Literary Matters

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

Aut nuntiare aut delectare

From the Editor

There's the old saying about things being found in the final place they are looked for. (And all the permutations of snarky replies that share the same end sum: that's because you stop looking once a thing is found.) Certainly, when your keys have vanished, you will no longer have a thing to look for upon tearing the last cushion from the couch and discovering the hiding place of your missing wares. But there are so many things in life that do not have a discrete sense of ending, and thus, how do we know when we've found them? How can we say when it's time to stop looking?

In such a subjective field—the literary arts—do we even want there to be something that could be said decisively to have been "found"? There's a reason the canon continues to grow; a reason why we keep considering the styles, techniques, and impacts of long-completed texts; a reason why people keep writing poems, plays, and prose in spite of all those who were already deemed masters and all the works previously declared superlative; and a reason why we will never all agree on or be satisfied with any universal methodology for the teaching of literature in schools. The reason? Well, for one thing, it would put a period at the end of our professions. More importantly, the literary arts are a quest not for the scholarly or aesthetic Holy Grail, but for continued exploration. We explore and create in order for there to be a greater need to explore and create, so that there is more out there for us to explore. We search so that we may prolong and expand our search.

Contradictory as the idea may seem (after all, most searches we undertake are indeed meant to end), in it rests the same spirit that is the substance of many concepts: opposites attract; there can be no good without the bad; yin and yang. Paradoxes, contradictions, irreconcilable notions—it is within these types of frameworks where truth and meaning flourish.

In stories of superheroes, the appeal is not that someone out there is so valiant, so kindhearted, as to perform acts of goodwill anonymously "just 'cause." We're enthralled because there's a bad guy who we want to see the good guy beat. Involving two poles is what keeps it interesting, and this comes into play beyond plotlines. It permeates; it is reflected in the characters as well. That's why even the good guy has a weakness or flaw, and why the bad guy generally gets around to doing or saying one mildly redeeming thing: virtually nothing real or complex or worth investing in is free of conflict or a little inconsistency. The feature pieces in this issue of *Literary Matters* demonstrate how the dichotomous can do more than coexist—they can also conspire to create richer material and produce more thoughtful insight.

Michael Daher's "The Disciplined Rebel: Thoreau and Routine" argues that it was Thoreau's ability to embrace patterned behavior and his self-restraint that ultimately enabled him to depart from the normative and cultivate a unique, independent selfhood. Generally, we think of the rebel as being disorderly, unwilling to be controlled and, likely, just as unwilling to exercise self-control. We think of those who rely on routine as being contained, perhaps rigid even. Yet Daher's examination of Thoreau's practices, as detailed in his journals and *Walden*, shows that seemingly contrary characteristics can coincide in a way that produces extraordinary brilliance. This sort of output would likely not be possible were its inventor more conventional, one dimensional, and unable to handle a complex and contradictory self-dynamic.

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Inside This Issue

Laura Solomon's "Blood and Guts: One Woman's Firsthand Experience of a Craniotomy (A Tragicomedy)," the second feature piece in this issue, is a stunning composition that further exemplifies how what appears to clash can actually cohere to generate something more authentic and textured than would be yielded by a more narrow approach. The genre of tragicomedy is itself the merger of two contradictory intentions. If it is done well, which is indeed the case here, it is more honest about the real experience of hardship, for so much of enduring depends upon finding moments of relief, even if that means forging them for one's self. Written with the perspective alternating between the first and second person—indicative of a rupture, yet also a means to provide the reader with information and emotions that could not be communicated were the level of psychic distance uniform throughout—Solomon's essay is by turns incisive and intimate, sensitive and sardonic.

The two book reviews appearing in this issue, Al Basile on Daniel Thomas Moran's *A Shed for Wood* and Kelly Cherry on Christopher Locke's *Waiting for Grace & Other Poems*, both touch upon the authenticity and emotional power that come about when expectations are not unmet but upended. Basile points out the richness in Moran's poems that is born from his self-identified incongruous career: a former dentist and professor of dentistry turned poet. That Moran's trade and true calling seem so at odds is what lends him a sensibility that might be inaccessible to those oriented exclusively in the literary arts. Cherry hones in on the depth of Locke's expression, which is achieved by balancing unifying themes and figures with the appearance of oddball characters, by letting certain scenes unfold several times while somehow rendering them anew on each occurrence. Cherry puts it very beautifully when she explains that the poet ultimately reaches "something like a cross between a call for help and a cry of triumph." Isn't there a profound sort of honesty presented by such contradiction? Do we not in times of intense suffering and loss learn the extent of our resilience and gain something from it?

In addition to the reviews and feature pieces, this issue contains a full report on the ALSCW's Annual Conference, which was held in April at Indiana University, Bloomington. I want to offer my congratulations to everyone involved in the organizing of the event and to those who presented their work during the panels and sessions. I was, unfortunately, unable to attend and experience it all firsthand, but in my capacity as editor, I had the privilege of corresponding with many of the presenters, and I have been consistently awed by the scholarship, creativity, and spirit that went into each paper, into every panel and workshop and reading. For those lucky enough to attend, the report may provide a pleasant flashback, and for those who could not be there, I think even the overviews of the proceedings will prove enlightening. I am also very appreciative of the efforts of those who volunteered to report on several of the panels and events: Celeste Barber, Bruce Gans, Lejla Marijam, Phillip Perry, and John Wallen.

There is also an interesting challenge cooked up by Debra San, "Color in the Lines," which will test your memory and more; the Poets' Corner, which offers up pieces that explore many types of entrances and exits, some as concrete as coming home or passing away, others, of more metaphorical sorts; and news and announcements about gatherings past and those in the offing, the many achievements of our members, and the launch of the review-copy database.

Before signing off, so to speak, I would like to thank everyone whose time and toil went into this issue. I also wish to invite those who are inspired to contribute to upcoming issues to send in their work. Share your words and take all you can from reading the words of others. We are duty bound to absorb as much as we can, and lucky that no matter how much we take, there will always be more to give and get.

Best wishes,

Samantha Madway
Editor, *Literary Matters*

LITERARY MATTERS

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

President's Column:
Listening to *Paradise Lost*

By John Briggs

Five years ago, a colleague invited me to an actor's recitation of Book Nine of *Paradise Lost*. I drove up to the University of Redlands with more curiosity than interest. I wanted to see the man I had heard was moving with graceful energy through each line of the text, performing from memory one book each evening on campuses across the country. At the same time, I found it difficult to appreciate the fact that such a feat was possible, even though I knew about Homeric festivals, performances by Eastern European and Irish singers in modern times, and the modern acting of massive scripts. I knew that more than a few Hamlets could deliver the character's 1,500 lines twice daily in summer stock. But I had never witnessed a lengthy recitation of lines from an epic poem. I had only an inkling that the performance of 1,189 lines from Milton's rendering of the Fall might reveal something about the poem—and about poetry and teaching—beyond my experience.

Part of what drove me to Redlands was my teaching of Milton's epic to undergraduates. No matter what sort of classroom or selection of students comes into play in such a course, Milton's *Paradise Lost* fills the room. I read sections aloud. Students recite favorite passages. We scan and ponder the art and meaning of Milton's grand style. We pore over lines upon which seem to hinge our understanding of larger dimensions of the work. We identify and sometimes debate recurring questions about the nature of God and man, the relationship of Adam to Eve, and the sublimation of angelic digestion. More than anything, we discuss character, plot, and motivation, setting and thought, because the persistent literary embodiment of Milton's conception of the world demands literary discussion if one is to appreciate and understand it for what it is.

I find that something is nearly always lacking in this venerable, almost indispensable, process: the assurance that students are reading Milton outside of class, that Milton's challenging presence is somehow accompanying them, at least between the covers of their book. Are they reading? The course's paper assignments are predicated upon the requirement that students base their essays on their reading of the text. But what sort of reading will it be? A scanning and plucking, a theorized autopsy, or an experience of being held in a spell even as one attempts to articulate the sources and significance of what is happening? Will the students be taken in hand, take their book in their hands, and read?

I was thinking about these things as I drove up to Redlands. In half-attended thoughts ramping from one freeway to another, I recalled the complementary and yet opposing principles that often came to mind when I walked across campus to my Milton class. On the one hand, there was the seemingly urgent need to interpret the poem, to grapple with its form and magnitude in matters great and small. On the other, there was the need to immerse oneself, to remain in the text. Each principle seemed to need the other, and yet each was capable of undermining its complement. Decades before, I had heard the story of an inexperienced faculty member who did nothing in his Chaucer class but read the great poet's lines aloud. His was a madness, I thought, that told a truth—not only of the difficulty of relying upon vital opposing principles but of the power of great poetry as it tore the instructor from the fabric of conventional academic instruction. What could be said, and yet what could be left out? These half thoughts would always end at the classroom door, beyond which a strange clarity prevailed. The book would open and an hour would pass without a metronome. With Milton in the room, the discussion would go beyond recitation, glosses, and analyses. In some measure, it aspired to possess the poem. Sometimes it seemed possessed by it.

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

Submissions for **Issue 7.4** must be received by **October 31, 2014**.

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.

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*.

Review-Copy Database Goes Live

In response to the enthusiasm among authors and contributors alike generated by the initiation of the Book Review section in *Literary Matters*, a new program has been established. A database of books that have been made available for review by the authors can be accessed online, and anyone wishing to write a review can browse said list to determine whether any of the options are of interest. To view the listings, please visit **https://app.box.com/reviewcopydatabase**. The PDF can be opened directly in your web browser, though you also have the option to download it.

For reviewers: If, upon surveying the list, you discover a publication you wish to review, you can contact the editor of *Literary Matters*, Samantha Madway, at literarymatters@alscw.org, and she will facilitate having the work sent out to you.

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

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

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

Book reviews submitted for publication in **Literary Matters** may range from 500 to 1,500 words. They 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 that you feel set the piece apart. Book reviews should be sent to literarymatters@alscw.org. Those received by **October 31, 2014** will be considered for publication in **Issue 7.4**.

President's Column
(continued from page 3)

That sort of discussion was not a passive activity; how could it be when Milton re-presents one controversial biblical passage after another, when his poetry arrests and impels, stops and accelerates, challenges and resists the reader's wondering apprehension? In a sense it was, as it had to be in a class on Milton's works, a plunge into the experience of temptation and resistance, of access and choice. Every day, Milton's composition would unsettle and resolve us, whatever our later conclusions. We were held in throes of labor and delight.

When Eve asks Adam for permission to go down the path alone to trim the garden, she seeks experience more than conversation, at least for a morning. The self-directed desire for immersion—or is it for self-directed interpretation?—is a kind of test, she says, that validates the conditions of Edenic existence.[1] To Adam's warning about the dangers of invited temptation and his praise of the connubial conversation that helps guard against it, she replies,

> Frail is our happiness if this be so
> And Eden were no Eden thus exposed!
> (9.140–41)

Eve is famously in error, judging by the consequences. Or is she being, in this scene at least, admirably Miltonic? What is Eden if the strolling pair must forever be in conversation at the classroom door?

In the spirit of the *Areopagitica*, some form of testing seems to be necessary in reading and teaching Milton in the classroom. One could argue that many of the poems are poetical, moral, and theological tests Milton imposes on himself. Students in my classes must write about those tests. If, as Eliot said, the poets who come after Milton cannot ignore him, then students and instructors would do well to accept the necessity, which many of them feel, of immersing themselves in the glimmering ordeals of his work. The process of parsing, analyzing, and weighing his work need not be separated from that process.

Yet to "earnestly seek such proof" of experience, as Adam ruefully tells Eve, is the beginning of a new failure (9.1141–42). There is a danger of false assurance when one prefers or attempts to enforce immersion over interpretation. To rest assured that such "proof" is self-evident in the trial of reading Milton is to repeat the fall of those who first eat of the apple. They

> swim in mirth, and fansie that they feel
> Divinitie within them breeding wings
> Wherewith to scorne the Earth....
> (9.1010–12)

Veterans of classroom discussions of Milton's poem know how untended discussion can proliferate into manifestos: Milton is a prophet or a dinosaur. Careful, liberated reading is a casualty. One looks for a better path.

The students leave the classroom with Milton's sublime, difficult, and perplexing soul in their packs and bags. Will he be ignored, I have wondered, or perhaps tortured by distracted minds? Many students will write good papers that help make them better readers, but many others will be unable to show that they have read Milton at all.

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1 *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy C. Flannagan (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998). All further citations to *Paradise Lost* are provided parenthetically in the text and refer to book number and line number(s) from this edition.

Winner Chosen for 2014 Meringoff High School Essay Award

Alexis Manos of Potomac, Maryland, has won the ALSCW's Stephen J. Meringoff Secondary School Essay Award for 2014 with her essay "The Use of *Contrapasso* in the *Inferno*." The Stephen J. Meringoff Secondary School Essay Contest was judged by Lee Oser and Helaine Smith. Alexis Manos will receive $1,500, and her award-winning composition will be published in an upcoming issue of *Literary Matters*.

Alexis (Lexy) Manos is a high school senior at the National Cathedral School in Washington, DC. Lexy is passionate about literature and critical analysis. She plans on majoring in English in college and hopes to do further research around Dante Alighieri, her favorite author. She received recognition for her performance on the National Spanish Exam twice in high school, earning the distinction of *Premio de Oro* (gold) on both occasions. She also served as editor for her school newspaper, the *Discus*.

Lexy balances her English focus with AP and accelerated courses in physics and mathematics. She is president of the Finance Club at school and an active debater in the Government Club. Lexy has augmented her government-related academic and extracurricular activities with real-world experience interning for Doug Gansler in his campaign for governor of Maryland. At National Cathedral, Lexy is a three-sport varsity athlete in tennis, basketball, and lacrosse. Lexy is a two-time member of the Brine All-American Lacrosse high school team, as well as a member of the All-ISL Lacrosse team.

A FRIENDLY REMINDER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Dear Friends of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers:

I joined the ALSCW twenty years ago when I was looking for a professional organization dedicated to literature and the literary imagination. I discovered what I was looking for among the scholars, critics, and writers dedicated to the goals of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers:

- To promote excellence in literary criticism and scholarship;
- To work to ensure that literature thrives in both scholarly and creative environments;
- To encourage the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship;
- To foster wide-ranging discussions among those committed to the reading and study of literary works.

I write to you now as president of the ALSCW with an urgent message: **The Association must expand its membership in the following months if it is to prosper in future years**. I urge you to join or rejoin the Association. Help us maintain and strengthen its rejuvenating annual conferences, its local readings, its excellent online newsletter, *Literary Matters*, its *Forum* publications, and its premiere journal, *Literary Imagination*, published by Oxford University Press. Begin receiving your copies of the journal and the newsletter, preferential registration rates at the annual conferences, and news of local ALSCW events. Join our collegial pursuit of the Association's founding goals.

Your decision to become a member of the ALSCW this year will be crucial to the future of the Association. In the coming weeks and months, members will be contacting graduate students, former ALSCW members, friends of the Association outside the academy, and other colleagues to tell them about the work of the Association and the urgency of increasing our membership. I hope that one of them will be able to reach you. Please look over the membership materials, visit our website (www.alscw.org) and join us in our pursuit of the Association's goals. If the spirit of the ALSCW moves you, please sign up for a self-renewing membership and forward this message to others along with your endorsement. Help us preserve and strengthen this worthy organization.

Sincerely,

John C. Briggs, ALSCW President
Professor of English, University of California, Riverside

The ALSCW membership year is based on the calendar year (January–December). When you join as a new member, Oxford University Press will begin to send *Literary Imagination* right away. You will also have access to the online archives of past issues of our journal and our newsletter, *Literary Matters*.

Please use the online form available at http://alscw.org/membership/join/index.html to renew your membership or to join. We accept all major credit cards. To pay by check, you can download the form as a PDF at http://www.alscw.org/PDFs/MembershipForm2014.pdf or use the copy included on page 43 of this issue of *Literary Matters* and mail the completed form along with your check to our postal address: 650 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02215.

Premium memberships are $125 annually; Regular memberships are $85 annually; Senior memberships (for those 70 and above) are $60; Reduced-price memberships are $45 annually. (Those eligible for reduced-price memberships are members in their first year, students, and those earning less than $50,000 a year.)

Internet users please note: It is not necessary to fill out the ALSCW ID field to purchase or renew a membership. (If you are a new member, our database will assign you an ALSCW ID automatically.) When you have successfully submitted your membership request, you will receive an email confirmation within twelve hours. Fields for payment information will appear as you fill out the preceding field for membership type.

**If you have any difficulties submitting your form, please verify that you have filled out all the required fields (those marked with an asterisk). Should the trouble persist, please email us at office@alscw.org or call our office at (617) 358-1990, and we will do whatever we can to assist you.*

President's Column
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My speculations ended as the Redlands campus leafed around me. I searched for the small hall where the recitation would take place. Inside was a scattered audience of a few dozen students and faculty. Through a set of glass doors on the far side of the room, a man was stretched out on a terrace bench, his eyes closed, his arms folded over his chest. Here was the lapsed Adam, I thought, the poem bound in sleep. There was a worn paperback book on the stones, dropped within his reach. Had he just taken a fatal drought or a dream-making potion? The hall filled in witness of the diorama: Would this Adam rise and come forth, or remain behind a wall of glass?

On our programs, this Adam was John Basinger, an experienced actor of Shakespeare and a veteran of the Theater for the Deaf. He rose and picked up the worn book, placed it on the piano, and told us it would rest there unless, in a moment of need, it became his prompter.

Over the next two hours, the book was his silent partner. Several times, he approached it, stretching out his arm and hand, but he never took it up, at least not in the way we expected. Each time, he was prompted to resume his performance—by book, gesture, memory, or all three. Sir Lawrence Olivier used to talk about his rare but telling terror of stage fright, when his lines would go dark, and he would have to rely on the pressure and charity of his fellow actors to prompt and reassure him, whether they played enemies or allies. On his Redlands stage, Basinger spoke through his rare hesitations in the presence of Milton's book.

What I learned in those two hours was not what I expected. I heard more of the clarity, magnitude, and particularity of Milton's conception in line after line, sentence after sentence. I also heard the poet's voice in the actor's long breaths and the plangent, then almost whispered, progression of his sentences. The subtly growing weight of Milton's conception of the Fall fell upon the audience in waves of unique symmetries of poetical snow. Whether it was my fatigue, an oversensitivity to the actor's human limitations, or my inability to take in the full magnitude of the event, these were not the things I was to remember most. What I recalled long after was a growing sense that whatever else I did as a reader and teacher of *Paradise Lost*, I needed to compose myself according to the accruing delay of Milton's poetical syntax and unfolding thought. The discipline I was asking my students to undergo was a discipline of reading, without which the presence of Milton in the classroom would not persist in their writing and reading beyond that classroom's walls.

Students and teachers of Milton's works are more likely to sense, perhaps more keenly than in classes where they are not invited to wonder about such things, that they have more questions than they first thought, and much to learn. In each classroom hour, there is bound to be a need for translation, elucidation, contextualization, and other motions of sensibility and intellect that are conducive to a basic understanding of a particular poem. But there are times when such tasks show themselves to be inadequate, too easily misunderstood. By habit, we either redouble our efforts to overcome that misunderstanding, or redirect them. In reading Milton, however, we are presented with what seems to be an urgent task that does not reward earnestness. The urgency of careful interpretation remains, but we are also drawn back to what is more elementary and more essential: rereading, reading aloud, reciting, wondering, waiting. Those things open us to old perplexities Milton knew well, including those mixtures of joy and grief that characterize many of his poems.

I assigned the DVDs of Basinger's complete performance of *Paradise Lost* to my students last spring. We watched them for a few minutes to help set the tone of the class. I hoped they would listen to them at home, or while traveling through Southern California's largest library of the spoken book: its freeways. But I did not return to those recordings in the last nine weeks of class. We made haste, but more slowly than was my old habit. We kept hearing the words, and yet before us was the book. We reached for it.

John Briggs
President, ALSCW

For those who wish to reserve tickets by postal mail, the relevant form is included on page 44 of this issue of Literary Matters.

Call for Entries: The 2015 Meringoff Writing Awards

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers announces three awards of $2,000 each in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Only one entry will be accepted from each person. **The entry must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2014**. The winners will be announced early in 2015. There is no entry fee for current members of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers. For everyone else, membership in the ALSCW is required. All newly registered members will receive the annual three issues of our literary journal/magazine, *Literary Imagination*, and our quarterly newsletter, *Literary Matters*; they will also be able to attend our conferences and local gatherings. See the ALSCW website (alscw.org) for details about how to join the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers.

Guidelines

- For the Meringoff Poetry award, entries can be one poem of no more than 150 lines or a group of poems that adds up to no more than 150 lines.
- For the Meringoff Fiction award, entries can be one story, or a chapter of a longer work, of no more than 25 double-spaced pages.
- For the Meringoff Nonfiction award, entries can be one nonfiction piece, or a chapter of a longer work, of no more than 25 double-spaced pages.

All entries will be judged anonymously. **Please include three copies of your entry. Print your name, email address, postal address, and phone number on only one copy; do not include your name or any contact information on the other two copies.**

All submissions must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2014. Entries should be sent to:

Stephen J. Meringoff Writing Awards | Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
650 Beacon Street, Suite 510 | Boston, MA 02215 | United States

The Fifth Annual ALSCW/VSC LiT Forum

Johnson, Vermont September 19, 2014

The ALSCW/VSC Literature in Translation (LiT) Forum features international writers and translators, often in collaborative pairs, who give a bilingual reading and then run a discussion about the processes of translation and collaboration, as well as other matters relevant to international literary and publishing communities. The poet and translator are always acknowledged masters, and their role is to inspire the community of artists at VSC and beyond.

The Fifth Annual LiT Forum will be held September 19, 2014. It will feature Swiss fiction writer Peter Stamm and translator and poet Michael Hofmann. The event will begin at 8 p.m. and is open to the public. Michael Hofmann will also give a separate reading of his own work at 8 p.m. on September 22, 2014.

Michael Hofmann

Michael Hofmann (b. 1957) is a German-born poet and translator. He has published six books of poetry: *Nights in the Iron Hotel* (Faber & Faber, 1983), *Acrimony* (Faber & Faber, 1986), *K. S. in Lakeland: New and Selected Poems* (The Ecco Press, 1990), *Corona, Corona* (Faber Poetry, 1993), *Approximately Nowhere* (Faber Poetry, 1999), and *Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009). With James Lasdun, he edited the influential anthology *After Ovid: New Metamorphoses* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994). A selection of his criticism, *Behind the Lines: Pieces on Writing and Pictures*, was published in 2002 by Faber & Faber. He edited and introduced short selections of the poems of Robert Lowell (2001) and John Berryman (2003); in addition, he edited the anthology *Twentieth Century German Poetry* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006).

Hofmann has also translated some seventy books, mainly novels, from the original German, including works by Hans Fallada, Ernst Jünger, Franz Kafka, Wolfgang Koeppen, Joseph Roth, and Wim Wenders. His criticism appears regularly in the *London Review of Books* and *Poetry* (Chicago). He has won a Cholmondeley Award, the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, and an English Arts Council grant for his poetry; the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the PEN Translation Prize, the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize (twice), and the Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize for his translations. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Deutsche Akademie der Künste.

He received a BA (1979) and an MA (1984) in English from Cambridge University. He teaches at the University of Florida. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Michigan, Rutgers University, the New School University, and Barnard College.

Peter Stamm

Peter Stamm (b. 1963) is a Swiss novelist, short-story writer, and radio dramatist. Stamm worked as an accountant for nearly a decade before becoming a writer. His sparse writing style has been translated into English by Michael Hofmann. These translated works include *Seven Years* (S. Fischer Verlag, 2009; Other Press, 2010), *Agnes* (Arche Verlag, 1998; Bloomsbury, 2000), *Unformed Landscape* (Arche Verlag, 2001; Handsel Books, 2005), and *On a Day Like This* (S. Fischer Verlag, 2006; Other Press, 2007), as well as *In Strange Gardens and Other Stories* (Arche Literatur Verlag AG, 2003; Other Press, 2006), a collection of short stories.

Previous ALSCW/VSC LiT Forums

The inaugural LiT Forum in September 2010, with Polish poet Adam Zagajewski and translator Clare Cavanagh, drew an audience of more than ninety people to the VSC's Lowe Lecture Hall. The forum began with Zagajewski reading his poems in the original Polish and their English translations. It then moved to a discussion of Zagajewski and Cavanagh's collaborative process and the backstory of Adam's poem "Try to Praise the Mutilated World," which appeared in the *New Yorker* immediately following the 9/11 attacks.

The 2011 LiT Forum featured Italian poet Patrizia Cavalli and poet and translator Geoffrey Brock. The pair gave a presentation to an international audience on the challenging role of choice and decision making within each translation. They read not only Brock's translations of Cavalli into English but also Cavalli's translations of Brock into Italian. Additional highlights included Cavalli reading and discussing samples from her translation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into Italian.

In August 2012, French poet Emmanuel Moses and his translator, poet Marilyn Hacker, conducted the Third Annual ALSCW/VSC LiT Forum. The evening included a talk and a joint bilingual reading and concluded with a question-and-answer session.

The Fourth Annual LiT Forum was held in October 2013. It focused on Hebrew and Arabic writing, with poet and translator Peter Cole and writer Adina Hoffman serving as the featured pair. In addition to the joint presentation on contemporary Middle Eastern literature through the lenses of Hebrew and Arabic poetry, the pair's week-long visit included a craft talk by Peter Cole for the VSC writing residents, a public reading of his original poems and translations, and lively participation by both Cole and Hoffman in VSC's diverse creative community.

2010 LiT Forum with Adam Zagajewski and Clare Cavanaugh

A. Borra, G. Delanty, G. Brock, G. Clark, P. Cavalli, A. Jacobs, 2011 LiT Forum

For More Information

For more information, visit http://www.vermontstudiocenter.org/literature-in-translation-lit-program/ or email the VSC at info@vermontstudiocenter.org.

Cassandra Nelson Receives Recognition from the NEH

Cassandra Nelson, a PhD candidate at Harvard University, has been selected as a Summer Scholar from a national applicant pool to attend one of thirty seminars and institutes supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The NEH is a federal agency that supports these enrichment opportunities at colleges, universities, and cultural institutions each summer so that faculty can collaborate and study with experts in various disciplines within the humanities.

Nelson will participate in a four-week program entitled "Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor." The NEH-sponsored institute will be held in Milledgeville, Georgia, at Georgia College and State University. It will be codirected by Professor Marshall Bruce Gentry of Georgia College and State University and Professor Robert Donahoo of Sam Houston State University. Summer Scholars will attend ten lectures; participate in seminars conducted by leading O'Connor scholars including Gary Ciuba, Christina Bieber Lake, and Brad Gooch; and spend a week working with materials available to scholars only through the Georgia College library.

Nelson, who will graduate in May 2014, is one of only three graduate students to have been selected as an NEH Summer Scholar for the "Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor" institute. The other twenty-two participants are faculty members at colleges and universities across the country. O'Connor is one of the writers Nelson considers in her dissertation, "Age of Miracles: Religion and Screen Media in Postwar American Fiction." Her essay about O'Connor's ambivalent attitude toward film and television, which was adapted from the first chapter of her dissertation, received the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers' Meringoff Nonfiction Award in 2012 and was published in *Literary Imagination* earlier this year.

Nelson looks forward to continuing her work at the intersection of religion, literature, and technology at the NEH Summer Institute in July. She is particularly pleased to be able to consult the letters, drafts, and other manuscripts—as both a researcher and a future teacher—housed in the Flannery O'Connor Collection at Georgia College. "I did a master's degree in editorial studies at Boston University's Editorial Institute before I came to Harvard," she said, "and as an archival researcher, I particularly enjoy introducing students to the materiality of the text. I'm excited to gather anecdotes about what O'Connor's house is like, and her library, her typewriter, her handwriting, or what kinds of doodles she drew in the margins of her notebooks. Details like these can make her life and work seem vivid and relatable to students."

The twenty-five teachers selected to participate in the "Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor" program will each receive a stipend of $3,300 to cover travel, study, and living expenses.

Topics for the thirty NEH seminars and institutes offered for college and university teachers this summer include "Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia: Literature, the Arts, and Cinema since Independence"; "American Maritime People"; "America's East Central Europeans: Migration and Memory"; "Arts, Architecture, and Devotional Interaction in England, 1200–1600"; "Black Aesthetics and African Diasporic Culture"; "Bridging National Borders in North America"; "Dante's Divine Comedy: Poetry, Philosophy, and the City of Florence"; "Daoist Literature and History: An Introduction"; "George Herbert and Emily Dickinson"; "Jewish Buenos Aires"; "The Late Ottoman and Russian Empires: Citizenship, Belonging and Difference"; "Mapping Nature Across the Americas"; "Performing Dickens: *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* on Page, Stage, and Screen"; "Tudor Books and Readers: 1485–1603"; "World War I and the Arts"; and "World War I in the Middle East."

The approximately 437 NEH Summer Scholars who participate in these programs of study will teach more than 113,925 American students during the following year.

Local Meeting Report:
"Shadows of the Opus...Magnum: An Evening on Samuel Beckett" at the Katzenberg Center
Boston, March 27, 2014

By Philip Nikolayev

An engrossing soirée of performance and discussion dedicated to Samuel Beckett and titled "Shadows of the Opus...Magnus" took place at Boston University's Katzenberg Center on Thursday, March 27, 2014. The star participants were the critic Christopher Ricks of Boston Univerity; Beckett's friend and theater director and dramaturgy theorist Robert Scanlan of Harvard; and the actress and literary scholar Allison Vanouse, Ricks's graduate student, who recently defended her master's thesis at BU's Editorial Institute.

The evening opened with a stunning performance by Allison Vanouse of Beckett's *Not I*, a dramatic monologue for a female voice, which was originally staged in 1972. It was impossible to follow all of Beckett's requirements and instructions on this occasion. In a theater setting, *Not I* would have been performed in pitch-black darkness with the actress herself invisible, hoisted on a platform eight feet above the stage, a single spotlight keyed on her furiously speaking mouth, the only clearly visible thing in the entire space. Without access to the proper theater props, Vanouse instructed the audience to focus on her mouth and try to ignore everything else while taking in the delivery. Then, masterfully and at what seemed like a superhuman speed of speech, she brought on Beckett's complex and utterly poetic text, all fifteen minutes or so worth of it, achieving an electrifying energy that called to my mind Beckett's favorite actress, Billie Whitelaw. This work is supposed to inspire a "helpless compassion," and it did. It's a pity that this interpretation was not recorded on video.

Robert Scanlan, who is currently writing a memoir of Samuel Beckett, movingly reminisced about his friendship and theatrical collaborations with Beckett and touched on certain "principles of dramaturgy" (which happens to be the title of Scanlan's own forthcoming magnum opus, one I am looking forward to). Scanlan, who first met Beckett in 1980, told us how, during the early part of their acquaintance, Beckett was open to a degree of deviation from his original intentions and stage directions in a number of productions of his dramatic works. Yet Beckett later began to insist on strict adherence to his instructions. He also disallowed any "genre-jumping" (Ruby Cohn's term for transferring a work to a medium for which it was not originally intended, e.g., staging a novel or turning it into a film, adopting a radio play for the a stage, and so forth). In particular, Beckett forbade a production of *Waiting for Godot* with a female cast. Moreover, he asked Scanlan to "police" on his behalf various American productions of his plays. Scanlan emphasized that there were deep reasons for this. All actors and directors who collaborated with Beckett shared "the experience of working under extreme pressure to achieve the minute precision necessary to capture something that is very hard to capture" in works that "reassemble the self and the initial conditions of existence."

Christopher Ricks's talk was about Samuel Beckett's short prose-poem "Ceiling," written in September 1981, and the French version, "Plafond." Dedicated to the artist Avigdor Arikha, a close personal friend of Beckett's, this miniature masterpiece was originally included in one of Arikha's art catalogues and was eventually published with a note by Ricks in the Beckett issue of *Fulcrum: An Annual of Poetry and Aesthetics* (no. 6, 2007). As Ricks put it, this is "a piece about coming to, wondering if it is a good idea." He commented on the text's "extraordinary equanimity" and on its various "gaits" of cadence. "Everything in Beckett [it] is about the pangs of birth and death," said Ricks. And, just as I was about to propose that "breath" go between the other two, he turned to discussing the phonetic "breath" of this prose poem, which he associated with the repetition of the word "white": For instance, the line, "On coming to the first sight was of white," and many additional examples occur. " 'Breath' here is in the word 'white,' " said Ricks, pronouncing it as the old school "hwite." He pointed out that *wh* conveyed a sound different from *w*, and it would not have worked the same way with a plain *w*. Similarly, the title of Melville's novel is "*The Hwite Hwale*, not *The Wite Wale*," Ricks articulated. Another breath rhythm is created by the recurring "On" that follows each paragraph on a line of its own. The vision's progress resolves in a "dread darling sight," " 'darling' being a very Irish word," remarked Ricks. He also reminded the audience that Beckett's advice to a young author was: "Despair young and never look back."

Philip Nikolayev completed his PhD under Christopher Ricks at Boston University's Editorial Institute. For his doctoral studies, he edited a critical edition of the complete poems of Samuel Beckett. He is an internationally known poet, the author of *Letters from Aldenderry* (Salt Publishing, 2006), and the editor of *Fulcrum: An Annual of Poetry and Aesthetics*.

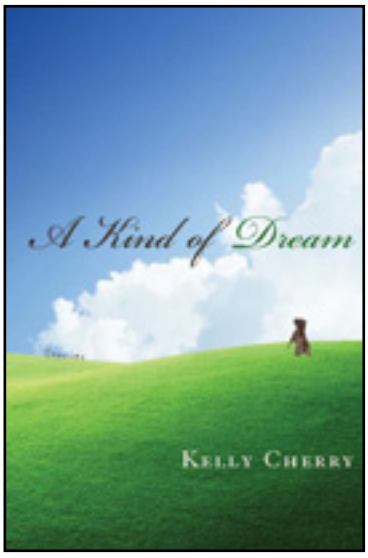
If you would like to see news of recent honors or awards you have received, notices for upcoming events of interest to ALSCW members, or information about Local Meetings you have hosted/are hosting included in *Literary Matters*, please send materials (photographs, text detailing all relevant information,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

New Publications by Members

Kelly Cherry, *A Kind of Dream* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014)

Life is *A Kind of Dream*. So is the art we make in response to life. In *A Kind of Dream*, five generations of an artistic family explore the ups and downs of life, discovering that, for an artist, even failure is success because the work matters more than the self.

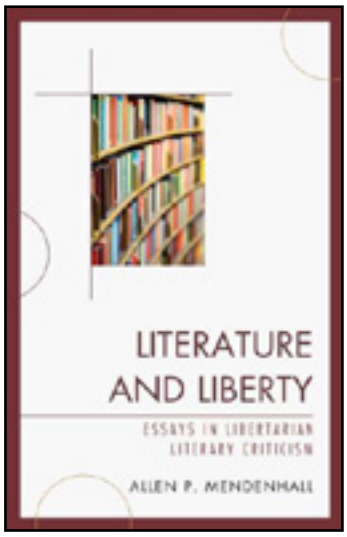
The selves in this book include Nina, a writer, and her husband, Palmer, a historian, who, having settled into marriage and family life, are now faced with the bittersweetness of late life; BB and Roy, who make a movie in Mongolia; Tavy, Nina's adopted daughter, a painter in her twenties who meets her birth mother for the first time; and Tavy's young daughter, Callie, a budding violinist. Other vivid characters confront the awful fact of violence in America and try to cope with political ineptitude; one devises his own code of sexual morality. Perhaps the most important character is Nina's dog, a salt-and-pepper cairn terrier of uncommon wisdom.



Fame, death, rash self-destruction, laughter, the excitement of making good art, love, marriage, being a mother, being a father, the appreciation of beauty, and always life—life itself, life in all its shapes and guises—are all here.

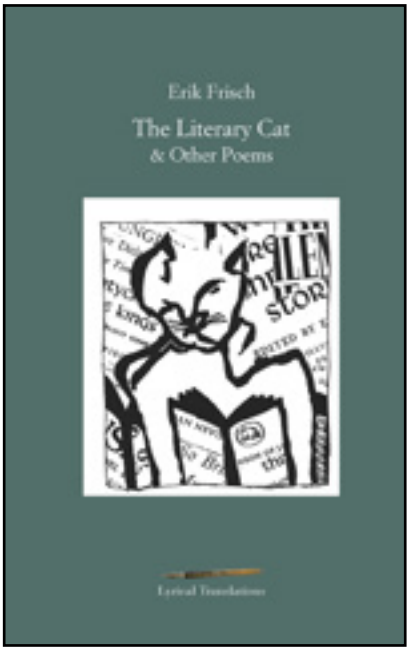
A Kind of Dream is the culminating book in a trilogy Kelly Cherry began with *My Life and Dr. Joyce Brothers* (Algonquin Books, 1990) and *The Society of Friends* (University of Missouri Press, 1999). Each book stands alone, but together they take us on a Dantean journey from midlife to Paradise. Cherry's prose is hallmarked by lyric grace, sly wit, the energy of her intelligence, and profound compassion for and understanding of her characters. Set in Madison, Wisconsin, *A Kind of Dream* reveals a surprisingly wide view of the world and the authority of someone who has mastered her art. It is a book to experience and to reflect upon.

Allen Mendenhall, *Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield/Lexington Books, 2014)



Anthologies of literary theory and criticism have sections devoted principally to Marxism but not to other modes of economics, such as free-market economics or capitalism. It is as if thinkers as wide ranging as Adam Smith, F. A. Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises have little to offer literary studies. This book attempts not to create a robust, comprehensive, or integrated theory of free-market economics, but to leave behind an index of ideas and approaches to libertarian or free-market literary theory and criticism that might influence students and scholars. With chapters on Geoffrey of Monmouth, Shakespeare, E. M. Forster, Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Hazlitt, *Literature and Liberty* offers a range of options for what libertarian literary theory might look like. It seeks to diversify the franchise of literary studies to include libertarian and capitalist ideas.

Erik Frisch, *The Literary Cat & Other Poems* (Lyrical Translations, 2013)

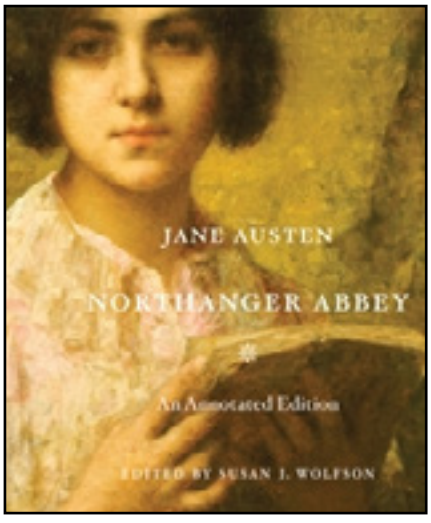


Erik Frisch was born in Oslo, Norway in 1944, and has a BA in journalism. His first book, the novel *Lysshow*, was published in Oslo, Norway in 1978 by Cappelen. Since then, he has covered a broad literary field, writing short stories, plays, poetic prose, poetry, and nonsense verse made especially for children. He often accompanies his literary works with illustrations from his own hand. *The Literary Cat & Other Poems* is his first collection of poems to appear in English. In the period from 1999 to 2004, he contributed poems and epistles to the Italian literary journal *Inchiostri*. Frisch has also translated *The Duino Elegies* by Rainer Maria Rilke for the Norwegian cultural quarterly *Cogito*. He is a member of the Norwegian Writers' Union and was the 2007 Guest of Honour at the poetry festival *Angeli nel cielo del Cilento* in Italy.

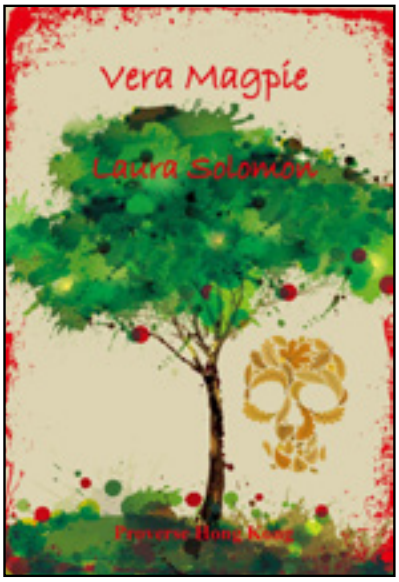
An idea of the kind of poetry you will find in *The Literary Cat & Other Poems* is perhaps best conveyed by quoting from the author's introduction to one of his readings: "For me poetry isn't just poetry—it's jazz, it's symphonies, it's paintings and pirouettes, and maybe, most of all, it's silence clad in lively and sad words that makes you remember you're a human being, whether you write it or you read it."

Susan Wolfson, *"Northanger Abbey": An Annotated Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014)

Susan Wolfson has just published Jane Austen's *"Northanger Abbey": An Annotated Edition* with 105 gorgeous illustrations and a lively introduction, which is at once an accessible, inviting orientation to Austen and this underappreciated novel and a critical discussion of some key adventures in the development of Austen's fiction. Wolfson frames the novel with attention to its verbal texture (from tonal nuances to literary allusions and echoes) and to the wealth of contexts that illuminate its scenes of action: the resort-mixer of Bath society; the culture of "picturesque" aesthetics; the parade of female fashions, of young men's social display in the kinds of carriages they drive, of the nouveau-riche show-off country estate; the paradigms of female conduct and social expectation; and the novels that were suspected of corrupting young minds—chief among them, the thrillingly gothic fictions that flooded the libraries and bookshelves and were disparaged by the guardians of high culture, devoured by young women, and read on the sly by young men.



Though not a gothic novel itself, nor even an exuberant spoof of the genre, *Northanger Abbey* is Jane Austen's remarkable, surprising venture in fiction that turns out to be about fiction itself and the way it can take possession of everyday understandings. Susan Wolfson has produced a unique text, one that returns to the first publication (1818) for authority, and she makes a cogent case for retaining wording that editorial tradition has "emended." The product of scrupulous scholarship as well as critical imagination, *The Annotated "Northanger Abbey"* might well turn out to the authoritative edition. The commentary will engage new readers, bring fresh perspectives and information to those who know the novel, surprise seasoned Austenians (fans, students, scholars, and critics) with unexpected angles, and—not the least—bring welcome attention to this least appreciated of Austen's novels.

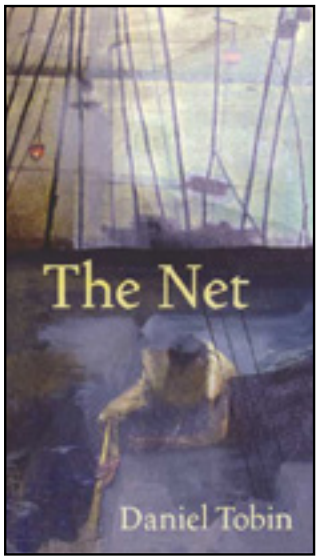


Laura Solomon, *Vera Magpie* (Hong Kong: Proverse, 2014)

Vera Magpie explores the gap between childhood fantasies of adult life and the stark reality of life in a women's prison. The eponymous narrator, Vera Magpie herself, is serving time for the murder of her three husbands, including Larry, a good man whom she loves, but is doomed to die at Vera's hands because she has acquired a taste for murder.

Vera experiences the reality that there are politics and a pecking order in prison, just as in society at large, but also she finds redemption through literature there. Like many women who kill, Vera is a product of her own flawed past. But aspects of this past also count towards her early release from prison, as her new female lawyer successfully argues Battered Women's Syndrome as a defense.

Daniel Tobin, *The Net* (New York: Four Way Books, 2014)



Unified by the theme of metamorphosis, The Net's poems descend deeply into divergent subjects: a jetty that disappears during high tide, a talking parasitical head, a sandlot baseball legend, a famine road in Ireland, Orpheus, Wittgenstein, a murdered poet and his wife, and, finally, grave personal loss. Through all of its many attentions, this collection traces the thread that binds the physical to the metaphysical—a psychic passage from death back to life again.

Daniel Tobin is the author of five previous books of poems, *Where the World is Made* (University Press of New England, 1999), *Double Life* (Louisiana State University Press, 2004), *The Narrows* (Four Way Books, 2005), *Second Things* (Four Way Books, 2008), and *Belated Heavens* (Four Way Books, 2010), which won the Massachusetts Book Award for Poetry in 2011. In addition, he has published the critical studies *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (University of Kentucky Press, 1999) and *Awake in America* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). He is the editor of *The Book of Irish American Poetry from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), *Light in the Hand: The Selected Poems Lola Ridge* (Quale Press, 2007) and (with Pimone Triplett) *Poet's Work, Poet's Play: Essays on the Practice and the Art* (University of Michigan Press, 2007). His awards include "The Discovery/The Nation Award," the Robert Penn Warren Award, the Robert Frost Fellowship, the Katherine Bakeless Nason Prize, and creative writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

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

On Daniel Thomas Moran's *A Shed for Wood*

Review by Al Basile

A Shed For Wood is Moran's seventh poetry collection. These poems were written as the poet entered his fifties—that time when, if you've been lucky in your life, your parents and the generation which influenced your childhood are going off the board; it is a natural time for taking stock and considering one's own mortality in a changed light. So, as might be expected, there is an elegiac tone to many of these poems, especially near the end of the book. (The poems often contain dates in their titles, and so it seems they are organized roughly chronologically.) Many artists have treated this stage of life in their work, so I look to this collection not for utterly new revelations about middle age but for the unique freshness that one artist brings to her or his own grappling with the ancient problems in personal terms. And it is here that Moran doesn't let me down. He has taken an unusual life path for a contemporary poet, which has led him to a fully realized personal voice in his work that immediately gives a clear sense of his specific human sensibility. Though this small volume is my first encounter with his poems, I feel that I know him.

When he considers human behavior, he tends to acknowledge kinship; he loves living in New Hampshire and finds his peaceful, still point in the natural world; and when faced with the passing of time, aging, and death, he doesn't raise his voice in anger or frustration—instead, he asks a question or makes a healing joke. He is thoughtful, his moods subtle and collected, and he is nourished in his life by the satisfaction of love attained. There is no substitute for this last component in the voice of a poet: it imbues everything he sees and says with positive energy. Though we need and naturally warm to this, it is too rarely encountered in life or letters, and it gives Daniel Thomas Moran's work an extra value.

The quote from Thoreau in the frontispiece speaks of the youth's collecting "materials to build a bridge to the moon" or "palace[s]…on the earth," but says, "the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood-shed with them."[1] The photo of just such a woodshed on the cover was taken by Moran himself and reinforces the idea that this collection is unpretentious, meant to warm rather than dazzle. In the dedication, Moran acknowledges Samuel Menashe among others, and while his style doesn't show the trademark compression of that poet, it does reflect his penchant for very short lines of four to eight syllables, which, coupled with the conversational rhythms, make Moran's poems invitingly accessible on the page.

That accessibility is evinced by the far-reaching acceptance of his work. His long list of credits shows that Moran has been a highly productive poet and a very active public figure. He's been published widely and often (particularly internationally), and his poems have been translated into many languages; he has given readings in Europe as well as in the United States, including at the Library of Congress and the United Nations. He was nominated ten times for a Pushcart Prize and served as poet laureate in the New York county of Whitman's birth. Moran has hosted radio shows, started organizations, and generally committed himself to expanding the cause of poetry

1 Henry David Thoreau, quoted in Daniel Thomas Moran, *A Shed for Wood* (County Clare, Ireland: Salmon Poetry, 2014). All further citations to *A Shed for Wood* are provided parenthetically in text and refer to line number(s) and page number.

at home and in Europe. Yet unlike most of today's poets, who operate out of a base in academe and whose daily lives are conditioned by its demands, he was a practicing dental surgeon for thirty years and a professor of general dentistry at Boston University from 2009 to 2013. As he says, "I always considered that a poet is what I was, and a dentist is what I do."[2]

Creative academics will routinely acknowledge that teaching disciplines close to the wellsprings of their art can muddy them; Moran says in "Life Now" that

> There is work to be done
> during each of our days, as well.
> Work which makes us feel
> tired and contented.
> (10–13, 76)

He has found a healthy balance between his creative life and his workday one, and the contentment he mentions shows in his outlook and his voice. Calm within himself, he does not turn his eye away from the violence of the outside world. In "Newtown," he finds a basis for identification amid the slaughter of the innocents:

> Can we bear to
> see ourselves yet again, in
> all that's been vanished?
>
> Who among us has words
> to explain the slaughter
> of the babies of strangers?
>
> Who are these people
> we claim to not know
> But us?
> (14–22, 94)

There are poems here about the individual in the natural world, and Moran portrays identity immersed in that context powerfully in "The Blue Heron":

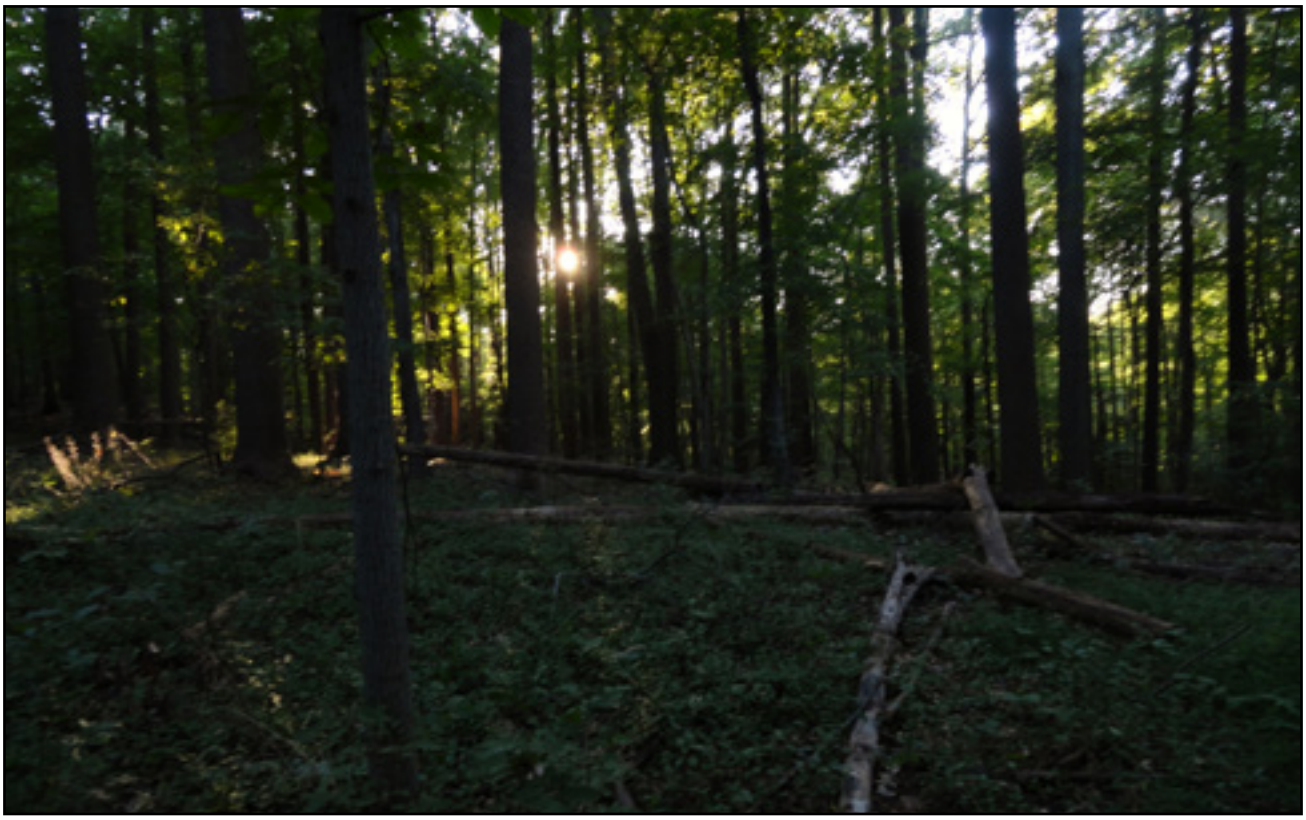
> In the moving world,
> like the rock which
> is his perch,
>
> He must be the stillness.
>
> He knows that what
> he needs, will come.
>
> He must be ready for it.
>
> This morning's rain runs
> off the slate of his back.
>
> He understands, somehow.
>
> The rain is the river, and
> The river is the fish, and
>
> The fish is himself.
> (4–16, 33)

His subjects on the themes of time passing, the aging, the ill, and the dead display great range. He writes of the lifespan of the Mayfly and the dust of Pompeii, those in hospital waiting rooms and those, in "Some of My Friends," who approach dreaded moments:

> Some of my friends
> seem to be wearing out.
> Their pink becoming gray.
> Their tightness loosened.
> Some will be told, today.
> (35–39, 27)

The poems that deal with death cover those of public figures such as John Updike, Amy Winehouse, and Killer Kowalski (this last, for someone like me who is slightly older than the

2 Daniel Thomas Moran, interview by Karen Weintraub, "Dentistry's Rhyme and Reason," boston.com, May 30, 2011, http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/health/articles/2011/05/30/dr_daniel_thomas_moran_talks_dentistry_and_poetry/.



poet, is a memorable figure from my childhood whom I have not encountered elsewhere in any poem), in addition to those of a close friend in "A Letter to Siv" and an unnamed suicide in "Now, A Month Beyond":

> We would like it to be different.
> But it can never be different.
>
> We try to talk about it even more,
> As if the words were a salve, but
> there are not the right words, not
> even the wrong words arranged well.
> (1–6, 69)

And, in the final stanza,

> If there were reason, we might not have to bear it.
> We can only hope to learn to bear it, to bear all of it.
> But you took your reasons with you, and
> You left us here, wishing for it to be different.
> What chance do we have?
> Of all things, why did you choose that?
> (32–37, 70)

Moran has a fascination with family history, which shows early in the book in "The Last Time We all Saw Nannie in Gerritson Beach" and "These Walking Sticks." In the latter, he connects two

canes he possesses with their role in the late marriage of his great-aunt and great-uncle. Further on in the book, he journeys to the ancestral home in Ireland, where he sees what has endured amid the crumbled wreckage in "Once Home":

> And, what is gone after all?
> Not your name.
> Not the leaning Ben Bulben.
> Neither the river nor sky.
> Not the serenity beside this rill.
> And surely not the sea,
> the ancient incessant sea.
> (31–37, 100)

Moran celebrates throughout the book those moments in daily life when humor is the only resort. In a serious stylistic homage to Keats in "After Keats' Ode to a Nightingale," he speaks with the voice of age:

> Oh, mock me no more you wistful youth,
> cast no fretful eye upon me,
> Take heed all, truths senescence
> speaks,
> words spoken too soon for thee.
> (33–36, 102)

And it seems fitting that after this, he concludes the book with a send-up (or is it send-off?) of Dickinson in "To The Bug Who Perished in My Drink." This poem turns the old joke ("Waiter, what's this fly doing in my soup?" "Backstroke!") and Dickinson's poem "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died" into an invitation:

> While I con---
> sider *You* now my
> sad little ghost,
> Howzabout
> one more round
> for a toast?
>
> To all those *cre*---
> atures both
> humble and great.
> *and*
> To the plea---
> sures of sha---
> ring a drink
> with a mate.
> (20–33, 103–104)

Especially—but not only—if you are a certain age, you will find Moran a comforting guide and a thoughtful counselor on the slowing and broadening waters of your life. There is not a particle of self-pity in his acknowledgment of loss. In "The Master Makes a Line," which recalls Renoir in his crippling old age and the quote from Hokusai that "At 110, everything I create; a dot, a line, will jump to life as never before,"[3] Moran displays a heartening faith:

> I must ask
> my young girl
> to strap a stick
> to my arm, and
> coax open the
> bottle of ink.
>
> I will show her
> how it can be,
> that a man can still
> possess his gift.
>
> That even
> a single line,
> can become
> a miracle.
> (22–35, 29–30)

Al Basile is a poet, singer/songwriter, and cornetist. He began his career as a cornet player with Roomful of Blues in 1973, and has worked with the Duke Robillard Band since 1990. He has nine solo CDs out; the last five reached the Top 15 on the *Living Blues* airplay charts. He was nominated in 2010, 2012, and 2013 for a Blues Music Award as Best Horn Player. His poetry and fiction have been published in recent years. He taught at the Providence Country Day School from 1980 to 2005, and has since concentrated on his writing, performing, and recording.

3 Translated from the postscript to Katsushika Hokusai, *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*.

Locke is new to me, a fact of which I am ashamed since he has published five poetry collections and a memoir. He is also the recipient of a number of awards.

New, yes, but it didn't take me long to recognize his work as serious and thoughtful, and deserving of a reception in kind. His young daughter, Grace, plays an important part in these poems, appearing at the beginning and the end and along the way, her name providing a useful pun that clarifies the poet's longing for salvation. Perhaps not religious salvation, but some soothing psychological emollient for the battered, tattered conscience that necessarily afflicts a serious person. In fact, in "Against Despair,"[1] the poet pretty much defines what it means to be serious:

> we always tried to make sense of it all,
> . . . . . .
> even as the day turned cold and late, even as
> dusk called the first stars up out of their graves.
> (16)

Locke's way with description is precise:

> Snowbank exhaust and the damp
> ochers of spring lash themselves
> to winter's breath-colored retreat,
> leaving morning striated with the hum
> of possibility[.]
> ("Opened," 19)

Or consider this vivid metaphorical description of a breaking wave: "the ocean staggers to its knees / and shatters itself raw" ("Self-Portrait as Postscript," 20). Reading this, I actually visualized a comber staggering and falling, though even now I am not sure how it is possible to do so.

Locke's fine hand for description allows him to develop poems that we take in the way we might take in a film: they seem brightly colored, set in scenes, and occupied, as films always are. Grace, the daughter, was mauled by a dog, and that event recurs in various ways throughout the book. We see

> maple
> leaves slobber like pitiful tongues in
> search of a face
> ("Day Five," 23)

In a poem about teaching school, we encounter a boy whose face "is a damaged

1 Christopher Locke, *Waiting for Grace & Other Poems* (Cincinnati, OH: Turning Point, 2013). All further citations are provided parenthetically in the text and refer to page number.

constellation" ("The One Year," 29). We read these lines in "Renunciation":

> the dog tearing
> open her face under the soft July
> sun, her neck a torrent of red
> weather
> (22)

Weather. Didn't we expect *blood*? But Locke pays attention not just to description but to the metaphorical extensions of description.

There are other memorable personae in Locke's poems—his father, his brother, and "Tina," at a summertime party

> collapsing into the rosebush after clouding
> her veins with morphine, blood spelling
> her name
> to the dark[.]
> ("Between Angels," 56)

"I am tired of loss and its many jeweled / teeth; I am tired of the way I shine," he writes in "Today's News" (52), a sonnet, of sorts, that expresses what many of us feel—a fading hope for more reason and less trauma in this insanely traumatic world.

But it is the unifying figure of Grace that brings him, in his title and final poem, to a kind of cry, something like a cross between a call for help and a cry of triumph, full throated and anguished, yet grateful:

> what she doesn't know is that every day she saves
> my life—drilling the science quiz together at night,
> or just by asking that I pass the ketchup at dinner
> is what keeps me here, awkward yet alive.
> ("Waiting for Grace," 57)

That domestic scene mashed up against Tina-with-morphine-in-her-veins or the brother who is under house arrest—and with whom the speaker watches a stolen DVD of *Apocalypse Now*—is all the more to be treasured. The speaker may feel foolishly awkward, but he is alive, and knows he is alive—alive and writing poems. And I, for one, am glad of it.

Kelly Cherry is the author of twenty-two books, nine chapbooks, and two translations. Her collection of linked stories, *A Kind of Dream*, was published in May by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Color in the Lines

Debra San

Select the color(s) that will complete the quotations. The answers can be found on page 26.

In among the _____ birches winding ways of tarmac wander
– John Betjeman, "Indoor Games Near Newbury"

. . . oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted _____
– Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"

Shame is the shawl of _____
– Emily Dickinson, J-1412

the gorgeous deep _____ of him gleaming
– Mark Doty, "Homo Will Not Inherit"

The _____ fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes
– T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

What had that flower to do with being _____ ,
The wayside _____ and innocent heal-all?
– Robert Frost, "Design"

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the _____ cold
– Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"

And though the last lights off the _____ West went
Oh, morning, at the _____ brink eastward, springs –
– Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur"

To what _____ altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies
– John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Her sunken minarets are crowned
With _____ and _____ water-flowers.
– John Masefield, "Fragments"

it came as a vision with trees
By a weaving stream, brushing the bank
With their _____ shade...
– Mark Strand, "Orpheus Alone"

The for an hour the water wore a mantle
Of tawny _____ and _____ and misted _____
– Sara Teasdale, "Sunset: St. Louis"

the Sun
Burst from a swimming fleece of winter _____
– Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Demeter and Persephone"

There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a _____ glow
– William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"

amber	cream	indigo	pink	taupe
black	crimson	ivory	puce	teal
blue	cyan	khaki	purple	turquoise
blueblack	ebony	lavender	red	umber
bronze	ecru	mauve	rose	vermillion
brown	gold	navy	russet	violet
carmine	gray	ochre	silver	white
copper	green	orange	tan	yellow

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The Disciplined Rebel: Thoreau and Routine

By Michael Daher

Many commentators have remarked on the change of emphasis and focus that characterizes the journals of Henry David Thoreau from 1852 to 1862, the last decade of his life. During these years, Thoreau clearly became more inclined to tabulate and describe and less likely to interpret and philosophize. Joseph Wood Krutch observes that at this time "more and more of the *Journal* pages are filled with mere facts dryly set down."[1] Krutch sees this shift as indicative of Thoreau's moving away from the transcendental assumption that the significance of nature can be reached by intuition, and toward the scientific conviction that observation will unlock nature's deepest meaning. Krutch maintains, however, that even to the last pages of the *Journal*, Thoreau's writing retains and sometimes exercises a capacity to fuse the scientific and the poetic, to combine the calculative and the meditative.[2]

Laura Dassow Walls takes a similar position. In her substantial study of Thoreau's perspective on science, she argues convincingly that Thoreau had reached a profound—yet still evolving—synthesis of scientific and poetic ways of knowing at the end of his life. She identifies three scientific habits that characterize Thoreau's widely observed shift in emphasis from philosophical commentary to descriptive nature writing in his later journals. These habits all reflect an enhanced concern with quantification. Dassow portrays Thoreau as increasingly concerned with fieldwork based upon extensive walking for the purpose of recorded information, systematic collection and classification of botanical specimens, and frequent application of precise measurement. Walls rejects the notion that the steady expansion of these activities diminished the range of Thoreau's creative imagination as a writer. Rather, she maintains that he continued his profound fusion of the physical and moral universes, but with more of an eye toward deciphering how "nature acts as an expressive artist."[3] Such a realignment of vision required systematic explication.[4]

Thoreau's ability to integrate rigorous tabulation into his exploration of nature without losing his creative flair can be understood by highlighting an occasionally overlooked dimension of his point of view: an ingrained respect for the potential advantages of routine. The scientific habits that Laura Walls describes as being distinctive to Thoreau's later years required a tolerance of a standard pattern of behavior. Thoreau had begun to develop such a tolerance in his youth, a process grounded in his conviction that routine need not *necessarily* be considered repressive to the life of the mind and spirit. In an early *Journal* entry, for example, he characterizes routine as acting in the manner of a springboard used by acrobats—it catapults you into an atmosphere suitable for creative feats.

1 Joseph Wood Krutch, *Henry David Thoreau* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), p. 174.

2 Krutch, pp. 169–180.

3 Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth Century Natural Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 142.

4 Walls, pp. 134–142.

Routine provides bearings, as it "is a ground to stand on, a wall to retreat to." Furthermore, routine facilitates range and mobility: "We cannot draw our boots without bracing ourselves against it." Routine also fosters maturity, for its muted but steady power enables us to "grow like corn in the general silence of the night."[5]

Thoreau's perspective on routine frequently emerges within the context of his statements about work. His own work life, as he proudly conveys in his writings, included an ample and consistent dose of manual labor. He declares himself a gardener, a farmer, a house painter, a carpenter, a day laborer, a pencil maker, and a glass-paper crafter. He also built fences and burned out chimneys. Although this labor sometimes became oppressive, he steadily maintains that when the routine of such activity is self-imposed, it can, in fact, be liberating. "The man who picks peas steadily," he observes, deserves the respect of his neighbors.[6] Experience taught Thoreau that such effort could generate insight. He did not hesitate to celebrate what he calls "life on the stretch." After a stint of shoveling manure from a pen, for example, he remarks that if the digger "muses" on how to live "uprightly" while sinking his spade, he may "hallow" his labor.[7] Thoreau writes of suspecting that his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson might have been short on experience with such quotidian tasks. He recounts wondering if the man who had lauded the ability "to see the miraculous in the common" had grooved the muscle tone necessary to maneuver a wheelbarrow through the streets, the kind of conditioning indicative of "a comprehensive character."[8] Routine can serve as the staging ground of discernment born of indirection. Carpenters, Thoreau observes, boisterously discuss politics between the strokes of their hammers while they shingle a roof, the productive hammering setting the pace for social analysis. Such

Thoreau reports certain episodes in which routine serves as the stage for the drama of inspiration.

scenes sometimes strike Thoreau as nearly irresistible. When he stumbles upon a number of carpenters repairing Hubbard's Bridge on the Sudbury River, for example, he envies them for both the pleasant pattern of their work and the scenery afforded by their view from planking above the water. The carpenters' ability to blend their routine duties with the leisure afforded by the river brings Thoreau close to resolving that he would be "a carpenter and work on bridges."[9]

Despite the pressing demands of his trade as a surveyor, Thoreau reports certain episodes in which routine serves as the stage for the drama of inspiration. In April 1856, a time when surveying had become a mainstay of his livelihood, he describes hearing the first brown thrasher of the season while on assignment. While he attempts to hack his way through a thick wall of shrub oaks and birches with an axe and a knife, he savors the song of the bird, which makes the entire hill-

5 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 1, *1837–1844*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell et al (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 229.

6 *Journal*, vol. 1, Witherell, pp. 301–302.

7 *Journal*, vol. 1, Witherell, pp. 301–302.

8 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 4, *1851–1852*, eds. Leonard N. Neufeldt and Nancy Craig Simmons (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 304.

9 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 3, *1848–1851*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer et al (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 372–373.

side "quiver or pulsate with sudden melody."[10] The indirection of the experience delights the surveyor. He hears the thrasher "with the side of the ear," and its melody becomes more delectable the harder Thoreau works.[11]

The "toil and rust" of his field work as a surveyor during the following winter once more leads Thoreau to a concentrated appreciation of music—and even into a mystical moment. Hearing the strumming of a guitar from a residence close to where he is working, the tradesman feels transported beyond all the "dust and mire" of his job and briefly feels he can "soar or hover with clean skirts over the field of [his] life."[12] The uplifting interplay of rugged routine and mellow music, Thoreau says, encases him in the manner of concentric spheres.

Established patterns of behavior, particularly if self-imposed, can provide a setting for infusing work with poetry. The stakes are high, for "if [work] is not poetic, it is not life but death we get"; the uses of routine therefore help provide the answer to "the most practically important of all questions…how shall I get my living[?]"[13] Thoreau vigorously explored this question at Walden Pond while performing agricultural tasks. Beans, his main crop, required planting, hoeing, harvesting, threshing, picking over, and selling—a structured routine. In his first year at the pond, he sometimes spent seven hours a day—from five in the morning until noon—hoeing his more than seven miles of bean rows. Yet he managed to cultivate this same turf as an artist. He transformed the bean plot into a field of battle when he imagined himself an Achilles mowing down weedy foes with his hoe. The weeds in the field become "Trojans who had sun and rain and dews on their side."[14] Tall weeds are "Hectors" and the smaller weeds, his army. As with many other passages in *Walden*, personification animates this mock-heroic battle. Thoreau enriched his labor by generating an *esprit de jeu*, but his claim is not that the entire process of bean growing was a delight. The balance of structured toil and sportive imagination in the weed war is, at best, delicate. Its edgy quality keeps the earthy contest robust.[15]

> At times after intense, exhausting work, he felt the muse visit him, and he saw or heard her beauty.

Even in his most passionate pursuit—writing—Thoreau acknowledged that routine, including that anchored in physical labor, could act as a catalyst. He viewed toil as a basis of inspiration. He describes one reason for working in the bean field at Walden as being "for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day."[16]

Labor also can serve as a distancing factor in the writing process, providing fresh perspective on a first draft. After completing

10 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 8, ed. Bradford Torry, entry for April 30, 1856 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 319.

11 *Journal*, vol. 8, Torry, pp. 318–319.

12 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 9, ed. Bradford Torry, entry for January 13, 1857 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 217.

13 *Journal*, vol. 3, Sattelmeyer et al, p. 195.

14 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2004), p. 156.

15 *Walden*, p. 156.

16 *Walden*, p. 157.

Answers to "Color in the Lines"

Betjeman: silver
Bishop: orange
Dickinson: pink
Doty: indigo
Eliot: yellow
Frost: white...blue
Hayden: blueblack
Hopkins: black...brown
Keats: green
Masefield: red...russet
Strand: violet
Teasdale: gold...mauve...turquoise
Tennyson: gray
Yeats: purple

John Betjeman, "Indoor Games Near Newbury," *Selected Poems* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1948), line 1.
Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish," *The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), lines 69–71.
Emily Dickinson, "J-1412," *Bolts of Melody: New Poems of Emily Dickinson*, eds. Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), line 1.
Mark Doty, "Homo Will Not Inherit," *Atlantis: Poems* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), line 76.
T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *Poetry* 6, no. 3 (June 1915): p. 130, line 15.
Robert Frost, "Design," *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916), p. 302, lines 9–10.
Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays," *Collected Poems of Robert Hayden*, ed. Frederick Glaysher (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1966), p. 41, lines 1–2.
Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 27, lines 11–12.
John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, pt. 2 (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1846), pp. 106–107, lines 32–33.
John Masefield, "Fragments," *Poems of Today* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1921), p. 5, lines 55–56.
Mark Strand, "Orpheus Alone," *The Continuous Life: Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), lines 48–50.
Sara Teasdale, "Sunset: St. Louis," *Flame and Shadow* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 23, lines 5–6.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Demeter and Persephone," *Demeter and Other Poems* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), p. 15, lines 19–20.
William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), p. 39, line 7.

an initial draft, Thoreau on some occasions composed abbreviated chapters of its contents. This mnemonic device enabled him to recall every page of a new piece. He then put the manscript in a drawer and took surveying jobs for one or two days. This work, he says, enabled him "rapidly to take new points of view" on what he had written, for it cleared his mind in the same manner as a journey might.[17]

At times after intense, exhausting work, he felt the muse visit him, and he saw or heard her beauty. During these moments, Thoreau says, "It is from the shadow of my toil that I look into the light."[18] For Thoreau, genuine art is not "holiday labor," but depends upon knowledge gleaned "in stithies and soot and smoke." To support his argument, he appeals to the gritty wisdom of Roman mythology, "which makes Vulcan a brawny and deformed smith, who sweats more than the other gods." In his forge, Vulcan stokes the fires of the imagination, flames that often must be kindled with the sort of mundane labor that gets hands dirty.[19]

Throughout his life, Thoreau devoted himself to the celebration of wildness, but he crafted this promotion with a discipline drawn from his native New England, a region steeped in Puritan heritage. He loved to roam, but was not averse to a schedule. Few doubt that this rebel brilliantly lived up to his promise in the epigraph of *Walden* to "brag as lustily" as Chanticleer in the morning in order to awaken his neighbors.[20] In our admiration of Thoreau's feisty and insuppressible spirit, however, we may forget that the undeniably bold and dynamic creature Chanticleer generally crows from the same domestic setting on a daily, regular, and routine basis.

17 Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 8, *1854*, ed. Sandra Harbert Petrulionis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 59–62.

18 *Journal*, vol. 8, Petrulionis, pp. 59–62.

19 *Journal*, vol 1, Witherell, p. 155.

20 *Walden*, p. i.

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Your own personal craniotomy. It seems too incredible to be true, the kind of thing that would happen to somebody else—a cousin or an old friend from high school with whom you lost touch years ago or that strange woman who used to live in the house next door to yours in Mount Albert when you were a child, the one whose double-hung windows came down upon her thumbs, trapping her, until she cried out and your father went across to rescue her. Phillips, you seem to recall was her name, Mrs. Phillips.

You were too young to realize then the complexity of the labyrinth you were immersed in. The complex web of family relationships that surrounded you. You had never seen your father cry. You could not comprehend public versus private. You did not understand the way in which the vast majority of people have two masks; the way in which we, as humans, present one face to the world, Eleanor Rigby–style, and have another private self that we keep well hidden, the Ace to be played at the last minute, the trump card; how much of life is a game of push-and-pull, give-and-take, one-upmanship. You still thought the world was a kind place. You hadn't learned yet that nobody respects a pushover, that the strong devour the weak and then sit gloating, munching on the bones, fresh blood dripping from one corner of the mouth. As she was for many New Zealanders, Janet Frame was the one who introduced you to the horrors of mental institutions. When her biographies were released, you witnessed firsthand the suburban schadenfreude, a Kiwi *Heart of Darkness* with its very own version of "The horror! The horror!" You accompanied your mother when she went to visit a friend whose husband worked with your father, and the two of them sipped tea, munched biccies and gossiped about *To The Is-land*, relieved that it was Janet who had suffered and not them. Mental illness was hush-hush, taboo. Most cities of any size had their own institutions; yours had Ngawatu, the remains of which still stand—the old villas and the 1920s houses where the doctors lived, the tennis court, and the bowling green. It even had its own shop where the patients could spend their "pocket money." Even the most unimaginative individual could easily picture the villas being haunted by the ghosts of inmates past. The gardens are beautiful, well maintained even to this day by a care-taker who lives in a ramshackle house on the grounds. The rhododendrons bloom; the natives, kanuka and manuka, blossom; and the bulbs, jonquils, daffodils, and freesias, burst into flower.

Blood and Guts: One Woman's Firsthand Experience of a Craniotomy (A Tragicomedy)

By Laura Solomon

***

The gardens are lovely, although I have no idea how many of the patients were allowed to roam freely and what restrictions were imposed upon their liberties. Doctoring, like lawyering, is not a business of black and white, but—at the risk of sounding like the recently released Mummy porn that has been flooding the market—contains many shades of grey. Lawyers deal in "legal" or "illegal," although of course there is plenty of room for shark-like maneuvering. Shrinks deal in "well" and

"unwell," so there's plenty of maneuvering in that profession too. The more cynical among us would call them glorified pill dispensers. What do we do when the brain goes haywire? Behavior is analyzed and then diagnosed. Major depressive disorder, bipolar, organic brain syndrome, Asperger's, ADHD, epilepsy, anxiety, PTSD, paranoia, delusions, obsessive compulsive, schizophrenia, dissociative personality disorder, paranoid schizophrenia, psychosis. The treatment is dished up: pills, the depot (an injection, typically administered fortnightly), ECT, seclusion, restraint, insulin therapy, IPC. I speak in defense of the patients—somebody has to. In any setting other than a psychiatric institution, a lot of what takes place would constitute human rights abuse. Oh, I know, I know, there are the posters on the wall—*Your Rights*—but it's all fairly tokenistic. Toothless. Prison might be better. At least a prison sentence has an end date, and there's always the chance that they'll release you early on good behavior. Or if you can stump up bail. Or get a good lawyer. But the vast majority of psychiatric patients will have access to neither. You can be kept in a psychiatric institution, or Mental Health Unit, indefinitely. Most of the lawyers who represent mental health patients would like to be sitting behind a swanky wooden desk, surrounded by leather-bound tomes and piles and piles of files, and pulling in six-figure sums rather than scraping the bottom of the legal aid barrel.

***

You didn't know when you were young about the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), about ECT or insulin therapy or Monsanto. You knew nothing about Risperidone, Lamotrigine, Quetiapine, Dilantin, or about the forced drugging of psychiatric patients in order to turn them into zombies who are more easily controlled (even though you had always been fond of horror stories). Death by doctoring. The three conditions for being sectioned remain the same: danger to self, danger to others, or inability to care for self. The brain is high-priced real estate—the Tokyo of the body. Private psychiatrists are represented in *New Yorker* cartoons, the shrinks modeling themselves on Freud, complete with couch and many a fleeing Dora. The public system is, of course, a good deal more brutal. Like the mental health lawyers who resent their colleagues who are employed in the private sector, the shrinks would undoubtedly prefer to be raking in the cash running their own *Sopranos*-style private practices and catering to the wealthy rather than dealing with those on benefits. Perhaps it is a grotesque generalization, but the public sector has always been more Scrooge than Santa.

***

I recently had a craniotomy to remove a brain tumor—oligodendroglioma, grade 2, in case your granny wants to know. I was operated on at Christchurch public hospital. I had been keeping myself fit. The evening before the operation, I ate a hearty meal of steak and spuds in order to make it through in one piece. I woke up in Ward 28: Neurology. Felt fine. Was seen by the neurosurgeon, the neurosurgical registrar, and two or three nurses. Three days later, the sutures were pulled from my head and I was discharged, left to find my own way back to Ranui house. I was driven back to my parents' home for the night. Following a nightmare, I sleepwalked into my parents' room and freaked them out, and they arranged to have me put in the local Mental Health Unit. I attempted to abscond and was locked in seclusion, a psychiatric version of "The Hole." The lights were switched on and

off all night; I spent the entire time vomiting. They moved me around from room to room (or should I say "cell to cell"?) in order to increase my sense of disorientation. The first room had nothing to see outside the window except concrete. It was a form of dungeon. A stitch-proof gown was put across the air vent to stop the draft. I could smell the murder in the walls.

The second room I was moved to had a plant outside the window, so at least I had some sense of where "outside" was. I wondered if the water was poisoned. The nurses entered with drugs, which I ingested after some deliberation. They moved me to another room. The doctor came in with more drugs, which I took. What else could I do? Dangerous? Deadly? This is how they train you to become medication compliant. The nurses seemed more interested in checking their Facebook messages and gossiping about their latest boyfriend dramas than they did in "tending" to the patients.

All right boys, out the back, out the back was what they said before hauling me into seclusion.

I coped by detaching myself, pretending it was a movie, something that was happening to somebody else. I wouldn't go through brain surgery again—it's ever so traumatic to have somebody else fossicking around in your frontal lobes and cingulate gyrus, especially if the aftercare provided is as horrendous as that which I received. Lucky for me, I had support workers arranged to help care for me in my own home, and so, with the help of a lawyer, I was discharged fairly quickly, bag of medication in hand. When I was diagnosed, I was given ten years to live. Now I've got six years to go. Gliomas "almost inevitably recur" and "are almost invariably fatal." The surgeon got most—but not all—of it due to infiltration, the tendrils that have invaded my brain. Time to check off a few items on the bucket list. Time to enjoy myself. I never would have parachuted before the cancer. *What's the worst that can happen*, I asked myself on the way up in the plane, *the chute doesn't open and you die an instantaneous death rather than a prolonged and lingering one?* Next up, paragliding...

Laura Solomon has a 2.1 in English Literature (Victoria University, 1997) and a master's degree in computer science (University of London, 2003). Her books include *Black Light* (Tandem Press, 1996), *Alternative Medicine* (Flame Books, 2008), *In Vitro* (HeadworX Publishers, 2011), *Operating Systems* (Proverse Hong Kong, 2010), and *The Shingle Bar Taniwha and Other Stories* (Proverse Hong Kong, 2012), among many others. She has won prizes from Bridport, the Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition, Ware Poets, the Willesden Herald International Short Story Competition, Mere Literary Festival, and Essex Poetry Festival Competition. She was short-listed for the 2009 Virginia Prize and won the 2009 Proverse Prize. She has had work accepted in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Wasafiri* (UK), and in the New Zealand publications *takahē* and *Landfall*. She has judged the *Sentinel Quarterly*'s Short Story Competition.

Retired?

Retired? *Finally!* Good for you!
What's that? You don't know what you'll do?
Don't fret about it. Get a plan.
You still can be a busy man.

You'll walk the dogs. You'll mow the lawn.
Grab the remote and see what's on.
Go shopping. Start to build a boat.
A model. You can watch it float.

Or travel. Go from A to Z
in books of places you can see.
It doesn't matter where or when.
Take off, and then take off again.

You'll have your wife. She'll want to share.
Your kids? They'll always want you there
just hanging out, and glad it's you.
They won't have anything to do.

What's that? Cold feet? You're still not sure?
Too bad. Too late. You've closed that door
behind you, and have this instead.
Cheer up. You'll soon enough be dead.

-Bruce Bennett

Bruce Bennett is the author of nine poetry books and more than twenty-five poetry chapbooks. His *New & Selected Poems, Navigating The Distances* (Orchises Press), was selected by *Booklist* as "One of the Top Ten Poetry Books Of 1999." He was a founding editor of *Field: Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* and *Ploughshares*, and has reviewed contemporary poetry in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Nation*, *Harvard Review*, and elsewhere. In 2013, he won a Pushcart Prize for a villanelle published in *Ploughshares*.

Post-Lunar Sadnesses

A translation of "Tristesses de la lune" by Charles Baudelaire

Tonight the lazy moon dreams
like a languid courtesan, who drowses
propped on pillows piled, and plays distractedly,
before she sleeps, about the contours of her breasts.

And in the satin avalanche of feathers,
dying, she groans in ecstasy, and gives her eyes
to visions blank that turn, and mount
into the blue, like fireworks.

When, then, she finally secretes
a bit of moisture in her idleness,
the sleepless poet, pious, watching her,

catches the pearly tear that glimmers
in the cruet of his palm just like a drop of opal,
and secrets it in his heart, far from the eyes of all.

-Ed Block Jr.

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

To contribute poetry—both original pieces and translations are accepted—to the Poets' Corner, send your work to *literarymatters@alscw.org* by the submission deadline for **Issue 7.4: October 31, 2014**.

From the Air

Above the plane, immensity;
below, a winter desert,
lit in places.
Millions sleep beneath
the billions of cold lights—

like snowflakes
frozen in a void—while one,
a sleepless father
turns on a porch light
for an errant daughter,
drawn by phantom novas
from the bright way
leading home.

-Ed Block Jr.

Ed Block Jr. is emeritus professor of English at Marquette University, Milawaukee, WI, where, most recently, he taught courses on Denise Levertov and Czeslaw Milosz and workshops in creative writing. His poems have appeared in *Cross Currents*, *Spiritus*, and a variety of other venues.

Looking for Norma

After decades, I've been looking for you, Norma,
in the basement of my heart. The light from boarded
windows, bad, the lamps without their bulbs.

The furnace now is old, the plumbing on the verge.
The empty bar is dry, the table tennis table piled
with junk and extra mattresses. Absurd!

I moved the boxes, caught in cobwebs, re-arranged
the toys. I opened musty trunks of memories. I felt
the pulse of days forgotten; found a battered dress,

some yellow underwear; old hats and model airplanes.
Pictures in old frames stare back at me. I read the books
and poems you gave me, tried on clothes
that you once wore.

I lay upon the broken couch, its springs poked
through my back. Beneath the workbench, dust
and mouse turds stopped my search.

I crawled back up the stairs and poured a drink
before I called the hearse.

-Ed Block Jr.

Poets' Corner Submission Guidelines:

- You may send up to five poems during each submission period.
- Please submit poem(s) via email as an attachment. When submitting multiple poems, please include all pieces in one file.
- You are encouraged to provide a biographical note (100 words or fewer) with your submission, which will appear alongside your poetry if it is accepted for publication.
- In order to provide a balanced forum for emerging poets, we ask those featured in the Poets' Corner to refrain from sending in further submissions for six months following the publication of their poetry.

Invitation to a Séance Around the Banquet Table

Were I to have the privilege of your company
for a *tête à tête* at my home some evening, Bob Dylan,
I would first offer you what, in my opinion,
is the best place to sit; then, if there were anything
else hopefully to your liking that I could purvey,
I would do my best to do so. *Then*
I'd shut up, treat you as a monarch of sorts,
one whom one doesn't speak to unless addressed.
Were you to be, before close of eve—
which you may wish to cut short!—so gracious
as to prompt a consideration from me
on any matter I—your subject of sorts—imagine
could be of common interest to us,
I might hazard the following question:
"I was wondering whether you would accept
the Nobel in Literature were it to be—finally,
as many would be sure to say—awarded to you?
Because I, too, would hardly disapprove
were you to be accorded, for literature, the honor:
I'd be sitting on the edge of my seat
waiting to hear your Banquet Speech!
But, even more unimaginable to my mind,
is what you might say in your Nobel Lecture.
My ears would be wide open then,
as they no doubt would be across the globe.
Would you talk at length, in a prose rhythm?
Have any idea of the tack you might take?!"
That, dear Bob Dylan, is what I would ask you.
(Plainly, I do not presume to divine your reply.
I couldn't possibly put words in your mouth.
Though I'd be a hypocrite if I didn't admit
I'd get a crack out of hearing, in royal Hick,
"I ain't here to lecture no one about nothin'.")

-Nail Chiodo

Nail Chiodo (b. 1952 in Padua, Italy) spent most of his formative years and early adulthood in the United States and majored in philosophy at Yale. He is the author of a yet-to-be-properly-unearthed underground movie, *The Insignificant Other* (2008), and a set of contentious philosophical poems, *In the Instant's Guise: Selected Poems 1978–2011* (CreateSpace, 2011).

Report on the Twentieth Annual Conference of the ALSCW

Thursday, April 3–Sunday, April 6, 2014 | Indiana University, Bloomington

The 2014 Annual Conference was held at the Bloomington campus of Indiana University. All of the events took place at the Indiana Memorial Union. The conference, which officially began the morning of Friday, April 4, was preceded by a more informal gathering Thursday night dubbed "An Evening of Poetry Readings," which featured Greg Delanty, John Burt, Rebekah Scott, Kevin Tsai, Brett Foster, Ben Mazer, Jacob Bennett, and Jee Leong Koh.

Six panels, three seminars, and two workshops comprised the bulk of the two-day program. Topics included the Bible and literature, Asian American poetry, the role of the chorus in Athenian tragedy, literary translation, and the significance of literature in the Common Core, among many others. In addition, there was a festive series of readings on Friday night by the winners of this year's Meringoff Awards in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; a luncheon with featured speaker Mark Bauerlein on Saturday afternoon, which was open to all conference registrants and visiting teachers; and a lovely banquet on Saturday evening with dessert readings of some favorite passages from ALSCW publications.

The 2014 Conference Report was composed thanks to the assistance of contributing writers Celeste Barber, Bruce Gans, Lejla Marijam, Phillip Perry, and John Wallen. This report contains a synopsis of each panel and seminar, a piece composed by Sandra Stotsky addressed to Governor Pence of Indiana—parts of which were generated directly from the proceedings of the two workshops she ran at the conference—an account of the readings given by the Meringoff Award winners, and an article about featured speaker Mark Bauerlein's remarks, as well as photographs taken throughout the weekend by contributing photographer Phillip Perry.

A view of the Tudor Room at the Indiana Memorial Union during the banquet held the evening of Saturday, April 5

Panel 1: Literary Translation from German and Slavic Languages

Vincent Kling of La Salle University moderated the panel entitled "Literary Translation from German and Slavic Languages." Jacob Bennett presented his paper "In Defense of 'Illiterate' Translation," which examines the worth of fidelity and explores the possibility that a more than serviceable translation is possible even when a translator may have little fluency in the original language. The main thrust of Bennett's argument is that translation is a process both technical and literary, and as such, requires some degree of mastery of both the scholar's and the practitioner's tactics. During the presentation, Bennett cited a number of reputable sources to destabilize the foundation for an expectation of complete fidelity. He then described the process of translating one of Petr Bezruč's poems and illustrated how one might overcome interlingual obstacles of idiom, dialect, tone, and cultural variance, not to mention the translator's lack of fluency in Czech.

Misha Semenov, Jacob Bennett, Hans Gabriel, and Vincent Kling during the "Literary Translation from German and Slavic Languages" panel

Misha Semenov spoke about his essay "Sorry, Wrong Address…Discovering Strategies for the Translation of the Russian Vy/Ty Distinction from Russian into English Through an Analysis of the English-Language Editions of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*." His presentation began with an examination of the more sociological components of the vy/ty distinction and then focused in on specific examples from English-language translations of Tolstoy's two great novels. He analyzed about a dozen passages in which the V/T distinction is very significant before cross-comparing seven English translations spanning the last hundred years to study how they handle the differences. From this, he proposed a classification system for V/T translations, with eight different strategies, which he analyzed on both a pragmatic and a literary level. Using this translation taxonomy, he categorized each of the Tolstoy translations by strategy and mapped strategy use by quote, through time, and by the gender of the speakers. The third panelist was Hans Gabriel, who spoke about his paper "Translating the Self-inclusive *Schadenfreude* of Gottfried Keller's *People of Seldwyla*."

Panel 2: Listening to Victorian Poets: Performance, Interpretation, Discussion

Report by John Wallen

During the panel entitled "Listening to Victorian Poets: Performance, Interpretation, Discussion," only three papers were presented, as Giffen Maire Maupin was trapped in Chicago and unable to join us. Debra Fried of Cornell University moderated the session and started the session off with some thoughts on the continued relevance of the Victorians for the modern age.

The first paper, "Browning's Bluff," was presented by Rebekah Scott of the University of Nottingham, UK. Scott explored the ways in which a dramatic performance of Browning's monologues could add a new level to their meaning; she also posed the question of whether such an activity amounted to leading the listener in particular interpretative directions without reason or cause. Scott accompanied her paper with some highly dramatic readings of Browning's monologues, which made clear how far superior Browning's work is when read aloud rather than silently perused.

The second paper, "Performance vs. Scrutiny: The Case of Gerard Manley Hopkins," was presented by Dustin Simpson of Reed College. His main aim was to point out how an understanding of Hopkins's "sprung rhythm" was unnecessary for a clear oral rendition of the poems. In support of his thesis, Simpson used relevant examples from Hopkins's poem "The Windhover."

The final presenter in this shortened session was Herbert Marks of Indiana University. His paper, "Hardy's Voiceless Ghost," concentrated on the ways in which the vagaries and occasional clumsiness of Hardy's versification techniques could be overcome by effective oral performance. Marks's moving recitations of Hardy's poems about his wife were much appreciated by the listening audience. A lively discussion followed on the topic of whether poetry is essentially written to be read or recited.

John Wallen has taught in the Middle East for more than fifteen years. He is currently an assistant professor at Nizwa University in Oman. Previously he worked at Bahrain University and Qatar University. He has published two books of criticism, a novel, and several books of short stories. He received his PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London in 2011.

Panel 3: Rhetoric and Asian American Poetry

Jee Leong Koh moderated the panel "From Rhetoric and Asian American Poetry." In addition, he gave a presentation on his paper "Erratic as Thought: Goh Poh Seng's *Lines from Batu Ferringhi*." Koh focused on Singapore poet Goh Poh Seng (1936–2010), specifically on Seng's book-length poem *Lines from Batu Ferringhi* (Island Group, 1978). His presentation detailed how Seng broke with an early lyrical style to write in a discursive and conversational manner. Koh noted that this change enabled Seng to trace, with frankness, charm, and considerable power, the contingencies of his inner and outer worlds, and discussed how close analysis of the first part of the poem reveals an artful control that makes room for error.

Alan Clinton discussed his encounters with Paolo Javier's work. Clinton's paper "The Feeling Is Actualized: Completing the Aristotelian Triangle in the Work of Paolo Javier" hones in on Javier's poem "Batman That One" and his book *The Feeling is Actual* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2011). Clinton spoke of how these texts are a shot over the bow at cultural studies and academic writing more generally, which tends to exclude pathos—one of the three points Aristotle argues is required for an effective argument—from its wheelhouse in the name of "objectivity." His claim was that this positivism is countered in most lyric poetry by completely leaving out "logos," or what is traditionally associated with an appeal to reason. He argued that Javier's work in general, but especially in *The Feeling is Actual*, presents a model for a new type of discourse which is neither "critical" nor "lyrical," but instead points to other possibilities for "writing" about culture that complete the Aristotelian triangle while simultaneously reimagining Aristotle in the digital age.

Kevin Tsai's paper "*Dictée*'s Rhetoric Between Word and Image" explores the visual rhetoric of photographic, cartographic, and calligraphic images in the book-length poem *Dictée* by Theresa Cha in order to consider the question of aesthetics in Asian American literature. Tsai's presentation examined the relationship between word and image in Cha's text. He explained that image in Cha is not the passive, silent partner to the active, speaking word—image supplements where language falls short, and at times supplants the text as the center of meaning. As such, *Dictée*'s rhetorical operation crosses media much like Susan Howe's work. To understand a rhetoric beyond language, Tsai said, one must turn to theories of persuasion through visuality, beginning with the classical rhetorical *ekphrasis* ("vivid" descriptions, not descriptions of art). He sought to answer how to bridge the gap between Cha's mythical abstraction and the historicity of Asian American studies.

Seminar: The Bible and Literature

Stephen Cox of the University of California, San Diego, moderated the "Bible and Literature" seminar. James Kee's essay "Bible and Literature: A Hermeneutical Vision" outlines how the relationship between the Bible and literature might be imagined from the standpoint of contemporary hermeneutics—hermeneutics today designating not a method or a technique, but a family of reflective insights with practical consequences for interpretive efforts. During his presentation, he discussed some developments in religious studies that have paved the way for a fruitful relationship between the Bible and literature. He pointed specifically to the emergence of "narrative theology" and attention to the figurative character of much religious language, and, more generally, to the movement beyond doctrinal propositions as the mode of discourse that best defines a religious tradition. He then detailed how literary critics might reimagine biblical texts and the literary texts that refigure them. To conclude, he commented upon the nuanced relationship between interpretive practice and religious belief suggested by contemporary hermeneutics.

Scott Crider's paper "The Test: Narrating God, Abraham and Isaac in the English Bible, Genesis 22:1–19" details the importance of distinguishing between object and manner of mimesis for those interested in Biblical narrative: the same action can be either recounted in narrative or enacted in drama. The essay explains how attention to narrative can disclose a great deal about how biblical poetics actually functions, especially when the actions represented are ambiguous or troubling. In his presentation, Crider pointed to Genesis 22:1–19—wherein God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac—as the epitome of an "ambiguous or troubling" act. He argued that the episode's narrative saves Abraham from ethical indictment even though what is represented is appalling, as is how it is represented. He did note, however, that the character of God is not so fortunate, assuming the God of the Old Testament is an unchanging principle of goodness. He then went on to examine the actions represented (directly or indirectly emplotted), how they are narrated (especially the voice of the narrator), and what the consequences both plot and narration have upon the reader's understanding of the character of each principal: the son, the father, and the father's God.

(continued on the next page)

The rapt audience at the "Bible and Literature" seminar

("Bible and Literature" report continued from previous page)

John Savoie presented his essay "Literary Creation: Johnson, Lewis, Milton, and Jesus Read—and Write—Genesis 1 and 2." Savoie explained how agreements, differences, overlaps, and tensions between the two creation accounts juxtaposed in Genesis 1 and 2 make these stories themselves flash points of further creation. He examined how four creative responses—James Weldon Johnson in *God's Trombones: Creation*, C. S. Lewis in *The Magician's Nephew*, John Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and Jesus in the Gospels (taking us back to Scripture and its own awareness of how it wants to be read)—begin as creative reading. Savoie detailed how in a variety of strategies, some shared and some distinctive, these texts address the demands of these first chapters of Genesis and flourish in the opportunity the chapters present. The fourth panelist, Margaret Ducharme, spoke about her paper "Groanings from Within: Paul's Concept of Spirit in Romans 8:1–39."

Readings by this year's Meringoff Award Winners

Report by Phillip Perry

This year's Meringoff Award winners read their works for conference attendees on the evening of Friday, April 4. ALSCW President John Briggs introduced a trio of speakers beginning with Anneliese Schultz, who won the Meringoff Fiction Award for her piece "The Edible and the Beauteous and the Dead."

Unable to attend the event in person, Schultz utilized the audio and video capabilities of Skype to read her prize-winning story from her office at the University of British Columbia, where she is senior lecturer in French, Hispanic, and Italian Studies. Conference attendees were able to hear the author's voice and view her image on a screen mounted at the front of the room. At the conclusion of her reading, Briggs congratulated Schultz for what he described as "the loudest ovation of the conference so far."

Briggs then introduced Alex Brink Effgen, who won the Meringoff Nonfiction Award for his essay "Measured Quantities: Authorship as Compared to the Culinary Arts." A doctoral candidate at Boston University's Editorial Institute, Effgen was also unable to attend the evening's event. At his request, a portion of his winning essay titled "The Death of the Chef" was read by Archie Burnett, Professor of English at Boston University and codirector of the Editorial Institute.

Briggs concluded by calling up the winner of the Meringoff Poetry Award, George Kalogeris, a member of the English literature faculty at Suffolk University and director of Suffolk's classics minor. "Prepare yourselves," quipped Briggs. "He's here." Kalogeris began his reading with a short poem called "Origins." He then followed the recitation with translations from his book *Dialogos* (Antilever, 2012). The author's four award-winning poems—"Peponi," "Reading ZH," "Language and Darkness," and "Singing Contests"—brought the evening to a close.

George Kalogeris, winner of the Meringoff Poetry Award

Comments on Draft #2 of Indiana's Future English Language Arts Standards: A Report to Governor Michael Pence

Sandra Stotsky, professor emerita at University of Arkansas, ran two workshops at the ALSCW Annual Conference. The first, "Indiana's Draft Literature Standards: What Are Your Suggestions for Improvement?," was held the evening of Friday, April 4. The second, "The Indiana Literature Standards," was held in the afternoon on Saturday, April 5. In place of accounts of these events, a revised and abridged version of the report Stotsky wrote for Indiana Governor Michael Pence on April 8, 2014 is printed below. Parts of this report are comprised directly of feedback and comments generated during the workshops.

In March 2014, Indiana Governor Michael Pence signed a bill requiring that "Before July 1, 2014, the state board shall adopt Indiana college and career readiness educational standards, voiding the previously adopted set of educational standards. The educational standards must…meet national and international benchmarks for college and career readiness standards and be aligned with postsecondary educational expectations[,] use the highest standards in the United States…[, and] prepare Indiana students for college and career success…."

This report responds to a request from Governor Pence to review a draft of English language arts (ELA) standards being developed by a committee of Indiana educators selected by the Indiana Department of Education to address this bill. Before accepting the governor's invitation to review a draft of the standards, I indicated that I would not review a set of standards that looked like the Common Core's ELA standards. I have criticized them steadily in various public venues since 2009. I have even testified twice about their deficiencies to Indiana legislators—in January 2013 and August 2013.

The standards for grades 6–12 in the draft sent to me on March 14, 2014 for review were not significantly different from the standards for grades 6–12 in the public comment draft (draft #1), which had been posted by the Indiana Department of Education in February 2014. The standards in draft #1 received a great deal of public criticism for being mostly the same as the Common Core's standards. Draft #2 was not much different. According to the department's own analysis, 93 percent of the standards in grades 6–12 in draft #2 were identical to or slightly edited versions of the Common Core's standards for grades 6–12. The differences between draft #1 and draft #2 rest mainly in K–5, even though K–5 standards in draft #2, according to the department's own analysis, also draw heavily on the Common Core's standards.

Sandra Stotsky, professor emerita at University of Arkansas and opponent of Common Core implementation

On March 17, I wrote to Governor Pence indicating that I would not review draft #2. But I did promise to solicit suggestions for improving draft #2 from literary scholars attending the ALSCW's Twentieth Annual Conference in Bloomington, Indiana, and from local high school English teachers who responded to an invitation to attend the conference.

I was eager to solicit the comments of literature professors and high school English teachers in Indiana at these workshops because very few are on either the drafting committee or the review panel of faculty in higher-education institutions in Indiana. It is not clear why so few high school English teachers and college-level literary experts in Indiana were selected to be on these two committees. In my view, it was necessary to compensate for the failure of the standards-drafting committee to move far beyond the low level of academic challenge implicit in the Common Core's own standards as this committee sought to develop an Indiana-oriented set of ELA standards that could meet Governor Pence's own criteria.

More than twenty-five people participated in the two workshops at the Bloomington conference. Most were teaching faculty in English departments at colleges and universities around the country. Four were high school English teachers in Indiana, most of whom teach upper-level high school English courses. Also in attendance as observers were a retired high school English teacher and a member of the Indiana Board of Education.

This report presents the comments of the participants on major problems they saw in draft #2 and their suggestions for a final version of ELA standards for Indiana that would meet Governor Pence's request for "uncommonly high standards written by Hoosiers for Hoosiers."

(continued on the next page)

Comments: *(Although no votes were taken, it should be noted that there was no disagreement about any comment.)*

1. The cognitive load does not visibly increase from grade to grade. The progression from grade 8 to grades 9/10 and then to grades 11/12, in the standards below, was pointed out as an example of "distinctions without a difference" and of "one standard with contradictory ideas in it." (These standards in Indiana's draft #2 were taken verbatim from the Common Core's ELA standards.)

    - *Grade 8: Analyze the development of a theme or central idea over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.*
    - *Grades 9/10: Analyze in detail the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of the text, including how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.*
    - *Grades 11/12: Compare and contrast the development of similar themes or central ideas across two or more texts and analyze how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of each text.*

2. Too few—if any—real progressions through the grades.
3. Excessive repetition/paraphrase of the same expectation/objective, as in the above example.
4. Jargon-laden language is excessive throughout.
5. The language of the standards suggests they are for assessment, not curriculum, purposes.

Suggestions:

1. Create separate literature standards for each of the four grades from ninth to twelfth.
2. Create standards at each grade level for each major genre (fiction, poetry, drama, nonfiction, and traditional/classical literature).
3. Embed sample titles or authors in each standard, selected by current English teachers in Indiana, to suggest the level of reading difficulty and complexity desired.
4. Create standards that show an increasing cognitive load (greater intellectual demand) at successive grade levels.
5. Put in summative comments at grade twelve for each strand or skill: How should this strand or skill look by grade twelve?
6. Provide a list of recognized Indiana-born writers (e.g., James Whitcomb Riley, Booth Tarkington, Theodore Dreiser) whose works are to be taught in the secondary grades.
7. Create a standard for the study of British literature before and after Shakespeare.
8. Create a standard requiring study of historically significant literature (i.e., literature written before the twentieth century).
9. Create a standard requiring study of literature from Anglophone countries.
10. List the different kinds of informational/nonfiction texts to be taught in an English class.
11. Define text complexity clearly and succinctly, and specify approximate length of major works to be read from grade to grade.
12. Draw on Bloom's taxonomy for verbs where possible.
13. Provide examples for each level of performance in composition at each grade level, not just examples of the strongest and weakest writing as in the Common Core.

Concluding Remarks:

One participant wrote, "Any 'uncommonly high' standards, written by Hoosiers for Hoosiers, must be written in a manner that is clearly understandable by all Hoosiers. It should be at a twelfth-grade level and be clear of 'eduspeak' (educational jargon) so that parents can understand what is expected of their children. Where jargon is unavoidable, the term should be marked and defined in a glossary."

Another participant wrote, "Indiana in the twenty-first century will need to have students who have developed the complex, critical thinking skills that are built out of an engagement with complex literary texts that speak to the human condition. Without specific examples, and a sense of clear progression from one level of thinking and reading to another, standards will not help to assure the necessary and desired outcome. Draft #2 standards were too obviously constructed for the purpose of assessment, and assessments based on them will inadequately capture these skills."

It is clear from the language of the bill Governor Pence signed that any set of proposed standards must meet international benchmarks. It is also clear from the comments and suggestions of the English professors and teachers at the Bloomington conference that a set of standards similar to the Common Core's ELA standards does not meet international benchmarks for college readiness or other requirements of the bill. Any revised set of standards for Hoosiers must go well beyond what the Common Core–based high school standards imply, even as a floor.

Many participants, especially those from Indiana, recommended a return to the 2006 Indiana standards as the right "floor" upon which to build an even stronger set of academic standards than those from 2006. The Indiana teachers noted the extent to which the literature standards in the 2006 document reflected the work of the state's own English teachers. The suggestions of the literary scholars and English teachers at the Bloomington conference point to the kinds of changes that will address both the statutory requirements outlined in the bill Governor Pence signed and his own charge as well.

Concurrent Seminar 1: Reading Literature and Learning to Write: A Discussion of Successful Pedagogies at University of California, Riverside

Report by Phillip Perry

How do college freshmen feel about reading and writing? How can the reading of literature help those students learn composition—even if they're enrolled in the school of business administration? These questions and others were addressed in a seminar titled "Reading Literature and Learning to Write: A Discussion of Successful Pedagogies at University of California, Riverside."

The seminar's three participating professors were described by moderator John Briggs as "real stalwarts in the university's writing program" who "really have taken seriously the importance of reading, including literary reading and writing instruction." Briggs added that the information being presented was not widely known. "I've never seen it published or discussed in the professional literature for higher education."

Paul Beehler, Wallace Cleaves, and Lash Vance, the three featured speakers at the "Reading Literature and Learning to Write" seminar

Lash Keith Vance started off by sharing some surprising findings from his fall 2013 survey of over one thousand intermediate-level writing students. Despite the younger generation's reputation for a digital lifestyle, some 76 percent professed a preference for reading books on paper. They also expressed what Vance described as a "pretty positive" attitude toward reading: Over 60 percent placed themselves at rungs three or four on a five-tier ladder of enjoyment, with level five signifying "love to read."

While a similar percentage of respondents placed themselves at the same position along a continuum of enjoyment of writing, many nevertheless expressed a sense of being lost when faced with a writing task. "This was a reminder to me that we have to be compassionate with these students," said Vance. Because they often don't know where to begin when approaching a writing assignment, instructors must adopt a "skills-based approach."

Wallace Cleaves followed up by addressing the question, "Why do we have to teach literature in the composition classroom?" Nodding to the well-publicized decline in humanities majors, Cleaves proffered that "if the humanities, and particularly the professing and profession of literature, are to survive and prosper in any meaningful way, it may have to be through a different means than the traditional literature course." Those means may well be composition courses in which instructors teach the "Big L Literature" that comprises the canon.

ALSCW President John Briggs moderated the "Reading Literature and Learning to Write" Seminar

One example of just such an approach was provided by Paul Beehler, who had been asked to teach a "Writing Across the Curriculum" (WAC) course to students in the university's School of Business Administration. That an instructor in composition—rather than in a discipline outside of writing—should teach the course was described by Beehler as "a significant shift in pedagogy."

That shift worked out well. The incorporation of canonical authors in the business-writing classroom, while a departure from traditional pedagogical boundaries, proved to be rewarding and demanding for the students and led to an overall improvement in the quality of business education. "The three business majors historically have been the worst students on campus," said Briggs. "They are now enrolled in the most challenging upper-division course. It's really amazing what has happened."

Phillip M. Perry is a New York City–based journalist and independent scholar. The author of a management column which appears in a number of business periodicals, Perry recently completed a novel as his capstone project for a DA in the humanities from Harrison Middleton University. He received an MA in the humanities from California State University, Dominguez Hills, and completed his undergraduate work at the University of Notre Dame.

Seminar 2: Wonder and Literature

Report by Lejla Marijam

The Wonder and Literature seminar, organized by Dr. David Smith, addressed the nature of wonder and its portrayal not only in literature but in the fields of religion and culture as well. The panelists discussed wonder in its diverse but complementary textual manifestations.

Dr. John Wallen discussed wonder as a death sentence in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, as the mark of a protagonist unfit to survive in the new capitalist society that usurped the land of pioneer dreamers who first founded the United States. Ashish Patwardhan analyzed the transference of wonder from the text to what we perceive as our "reality," focusing on Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings*. Dr. Peter Cortland's uncanny physiological response to wonder in the text based on our psychological projection as readers and Chappell's idea that we are stuck in wonder loops with the text as it merges with real life both illustrated a gateway through which "real" life and "text" are able to affect change in one another. Lejla Marijam's paper likened wonder in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* to a religious process in which the believer/reader becomes a cocreator of the imagined text. In a similar vein, Dr. J. H. S. McGregor's paper focused on the wondrous metamorphosis of the author and protagonist in Dante's *Inferno* into a redeeming Christ-like figure capable of influencing the conversion or salvation of the sinners who are his readers. The panelists concluded by asserting that wonder in literature is invaluable for its ability to allow the readers to re-engage with the "real" world in a more authentic way.

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

Report by Celeste Barber

The panel began with John Burt's paper "Negative Capability and Education." He discussed the "two cultures" and "the special status of negative capability and metaphor" in the humanities, where focus is placed on "ways of knowing capable of illuminating matters we can interpret but not explain." He asserted that higher education in literature can be better understood as a search for reasons rather than as an inquiry into causes, that it tends to be focused on recognition more so than on the operations of cognition, and that its human dimensions are all the more evident in its cultivation of judgment and the freedom with which good judgment is exercised. By contrast, science-oriented fields in the modern academy concentrate on determining causes. They inquire into what determines what. Choice is not a subject of interest. Burt argued that the study of literature upholds democratic and human values by encouraging engagement with literature that depends upon judgment and freedom. Hence, it resides in and largely sustains the humanities. The sciences, by comparison, are instrumental studies: their powerful accomplishments depend upon judgment and freedom, but in their essential activities, they do not reflect upon those things or make them central parts of their studies. Far from being derivative or merely a subjective endeavor, literary study is indispensable to higher education.

Sandra Stotsky, who has been outspoken in her opposition to Common Core implementation, discussed her paper "The Fate of Poetry in a Common Core–Based Curriculum." The thrust of her talk was the Common Core's potential negative impact on poetry specifically. In her paper, she argues that poetry will necessarily be relegated to the sidelines—"an afterthought" in the curriculum—given the dictate for greater inclusion of informational material in order to prepare students for the real world. The talk presented the Common Core Standards as the latest in a series of educational reforms over the past fifty years that have steadily eroded literary studies in public schools. Following the Second World War, there was the shift toward a skills- and standards-based curriculum. Starting in the 1970s, high school instructors taught less challenging readings to accommodate the increasing number of high school students electing to complete their education rather than drop out and enter the work force. Teachers were thus presented with a wider spectrum of student abilities, and the lowered standards adversely affected middle-range students (those falling somewhere between AP and remedial). Stotsky maintained that these lowered standards and the shrinking curriculums have resulted in poetry's increasing marginalization.

Mark Bauerlein's talk, "It All Depends on Personnel," began with the question, "How do you assess knowledge of two and a half centuries of foundational American Literature?" His question exposes some key weaknesses of the Common Core. First, there is the question of how to test knowledge of material. The cost has not been factored in as the test is shifted from computerized scoring to human readers. Essay questions are expensive to score, yet computerized scoring cannot evaluate knowledge of material. How will we pay for the significant cost of the tests, and who will pay? Second, those driving the curriculum are not themselves literary people. Decision makers would be more prone to require the inclusion of informational and nonfiction texts over literary works. This particular conclusion supports Sandra Stotsky's concerns about the continued dismantling of literary study in favor of nonfiction-based language arts programs.

Celeste Barber teaches English at Santa Barbara City College in California. She is also the coordinator for the Great Books Curriculum, modeled on the acclaimed Wilbur Wright College program.

Featured Speaker Professor Mark Bauerlein, "Why Informational Text?"

Report by Bruce Gans

The featured speaker at the luncheon for all conference registrants and visiting teachers, Professor Mark Bauerlein, discussed in his remarks—entitled "Why Informational Text?"—what he foresees will be the destructive consequences for America's high school English curricula and student learning that will inevitably follow from the new Common Core assessment tests that are in the process of being implemented in most states.

According to Professor Bauerlein, even though the Common Core standards themselves contain some admirable literary-historical elements—for instance, the reading standard that asks students to demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century "foundational works" of American literature—high school English syllabi may follow a process that strips away the classics and opts for topical contemporary materials instead. This is how "informational text" may be interpreted at the local level—not as important works of autobiography, history, and criticism, but as blogs, op-ed pieces, movies, and TV shows.

Professor Mark Bauerlein

And this does not only mean a loss of the tradition. Professor Bauerlein pointed out that informational texts such as how-to articles and Wikis on fashionable topics of the moment neither increase core student cultural literacy, nor give students an opportunity to gain in the classroom the skills complex literary texts require for mastery. The Common Core was designed to promote college readiness, but dumbed-down reading materials will only hinder it. Students will not have an opportunity to gain the higher-order reading skills that come from encountering and struggling to master challenging, complex works of literature. What is more, they will not have an opportunity to gain the historical literacy and perspective necessary to the study of great literature.

Bauerlein distributed a "scoring guide" from Smarter Balance, one of the makers of tests for the Common Core, as an example of the problem. Past assessment exams to measure college preparedness contained numerous specimens of serious literature, but not this one. The passage examples discussed, among other things, birds and sustainability. There was only one passage that bore upon literature—a make-believe conversation between two high school students about one of Shakespeare's plays, carried out in "teen speak." Everything in the guide encouraged English teachers to forsake literary assignments, and the materials required little on the order of analytical skills, the ability to handle complex vocabulary and syntax, or the competence to identify and interpret symbol, metaphor, irony, wit, satire, complex themes, and moral ambiguity. Needless to say, literary-historical knowledge was irrelevant.

The sad truth, Professor Bauerlein pointed out, is that the goal of adding more informational text to the Common Core was to build more literary-historical knowledge, not less. The examples in the Common Core demonstrate that intention, but we may expect increasingly fewer classroom hours devoted to it. High school English is, perhaps, the only opportunity most students will have to learn about the existence of and experience the introspective rewards that come from grappling with profound texts communicating universal truths in beautiful language. The end result, Professor Bauerlein predicts, is that more students than ever before will arrive at college without the skills or intellectual background to master college-level literature syllabi.

In response to a comment from an attendee, Professor Bauerlein agreed that the implementation of informational text in the Common Core assessments could never occur in the sciences because the faculty in these disciplines uphold the principle that their fields contain a solid body of essential knowledge that students must know and master before they can progress to higher levels. In the humanities, however, that graduated process has broken down. The idea of a core knowledge of works has been discredited, with the result that English has an incoherent curriculum. No wonder "informational text" all too often means not W. E. B. Du Bois, Thoreau, and Gibbon, but NPR, Wikipedia, and *USA Today*.

Bruce Gans was a professor of English for many years at Washington College and Wright College in Chicago, where he founded and directed a Great Books Curriculum. Through grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, his Great Books Curriculum became the model for the establishment of other Great Books Curricula around the United States. Gans has also received a National Endowment for the Arts grant in fiction writing and an Illinois Arts Council grant for literary essay. He has published over two dozen short stories, as well as essays and reviews in publications including the *American Scholar*.

Panel 5: Compassionate Fictions: Fellow Feeling in Renaissance Literature

Leah Whittington served as moderator of the seminar "Compassionate Fictions: Fellow Feeling in Renaissance Literature." She also presented a paper entitled "Compassion in the Classroom or What Shakespeare Learned from Vergil." Her paper treats Shakespeare's ethics of empathy as a facet of his classicism. It traces Shakespeare's career-long preoccupation with empathy to his classical reading, and, in particular, to a sustained interest in the poetic strategy of *empatheia* in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Whittington first spoke about the role of emotional identification in the Elizabethan humanist rhetorical curriculum; she then turned to the specific impact of Vergil in shaping the ethical aesthetics of empathy that seem to have mattered most to Shakespeare. Her final destination was *The Tempest*. She asserted that Shakespeare is at his most Vergilian in this play, drawing on the poetics of empathy to orchestrate the play's famously unsettled ending. John Staines, another member of the panel, spoke about his paper " 'It is no little thing to make / Mine eyes to sweat compassion': Compassion and Tragic Pity in *Coriolanus*."

Katherine Ibbett talked about the representation of compassion as failure—misreading, misunderstanding, exclusion—in the work of Lafayette, a seventeenth-century French novelist who wrote about the religious wars of the sixteenth century. She explored how one could read this failure of compassion in relation to the larger failure of religious toleration in early modern France. The fourth panelist, Oliver Arnold, discussed his paper " 'He to Hecuba': Impossible Relations and Compassion in *King Lear* and Early Modern England."

Panel 6: The Problem of the Chorus in Athenian Tragedy, Then and Now

Stephen Scully of Boston University moderated the panel "The Problem of the Chorus in Athenian Tragedy, Then and Now." In his opening remarks, Scully provided context for the panel as a whole. He explained that Greek tragedy is—in its conception—Athenian tragedy, and for the ancient Athenians, a tragedy was first and foremost a chorus. He went on to detail how a tragic poet who wished to produce a play "asked for a chorus" and, if selected, was "granted a chorus." The first tragedies consisted of a chorus and a single actor, whom the Athenians called a *hupokretes*, a responder. As the genre matured, it expanded to three actors, but no more, prompting modern scholars to see tragedy as a *choral genre*.

Thomas Hubbard's paper "Choral Unwisdom and the Inadequacy of Democratic Man" turns to Aristotle's insight that a chorus is like an actor and should be judged like an actor. During his talk, Hubbard maintained that while it is often correct to see the chorus as a collective reflection of common people's emotions and judgments, every tragic chorus needs to be evaluated differently in terms of its own distinctive ethos. Through an in-depth discussion of Sophocles's *Ajax*, Hubbard contended that even when its role is to witness and judge the actions of others, the chorus should be construed as a character with its own flaws and vulnerabilities encoded through the prisms of gender, social class, and national identity.

Francis Blessington talked about his paper "The Greek Chorus and Alternative Tragedies." He argued that, rather than acting as an idealized spectator, choral lyric opens up a verbal window onto an alternative reality that plays against the human views on stage. He asserted that the chorus often thinks and sings in narrative fragments. Choruses propose possibilities for the development of the play but fall far short of actual story—their stories contrast with the more imaginative turns the action takes.

Herbert Golder talked about the making of a film he cowrote with Werner Herzog, *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done*, which is inspired by the true story of a promising young actor playing Orestes in a theater production of the *Oresteia* who murders his actual mother. Golder spoke specifically about how the rehearsal scenes with the chorus triggered something visionary and visceral, mythic and murderous, in the actor's psyche. He described how in each of the choral scenes staged in the film—both in his and Herzog's conception of them and through what actually happened during filming—myth appears to have punctured reality, though he also quipped, "maybe it was the other way around."

Helaine Smith discussed the ways in which she used the chorus in middle school adaptations of *Clouds* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*. She noted how the young students, simply by contemplating the performances they had given, touched upon many points of scholarly discussion and debate. She shared that one of the more striking insights the students came to was how central to Greek drama the chorus was. She ended her talk with comments from the students about what they learned about the ancient Greek chorus from performing these scripts. One of the young women wrote, "I thought it was interesting that Aristophanes included Agathon's Trojan Maiden Chorus in our play. It was the very opposite of our realistic chorus of Women celebrating the Thesmophoria—and we were central to the action of the play; Agathon's chorus didn't even have a play to be central to! But maybe that showed that some writers thought the chorus was the most important part of a performance."

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