kindle were all packed. Our publications include the esteemed triannual journal, *Literary Imagination*; the quarterly newsletter, *Literary Matters*; and the occasional imprint, *Forum*. The ALSCW sponsors local meetings at universities around the country and coordinates the recently instituted Meringoff prizes in nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and high school student writing.

We are profoundly grateful for your membership and support over the years. We think that the ALSCW is a great institution, one that should continue to thrive. Members of the current council have started the ball rolling with a kick-off donation of \$1350. Please join them and help us reach the goal set by the Meringoff Matching Grant. To make your donation online, visit <http://www.alscw.org/donate/donate-now/index.html>. If you need to make your donation by check through the mail, you may direct it to the Boston office address, 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215.

With thanks and all the best wishes,

Sarah Spence

Distinguished Research Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature, University of Georgia
President, Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers



On December 5, 2012, the George Jean Nathan Award Committee conferred its 2011–2012 prize for the year’s best work in dramatic criticism on ALSCW member Kenneth Gross for his book *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). A committee comprised of the English-department heads at Cornell, Princeton, and Yale Universities awards the prize, which is one of the most distinguished and highly sought in American theater.



George Jean Nathan, a prominent theater critic who published thirty-four books on the theater and co-edited two influential magazines with H. L. Mencken, endowed the award. Previous winners include Charles McNulty, Walter Kerr, Jack Kroll, Alisa Solomon, Charles Isherwood, H. Scott McMillin, and blogger Jill Dolan. Gross was a rare co-winner of the Nathan Award: Jonathan Kalb also received this honor during the award period for his book *Great Lengths: Seven Works of Marathon Theater* (University of Michigan Press, 2011).¹

Mr. Nathan stipulated in his will that the annual net income of half of his estate be used to fund the award. In describing his motivation for founding the award, Mr. Nathan wrote, “it is my object and desire to encourage and assist in developing the art of drama criticism and the stimulation of intelligent play going.”² The award committee’s charge is to “foster the spirit of the award by honoring criticism which demonstrates the highest level of critical thinking about theatre.”³ The committee commended *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* for “offer[ing] a brilliantly idiosyncratic meditation on the fascination “wooden acting” exerts over its delighted but often unnerved human audiences.”⁴ In light of such praise, it is no great surprise that Professor Gross’s work was chosen to receive this prestigious prize.

Kenneth Gross teaches English at the University of Rochester, where he has been on the faculty since 1983. He has written widely on Renaissance and modern poetry,

1 “Two critics win George Jean Nathan Award,” *Chronicle*, Cornell University, December 5, 2012, <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Dec12/NathanAward.html>.

2 George Jean Nathan, quoted in “The Prize,” George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism website, Cornell University English Department, <http://english.arts.cornell.edu/awards/nathan/>.

3 “Selection of the Award Winner,” George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism website, Cornell University English Department, <http://english.arts.cornell.edu/awards/nathan/>.

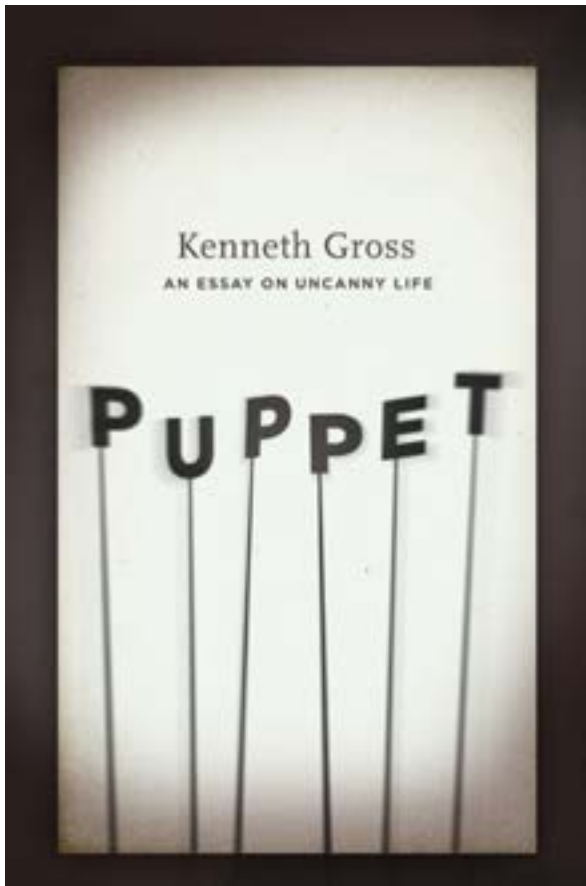
4 “Two Critics,” *Chronicle*.

Shakespeare and Renaissance Theater, and literature and the visual arts. In addition to *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life*, his books include *Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and Magic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Cornell UP, 1992; rpt. 2006), *Shakespeare's Noise* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), *Shylock is Shakespeare* (Chicago UP, 2006). Most recently, he edited an anthology of essays, *On Dolls* (London: Notting Hills Editions, 2012), which contains prose pieces on dolls, puppets, automata, and waxworks by writers such as Heinrich von Kleist, Rainer Maria von Rilke, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, and Bruno Schulz.

Gross has received research fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition, he has been a visiting fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Bellagio Study Center, the Bogliasco Foundation, and the American Academy in Berlin. In the spring of 2004, he was visiting professor of English and fellow in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University. A long-time member of the ALSCW, he has served on both the organization's Executive Committee and the editorial board of *Literary Imagination*.

About the Book:

The puppet creates delight and fear. It may evoke the innocent play of childhood, or become a tool of ritual magic, able to negotiate with ghosts and gods. Puppets can be creepy things, secretive, inanimate, while also full of spirit, alive with gesture and voice. In this eloquent book, Kenneth Gross contemplates the fascination of these unsettling objects—objects that are also actors and images of life.

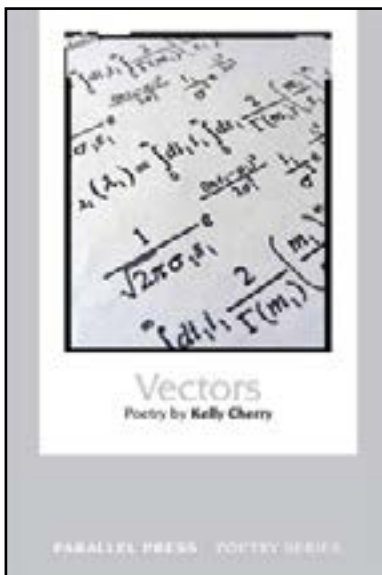


The poetry of the puppet is central here, whether in its blunt grotesquery or symbolic simplicity, and always in its talent for metamorphosis. On a meditative journey to seek the idiosyncratic shapes of puppets on stage, Gross looks at the anarchic Punch and Judy show, the sacred shadow theater of Bali, and experimental theaters in Europe and the United States, where puppets enact everything from Baroque opera and Shakespearean tragedy to Beckettian farce. Throughout, he interweaves accounts of the myriad faces of the puppet in literature—Collodi's cruel, wooden Pinocchio, puppet-like characters in Kafka and Dickens, Rilke's puppet-angels, Philip Roth's dark puppeteer, Micky Sabbath—as well as in the work of artists Joseph Cornell and Paul Klee. The puppet emerges here as a hungry creature, seducer and destroyer, demon and clown. It is a test of our experience of things, of the human and inhuman. A book about reseeing what we know, or what we think we know, *Puppet* evokes the startling power of puppets as mirrors of the uncanny in life and art.

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 6.3: **August 15, 2013**.

NEW PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS

Kelly Cherry, *Vectors* (Madison, WI: Parallel Press, 2012)



Many have tried to explain the apparent contradictions of Oppenheimer's life and his complex personality; Cherry's concern is to bring the reader into relation with the physicist so that this enigmatic figure can become more transparent to her audience. Cherry wrestles with the complicated figure of J. Robert Oppenheimer, both the "father of the atomic bomb" and the flesh-and-blood man, from his early upbringing to his work with the Manhattan Project. Her poems explore his formation and education, coming inevitably to rest with his best-known achievement, which she describes in these lines: "The atom would reveal / a power incommensurate with its size. / The skies would open their doors, the firmament shift. / A man would find and lose and find himself."

Kelly Cherry has published twenty books of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, eight chapbooks, and translations of two classical plays. She was the first recipient of the Hanes Poetry Prize given by the Fellowship of Southern Writers for a body of work. Other awards and honors include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation,

the Bradley Major Achievement (Lifetime) Award, a USIS Speaker Award (The Philippines), a Distinguished Alumnus Award, three Wisconsin Arts Board fellowships, the *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook Award* for Distinguished Book of Stories in 1999, The Carole Weinstein Poetry Prize, and selection as a Wisconsin Notable Author. Poet Laureate Emerita of Virginia and a member of the Electorate of Poets Corner at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City, she is also Eudora Welty Professor Emerita of English and Evjue-Bascom Professor Emerita in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She and her husband live in Virginia.

Kelly Cherry, *The Life and Death of Poetry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013)

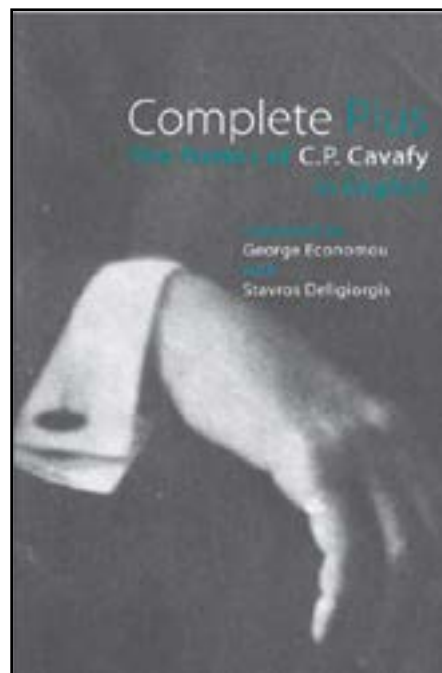
In her ninth full-length collection of poetry, Kelly Cherry investigates language and its uses. Clear and accessible, her book begins with silence and animal sound before taking on literature, public discourse, and the particular art of poetry. The second section, a sequence titled "Welsh Table Talk," considers the unsaid, or unsayable, as a father, his daughter, his daughter's friend, and a woman spend a week on Bardsey Island off the coast of Wales. The innocent and playful chatter of the children is placed next to a darker and sadder, slightly submerged—like the island itself—narrative of failed communication between the adults. In the third and final section, Cherry considers the pluses and minuses of translation, great art's grand sublimity, and the divine tongue or word, and its relation to an everyday, secular world. Cherry's poems are by turns witty, poignant, wise, and joyous.



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 (no more than 250 words) and a photo of the book cover. Submissions about articles published, journals edited, and so forth are also welcome.

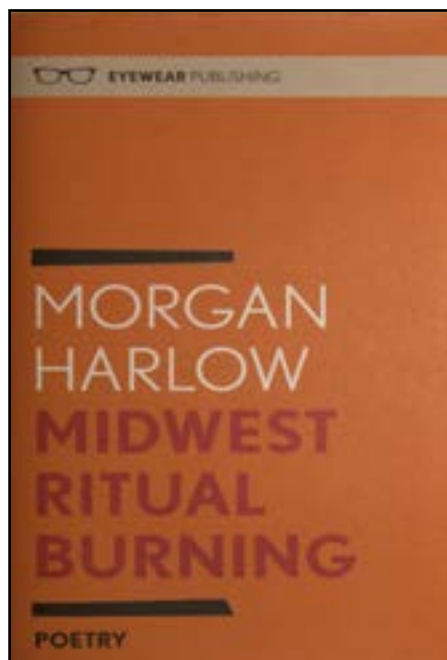
George Economou, *Complete Plus—The Poems of C. P. Cavafy in English* (Shearsman Books, 2013)

George Economou is the author of thirteen books of poetry and translation, the latest of which are *Complete Plus—The Poems of C. P. Cavafy in English*, *Ananios of Kleitor* (Shearsman Books, 2009), and *Acts of Love, Ancient Greek Poetry from Aphrodite's Garden* (Modern Library/ Random House, 2006). He has published many translations from ancient and Modern Greek, as well as medieval European languages, including William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). A critic and scholar of medieval literature, he is the author of *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature* (Harvard University Press, 1972; rpt., University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) and numerous other studies, including editions of the translations by the late Paul Blackburn of the troubadours, *Proensa* (University of California Press, 1978) and *Poem of the Cid* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). A Rockefeller Fellow at Bellagio, he has been named twice as an NEA Fellow in Poetry. In 2000, he retired after forty-one years of college and university teaching.



Economou's *Complete Plus* features 162 poems by Cavafy: the 154 contained in *Collected Poems*, as well as seven of the *Uncollected Poems* interspersed among them. Additionally, one of Cavafy's rejected, early poems, "Ode and Elegy of the Street," serves as an introduction to the collection. According to Peter Jeffreys of Suffolk University, "George Economou has offered the 21st century a refreshingly lyrical translation of Cavafy...With the acute sensibility of a scholar immersed in the classics yet carefully avoiding any trace of the pedantic, Economou presents translations that are actual poems and not simply the linear re-workings of previous Cavafy translations."

Morgan Harlow, *Midwest Ritual Burning* (Eyewear Publishing, Inc., 2012)



Morgan Harlow's poems, fiction, and other writing have appeared in *Washington Square*, *Seneca Review*, the *Tusculum Review*, the *Moth*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, and elsewhere. Her debut poetry collection, *Midwest Ritual Burning*, published in the UK by Eyewear Publishing, was released in 2012. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studied English literature, journalism, and film. In 1999, she earned an MFA from George Mason University.

With its modified sonnets, journal fragments, prose poems, and overall wit of gaze and poised eccentricity, Morgan Harlow's debut collection builds a significant new bridge between American and British poetry. Harlow represents a natural world riddled with strange artifice, "the countryside blurred in a way one hadn't noticed quite before." Eyewear Publishing has lauded *Midwest Ritual Burning* as the "most original and surprising collection" of 2012 and likened Harlow's writing to that of Emily Dickenson. Her poems, which strive to join the bucolic and the modern, have been described as "strikingly beautiful American nature poetry."

J. Chester Johnson, “Evanescence: The Elaine Race Massacre,” *Green Mountains Review*

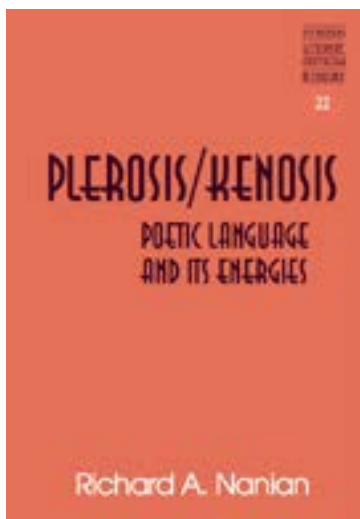
In February of 2013, *Green Mountains Review* presented, in four installments, the article, “Evanescence: The Elaine Race Massacre,” by J. Chester Johnson. Characterized by *Green Mountains Review* as “groundbreaking,” this article explores the massacre of African-Americans in the fall of 1919 in Phillips County, Arkansas, along the Mississippi Delta, whose murderous and legal importance has been mostly ignored by American history.



Poet J. Chester Johnson, explicating personal views about his own grandfather’s likely participation in the massacre, relates the feral and implacable racism leading to one of the country’s deadliest assaults against African-Americans. He describes the scenes of the massacre itself as they unfolded in “the killing fields” and the institutional efforts by Phillips County and the State of Arkansas, and even by a national administration, to cover up the massacre’s true account.

“Evanescence: The Elaine Race Massacre” also recounts the gravitas of the legal proceedings that evolved out of the massacre. These ultimately resulted in a new federal precedent and more progressive judgment by the US Supreme Court in the form of a favorable opinion, written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, for the African-American sharecroppers who had been convicted of murder in the accelerated and unfair trials immediately following the massacre. The US Supreme Court decision in *Moore v. Dempsey* established a more forceful federal guarantee of equal protection under the law and created a foundation for the future civil rights movement.

Richard Nanian, *Plerosis/Kenosis* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012)



Plerosis/Kenosis proposes that poets aim toward two contradictory goals: the desire to say more, to convey universal truths and overwhelm the reader with intensity, and the desire to speak with perfect clarity and precision, to achieve the purity of mathematics or logic. The pursuit of both goals ultimately ends in failure, yet poetry becomes most powerful and affecting as it reaches toward these extremes. In this book, Professor Nanian puts forth a new theory of poetic language that illuminates poetry’s power to move readers, and he does so in a clear and accessible style. Scholars, graduate students, and sophisticated undergraduates alike will find their understanding of poetry enriched, and indeed transformed.

“Richard A. Nanian’s study of poetic language and its energies is an original and bold attempt to conceptualize both the anatomy and history of modern poetry that has the philosophical sweep, critical sophistication, and elegant clarity of a Northrop Frye or a Kenneth Burke...The first and theoretical part, his innovative paradigm of poetic energies in terms of the plerosis/kenosis binary, is clearly and cogently articulated. The ensuing close readings of individual poems in support of his thesis of a shift from the plerotic Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, to the kenotic Dickinson, Eliot, and Stevens, are eye-opening in their striking combination of probing insight and artful appreciation. This thoughtful, ambitious, and lucidly written study of the nature and language of poetry deserves a wide audience” (Eugene Stelzig, Distinguished Teaching Professor of English, SUNY Geneseo).

Jeet Thayil's debut novel *Narcopolis* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012) marks a continuation in the Indian literary scene of a conscious awareness of the problematics of identity and belonging (personal, religious, sexual, regional, national, and international) in an ever-evolving post-independent, post-colonial India. The backdrop of the drug world, where an unlikely set of characters come together, provides the locus for the intersection of these elements. This theme is infused formalistically with a conscious stylistic engagement with what is now termed high modernism as well as postmodernism. James Joyce makes his presence felt as early as the prologue and is followed by Baudelaire and

some of the names, as they're all dead now."¹ The keen eye with which he makes his reader navigate the several layers of the lives of the array of characters—Dimple, Rumi, Rashid, Salim, Jamal, and Bengali—through the various episodes is achieved by allowing the multiplicity of the voices to emerge. This dialogic mode is one of the aspects that prevent the novel from becoming just another drug/junkie novel. For it is not just addiction to heroine or opium that return the narcos (the inhabitants of this narco-polis) to this world. Everyone is trapped in his own personal hell. The pipe just helps them burn in another one. Dimple is addicted to knowledge, Rumi to violence, Mr. Lee to his China, Rashid to Dimple, and Thayil to Bombay.

“MEMORY, ADDICTION AND AFFECTION”: JEET THAYIL'S *NARCOPOLIS*: A NOVEL REVIEW BY ANJUMON SAHIN

Burroughs, among others pervading the spirit of the city of the dead. The narrator, Dom Ullis (Ulysses?), a Tiresias in the land of this rabidly globalising, decaying, dying city is himself a ghost. His ineffectuality is replicated by the pattern of the narrative itself, where he appears and disappears by turns and, even more so than Eliot's Tiresias, is not only not prophetic, but is barely able to decipher the meaning of the phantasmagoria of characters and images that surrounds him. Dom is even unable to take credit for his story, transferring any active participation that storytelling might have accidentally granted him to the pipe.

Where *Narcopolis* gains, apart from the realistic description of Bombay's underbelly and its changing face over a span of more than thirty years, is in the ease with which its author transforms autobiography into fiction. Thayil is quoted as saying “I didn't even bother changing

Nietzsche might have been right in asserting that “blessed are the forgetful,”² but it is a luxury that only a few can lay claim to. Memory finds its most painful rendition in acting as a persistent reminder to the inhabitants of this Hades of their dislocation, and this inability to forget is also a failure to forgive or outgrow the past. The displacement, which is physical and geographical, as well as mental resurges at key moments whether it is when Dimple recounts her childhood with her Hindu-Christian mother in northeast India or when Mr. Lee offers his personal history of China. This rootlessness of being, which the characters often try to repress, finds alternative modes of expression in religion or opium or sex but is bound


1 Jeet Thayil, interviewed by Monisha Rajesh, “Jeet Thayil: Confessions of an Indian Opium-Eater,” *Civilian*, December 2, 2012, <http://www.civilianglobal.com/arts/jeet-thayil-confessions-of-an-english-opium-eater-booker-prize/>.

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Helen Zimmern, trans., (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989) Chap. 7. Project Gutenberg Ebook, http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=3275478.

to fail as the past they are trying to recapture is as illusory as the present they inhabit. Yes, Bombay is dying. To quote the author, "Everybody is dying."³ But there is yet time for the burial of the dead in this Narcopolis/Necropolis. Redemption lies just around the corner from Shuklaji Street. The glimmer of it is found in the various manifestations of love, which still makes itself felt despite all odds.

Of course, love too is often muted, perverted, dead, or even a ghost, and is rarely if at all expressed. Still it exists beyond life and is often inextricably intertwined with memory. Lives are stretched beyond death as long as one is remembered: Mr Lee. comes back from the dead when Dimple betrays her last promise to him, and Dimple will remain alive as long as Rashid's memory does. Even the fraudulent S. T. Pande, who is his own publisher and bookseller (reminiscent of Swift), hints at the necessity of remembering to forget. When fiction is placed within fiction, its inclusion in the text also questions the very nature of fictionality, as well as that of reality.

³ Jeet Thayil, interviewed by Monisha Rajesh, "Jeet Thayil: Confessions of an Indian Opium-Eater."

The end, as has often been remarked, signals the transition of an evolving Bombay, whose ever-changing yet ever-the-same sea is all that remains from an older world long dead. Bleak as it is, it also marks a forward movement, an acceptance of the old world on its own terms without blaming it and without guilt. Spider-man Shankar won't return to that world but cares enough to convey his regards to his old boss, and Ullis is no longer a regular but a visitor. This understanding of addiction (to drugs, violence, love, sex, or memory), and its reasoned acceptance/rejection on its own terms is where *Narcopolis's* beauty lies. For here, races condemned to one hundred years of solitude might still have a second opportunity on earth. 

Anjumon Sahin is currently pursuing her M.Phil degree in English literature at the University of Delhi. A passionate lover of books and animals, she is currently camping in Delhi and working as an assistant professor in Gargi College until the winds fly her to a new land. Writing is the magic bond that helps her negotiate the real and the reel. Anjumon can be contacted at anjumon.sahin@gmail.com.



IF ONE NOTE IS MISSING: C. D. WRIGHT'S *ONE WITH OTHERS* REVIEW BY J. CHESTER JOHNSON

During a short period a number of years ago when I corresponded with Robert Graves, the poet and classicist, he declared in a letter with considerable certitude and a touch of impish hyperbole that he had never won any literary prize of any kind in his entire life. While this pronouncement wasn't completely true, he nevertheless solidified a valuable point: one does not need to rely on prizes to justify works of art. Notwithstanding Graves's cautionary note on the subject, C. D. Wright's *One With Others*

(Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2010) deserves all the notice and prizes it has thus far received, including its selection as the winner of the 2010 National Book Critics Circle Award and the Academy of American Poets' Lenore Marshall Prize in 2011.

I attend many poetry readings, from those convened in cramped taprooms to those sponsored by any one of the several national poetry organizations located here in New York City. I also read a good deal of contemporary verse. One flaw I discover among some current verse more often than I would like is the absence of big ideas in favor of what one literary critic terms "regretful isolation." This fault will not be detected in *One With Others*. Never steeping herself in subjective ambience and private revelation, Wright forges ahead in establishing for the reader an environment in which both writer and reader face translucent choices for responsible attention, if not action. Thus, the poet acknowledges and confirms her and the reader's role as citizens in and of the world.

At the outset, the reader should know *One With Others* is a story—actually, three stories told in tandem. Of course, the work has features of a long poem, but it would be a mistake to come to this book expecting the conventions typical of a long piece of verse. First, it is part of the story of the 1960s' civil rights movement in the American South at a time when many whites there responded manically, "with fear and trembling," and, on occasion, violently to the threat of compulsory integration and an imminent end to Jim Crow. Second, *One With Others* is a narrative, reflected in memories, ruminations and testimonials, about the March Against Fear that occurred in the summer of 1969, with protesters walking from West Memphis, Arkansas to Little Rock, Arkansas. Indeed, I remember the end of that summer well. I had begun, in an effort to help black students become more familiar with whites in advance of desegregation, to teach in an all-African American public school on the cusp of the Arkansas delta along the Mississippi River, south of where the march took place, the last year before school integration; the region was on the verge of embarking on a new way of life, and harsh predictions were pervasive everywhere, among both blacks and whites. Third, *One With Others* is intrinsically the story of a Wright mentor, Margaret Kaelin McHugh—a white woman, a mother and wife—who lived at the time along the route of the march. She carried the moniker of "V" for Wright—drawn from Thomas Pynchon's title for his debut novel—and joined the march only to be expelled from her Arkansas town and family. Multidimensional in its reach, *One With Others* is a social commentary on the endangered and affronted racism of the 1960s in the South, a carefully assembled diorama of the March Against Fear, and a buoyant and memorable biography of McHugh all enveloped in a saga told with cogency, élan, humor, and unrelenting and unforgettable verse.

The challenge Wright places on herself as guide for a citizen's journey is surely not inchoate for her. She previously tasked herself with similar undertakings in *One Big Self* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007), her long

witness poem about those persons who endure substantial stretches of confinement in the Louisiana state prisons, and in *Rising, Falling, Hovering* (Copper Canyon Press, 2009), her cross-border outreach to evince the limits, controls, and effects outside the United States of recent versions of *Pax Americana*.


Although unfair and amiss to characterize C. D. Wright as a distinctly Southern writer, she nonetheless does continue to rely on a transported treasure trove and sundry accoutrements from her Arkansas roots as inspiration for vivid incidents and vivid characters to fuel her art. In this respect, she and James Joyce, with his transmutation of Dublin to Europe, share a bit of a common, homespun Muse. References to Arkansas, locations within the State, and vignettes of Arkansas events emerge in both her short and long poems. In *One With Others*, she also inserts a little Southern gothic, such as the matter-of-fact comment about a sheriff who always kept a man's testicles in a jar on his desk. In this work, Wright ventures back into this Southern territory—both geographic and existential—fraught with the consequential forebodings of memory through expressed and ineffable, arresting and evading, words.

Though akin to the poetic design of certain other long pieces by Wright, especially to that of *One Big Self*, the line structure in *One With Others* is often, however, more truncated, with thoughts and recalls becoming virtual snippets in much of the poem. This occurs most frequently in depictions and recollections of various aspects of the march and in the exposition and evidence of the vicinal racism. I wonder whether Wright, either consciously or not, employs more abbreviated lines to communicate the strain, the qualms, the intimidation, and the risks of disclosure—that is, the telling, the verbal exposure, in a precarious, easily conflagrant environment that insists little be said publicly about the racial dysfunctions, domination, and duress.

Another technique, present in *One With Others* and utilized in prior Wright poems, is the repetition, the recycling of moments, remembrances, impressions, and phrases that appear early in the poem and rise again recognizably at another later time or phase. I cannot help but think that this echoing style of Wright's derives from William Faulkner's

technique of manipulating time intervals and gambling around with interludes, reacquainted consciousness, and resurrections of scene and language. This feature of *One With Others* adds comfort and familiarity to the reader engaged in a story that contains a multiplicity of voices, sources, and episodes.

Auden once defined poetry as “memorable speech.” A number of lines from *One With Others*—quotes from individuals in the story or passages from Wright's own poetry—happen to be quite “memorable” for me. At the least, several lines insisted I remember them well after I closed the book. Here are a few: “If religion is the opiate of the masses fundamentalism is the amphetamine” (p. 35); “Mind on fire, body confined” (18); “Nothing is not integral” (149); “Any simple problem can be made insoluble” (75); “Whoever rides into the scene changes it” (116). Of course, some readers may consider these simply aphorisms; even if that is true, I still do not wish to forget them.

One With Others takes on big issues, and the reader—the citizen, if you will—departs from a work about unusual times and people with incontrovertible insights and sensibilities. In exploring a book of verse, I often search for the right excerpt that can summarize both the poet's intent and much of the volume. The idiom of Wright's voice for the citizen in *One With Others* is, I believe, largely embodied in this one short melodic selection: “It is known that when a blackbird calls in the marsh all sound back and if one note is missing all take notice. This is the solidarity we are born to” (107). And so we are. 

J. Chester Johnson is a poet, essayist, and translator. He has published twelve books of poetry, the most recent of which is *St. Paul's Chapel & Selected Shorter Poems* (Brunswick Publishing Corporation, 2006). His work has been published in the *New York Times*, *Best American Poetry*, *International Poetry Review*, *Twin Space* (Italy), and elsewhere. Johnson has also composed numerous pieces on the American Civil Rights Movement, five of which are included in the Civil Rights Archives at Queens College. In February, his article “Evanescence: The Elaine Race Massacre” was featured in *Green Mountain Review*.

REPUBLIC OF NOISE: THE LOSS OF SOLITUDE IN SCHOOLS AND CULTURE,

DIANA SENECHAL

REVIEW BY ROSANNA WARREN


In this remarkable book, Senechal weaves together her experiences as a public school teacher in New York City, a masterful review of the policies and politics of so-called reform in curriculum over the past several decades, a diagnosis of the condition of frantic distraction in society at large, and a detailed evocation of Western traditions of the contemplative life and productive solitude. In the din of contemporary books decrying our hopped-up, hyped-up, wired, Attention-Deficit-Disordered culture, Senechal's book stands out for its erudition and quiet wisdom. It's one of the most inspiring books I've read all year.

Schools express both the ills and the aspirations of the societies that create them. Senechal's report from the classrooms—both her own and others'—is by turns dismaying and hopeful. The dismay arises from the accounts of coercive software and “materials” being introduced into more and more school systems, software that restricts the imagination and knowledge of both teachers and students to a miserably narrow set of utilitarian “skills.” Along with these mind-numbing exercises come mandated procedures for interrupting the flow of thought and exploration in the classroom, with constant shifts of focus and so much punitive interference from administrators that even the best teachers would be hard pressed to lead students through the experience of thinking in any depth.

The hope arises from Senechal's radiant accounts of classrooms where thinking does indeed take place, and carries the students and teachers to unexpected illuminations. Senechal has taught a wide variety of subjects, including ESL, at a wide variety of public schools, including a Crow reservation in Montana, and writes with the calm authority of someone with a foundation of practical experience and deep knowledge of her subjects. Those subjects include far more than the history of education. Senechal,

who holds a PhD in Slavic languages and literatures from Yale, has translated two volumes of poetry by the Lithuanian poet Tomas Venclova. The vision in *Republic of Noise* has ancient sources: the book takes direction from Petrarch, whose fourteenth-century treatise *De vita solitaria* (*Of the Solitary Life*) provides the core of Senechal's second chapter. She gracefully recounts Petrarch's ambivalence about solitude, his alternation between court life and pastoral, meditative retreat in his property in the Vaucluse north of Avignon, and the subtleties of his argument about the riches of the contemplative life and of true friendship. (Solitude, for Petrarch, doesn't exclude communion with others: it makes it possible.)

Sophocles' *Antigone* provides her other touchstone. She devotes her fourth chapter to an examination of Antigone's “aloneness,” her “apartness,” and her independence, which allows her to defy the edict of Creon, her uncle, and bury her brother Polyneices, whose corpse lies outside the walls of Thebes. In an extended discussion of the play, Senechal contrasts two kinds of solitude: Antigone's noble “thinking apart” versus the merely political calculations of Creon's authoritarian solipsism, which brings disaster upon his family, himself, and the city. As Senechal explains, “Creon has no such sense of internal freedom; he does not recognize other minds” (page 65).

Republic of Noise is a rare achievement, bringing a deeply schooled intelligence to bear upon the pains and follies of contemporary education. Senechal writes elegant prose, a fitting instrument for the vision she presents. Here is an author and a teacher who shows us what it is like, and why it matters, “to recognize other minds.” 

Rosanna Warren is a poet and a professor at the University of Chicago. She served as President of the ALSCW from 2004 to 2005.

The UGA Chapel, where most of the events took place, stands tall on the edge of the closely knit campus near Broad Street, the main street in festive downtown Athens.

THE NINETEENTH-ANNUAL ALSCW CONFERENCE

As the conference opened, old friends embraced, and conversations expanded into new friendships. Over the following days, President Sallie Spence presided over the continual in and out of scholarly messengers while the drama of our intellectual and imaginative fervor mounted.

Friday, April 5

Panel One: Southern Literature on the World Stage

Moderated by Joel Black of the University of Georgia, the first session focused on Southern Literature as a participant in international dialogues from issues of reference and influence to translation.

Joseph Boyne's talk hinged around a criticism by Irving Howe of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Ellison, according to Howe, was "'literary' to a fault" at a time when writers in Ellison's position bore the enormous responsibility to voice protest at the injustices faced by fellow black Americans. However, Ellison and his *Invisible Man* do not fail to protest, Boyne noted, but instead confront "a fundamental problem that subtends the more topical and specific symptoms which often serve as ammunition for protest."

Karen Svendsen Werner invited us to see Katherine Anne Porter's short novel *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* as a festive journey through Hieronymous Bosch's triptych, "The Garden of Earthly Delights." Dr. Werner traced the character Miranda's passage through the sociopolitical landscape of the twentieth century, and showed how the trauma of loss and personal illness were parallel to the movement of Bosch's triptych, a carnivalesque turn on and from the official spectacle.

In Clare Cavanagh's paper on Milosz, Faulkner, and the provincial imagination, she described Milosz as a writer with an early fascination with American fiction. The Faulkner/Milosz link, according to Professor Cavanagh, "shapes not only the path Milosz's writing would take during his long decades of exile ... more than this—first obliquely, through Milosz, and then later in translation, Faulkner also influenced an important strain of post-war Polish writing that continues to this day."

As respondent, Kling noted three themes as vital to the papers: the "anxieties of influence" in and around Southern writing as it relates to world literature, the sense of cultural heritage

passed on, and the use of *bricolage* as a method of using and transposing history in new contexts.

Seminar: Can You Read Poetry on a Kindle?

Moderated by Elizabeth Wright of the University of Georgia, “Can You Read Poetry on a Kindle?” gave conference attendees an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss the wide range of issues



*Vincent Kling speaks at the Southern Literature on the World Stage panel
Photograph by Ned Hinman*

surrounding digitization and the rapidly increasing ubiquity of e-reader devices. The seminar began with presentations by Tess Taylor, Cassandra Nelson, Mariana Krejci-Papa, Peter Cortland, Nail Chiodo, and Matthew DeForrest, who, in turn, expressed their concerns and critiques of the pervasive new medium. Given the broad impact of this technology on our lives, the seminar inspired a lively and thought-provoking discussion of the gains and losses involved in reading from a digital text, the ramifications of participating in a commercial network which profits from distraction and champions hyper-efficiency, and the extent to which the advancement of the digital media might be considered a revolution on par with the invention of the Guttenberg press.

Seminar: Occupying the Margins

[Write-up: Mary Erica Zimmer]

During the “Occupying the Margins” seminar, led by Margaret Amstutz of the University of Georgia, this question of benefits accorded to, and evolving from, marginalia built upon individual instances to consider broader concerns pervading the environments in which such textual engagement may occur.

Initially, discussion focused on rhetorical stances emerging through annotations of particular works: Steve Partridge explored patterns and surprising sympathies found in Chaucerian manuscripts; Erik Liddell provided samples of the incisive, witty, and wide-ranging comments within Voltaire’s personal library; and Eleanore Lambert probed the varied voices of Emily Dickinson, as well as the ambiguous desires for publication suggested by her means of circulating and revising poems. Turning to the influence annotations may exercise, the group then considered John Leonard’s provocative thesis that Milton’s universe has been widely misunderstood through two centuries of critical annotation and Anya Razumnaya’s thoughtful presentation of editorial dilemmas raised by the vivid annotations of Nadezhda Mandelstam within a personal copy of her husband Osip’s works.

Stephen J. Meringoff Session at Athens Academy

On Friday, ALSCW members traveled to Athens Academy to enjoy lunch there with the students for this year's Meringoff Session, named after the Association's main benefactor, Stephen J. Meringoff. Participants included Greg Delanty, Victoria Meringoff, Elise Partridge, Christopher Ricks, ALSCW Vice President John Briggs, and President Sarah Spence. The representatives talked with the seniors about what they teach, what they research and write, and why they do what they do.

The lunch concluded with a picture session, many exchanges of thanks, requests for email addresses, and an open invitation from the ALSCW seniors wishing to attend the conference on the following day.

Panel Two: Two Takes on Verse Composition

In two adjoining sessions on verse composition, moderated by Ernest Suarez of Catholic University, we were invited to meditate on associations and connections between the creative practice of the New Critics and the practice of verse composition in the blues.

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

Elise Partridge offered a remarkable account of her experience in Robert Lowell's classroom during the spring of 1977. Lowell's pedagogy, according to Partridge, transmitted some of the New Critical legacy in his own teaching. Lowell would depart from Cleanth Brooks' approach, Ms. Partridge said, in relating the lines to biography. Keats was "a young man

who pursued art and beauty as [a] religion... not an ivory tower decadent in the least...The urn is art."

Ben Mazer continued the session, offering analysis—much of it from Ransom's own account—of the substantial revision of Ransom's "Prelude to an Evening," giving consideration to whether the different intention of the revised poem "represents an embracing of change which is unfettered by the known and loved, or whether this change in fact represents a more radical return to something which is in its essence unchanging." Mazer then addressed Allen Tate's process of revision, focusing on two incarnations of lines 6–8 of "Ode to the Confederate Dead," noting that "what is new to the poem is precisely that which is faithful to what is unchanging and essential in experience."

Ryan Wilson offered a view of Donald Justice's "rich refusals" of both the "disheveled phalanxes of Beat poets and Confessional poets," and his relationship to the New Critics, to whom he owed much of his sense of technique. According to Wilson, this complex relationship with the New Critical perspective "creates the fundamental tension in [Justice's] poetry."

II. Singing the South: Blues Verse and Composition

Wesley Rothman began the panel with a paper entitled "The Blues Spirit 'Grown Deep Like the River,'" which explored the relationship between race and the blues, but sought to characterize a "blues spirit" which transcends the indisputably black origins of the blues. Michael Kimmage presented an in-depth analysis of "Goin' to Dallas to See My Pony Run" by blues legend Lightin'

Hopkins. Finally, rounding out the panel with his paper “Tell Your Story: Elements of Blues Composition and Verse,” Mike Mattison discussed what he considers to be the four essential features of the blues: a driving, syncopated rhythm; blue notes, which approximate the resonance and feeling of the human voice; the twelve-bar blues form, which builds tension through repetition; and authenticity of feeling, which is not necessarily sad, but simply “real.”



ALSCW members gather outside The Melting Point
Photograph by Ned Hinman

The session on the blues was immediately followed by the President’s Reception, where Scrapomatic, Mike Mattison’s award-winning blues ensemble, played at The Melting Point, a local club, demonstrating not just his intellectual command of the blues, but his visceral understanding of it as well.

Saturday, April 6

Panel One: Narratives of Ovid and Ovid’s Narratives

This double session, chaired by Peter Knox of the University of Colorado, included five talks about Ovid. Barbara Weiden Boyd, Bowdoin College, spoke about two types of weaving in the tale of Ariadne in Book 6 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—that of Pallas, which is linear and preplanned, and that of Ariadne, which is poly- or acentric and ever expandable—and how the two textiles depict two different ways of telling a story.

James McGregor, University of Georgia, spoke on Dante’s appreciation of Ovid: Dante saw Ovid’s concern with making bodies speak as akin to God’s special eloquence. Joshua Cohen of Massachusetts College of Art and Design examined Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and the notion of “transforming into truth,” or how, in Shakespeare’s hands, change reveals true form. John Miller, University of Virginia, explicated Robert Pinsky’s poem, “Creation According to Ovid,” taking especial interest in the role allotted to chaos. Carole Newlands, University of Colorado, talked about the Scottish poet Robin Robertson and how his response to Ovidian language illuminated his stance on nationalism.

Panel Two: Translating Asia

Organized by Jee Leong Koh of The Brearley School, this panel featured papers by Ravi Shankar of Central Connecticut State University, Matthew Chozick of the University of Birmingham, UK, Carolyn Fitzgerald of Auburn University, and Masaki Mori of the University of

Georgia. Shankar explained the process behind editing *Language for a New Century*, a diverse compilation of poems by Eastern writers. Chozick's presentation related the history and legacy of *Genji*, an early novel written by Japanese noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu in the eleventh century. Fitzgerald discussed the life and work of seminal Chinese poet Mu Dan and assessed the inspiration he found in Western poets such as Whitman, Empson, and Auden. Mori highlighted the achievements of Haruki Murakami, including the numerous English-language novels he has translated into Japanese.

Seminar: 1863

Leader John C. Briggs opened the seminar by suggesting that 1863 is a place more than it is a period or a date in history, a place that Hawthorne is observing, that Thoreau is seeking, and where Lincoln and the Union are enduring.

Charles Baraw provided a view of Hawthorne in the year he fell from political and social grace for dedicating his last completed work, *Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches*, to Frank-

lin Pierce. He examined the purely aesthetic theory of Hawthorne's fall and posited that the actual contents of *Our Old Home*, including the dedicatory letter to Pierce, remain under-read and under-analyzed.

John Burt gave a paper on "The 'New Birth of Freedom' in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." The Gettysburg Address is the product of a revolution in Lincoln's thinking that turned his focus from the mere restoration of the Union to the destruction of slavery. His choice of argument, even in 1862, implied that it was not emancipation, but equality, which was the ultimate issue upon which the war would be fought.

Richmond M. Eustis, Jr. gave a paper on "Life Without Principle" by Thoreau, which appeared in 1863 after Thoreau had been dead a year, suggesting that the essay belonged to one of Thoreau's ongoing projects: the deployment of the pastoral in opposition to the regimentation of politics, economics, and the very notion of "getting a living." Thoreau's use of the wild pastoral, the discussion of nature as a counterpoint to civilization, was a means of creating a powerful guiding myth of small realms free of State coercion.



Photograph by Ned Hinman

A view of downtown Athens

Wendy Galgan delivered a paper about how history grew into mythology as the tales of Gettysburg were told and retold. Novels like *The Killer Angels* conflate history with fiction, as do films like *Gettysburg* (1993), turning the memory of a figure such as Joshua Chamberlain more toward “story-truth” than “happening-truth.” Galgan closed by asking whether it is possible to determine what is history and what is myth when studying past events for which no careful, official records were kept.

Brian Abel Ragen delivered a paper entitled “Faulkner in Shleswig and Jeff Davis’s Crown of Thorns,” which drew parallels between the American Civil War and the simultaneous struggles of Italy, Germany, and Denmark out of which emerged new, unified nation-states. Ragen noted that what ties Southern Denmark and Southern Italy to the American South is a shared knowledge of defeat. The experience of every nation is both *sui generis* and universal.

Seminar: Editing Diaries

Led by Professor Christopher Ricks, this seminar began with a talk by Owen Boynton of Cornell University, who spoke of endurance in the journal of Jane Welsh Carlyle. Boynton’s talk demonstrated the various posthumous admirations and sympathies that have colored publication of Jayne Welsh Carlyle’s journal. For Boynton, not dramatizing but appreciating “how Jane’s tragic resilience and, even more than resilience, its close cousin (not twin), endurance, manifest themselves in the journal is one way in which to value it as a form of intelligence.”

Lauren Eckenroth, a PhD candidate at the Boston University Editorial Institute, brought attention to issues that face an editor of personal documents. Eckenroth focused on the diary of Alice James and touched on the contrasting approaches taken by Mary James Vaux’s *Alice James: Her Brothers—Her Journal* and Leon Edel’s *The Diary of Alice James*. She then pointed out that editors of letters and

editors of diaries share some editorial considerations. The talk concluded with the question of narrative contextualization in letters.

Jeffrey Gutierrez followed with a presentation on Sylvia Plath’s intimate documents. The issue of bowdlerization was central to the talk, which dealt particularly with the censored portions of the letters and journals, often indicated by ellipses, but, as Mr. Gutierrez pointed out, this is “complicated in that Sylvia Plath often used them in her own writing.” Some of the mysterious ellipses proved to omit endless accounts of mundane details. “We ought to have punctuation,” Anna Razumnaya offered, “to indicate when something has been omitted for its juiciness.”

Professor Sassan Tabatabai discussed the travel diary of Naser al-Din Shah, the reigning monarch of Persia, which he wrote on a journey through Europe in 1873. Tabatabai noted that “the main objective of Naser al-Din Shah’s diary...was to inform and educate the people of Iran about what existed beyond his realm: the strange and exciting new world of *Farangistan* (foreign lands).” “The diary serves as a testament,” Tabatabai closed, “to an oriental monarch keenly aware of a changing global climate in which his country was being quickly left behind by the western advancements.”

Meg Tyler’s presentation centered on Ashbery’s take on his long poem “Flow Chart”: “it is a kind of continuum, a diary, even though it is not in the form of a diary. It’s the result of what I had to say on certain days over a period of six months, during the course of thinking about my past, the weather outside.” Her conclusion was that “the modern long poem—like a diary with its scribbled perceptions and its set calendar dates—embraces the uneasy relationship between a sense of improvisation and a sense of confident order.”

Shawn Worthington's talk sought to locate the ways that journal writing for Lord Byron was a form distinct from memoir and poetry. "For Byron," Mr. Worthington contended, "journal writing was not an act of recollecting what he once was; it was coming to terms with...the question of what he is, that very day, in that year of his life."

Literary Impersonation

Greg Delanty of St. Michael's College, Vermont moderated the session on Literary Impersonation, featuring papers by John Wallen of Nizra University, Rosanna Warren of the University of Chicago, Mary Erica Zimmer of Boston University, and George Economou from the University of Oklahoma.

John Wallen gave a paper entitled "What Did Burton Really Think?" In Burton's two long poems "Stone Talk" and "The Kasidah," published fifteen years apart, Burton writes under pseudonyms. What emerges from close examination of the texts is a sensitive relativist who, while adhering to the scientific method in all his practical dealings, is able to consider the possibility that everything we



George Economou presents at the Literary Impersonation panel

see around us and all our experiences of the world might ultimately be nothing more than illusion.

Rosanna Warren presented on "Max Jacob as Druid." Jacob had a complex relationship with the destructive poetics he pioneered, as is seen in his adoption of a Breton persona, first in a hybrid way in his 1911 *la Côte*. *La Côte* is stylistically at odds with itself, a medley of real Breton folklore and Parisian satire and wit. But Jacob's later Breton persona, Morven le Gaëlique, invented in 1926, simplified and purified the idiom. Jacob—Jewish, provincial, and homosexual, who was thus triply marginal in Parisian high culture—found a way to unify his often scattered selfhood in the persona of Morven.

Mary Erica Zimmer discussed how Hill's engagement with Ezra Pound may have helped him in developing the ostensibly translated works of a particular Hillian persona: the "apocryphal Spanish poet," Sebastian Arrurruz, a figure singular to Hill's corpus. The paper concluded by touching upon a few specific poems in light of their explicit engagement with Antonio Machado, whom Hill cited as directly influencing the sequence.

Finally, George Economou presented "How I Did Ananios of Kleitor & How He Made Me Do *Ananios of Kleitor*," a first-hand account of how he went about creating a fictional Greek poet whose poetic fragments have ostensibly been recovered, translated, and studied by a diverse and equally fictitious cast of scholars.

-BOSTON OFFICE STAFF, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

STANZA TEST

BY DEBRA SAN

How many stanzas does Robert Frost's "Acquainted with the Night"¹ have? On this and the subsequent page are six versions, only one of which is his. Have fun trying to identify the version as laid out by Frost, assuming you don't already know. If you do, imagine trying to figure it out as if you'd just come upon the poem for the first time.

¹ Robert Frost, *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*, ed. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 234.

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.
I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height
One luminary clock against the sky
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

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Debra San is a professor of English in the Liberal Arts Department at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston.

“Surprised by Joy,” by William Wordsworth, tells the story of the author’s grief over the death of his three-year-old daughter, Catherine. Grief, in particular in relation to death, is a universal experience. To explain, to justly express a feeling that is unparalleled in magnitude to any other, is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible. Wordsworth, in this poem, achieves poignancy on the subject through an unusual approach to the issue. The rhyme scheme breaks the sonnet up into two quatrains and a sestet, a variation on the Petrarchan sonnet, but the progression of the poem is original rather than traditional, and lies contrary to this structure. In the first ten lines of the poem, Wordsworth illustrates the unhappiness that grief continues to inflict on his life in the years after Catherine’s death. It is only after the delayed turn of the poem, in the final four lines, that he addresses his emotions at the actual time of her death. By illustrating the after-effects of death, Wordsworth demonstrates the inexplicable magnitude of grief at the actual moment of its onset.

In the first quatrain of the poem Wordsworth experiences a moment of joy, followed by the remembrance of reality, which inevitably precludes the happiness. In the first line, he experiences the moment of joy. He does not describe its context or its source, simply announcing that he was “surprised by joy.”¹ This use of *in medias res* indicates that the specific conditions of the joy are unimportant,

This essay, which won the Meringoff High School Essay Award, has been published in its original form.

¹ This and all subsequent citations are taken from *Selected Poetry of William Wordsworth*, ed. Mark Van Doren, Modern Library Paperback Edition (New York: Random House, 2002).

AND JOY MUST FLEE: ON WILLIAM WORDSWORTH’S “SURPRISED BY JOY” BY NORA BATTELLE

and hints that the focus of the text will not remain on joy. The mere existence of the joy is what is important. It is the joy of a man who has felt little recent happiness. Wordsworth is “surprised” (1) by it. It is not a steady build-up of happiness, nor is it an expected pleasure. The sense is that he is almost attacked by the joy, as if it is not only unexpected, but perhaps undesired. This sense is reinforced by the jolt of an em dash immediately following the pronouncement, and the following word, “impatient” (1). The adjective primarily modifies “I” (2), the subject of the second line, but as it is placed in the first line, it can also be seen as a modifier for the joy, implying that the joy is fleeting and unsatisfactory. The fleeting joy is not

only impatient, however. It is “impatient as the Wind” (1). The use of the “Wind” (1) simile reinforces the swiftness, or brevity, of the joy, but it implies that the joy also conveys freedom. For a moment, the joy releases Wordsworth from his pain with “transport” (2), or with extremely strong emotion. The use of the word “transport” (2), however, also implies a more physical displacement, to the time when Catherine was alive. This illusion of time-travel does not last. In line two, he “turn[s]” (2), to look for his little daughter in order to “share the transport” (2), the movement this joy has enacted on him, with her. At the end of the line, he remembers Catherine is dead. The return of the present is marked by the jerk of another em dash. This em dash and the initial em dash, in line one, frame Wordsworth’s moment of forgetfulness. In forgetting Catherine is dead, Wordsworth is in a sense returning to the distant past, when sharing joy with Catherine

was possible. That he immediately associates his joy with Catherine, to the point that he forgets time has passed and she is now dead, shows the depth of his love for her. He cannot help but associate happiness with Catherine and fatherhood. And so, the em dashes frame not only forgetfulness, but also a brief foray into the past. The exclamation of “Oh!” (2), Wordsworth’s first word on remembering his daughter’s death, shows the genuine pain Wordsworth feels. Remembrance takes away his capacity to express himself in coherent words for a moment.

The next two lines of the poem introduce the isolation that Catherine’s death inflicts on Wordsworth, and the unalleviated sadness with which he continues to view her death. He plaintively asks, “with whom / But Thee” (2–3) he ought to share his joy as he remembers that Catherine is dead. There is no other person with whom he wishes to share this joy but his daughter. This leaves him not only miserable, but also alone, in the wake of his fleeting happiness. The diction is weighty, cold, and unforgiving. Wordsworth envisions Catherine “deep buried in the silent tomb, / That spot which no vicissitude can find” (3). The tomb is a cold, dark place, completely without change. The lack of change contrasts strongly with Wordsworth’s almost frantically changing, moving state in the first two lines. He “turned” (1) to share his “transport” (2) like the “Wind” (1), and he moves back and forth across the line between joy and sadness and the line between the past and the present. The “vicissitude”

(4), then, is not only an independent force of change and life that cannot reach Catherine’s tomb. It is also the active vicissitude of Wordsworth. Through no “vicissitude” (4) can he revive Catherine. Through no change in fortune or the world, through none of the “transport” (2) and motion he experienced in the first two lines, can Wordsworth find his daughter. In this, the finality of Catherine’s death, and Wordsworth’s isolation, is emphasized. The return of reality to Wordsworth’s mind is a bleak picture, one in which none of the comforting images of Christian heaven, and its promise of eventual reunion, are displayed.

Wordsworth’s enduring grief colors his moment of happiness, and his resulting forgetfulness, as betrayal, which leads him to self-critical guilt. Line five, “Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind” (5), implies that his forgetfulness, which expelled her from his mind, was a form of unfaithfulness. His repetition of the word “love” (5) emphasizes its importance and impresses a sense of its urgency and magnitude. That Wordsworth personifies love as an entity separate from



himself, however, rather than referring to it as his own love, distances him from the moral vindication this “love” (5) provides. It also stresses his isolation, as not even his love, an integral part of his being, is associated directly with him. Wordsworth does not wish to pardon himself for his forgetfulness. He accepts the blame, and asks himself, “But how could I forget thee” (6)? He is horrified that he could so greatly transgress against his grief and his memory of his daughter. The rhyme of “mind” (5) with “blind” (8) emphasizes this sense of failure, weakness, and betrayal. It is Wordsworth’s own “mind” (5) that has been blind, and therefore his own failure in allowing this blindness to invade it. It is also his mind, his intellect, that has failed, not his heart or emotion with regard to Catherine. Though he forgot his grief and the actuality of



Catherine’s death, he never forgets her or his love for her. It was she, even in his state of mental blindness, towards whom he turned to share his joy. A second significant rhyme in this section is that of “power” (6) and “hour” (7). The hours, or the time, that have passed since Catherine’s death have been powerful, but, contrary to the traditional view of time as a healer, this power, of inflicting guilt and constant pain, seems malicious rather than benevolent. It has worked its own hurt over the initial grief of the death itself.

Wordsworth repeats the question initially posed at the beginning of line six in lines six through nine, but here, the blame is shifted. He asks, “Through what power, / Even for the least division of an hour, / Have I been so beguiled as to be blind” (6–8). A greater “power” (6), which has “beguiled” (8) him, tricked and fooled him, is the culprit. It is the entity to which blame must be shifted, because he cannot fathom that he himself could have enacted such a hideous betrayal. The urgency and specificity of the question, with its direct reference to the brief time he felt this joy, implies that he is still ridden with guilt, and that he puts such distance between himself and the guilt because he feels it too keenly, and wishes, as any guilty man does, to alleviate part of his burden by sharing it. The question is also, however, an acknowledgment of his grief in its use of the word “division” (7). The word is

physically placed at the center of line seven, at the center of his description of guilt, and even at the center of the poem. This placement serves as a reminder that the sharp, clear, insurmountable “division” (7) between Catherine and Wordsworth is what lies at the heart of his guilt, and at the heart of his grief. After this line, it is evident that the dispersion of blame he attempts to engage in when posing his question comes to naught. His guilt is again clearly evident in the following line, in which he acknowledges that he has been “blind / To my most grievous loss” (8–9). In his acknowledgement that the loss is “my” (9) loss, and therefore his declaration that he is the one to whom the grief must adhere, Wordsworth accepts responsibility.

Following his definitive acceptance of responsibility, Wordsworth uses caesura, in line nine, to mark the shift from guilty self-criticism to direct address of the pain that remembrance of Catherine's death inflicts on him. He describes this remembrance as "the worst pang that sorrow ever bore" (10). It is a renewal of what have likely been several years of nearly constant unhappiness, from the time of Catherine's death, in 1812, to the year of the publication of the poem, in 1815. And yet, it is the "worst pang that sorrow ever bore / Save one, one only" (10-11). Finally, in line eleven, the delayed turn occurs. The delay of this turn, which would occur, in a traditional Petrarchan sonnet, at the beginning of the sestet, illustrates the drawn-out, continuous after-effects of death. They are not easily escaped nor dismissed. The very fact of their power sets a point of reference, a context, for the description of a grief, as explored in the final four lines, that is nearly incommunicable.

For all the magnitude and power the return of Wordsworth's grief has over him, it cannot equal, or even compare with, the desolation resulting from the actual event of Catherine's death. The repetition of "one" (11), emphasizes that this is not only the worst pang of his life, but also that it is a pang immeasurable. He conveys the utter isolation and finality he felt at the loss of his little girl whom he describes her "my heart's best treasure" (12) and even as an angel, with a "heavenly face" (14). He stood "forlorn" (11), because Catherine was "no more" (12), and because "neither present time, nor years unborn / Could to my sight that heavenly face restore" (13-14). Nothing, not the ephemeral "transport" (2) of joy, nor the future and perhaps other children who are as yet "unborn" (13), can return Catherine to her father. Again, though Catherine's face is described as heavenly, the Christian promise of heaven, where fathers shall be reunited with their children, is markedly absent. That it is a physical attribute of Catherine that is described as "heavenly" (14) suggests that the word is used as a term of endearment

rather than as an allusion to her ascension to heaven. Nothing can return to Wordsworth's "sight" (14) Catherine's "face" (14). As in the middle section of the poem, where the "power" (6) of the "hour" (7) serves to change grief into guilt, here "present time" (13) and "years unborn" (13) are incapable of returning Catherine to Wordsworth. He is permanently "blind" (8), not due to his own failure here, but due to the failure, or in reality the nature, of the passage of time. And so the connection between Wordsworth's human failure and the inescapable progress of time is drawn. It is inevitable, and even natural, that he should forget Catherine and then remember her with guilt, as it is inevitable and natural that the passage of time should keep Catherine's face from his "sight" (14). Physically, she is gone forever. The poem ends on this note of loss, with the verb phrase "could" (14) "restore" (14) on opposite ends of the final line.

"Surprised by Joy" is a touching chronicle of guilt, with its root in grief, with its root in love. Throughout the poem, even without the knowledge that the subject of the poem is Wordsworth's daughter, the love is evident, and that, along with the poetic form and language, is what gives the poem its power. Perhaps, if all were to be stripped away, and Wordsworth, with bare pain written on his face, were to stand in naked emotion before us, the truth, the crux of the matter, would be more clearly stated. As a human being, Wordsworth cannot stand permanently before an audience in living pain. As a poet, he has made the closest approximation he can, and has composed a narrative that effectively takes the place of his face.

Nora Battelle attends The Brearley School in New York City. She lives with her mother and their two cats and dogs in a small Manhattan apartment; her older brother is currently studying fine art at Oxford University. Nora has edited her school literary magazine and written for the school paper. She has interned for the Robin Straus Agency, a New York-based literary agency, and Teachers & Writers, a nonprofit involved with education. Currently, she is interning at the *American Reader*, a literary magazine. In September, she will move to Pennsylvania to attend Swarthmore College.

A GOD BROUGHT TO STONEMOOR BY COACH

In the coach, which ticked and hissed with sleet,
 and thumped with ice thrown by the horses' hooves,
 I watched the talkative god. His voice rang bright
 as a drawn sword. He rubbed the frost-print glass
 to view the snowy uplands, and I sensed
 communications winging back and forth,
 fleet instructions distantly obeyed,
 the racing elfin blur of his commands
 preparing violets under faery ice.
 "Mostly I'm out there, you know," he winked.
 Arranging winds, I guessed, assembling flowers
 for resurrected maidens in the spring.
 But listening to the god, I couldn't be sure.
 He spoke of gardens, olives, miracles, mules;
 drew pictures in my eye of fountains tiled
 in teacup-fragile green and white. The god
 offered me a fig, which I accepted.
 The horses still kicked ice up from the lanes,
 but I sat on a portico in Cyprus
 engaged in learned discourse, or lay drugged
 in pearled seraglios under breezing palms,
 restless on the shores of my desires.

The English trees branched stiffly past. At last
 we turned and drove through Stonemoor's coachyard arch.
 The vast estate seemed less than adequate.
 We bustled in, removing hats and cloaks,
 the entry hall alight with torches. – He's
 full of talk, I whispered to the Duke.
 A footman opened the library door.
 The Duke stood pensive, doubtful, overawed:
 the brilliant wave in the god-like hair; distracted
 gleam in the ancient youthful eye. – I fear,
 said the Duke, this poor library cannot hope –
 The god held up his hand. "It will suffice."
 We left him by a snapping fire, ignoring
 his tea, murmuring, paging in joyous hurry
 through rare, gold-glittering late-medieval books.
 The Duke and I retired to our own fire
 in a drafty sitting room of the house,
 and spoke of ancient silences made loud
 by massive winged footsteps through the trees.
 We feared the new-found valleys in ourselves.
 I dreamed that night of maidens locked in ice,
 their eyelids fluttering open in the dawn.

–Brian J. Buchanan

Brian J. Buchanan's poetry has appeared or will appear in *Cumberland River Review*, *Puckerbrush Review*, *Valley Voices*, *Potomac Review*, on *National Review Online* and in other journals. His book reviews have been published in Nashville's *Tennessean* and in *In Concert*, the magazine of the Nashville Symphony. Two of his essays appeared in *Literary Matters*. Buchanan is the former managing editor of the First Amendment Center Online at Vanderbilt University.



THE HEIGHT

Cows slowly sway vacuuming up the grass,
But enough of that. I've come to them at last,
These Cliffs of Moher: slower goes my footfall now.
Lashed shutters flutter midst the rip-roaring wind,
Come again, come with me, I have yet to begin.

Slanted slate stone adorns the narrow path.
On my stomach, I lay eyes down the abyss
Down those perfect, vertical steps lashed
By the rocky winds of a millennia. Abashed
By such height, they aren't steps at all:
For they angle ever inward to the base.
Only the gulls working close have a chance.

They, eight-hundred feet high, fly
Towards me level to mine eye.
Foamy fingers crash at the base
Painstakingly etching the newest line.
It feels good here in the clouds.
Beyond is only the blue Atlantic
And a solitary sailboat miles away.
The clouds have hid the sun
Yet the ocean still reflects his rays.

A gleaming white pond amidst the void:
Where the ocean meets the sky
I cannot say

As seen from Inis Oírr

Behold! The Cliffs of Moher.
We meet again, and Doolin
is a mere pasture to your left,
an emerald hectogram shining at the low
of an otherwise impenetrable promontory:
a brilliant green patch of seamless
hair for the left most shoulder
of your craggy back.

Works published in the Poets' Corner are selected blindly by Greg Delanty, former President of the ALSCW (2010–11).

To contribute poetry—original pieces or translations—to the Poets' Corner, send your submissions to literarymatters@alscw.org by the submission deadline for Issue 6.3: **August 15, 2013.**



This coast I see before my eyes
in its entirety was but the first
red line traced on a "AAA" map.
The clouds still roll by as I walk on,
bumbling for want of extension in song.

I, unaccustomed to looking their way,
Save this day my gaze fell upon simple
Plain clouds of white pierced by sun's failing ray.
Provided an x-ray like effect, did
That summer sunset. Flesh of the nimbus
Exposed, a steady eye can see inside.

The details of these most (otherwise) hum-
Drum pillowed plain clouds of white, millions
Of brush strokes etch-a-sketched into place, all
These whispering ellipsoids folding to
One, then out, diverging on nor'eastern
Breaths.

Plain clouds? No, my friends. *This* was that sacred
Code, life-fluidity, fetal-advance:
A fading glance at the mechanics of
The machine, lucid enough to inspire
The dream, catalyst of deeper meaning,
Source of soul & final resting place of peace.

Or

They are that which we fear most:
The absence of meaning.
These words, simply a revolt
Against the indignant embraces
Of pink-blue nebula in empty spaces.

-Michael Hogan

Michael Hogan holds a BA from Amherst College and an MA in English and American Literature from Boston University. He is currently a PhD candidate in English at BU, where he teaches a course entitled "The 'Meta' in Literature" for the Writing Program. Hogan is the recipient of the English Departmental Teaching Award (2011–2012). His scholarly interests include metapoetics and the semantics of rhythm. He can be contacted at mthoganreads@gmail.com.

CONDITION ZEBRA

Tell us again how the power of ten
Bellows the fire-seed and kindles the ken.

“Set ‘Condition Zebra!’” he heard the man
The Captain scream, aboard the *U.S.S.*
WASP, *CVS-18*: an *Essex* class
Aircraft-carrier, mostly a sub-hunter—
It would also recover manned space-flights
Back in '69, round the same time word
Came down to mount the chiaroscuro horse.

Acoustic signatures below crush-depth
Had sounded the initial alarum,
But now something had brought down the lookouts
From the towers: three visual-contacts
Were spotted hovering in the distance
Out in the middle of the Atlantic—
Talk of impossible redirections.

Muttonchops saw and heard all this transpire
From his position at the co-plot board;
An E-3 Petty-Officer First-Class,
Muttonchops (one of the “Admiral’s Staff”
In less eerie times on another ship)
Muttonchops was there to hear when Captain
Gillhouly sounded “General Quarters.”

Somewhat out of protocol, Muttonchops
Quickly turned to the portside of the Bridge
And tersely swung around the alidade
Onto the moving lights emanating
From the horizon’s face, as if to make
Some calculation or take measurement
Of an event beyond comprehension.

They illumined the ocean beneath them.
Color became something of a question.
For a moment, Muttonchops was neither
Here nor there. Ions seemed to charge the air
That swirled around the NAVY ship, equipped
For far much less than this. Now Muttonchops
Makes for the helm and puts on his hard-hat!

“Set ‘Condition Zebra!’” he heard the man
The Captain scream, aboard the *U.S.S.*
WASP, *CVS-18*. Gillhouly’s play
Was to send out two CH-53
Helicopters (Sea-Stallions, they call ‘em).
Gillhouly ordered two Sea-Stallions ride
Into the lights that had troubled their sleep.

As when a smoker finishes her butt
Down to the filter, then cocks a finger
And flicks it a-flight, mirthfully firing
Spent embers to the night, so too did these
Lights look as they ascended from the fray,
Massy, large and round, then winking to nill
In quite psychedelic changes of scale.

The hooves of the Stallions chopped at the air
Abashedly, as they made their return
From their useless charge into the margins
Of science and the known world. Gillhouly
Banished the Quartermaster from the Bridge
And intended a gap in the ship’s log,
When he called the pilots over to him.

“Did you see anything?” he demanded
Of the near-catatonic pilots. One
Lowed: “We got close enough to see markings.”
Positioned in the helm, Muttonchops was
Near enough to hear their conversation
And forever inscribed hieroglyphics
Of his own, demarcating spectacles.

Were these as those seen by the Genoese
From the decks of the *Santa Maria*
The night before landfall, ‘wax-candle flames
Flickering’? Or that which on November
Eleventh, '72, evaded
Norwegian torpedoes and depth-charges
For two weeks, escaping the Sognefjord?

Muttonchops steamed ahead to Rhoda, Spain,
Leaving cigar-shaped thoughts in the ship’s wake.

Perhaps this is all very credible ...
I have it by word from the principal.
Yes! for we have all stood
feet gripping a driveway
glistened by luminosity;

been offered the saucer
by burnt-orange Michelangelo,
the mutant ninja turtle

extended a disc of green dust.
Lebron-like, I threw it in the air!

-Michael Hogan

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