

**Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
Twenty-Seventh Annual Conference
October 17-20, 2024 at the Catholic University of
America, Washington D.C.**

Call for Papers

Conference Committee for 2024:

John Burt, Brandeis University
Mary Jo Salter, Johns Hopkins University
Diana Senechal, Szolnok, Hungary
Ernest Suarez, Catholic University

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 2024 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).

All ALSCW members are eligible to submit paper proposals for the seminars listed below. Unless otherwise noted, plenary panel presentations are by invitation only. (The plenary panels are listed at the end.)

Proposals of approximately 300 words and a C.V. should be sent as email attachments to Diana Senechal at <dianalouisesenechal@gmail.com > and Ernest Suarez at <Suarez@cua.edu> on or before June 1, 2024. Please title your attachments as follows: surname and first initial.seminar number.abstract or cv. For example: smitha.seminar1.abstract or smitha.seminar1.cv

Seminars

1) Teaching Writing Through Literature

Moderator: Taryn Okuma, Associate Professor of Practice in English and Director of the Cornerstone Program, Catholic University

This seminar invites participants to join a conversation about pedagogy in the literature classroom as it pertains to both creative and analytical writing. How does the literature classroom provide unique possibilities for teaching students how to write well in the 21st century? How can focusing on writing pedagogy enhance students' engagement with literature? How do our goals in teaching writing intersect with our goals as teachers of literature? What particular challenges do we, as practitioners, face as we navigate - among other things - AI, the rise in popularity of non-text based media platforms, curricular shifts away from literature in grade schools and beyond, and students who are struggling to overcome the challenges they experienced during pandemic schooling? Papers that present and reflect on examples of praxis are welcome, including particular writing assignments or projects, workshop models, literature course designs that are writing-intensive, as well as other teaching practices that serve a dual purpose of teaching both literature and writing. More theoretical papers are also encouraged, though they should ultimately connect back to our general conversation about practical application in our literature classrooms. Papers from anyone who teaches literature at a high school, community college, college, or university are warmly welcomed.

2) Religion and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century

Moderator: Sandra M. Gustafson, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English, University of Notre Dame

Proposals are welcome on all aspects and varieties of religion as they influenced, informed, responded to, and/or contested aspects of American literature in the nineteenth century. Presentations on less-familiar religious influences--including Indigenous spirituality, African traditions, Spiritualism or Swedenborgianism, and Islamic, Quaker, Jewish, or Catholic beliefs and practices--are especially welcome. With an eye to keeping literature at the center of the seminar, presenters may wish to focus on a particular writer or work.

3) Teaching Taboo Topics in Shakespeare

Moderator: Hannibal Hamlin, Professor of English, The Ohio State University

Shakespeare has a unique status in English and American culture and in many others across the world. For a variety of reasons—political as well as cultural and aesthetic—Shakespeare is the one author almost every American student is likely to encounter at some point. He is the one pre-1900 author regularly taught in high school English classes. Most colleges and universities offer Shakespeare courses, and many college and university students still feel it's important to take one, whatever their course of study. In survey courses he also looms large, the dominant *Norton Anthology of English Literature* including both *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*, as well as many of the Sonnets. Teaching Shakespeare, however, is challenging. At the high school level, how do you engage students with what makes Shakespeare most exciting—the intricacies of his language, his deep exploration of love, sex and sexuality, gender, deception, manipulation, violence, warfare, as well as religious, political, and social ideas, values, and systems—without risking the wrath of administrators or parents? *A Midsummer Night's Dream* becomes so much more exciting knowing the lurking undercurrents of misogyny and bestiality, as does *Romeo and Juliet* when you understand allusions to Classical rape stories and Mercutio's foul (homo)sexual jokes and

their function. *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* are rich in allusions to the Bible, but they also raise existential questions about the afterlife and the goodness, justice, and even existence, of God. Similar problems may face college and university teachers, though they also likely have to engage with sensitive ideological issues at a higher level, being prepared to address the representation of race and racism in *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello*, and *Merchant of Venice*, colonialism in *The Tempest*, incest and misogyny in *Hamlet*, homosexuality in the sonnets and many of the plays, and dysfunctional families in all of them.

This seminar will explore taboo topics in Shakespeare, asking both whether such topics are essential to what makes him worth reading and studying, as well as how such topics can best be tackled in our schools, colleges, and universities.

4) A Tradition of One's Own: Virginia Woolf, Her Influences and Legacy

Moderators: Maria DiBattista, Charles Barnwell Straut Class of 1923 Professor of English, Princeton University; Deborah Nord, Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature, Princeton University; Rebecca Rainof, Associate Research Scholar, University of California-Berkeley

Papers welcome on Virginia Woolf, the past and contemporary influences on her writing and thought, including her political convictions, and those assessing her impact on writers from her own time to the present. The seminar will potentially address questions of authorship and public life; literary genre and fiction's relationship to drama, poetry and the essay; the feminist literary tradition; Woolf's relation to the sister arts, especially photography and cinema; and indeed invites a wide array of approaches and subjects pertaining to the seminar topic. The seminar also welcomes papers that address approaches to teaching Woolf at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate level as well as creative non-fiction essays reflecting on Woolf's influence.

5) Miłosz, Herbert, and the “moment of revision”

Moderator: Cynthia Haven, author, *Evolution of Desire: A Life of René Girard and Czesław Miłosz: A California Life*

“It seems to me every poet after death goes through a purgatory,” Nobel poet Czesław Miłosz told me in 2000. “So he must go through that moment of revision after death.”

He died in 2004. His frenemy and fellow poet Zbigniew Herbert died in 1998. One stubbornly remained in his native Poland; the other, an ethnic Pole born in Lithuania, fled Europe for a life in American exile. What is their reception today, decades after their death? Why do they matter now and what do they have to say to us in their poems and essays – and not least of all, by their example? How would we characterize this “moment of revision”?

My hope is to discuss these poets' legacy in the world at large. How can we convey this meaning to new generations, in the era of Chatbox? What would we ask them if they were with us today?

People encountering their works for the first time might want to consider the relationship between Milosz and Herbert. Why do they matter? Two very different lives, two very different poets. This discussion will consider attitudes, lives, choices, as well as their mighty texts. As writers, poets, translators, scholars – how do we view them?

We might also want to widen the discussion to consider two other great poets of Eastern Europe – the Russian Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), also an American exile, and the Lithuanian poet and essayist Tomas Venclova (1937–).

6) Vision and Resonance

Moderator: Diana Senechal, Varga Katalin Gimnázium, Szolnok, Hungary, and Martha Hollander, Professor of Fine Arts, Design, Art History, Hofstra University

John Hollander's 1975 essay collection *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* examines, with precision and subtlety, the interaction of sound, syntax, convention, and visual shape in specific poems. This seminar, offered in his memory yet diverging at times from his focus, will explore "vision" and "resonance" in a range of literary works—where "vision" may refer to the visual shape of a work, the explicit and suggested images within it, or even a prophetic insight; and "resonance," the rhythm, meter, and sound of a text; its references to sound; and its silences. We welcome papers on works ranging from fiction to song. For example, a paper might discuss the visual and sonic aspects of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, images of silence in the poetry of János Pilinszky, the role of the elongated syllable in Bob Dylan's "Simple Twist of Fate," the rhythms of Darl's voice in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, or representations of sound in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Papers inspired by Hollander's work are welcome; presenters may also discuss their own writing in light of the seminar's theme. We encourage bold approaches.

7) Joseph Conrad and Literary History

Moderator: Brian Richardson, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, University of Maryland

Joseph Conrad helped create modernist narrative techniques and explored their possibilities in ways that continue to inspire other authors. To commemorate the centenary of Conrad's death, this session will focus on his place in and influence on the history of fiction. Papers are invited in any of the following adjacent areas: 1) Conrad and Modernism: narrators, temporality, emplotment, endings, frames, allusion, etc. 2) Conrad, Periods, and Poetics: realism, the Victorians, colonial and postcolonial writers, postmodernism, Latin American authors, the global novel, etc. 3) Conrad and other writers: Flaubert, James, Ford, Woolf, Faulkner, Alejo Carpentier, Ngugi, Tayeb Salih, Arundhati Roy, etc.

8) Letter & Spirit in Literary Translation

Moderator: Ryan Wilson, Editor-in-Chief, Literary Matters, Catholic University

“Poetry,” Robert Frost once quipped, “is what is lost in translation.” And yet The Bible, a book full of poems and almost always in translation, still sells more copies than any other book on earth. In 2 Cor. 3:6, St. Paul writes (in the KJV translation) that “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Meanwhile, innumerable texts translated in the “literal” manner which Dryden called “metaphrase” continue to appeal to readers and writers.

This panel encourages experienced and novice translators to analyze how they have dealt with specific problems in specific texts they have translated, are translating, or are using as models of translation.

N.B. In order to facilitate discussion, participants’ final contributions (not their abstracts) should include the original text(s) under discussion, a word-by-word “trot” of each text discussed, and a prose metaphrase of each text discussed.

Some possible subjects might include:

- Translation & theology
- Translation & morality/ethics
- Style & semiotics
- Questions of form in translation
- The rhetorical triangle & translation’s problems of fidelity
- Translation’s fidelity & acceptable sacrifices
- Vocal affinity & vocal architecture
- Technique & inspiration in translation
- Anonymity vs. personality in translators

9) Literary Ghosts

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

Ghost stories, naturally (from the witch of Endor to Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, from the Kolkfolk to Lady Murasaki’s Yugao, not to mention Shakespeare and Maupassant and Zeami and Ambrose Bierce), but also the belief that literary language is haunted language, whether by memory or etymology or the textual shadows poets love to conjure. Papers are invited on these or other topics that shed light on what is likely the most ancient of human fictions—and as such the origin not only of ritual and incantation, but of story telling and what has been called the “double realm” of poetry. As James Merrill was told when he consulted the spirit world with the help of a Ouija board, a writer may “give up everything except the ghost.”

10) Mimesis

Moderator: Stephen Dowden, Professor of Germanic Languages, Brandeis University

In the first chapter of *Mimesis*, Auerbach contrasts biblical with Homeric representation. Greek representation is direct and positive naming whereas biblical storytelling is elliptical and “fraught with background.” He then follows up solely on the Homeric model.

Auerbach told only half the story of mimesis. There is a form of mimesis that is not representational, but expressive. The ancients included music and dance as a mimetic arts. Might it be better to think of mimesis as an echo? When music plays and you begin to tap your foot, or even to dance, that impulse to echo the rhythm is mimetic, not representational. How do such mimetic echoes play out in literature?

Auerbach, following Kierkegaard, pays special attention to Abraham's expressive silence when the angel frees him of the duty of having to kill Isaac. Compare that expressive silence Kafka's "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk": "Is it her singing that enchants us or is it not rather the solemn stillness enclosing her frail little voice?" That silence echoes something unassimilated that positive representation cannot name. The protagonists of this mimesis of silence might include, besides the Bible and Kafka, Diderot, Sterne, Jean Paul, Novalis, Melville, Kleist, Stein, Beckett, Coetzee, Walser, Jaeggy, Sebald, Bachmann. Poetry would have a place from Sappho to Hölderlin on to Glück and many more. And antisystematic philosophers and essayists might claim our attention: Schlegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Adorno and of course the mystics and their apophatic tradition.

What might the canon of this counter-tradition look like? Where might the ascetic angularity and the dashes of Dickinson's poems fit in? Is Romantic irony an expression of this other mimesis? What of the tension in Melville between Ishmael's volubility and Bartleby's refusal to speak? What of the silences characteristic of figures such as Billy Budd and of Büchner's Woyzeck? Are there species of silence that are gendered?

11) The Character of Community in Toni Morrison's Novels

Moderator: Onyema Nweze, The MacMillan Institute

In an interview with Robert Stepto published in 1977 in *The Massachusetts Review*, Toni Morrison reflected on her first two published works at that time, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. Stepto began the interview with a question about community, the landscapes that "seem to perform different functions in the two novels." Morrison acknowledged feeling "a very strong sense of place... in terms of the details, the feeling, the mood of the community." She went on to describe her intentions when creating community in her novels:

In the first novel, I was clearly pulling straight out of what autobiographical information I had. I didn't create that town... When I wrote *Sula*, I was interested in making the town, the community, the neighborhood, as strong as a character as I could, without actually making it "The Town, they," because the most extraordinary thing about any group, and particularly our group, is the fantastic variety of people and things and behavior and so on.

After this interview, conducted in 1976, Morrison went on to publish nine more novels, in which readers follow not only the actions of characters but also the movement of communities—communities that, according to Morrison, "were interested in you... cared about your behavior." The significance of community is stressed even more today as different personal identities are finding places and groups who are "interested" in them. Given Morrison's description of her intents when creating community, papers are welcome that explore the character of community in Morrison's works. What function does the community play in the novels? What influence

does community have? What contributions do individual characters make to the state of the community? What can readers learn about community?

12) **ARS AUTOPOETICA: Why Write with AI?**

Moderator: Sasha Stiles, poet, language artist, AI researcher and author of *Technelegy* (2021)

AI-powered interfaces such as ChatGPT and Sudowrite offer fresh possibilities for creativity and communication while opening up urgent questions about authorship, originality, human skill and more-than-human imagination. This seminar will invite informed discussion on this exhilarating and controversial topic, centered around the core question of what we stand to gain from writing with AI. How might natural language processing augment, or challenge, human creativity? In what ways does ChatGPT illuminate the fundamental human desire for dialogue? Why has generative authorship been so important to avant-garde movements from the Surrealists to the Beats to the current crop of “crypto poets”? While many authors and editors decry the use of AI in literature, is it possible that we’re on the cusp of an inevitable next chapter in the history (and future) of language?

Papers welcome on any aspect of personal experience with AI-powered language, particularly with a focus on poetry and/or the poetics of large language models and generative approaches to literature.

13) **The Inklings and Their Critics**

Moderators: Lee Oser, Professor of English, College of the Holy Cross; Jonathan Mulrooney, Professor of English, College of the Holy Cross

How do we understand the historic relationship between the Inklings and their defenders, on the one hand, and, on the other, critics and writers who espouse differing versions of modernism and modernity? Likewise, how do we address the differences between the Oxford coterie of Tolkien, Lewis, Barfield, and Williams and the more progressive Cambridge-driven course of modern English studies? What is at stake in these literary relationships? How might a reconsideration of the Inklings and their reception reshape our understanding of modernism's literary and curricular legacies?

Points of discussion may include, for example, common literary ancestors (including myth, saga, epic, and romance), science and technology, nature and human nature, humanism and Christian humanism, the profession of English, the uses of the past, and the English language. Comparison and dialogue are to be preferred over narrow specialization.

14) **“But Thou Thyself Unbind”:** The Uncontainable Sonnet

Moderator: Dora Malech, Associate Professor, The Writing Seminars, Johns Hopkins University

In *The American Sonnet: An Anthology of Poems and Essays* (eds. Dora Malech and Laura T. Smith, University of Iowa Press, 2023) Jahan Ramazani highlights the “irrepressible globality and translocality” of the sonnet, how “the seemingly container-like genre of the sonnet proves . .

. uncontainable.” This seminar invites exploration of the manifold ways the sonnet—that quintessential lyric form—has punched above its weight and thought outside its box for centuries and continues to do so today, crossing borders, leaping languages, and defying assumptions about what it can do and be.

Papers from poets, critics, historians, translators, and teachers of the sonnet are welcome, as are papers from scholars in fields including (but not limited to) lyric studies, manuscript studies, comparative literature, and translation studies. This is to say, this seminar intends to gather a wide range of voices and perspectives together in the room of the sonnet, initiating uncontainable conversations therein.

15) Just Like Music: Fiction, Poetry, and the Sounds of the United States

Moderators: Justin Mitchell, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor; Ernest Suarez, David M. O’Connell Professor of English, Catholic University

Up until the late twentieth century, homegrown American musical traditions deeply informed works by a vast array of US writers, from African American like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, Amiri Baraka, Toni Cade Bambara, Jayne Cortez, and Gayl Jones to so-called white ethnics like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gilbert Sorrentino. At the same time, US literature has left an indelible mark on the nation’s music, inspiring artists such as Cecil Taylor, Gil-Scott Heron, The Last Poets, Bob Dylan, and Joni Mitchell, just to name a few. This rich, sometimes symbiotic relationship between US music and literature has many names: “the jazz cadence of American culture,” the “blues aesthetic,” “the black aesthetic,” “poetic song verse,” “the rock novel,” “slam poetry,” and so on. And yet in the twenty-first century it somehow seems much less obvious that such a relationship persists. The works of contemporary US writers are arguably less self-consciously informed by (popular) music and vice versa.

In this seminar we are seeking papers from scholars, vernacular critics, fiction writers, poets, and musicians, that assess the status of US music—jazz, blues, R&B, country, rock n’ roll, rap/hip-hop, pop, salsa, avant-garde, etc.—on late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century literature. We would be especially interested in papers that respond to questions like the following: How should we periodize genres like jazz poetry, poetic song verse, the black aesthetic, or the rock novel? What currency do these genres or their representative practitioners have in the present, either in the academy or the broader public sphere? How have emergent genres like trap and drill or recent subgenres like chopped and screwed or hyphy informed contemporary literary culture (especially creative nonfiction)? To what extent has the phenomenon that music critic Simon Reynolds calls “retromania”—the loss of temporality in popular music—affected or been mirrored in twenty-first century literature? Has the globalization of US musical culture had important repercussions for world literature or literary traditions outside of the US? What new theories about the relationship between US music and literature have emerged in the last 40 years in response to the rise of genres like punk, grunge, metalcore, quiet storm, and rap? What is the relationship between Latin music, world music, or contemporary avant-garde music and US fiction and/or poetry?

16) John Donne and George Herbert

Moderator: Tobias Gregory, Associate Professor, Catholic University

Papers welcome on any aspect of Donne's work, Herbert's work, the relation between them, or their influence.

Plenary Panels (by invitation only unless otherwise noted):

1) David Ferry and the Play of Allusion

Moderators: Sarah Spence (sspence@uga.edu) and Stephen Foley (stephen_foley@brown.edu)

Note: This plenary panel is open to paper proposals from ALSCW members.

David Ferry's *Some Things I Said*, published shortly after the poet's death in 2023, highlights his fascination with poetic borrowing, tracing the echoes that ring through a single poem to suggest how dense—and playful—a web of allusion underwrites his verse. This plenary panel will focus on Ferry's extraordinary career-long engagement with earlier poems (his own and others), and we welcome proposals that delve into aspects of Ferry's imitative prosody, whether in terms of found poetic matter (that allows him the freedom to discover formal possibilities as he makes their lines his own), meter (a patterning that is simultaneously effective and invisible), diction ("his distinctive speech being one of the most interesting and ravishing achievements of the past half century"), syntax (that often stretches against caesura and close), or other poetic devices.

2) The End of Modern Literature?

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

3) Literary Frederick Douglass

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

4) Library of America

Moderator: Max Rudin, President, Library of America

Events:

1. **Poetry Reading**
To be announced soon.
2. **Concert**
To be announced soon.
3. ***Literary Matters* Reading**
Ryan Wilson, Editor-in-Chief, *Literary Matters*, presiding
4. **Banquet, October 19th**
Remarks: Diana Senechal, President, ALSCW
Reading: To be announced soon.

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.