

**Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
Twenty-Fifth Annual Conference
October 20-23, 2022 at Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut**

Call for Papers

Conference Committee for 2022:

David Bromwich, Yale University
Diana Senechal, Varga Katalin Gimnázium, Szolnok, Hungary
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, secondary school teachers, and others interested in literature. The 2022 membership rate for new members, graduate students, and retirees is \$52. Renewals are \$113. Membership includes a year's subscription to *Literary Imagination* (Oxford UP) and to *Literary Matters* (our online journal). Subscribing to *Literary Imagination* is the same as joining or renewing your membership in the ALSCW (<https://academic.oup.com/litimag/subscribe>). Visit our website for detailed information (alscw.org).

Proposals of approximately 300 words and a C.V. should be sent as email attachments to David Bromwich at <david.bromwich@yale.edu> and Ernest Suarez at <Suarez@cua.edu> on or before June 10, 2022.

Seminars

1) Proust

Moderator: Herbert Marks, Professor of Comparative Literature, Indiana University

Lyrical and analytical, meditative and satiric, descriptive and self-consciously parabolic, Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) stands as the definitive work of twentieth-century literature in scholarly and popular opinion alike. This seminar invites papers on any aspect of Proust's work, including his sources and legacy, both imaginative and critical. Readings of specific passages are welcome, no less than reflections on such perennial topics as the genesis of the work, fiction and memory, sexual identity, style, formal structure, and Proust's relation to the other arts.

2) Periodization, the Present, and Literary Form

Moderator: Kenneth W. Warren, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor, Department of English, University of Chicago

This seminar invites papers that take up the question of periodization at the present moment in literary works or by addressing the writing of literary history.

Periodization is at once a necessary and embarrassing concern for literary historians and scholars. Necessary because without some concept of history, some mode of distinguishing one moment from the next, some way of marking past from present, the very idea of history would disappear. Embarrassing because, well, for many the idea, or the possibility of history *has* disappeared, whether in terms of a Faulknerian persistence of the past that has been renewed in the contemporary insistence on the ongoingness of slavery, or by way of declarations that with the commodification of everything history has ended, or through expressed preferences for surface reading over contextual criticism (to name a few examples).

Despite such skepticism we don't seem able to dispense with chronological markers, however provisional they may be, and instead readily speak of literature after 9/11, literature of the 2008 financial crisis, literature after #BLM or after George Floyd, or the literature of the Anthropocene.

What are we to make of the persistence of the idea of periodization in our discussions of literature, even or especially, if the periods in question are a matter of a few years, rather than decades or centuries?

3) Muriel Spark: Show and Tell, Surface and Depth

Moderator, Maria J. Fitzgerald, Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing, University of Minnesota

This seminar invites papers on any and every aspect of Muriel Spark's writing and career. It may include character analyses of protagonists and others in her novels, close readings of a single novel or a cluster of novels, or papers on the intersection of biography, autobiography, memoir and fiction in some of her books, the theological, religious and specifically Roman Catholic aspects, as well as the more mysterious and questioning aspects contained in the quote by Thomas Mallon in *The New Yorker* (April 5, 2010); in front of a New York audience in the nineteen-sixties, Spark had insisted that she loved her characters 'like a cat loves a bird.' The hope is that her particular contribution to mid-twentieth century Letters can be considered and discussed with delight and enjoyment...and even a little of her own acerbic wit.

4) Ralph Ellison Now: What Can Ellison Offer Today?

Moderator: Paul Devlin, Associate Professor, United States Merchant Marine Academy; Kevin C. Moore, Lecturer, Stanford University

The study of Ralph Ellison's work is thriving, partially because his work appears more relevant than ever to many people. This two-hour seminar seeks eight papers relating to how Ellison's work can inform and illuminate the present moment. Albert Murray writes in his preface to *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray (2000)* that in the 1940s, Ellison "playfully" told him "stories endure not only from generation to generation but also from age to age because literary truth amounts to prophecy. Telling is not only a matter of retelling but also of foretelling." Can we use Ellison's work to test this playful claim?

Possible paper topics could include but are not limited to:

Demagoguery and Oratory

Surveillance

Whiteness/Blackness

Media and Manipulation

Weak Theory

Hospitals/Hospital Spaces/Medicine

Cultural Appropriation

Ellison and Today's Writers (e.g., Mat Johnson, Colson Whitehead, Viet Thanh Nguyen, etc.)

Ellison's Mentorship (e.g., James Alan McPherson, Michael Harper, Stanley Crouch, etc.)

Ellison and Albert Murray

Ellison's Library (cataloged recently)

The Ellison Archive/Ellison in the Archives of Others

Ellison and the Idea of Comedy

5) General Education and the Idea of a Common Culture

Moderators: David Bromwich, Sterling Professor of English, Yale University, and Ernest Suarez, David M. O'Connell Professor of English, Catholic University

Since the early 20th century, the thinness or fragility of an accepted "common culture" in America has been a recurrent theme of social critics, from Randolph Bourne ("Trans-National America"), George Santayana ("The Genteel Tradition in America"), and Van Wyck Brooks (*America's Coming-of-Age*) to Walter Lippmann (*The Public Philosophy*) and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (*The Disuniting of America*).

The prominence of identity politics in university culture, the celebration of "dissensus" in the academic humanities, and related changes of the past three decades have not essentially altered the situation; while the proliferation of alternative media and social media has made it harder than ever to ask the questions: *What should an educated citizen know? And what habits of thinking and reasoning do we think desirable in a democratic culture?*

Papers are welcome on the history of this discussion; its implications for the idea of a core curriculum and for general adult education; the place of non-literary media in American public discourse; and the tension between cultural authority (i.e. a recognized standard of qualified speech) and the threat of censorship.

6) Milton

Moderator: Tobias Gregory, Associate Professor of English, Catholic University

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

7) Democracy and American Literature

Moderator: Robert S. Levine, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland

At a time when some believe that democracy is under threat, this seminar will reconsider the relationship of democracy to American literature and to American literary studies. We invite proposals on any aspect of the topic. In addition to proposals on American literary history, we would be interested in proposals from creative writers on teaching and writing at the current moment.

8) The Art of Confession

Moderator: Gregory Pardlo, Co-Director, Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice, Rutgers University--Camden Branch; Visiting Associate Professor of Practice in Literature and Creative Writing, NYU Abu Dhabi

This seminar will consider the craft of confession from St. Augustine to Sylvia Plath to Viet Than Nguyen. In our time of racial and class guilt, zealous courts of public opinion and the resentments expressed in backlash, might the art of confession suggest a path toward social health and collective well-being? What of allyship and the burden we bear in "hearing" a confession? Is confession possible outside the shadow of power and its implied expression of punishment and even torture? Does considering confession as a craft allow us to slip the fetters of genre and discipline to range freely between research-based, clinical, critical, and creative practices?

9) Resurrected Genres

Moderator: Walt Hunter, Associate Professor of English, Clemson University

This seminar will explore genres of poetry that have come back to life in the present, after a time of being neglected, forgotten, disparaged, demoted, lost-- or else nourished underground. How do the sonnet, the epistle, the prose poem, the house poem take on fresh salience for contemporary poets? What are some of the challenges with tracking the histories of these genres as they re-emerge? Papers might take as their cue the New Lyric Studies's call to sharpen our attention to the relation between genre and institutional power; others might look to Susan Stewart's idea of "distressed" genres, conformed to meet the needs of the present, or to Nigel Smith's account of how revolutionary times unsettle and transform genres. Poets might speak to their own creative practice, to the difficulties and pleasures of refashioning existing forms, and to their resistance or attraction to inherited genres. Participants are encouraged to interpret "genre" quite liberally, since the uses and limitations of genre as a concept will be part of the discussion.

10) Figures of Civil War

Moderator: Michèle Lowrie, Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Service Professor, University of Chicago

Civil war's proliferation across the globe and threats of a renewed outbreak troubling the United States make it urgent to revisit its representation with the aim of greater understanding. The term, which derives from Latin and originated in the Roman civil wars (first century BCE), specifies warfare and citizenship as decisive categories, but political scientists have had difficulty defining civil war systematically. Even in antiquity, Greek and Latin literature alike belied these restrictions: family, self, and cosmos offer battlegrounds for civil war. In modernity, deeper ties, of blood and soil, religion and ethnicity, spur members of the same state to bear arms against each other. Civil war refuses to stay within bounds, either conceptual or geographic. External enemies come under the guise of intimate bedfellows, while the internal enemy is often "othered" as alien.

In the seminar, literary scholars, writers, and artists with a comparatist bent will analyze civil war over the *longue durée* and from cross-cultural perspectives. Relevant questions include:

What categories (such as sedition, tumult, or putsch) help tell stories about civil war?

How universal are civil war tropes, such as fratricide and adultery?

What forms externalize the internal enemy and vice versa?

What boundaries does civil war cross?

11) Setting Poetry to Music

Moderator: Diana Senechal, Varga Katalin Gimnázium, Szolnok, Hungary

What questions and problems do composers encounter when setting poetry to music? How can music enhance, transform, or distract from a poem that already stands on its own? How might the music follow or depart from the poem's inherent rhythms and tones? How might the musical rendition become an artistic creation in its own right? This seminar will explore these and other questions in relation to a wide variety of poems and music. Papers may take one of two directions. Those analyzing others' musical renditions of poetry should plan to present a short paper (5–10 pages), possibly with an accompanying sound recording. Those presenting their own musical renditions or poetry should play it (through or a recording or on an acoustic instrument) and then comment on it briefly. The poems considered may be in any language, but any poem not in English should be accompanied with at least a basic translation or summary. The presentations should be prepared with a general audience in mind. Composers, songwriters, musicians, poets, scholars, teachers, students, and others interested in the subject are welcome to submit proposals. (Note: This seminar is not about songwriting or poetic song verse in general; it focuses specifically on poetry set to music.)

12) Life Writing

Moderator: Elizabeth D. Samet, Professor of English, U.S. Military Academy, West Point

This seminar takes inspiration from the beginning of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." This opening to what is commonly referred to as an autobiographical novel invites readers to think about the degree to which all written lives are shaped and the ways in which the narrative structures employed in various kinds of life writing (diary, memoir, autobiography, biography, personal essay) intersect with those of fictional genres—not only autobiographical novels but also lyric poetry, drama, etc. What is the nature of the relationship between fiction and nonfiction in life writing? How do expectations about that relationship differ across time and place? Is life writing inevitably a species of fiction?

13) The Jameses

Moderator: John Burt, Paul E. Prosswimmer Professor of American Literature, Brandeis University

The seminar will welcome papers on any aspect of the works of Henry, William, and Alice James. Here are some suggested topics about which scholarship has been brooding over the last few years.

About Henry James:

- * HJ in Film and Opera
- * HJ and the development of literary movements (HJ as realist, HJ as modernist)
- * HJ and characterization (perhaps especially his female heroines)
- * HJ and Gender (or HJ and sexuality)
- * HJ and the other arts (painting, music)
- * HJ on heroism and quietism
- * The Supernatural and the Uncanny in HJ
- * HJ and publication (magazine, book, collected edition, scholarly edition, teaching edition)
- * HJ and other writers (e.g. Flaubert, Turgenev, Howells, Wharton, Conrad, Ford, Toibin)
- * HJ on metaphor
- * HJ and his biographers

About William James:

- * WJ and "American Philosophy" (Royce, Santayana, Hocking)
- * WJ and Analytic Philosophy
- * WJ and Religion (or Ethics, or Aesthetics)
- * WJ, Cavell, Pragmatism, and Skepticism
- * WJ and Nature (and Humboldt, Thoreau, Darwin, Huxley)
- * WJ and the Post-Civil-War intellectual world
- * WJ and Henry Adams
- * WJ and Gender
- * WJ and Henry James, Sr.

About Alice James

- * AJ and the Diary form (or the letter)
- * AJ and illness
- * AJ and biography
- * AJ and gender

14) Imagining the Modern Self: Literary Portraiture from Austen to the Present

Moderator: Maria DiBattista, Charles Barnwell Straut Class of 1923 Professor of English, Princeton University, and Rebecca Rainof, Associate Research Scholar, Princeton University

This seminar welcomes papers that explore the role of portraiture in literature from the 19th-century to the present day. From Austen's time to our own, the portrait has offered a form for capturing modern selfhood. This period saw the shift in portraiture's cultural and class status from being an exclusive art commodity—a visual record of the aristocracy in oil costly—to becoming the expression of “everyman” with the advent of photography. Pioneering photographer Nadar described a successful portrait as an “intimate likeness” as opposed to merely a “banal” image, and urged artists to “put yourself at once in communion with the sitter, size up his thoughts and his very character.” From the 19th century through to the present, this imperative has been taken up by writers who developed different approaches to literary portraiture that invoked a range of emerging media.

Examples of literary portraiture in papers might include, but are not limited to: portraits described via ekphrasis in novels or poetry, character description as a mode of literary portraiture, books that present themselves as portraits (*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Portrait of a Lady*), fictional autobiography as a form of self-portraiture and biographical portraits, etc. These topics are merely jumping off points for what we hope will be a lively conversation about literary portraiture and its many different forms and effects.

15) Literature and Science

Moderator: Steven Meyer, Associate Professor of English, Washington University in St. Louis

Recent decades have seen the transformation of Literature and Science from a fairly discrete area of inquiry regarding the influence of science on literature into a much more expansive set of pluralistic and cross-disciplinary investigations of literary, artistic, and scientific practices, variously aligned with concurrent developments in science studies. Several contributors to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Science* (2018) will present case studies building on their essays in the volume, and additional speakers are encouraged to propose topics relating to their own work in the field. Possible areas of focus include – although they are certainly not limited to – comparative discussions of scientific and literary practices; relevant expansions of empiricism; the limits of the two-cultures model; poetic aspects of science; and historical

accounts of the mutual imbrication and “interanimation” of science and literature as well as, more broadly, of domains of inquiry in the humanities, arts and sciences.

16) *Ulysses* at 100

Moderator: Gregory Baker, Associate Professor of English, Catholic University

Few novels written in English have borne the curious burden of extreme stylistic eccentricity and remarkable public notoriety simultaneously – none perhaps more so than Joyce’s *Ulysses* has for the last 100 years. To say the dense, serpentine path Joyce traced through a warm June day in Dublin still confounds convention and readerly expectation has ironically become something of a cliché. Yet the novel’s difficulty, and subsequently, the story of its torrid early reception, still attracts readers, writers and critics eager to grasp something of its complex story and its importance in the history of literary modernism. With this in mind, this seminar welcomes papers that respond to a simple but compelling question: what’s the story of *Ulysses* after 100 years? Papers may perhaps stress the evolution of understanding at work in the novel’s genesis and composition, its narrative structure, its reception in the public mind, or its changing influence over later writers and critics.

Plenary Panels (by invitation only):

1) The Lives of the (American) Poets

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

2) Shakespeare’s Verse: Thinking on the Line

Moderator: Scott Newstok, Professor of English, Rhodes College

3) Reading *The Waste Land* at 100

Moderator: Frances Dickey, Associate Professor of English, University of Missouri

4) Aesthetics of the Sublime in Japanese Literary Arts

Moderator: Dennis Washburn, Burlington Northern Foundation Professor in Asian Studies, Dartmouth University

Events:

- 1. Poetry Reading**
Ishion Hutchinson, Associate Professor of English, Cornell University
- 2. *Literary Matters* Reading**
Ryan Wilson, presiding
- 3. Presentation of Meringoff Writing Awards**
Ryan Wilson, presiding
- 4. Banquet, October 22th**
Remarks: David Bromwich, President, ALSCW

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.