

Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
Twenty-Third Annual Conference
November 1-4, 2018 at Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee

Call for Papers

Conference Committee for 2018:

Kate Daniels, Vanderbilt University
Rebecca Rainof, Catholic University and Princeton University
Ernest Suarez, Catholic University
Rosanna Warren, University of Chicago

Please note: everybody who participates must be a current member of the ALSCW. We encourage participation by creative writers, scholars, critics, and secondary school teachers. The 2018 introductory membership rate for new members, graduate students, and retirees is \$50. Renewals are \$100. Visit our website for detailed information (alscw.org).

Proposals of 300 words and a C.V. should be sent as email attachments to Kate Daniels at <Kate.daniels@Vanderbilt.edu> and Ernest Suarez at <Suarez@cua.edu> on or before June 1, 2018.

Seminars

1) “Each other’s magnitude and bond”: Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Bishop, and Gwendolyn Brooks

Moderator: Lisa Russ Spaar, Professor of English and Creative Writing, University of Virginia

Gwendolyn Brooks’s eponymously titled poem “Paul Robeson” suggests that poets are, “in music-words / devout and large, / . . . each other’s / harvest: / we are each other’s / business: / we are each other’s / magnitude and bond.” Recent social, racial, gendered, political, and aesthetic interpretations of any one of Brooks’s terms— *harvest*, *business*, *magnitude*, *bond*—suggest that it is never too late or too early to revisit the intrepid poetries of Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Emily Dickinson, individually or in dialogue. The time feels right to risk splitting the lark, as Dickinson would say, to explore anew the urgencies of these iconic poets and their “music-words.” Where, to paraphrase Elizabeth Bishop, could or should we be today— as poets, as readers, as witnesses? “Great Hungers,” Dickinson said, “may feed themselves” (L652), but delving into how and why these hungers continue to feed twenty-first century readers will be the engine of our conversation.

Proposals for papers and presentations are welcome from practicing poets and scholars on any aspect of the work of one or more of these three poets.

2) **Milton**

Moderator: Tobias Gregory, Associate Professor, Catholic University

Papers welcome on any aspect of Milton's work: poetry, prose, theology, politics, influence, reception.

3) **On Rereading**

Moderator: Willard Spiegelman, Duwain E. Hughes Jr. Distinguished Professor of English, Emeritus, Southern Methodist University

Teachers always remind their students that "writing" really means "re-writing," that revision is an essential part of the process of making a finished product.

Surely the same can be said of reading. A single experience of a poem, a novel, of any text, will not suffice. Repetition is required.

This seminar will offer participants the chance to exchange ideas about principles and protocols of rereading, and to engage in a wide-ranging discussion that may include, but is certainly not limited to: personal experiences of re-reading; the pedagogic values of re-reading; theoretical perspectives on how re-reading engages a reader and can enlarge or transform both the experience and the understanding of a known text.

4) **Modernism and the Novel**

Moderator: Richard Rankin Russell, 2012 Baylor Centennial Professor, Baylor University

In Virginia Woolf's essay, "Modern Fiction" (1925), she castigated novelists such as Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett, whom she terms "materialists" only concerned with the body, not the spirit. This seminar invites considerations of how modern novelists--American, British, Irish, worldwide--may have anticipated or heeded Woolf's call in this same essay to present "life as a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." Spirit, in Woolf's sense, could thus refer to consciousness, to spiritual life, even to a reclamation of consciousness or spiritual matters that would then be balanced with a continuing consideration of the body. What strategies, including re-imaginings of the genre, have modern novelists before and after Woolf engaged in to represent "spirit," defined as she does?

5) **The Harlem Renaissance and the Southern Literary Renaissance: Contexts and Connections**

Moderator: Daniel Cross Turner, Institute for Southern Studies, University of South Carolina

This seminar invites scholars and creative writers to examine two famous literary outpourings (if not uprisings) that occurred simultaneously (1920s-1930s), yet in some ways seem worlds apart: the Southern Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. Viewed traditionally, one was up North, the other down South; one urban, the other rural; one Black, the other White; one politically progressive, the other reactionary. However, this seminar will explore ways to move beyond these somewhat schematic dividing lines and consider contexts and connections that draw together these two literary-intellectual movements. What important aesthetic, philosophical, cultural, or political overlaps can we find between the Southern and Harlem Renaissances (e.g., use of dialect or idiom; drawing on blues, jazz, country, or folk musical traditions and forms; relation to contemporaneous visual art; modernist or experimental elements; shared cross-cultural influences)? Are there significant crossovers also with regard to the aforementioned divisions (i.e., geography/region; urban/rural location; race/ethnicity), or any other images or ideas that influence the literature associated with these Renaissances? For instance, how does the South show up in the work of Harlem Renaissance writers, or vice versa? What are some shared roots and/or shared routes reflected in Southern and Harlem Renaissance literature? Were there any common influences behind these movements, and have there been any converging impacts in their wake?

6) Poetic Song Verse: Joni Mitchell, Gil Scott-Heron, Iris DeMent, and Others

Moderators: Mike Mattison, Tedeschi Trucks Band, and Ernest Suarez, David M. O'Connell
Professor of English, Catholic University

This seminar invites consideration of what we identify as a relatively new literary genre—*Poetic Song Verse*—that began to emerge in the late 1950s and flourished in the 1960s and after with Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Gil Scott-Heron, and others for whom lyrics are primary and who use voice, instrumentation, and arrangement to foreground their lyric practices.

At the 2017 ALSCW annual conference we held seminars on “Bob Dylan and Poetic Song Verse.” Most, though not all, of the papers were on Dylan’s verse practices. This year we would like to address the work of artists other than Dylan. We invite papers that explore this new form of verse composition through close readings that consider the relationship between verse, voice, instrumentation, and arrangement in one or more works. What are the origins of Poetic Song Verse, what are its conventions, its legacy, and its cultural impact?

7) Teaching Creative Writing at the College & University Level

Moderator: Erika Meitner, Associate Professor and Creative Writing Programs Director, Virginia Tech

This seminar seeks to provide a forum for the discussion of creative writing pedagogy, and the creative writing classroom as a generative and critical community. What are the challenges, obstacles, and possibilities of teaching creative writing in the 21st century? How might we best serve creative writers across genres in undergraduate and graduate classrooms? Papers on

workshop models, craft lessons, generative tactics, and radical re-thinkings of our current pedagogical models for teaching creative writing are welcome. These may include approaches for disrupting the ‘traditional’ workshop model, creating truly inclusive critical spaces, addressing power structures in the workshop, or using the workshop as a space of social transformation or protest. Papers that expand the semiotic reach of the creative writing classroom to the web, mixed media, or digital forms, as well as papers that address interdisciplinary forms of creative writing pedagogy or that apply pedagogies from other fields to the discipline are also encouraged. In short, papers from anyone who teaches creative writing at the college and university level are welcome.

8) High School Teachers Seminar: Reading in the Age of Distraction and Cultivating a Love for Language

Moderator: Freya Sachs, University School of Nashville

In our age of digital distraction, how can we instill in our high school students a love for, and perhaps joy in, reading and language? Why do reading, and literature, matter in a world of image and audio? How can we guide teenagers in the discovery of text and context? This seminar invites consideration of the many ways that we can encourage and invite today's teens to engage with text, from both writers' and teachers' perspectives.

9) Poetry and Translation: Why Do Poets Translate Other Poets?

Moderator: Marco Antolín, Associate Professor, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

This seminar invites papers that explore why poets (in any age or language) translate other poets, and how translation enriches a poet's own verse or that of others. Possible topics may include the role of translation in creating a new aesthetic, how translations by scholars are different from those by poets, or how translation can make one appreciate aspects of the poet-translator's own tradition that were previously underestimated.

10) The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America: June Jordan's Essay as Manifesto and Beyond

Moderator: Tiana Clark, Vanderbilt University

“It's such a futuristic idea,” Terrance Hayes notes, “a world in which the descendants of slaves become poets.” And in her seminal essay, “The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America: Something like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley,” June Jordan argues for the literary survival of the first Black poet published in America:

...the miracle of Black poetry in America, the difficult miracle of Black poetry in America, is that we have been rejected and we are frequently dismissed as “political” or “topical”

or “sloganeering” and “crude” and “insignificant” because, like Phillis Wheatley, we have persisted for freedom. This is the difficult miracle of Black poetry in America: that we persist, published or not, and loved or unloved: we persist...

The *difficult miracle*, Black persistence itself, is a tenacious ontological resolve, built and bred from struggle and resistance. How do contemporary Black poets engage and survive in their creative and scholarly work? What examples can be gleaned from other Black poets past and present? What current issues are plaguing, strengthening, and/or influencing contemporary Black poets? We invite submissions on these topics and others addressing Black poets and poetics in America.

11) “Museum Piece” Revisited: Poetic Ekphrasis

Moderator, Karl Kirchwey, Professor of English, Boston University

John Hollander's landmark 1995 book *The Gazer's Spirit* posited a number of possible strategies for poetic ekphrasis: describing or interpreting the work of art; addressing the work of art; speaking for the work of art; contemplating the work of art in its setting, or the self in the presence of the work of art, etc. Young poets are often moved to engage with an artwork without being aware of the range of relationships to that work that are available to them. This seminar invites a consideration, by means of close reading of poetic texts and visual images, of topics including (a) the extent to which these and other ekphrastic strategies have been revised, expanded or even superseded by new media in an era long after that of the "mechanical reproduction" described by Walter Benjamin in 1935; (b) the extent to which the products of poetic ekphrasis necessarily do or do not stand in a secondary and derivative relationship to an often-absent visual antecedent; (c) the extent to which strategies for ekphrasis have been affected by feminist responses to male artists and the male gaze; (d) the sources and role of pleasure for both writers and readers of ekphrastic verse.

12) Ancient Texts/Modern Performances

Moderator: Sarah Spence, Medieval Academy of America and Editor of *Speculum*

This seminar will examine the interaction between classical allusion and modern reception. By interrogating the ways in which performance complexity interacts with textual allusiveness, we will explore how classical references within a literary work parallel, echo, complement, or fight with the contemporary experience of that work. It is our intention to focus the discussion on the use of classical works by modern authors, and we welcome any approach to this problem, including questions of performance, translations of ancient works, or studies of classical references within modern literature.

Plenary Panels:

1) Spanish Golden Age Literature

Moderator: Sonia Velázquez, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Indiana University

- a) Edward Friedman, Gertrude Conway Vanderbilt Professor of Spanish, Vanderbilt University

While visiting a printing shop in Barcelona, Don Quixote declares translation between vernacular languages to be “like looking at Flemish tapestries from the wrong side, for although the figures are visible, they are covered by threads that obscure them, and cannot be seen with the smoothness and color of the right side.” And yet, as any weaver knows, it is precisely by facing what will become the backside that a tapestry is made. Looking forward but working from the backside, translation promises a legible afterlife to its source text. This seminar will examine the myriad ways in which the practice, theory, and figuration of translation shaped not only the rich literary world of the Spanish Golden Age but also how it contributes today to making these texts come alive in the classroom.

2) Editing and Teaching the Literary Anthology (session filled)

Moderator: Robert Levine, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland-College Park

- a) Robert Levine, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland College Park
- b) Kate Flint, Provost Professor of Art History and English, University of Southern California
- c) Sandra Gufstason, Professor of English, University of Notre Dame
- d) Hortense Spillers, Gertrude Conway Vanderbilt Professor, Vanderbilt University
- e) Stanton B. Garner, Jr., Professor of English, University of Tennessee

3) Latino/-a Literature in the Southeastern United States (session filled)

Moderator: Lorraine Lopez, Gertrude Conway Vanderbilt Professor, Vanderbilt University

- a) Maria DeGuzman, Professor of English, UNC Chapel Hill
- b) Claudia Milian, Associate Professor of Romance Studies, Duke University
- c) Lila Quintero Weaver, Author/Illustrator

4) Humanities Centers and the Future of Literary Studies (session filled)

Moderator: Mona Frederick, Executive Director, Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

- a) Deborah N. Cohn, Professor of Spanish, Indiana University
- b) Susan Hegeman, Professor of English, University of Florida
- c) Derrick Spires, Assistant Professor of English, University of Illinois

- d) TBA: three current or former Graduate Student Fellows of the Robert Penn Warren Center at Vanderbilt

Events:

1. Plenary Reading, November 1

Mark Jarman, Centennial Professor of English, Vanderbilt University

2. Plenary Reading, November 2

TBA

3. Banquet, November 3

Keynote: TBA

ALSCW Mission Statement:

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers seeks to promote 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.