

# Literary Matters

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



*Aut nuntiare aut delectare*

## FROM THE EDITOR

This letter has been born of an unusual route for me. Happy accidents are almost always involved in how these pieces take shape; their impact and the stage at which they factor in are usually the same. After having received, read, selected, edited, and finalized the articles and essays that will appear in the issue, a theme or common strand emerges. But it isn't until I've removed myself—or, rather, my mind—from intense focus on the contents of the issue that I'm able to see the relevance of the motif or message in its larger environment, beyond *Literary Matters* itself, in the whole literary world. Sometimes I'll be doing a bit of morning reading, and a few paragraphs in, an article will assume the role of caffeine in the coffee I'm drinking and jolt me awake with the realization that it belongs, that I found the point of entry. Other times, I'll be struggling to make a direct connection between the feature pieces, knowing that there is a kindred something, but what that something is won't make itself known. And then I'll be reading (again for leisure, not in the hopes of mining for a motif), when suddenly at the end of an article, I discover it became a bridge, linking the pieces I previously had been challenged to travel between.

This time around was seemingly the same. I read an article about the history of slang terms, which was so well done and interesting that I desperately wanted to find a way for it to relate to this issue, and then a short while later, I happened upon an astounding interview with psycholinguist Steven Pinker, which complemented the piece about slang to such perfection that my coming across it could be considered kismet, and they coalesced with the content and concepts in my brain, and *voilà*, that had me nearly finished with my letter to you all.

I then received a few additional items that I planned to squeeze into the issue, without any fear that their content might interfere with this letter that was finished save for a few final commas to consider. That was, of course, until I discovered that I had in hand two articles about the same event. Though this came to pass in a not-so-intentional manner, receiving two finely crafted and insightful articles can hardly be called a problem. But generally, local meetings and other ALSCW events are covered by a single reporter, and the proceedings are thus relayed according to a single point of view. Yet it seemed that to publish one piece over the other would be to produce an unreliable account of the event because the two pieces were so very different. And there it was, the happy accident that I hadn't been waiting for any longer but which came anyway, one more serendipitous than all those that had come before.

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This pair of reports stands as a shining example of what it is that makes the literary world special and, in some senses, eternal: the ability for a single, same thing to be several things to several people at the same time without itself ever changing in the least. How better to demonstrate this very principle than to have two people attend the exact same event and reflect on it thereafter (never knowing that anyone else had it in mind to do likewise), only to discover that two completely disparate experiences were had? And it is my hope that this impromptu double booking will become a new feature in future issues of *Literary Matters*: Welcome the inaugural "Two Takes on a Talk."

Both J. Chester Johnson and Kasia Buczkowska wrote articles about the third gathering in the series of talks given by Christopher Ricks at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City during October 2014. Each author took such different messages away from the presentation, entitled "Just Like a Woman? Bob Dylan and the Charge of Misogyny," that to have both accounts appear together is a stunning testament to how literature itself, and works of scholarship about literature, can inspire so many unique interpretations and understandings. How could there be

room to debate the meaning of Dylan's lyrics, and room to debate the merits of the debate itself, if we didn't all consent—whether explicitly, or so innately that it never needed to be considered before moving forward—to the premise that a work of art doesn't mean only one thing? That even if we were to ask the poet or the playwright, *what is the meaning of this?*, that we might not be satisfied with the creator's own answer. Once a work is released to its audience, its shape and space and substance are different for each person experiencing it, and even for that person, it may transmute further the next time he or she takes it in. All of these encounters between reader and text generate individual—perhaps conflicting at times—accounts, but we need not select only one to serve as the absolute truth, the authoritative analysis.

This idea is also exemplified beautifully by language itself—lexicon, grammar, syntax, signs and signifiers—and most exceptionally, perhaps, in the case of slang words. An article appeared recently in the *New York Times* that detailed the historical origins of many slang terms. Plenty of people would stop here and meet such a statement with disbelief. Not because they are equipped with information to the contrary, but because such an assertion confronts us with information that is counter to what we thought we knew. The article indeed begins by detailing exactly this: Nearly everyone, the users of slang and those who are dismissive of it or view it with derision, assumes that these are new coinages which did not and perhaps could not exist at any time prior: "Slang often falls prey to what linguists call the 'recency illusion': I don't remember using or hearing this word before, therefore this word is new (often followed by the Groucho Marx sentiment: 'Whatever it is, I'm against it')." <sup>1</sup> But, as Stamper, the author of the article explains, "much of today's slang has older and more venerable roots than most people realize." Just as literature can withstand the passing of time, can flourish and spawn new ideas—and, as the Two Takes on a Talk panel exemplifies, those takeaways can themselves inspire countless considerations—the

1 Kory Stamper, "Slang for the Ages," Opinion Pages, *New York Times*, October 3, 2014, <http://nyti.ms/Z2NP97>.

language and words upon which literary works are built can also be reborn, revived, and repurposed for users and speakers across generations.

Steven Pinker articulated similar points about the structures and rules of language in his interview about the shortcomings of style guides. He explains how language evolves as its purposes and functions shift, as its users require new things of it, and that the rules "emerge as a tacit consensus among a virtual community of writers," <sup>2</sup> rather than being rigidly fixed as some might have us believe. And because these guidelines of language use evolve to suit the needs and attitudes of those who speak and write the language, there will always be multiple views on what constitutes acceptable usage at any given time, in addition to the obvious shifts over the passage of time. <sup>3</sup> Yet the most important concept underlying all of this is that language as an entity is fluid and flexible and enduring; its integrity does not falter simply because different people employ it in individual ways and for different purposes.

Literature, too, holds firm in this same manner: once a text is opened and interacted with, it's never static again, yet no number of explanations, critiques, or analyses will degrade or alter the authority of the text itself. An endless number of readers for the rest of time can each explain the piece differently, and they will all be right; the text will never need to change in the least for that principle to stay true.

*Continued on page 5*

2 "The Evolution of the Style Guide: An Interview with Psycholinguist Steven Pinker," by Brett Beasley, *Ploughshares* (blog), October 20, 2014, <http://blog.pshares.org/index.php/an-interview-with-steven-pinker/>.

3 In fact, this distinction is made very obligingly in the field of linguistics, with the former being known as synchronic change and the latter as diachronic change. Further, linguists do allow for variation in standards of correctness by designating grammar as either prescriptive (the more rigid rules) or descriptive (the actual usage patterns). Despite this, there are greater nuances and faster shifts in the world of language change which render these terms ineffective. Pinker's point, with which I agree, is that there are many competing ideas about what language ought to look like and that there need not be one right answer, especially because what language looks like and what we want it to look like and what we want it to do all keep changing.

## 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.

# A LETTER FROM THE FORMER TREASURER:

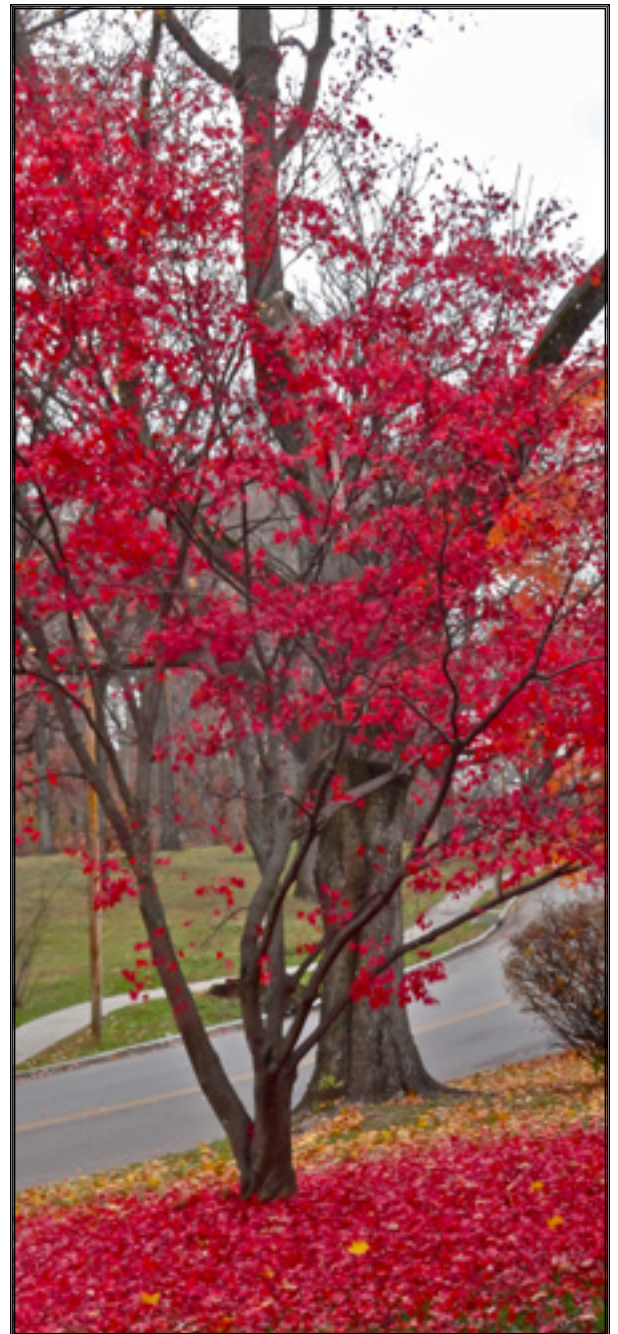
Dear colleagues:

I'm Tim Peltason, a teacher at Wellesley College and, for the last five years, the Treasurer of the ALSCW. I don't usually participate in fund-raising, and I haven't before sent out an appeal like this one, which comes to you with the support of my fellow officers, but not at their instigation, not through ordinary channels or as a part of ordinary procedures. I speak for myself.

Although I'd been a member of the ALSCW for many years, I became active in the Association only as I took on the treasurer's job, and so I've had the double experience over the last five years of discovering both how challenging the ALSCW's financial circumstances are and how highly I value its activities and its mission. At five conferences, at a dozen or so local meetings, and in countless conversations over the last five years, I've enjoyed the meaningful pleasures of membership in an association in which excellent writing is discussed, nurtured, and made the focus of inquiry; in which the great writing of the past is fully alive in the present; in which the writing of the present is nourished by the past; and in which the enabling intimacy of English and non-English literatures, of teaching and writing, of creation and criticism are acknowledged and honored.

I've also watched and participated as the ALSCW has responded to the withdrawal of the foundation support on which it once relied by streamlining its operations in a variety of ways and reducing its budget to less than half of former levels: we have managed with a smaller and modestly paid office staff; we have discovered both the economy and the tremendous appeal of locating our Annual Conferences in college and university settings rather than at big city convention hotels; we have renegotiated our arrangement with Oxford University Press to minimize the expense and maximize the returns of our journal, *Literary Imagination*. And we have done this while keeping down the costs both of membership and of conference registration so that we can sustain our egalitarian policy of making it possible for the most senior and distinguished of our critic/scholar/writer members to meet as peers with students, teachers at all levels, gifted amateurs, and others.

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To contribute to **Literary Matters**, please send articles to [literarymatters@alscw.org](mailto: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 8.1** must be received by **March 15, 2015**.



# 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](http://www.pencil.org) or contact [eloubaton@pencil.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:literarymatters@alscw.org). Those received by **March 15, 2015** will be considered for publication in **Issue 8.1**.

FROM THE EDITOR  
Continued from page 2

This issue's feature pieces also speak to this timeless quality, taking us back to more classical works, illustrating the power certain pieces can have and how the themes within them are of such great significance that the texts remain relevant and continue to demand the attention of students and scholars even centuries later. They show that there is no end to the discussion or debate that can be generated by a literary work, how a book or poem or play is always new, in a sense, no matter how long ago it was written. They demonstrate how contrasting approaches or derivative analyses need not diminish those that came before, and are, in fact, welcome additions to already fertile fields of study.

In this vein, Charles Ross offers up a paper on the transfer of power in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, investigating the similarities between Caesar's spirit and the Holy Ghost, and demonstrating how those wrestling to assume control after Caesar's assassination are influenced by—and ultimately destroyed by, in the majority of cases—the movements of his spirit. Ross delves deeply into how the dead are honored or ignored in the play and what powerful messages are delivered by the staging of the corpses throughout the production. This paper highlights the reasons for this play's enduring appeal to students of drama, literature, and theology alike, and also illustrates literature's uncanny ability to inspire novel theories even after having been read countless times by countless pairs of eyes.

The second feature piece in this issue is a paper by Alexis Manos, winner of the 2014 Stephen J. Meringoff High School Essay Award. "The Use of *Contrapasso* in *The Inferno*," the paper that earned Manos this distinction, details several instances of the law of *contrapasso* in Dante's epic poem, and explores the clever ways Dante ensures that each sinner's "punishment is commensurate with the fault."<sup>4</sup> Manos focuses in on three distinct circles and explains how *contrapasso* is not quite so simple as enduring the same suffering in death that the sinner caused in life: Dante's conception of retribution is far more elaborate than that. Her observations and keen analysis make it no surprise that this essay was chosen to receive the Meringoff High School Essay Award.

Also inside the issue are articles about the many activities undertaken by the Association over the past several months and information about upcoming opportunities and events. In addition, you will find announcements about the achievements of our members, including profiles on a new round of winners of the Meringoff Writing Awards and listings of the recent publications our fellows have produced.

4 Allen Mandelbaum, trans., *Inferno*, Dante Alighieri (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 349n52–69.

"A LETTER FROM THE FORMER TREASURER"  
Continued from page 3

We'll keep working to be as efficient, and also as affordable, as we can be; we'll continue our strenuous efforts to seek support from a variety of sources. But it's now clear that in order to continue our current operations, to continue existing at all in our current form, we urgently need to find some way to close an annual funding gap of \$50,000–\$75,000. We hope to do this partly by finding some few members whose means enable them, and whose belief in the ALSCW compels them, to pledge \$5,000 or \$10,000 annually for the next three years.

**We must also find at least a few dozen more members who will do what I and ten other members have done to date, which is to become members of the ALSCW Circle of Friends by pledging \$1,000 a year, or more, for the next three years. This gift can be charged automatically each month—that's \$83.33 a month for a \$1,000 pledge—and if just 30 or 40 or 50 of us are able and willing to make such a pledge, we will have a democratically broad foundation of support on which to build our future.**

Please consider joining me in this commitment to the mission of the ALSCW. You can email me directly at [tpeltason@wellesley.edu](mailto:tpeltason@wellesley.edu) to make your pledge or to ask questions, or you can email the office at [office@alscw.org](mailto:office@alscw.org). Or go to <http://alscw.org/donate/donate-now/index.html> to donate straightaway.

Thanks for your time and attention,

*Tim Peltason*  
Timothy Peltason  
Professor of English  
Class of 1949 Professor in Ethics  
Wellesley College

Before closing, I wish to encourage all of you to consider contributing your work to *Literary Matters*. Whether you have a poem to share or news to disperse, an essay exploring recent works or those written long ago, a book you'd like reviewed or a review about a book you liked, or anything else that needs reading, please feel welcome to get in touch. All words are welcome here.

Thank you for your time and for your support of the ALSCW.

Best wishes,

*Samantha Madway*  
Editor, *Literary Matters*

## 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](http://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, Immediate Past President of the ALSCW  
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](mailto:office@alscw.org) or call our office at (617) 358-1990, and we will do whatever we can to assist you.*

# REPORT ON THE FIFTH ANNUAL ALSCW/VSC LiT FORUM

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF TRANSLATION AT VSC,

Johnson, Vermont September 19, 2014

Thanks to your generous support, the Fifth Annual ALSCW/VSC Literature in Translation (LiT) Forum at the Vermont Studio Center was a success. Held on September 19, the 2014 LiT Forum featured German-born poet and translator Michael Hofmann and Swiss novelist, short-story writer, and radio dramatist Peter Stamm.

During their week-long visit, the writers became integral participants in the international VSC community, chatting over meals, looking in on galleries, and attending slide presentations of fellow visiting artists. Both Hofmann and Stamm made themselves available to many of the residents, and the conversations about translation carried on

throughout the residency. The VSC community was inspired by the presence of this team. Their influence seemed to have sparked a special collaboration between residents: Taiwanese native Yu-Chin “Tiny” Chen and poet Catherine Woodard teamed up in order to complete a translation project. With the help of Tiny’s friends back home, the two completed a translation of a short story in progress by the Taiwanese author. They presented the original and its translation at the final resident reading of VSC’s September session.

Their visit was highlighted by the LiT Forum presentation, where they engaged in a lively discussion on translation and the importance of translators for writers in other languages.



*Peter Stamm and Michael Hofmann present at the 2014 LiT Forum*

After the guests read excerpts—Peter from his original German short stories and Michael from his translations—each reflected on the experience of collaboration through translation. During the program, Stamm and Hofmann also focused on the idiosyncrasies of language and the difficulties of translating cultural expressions. They also discussed the value of one’s knowing a language and a translator’s ability to convey meaning precisely. You can listen to their LiT Forum presentation on VSC’s SoundCloud page: <https://soundcloud.com/vermont-studio-center/vsc-lit-forum-peter-stamm-and-michael-hofmann-91914>.

In addition to the joint presentation, Michael Hofmann delivered a craft talk to the VSC writing residents in which he reflected on a long career of translation and ended the week with a public reading of his original poems and other translated works.

The Literature in Translation Program at VSC was established in 2009 in order to foster a more diverse international creative writing program. We send our thanks to those of you who helped make this event possible through your generous support. Newly established fellowship programs have brought more than thirty-five writers and literary translators from Botswana, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Nicaragua, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United States to VSC since 2012.

With sincere gratitude for your interest and support,

All of us at Vermont Studio Center



## 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/lit-the-literature-in-translation-program> or email the VSC at [info@vermontstudiocenter.org](mailto:info@vermontstudiocenter.org).



# *The Collected Poems of John Crowe Ransom*, Edited by Ben Mazer



Robert Graves: "The sort of poetry which, because it is too good, has to be brushed aside as a literary novelty."

Howard Nemerov: "His verse is in the best sense 'private,' the judgment upon the world of one man who could not, properly speaking, be imitated."

Robert Lowell: "so many lyrics that one wants to read over and over."

So many? But there exists a greater yield than was preserved by Ransom himself. For the poet, in a fierce act of purgation, force-slimmed his poems to sixty-eight pages. Selected with a vengeance. Presented here now is the first-ever complete edition of the poems of John Crowe Ransom, restoring to the world—in the name not of mercy but of justice—a great many poems that Ransom himself had once (and quite rightly) judged perfectly worthy of publication, poems that, joining now his select poems, will enjoy a renaissance.

John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974), poet, critic, and teacher, was born in Pulaski, Tennessee. He entered Vanderbilt University at the age of fifteen, received his undergraduate degree in 1909, won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, and crowned his academic career at Kenyon College, where he founded and edited the *Kenyon Review*. His criticism—the New Criticism—was revered and feared. His poems are at once ancient and modern while never modernist (T. S. Eliot: "I have probably a higher opinion of your verse than you have of mine"). They won high esteem and deep delight for their fineness, their humor, their individuality of manner and movement, and their unforced poignancy.

*Poems About God* (Henry Holt and Company, 1919), *Chills and Fever* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), and *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1927) led in due course to Ransom's *Selected Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), the revised reissue of which won the National Book Award in Poetry in 1964.

Ben Mazer was born in New York City in 1964; he now lives in Boston, Massachusetts. His poems have been widely published in international literary periodicals, including *Verse*, *Stand*, *Leviathan Quarterly*, *Harvard Magazine*, *Jacket Magazine*, *Fulcrum*, *Pequod*, the *Boston Phoenix*, *Thumbscrew*, and *Agenda*. He is a contributing editor to *Fulcrum: an annual of poetry and aesthetics*. His first collection of poems, *White Cities*, was published by Barbara Matteau Editions in 1995. His most recent collections of poems are *Poems* (The Pen & Anvil Press) and *January 2008* (Dark Sky Books), both published in April 2010. His edition of Ransom's poems was effected at the Editorial Institute of Boston University.

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet John Ashbery has said of Mazer's work: "Like fragments of old photographs happened on in a drawer, these poems tap enigmatic bits of the past that suddenly come to life again. To read him is to follow him along a dreamlike corridor where everything is beautiful and nothing is as it seems."

Subscriptions are now being taken for *The Collected Poems of John Crowe Ransom*, edited by Ben Mazer, which will be released imminently by Un-Gyve Press. Subscribers may order the book at a lower pre-publication price and will have their names listed at the front of the book as among the original subscribers.

Subscriptions can be placed by visiting <http://www.un-gyvelimitedgroup.com/literature/r2thrw7yjrqbfdx17t0isle8fuceqs>. (Please make sure to select Co-Opproduction option at the outset.)

Subscription orders can also be placed by mail (please make checks payable to Un-Gyve Limited, 139A Charles Street No. 393, Boston, Massachusetts 02114, USA), or payment details can be provided to the Un-Gyve Press by telephone (617-350-7884), by fax (617-482-2339), or by email ([info@un-gyve.com](mailto:info@un-gyve.com)).

*The Collected Poems of John Crowe Ransom* will be published in cooperation with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. / Knopf Doubleday Publishing and by CO-OPPRODUCTION.

## ROSANNA'S CHALLENGE

Dear Fellow Members of ALSCW,

In response to Tim Peltason's appeal, and in painful awareness of the Association's need for an income of roughly \$60,000 a year in order to keep our operations going, I have conceived a financial challenge for us. I have been a member of the Circle of Friends at the level of \$1,000 a year since 2008. I am not a wealthy person (far from it), but I am passionately devoted to the Association and all its works: our journal, *Literary Imagination*; our residential fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center; the Meringoff Writing Awards; our occasional publication, *Forum*; our local meetings in Boston, New York, Baton Rouge, Washington DC, and Chicago; our newsletter, *Literary Matters*; our advocacy for literary education K-12 and beyond.

I will give \$10,000 to the ALSCW in 2015 if you, my fellow members, can collectively respond by expanding our Circle of Friends by twenty members by April 1. This would mean that the Association could count on a gift of \$30,000 in 2015, with my \$10,000 and \$20,000 from the twenty new Friends; it would also mean the assurance of a new level of stability for several years to come, since Friends pledge their annual gift for three years. If we find more than twenty new Friends by April 1, so much the better. (I will not count renewed pledges made by the ten existing members of our Circle of Friends, as that sum is already accounted for in our woeful budget.)

If you are not ready to join the Circle of Friends but would be willing to answer my challenge for 2015, please contribute whatever you can manage and specify that your gift responds to my plea to raise \$20,000 by April 1. We will keep track of the mounting sum, and I will donate \$10,000 on April 1 if that goal has been met.

The Association is precious for many reasons, not least of which is the opportunity it creates for young writers and literary scholars to find encouragement and inspiration. I have devoted a great deal of my life to this ideal.

Sincerely,

Rosanna Warren  
Hanna Holborn Gray Distinguished Service Professor, Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago

*We invite writers and translators to apply for the 2015*  
**ALSCW Fellowship at Vermont Studio Center**

This fully-funded, four-week residency at VSC is awarded to a current member of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW). This fellowship is open to all of the Association's creative writers and literary translators.

The ALSCW is devoted to the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship. A first-year membership costs only \$45; current non-members are warmly invited to join in order to become eligible for the VSC residency.

ALSCW members who apply will be considered for the ALSCW Fellowship and any other VSC award for which they may be eligible. Applicants who do not receive a Fellowship will also be considered for partial grant and financial assistance towards the cost of a VSC residency.

To apply, visit <http://vsc.slideroom.com>



To learn more about the Association  
and to join, visit [www.alscw.org](http://www.alscw.org)



**VERMONT STUDIO CENTER**  
VERMONT STUDIO CENTER

Deadline:  
15 Feb 2015

# The Winners of the 2015

## Stephen J. Meringoff SMW Writing Awards

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW) seeks to promote excellence in literary criticism and scholarship; works to ensure that literature thrives in both scholarly and creative environments; encourages the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship; and fosters wide-ranging discussions among those committed to the reading and study of literary works.

The ALSCW Stephen J. Meringoff Writing Awards are held annually in the categories of Poetry, Fiction, and Nonfiction in the fall, and in the category of High School Writing in the spring. Members of the ALSCW are eligible to submit entries (<http://alscw.org/membership/join>). Members receive a full year's subscription to our triquarterly journal, *Literary Imagination* (founded in 1999, now published by Oxford University Press: (<http://litimag.oxfordjournals.org/>), invitations to our Annual Conference and ALSCW local meetings, and our newsletter, *Literary Matters*.

### Fiction

Marlene Veloso has won the ALSCW's Stephen J. Meringoff Fiction Award for her story "The Return of J Walker." The Fiction Award was judged by Lee Oser. The award carries with it a cash prize of \$2,000, and the winning story will be published in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.

Marlene Veloso is the executive director of Kids Research Center, a nonprofit focused on children's literacy. She graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in English and theater. She has taught poetry and writing throughout New York City. This is her first prize for fiction.



## Nonfiction

Michelle Chikaonda has won the ALSCW's Stephen J. Meringoff Nonfiction Award for her essay "Mine." The Nonfiction Award was judged by Diana Senechal and Ernest Suarez. The award carries with it a cash prize of \$2,000, and the winning essay will be published in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.



Michelle Chikaonda is a narrative nonfiction writer originating from Blantyre, Malawi. Currently living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, she works at the undergraduate admissions office of her alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, and is completing a collection of nonfiction essays about growing into adolescence and adulthood across the multiple cultures in which she was raised.

In 2014, Michelle was the first-place winner in the nonfiction category of the Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards held by the University of Arizona at Tucson for her essay titled "AIDS: A Family Topology." In the spring of 2015, her essay "Until" will be published in the *Oracle Fine Arts Review* of the University

of Southern Alabama. Michelle is currently learning her fifth language, German. When she is not working or writing, she spends her time traveling, reading, and visiting with friends.

James Najarian has won the ALSCW's Stephen J. Meringoff Poetry Award for his poems "Kleptomania," "From the Armenian Quarter," and "The Frat Boys." The Poetry Award was judged by Greg Delanty and David Curzon. The award carries with it a cash prize of \$2,000, and the winning poems will be published in either *Literary Imagination* or *Literary Matters*.

## Poetry

James Najarian is an associate professor of English at Boston College, where he teaches Victorian poetry and prose, directs the PhD program in English, and edits the scholarly journal *Religion and the Arts*. He grew up on a goat farm in Berks County, Pennsylvania. His monograph, *Victorian Keats: Masculinity, Sexuality, and Desire*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2002. He has published verse in *West Branch*, the *Mennonite*, *Tar Poetry Review*, and other journals. His volume of verse, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, has been a finalist in several publication contests, including those sponsored by Anhinga Press, the Ashland Poetry Press, and the National Poetry Series.



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](mailto:literarymatters@alscw.org).



By Kristina Gibby

## BARBARA BARNES SIMS AT LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Baton Rouge, September 28, 2014

It was an afternoon filled with music and nostalgia as Barbara Barnes Sims presented her recently published book, *The Next Elvis: Searching for Stardom at Sun Records*, at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge on September 28, 2014. The book presentation and launch, put on by the LSU PhD Program in Comparative Literature, was well attended by university students, faculty, and members of the community. With her southern warmth and energy, Sims charmed her audience as she read passages from her book and related several anecdotes from her time as an employee at Sun Records at the height of its success, fleshing out the figures of many of rock 'n' roll's foundational stars while revealing their humanity. Sims's unique perspective as a young woman working in an overwhelmingly male-dominated environment helped to provide a new way of thinking about this specific time in rock 'n' roll history.

As Sims painted it, Sun Records, the studio known for discovering Elvis and other beloved acts, was right on the cutting edge of music that would define a generation and direct the trajectory of popular music in the twentieth century, paving the way for talented artists such as the Beatles. Sims relayed the spirit and energy of the era by peppering her presentation with film clips and sound bites of the many famous artists of Sun Records, painting a vivid picture of what it would have been like to be a part of rock 'n' roll history.

As she played the music of Sun Records, the audience was transported back some sixty years—as if we were hearing these rock 'n' roll legends with new ears, as if for the first time. In addition to playing Elvis's cover of Little Junior Parker's R&B track "Mystery Train," Sims showed video clips of Carl Perkins performing "Blue Suede Shoes" and Jerry Lee Lewis singing "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." She closed her remarks by playing a video of Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, and Johnny Cash singing "This Train Is Bound for Glory" as a tribute to Elvis. It was perhaps one of the most fun and entertaining book presentations that any of the audience members had yet attended.

Barbara Barnes Sims worked in promotion and publicity during Sun's golden years, from 1957 to 1960. She published newsletters, liaised with distributors, and wrote liner notes for the first albums of Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Charlie Rich. In 1960, she began a thirty-six-year career teaching English at Louisiana State University. She lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

An American institution, Sun Records has a history with many chapters—its Memphis origins with visionary Sam Phillips, the breakthrough recordings of Elvis Presley, and the studio's immense influence on the sound of popular music. But behind the company's chart toppers and legendary musicians, there exists another story, told by Barbara Barnes Sims. In the male-dominated workforce of the 1950s, twenty-four-year-old Sims found herself thriving in the demanding roles of publicist and sales promotion coordinator at Sun Records. Sims's job placed her in the studio with Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie Rich, Carl Perkins, and other Sun entertainers, as well as the unforgettable Phillips, whose work made the music that defined an era.

*The Next Elvis: Searching for Stardom at Sun Records* chronicles Sims's career at the studio, during a pivotal time at this recording mecca, as she darted from disc jockeys to distributors. Sims not only entertains with personal stories of big personalities—she also brings humor to the challenges faced by a young woman working in a fast and tough industry. Her disarming narrative ranges from descriptions of a disgraced Jerry Lee Lewis to the remarkable impact and tragic fall of DJ "Daddy-O" Dewey Phillips to the frenzied Memphis homecoming of Elvis after his military service. Collectively, these vignettes offer a rare and intimate look at the people, the city, and the studio that permanently shifted the trajectory of rock 'n' roll. See more at <http://lsupress.org/books/detail/next-elvis/#sthash.FGorYjny.dpuf>.

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Kristina Gibby is a second-year PhD student in the Program in Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University. She earned an MA in comparative studies and a BA in humanities from Brigham Young University. Her research interests are modernism in art and literature, gender studies, and postcolonialism.

# LOCAL MEETING REPORT:

## JONATHAN MULROONEY AT COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Worcester, October 29, 2014

On Wednesday, October 29, 2014, members of the Association and their guests gathered in Worcester, Massachusetts, on the campus of the College of the Holy Cross to hear romanticist Jonathan Mulrooney give a talk entitled “Keats, Interrupted.” Mulrooney, an associate professor and Chair of English at Holy Cross, was introduced by his colleague Lee Oser. Oser noted the speaker’s numerous scholarly articles on Keats and romanticism, as well as a special issue of *European Romantic Review* that Mulrooney edited last summer. The talk took place in the comfort of the English faculty room, accompanied by an abundance of good things to eat and drink.

Mulrooney began with the curious comma in his paper’s title: “Keats, Interrupted.” For Mulrooney, Keats learned to connect acts of political resistance



to the deliberate interruption of narrative, a process whereby Keats’s true voice—his “generative” and emotional power—emerged. The ambiguous comma of “Keats, Interrupted” therefore marks not just a syntactical turn, but a prelude to Keats establishing his literary authority through a poetics of interruption as well. In short, the comma marks both interruption and apposition.

To show how early nineteenth-century writers responded to the disappointment of revolutionary fervor in Regency England, Mulrooney contrasted a scene of theatrical interruption in Frances Burney’s 1814 novel, *The Wanderer* (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown), with the conclusion to Keats’s *Lamia* (originally from *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* [Taylor and Hessey, 1820]). In Keats’s testing the limits of narrative, as opposed to Burney’s traditionalist tidying up, Mulrooney sees evidence of Keats’s and the Cockney Regency’s kicking against officially sanctioned narratives, which was especially significant at a time when the Prince of Wales (the future George IV) was disabusing those who had put stock in his airy promises of hope and change.

Mulrooney approached the matter of Keats’s development through the poet’s famous admiration for Leigh Hunt, whose jail time for insulting the Prince Regent created a model of interruption—a “celebrity” event that artists like

Keats could learn from. Mulrooney went on to place Keats in the

By Lee Oser

company of Edmund Kean and William Hazlitt, figures who sought on the level of formal artistry to disrupt the narrative of counterrevolutionary success. They succeeded to the extent that formal techniques of disruption and resistance grew in favor among artists and their public. After Napoleon’s empire began to crumble in 1814, yielding to the combined powers of Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, such artists were responding to a cultural crisis, which the author of the Odes registered as a “felt sense of the impossible.” So it happens, in Mulrooney’s reading of “To Autumn,” that the opening apostrophe suggests a historically informed turning away from direct modes of speech.

For Mulrooney, Keats’s “highly figural, highly lyrical ode form...presents itself as post-narrative, as a product of the grand Cockney interruption set in motion by Hunt’s imprisonment.” In this respect, the mature Keats defied not only historical triumphalism during the Regency period: he *defies* historicizing claims in contemporary romantic studies. Insofar as the Odes continue to inspire such resistance, we can appreciate Mulrooney’s sympathy with “radical aestheticism” as an approach based on close readings of the poetry itself.

Conversation after the talk was lively and wide ranging. Association member James Kee, a professor at Holy Cross, noted that finite verbs are long withheld from the opening stanza of “To Autumn,” an observation in accord with Mulrooney’s comments about the poem’s precarious straddling of time. Perhaps the highlight of the question-and-answer period was Mulrooney’s compelling remark that “the split between Keats and Wordsworth is just as great as the split between Wordsworth and Pope.”

# LOCAL MEETING REPORT:

## ROBERT POLITO POETRY READING AT UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Chicago, December 4, 2014

By Rosanna Warren

The inaugural meeting of the Chicago ALSCW went off well. Cosponsored by the ALSCW and the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, the local meeting featured a poetry reading by Robert Polito. The room was so full that some people had to stand or sit on the floor; all told, about sixty people attended. Robert Polito read his poems for fifty minutes and showed a three-minute film of a poem of his that had been set to a dreamy collage of images and dissonant sounds. The discussion afterwards was lively and followed by a feast of hors d'oeuvres and wine with general, almost raucous, good fellowship. Guests included faculty and students from various departments in the University of Chicago, as well as quite a few from other schools and from the city at large. Clare Cavanagh, former president of the ALSCW, attended, and was, as usual, brimming with enthusiasm.

Robert Polito's most recent books are the poetry collection *Hollywood & God* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) and *Farber on Film: The Complete Film Writings of Manny Farber* (Library of America, 2009). *Hollywood & God* was chosen by Barnes and Noble as one of the top five poetry books of 2009. Polito received a National Book Critics Circle Award for *Savage Art: A Biography of Jim Thompson* (Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1995). He is also the author of the poetry collection *Doubles* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), as well as *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's "The Changing Light at Sandover"* (University of Michigan Press, 1994) and a study of Byron's poetry. His poems and reviews, criticism, and essays on literature, film, and popular music have appeared in numerous venues, including *Harpers*, the *Believer*, *Bookforum*, the Poetry Foundation's website, *Best American Essays*, *Best American Poetry*, and *Best American Film Writing*. The founding director of the Graduate Writing Program at the New School in New York City, he is now President of the Poetry Foundation.



Photograph by Rosanna Warren

From left to right: Bulgarian poet and translator Katia Mitova, who teaches in the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Lindsay Atnip, a graduate student in the Committee on Social Thought, and Robert Polito

# RICKS ON DYLAN (BOB, NOT THOMAS)

By J. Chester Johnson

The third and last of three lectures given by Christopher Ricks and sponsored by the ALSCW was held at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City on the evening of Wednesday,

October 22, 2014. The two previous lectures by Ricks had been wide ranging and illuminative, explicating works by T. S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot, with frequent and satisfying side trips into the literary landscapes of related writers and poets. The final lecture, entitled “Just Like A Woman? Bob Dylan and the Charge of Misogyny,” dealt with one of Ricks’ favorite subjects, Bob Dylan.

I admit I’m a fan of Christopher Ricks; he’s a treasure for the literary arts of the English language—on both sides of the pond. I read his work and listen to him whenever I have a chance. Having acquired and read much of Ricks’ book *Dylan’s Visions of Sin* (Penguin Group, 2003) in advance of the lecture, I was especially interested to hear his remarks.

Reflective of both Ricks’ writings on Dylan and the lecture’s title, two areas given special consideration at the third lecture were the poetic construction of the poem-songs and the degree to which Dylan’s “Just Like A Woman” bears some prejudicial characteristics of misogyny. Once I had listened for a while to Ricks’ exploration of the former area—Dylan’s poetic construction—it became clear that Ricks has, in fact, done a great service to American poetry; I would also guess he has done much the same for English poetry, but I have less experience in the British venue to conclude that is the case. Through his focus on Bob Dylan, Ricks has given us reason to expand, in crucial ways, our view of American poets and poetry.

*Continued on next page*

On three Wednesdays this October in New York City, Christopher Ricks gave a series of talks entitled Literature & All the Other Activities at the Kosciuszko Foundation.

T. S. Eliot: “to exhibit the relations of literature—not to ‘life,’ as something contrasted to literature, but to all the other activities, which, together with literature, are the components of life.”<sup>1</sup>

## CHRISTOPHER RICKS’S CLOSE READING OF DYLAN’S “JUST LIKE A WOMAN”

By Kasia Buczkowska

The talks—“More than One Waste Land” (October 1), “The strength to force the moment to its crisis: Thomas Hardy and George Eliot” (October 8), and “Just Like a Woman? Bob Dylan and the Charge of Misogyny” (October 22)—were made possible by the generosity of William Louis-Dreyfus, who bore the expenses of hospitality, and were sponsored by the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers.

The October 22 talk, “Just Like a Woman? Bob Dylan and the Charge of Misogyny,” happened on the brink of the publication of *The Lyrics: Since 1962* (Simon & Schuster, 2014), edited by Christopher Ricks, Lisa Nemrow, and Julie Nemrow. The magnificent 960-page tome of Dylan’s writings and re-writings of his lyrics over time was one of many reasons to attend Christopher Ricks’ talk on the motions of the mind in “Just Like a Woman.”

*Continued on next page*

<sup>1</sup> “The Function of a Literary Review,” *Criterion* 1, no. 4 (1923): p. 421.



"RICKS ON DYLAN (BOB NOT THOMAS)"  
Continued from previous page

For years, I listened to and enjoyed Dylan's music without thinking that a serious poet—maybe even a major poet—stood behind the songs. Though this notion changed over time, Ricks enabled a number of us to shed more thoroughly the limitation of that earlier impression. Of course, Dylan had, many years ago, told music critic Robert Shelton that he considered himself a poet first and a musician second; indeed, Dylan stretched the geography beyond the traditional pools where convention suggests notable American poets may be found.

Regarding the second way Ricks has, through his work on Dylan, affected positively the American perspective on verse, I have feared for a long time now that we Americans were choosing to narrow both our practice and our appreciation of verse into contemporary bastions to an extent that certain traditional techniques, such as rhyme—whether in the form of line endings or internal or elastic structures—couldn't and wouldn't be acceptable at all. By stressing the compositional aspects, dramatized on the evening of October 22 through our listening to Dylan recordings, and delving into the seductive force of rhyme, a theme he also underscores in *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, Ricks provides an attraction to rhyme too often eschewed and discarded. Though a few of us may take some issue with Ricks' apparent sharp preference for line ending rhyme, as opposed to internal or elastic rhyme, he makes his point effectively nonetheless.

In the end, whether "Just Like A Woman" should be deemed misogynistic isn't easily confirmed one way or the other—I didn't leave the lecture with a steadfast conviction. Through my own discussions with folks familiar with the poem-song, I've come to find that views vary: I've heard it's a sincere love poem with the woman's shortcomings recognized and with her vulnerabilities ("but she breaks like a little girl") accepted for what they are—individual, if not peculiar, vulnerabilities that can undo human beings. At the same time, I've been told the poem-song definitely displays misogynistic aspects, not toward womankind in general, but toward a specific kind of woman. These subjects of possible or overt prejudice should rightly occupy considerable attention for those who serve to enlighten through the literary world, whether the focus is on this Dylan poem-song or, by way of another example, on poetic works by T. S. Eliot that may mirror anti-Semitism. Similarly, when poems are used as tools in defense of autocratic political regimes, the practice should also be called out; in this respect, I'm reminded of the debate a number of years ago held in the West that surrounded Yevtushenko's poem "Bratsk Station"—had it been written by the poet to exalt the Soviet system, and was it being employed internally and externally by the USSR to justify the Soviet State? It is not enough to call a poem or poem-song simply good or great from an artistic or structural perspective; rather, even though a fixed conclusion may not necessarily be

apparent, an obligation still exists for the piece also to be judged by its ethical and human messages.

Personally, I regret that the lecture series by Christopher Ricks has now ended. Still, I'm glad to have had the opportunity to attend, especially on a rainy night in New York City with Bob Dylan playing along.

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J. Chester Johnson is a poet, essayist, and translator. His writings have been published domestically and abroad, and have been translated into several languages. Johnson has authored numerous volumes of poetry, the most recent being *St. Paul's Chapel & Selected Shorter Poems*, second edition (Saint Johann Press, 2010); the collection's signature poem remains the memento card for the 30,000 weekly visitors to the chapel that survived the 9/11 terrorist attacks at Ground Zero. Johnson and W. H. Auden were the two poets on the drafting committee for the retranslation of the Psalms, which is the version contained in the current edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church (USA); the retranslation has been adopted for worship books and services by Lutherans in Canada and the United States, and by the Anglican Church of Canada. He has also composed works on the American civil rights movement, several of which constitute the *J. Chester Johnson Collection* in the Civil Rights Archives at Queens College (New York City). To read more, visit Johnson's poetry website, [www.jchesterjohnson.com](http://www.jchesterjohnson.com).

"CHRISTOPHER RICKS'S CLOSE READING OF  
DYLAN'S 'JUST LIKE A WOMAN'"  
Continued from previous page

Phillis Levin, a poet and a professor of English at Hofstra University, greeted the gathered guests—among them, ALSCW members both seasoned and new—and thanked William Louis-Dreyfus for his gift of sponsorship, as well as Allison Vanouse and Ben Mazer from the Boston Office for assembling the series. Then Professor Levin introduced Christopher Ricks by telling the audience members that they were in for an evening of poetic delight.

Christopher Ricks, codirector of the Editorial Institute at Boston University and Warren Professor of the Humanities, said that the main task at hand was to examine the creative relationship between *how* and *what* in the Dylan song. He briefly reminded the audience that a song rendered in voice and music has the lineation of a poem with its inherent tension at line endings. What is unique to a song, he pointed out, is melisma, or the singing of a single syllable over a succession of different notes.

Dylan's recorded singing of "Just Like a Woman" filled the elegant salon of the Kosciuszko Foundation.<sup>2</sup> Then Christopher Ricks beautifully intoned the song's opening lines:

Nobody feels any pain  
Tonight as I stand inside the rain.

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2 *Blonde on Blonde*, track 8, produced by Bob Johnston (New York: Columbia Records, 1966).

"CHRISTOPHER RICKS'S CLOSE READING OF  
DYLAN'S 'JUST LIKE A WOMAN' "  
Continued from previous page

In stark contrast to "Nobody feels any pain," the character of the song is in distress, which is expressed, as Ricks emphasized, by the slightly foreign-sounding sentence, "I stand inside the rain." The intriguing phrase *inside the rain*—rather than the so-called correct "in the rain"—makes one imagine someone contained in utter somberness, as if inside mournful tears, which Dylan's rhyming of *pain* and *rain* illustrates further.

While outside, Manhattan stood in the rain that evening, the evocative opening words instantly transported the listeners into the song's dramatic landscape. With the lyrics in hand, the audience was inside the song, and its words were up for close reading in accord with the ALSCW's primary credo of searching for meaning in a work of literature by scrupulous analysis.

"What the work of art ministers to" rather than "what it says" is of importance, Christopher Ricks explained.

The song is for singing your aches into the stream of a melody. It is the releasing of emotion while cultivating good form. And here, the author of the song about intensely bitter feelings does it in a controlled, sharp, and distinct manner. As in any good work of art, there is the familiar and the strange, the safe and the provocative. In the stanzas, there are familiar lamentations: "And your long-time curse hurts"; "I just can't fit"; "I believe it's time for us to quit." The slightly provocative is evident in the refrain:

And she aches just like a woman  
But she breaks just like a little girl

Christopher Ricks cited instances of criticism that considered these comparisons inflammatory and even misogynistic. In response, he said that some people unnecessarily detect "appropriation and scorn" in Dylan's song. These comparisons found in the refrain, he brilliantly suggested, come from a character who is "lucidly unhappy" and complaining that a particular woman behaves in a particular manner, rather than from Dylan himself making a comment on womanhood.

Just as Joseph Conrad cannot be held responsible for endorsing what a character says in his work of fiction, Bob Dylan cannot be held accountable for the attitudes a persona in his song expresses, Ricks posited. After all, many authors of literary works focusing on flamboyant or fiery relationships could be accused of misogyny, blasphemy, or pornography if we were to ascribe the characters' thoughts, feelings, and attitudes to the creators themselves. Ricks said that artists simply cannot play it safe and must take calculated risks in pursuit of the Beckettian charge to "Fail better."

Against the slings and charges of misogyny, the speaker also noted that misogyny tends to give pleasure to the practitioner, however, the emotional tone of "Just Like a Woman" is not that of "gloating" at all. The song embraces emotions while the subject struggles with these emotions. And since in the song "so little information controls so much behavior,"<sup>3</sup> Ricks cautioned against hasty and too-easy moral judgments cast against a momentary repository of feelings.



During the question-and-answer period after the talk, an audience member inquired about the order in which Dylan wrote words and music. Christopher Ricks said that the songwriter gives contradictory answers. "I sometimes dream about him, and we have there long discussions," Ricks said.

The evening ended with cocktails and culinary delicacies; the mood was one of merriment, and it inspired spirited conversations. A member of the audience said to me, "Christopher Ricks has a laser vision on words," and raised a glass of red wine to it.

Then a comment on words made by Professor Ricks in his good-humored manner particularly rang clear and true to me. He mentioned an example of insensitivity to words and education within academia. "We need to embed the arts in the student experience," he quoted a university document. The concept of "embedding" stood in glaring contrast to the evening that just passed during which students and others lived and breathed the arts.

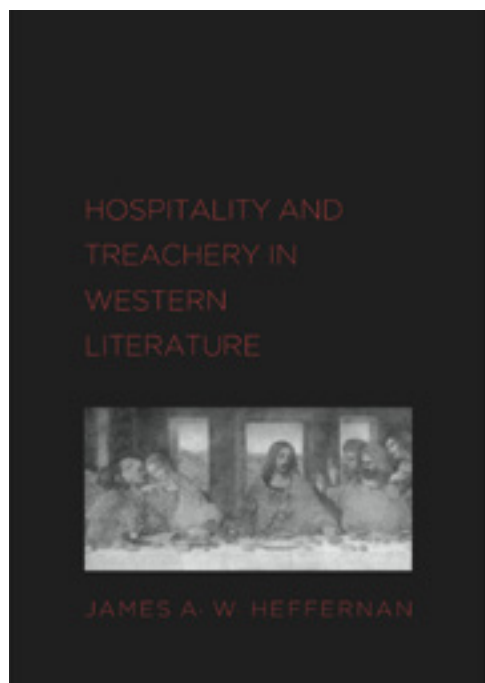
3 See Richard Gregory, "On how so little information controls so much behaviour," in *Towards a Theoretical Biology*, ed. C. H. Waddington (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1968).

Kasia Buczkowska is a writer and translator in New York City who writes very short prose in Polish and English. She has published in *Literary Imagination*, *Clarion*, *Przegląd Polski*, and *Trafika Europe*. Her first book, *in Prose*, is from Un-Gyve Press (2014).

## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS

### James A. W. Heffernan, *Hospitality and Treachery in Western Literature* (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2014)

"Superb...in every way: learned, original, written with elegance and ease, highly readable, and on an important topic....The only book I can think of that is at all like it in scope and importance is Eric Auerbach's classic study, *Mimesis*. Like *Mimesis*, Heffernan's [*Hospitality and Treachery*] takes examples from the whole range of Western literature from Homer and the Bible down to twentieth-century modernism to explore a single topic and to make authoritative and original readings of the examples from the perspective of that topic.

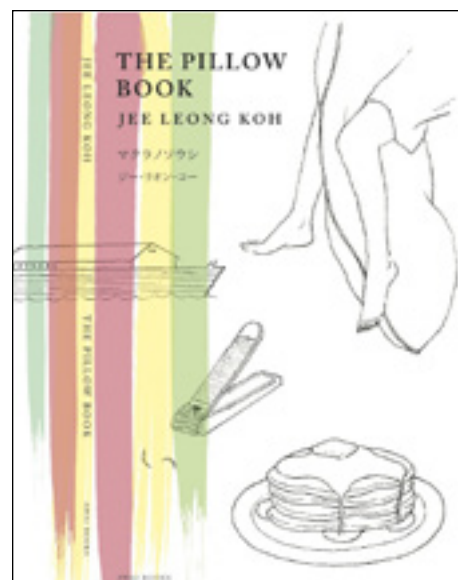


"*Hospitality and Treachery* is not so much a work of theory...as it is a series of extremely distinguished and innovative readings of major works in the canon of Western literature....Building on recent theoretical work on hospitality by Mauss (by way of gift-giving and receiving), Derrida, and others, including anthropological studies, Heffernan reads in detail scenes of hospitality that go from the many episodes involving hosts and guests in Homer's *Odyssey* to Abraham's welcoming of the disguised angels in Genesis 18:1–8, through the *Aeneid* (a wonderful chapter), on to *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, up to the English Romantics, followed by European novelists [of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] and then on to Proust, Joyce, Woolf, and Camus....I have learned much from every one of the chapters and have been continuously amazed by Heffernan's new insights into familiar episodes." —J. Hillis Miller, Reader's Report for Yale University Press

### Jee Leong Koh, *The Pillow Book*, ed. Keisuke Tsubono, bilingual edition (New York: Awai Books, 2014)

Inspired by the example of Sei Shōnagon, a court lady of the Heian period in Japan, Jee Leong Koh collects his miscellaneous jottings in his own pillow book. Written in the genre called *zuihitsu*, which comprises both prose and poetry, these observations, lists, and anecdotes on life in Singapore and New York are, in turn, humorous, reflective, satirical, nostalgic, insightful, and outrageous. This amusing book has now been translated into Japanese by Keisuke Tsubono and published in an illustrated bilingual edition by Awai Books (Tokyo and New York).

Jee Leong Koh is the author of four books of poems, including *Seven Studies for a Self Portrait* (Bench Press, 2011). He has a new volume of poems forthcoming from Carcanet Press in June 2015. An ALSCW council member, Koh teaches English at the Brearley School. He also curates the website Singapore Poetry and is cochair of the first Singapore Literature Festival in New York (Oct 10–12, 2014).

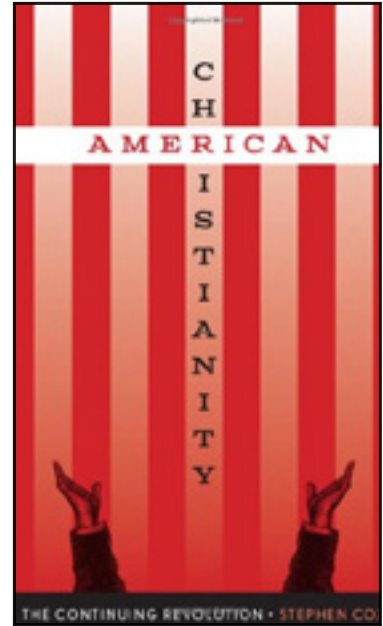




**Stephen Cox, *American Christianity: The Continuing Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014)**

Christianity takes an astonishing variety of forms in America: there are churches that cherish traditional modes of worship, Evangelical churches and fellowships, Pentecostal churches, social-action churches, megachurches, and apocalyptic churches—congregations ministering to believers of diverse ethnicities, social classes, and sexual orientations. This diversity is not a recent phenomenon, despite many Americans' nostalgia for an undeviating "faith of our fathers" in the days of yore. Rather, as Stephen Cox argues in this thought-provoking book, American Christianity is a revolution that is always happening, and always needs to happen. The old-time religion always has to be made new, and that is what Americans have been doing throughout their history.

*American Christianity* is an engaging book, wide ranging and well informed, in touch with the living reality of America's diverse traditions and with the surprising ways in which they have developed. Radical and unpredictable change, Cox argues, is one of the few dependable features of Christianity in America. He explores how both the Catholic Church and the mainline Protestant churches have evolved in ways that would make them seem alien to their adherents in past centuries. He traces the rise of uniquely American movements, such as the Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, and brings to life the vivid personalities—Aimee Semple McPherson, Billy Sunday, and many others—who have taken the gospel to the masses. He sheds new light on such issues as American Christians' intense but constantly changing political involvements, their controversial revisions in the style and substance of worship, and their chronic expectation that God is about to intervene conclusively in human life. Asserting that "a church that doesn't promise new beginnings can never prosper in America," Cox demonstrates that American Christianity must be seen not as a sociological phenomenon but as the ever-changing story of individual people seeking their own connections with God and constantly reinventing their religion, making it more volatile, more colorful, and more fascinating.



**George Drew, *Down & Dirty* (Huntsville: Texas Review Press, 2014)**

Garth Brooks sang about his friends in low places. *Down & Dirty* sings about friends in low places too. Sing is the operative word, for these poems, encompassing both the North and the South, are songs of that most indigenous and proud American—the redneck. Whether of lust or prejudice or loss or family or politics and culture, he sings, this speaker, frequently off-key, but always gustily. Like him or not, we can't turn away. For he is a redneck and damn well proud of it. He sings from his whole or fractured heart—and will until the "cosmic cows come home."

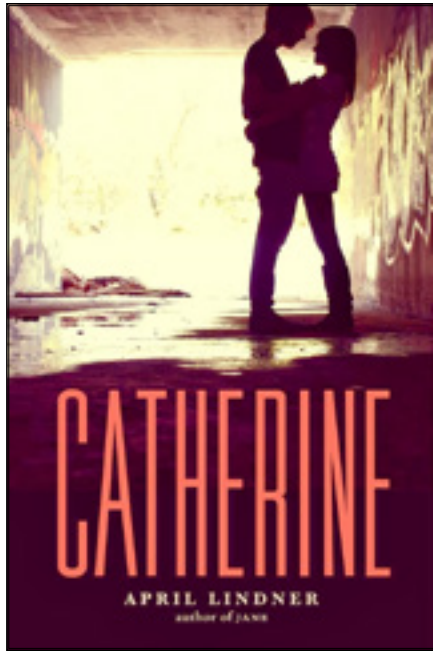


George Drew was born in Mississippi; he was raised both there and in New York State, where he currently lives. He is the author of five collections of poetry. His book *The View from Jackass Hill* (Texas Review Press, 2011) was the 2010 winner of the X. J. Kennedy Poetry Prize. His reviews and essays have appeared in *Louisiana Literature*, *FutureCycle*, *Off the Coast*, *BigCityLit*, and the *Texas Review*. Several of his poems appeared in *Birchsong: Poetry Centered in Vermont* (The Blue Line Press, 2012), and he has poetry currently in or upcoming in *I-70 Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Naugatuck River Review*, the *Nassau Review*, *Atticus Review*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, and *Solstice*.

*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](mailto: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.*



**April Lindner, *Catherine*, reprint edition (2013; New York: Poppy, 2014)**



Catherine is tired of struggling musicians befriending her just so they can get a gig at her Dad's famous Manhattan club, the Underground. Then she meets mysterious Hence, an unbelievably passionate and talented musician on the brink of success. As their relationship grows, both are swept away in a fiery romance. But when their love is tested by a cruel whim of fate, will pride keep them apart?

Chelsea has always believed that her mom died of a sudden illness, until she finds a letter her dad has kept from her for years—a letter from her mom, Catherine, who didn't die: She *disappeared*. Driven by unanswered questions, Chelsea sets out to look for her—starting with the return address on the letter: the Underground.

Told in two voices, twenty years apart, *Catherine* delivers a fresh retelling of the Emily Brontë classic *Wuthering Heights*, interweaving timeless romance with a captivating modern mystery.

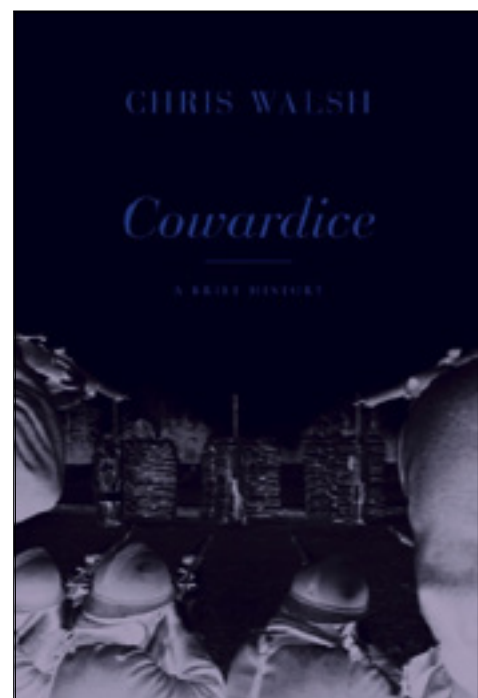
April Lindner is the author of *Jane* (Poppy, 2011) and a professor of English at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Her poetry collection, *Skin* (Texas Tech University Press, 2002), received the Walt McDonald First-Book Prize in Poetry, and her poems have been featured in many anthologies and textbooks. She holds an MFA in writing from Sarah Lawrence College and a PhD in English from the University of Cincinnati. April lives with her husband and two sons in Pennsylvania. Her third novel, *Love, Lucy*—also published by Poppy—is due out in January 2015.

**Chris Walsh, *Cowardice: A Brief History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014)**

Bringing together sources from court-martial cases to literary and film classics such as Dante's *Inferno*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *The Thin Red Line*, Chris Walsh's *Cowardice: A Brief History* recounts the great harm that both cowards and the fear of seeming cowardly have done, and traces the idea of cowardice's power to its evolutionary roots. But Walsh also shows that this power has faded, most dramatically on the battlefield. Misconduct that once might have been punished as cowardice has, more recently, often been treated medically, as an adverse reaction to trauma, and the book explores a parallel therapeutic shift that reaches beyond war, into the realms of politics, crime, philosophy, religion, and love.

Yet the therapeutic has not altogether triumphed—contempt for cowardice endures, and Walsh argues that such contempt can be a good thing. Courage attracts much more of our attention, but rigorously understanding cowardice may be more morally useful, for it requires us to think critically about our duties and our fears, and it helps us to act ethically when fear and duty conflict.

*Cowardice* is the first sustained analysis of a neglected but profound and pervasive feature of the human experience.



# THE BATTERSEA REVIEW

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PUBLISHER & MANAGING EDITOR

U.S. DHUGA

EDITOR BEN MAZER

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# PROFILES: THE NEWLY ELECTED COUNCILORS

## David Bromwich

David Bromwich is Sterling Professor of English at Yale University. After graduating from Yale with a BA in 1973 and a PhD four years later, Bromwich became an instructor at Princeton University, where he was promoted to Mellon Professor of English before returning to Yale in 1988. In 1995 he was appointed as Bird White Housum Professor of English at Yale. In 2006 he became a Sterling Professor.

Bromwich is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published widely on romantic criticism and poetry and on eighteenth-century politics and moral philosophy. His book *Politics by Other Means* (Yale University Press, 1992) concerns the role of critical thinking and tradition in higher education and defends the practice of liberal education against political encroachments from both the Left and the Right.

His essays and reviews have appeared in the *New Republic*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *London Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and many other US and British journals. He is a frequent contributor of political blog posts on the *Huffington Post*. Bromwich's *Skeptical Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) was awarded the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay in 2002.



## Vincent Kling

Vincent Kling studied English, German, and comparative literature at La Salle College, Georg-August-Universität (Göttingen, Germany), University of Pennsylvania, and Temple University. His dissertation is titled "The Artist as Austrian: Social Principle in Some Early Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal." He served as a Fulbright scholar twice, once after his undergraduate years (with a project on Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*), and later as a visiting professor at the University of Vienna. He has been awarded research fellowships by the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana (the Everett Helm Fellowship) to study literary translation and by the Beinecke Library of Yale University (the Hermann Broch Fellowship) for research on Broch's novel *The Death of Virgil* (Pantheon Books, Inc., 1945). He participated in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute on "The People of Vienna in an Age of Turmoil, 1848–1955." Most recently, Dr. Kling was awarded the 2013 Schlegel-Tieck Prize awarded by the Goethe Institut of London, England, for best translation of a literary work from German.



Dr. Kling has published scholarly articles on literary translation; detective fiction; the "Robin Hood of Vienna," Johann Breitwieser; film, with especial focus on those of Rainer Werner Fassbinder; Isabel Allende; Anthony Hecht as translator; Aglaja Veteranyi; and W. G. Sebald. His emphasis on Austrian literature has led him to publish on Heimito von Doderer, Heimrad Bäcker, Lilian Faschinger, Andreas Pittler, Ödön von Horváth, Gert Jonke, and Gerhard Fritsch.

Dr. Kling has translated fiction, poetry, and critical writings by Doderer, Bäcker, Pittler, Jonke, and Fritsch. He was awarded the Schlegel-Tieck Prize for his translation of the Swiss novel *Why the Child Is Cooking in the Polenta* by Veteranyi (Dalkey Archive Press, 2012). Currently, he is working on a translation for the *New York Review of Books* of Doderer's monumental novel *Die Strudlhofstiege oder Melzer und die Tiefe der Jahre* (Biederstein, 1951) and is compiling a compendium volume of writings by Heimito von Doderer in English translation.



Diana Senechal's book, *Republic of Noise: The Loss of Solitude in Schools and Culture* (Rowman & Littlefield Education), was released in January 2012; a paperback edition appeared in March 2014. In this book, Senechal criticizes the emphasis, in our schools and beyond, on group work, rapid activity, and instant results. Arguing that "the chatter of the present, about the present, cannot always grasp the present," Senechal examines the role of solitude in public life, creative work, and the life of the mind. The book calls not for drastic changes but for subtle shifts—an honoring of the things of solitude, such as literature, science, art, friendship, and matters of conscience.

## Diana Senechal

She taught and advised in New York City public schools from 2005 to 2009 and from 2011 onward. In her first year of public school teaching, she directed her students, all English-language learners, in a production of *The Wizard of Oz*, which Michael Winerip describes in "Courage? Follow the Yellow Brick Road" (*New York Times*, June 14, 2006). She currently teaches philosophy and serves as philosophy coordinator at Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science, & Engineering. In February 2014, her students released a philosophy journal, *CONTRARIWISE*.

Senechal is the 2011 winner of the Hiett Prize in the Humanities, awarded by the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture. She holds a PhD in Slavic languages and literatures from Yale; she wrote her dissertation on Nikolai Gogol. Her translations of the Lithuanian poetry of Tomas Venclova have appeared in two books, *Winter Dialogue* (Northwestern University Press, 1997) and *The Junction* (Bloodaxe Books Ltd., 2008). She read her translations at the International Czeslaw Milosz Festival in 1998.

Her education writing has appeared in *Room for Debate* (*New York Times*), *Education Week*, the *New Republic*, *Double X*, *American Educator*, *Educational Leadership*, and several leading education blogs, including *GothamSchools*, *Answer Sheet* (*Washington Post*), *Joanne Jacobs*, *The Core Knowledge Blog*, and *The Cronk of Higher Education*. Her article about education philosopher Michael John Demiashkevich was published in *American Educational History Journal* 37, no 1 (2010), and was selected as *AEHJ*'s Article of the Year.

Senechal has contributed to several education projects. She helped with the editing and documentation of Diane Ravitch's most recent book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (Basic Books, 2010). In December 2009, she served on the English Language Arts Work Team for the Common Core State Standards Initiative; in 2010, she was project writer and curriculum drafter for the Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project. In addition, she contributed to the Thomas B. Fordham Institute's report *The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010*.

Senechal has spoken on numerous radio programs and at venues around the US. In 2012, she delivered the principal address at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music; in 2013, she was a keynote speaker and panelist at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. In April 2014, she took part in a discussion of solitude on BBC World Service's program *The Forum*.



She is a fellow of the Dallas Institute and a member of PEN, the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers, the Philosophy Teaching and Learning Organization, and the American Philosophical Association. Since July 2011, she has taught on the faculty of the Dallas Institute's Sue Rose Summer Institute for Teachers.

Her interests have allowed her to pursue a rich variety of occupations. In San Francisco, she worked as an editor, counselor, and computer programmer; in her own time, she played music and took courses in animation, screenwriting, and film acting. In Tucson and New York City, she worked as an editor and took classes in acting and improvisational theater before teaching. She founded a literary journal, *Sí Señor*, which she edited and ran for five years. She plays cello; writes poems, stories, and songs; and enjoys memorizing poetry in various languages.



## PROFILE: THE INCOMING VICE PRESIDENT

Before her retirement, Marjorie Perloff was Sadie D. Patek Professor of Humanities at Stanford University. She is also Florence Scott Professor Emerita of English at the University of Southern California. She teaches courses and writes on twentieth—and now twenty-first—century poetry and poetics from both Anglo-American and comparatist perspectives, as well as on intermedia and the visual arts.

### Marjorie Perloff

Her first three books deal with individual poets—William Butler Yeats, Robert Lowell, and Frank O'Hara; she then published *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Northwestern University Press, 1981), a book that has gone through a number of editions, and which led to her extensive exploration of avant-garde art movements in *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (University of Chicago Press, 1986; 1994). She continued to examine these topics in subsequent books—thirteen in all—the most recent of which is *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), which appeared in Portuguese translation in 2013.

Her book *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) has been used in classrooms studying the “new” digital poetics; *21st Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (Blackwell, 2002) is a manifesto of “modernist survival.” *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) brought philosophy into the mix; it has recently been translated into Portuguese, Spanish, and Slovenian, and it will be translated into French for publication in 2014. Perloff also published a cultural memoir, *The Vienna Paradox* (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2004), which recently appeared in German translation in Vienna, and which will soon be published in Brazil. *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound*, coedited with Craig Dworkin, was published by Chicago University Press in 2009. A collection of interviews, *Poetics in a New Key*, will be published by the University of Chicago in the fall of 2014. Perloff is currently under contract with Chicago for a book called *The Other Austrians*, a study of the still largely misunderstood contribution of the late Hapsburg Empire to modernist literature. In this study, Perloff returns to her Viennese roots but also engages what is for her a new area—modernist fiction, theatre, and memoir.



Marjorie Perloff has been a frequent reviewer for periodicals such as the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Washington Post*, as well as for many major scholarly journals. She has lectured at most major universities in the US, and at European, Asian, and Latin American universities and festivals. In 2009, she was the Weidenfeld Chair in Comparative European Literature at Oxford University. Perloff has held Guggenheim, NEH, and Huntington Fellowships; she served on the Advisory Board of the Stanford Humanities Center, and she was President of the Modern Language Association in 2006. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

Recently, she was named Honorary Foreign Professor at the Beijing Modern Languages University. She received an honorary degree, Doctor of Letters, from Bard College in May 2008. In 2012, the Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania honored her with a special symposium; a varied set of the individual contributions to that symposium appeared in the online journal *Jacket2*.

The staging of Caesar's assassination in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* conjures up more than future performances of the bloody murder. For if the assassination of Caesar and its aftermath are suitable for dramatic performance—"Stoop then, and wash. How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over / In [states] unborn and accents yet unknown! (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.111–13)<sup>1</sup>—then Caesar's spirit is also suitable for allegory, as both a mode of composition and interpretation. Following Antony's invocation of "Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge" (3.1.270), standard school interpretations usually regard Caesar's surviving spirit as a revenging agent. This interpretation is supported by hints in Cassius's language and Brutus's reaction to the specter that appears to him at

Philippi. But more sophisticated critics have long felt that there is more to this play than meets the ear.

## STAGING THE SPIRIT, BEARING A CORPSE, IN SHAKESPEARE'S *JULIUS* *CAESAR*

BY CHARLES ROSS

Recent work by Harold Fisch, David Daniell, Steve Sohmer, and Maurice Hunt supports the argument that Shakespeare so surrounds Caesar with the possibilities of interpretation—substitutions, typologies, and oblique references—that we can be confident that audiences would wonder what *enigma* or *hyponoias* ("under-meanings") are present.<sup>2</sup> Fisch, for example, argues

that the play, with its intermittent biblical language and scattered Christian echoes, is about the relationship of tragedy to sacrifice: "Shakespeare's purpose...is not so much to reconstruct the circumstances of Caesar's death as to display for our critical judgment the phenomenological core of ancient tragedy. ...What we have, in short, when the play is sensitively produced, is a Pagan text and a biblical-Christian subtext."<sup>3</sup> But I will argue that the play stages not just a sacrifice, as Fisch would have it, but the movement of a spirit not dissimilar to the mysterious third element of the Christian Trinity.<sup>4</sup>

Caesar himself is not a lamb, even if he wants to be a god. And Caesar's spirit is not limited to vengeance; it is also a great enabler. Like the spirit that leaves Saul for David in 1 Samuel 16:14, Caesar's spirit brings special grace to whomever it enters—first Antony, until his mistreatment of Lepidus, and then Octavius, whose anointing is confirmed by his special regard for the dead body of Brutus at the end of the play. The representation by Shakespeare of an enigmatic, religious shadow, which enters and then abandons Anthony before lodging in the otherwise cold

1 All quotations are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974). Subsequent citations to Shakespeare's works are provided parenthetically in the text. References are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

2 See Harold Fisch, *The Biblical Presence in Shakespeare, Milton, and Blake* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Daniell, ed., introduction to *The Arden Shakespeare: Julius Caesar* (1998; rpt., London: Thomson Learning, 2006); Steven Sohmer, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: The Opening of the Globe Theater 1599* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); and Maurice Hunt, "Cobbling Souls in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," in Beatrice Batson, ed., *Shakespeare's Christianity: The Protestant and Catholic Poetics of "Julius Caesar," "Macbeth," and "Hamlet"* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 111–129. For "under-meanings" in Renaissance allegory, see Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2 (italics in original).

3 Fisch, *Biblical Presence*, 8, 17.

4 This essay follows up religious hints in the play, but I hope it will be seen as not about Christianity in any simple sense but rather as the kind of essay on the cultural construction of meaning that Alan Sinfield calls for in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). In *Faith in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Richard McCoy, noting a return to religion in recent Shakespearean scholarship, takes a New Historicist position, claiming that Shakespeare drew on a faith "distinct from religious faith" (3), but he does not include *Julius Caesar* in his analysis.

and calculating heart of Octavius, is an eminent example of the gap between human life (and death) and a transcendent ideal that Walter Benjamin found in the German *Trauerspiel*, or mourning play.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare knew that Octavius, renaming himself Augustus, presided over the *Pax Romana*, or “universal peace,” under which Christ was born, and therefore

CAESAR’S SPIRIT, IT TURNS  
OUT, IS AN INSTIGATING  
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METAPHOR FOR REVENGE

allowed his play about the death of Brutus and the rise of Octavius to be haunted by Caesar’s spirit and its biblical proxies.<sup>6</sup>

Many commentators have noticed that Caesar’s aspiring to divinity recalls the mystery of Christ’s incarnation. Therefore, I will start with Shakespeare’s staging of Caesar’s assassination before examining how Shakespeare arranges the translation to Octavius of whatever spirit might have been in Caesar. Caesar’s spirit, it turns out, is an instigating agent, not merely a metaphor for revenge. It is also mysterious, like the operation of the Holy Spirit in Christianity, and therefore accounts for the penumbra of religiosity and the sense of allegory most people discern in the play, which was at one time the drama of choice for American high school students.

Shakespeare guides his audience to connect Caesar’s assassination with the crucifixion by using intermittent biblical language and scattered Christian echoes, and by the way

5 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: Verso Books, 1977).

6 Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, where Octavius Caesar claims, “The time of universal peace is near” (4.6.4), when he believes he has overcome Antony; this may suggest the Roman peace that prevailed at the birth of Christ.

he stages the famous scene in the Senate house. As critics have noticed, both characters have the initials J. C.,<sup>7</sup> and Shakespeare altered his sources to give Caesar thirty-three wounds, the number of years Jesus lived and a reference to the Christian Trinity.<sup>8</sup> Sohmer hesitates to accept that Shakespeare drew a parallel between Caesar and Jesus Christ, but is willing to accept that Shakespeare wrote parodies of—or, better, commentaries on scripture.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is correct to say that Caesar’s assassination parodies, or parallels, the Crucifixion (as does the way Margaret orders York’s arms outstretched when she has him killed in act 1, scene 3 of *Henry VI*, part 3).<sup>10</sup>

The main connection—and, at the same time, difference—between Christ and Caesar is Caesar’s assumption of deity, which drives his colleagues of the senatorial rank to murder him. Caesar is a man trying to be a god. “And this man,” Cassius tells Brutus,

Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature, and must bend  
his body  
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.  
(1.2.116–18)

How can Caesar be a god, argues Cassius, if Cassius can swim better, or if Caesar cried like a woman when he fell sick in Spain? Shakespeare’s Caesar is mortal and has infirmities. Indeed, when we first see Caesar, he is superstitious and deaf in one ear (a sign that he cannot hear how his own pompousness affects the conspirators), and he has the falling sickness—or seems to. (Shakespeare leaves open many possibilities, such as that

7 Sohmer, *Shakespeare’s Mystery Play*, 130.

8 Hunt, “Cobbling Souls in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*,” 112.

9 Sohmer, *Shakespeare’s Mystery Play*, 28. Also, a few pages later, where Sohmer argues that Shakespeare’s play is a “commentary” on John 2 (the text set for the Ides of March in the Protestant calendar), not a mining of it. Such an identification is a “textual marker,” an identification that is not metaphorical but “anamnetic” (31), by which (I take it) he means “reminiscent.”

10 Sohmer, *Shakespeare’s Mystery Play*, 29.

Caesar fakes his fainting—perhaps like Lady Macbeth—when he realizes he has asked too much of the people to have them approve of his accepting a crown from Antony.) To Cassius, Caesar is the pattern of a weak man, and his falling sickness is a metaphor for the Romans, who allow Caesar to behave like a god: “No, Caesar hath it not; but you, and I, / And honest Casca, we have the falling sickness” (1.2.255–56). Yet Cassius’s fear of a fall is enough to establish the parallel between Caesar’s assassination (and its aftermath) and the common understanding that the Crucifixion occurred to repair the Fall of Adam.



More importantly, just as Christ had to die as a man to live as God, it may well be that Antony, who is not present at the actual assassination, is right in claiming that Caesar gives up when he sees Brutus among his attackers: “*Et tu, Brute?*—Then fall Caesar!” (3.1.77). This final utterance is an odd echo of his earlier fall in front of the crowd. Both falls are part of a pattern of stagings in the play, from what Maurice Hunt calls the little offstage “playlet,” in which Caesar reluctantly refuses the crown offered by Antony, to Antony’s famous funeral speech.<sup>11</sup> Caesar’s surrender in the face of what Antony considers betrayal—“This was the most unkindest cut of all” (3.2.183)—allows for the possibility that Caesar dies in distress like Christ forsaken on the cross:

For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude...  
Quite vanquish’d him. Then burst his mighty heart.  
(3.2.184–86)

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<sup>11</sup> Hunt, “Cobbling Souls in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*,” notes “the histrionic nature of Caesar’s character in Shakespeare’s play” (154n16), citing J. L. Simmons, “Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*: The Roman Actor and the Man,” *Tulane Studies in English* 16 (1968): 1–28, which in turn says that Caesar is “of all the Roman actors...by far the greatest” (Simmons, 7). See also John Drakakis, “‘Fashion it Thus’: *Julius Caesar* and the Politics of Theatrical Representation,” *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1992): 65–73; and Sinfield’s observation that Caesar “is the arch performer in the theater of power” (*Faultlines: Cultural Materialism*, 15).



According to Antony, Caesar may have died, but his spirit lived on to stir Rome to revenge. He is partly correct.

Shakespeare's enactment of Caesar's ghost relies in part on a demonic parody of the Holy Spirit, similar to Milton's later inversion of the Trinity in the figures of Satan, Sin, and Death.<sup>12</sup> We may take Antony's words when he conjures Caesar's revenging spirit as a commentary on or reminiscence of the mysterious third element of the Trinity. Shakespeare often uses indirect, symbolic language in connection with Christianity. Henry IV drifts into a metonymy when meditating on the one whose "blessed feet" walked those "holy fields" (*Henry IV*, part 1, 1.1.24–25); his father, John of Gaunt, uses a form of periphrasis as he lies dying in despair ("the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son" [*Richard II* 2.1.56]). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, a soldier interprets music in the air as a sign that the god Hercules is abandoning Antony, but the scene also represents the coming of a new era, when Christ will be born in the proximate Holy Land. Shakespeare's age knew the importance of Roman power in the establishment of the Christian church.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, this musical harmony reflects Octavius's triumph over his rival.

In *Julius Caesar*, a similar penumbral connection between Christ and Caesar derives not from the actual assassination of Caesar, the coincidence of the initials J. C., or the thirty-three stab wounds (according to Octavius

[5.1.53])—it derives from the whole atmosphere of the play. Hunt, for example, argues that puns on "all"/"awl" and "sole"/"soul" in the opening scene suggest that the play is about more than Roman politics: He believes that Cassius and Brutus renew their souls, which represent their "suffering faculty," when they "cobble a soulful brotherhood" under the influence of Caesar's spirit after they argue in camp at Philippi.<sup>14</sup> The editor of the Oxford edition remarks that the play is not dogmatic, yet even in Plutarch and Appian, Caesar's murder is an attack on religion and attended by "divine vengeance."<sup>15</sup> The Arden editor believes that *Julius Caesar* shows the "patterns" of the older mystery plays: "the strong central narrative with a great sacrificial act at its heart is watched and shared by tradesmen and common people."<sup>16</sup> Daniell argues further that even the geography of the Caesar story touches the birth of Christianity, for the battle of Philippi, to which the play "is directed[,] was the place, in Macedonia, of the first Christian church in Europe—to which Paul was especially called in about AD 52 from Troas, not far from Sardis, the location of the Quarrel scene"; for Daniell, *Julius Caesar* has "a sense of the scale of human experience in the vastness of the cosmos only found" in the Bible.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, indications of time often link the play to scripture. The church reading prescribed for the Ides of March (which in England fell at March 25) was John 2, where Jesus

12 Milton's demonic Trinity is a commonplace of criticism. Similar demonic parodies were common in Renaissance poetry. See, for example, Michael Murrin's discussion of Falerina's false garden of Eden in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* in *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Decline* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 53–85.

13 Hunt notes that the *Pax Romana* established the "universal peace cited in Isaiah 39:8ff. as requisite for the Messiah's birth," citing Mark Rose ("Conjuring Caesar: Ceremony, History, and Authority in 1599," *English Literary Renaissance* 19, no. 3 [December 1989]: 291–304), and that the association of Caesar and Christ is not ironic because of this new inauguration ("Cobbling Souls," 125, 157n42).

14 Hunt, "Cobbling Souls," 124. Hunt's essay argues that "Caesar's mobilizing spirit" forges a bond of friendship (or cobbling of souls, based on the language of the opening scene) between Cassius and Brutus despite their differences. My argument is somewhat similar, but I use the structure of individual scenes to argue that the beneficiary of spirit is Octavius at the expense of Antony. Moreover, I would not go as far as Hunt and claim that Shakespeare believed ideas as common as friendship or mercy to be exclusively Christian.

15 *The Oxford Shakespeare: Julius Caesar*, ed. Arthur Humphreys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 23.

16 Daniell, *Arden Shakespeare*, 5.

17 Daniell, *Arden Shakespeare*, 95, 6.

prophesies that he will raise up his temple on the third day. Thus, Sohmer argues that, although the historical time of events in the play is several years, Caesar's ghost appears to Brutus at Philippi on the third day of "dramatic time."<sup>18</sup>

## THE BENEFICIARY OF SPIRIT IS OCTAVIUS AT THE EXPENSE OF ANTONY

Shakespeare's staging of Caesar's spirit depends on this religious atmosphere. Even for believers, the meaning—if not the fact—of the crucifixion of Jesus is a religious mystery and the subject of extensive commentary. Is the deed a sacrifice? An atonement? A ransom?<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Caesar's motives in the play are ambiguous, as they were throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and the meaning of his death remains uncertain in the play. If Caesar is a good man, as he and Antony believe, then his death is ceremonial. He is sacrificed for the greater good of the world, and his friend Brutus is a Judas who betrays him. But if Caesar is a bad man, a false god enigmatically imitating Christ, then his assassination inverts the crucifixion, and Brutus, the seemingly Judas figure, ultimately does the right thing.

Whether Brutus is right or wrong to assassinate Caesar, his deeds are, for the most part, typical of a tragic hero—not so much born of character flaws, but a series of well-intentioned yet ultimately mistaken actions.<sup>20</sup> One of those

mistakes is that at first Brutus is less concerned with Caesar's godlike status than Cassius is. Cassius tells Brutus he would rather kill himself than see Caesar crowned the next day because his own "spirit" (1.3.95) is so strong it will have to leave his body. By contrast, Brutus is concerned that Caesar would become a crowned king with nothing to check his ambition:

Crown him that,  
And then I grant we put a sting in him  
That at his will he may do danger with.  
(2.1.15–17)

But Brutus hears Cassius and eventually adopts Cassius's interpretation.

Images the mind makes find a way out, and characters pay close attention to each other's language. Cassius's and Brutus's suicidal thoughts prefigure their actual suicides in the play. Cassius's words set up Brutus's interpretation of Caesar's ghost as a cause of their deaths. Cassius repeats the idea that Caesar will prey on the weak ("He were no lion, were not Romans hinds," [1.3.106]), just as he had successfully argued earlier to Brutus that Caesar, like a colossus, makes everyone look small (1.2.135–61). Brutus must take Cassius's language of the spirit to heart because there is no evidence—except his own imagination—that the spirit he sees at Philippi is the ghost of Caesar coming to seek revenge on his murderer. The "Ghost of Caesar" (so-named in the original stage directions) claims to be Brutus's "evil spirit" (4.3.282), and Brutus figures this means he will see him again at Philippi and lose there. But this may well be one of Brutus's many mistakes in the play, such as arguing against having the conspirators take an oath, letting Antony live, giving Antony the last word in the Forum, and marching to Philippi despite Cassius's objections. He is a

<sup>18</sup> Sohmer, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play*, 144.

<sup>19</sup> The closest Shakespeare comes to articulating a theory of the crucifixion occurs when Warwick conjures by the "dread King that took our state upon him" a form of atonement "To free us from his father's wrathful curse" (*Henry VI*, part 2, 3.2.154, 155).

<sup>20</sup> See D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; rpt. with corrections, 1983), on the concept of *harmartia* in notes to *Poetics* §53a8–10: "This flaw or frailty is a popular starting-point for the discussion not only of Greek plays. But though ἀμαρτία can mean many things, there are few, if any, passages where 'flaw' is a justifiable rendering...and there can be little doubt

that what A. recommends is a character neither very good nor very bad who makes a mistake; the mistake may, or may not, be reprehensible" (143).

man who has trouble telling the time, and he drinks wine when he is depressed over Portia's death, even when he needs to be sharp for battle. It is possible that this phantom is Brutus's own evil spirit (a form of bad conscience, or evil genius), and Brutus's mistake is interpreting it as Caesar's revenging spirit.

The various meanings of the word *spirit* in the play include the irrationality of the civil war that followed Caesar's assassination, the spirit of revenge that drove Antony and haunted Brutus, and the transfer of power or spirit from Antony to Octavian. All of these instances center on Antony. Sohmer calls Antony the "fulcrum" of the play because he enters to meet Caesar's killers exactly halfway through the production, and even Brutus greets him with "reverence" (3.1.176), a strong word.<sup>21</sup> In fact, we can go further than this and say that even though the surface plot centers on the assassination of Caesar, the scenic structure of the play—the actual shape of the staging—suggests that the true moral action of the scene is Antony's reaction to the event, not the event itself. Caesar's assassination has been previously plotted before act 3, scene 1. There it is only carried out.<sup>22</sup> The weighing and deciding, the thinking about it, takes place earlier. By contrast, Antony absorbs what happens during the scene; then he acts based on what he believes is right or wrong for him to do. He is the final moral actor in the scene, and what he does at the very end is hold back Octavius's man to witness his funeral speech:

Yet stay awhile,  
Thou shalt not back till I have borne this  
corse  
Into the market-place....  
(3.1.290–92)

21 Sohmer, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play*, 39. He notes that Antony appears at TLN 1397.

22 The Folio divides the play into five acts, without further dividing these into scenes, yet later editors presume their existence—to my mind, correctly.

The context of the assassination scene, taken as a whole, suggests that Antony reacts to Brutus's incompetent failure to inform him at once of his reasons for the assassination (3.1.182, 222). He hears Brutus try (but fail) to recruit him (3.1.175). He must realize Brutus also fails to understand the ironic, threatening way that Antony shakes bloody hands with the conspirators (3.1.184). He probably realizes that Brutus fails to hear the threat in Antony's calling him a "brave hart," where Brutus seems to hear "heart" and misses Antony's pun on a stricken deer, such as he intends to make Brutus. Having noted that Caesar's "spirit" is now looking down on them (3.1.195), Antony must thank heaven for Brutus's silly decision to let him speak second in the Forum, thus giving Antony the ability to rebut anything Brutus says.

Ultimately, Antony's reaction to all that he sees and hears is to form his own conspiracy. His action thus fits one of the most important patterns in the play, which starts with a conspiracy between Flavius and Murellus and grows in the first two acts to the larger conspiracy against Caesar on the part of Cassius, Brutus, and the others. We have seen Cassius recruiting Brutus. Now we see Antony trying to recruit Octavius, starting with his messenger.

The movement from the plot of act 3, scene 1 (the assassination) to the moral action of Antony (forming his own conspiracy) illustrates Shakespeare's theatricality and how he represents his characters' thoughts and the resulting actions based on those thoughts. Shakespeare is the thinking person's playwright, and for the thinking person studying the text under a reading lamp, trying to decipher what staging Shakespeare's text calls for, what counts most is the understanding of character, by which Aristotle meant action contingent on choice—the thing that is done after a character considers right and wrong in a given situation. This difference between mere events and

moral choice is what sets Shakespeare apart from other authors: his scenes invariably turn not on coincidence or plot itself but on a character's thoughtful reaction to events, and the plot that results is not a series of occurrences but a sequence of moral actions taken by individual characters weighing right and wrong.

We might consider this disparity to be Shakespeare's secular equivalent to the "crisis of representation" that Fredric Jameson found in medieval allegory.<sup>23</sup> Where Dante's solution is the straining of metaphors to represent theological truths that cannot be directly represented, Shakespeare creates scenes based on character's actions, and nowhere more so than in *Julius Caesar*, where the religiously inflected language suggests the kind of human action that presumably accompanied Christian mysteries. Thus, Antony doesn't simply form a conspiracy—he takes that action after telling us that what he does has been premised on his belief that Caesar's spirit is "ranging for revenge, / With Ate by his side come hot from hell" (3.1.270–71). His action expresses that spirit, even as his words reveal to us the moral character of his thought, for it is the nature of drama that thought should be articulated, hence Aristotle's emphasis on diction as one of the six key elements of a play.<sup>24</sup> Much is

at stake when Antony asks Octavius's messenger to stay until Antony can bear Caesar's body to the Forum.

It will turn out, at the end of the play, that Octavius treats Brutus's body even better than Antony treats Caesar's in act 3, scene 1, and certainly better than how Brutus treats the body of Cassius. Later in the play, we are given another hint that Brutus cannot abide the presence of the dead. In act 3, scene 1, Antony must notice that Brutus leaves Caesar's body behind ("Prepare the body then, and follow us" [3.1.253]), and Brutus's separation of himself from Caesar's corpse gives Antony a chance to meditate over it alone: "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, / That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!" (3.1.254–55).

Antony's decision to carry the corpse is not itself a moral action (a decision is not a moral action because it is not staged). The actual action, what we see staged, is his *ordering* the messenger to join him in bearing dead Caesar to the Forum. Thus, to describe what happens accurately, we must say that Antony internalizes Caesar's spirit by bearing his body—not by carrying it, which happens off-stage, but by enduring its presence.

Antony retains the power of Caesar's spirit only long enough to rise to the heights of his famous funeral oration in act 3, scene 2. By act 4, scene 1, he has lost that strength, and Octavius becomes the main actor. In the intervening funeral-speech scene, the gap between plot and moral action takes the form of the difference between Antony's great speech and what Antony actually does in the scene as Shakespeare constructed it. Of

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23 See Fredric Jameson, "The Medieval" in *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*, ed. Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

24 Aristotle's six parts of tragedy are plot (*mythos*), character (*ethos*), thought (*dianoia*), diction (*lexis*), melody (*melos*), and spectacle (*opsis*). See *Poetics*, chapter 6. It perhaps needs to be said that an Aristotelean analysis precludes the kind of "identifying with the characters in the way traditionally advised" that made Sinfield so troubled when he approached *Julius Caesar* as an adult (Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism*, 10). The group of professors at the University of Chicago (Ronald Crane, Richard McKeon, Elder Olson, Bernard Weinberg, Norman Maclean) who devoted themselves to the recovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* never published a complete methodology. But in their many essays, such as those collected in *Critics and Criticism: Essays in Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), they stressed that we know what characters think by what they say (diction, or *lexis*). They do things based on their thought (*dianoia*). And the things they do compose the plot (*mythos*). Because their criticism emphasizes plot—not the sequence of events, but the sequence of actions—they tend to focus on the shape of a poem or a unit of a literary work, such as a chapter or a scene in a play. From their practical readings, one can

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derive analytic rules for composing an action statement: 1) Only one character can perform the key action of the scene. 2) Decisions do not count. 3) Anything planned before the scene starts does not count. 4) The action is something the character *does* in thoughtful response to some cause or causes. 5) Talking (e.g., pleading, confessing) to the audience can be an action. How these actions are staged, or whether these aspects of the texts are even included in production, naturally depends on how the play is interpreted.



course, Antony crushes Brutus with his irony (“Brutus is an honorable man” [3.2.87]), but surely he was confident he could do that before the scene started. What he did not know was that his speech would be so successful that Brutus and Cassius would flee, as he learns from Octavius’s servant, who leaves and then returns at the end of the scene: “I heard him [Octavius] say, Brutus and Cassius / Are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome” (3.2.268–69). In essence, Antony has exorcized Rome, driving out Brutus and Cassius, even as he ironically denies what he is doing:

But were I Brutus,  
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony  
Would ruffle up your spirits...  
(3.2.226–28)

Antony then interprets himself as a conjurer of spirits, and that he can conjure up and then exorcize a demon suggests the power of Caesar’s spirit, which possesses him. So possessed, Antony interprets the flight of Brutus and Cassius as their recognition that he has raised a spirit in Rome: “Belike they had some notice of the people, / How I had mov’d them” (3.2.270–71). The action is significant because such an interpretation not only fits that of an augur basing a prophecy on the flights of birds but also suits the atmosphere of religious mystery in the play.<sup>25</sup>



The counterstroke, Antony’s sudden loss of spirit, occurs according to classical dramatic theory, right at the beginning of act 4. Time has elapsed, and Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus are triumviri, in the midst of proscribing men. Antony still takes the lead, or seems to: “These many then, shall die; their names are prick’d” (4.1.1). But as Lepidus leaves them, asking when they three shall meet again, Octavius rather dismissively answers, “Or here or at the Capitol” (4.1.11), perhaps to lure Antony into a trap, and Antony takes the bait. He badmouths their fel-

low as a “slight unmeritable man,” comparing Lepidus to an ass bearing a load too great for him, and for being so “barren-spirited” that his taste is out of “fashion” (4.1.12, 26, 36, 39).

<sup>25</sup> It is how Shakespeare stages the hidden truth of allegory. For truth as the meaning that allegory sometimes hides from the common people, see Michael Murrin, *The Veil of Allegory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

By conspiring against Lepidus, Antony gives away his honor, and Octavius registers that fault, always indirectly:

ANTONY:

This is a slight unmeritable man,  
Meet to be sent on errands; is it fit,  
The threefold world divided, he should  
stand  
One of the three to share it?

OCTAVIUS:

So you thought him.

(4.1.12–15)

Antony's descent continues as, after further comparing Lepidus to his horse, Antony suggests that he and Octavius form an alliance (he is like Cassius in this, a bad sign for him) and calls for a council where covert matters can be disclosed. The moral momentum shifts to Octavius. Having heard Antony mention covert matters, Octavius tests Antony by saying that some men smile when they mean mischief—"and some that smile have in their hearts, I fear, / Millions of mischiefs" (4.1.50–51). But Antony does not seem to register that Octavius might be one of those men with mischief in his heart. We cannot say that Octavius has a definite plan to accept the "alliance" and then remove Antony. But he must notice that Antony does not register the double sense of his words, nor does Antony accuse Octavius of hypocrisy—what Octavius has been subtly accusing Antony of all through the scene. Lies and brutality are not enough to remove Caesar's spirit from Antony. It needs a new home. Octavius may—or may not—be more brutal and a better liar or deceiver than Antony (stage and film productions that make Octavius cold and calculating have it right), but he is a better man, more powerful, the designated winner.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In the Marlon Brando film version (MGM, 1953), directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Brutus's body already lies in Octavius's tent

Act five continues the staging of Octavius's ascendance over Antony. It starts as the two argue over who will lead each side of the upcoming battle. Octavius insists on being on the right—which is symbolic even in Latin, where "sinister" means the left. Again, Antony misses the threat in Octavius's double sense that he "will do so"—will take the right, but will also "cross" him when necessary:

OCTAVIUS:

Upon the right hand I, keep thou the left.

ANTONY:

Why do you cross me in this exigent?

OCTAVIUS:

I do not cross you; but I will do so.

(5.1.18–20)

During the ensuing exchange of insults with Brutus and Cassius, Octavius fully replaces Antony as the agent in whom Caesar's vengeful spirit lies. It is he who now calls them "conspirators" and "traitors," as Antony had in the funeral scene, and he who promises that Caesar's "three and thirty wounds" will be "avenged," his use of the number suggesting that he knows more than he lets on and that Brutus is, as usual, blind to the truth (5.1.51, 55, 53).

"STAGING THE SPIRIT..."

*Continued on page 38*

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when he delivers the line "Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie," and the film reverses the order of the text, as Antony then gives his "noblest Roman of them all" speech. Douglass Watson, a soap-opera actor, is not a commanding presence as Octavius in the MGM production. Nor is Richard Chamberlain (better known for playing Dr. Kildare in a 1960s TV series) in the Charlton Heston version (Commonwealth United Entertainment, 1970), directed by Stuart Burge. He plays almost no role at the end, for the film cuts his offer to employ "All that serv'd Brutus" (5.5.60), which establishes Octavius's hegemony, as well as Octavius's final lines, and ends instead with Antony's "This was a man!" (5.5.75). Fortunately, a later generation has found much to like in Octavius's duplicitous personality, as is evinced by Herbert Wise's *BBC Television Shakespeare version* (1979), which may have influenced the equally compelling portrayal of Octavius in the HBO series *Rome*, which features the rise of Gaius Octavian as Augustus.

# THE USE OF CONTRAPASSO IN *THE INFERNO*

Dante Alighieri uses *contrapasso* in *The Inferno* to make a moral statement about particular sins and to reveal the justice, wisdom, and art of God. The use of *contrapasso*, in which a sinner's punishment in Hell reflects the crime committed while alive, is powerfully

revealed in the sixth *bolgia*, where the hypocrites are punished, in the eighth *bolgia*, where the false counselors are punished, and in the figure of Lucifer himself in the ninth and final circle of Hell, the realm of Judecca in Cocytus. Because hypocrites and false counselors perverted, respectively, God's gifts of virtue and speech, their torments are perverted forms of those gifts. The hypocrites' false appearance of virtue in real life masked an ugly and base interior. Their punishment, therefore, is to trudge endlessly while weighed down by a heavy-hooded cloak that is golden on the outside, but lead on the inside. The heaviness of the cloak keeps them weighed down towards darkness and away from the ethereal light of God. The false counselors distorted God's gifts of reason and the spoken word, and therefore their punishment is to be encased, unseen, in tormenting tongues of fire. Lucifer's physical appearance and his location in Hell reflect his *contrapasso*: he sought God's position and for that sin he is made the hideous ruler of the damned in Hell, in the cold, dark center of the earth instead of high above the universe in the light.

BY ALEXIS MANOS

Judges Comments: The judges found Alexis Manos's essay, "The Use of *Contrapasso* in *The Inferno*," to be commendable in a number of ways: the writer addressed a work of significant literary merit, focused on a significant aspect of that work, created a sound, clear, and not-overly-broad thesis, and marshaled details from the text to support that thesis. The essay was intelligent and imaginative, and attention had clearly been paid to organization and tone.

In life the hypocrites were outwardly beautiful yet inwardly hideous, and so in Dante's *Inferno* they are the same in death. Their punishment is to tread eternally under the weight of "dazzling, gilded cloaks" that were gold on the outside, "but inside they were lined with lead, so heavy."<sup>1</sup> The hooded cloaks the hypocrites wear resemble the cloaks of pious monks, and the radiance of their cloaks implies divinity because gold is rare and valuable and in its radiance represents God's gift of virtue. Lead, in contrast, is the cheapest and most common of metals and represents, by its malleable and common nature, sin itself, since sin is common to all mankind. In Dante's just universe, the cloak punishment reveals the very nature of the sin of hypocrisy. Dante also meant for this *contrapasso* to illustrate the art of God in its ingenious use of the Greek word for gold, *chryso*, which Dante erroneously believed to be the root of the word "hypocrite." The art of God is revealed here also in that these cloaks are like the whitewashed tombs to which Jesus compares the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:27, tombs that have a beautiful outward

This essay, which won the Meringoff High School Essay Award, is being published in its original form. The editor has made adjustments only to the formatting of citations to ensure they conform to the style guide developed for *Literary Matters*.

<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 23.64, 65. All citations and translations are from this edition. They are noted parenthetically in the text. Text references are to canto and line of this edition.

appearance, but inside are full of filth and the bones of dead men. Like the tombs to which Jesus referred, these hypocrites are attractive on the outside but filthy on the inside.

**DANTE ENHANCES THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF  
CONTRAPASSO THROUGH  
THE USE OF HISTORICAL  
AND MYTHOLOGICAL  
CHARACTERS**

Dante further emphasizes the *contrapasso* in the sixth *bolgia* through the use of historical figures. Among the hypocrites is Caiaphas, the high priest of the Jews who advocated the crucifixion of Christ under the pretext of acting for the good of the people, when truthfully he wanted Christ crucified in order to protect himself, since Jesus criticized him. Caiaphas claimed that Jesus ought to be crucified, that it was better that one man suffer and not the entire Hebrew nation. In Dante's Hell Caiaphas is "crucified with three stakes on the ground" and "all his body writhed, / and through his beard he heaved out great sighs of pain" (23.111–113). God's justice and wisdom are obvious in Caiaphas's *contrapasso*, which is threefold, as symbolized by the three stakes, and is also a perverted reference to the Holy Trinity against which Caiaphas sinned. Dante places Caiaphas among the hypocrites for pretending to act in a pious manner when in truth his actions were purely selfish, and for preaching virtue, which he failed to practice. Having called for Christ's crucifixion, Caiaphas is himself crucified, naked as Christ was. Having made one to suffer for the sins of many, he is made

to suffer for the sins of many by being trampled underfoot by the rest of the hypocrites, and made literally to bear the weight of the sins of all the others.

The eighth *bolgia* of the false counselors similarly reflects the use of *contrapasso* to reveal God's justice and wisdom. Humans, who are made in *imago dei*, "in the image of God," share characteristics with God. Reason and speech are such characteristics. False counselors, in misusing their power of reason and speech to influence others, abuse these gifts from God and pervert the *imago dei* within themselves. In the eighth *bolgia*,

each flame moves itself along the throat  
of the abyss, none showing what it steals  
but each one stealing nonetheless a  
sinner.

(28.40–42)

The *contrapasso* of the false counselors reflects the justice and wisdom of God because the inner motives and workings they hid in their lives result in their being hidden in flames in death. This *contrapasso* also shows the art of God in that it reflects a perversion of the Christian image of the Pentecostal flames of the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples of Christ and giving the disciples the ability to spread the word of God. Likewise, it also represents a perversion of God's speaking to Moses through the burning bush so that Moses may then speak to Pharaoh.

The example of Ulysses in the eighth *bolgia* accentuates the nature of the *contrapasso* just as the example of Caiaphas does in the sixth *bolgia*. This is evident when Virgil, who accompanies Dante, questions Ulysses through the flame and

while its tip was moving back and forth,  
as if it were the tongue itself that spoke,  
the flame took on a voice...

(28.88–90)



Because false counselors like Ulysses sinned by deception of the tongue, the flames are made into grotesque tongues. And because these deceivers had the ability to control their tongues in life but abused that power, they are punished by a loss of that control, and are instead controlled by tongues in death. Just as God gave the power of persuasive speech to Moses and the counsel of the Holy Spirit to the disciples to spread his word, so God, by making the flames themselves speak to Dante, is here giving Dante the power to spread His word as a caution against such sinning.

Finally, Lucifer's punishment serves as the ultimate *contrapasso*, a *contrapasso* which is in every way a[n] inversion of God in Heaven, whom Lucifer futilely attempted to unseat. Virgil introduces Lucifer with a perverted version of the opening lines of the hymn "*Vexilla regis prodeunt*" ("The Banners of the King Advance"), which is sung on Good Friday before the unveiling of the cross. Virgil instead says, "*Vexilla regis prodeunt Inferni*" (34.1; italics in original), which means "The banners of the King of Hell advance."

Lucifer, whose "windmill" wings create an image of their own perverted cross, is the king of Hell, and his wings serve as his banner. The culminating *contrapasso* is that Lucifer, who desired God's power, now rules over the damned in Hell, "the King of the vast kingdom of all grief" (34.28). Lucifer's very appearance reflects his crime. Dante observes that "once he was fair as now he's foul" (34.34) and Lucifer, once an angel, is now as hideous as his crime. He is described as having "a head—one head wearing three faces!" (34.38). Each face is a different color, the first red, the second yellow, and the third black. As such, Lucifer is a grotesque parallel to the Holy Trinity. His three faces are symbolic



of the three attributes of the Trinity: the red face, symbolic of hatred or envy, is the opposite of love; the yellow face, symbolic of impotence, is the opposite of divine omnipotence; and the black face, symbolic of ignorance, is the opposite of divine wisdom. Beneath each of Lucifer's faces,

two mighty wings stretched out,

.....  
not feathered wings but rather like the ones  
a bat would have. He flapped them constantly,  
keeping three winds continuously in motion

to lock Cocytus eternally in ice.  
(34.46, 49–52)

Lucifer's bat-like wings display another level of his *contrapasso*: as Lucifer yearned to rule high above in the light, like a bird, so he is forced to rule down below in the darkness, like a bat. As he beats his wings in an attempt to rise above his place, which was his original sin, he further ensnares himself in his punishment, creating icy winds that further freeze the ice of Cocytus, trapping him in a hell of his own making.

Hypocrites and false counselors pervert God's specific gifts; Lucifer is himself a perverted parallel of God. Dante cleverly uses *contrapasso* to highlight sins, especially the sins of hypocrisy and false counsel, and to reveal the justice, wisdom, and art of God in the form of the punishment meted out to sinners. Dante enhances the effectiveness of *contrapasso* through the use of historical and mythological characters such as Caiaphas and Ulysses, through Christian imagery like the Pentecostal flames, and through powerful language. And as sins in Hell are weighted by the degree to which they oppose love, it is fitting that Lucifer, who directly opposed God, who is love in its purest form, is the center of Hell, and thus the center of all sin. Dante's carefully structured universe defines the justice, wisdom, and art of God through all these physical manifestations of sin.

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"STAGING THE SPIRIT..."  
Continued from page 34

The focus of the scene is Brutus, but despite the general belief in his honor, he leads only by following. While arranging the procedure for the final battle in act 4, scene 2, Brutus does not assign himself a commanding role, and in act 5, scene 1, his action is the same: Brutus lets Cassius lead although Cassius has become a depressive, near-sighted man. In act 5, scene 2, Brutus is again mistaken, for he sends a messenger to Cassius for help, even though Brutus's own troops are winning and do not need assistance. As Caesar's assassin, Brutus never assumes Caesar's spirit—for better or for worse.

Error continues to hang over Caesar's former enemies. Cassius makes an equally serious mistake in act 5, scene 3, committing suicide when he wrongly believes that his messenger has been captured; in actuality, Titinius is celebrating Brutus's victory. Ordering Pindarus to kill him with the same sword he used against Caesar, Cassius echoes the belief of Antony and Brutus that Caesar's avenging spirit is at work: "Caesar, thou art reveng'd, / Even with the sword that kill'd thee" (5.3.45–46). But Cassius has been a skeptic with regard to spiritual matters all along,<sup>27</sup> and it is appropriate that when Titinius and Messala find him dead,

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27 To take one overlooked example, Cassius convinces Casca that the prodigies described at the beginning of act 1, scene 3, mean something is going to happen. He says,

a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol.  
(1.3.72–75)

Casca, who seems dull—or is hiding his wit—makes the point that the man is Caesar: "'Tis Caesar that you mean; is it not, Cassius?" (1.3.79). Now the problem is that Cassius has not heard Casca mention a lion, so possibly there was one in the Capitol, or at least a roaring, or perhaps people had been spreading such a rumor. Suddenly the spooky, shadowy Christian aspect of Caesar's spirit enters in the play—unless, earlier, Caesar's very odd way of speaking in the third person is meant to imitate the cryptic way Jesus often spoke.

they moralize the spectacle of his body with a little allegory about the birth of error:

O hateful error, melancholy's child,  
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts  
of men  
The things that are not? ...  
(5.3.67–69)

Their point is that lean and hungry Cassius could not abide happiness, but their language recalls Christianity's claim to correct the errors of the pagan gods and false churches.<sup>28</sup>

In religion, uncertainty raises the issue of faith for those who can only seek through a glass darkly.<sup>29</sup> When Brutus enters the scene looking for Cassius's body ("Where, where, Messala, doth his body lie?" [5.3.91]), his interpretation may just as easily describe what is not as what really is. He independently blames Cassius's death on Caesar's powerful spirit:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our  
swords  
In our own proper entrails.  
(5.3.94–96)

Brutus's interpretation is uncertain; it is only his opinion, and he is wrong throughout the play. His uncertainty fits a pattern that includes the nature of Caesar's motives, which Cassius and Brutus first argue over; the meaning of Caesar's dream, which Calphurnia interprets one way and Decius Brutus another way ("This dream is all amiss interpreted" [2.2.83]); and the cause of Brutus's and Cassius's flights from Rome, which Antony assigns meaning to on his own.

28 As in Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," where during the "universal peace" (line 52), "The oracles are dumb... Apollo from his shrine / Can no more divine" (173, 176–77). Quoted from John Carey, ed., *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems* (London: Longman, 1968), 109.

29 "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12, from the revised King James Version of the Holy Bible [New York: American Bible Society, n.d.]).

Though the issue of how Brutus treats the dead body of Cassius is often overlooked, when it is incorporated into an analysis of the final three scenes, we see that the true animating spirit—whether Caesar's or something higher—is concerned with leadership, not revenge.

### FASHIONED AS DRAMA NOT THEOLOGY, SHAKESPEARE'S SCENES SUGGEST THE IMPORTANCE OF OCTAVIUS'S FINAL ACTION OF PIETY

Oddly buoyed by his belief that he understands the workings of Caesar's spirit, Brutus returns to fight the second battle at Philippi. Once again, he does not lead but follows into battle, sending Labeo and Flavius ahead of him (5.3.108). It is significant that he does so after first refusing to have Cassius's funeral in his camp. He says that he wants time for proper mourning, but he also does not want to upset himself:

Come therefore, and to [Thasos] send  
his body;  
His funerals shall not be in our camp,  
Lest it discomfort us....  
(5.3.104–6)

Earlier, he leaves Caesar's body in the Senate house for Antony to address alone, and then later leaves it in Rome when he flees, even as Antony declaims over it. Yet here he refuses to be upset by a funeral in his camp.

Brutus's inability to care for the dead illustrates a lack of leadership that contrasts with how Octavius takes care of Brutus's body at the end of the play. The closing scene—after Brutus finally finds someone to assist in his suicide, and Antony, now a changed and lesser man, praises Brutus as the noblest Roman





of them all—ends with Octavius ordering Brutus’s body into his tent: “Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie, / Most like a soldier, ordered honorably” (5.5.78–79). Coldhearted and mechanical he may be, but he knows how to provide a proper ceremony for the dead, one of the sacramental functions of religion.

Octavius’s ceremonial gesture, precisely because it contrasts with the behavior of the otherwise noble Brutus, suggests a new set of values coming into being in the person of Octavius. The editor of the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the play thinks that both Antony and Octavius “honour their dead antagonist” and exhibit “heartfelt nobility” that is missing in Plutarch’s accounts.<sup>30</sup> Directors, producers, and critics praise Brutus’s honor as “the characteristic note of the Roman.”<sup>31</sup> But Samuel Johnson was not wrong to prefer the quarrels among the characters, because it made the Romans men. The

play is not about honor so much as it is about the waning importance of “early-republican values,”<sup>32</sup> which Brutus represents and Antony strangely extols at the end of the play in a way that separates him from Octavius, as he seems to echo his ironic praise of Brutus in his funeral speech when he suddenly proclaims, “This was the noblest Roman of them all” (5.5.68).

The penultimate scene prepares us for the elevation of Octavius. By granting Lucilius his life as a reward for his valor, Antony tries to inherit the nobility that has been associated with Brutus throughout the play, despite his errors. But even nobility is not enough to overcome Augustus Caesar, whose power is now set in motion toward the height it attains in *Antony and Cleopatra*. There a soothsayer tells Antony that Caesar’s fortunes will rise higher than Antony’s: “Thy lustre thickens / When he shines by” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.3.28–29). Later, a music in the air tells

30 Humphreys, *Oxford Shakespeare*, 23–24.

31 Coppélia Kahn, “‘Passions of Some Difference’: Friendship and Emulation in *Julius Caesar*,” in *“Julius Caesar”: New Critical Essays*, ed. Horst Zander (New York: Routledge, 2005), 281.

32 Humphreys, *Oxford Shakespeare*, 32.



Antony's soldiers that "the god Hercules, whom Antony lov'd, / Now leaves him," their leader (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.3.16–17). Thus, Antony's sudden praise of Brutus at the end of the play seems to arise less from the heart than from a sense that he, Antony, cannot match Caesar, for whom nobility might not even be the true virtue.<sup>33</sup>

The exact nature of Octavius's greatness cannot be represented, but Shakespeare gives us an allegorical idea of its presence by the resonance of what Octavius does when he accepts responsibility for the body of Brutus: "Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie" (5.5.78).

We may conclude that Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* stages the transfer of power to Octavius through the structure of its scenes and the main actions of its characters those scenes define. Nothing in the play directly says transference depends on a movement of grace. The Holy Spirit has always been difficult to define. C. S. Lewis, following Augustine's *De civitate dei*, compares it to the "spirit" that animates a "family, or club, or trade union."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the "time of universal peace" fits that definition, but one might also find echoes between the uses of the word "spirit" in *Julius Caesar* and such traditional deeds of the Holy Spirit as inspiring the apostles in Acts, apportioning gifts, creating fellowship, teaching you what you ought to say, and brooding over the deep. Fashioned as drama not theology, Shakespeare's scenes suggest the importance of Octavius's final action of piety—heartfelt or false hardly matters, and that respect for the dead can become a commentary on any number of similar issues in Christian thought.

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33 Octavius himself may not be forthrightly agreeing with Antony's praise of Brutus when he says, "According to his virtue let us use him" (5.5.76).

34 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952; New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 175. For Lewis's debt to Augustine in his understanding of the Holy Ghost, see Charles Ross, "C. S. Lewis, Augustine, and the Rhythm of the Trinity," *Journal of Inklings Studies: Theology, Philosophy, Literature* 2, no. 1 (April 2012): 3–22.

In conclusion, the language of *Julius Caesar* suggests many religious overtones and echoes of the mystery plays, while the characters themselves play out the differences between Brutus's treatment of Caesar's body and his treatment of Cassius's, and Octavius's treatment of Brutus's body.<sup>35</sup> The distinction is almost impossible to see, for Antony does not mistreat Caesar's body, yet the transfer of spirit—or power, or even some numinous aura—from Antony to Octavius becomes visible in the contrast between Brutus and Octavius. The reason lies in the staging: when Brutus abandons Caesar's body in the Forum and then Cassius's body on the battlefield, his action is not what the respective scenes are about, nor is Antony's decision to bear Caesar's body what the scene of his funeral oration is truly about. But when Octavius cares for Brutus's body, his action dominates the scene and the end of the play. He may be cold and calculating, but he knows what he is doing, even if he cannot realize, in historical terms, what it all means.<sup>36</sup>

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35 Michael Davies argues that it is impossible to assimilate Shakespeare into either Protestantism or Catholicism. If there is a metaphysical distinction to the difference between Brutus and Octavius in each man's care for the dead, it remains invisible, or at least speculative. It touches the concerns of Protestants and Catholics, but takes no position. "Introduction: Shakespeare and Protestantism," *Shakespeare* 5, no. 1 (2009): 1–17.

36 It bears saying that the end of *Hamlet* is different. Although Fortinbras orders his soldiers to "Take up the bodies" (5.2.401) at the end of the play, Fortinbras does not take Hamlet's bones into his own tent but instead orders his soldiers to shoot a round of ordinance: "Go bid the soldiers shoot" (5.2.403). His action recalls Claudius's custom of firing a cannon as he carouses, which Hamlet declares, "More honor'd in the breach than the observance" (1.4.16). Moreover, he has little basis to presume that Hamlet would have "prov'd most royal" in a way that would merit "soldiers' music and the rite of war" (5.2.398–99), thus touching the theme of uncertainty as to how to behave that runs through *Hamlet*; see Charles Ross, *The Custom of the Castle from Malory to Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 107.

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Charles Ross, a former Fulbright-Hays Scholar in Italy, is a professor of English and the director of the Comparative Literature Program at Purdue University. His books include the first English translation of Matteo Maria Boiardo's Italian romance *Orlando Innamorato* (University of California Press, 1989); *The Custom of the Castle from Malory to "Macbeth"* (University of California Press, 1997); *Elizabethan Literature and the Law of Fraudulent Conveyance: Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003); a verse translation of Publius Papinius Statius's *Thebaid* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) from the original Latin; and, among several edited collections of essays, *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* (Purdue University Press, 2009).

## LOST AND SAVED

Jesus walks a little to my left,  
 Past the broad, all-seeing traffic light,  
 Navigating holy roadways cleft  
 By potholes that would swallow up the night.  
 Behold a storefront temple, glass encasing  
 Swaying, prayerful worshipers who sing.  
 Their hands reach out, as if embracing  
 Me. My dead cell phone lights up to ring!  
 As if I ever would have walked this far  
 Beyond all safety and my stalled Trans-Am,  
 The streetlights bleeding like some holy star  
 Somewhere over downtown Birmingham.

—David Galef

David Galef is a shameless eclectic, with over a dozen books in two dozen directions. They include the novel *How to Cope with Suburban Stress* (The Permanent Press, 2006), the story collection *My Date with Neanderthal Woman* (Dzanc Books, 2011), a poetry collection called *Flaws* (David Robert Books, 2007), the children's picture book *Tracks* (William Morrow, 1996), and three volumes of translated Japanese proverbs. His latest poetry collection, *Kanji Poems*, is forthcoming in 2015 from Word Poetry. He is a professor of English and the Director of the Creative Writing Program at Montclair State University.

## DISPLACEMENT

My lover's lover tastes of cloves and mint,  
 The toothbrush dangling from its privileged nook,  
 The dampened towel betraying just a hint  
 Of romance, like the title to a book.  
 The closet door hangs open as a mouth  
 Surprised by all it's swallowed up in there.  
 Embroidered scarves hang north; black boots stand south,  
 But near the front, a spot that's lately bare.  
 The dishes in the kitchen sink show little:  
 A smear of egg that's hardened into crust  
 The angle of two chairs is just a riddle,  
 And in the corner gathers secret dust.  
 The bedroom sheets show nothing I can see,  
 Pulled tight again to tell no trace of me.

—David Galef

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