

Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
Twentieth Annual Conference
October 27-30, 2016 at The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC

Call for Papers

The Program Committee for the 2016 Conference:

John Briggs, University of California-Riverside
Lee Oser, College of the Holy Cross
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 as well as scholars and critics. The 2016 introductory membership rate for new members, graduate students, and retirees is \$50. Renewals are \$100. Visit our website at alscw.org for detailed information.

Proposals of 300 words and a C.V. should be sent as email attachments to Ernest Suarez at <suarez@cua.edu> on or before May 1, 2016.

Panels:

Session 1: Literature in Painting, Painting in Literature

Moderators: Deborah Nord, Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature, Princeton University and Rebecca Rainof, Associate Professor Catholic University and Princeton University

This panel explores the relation between literature and painting of the Victorian period, addressing exchanges and influences between the two representational modes. Why do descriptions of paintings feature so prominently in Victorian novels? How do scenes of ekphrasis shape literary realism? Conversely, why do paintings of the period often adopt literary subjects as a source of inspiration? What effect do painters achieve in invoking narrative art and its methods within a visual medium? This panel will discuss key examples from novels and paintings to suggest different forms of reciprocity arising in the nineteenth century. It will consider both formal and aesthetic questions of the connection between art forms, as well as the question of historical influences. On a larger scale, the panel will potentially suggest ways in

which both the affiliation and the tension between visual art and literature shaped larger aesthetic movements and developments.

Session 2: **John Milton**

Moderators: John Leonard, Professor of English, University of Western Ontario and Tobias Gregory, Associate Professor, Catholic University

Papers invited on any aspect of Milton's work, including poetry, prose, religion, politics, reception, or connections between these subjects.

Session 3: **Dante**

Moderator: Giuseppe Mazzotta, Sterling Professor of the Humanities in Italian, Yale University

Session filled.

Session 4: **American Literature Across Borders**

Moderator: Philip Gould, Nicholas Brown Professor of Oratory and Belles Lettres, Brown University

This panel solicits proposals for papers that focus on American literature in ways that consider individual authors, literary works, genres, and/or literary history in transnational contexts and perspectives. Such work may address, for example: the transatlantic novel, the "Black Atlantic," literary migrations and adaptations, hemispheric American literary history, reconsiderations of "colonial" and "postcolonial" literature, the subject of aesthetics and national/transnational perspectives, and literature-at-the-borderlands. Scholarship that engages canonical and lesser-known literary works is equally welcome.

Seminars

1. Tom Stoppard and the Interplay of Science and Art/Theatre

Moderator: William W. Demastes, Alumni Professor of Theater and Drama, Louisiana State University

Tom Stoppard has incorporated a range of contemporary scientific theories in his theatre, including chaos theory (nonlinear dynamics), quantum theory, and materialist consciousness theory in such works as *Arcadia*, *Hapgood*, and *The Hard Problem*. In many instances, these "science plays" have been almost exclusively scrutinized for their scientific accuracy. The central

point of discussion for this seminar will be the degree to which the use of scientific theories is of artistic/philosophical value versus the degree to which such uses merely become critical distractions. Using Stoppard as a focus, the question is: what value is there of blending the arts and sciences? Using "science plays" from writers other than Stoppard--and perhaps even works other than drama--will be welcomed.

2. Why Historical Novels?

Moderators: Gerald Gillespie, Professor of German and Comparative Literature, Stanford University and Virgil Nemoianu, Byron Professor of Literature, Catholic University

We do not have a fully satisfactory contemporary theory of the historical novel. Let us set some foundations by discussing the following topics: Are all novels up to a point historical? Can we divide historical novels into several distinct categories and, if so, which? Do most postmodernist novels have a dimension of historical fiction? Is there some connection between science fiction and the historical novel? Examples can be taken from English language literature or from world literature in general.

3. Irish Verse Since 1950

Moderators: Greg Delanty, Professor of English, St. Michael's College, and Lee Oser, Professor of English, College of the Holy Cross

Papers (3,000 words, max.) invited on any aspect of Irish poetry since 1950, including form, translation, religion, politics, reception, or connections between these subjects. The moderators encourage participants to address poetry, both in English and Gaelic, throughout the whole island, north and south, and also Irish poets who live outside Ireland. Papers can focus on one poet or more.

4. Achilles in the Greco-Roman World

Moderator, Justina Gregory, Sophia Smith Professor of Classical Languages and Literature at Smith College

Since Achilles is the protagonist of the ancient world's dominant epic, his influential role in the Greco-Roman tradition comes as no surprise. What does surprise is the variety of his instantiations. The Iliadic Achilles does not dominate the hero's post-Homeric reception, and Achilles is presented (as Pantelis Michelakis points out in *Achilles in Greek Tragedy* [Cambridge, 2002], 1) "both as a model and as a problem." This seminar will consider the Achilles tradition in diverse ancient eras and contexts. Starting points might include (but are not limited to): epinician Achilles; Achilles and pederasty; Achilles as son and father; Achilles in Roman elegy; iconography of the hero.

5. What makes something funny? Comedy from Aristophanes to Sid Caesar

Moderator: Helaine Smith, The Brearley School, New York City

Papers should be no more than 4-5 pages, and should address, through close and selective textual reference, comic moments in no more than three works—or in just one, if you prefer. Examples might come from plays, poems, fiction, and the essay (for example, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Congreve, Fielding, Pope, Austen, Lamb, Dickens, Twain, Wilde, Beckett, etc.), from sketches by great comedians (Sid Caesar, Jack Benny, the Marx Brothers) or from libretti by Gilbert & Sullivan. In addition to the sources and the psychology of humor, papers might explore comic purposes and comic limits (when, for example, does something become not funny?).

6. “You Must Change Your Life”: The Gesture of Opening in Literature

Moderator: Diana Senechal, Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science & Engineering in New York City

It is an essential gesture of literature to take the reader from a limited view into a larger perspective. To accomplish this, a work needs subtlety of form and word; it cannot arrive at such opening through dogmatism or canned devices. We will examine this gesture of opening in Homer’s *Iliad* (Book XXIV), Rainer Maria Rilke’s sonnet “Archaic Torso of Apollo,” Julio Cortázar’s story “End of the Game,” and other works. For works written in languages other than English, we will work primarily with translations but also refer to the original. Papers should be 5-10 pages long and should focus on one or two works.

7. Representing Contemporary Literature

Moderator, Thomas Hill Schaub, Executive Editor *Contemporary Literature*

For designing courses or developing research programs, the category of the “contemporary” does little work conceptualizing recent narrative fiction in English. To make matters worse, there is a surfeit of fiction coming “online” as it were with each passing week. Contemporary writing thus resists easy sifting and winnowing. The participants in this seminar will offer their methods and rationales for wresting some order from the ongoing production of fiction in English. Relevant questions would seem to include the following:

How does the marketplace interact with the academic study of contemporary writing? What role does literary history play in our reception of the contemporary? Does “the postmodern” continue to identify the avant-garde in recent writing? Are there ways to “cross” the postmodern with a revived realism? Can we select the best of recent writing on the basis of aesthetic values? Finally, how does fiction’s dialogue with contemporary histories offer a justification for collecting this or that groups of writers and novels?

8. Robert Penn Warren & Time

Moderators: Joan Romano Shifflett, U.S. Naval Academy and Ryan Wilson, Catholic University

*The name of the story will be Time,
But you must not pronounce its name.*

Most of Warren's *oeuvre* concerns itself with Time in one way or another, whether through personal memory, metaphysical speculation, "official" history, cultural traditions, or prognostication. While the historical and socio-historical elements of Warren's work remain of permanent interest, we particularly encourage studies that explore Time in its relation to Warren's metaphysical quest, or "yearning," and/or in its relation to his aesthetics.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to: Classicism & Idealism; The Western Tradition & Warren's Forms; Warren's "vital image," Memory, & Epistemology; Warren & St. Augustine; Personal & Collective Histories in Warren; Narrative & Culture; Warren as an Historical Personage; and Writers Who Influenced Warren, or Were Influenced by Warren.

9. Poetry and Translation: A Question of Life or Death

Moderator: Adelaide Russo, Phyllis Taylor Professor of French Studies, Louisiana State University

In a 2015 lecture the French poet, Michel Deguy, spoke of translation as a question of life or death for poetry. Recounting his own experience as a young writer he described the importance of the translation process in providing him with an intimate contact with such writers as Dante, Gongora, and Kleist. In this seminar we will explore three interrelated topics: 1) How poets learn about poetry through translating the work of other poets; 2) Which languages and what poets are translated today?; and 3) What is the role of poetry in translation -- can poetry really be translated? We would like to explore individual cases or collaborative efforts in any language or any geographic area.

Events:

1. An Evening of Readings, October 27th

At 5 pm we will open the program with poetry readings by ALSCW members. If you would like to read your verse, please notify us at <suarez@cua.edu>.

The plenary poetry readings will follow at 7:30 pm.

2. Musical Performances, October 28th

Performance, 7 pm-8:30 pm

Emily Noel
Rachelle Fleming

3. **Banquet, October 29th**

The banquet will be followed by the keynote address (speaker TBA) and a performance by **two time Grammy winner Mike Mattison and his band Scrapomatic.**

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.