



Round Table: Teaching *Huckleberry Finn*

[Editor's Note: As you will recall, the last issue of *Literary Matters* featured an essay, co-winner of our first annual Secondary School Essay Contest, entitled "All Kinds of Signs: Superstition in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*." In the submitted version of the essay, author David Gore had opted not to spell out the word *nigger* in quotations taken from the novel, replacing the letters after "n" with dashes. When notified that the essay had won and queried about the offending word, however, David chose to restore the original diction of the text. This exchange drew our attention yet again to a controversy about the novel that has a long history, and which has recently received much media attention, with the 2011 publication of Alan Gribben's new edition of the novel, which replaces "nigger" with "slave."

The following is a collection of reflections on this debate by instructors at both the college and secondary school levels, as instructors, as critics, and even as parents. We begin with introductory comments by ALSCW Immediate Past President **Susan Wolfson**. Many thanks to **Janice Miller, Brad Evans, Christina Zwarg, Renate Von Huetz, and William Gleason** for sharing their thoughts as well.]

Introduction

Susan J. Wolfson, Princeton University

Alan Gribben's high-school oriented, *nigger*-purged redaction of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (NewSouth, 2010) reflects a well-intentioned desire for a version of this classic American novel that will avoid the discomfort, dismay even, of encountering this pervasive word and experiencing its poisonous effects—both in the historical world of Twain's fiction and in the historical present of the classroom. On the embarrassment of 219 instances of *nigger*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been purged from many high-school curricula, sparing the political problem of an institutional *imprimatur*, sparing students distress, and remanding the classic to mature college courses. Gribben was not out to sanitize the

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From the Editor

Dear ALSCW Members and *Literary Matters* Readers,

I hope that this first issue of 2011 finds you well and warm, sheltered from a winter that has been particularly severe for us in the Northeast. During these cold, dark months, I find myself thinking how glad I am that literature is not like aging snow or re-heated soup: I return to a favorite poem, or reread a short story, and am reassured in noting that they have not lost their crispness, nor their flavor.

I've been spending a lot of time lately with the poems of Miguel de Unamuno. This is largely because I'm writing a dissertation on his work; you may have noticed that he has come up in my Editor's Note in the past. A couple of months ago, I came across one of Unamuno's more well-known poems, one that he wrote late in life, and which beautifully distills his understanding of the literary realm. The first line of this poem, number 828 in Unamuno's *Cancionero*, reads, "Me destierro a la

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The President's Column

BY GREG DELANTY

There is plenty to be happy about this coming year. First, we have achieved a stable financial condition which should take us easily into 2012. This has been partly managed with the help of many members who donated money to match the Meringoff \$10,000 fund. The names of these members are listed within these pages with a formal thank you. **Stephen Meringoff** contributed a separate donation of \$15,000. **Liam Cunningham** in Ireland committed another \$5,000, as did **Francis O'Neill**. We need this money mainly to keep the office running efficiently.

The other financial good news is that we received \$11,500 from the Humanities Foundation at Boston University (Director, Professor **James Winn**) to help us with this year's conference, October 14th-16th at BU. The application was shaped by **Tim Peltason**, our Treasurer, with ALSCW Past President **Christopher Ricks**. I have seen a draft of the program and it looks remarkable. We thank all the members of the conference committee for this and we look forward to hearing more.

Our latest initiative is to get people to renew their membership, and to get others to join or to give a gift membership. At the start of January I sent out a letter regarding this, and the renewals and new memberships have been pouring in. Thank you. If you haven't renewed your membership then please do, and also get someone to join or give a gift membership. I promise to give five gift memberships this month.

I also ask that you set up a local meeting for this coming year. Last year we had great local meetings, such as

those held at LSU, hosted by council member **Adelaide Russo**. Keep an eye out for meetings that are upcoming here in Vermont at Saint Michael's College, at BU and elsewhere. In addition, if you are setting up a local meeting, please let us know.

As I am finishing this piece more good news has just come to light. Another ALSCW Past President, **Clare Cavanagh**, has shared the news that her recent book *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* is one of the five finalists for the 2010 National Book Critics Circle Award in Criticism this year. Congratulations, Clare. Please let us know of any of your own successes and we will herald the news. It is important and good to know and make known each of our literary achievements and works. Not all receive prizes, but that does not mean that they are not just as valuable. So, let us know when you have books out, and so on, please. That we know and relish each others' work will help each of us and our own work (even if we are envious at times of each other—let it be a good envy).

Finally, this is one of the last issues that **Leslie Harkema** is editing and I don't want to leave it till the spring issue to thank her. She has done a great job with *Literary Matters* over the years. We wish her the best with everything as she moves on.

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.



memoria" ["I'm exiling myself into memory"*], and the opening stanza invites the poem's readers to look for the poet ("buscadme") in the wasteland of history ("el yermo de la historia"). Written during Unamuno's exile from Spain, the poem begins with isolation—that of the political objector and of the writer—but then goes on to insist on the trans-national and trans-historical communion to be found in the act of reading. In the third stanza, the poet announces that he will take his readers—"you"; i.e., us—with him on his journey, thus populating the barren landscape in which he finds himself ("para poblar mi desierto"). Though he might be dead, he declares, he will revive and resound ("retemblaré") in the reader's hands.

The poem finishes with the oft-quoted couplet:

Cuando vibres todo entero,
Soy yo, lector, que en ti vibro.

When you vibrate from head to foot
It's me, reader, who vibrates in you.

This image of vibration, of a region humming with life and thought to which one can tune in even on the coldest night of snowbound solitude, stuns me, shakes me each time I read or recite these lines. For me, it illustrates exquisitely the kind of literary encounter that the ALSCW works so hard to celebrate, investigate, and promote.

This is my last issue as Editor of *Literary Matters*. The dissertation beckons. Yet I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the ALSCW for the many ways it has enriched my literary encounters, as a student, a critic, and a reader. Thanks, particularly, to **Sallie Spence**, who mentored me and brought me into the ALSCW "fold" when I worked for her on *Literary Imagination* from 2005 to 2007. Thanks to **Rosanna Warren** and to **Christopher Ricks** for their guidance during my time

at BU. Thanks to so many of you who have contributed pieces and suggested wonderful projects for the newsletter. I have learned a great deal from this experience, and have enjoyed having this opportunity to peer outside of my field to see what's going on in the world of literature at large. And thanks to Office Manager **Katherine Hala**, who has helped me so much with *LM* over the past year; and to **Chris Clark**, who worked on the newsletter with me in the past, and has stepped in to help with the layout of the current issue.

Finally, I want to introduce you to the new Editor of *Literary Matters*, **Samantha Madway**. Samantha is finishing her BA/MA degree in the University Professors Program at Boston University this spring. She has worked as an ALSCW intern for the past year, and currently holds the titles of Supervising Intern and Assistant Office Manager. I wish Samantha all the best in this new endeavor, and ask you to continue sending your ideas and submissions to help her and the newsletter in reflecting the vibrant life of this association.

With best wishes,

Leslie Harkema

*All translations are my own.

SAVE THE DATE:
Seventeenth Annual Conference
October 14-16, 2011
Boston University



novel's historical situation; he wanted only, and passionately, to keep a classic viable for high-school classrooms. Gribben's concern about "preemptive censorship" struck a chord with NewSouth, who wanted to meet the distaste with a palatable product.

For textual purists, there remains the dilemma: either you cut this classic, or you try to manage the fallout of pernicious language. In the entanglements of a great work that at once ironizes racism and reverberates with a keyword that may not be containable by irony, Jonathan Arac's searching study *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) makes no case for censoring nor for sanitizing, but for deferring beyond high school. Gribben's gambit is to pave over the linguistic sinkholes, drilling out *nigger* and filling in with *slave*. Yet because such a project is nothing if not visible, it becomes part of the problem. Jon Stewart had serious fun with this on *The Daily Show* (January 11, 2010) in a conversation with "Senior Black Correspondent" Larry Wilmore, who gave this deadpan review to Gribben's revision:

Well, congratulations on the promotion, Jim. Wow, this is a huge upgrade, from nigger to slave. Yeah, that's like a show going from the W.B. to U.P.N. . . . Look, Mark Twain put that word in for a reason. The n-word speaks to a society that casually dehumanized black people. "Slave" was just a job description. And, and it's not even accurate: in the book Jim is no longer even a slave; he ran away. Twain's point is that he can't run away from being a nigger.

This historical point is one embarrassment to Gribben's argument.

Another embarrassment is the likely double-play of reception. Once a euphemism is recognized, it is played out. For my generation, the star case was the ninth-grade Shakespeare designation, *Romeo and Juliet*, in an edition from which the nurse's bawdy was excised, with the excisions indicated by asterisks. The inadvertent effect was an advertisement that propelled us to search out the forbidden language. And the total effect was to render the bowdlerizing ridiculous. Now, with the World Wide Web, not only may a student's curiosity about the original be instantly satisfied, but the sanitizing process is also likely to return *nigger* to classroom discussion. Innocence is not what it used to be.

Milton had these dynamics in mind in *Areopagitica* (1644), his great liberal tract against censorship. Its famous argument is that evil is a part of life, that one cannot know good without this reference:

what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat . . . what purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.

Milton's concern was profane literature and heresies—profanity against the Christian religion. He might have cheered the schoolchildren for seeking out what was censored and testing their strength against it, or he might have lamented their seduction into it. But he would not have denied them the reading. This was the great risk of seductive Satan: Milton gave the devil his due, said Hazlitt. *Huckleberry Finn* presents profanity of a different order: of racist contempt casually captured and voiced in a reiterated word, to which worlds of political and social atrocity are linked, and persist.

It is the innocence of my high-school English class engagement of *Huck Finn*, in the hands of a nervous student teacher, that her primary concern was not *nigger* (in 1960s New England, this word was never said at all—in effect producing Gribben *avant la lettre*) but to avoid a fall into the junior-high joke of transposing the front consonants. Her worry became clear in her pause each time before she said "Huck Finn." The slip was of course inevitable and we were all waiting for it. Such innocence. It wasn't trial by spoonerism that Milton might have liked in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* so much as the protagonist's moral trial by a test against what is contrary. We were morally able readers of Huck's crisis: his fidelity to Jim's humanity, in contradiction to the law (civic and religious) that tells him that Jim is Miss Watson's property and that his disobedience in "stealing" Jim is "wickedness":

But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him agin in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him

by telling the men we had smallpox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell"- and tore it up.

Twain has crafted an amazing, arresting interior monologue, a revolution in personal conscience that simultaneously calls into question the whole external structure of judgment, even as Huck is willing to damn himself by its laws. And yet, here, too, in Chapter 31 alone, are 20 of those instances of *nigger*, about which we ninth-graders remained silent.

This sort of paradox, or even contradiction, if one wants to press *nigger* out of the fictional context and into speech licensed by the novel, is what prompts Arac to indict the "idolatry" of *Huckleberry Finn* (its iconic status) as "an excuse for well-meaning white people to use the term nigger with . . . good conscience"—on the same page with admired Huck, as it were. We all know the argument that justifies the lexicon of *nigger* both by fictional logic (the novel is situated in a racist society) and ideological irony (Twain does not endorse the racists he so ably represents), and our very discomfort or distress with the casually reiterated *nigger* marks out our historical distance from its world, our improvement against its awful prejudice.

That's how I was teaching *Huckleberry Finn* to college students at Berkeley and at Rutgers, and how I defended this and other literary works in which repellent situations are presented. I was presenting this case to a class at Princeton when I first arrived, and the black students there (perhaps more acutely conscious of the non-blackness of Princeton University and of Princeton Borough) said they saw the argument but wanted me to know that in their high schools, notwithstanding this perspective, the presence of the word *nigger* gave performative license to utterance; more than few white kids had cover to say it out loud with gleeful snickers—a racism which registered, and was allowed, under the pretext of talking about the novel. Ideological containment and historical perspective were the enabling cover.

I experienced a version of this double play when I was on a flight to Atlanta, in which *As Good as it Gets* was the entertainment. Melvin Udall (Jack Nicholson), you'll recall, begins as a nasty misogynist and gay-baiter. Well, never mind that Mark Andrus's screenplay ironized all this and plotted a reform. Every time Melvin uttered a choice phrase, all the good ol' boys on the flight

whooped and hollered and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. My recognition of this uncontainable antagonism is no argument for censorship or euphemizing; it is a lesson in how poisonous language is not containable by the program of a "teachable moment" about a represented world, but gets launched along unsuspected rhetorical vectors for opportunistic performers. To argue that *nigger* or *faggot* is not endorsed, that it is subject to critical regard, that its potential discomfort is a rhetorical calculation, that it is plotted for reform, is to rehearse only desirable, not guaranteed effects.

In the midst, or to the side of this painful debate, I notice that nothing has been said about the acid "feminizing" of Huck's antagonists, among them Miss Watson, the slave-owning would-be civilizer of Huck's vital individualism. Look again at the passage I quoted from *Areopagitica*, and you'll see Milton advancing his argument with an array of antifeminist allegorical characters: vice with her alluring baits; slinking, weak, evasive maiden-virtue—both enemies to the moral man. These markings are as present in our classrooms as the racism of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but unlike *nigger*, there has been no widespread national discussion, no acknowledgment of discomfort, unease, regret. If *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a story of racism represented and resisted, it's also a story about a boy's developing individualism, in which the trial by contrary is argued by gender oppositions. To become moral Huck is to escape women, to ridicule femininity, to become the antithesis, even the antagonist of their world. Do those who regret *nigger* have analogous responses to the embedded and embodied character of "female" in this novel? Does *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* deflect and even grant aesthetic legitimacy to this element of the great American novel, even as it stirs our critical attention to *nigger*?

Teaching *Huck Finn*

Janice Miller, Newton North High School, Newton, MA

At Newton North High School, the English department has designated three books as "core texts" that must be taught to every junior: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. At the same time, questions of how and if Mark Twain's novel should be introduced to high school students have been raised repeatedly within our department.

Both students and teachers have asked, "Is this book too alienating or too difficult for our students?" Lorrie Moore articulates one side of this debate when she writes, in response to the controversial new edition of Twain's work, "No novel with the words 'kike' or 'bitch' spelled out 200 times could or should be separated—for the purposes of irony or pedagogy—from the attitudes that produced those words. It's impossible that such a novel would be

taught in a high school classroom.” She suggests that “College, where students have more experience with racial attitudes and literature, can do as it pleases” with Twain’s novel. Yet my students more often argue for the book’s central place in a year that focuses on American literature. They more or less ask, as Michiko Kakutani wrote earlier this month in *The New York Times*, “Haven’t we learned by now that removing books from the curriculum just deprives children of exposure to classic works of literature? To censor or redact books on school reading lists is a form of denial: shutting the door on harsh historical realities—whitewashing them or pretending they don’t exist.”

I don’t have a definitive answer for whether or not *Huck Finn* is the best book to use in educating my students. I do not even know if it will continue to be taught at my school. I do know that as I begin to teach it I set the stage for our discussion in several ways: I discuss its reception history, the issue of its racist language, the question of Twain’s portrayal of Jim, and readers’ dissatisfaction with the final section of the novel. I introduce them to both Hemingway’s claim that “All modern literature comes from” *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Jane Smiley’s view that this book is not “even a serious novel” and that “all the claims that are routinely made for the book’s humanitarian powers are, in the end, simply absurd.” I test their ability to understand satire, and keep that frame in the front of their minds, so they won’t mistake Judith Loftus or Miss Watson for kind or pious ladies but will see them for those who equate human beings with easy profits. I challenge them to read carefully by saying, “There are those who say you are not smart enough to read this book . . . and that I’m not smart enough to teach it.”

However, the question for this round table was not if the book should be taught, or how I teach it generally, but how I address its use of the racist epithet. After my student’s essay was chosen for publication in this newsletter, there was a question of whether or not he should reproduce Twain’s original language. Students routinely ask me about this when they write about the book. I think that is because I rarely—if ever—use that word myself. Perhaps that is cowardly. But this is what I tell them: “quote the text.” When asked, “How do you handle the word *nigger*? And how do your students react to this word or comment on it?” I would say that as a class we look at that word’s role in the text: its insistent appearance on page five when Huck first introduces Jim, how it might reflect both this society’s values and Huck’s changing attitudes, the struggle as Mark Twain says of a “sound heart and a deformed conscience.” We consider Huck’s use of the word as we would his proud pronouncement that “six times seven is thirty-five,” a moment where our imaginations should supply the truth that hides beneath the error—Jim’s family waiting offstage for rescue but treated like the dollar bill Jim splits in two to show the limits of “King Sollermun’s” wisdom.

Fronting the Affront

Brad Evans, Rutgers University

The story about the new *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* broke just in time for the MLA convention in early January, making for some animated talk and a lot of eye-rolling in Los Angeles. I have yet to hear of anyone ready to defend the new edition, and I am certainly not about to do so. My opinion, in a nutshell, is that if you take the word *nigger* out of Twain’s story, you really are not left with much—and replacing it with *slave* only exacerbates the problem for a number of historical and dramatic reasons.

But let me start with a short anecdote. I was in graduate school when my oldest son was born, and when he was just starting to toddle around I came into possession of a 1948 edition of the novel with some color illustrations by Donald McKay—anodyne, pastel affairs having, at least for me, the familiar feel of a Sunday night television airing of the Wonderful World of Disney—and I thought it might be a nice edition to read from at bedtime. The book collected dust for a while, but when my son was seven, in a moment of complete disconnect between academic and family worlds that I now find hard to reconstruct, we started in. Blame it on those innocuous pictures igniting some misbegotten romantic ideas about boyhood. “Miss Watson’s big nigger, named Jim” is introduced at the beginning of Chapter Two, and we made it to the chapter’s end, where “[n]iggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had” to see proof of his bewitchment, before I uncomfortably called the whole thing off.

He is in high school now, and it could well be time for him to return to *Huck Finn*. After all, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has already turned up on the syllabus of his Language Arts class this year. I doubt that he or his friends would bat an eye at Twain’s offering.

And that is the problem.

That failure to blink presents the biggest challenge to teaching *Huck Finn* to undergraduates at Rutgers. They ought to blink at Miss Watson’s slave being introduced as “nigger” first and “Jim” only as an afterthought, and at all the two hundred other times the word *nigger* is used, because if they don’t then they may well be missing the point that the word was (and is) meant to affront readers. And in my opinion, it is especially as an affront that the novel becomes something more than merely a lively children’s book.

How to teach the affront? First and foremost, I would foreground historical context. The obvious point to make—one that Alan Gribben, to his credit, notes in the introduction to the new edition—is that *nigger* was no less a derogatory word in the nineteenth century than it is now. Its use may be historically accurate, but that does not lessen its sting. A second would be that

the novel was published in 1885. Even though coming twenty years after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the date was hardly a harmonious one in the country's racial history. A sketch of the immediate historical context of *Huck Finn* would include the end of the idealism of the abolition movement and Reconstruction, a bloody terrorist campaign against blacks led by paramilitary groups like the White League and the Redshirts, the repeal of a series of Civil Rights Acts passed in the 1860s that look agonizingly similar to those passed in the 1960s, the judicial legitimization of segregation, and the extra-judicial establishment of "lynch law," which saw as many as 5000 African Americans publicly murdered between 1860 and 1890. This is the immediate racial context for *Huck Finn* that makes Gribben's choice to substitute *slave* for *nigger* particularly unfortunate. Slavery had been abolished but not the use of the word *nigger*, and the offending term should be understood by all as part of the symbolic machinery deployed in Twain's time on behalf of the newly invented, white supremacist social order of the New South—an order known popularly as "Jim Crow."

Which brings me to a final point: Twain's Jim ought to be placed in the context of Jim Crow. Huck may come to realize that Jim was a man, but the strategy of the novel depends on figuring Jim as a stereotype first—the stereotypical Jim Crow. Huck eventually sees below and beyond the stereotype, but to do so, he has to mistake Jim for it, and so do we. E. W. Kemble's illustrations make the point an easy one to show in class. The frontispiece is of Huck holding up a rabbit by its back paws, which allows a segue to Twain holding up Joel Chandler Harris's wildly popular "brer' rabbit" stories and Uncle Remus as precursors. (As an aside, I wonder, in the context of Harris, about the irony of the new, no-*nigger* edition being brought out by "NewSouth, Inc.") You can see where this goes, with a long history of stereotypical black men telling stories to little white boys, of black writers like Charles Chesnutt responding to the stereotype with extended reflections on the word *nigger* in a novel like *The Marrow of Tradition*, and more generally to the relationship of cultural performance to segregation law. How is it, after all, that Jim Crow segregation comes to be known under the moniker of a wildly popular racial entertainment? An entertainment that, for all that is known about Twain's anti-racism, he still delighted in attending?

Gribben notes in the introduction to the NewSouth edition that it is "emphatically not intended for academic scholars," and I would agree. Despite its intentions, the NewSouth edition should really not be intended for impatient parents either. It robs the novel of its bite.

Twain's Idiomatic Gun

Christina Zwarg, Haverford College

Mark Twain had a rather large clip in his idiomatic gun where the n-word is concerned. His daughter Susy knew this, which probably explains why she begged her father not to tell his favorite story when he lectured at her school, Bryn Mawr College, in 1891. Twain told the story anyway. And while his tale "The Golden Arm" did not use the n-word, it did use material resembling the burlesque humor found in black-face performances. Eric Lott reminds us in *Love and Theft* how Twain often attended and enjoyed these minstrel productions. I wonder then what Susy would think of the recent debate over the forthcoming edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* where the offending word has been replaced with *slave*? If she could join some of the Bryn Mawr students taking my social justice course at neighboring Haverford College, she might also join them in asking how to mesh the word's appearance in *Huck Finn* with what Frederick Douglass has to say about his experience with and strategic deployment of the same word, notably in *Life and Times*, published just a few years before Twain's novel. Or she might ask her father for his thoughts on a lecture given years earlier by Emerson, one marking an anniversary of the Emancipation of slaves in the West Indies. There he pauses over the word's terrible authority, observing its power to deflate reasoned pleas for social justice by its mere expression. In Emerson's view, the n-word provided those using it with a shortcut to a false notion of racial inferiority. With its rapid fuse to this devastating theory, the word produced lethal results. Worse than crying "fire" in a theater, the mere dropping of this term into polite conversation could consolidate prejudice across vast regions of habit and social practice. Already a high-tech lynching in this sense, *nigger* linked networks of hate like no other utterance before or after.

Along with her classmates, Susy might ask her father to look at Spike Lee's provocative film *Bamboozled*, where the n-word gets applied like so much burnt cork across the entire skin of the film. With them she might ask Twain to notice the character crooning "nigger is a beautiful thing" to consider how that performance dishes up for analysis and consumption some of the dangerous allure the word still carries. Of course, whenever we study an obscenity we always seem to set its terrible logic in motion. Susy might also ask Daddy to consider how Lee's film exposes our continuing obsession with the word, showing as well the heated quarrels that swell up over who can own its rights, like some kind of verbal property. The same debate emerges in fits and starts as students from various backgrounds begin to talk with each other about the issue. After listening to some of these conversations, even Twain might worry that he was applying only three-fifths of his brain whenever the word tumbled so easily onto the page. The same suspicion might be applied to those recovering the word's

magnetic energy today. Sadly, sparks always flash out in these conversations, especially in classrooms where so few students have been prepared for the quickening self-analysis they may have to deploy to break through hidden defenses. Twain himself began to explore the word's punishing value in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, though perhaps not thoroughly enough for Susy. Moreover, after reading Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* with her classmates, she might be tempted to escort her father back to the future where "trigger rhymes with nigger" and malice and sadism blend.

Does it fix things to substitute the word slave for nigger in the recent edition of *Huck Finn*? Of course not, though the edition forces us to ask what we think we are doing when we choose to teach Twain's novel. Asking what we might do to prepare such a topic well should never be a casual question.

Teaching *Huckleberry Finn* to the Tenth Grade at The Brearley School

Renate Von Huetz, The Brearley School

The course in which I teach *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is entirely made up of American literature – we begin with the Puritans and end with *Beloved* and a (mostly) modern poetry unit – and at the same time the girls are studying American History in that class. So, I don't have to work as hard to provide a context for Twain's treatment of race and his use of the word *nigger* as some teachers might. Nevertheless, before we do anything else we talk about the racial epithet, why it's there and how we want to deal with it in discussion. The girls have read, discussed, and written about Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* by then, so they have already come across the word *nigger* in that text. (In fact, they notice and have interesting things to say about the fact that both Huck and Hugh Auld invoke the saying: "Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell" when Jim and Douglass take steps towards claiming their freedom and humanity.) This year, we began our discussion with the paragraph in Chapter Two that begins: "As soon as Tom was back...." I read it aloud and asked them why the word *nigger* appeared so frequently there. They were pretty quick to suggest that its use told us something we needed to know about Huck and his society. They are increasingly able to see that Huck is complicated, contradictory, and influenced by the society from which both he and Jim are fleeing. We always, for example, discuss the quotations below and the passages from which they come. This year, apropos of Alan Gribben's edition, we talked about the effects of substituting the word *slave* in these quotations. The debate was spirited and pretty sophisticated.

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go humble myself to a nigger – but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. (Chapter XV)

Well, if ever I struck anything like it, I'm a nigger. (Chapter XXIV)

And the ironies in Huck's highest praise of Jim are not lost on the girls: "I knowed he was white inside...." (Chapter XL)

I have to say that all of this is easier when there are a healthy number of African-American students in the class. No one wants to have to represent her race. But by and large I find that the kids are much better than adults are at talking frankly and comfortably about race and race relations in America.

I have never been aware of a student being offended or hurt by Twain's use of the word *nigger* or by our discussions of it. Students have been outraged by Jim's insistence, even though it means giving up all his hopes of freedom, on staying with the wounded Tom at the end of the novel, and by Jim's other implausibly saintly or painfully passive behavior. But here again is food for debate and discussion. And I find they can handle it.

Three Cheers for Alan Gribben!

William Gleason, Princeton University

Three cheers for Alan Gribben! Not for scrubbing the n-word out of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—but for reigniting conversation around one of our most volatile, and thus most worthwhile, American texts. We've been here before, of course; perhaps we've always been here. Reading, let alone teaching, Twain's novel has long been risky business. The Concord Public Library pulled it from their shelves for being "absolutely immoral in tone." One early review, awash in sarcasm, praised Huck's account of his father's sufferings from *delirium tremens* as "especially suited to amuse the children on long, rainy afternoons." Readers expecting a sequel to the boyishly comic *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are often dismayed to find they are holding something quite different: something darker in tone, more adult in subject matter, and more ambiguous in morality.

Early disputes over the novel's language focused on its coarseness, not its racial epithets. But by the mid-twentieth century, objections to the book's depiction of Jim and its use of the n-word had come to dominate discussions of the text's appropriateness for instructional use, especially in newly desegregated classrooms. Gribben's bowdlerized version is not even the first of its kind: as recently as 1983, Virginia educator John Wallace published an adaptation of the text for young readers that, like Gribben's, erased the offensive term from the story.

(Wallace also struck out “hell.”) Though Wallace’s edition has slipped out of view, he was at the center of the last major public conflagration over Twain’s use of the word, the one that landed the novel, on its 100th birthday, on Ted Koppel’s *Nightline* under the invitation to reflect: “Huckleberry Finn: Literature or Racist Trash?”

In a certain sense most of us have only ever read bowdlerized versions of Twain’s novel. Originally published with 174 illustrations by E. W. Kemble—illustrations so central to Twain’s conception of the text that 65 of them were included in the prospectus mocked up for subscription agents to show potential buyers—today’s popular editions rarely include even a fraction, if any, of Kemble’s images. This is quite possibly a good thing, since Kemble’s minstrel-like drawings of Jim, critics have argued, don’t humanize him any more successfully than many of the episodes in Twain’s text. If contemporary editions were still reprinting Kemble’s illustrations, make no mistake: Gribben would be stripping them out, too. But with far less controversy.

So I understand Gribben’s desire to produce a text that doesn’t offend at first sight. I’ve seen college students and adult reading groups alike cringe at the n-word in *Huckleberry Finn*. (And also in *Tom Sawyer* and *Pudd’nhead Wilson*; and also in Charles Chesnutt’s conjure tales.) At times I’ve censored myself from reading the word aloud in class. But I can’t do so without calling attention to that censorship and asking students to wonder, with me, why the text provokes in the ways it does, and what that means for our understanding of Huck, Jim—and Twain. Impassioned critics have disputed the extent (indeed, the existence) of Twain’s racism in

Huckleberry Finn for decades. We need this dispute. It takes us into the heart of the novel’s language, into the meanings and contexts of words, then and now. It makes Twain matter, regardless of the side of the argument you favor. So we can chastise Gribben the censor. Or we can thank Gribben for reigniting one of the most useful conversations we should be having about *Huckleberry Finn* every time we teach it, whether we would recommend his version to readers or not. I would not. But I highly recommend the controversy.

Student Essay Contest

To encourage fine analytical writing at the secondary school level, the ALSCW again this spring plans a student essay contest. In anticipation of this endeavor, we would be happy to receive suggestions of names of teachers you know who may wish to receive the contest announcement. Please send your recommendations to essaycontest@alscw.org with “Essay Contest” in the subject line. Look for further information about the second annual contest in the next issue of *Literary Matters*.

New Publications by Members

Editor’s note: We welcome news of our members’ publications, and will note as many as possible in each issue of *Literary Matters*. In some issues, however, available space will dictate a limit of two notices per member. When such limitations are necessary, we will print the first two entries in the order in which they were received. Additional entries will be printed—again, in the order in which they were received—in subsequent issues of *Literary Matters*.

Greg Delanty’s recent anthology, *The Word-Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation* (Norton, December 2010), which we announced in our last issue, includes contributions from several ALSCW members. They are: **Peter Campion, David Ferry, Marcia Karp, Rachel Hadas, Mark Halliday, Saskia Hamilton, Robert Pinsky, A.E. Stallings, and Daniel Tobin.**

James Balakier, *Thomas Traherne and the Felicities of the Mind* (Cambria Press, October 2010);

Michael Groden, *Ulysses in Focus: Genetic, Textual, and Personal Views* (UP of Florida, Florida James Joyce Series, October 2010);

Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones, eds. *The King James Bible After Four Hundred Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences* (Cambridge UP, January 2011);

Marcia Karp, “Don Juan in Hell,” *Times Literary Supplement*, June 11, 2010;

Helaine L. Smith, “Euripides’ Nurse: Performance as Pedagogy,” *The Classical Journal* 106.1 (November 2010);

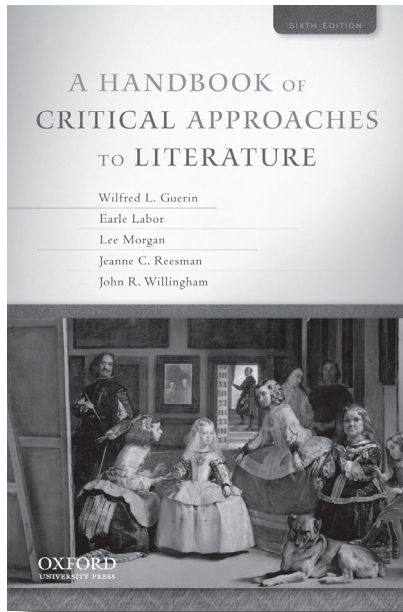
Andrew Sofer, *Wave* (Main Street Rag, January 2011);

Kieron Winn, “First Photo,” *Times Literary Supplement*, November 19, 2010.

An essential guide to the most useful critical approaches to literature— applied to the same six classic works

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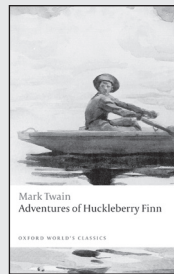
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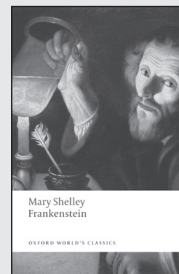
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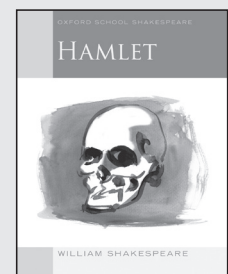
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Report on the 2010 Annual Conference in Princeton, N.J.

For those of you who could not join us last November, the following pages present a series of reports on the goings-on at the 2010 annual conference, held at Princeton University. We were unable to cover all of the sessions this year; but we hope this will give you a good sense of the excellent series of events to which those in attendance were treated. Mark your calendar now for the 2011 conference, to be held at Boston University the weekend of October 14-16.

Introduction: Common Ground

Friday, 10:00 a.m.

The 16th annual ALSCW conference began this year with an interactive conversation between audience and panel—a committee of ALSCW All-Stars including both the association’s immediate past president **Susan Wolfson**, current President **Greg Delanty**, and President of the MLA **Russell Berman**. The audience became increasingly involved in the discussion following Prof. Wolfson’s introductory remarks on the most concerning issues facing contemporary humanities scholars, and several ALSCW members in attendance voiced their passionate opinions.

The debate centered around the so-called “assault on the humanities,” a trend that has increasingly affected American educational institutions and has already crippled humanities departments in Europe. Since universities are focusing on immediate, directly traceable profit lines—and the research departments that provide this income—teachers of modern languages and literatures are feeling growingly threatened by the apparent devaluing of their fields in schools and universities.

ALSCW members put forth several ideas and points of concern during the debate, positing how the humanities could react in combating this movement, but as no immediate solution exists the panel served mostly as a collective acknowledgment regarding an important issue that needs both awareness and immediate attention.

Some progress has been made in combating the anti-humanities trend, and efforts by the ALSCW and the MLA were recently able to preserve advanced comparative literature degree programs at the University of Toronto and Louisiana State University. But audience and panel members agreed that wider reforms would be needed



*Featured speaker **Joyce Carol Oates** reads on Saturday evening.*

if American universities, and American education policy in general, are to reconfigure their value system from a purely utilitarian and construction-based philosophy to one of “instruction,” in which cultural literacy is equally appreciated. As this issue continues to influence educational systems nationwide, it will have to be a major topic of concern for the ALSCW and its partners this upcoming year.

- Chris Blair

Remembrance of Things Past: Scholar-Poets on Renaissance & Contemporary Poems

Friday, 2:45 p.m.

Friday’s festivities continued with the discussion “Remembrance of Things Past: Scholar-Poets on Renaissance & Contemporary Poems,” convened by **Brett Foster** of Wheaton College and **Kimberly Johnson** of



The panel on "Writing War."

Brigham Young University. The panelists, who are poets as well as poetry scholars, included **Francis Blessington** of Northeastern University ("Naming Things"), **Joanne Diaz** of Illinois Wesleyan University ("Ultra-Talk Poetry in the Renaissance"), Foster ("Restless Writing and the Resources of Renaissance Poetry"), **Linda Gregerson** of University of Michigan ("Dramatic Voicing in the Lyric Poem"), Johnson ("Having Faith in Language"), and **Philip White** of Centre College ("The Example of Wyatt").

The panelists discussed Shakespeare, Donne, and Wyatt while examining the relationship between Renaissance and Contemporary poetry. Diaz, whose paper borrows its title from a term Mark Halliday used with respect to contemporary American poetry, brought up Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, in which the speaker compares himself to autumn. The poem takes on its meaning through metaphor, but where does that leave the poems that privilege metonymy over metaphor, if there was such a thing in Renaissance poetry? And what about the Renaissance poems that served as models for the early modern metonymic poets? The panelists returned to this idea later, noting that metaphors can be problematic when they yoke things together in artificial relationships and thus exclude other possibilities. In short, it is impossible to define something as exclusively metaphor or metonymy,

as the two are on a continuum and always working in tandem.

Other characteristics of Renaissance poetry were discussed, such as the emerging legitimacy of national languages as an artistic medium, as well as the language of faith that is so prevalent in the poetry of that era. Johnson noted that, while Renaissance poets used a language of faith and ours is one of doubt, there was an element of uncertainty in Renaissance Christianity, and the questions we confront are the same. Similarly, Gregerson highlighted the 16th-century lyric in connection with emergent American poetry, using Wyatt's "Whoso List to Hunt" as an example of the poetic "voice as a characterological symptom." In both Renaissance and Contemporary poetry, the poet has the ability to move into and out of character, and there is a commonality between the speaker and the implied inner audience.

In this day and age, we don't try to write 16th and 17th century poetry; yet we are influenced by it. The discussion concluded with a reading of each of the panelists' own poetry, shaped by the thoughts of Renaissance and contemporary poets alike.

- Liza Katz

The Common Reader

Friday, 4:30 P.M.

On Friday afternoon **Patricia Hampl, Mark Edmundson, Mark Halliday, and Phillip Lopate** sat on a panel to discuss “The Common Reader” and the common, contemporary experience of reading.

Hampl focused on the relationship between the author’s mind and the reader’s mind, specifically in personal forms of writing. She cited Fitzgerald’s collection of essays, “The Crack-Up,” as a series of psychological breakdowns between story and poem that marked a shift from omniscience to an autobiographical and personal voice.

Edmundson found that the common reader is one who reads for pleasure and easy enjoyment; with many people working a 40-hour work week and needing two incomes to get by, Edmundson explained, the common reader does not wish to undertake the strenuous effort required to understand complex texts. The media, also, no longer strive to shape tastes as they once did. If they took this approach, Edmundson hypothesized, the common reader would feel dumb. Taking a somewhat cynical approach to the topic, Edmundson saw the common reader as a kind of Narcissus, not looking for a challenge so much as instant gratification.

Poet Mark Halliday spoke of the use of accessible versus difficult language in poetry, and his own inclination as a poet to identify with the common reader. Citing the tendency of common readers to conceive of poems as characterized by non-transparent, obscure language, Halliday argued for the

power of simple, accessible language to convey complex ideas. He spoke of clarity and obscurity not as binaries, but rather as different methods of approaching a poem. Language with surface simplicity can convey an underlying difficulty, he related, while seemingly inaccessible language can convey the simplest of ideas.



From top to bottom: **Mark Edmundson** speaks during the panel on “The Common Reader,” the panel on “Remembrance of Things Past,” and **Susan Wolfson** speaks at the Friday evening banquet.

Phillip Lopate, the final speaker, called himself a common reader, one looking for an understanding of the way things are—what he called wisdom, or, the loss of innocence.

- Matthew Connolly

Saturday Morning Seminars

To begin the second day of the conference, several dozen ALSCW members met in four concurrent seminars. The four topics were “Teaching Shakespeare,” “Teaching the Writing of Poetry,” “Studies in Victorian Realism,” and “Literary Allusion.”

In their session, “Literary Allusion” conveners **Joseph Pucci** and **Hannibal Hamlin** led a group discussion on differing conceptions of what it is that constitutes allusion, what purpose it serves in literature, and what effects it creates. Each member of the panel, which included 11 members of our fine organization, presented papers on allusion in different literary works, before entering into a lively debate on the subject.

The discussion began with an attempt to define the breadth of allusion, in a sense determine its literary scope, by considering what features of the text it interacts with. It was suggested that perhaps allusion’s reach could go beyond imagery and find application to

discussion of syntax. This also led into the question of how to distinguish between an allusion and the “trace of a source.” No true consensus was reached, as there exists a certain continuum of subjectivity when it comes to defining literary devices, but it sounds like the kind of distinction one is able to say “I know it when I see it” about.

Next, the role of the author came up, first with a touch of humorous acerbity in the posing of the question “Does anybody really want to know exactly what someone else thought?” after which the discussion acquired a more scholarly demeanor, with talk of the pragmatics governing reader-writer relationships. The issue of what kinds of mutual knowledge the reader and writer can assume the other shares came up, as the use of allusion implies that certain contextual information is presupposed. It was posited that the type of relationship obtaining between a reader and writer is somewhat governed, or characterized at the very least, by the use of allusion.

This theoretical discussion was nicely balanced by the Sunday morning panel, also titled “Literary Allusion,” convened by **Nick Moschovakis**. **Moschovakis**, along with panelists **John Leonard** (University of Western Ontario) and **Christina Pugh** (Univ. of Illinois, Chicago) illustrated the nature of allusion with concrete—and intricate—instances of allusive operations in poetry from the Renaissance to the Contemporary period.

- Samantha Madway

Writing War

Saturday, 10:30 A.M.

After Saturday morning’s concurrent seminars, the first panel of the day convened to address the topic of “Writing War.” **Stacey Peebles** of UNC Greensboro introduced the panel, which included herself and **Chris Walsh** of Boston University, **Jim Frederick** of TIME Magazine, and **Elizabeth Samet** of the US Military Academy, West Point. Walsh began the session with a lecture titled “In Defense of Cowardice,” reflecting on the societal and historical relationship between cowardice and war. Jim Frederick discussed his new book *Black Hearts*, a journalistic attempt at understanding one platoon’s experience in the most deadly area of Iraq. Stacey Peebles then examined contemporary writing coming from the soldiers themselves, such as Iraq War veteran and poet Brian Turner, and how soldiers today live in an American society where a tolerance for varying lifestyles and rapid technological advancement have combined to allow for unprecedented freedoms of expression and opinion among modern US troops. Elizabeth Samet finished up the conversation with a look at how names assigned to wars tend to imply their characteristics—specifically, their faults—and how the current American anti-terror campaign is being de-

scribed as the “Long War.” Drawing examples from both Western and Eastern traditions, and particularly acknowledging the legacy of the Trojan War as the prototypical “long war” in the Western tradition, Samet reflected on the literary vision of wars and its relation to their perception today.

- Chris Blair

A Reading of Memoirs

Saturday, 1:30 P.M.

Mark Edmundson, **Sigrid Nunez**, and **Patricia Hampl** read excerpts from their respective memoirs Saturday afternoon. Edmundson recalled his days as an English teacher at the “last hippie school in America,” where he mentored stoners and brought a rock and roll concert to the Woodstock Country School (Edmundson’s book is titled *The Fine Wisdom and Perfect Teachings of the Kings of Rock and Roll*). Nunez read from her memoir, which focuses on Susan Sontag and the time Nunez spent with her as a young adult. Hampl then read from her in-progress book *The Art of the Wasted Day* (part of a trilogy that examines art and travel), which intersperses the writer’s personal reflections with musings on the life and work of Michel de Montaigne.

- Chris Blair

Robert Fitzgerald Remembered

Saturday, 4:45 P.M.

Saturday ended with a panel honoring renowned classicist and translator Robert Fitzgerald, with Fitzgerald’s daughter **M.J. Fitzgerald** giving the introduction. The panel, which included several veterans of the course on English prosody that Fitzgerald taught at Harvard, remarked on his renowned scholarship and excellent teaching skills, and remembered him as a man who embodied—rather than just argued—his principles. **Dana Gioia** of the Aspen Institute described Professor Fitzgerald as “the finest translator of the classics in the American tradition,” a sentiment that the other previous students and Fitzgerald admirers on the panel—**Phillis Levin**, **Elise Partridge**, and **David Rothman**—echoed.

- Chris Blair

Great Books and the World of Ideas

JOSHUA CONVERSE

At Monterey Peninsula College, we, the students, were hungry for something real. We found it in English 1B: "Introduction to Literature." We arrived in a classroom with **David Clemens** and we all experienced something earth-shattering (or world-shaping). Over the course of weeks the once-flat landscape of Literature delineated by context, race, class, gender, and the quotidian use of language started to shift beneath us; the World of Ideas opened. We learned how to really read. We were on fire to talk about it. I found a copy of *The Great Conversation*, the introductory book in the Great Books series edited by Robert Hutchins *et al.*, and it framed in me a revolutionary concept to which no one before Clemens had ever even alluded: reading can make you a better human being. Reading Great Books is not incentivized by financial reward or promises of success, but it can make you a better citizen of your country. I opened that book and I felt as if Hutchins were speaking to me personally across the decades when he said, "...reading these books will make you a better companion to yourself." He was only the first voice; others would come from the much more distant past.

Within weeks other members of the class and I were meeting on our own time to discuss the Great Books. We read Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. We read Sappho. We felt and spoke as if we had rediscovered some long-forgotten treasure abandoned by the generation before. Members of the faculty began to attend, and we became an officially recognized club on campus.

The semester concluded and people went their ways, but something that had begun with an extraordinary teacher opening my eyes to the discourse of ideas across the centuries, and an old book found in the discard pile at the local library which promised more genuine humanity was now evolving into something deeper: the students I came into contact with seemed to react as I had. We felt we'd missed out on something essential by not being exposed to these works earlier. Our numbers expanded

and contracted as the semesters went on. Sometimes I sat alone and read, waiting for someone to show. Sometimes fifteen people showed up and they had read the material and had strong, bursting, boiling thoughts that they needed to discuss immediately or risk internal injury. They were inspired by what they were reading.

I was inspired by *The Iliad*. I happened upon a Fitzgerald translation when I was in high school and didn't really understand it; it passed me by. After the Army and time spent in the Middle East, I read the Robert Fagles translation and understood, finally, that this poem was not only about the Trojan War, but also about humanity and warfare. It might have been any war. It might be every war.

People came to talk about books. Eighteen-year-olds and sixty-year-olds and teachers came and sat (or stood, gesticulating wildly) and were passionate in ways that are rarely risked on your average community college Friday afternoon. And it was real.

Within a couple of years there was enough momentum on campus and Professor Clemens took a sabbatical to design the Great Books Program at MPC. He created English 5: "Introduction to Great Books." Other courses such as "The Bible as Literature" and "Masterpieces of Literature" were folded into the program and students were offered a chance to study formally the Great Books and to earn a certificate stating as much.

We were privileged then, under the banner of the Great Books Program and with a generous grant from the Apgar Foundation, to host a colloquium on Great Books and Democracy in the spring of 2010 for which **Robert Pinsky**, Victor Davis Hanson, and **Dana Gioia** came to our campus and spoke. The World of Ideas opens more and more to the student body at MPC and to the larger community it supports.

Spring Submissions Deadline for *Literary Matters*

April 4

Send all submissions to literarymatters@alscw.org

Aristophanes in Middle School: *Frogs*

HELAINÉ L. SMITH

[This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates through sample texts and sample lessons how easily and happily the finest literature can be taught in secondary school English classes. The ALSCW is committed to such teaching and seeks similar pieces from its members. Articles should be sent to literary-matters@alscw.org, to the attention of the Editor of *Literary Matters*.]

Aristophanes' *Frogs* is a long and very funny script, reduced [here](#) to about 30 minutes of performance time. The first half of *Frogs* is broad physical comedy as Dionysus and his slave Xanthius make their way from Athens to the Underworld to bring the playwright Euripides back to life so that theatre may again flourish in Athens. Along the way they encounter the hero Heracles, a talking Corpse, the surly boatman Charon, and a lake of Frogs. Once they reach their destination, they find a Chorus of Initiates who in life participated in the Eleusinian mysteries, a seductive Maid of Persephone's, an angry Innkeeper, his Wife, and their Servant (the Innkeeper is omitted in this adaptation), and Aeacus, the ferocious gatekeeper of the Palace of Pluto. This portion of the play moves quickly, with lots of slapstick involving mistaken identities and rapid costume changes.

The second half of *Frogs* is hilarious verbal comedy with a serious purpose. Two dead poets, Aeschylus and Euripides, vie in the Underworld for the Chair of Tragedy, an honor reserved for the best dead playwright. Dionysus arrives just in time to judge their contest and at its conclusion Pluto promises that the winner can return with Dionysus to Athens to save the city by means of the virtues taught by Athenian drama. The second portion of the play is, in many ways, even funnier than

the first, but is frequently regarded as too obscure in its references to the art of Aeschylus and Euripides to be accessible to present-day audiences, let alone to young students. A recent Broadway production, for example, made the mistake of replacing the contestants Aeschylus and Euripides with Shakespeare and Shaw, forcing the hapless adaptor to match Aristophanes' wit and literary knowledge, an impossibly tall order. Such updating also failed dramatically because it was a foregone conclusion to American audiences that Shakespeare would trump Shaw. In Aristophanes' comedy, Aeschylus and Euripides are evenly matched and the outcome is in doubt until the end of the *agon*.

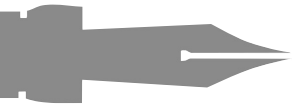
The guiding principle behind this adaptation for young students (at my school *Frogs* was performed by sixth graders, but the text is suitable through twelfth grade), is that English classes should be based on works by first-rate authors and that those authors should then be trusted completely, rather than modernized or denuded. I have cut portions of the play—for example, those that address meter and music—that cannot be presented in non-technical terms, moved scenes around a bit, pared down the number of costume changes required for Xanthius and Dionysus, eliminated the whipping scene to allow more time for the literary contest, and followed the opinion of those scholars—and the evidence of the play—suggesting that the Frog Chorus is, if not altogether offstage, at best a minor motif, and that pride of place belongs to the Chorus of Initiates, who appear at line 323 and remain onstage for the remaining 1,200 lines of the text. I have also tried to ensure that scene changes are simple enough for a modest school production, and that there are enough good parts to go around.



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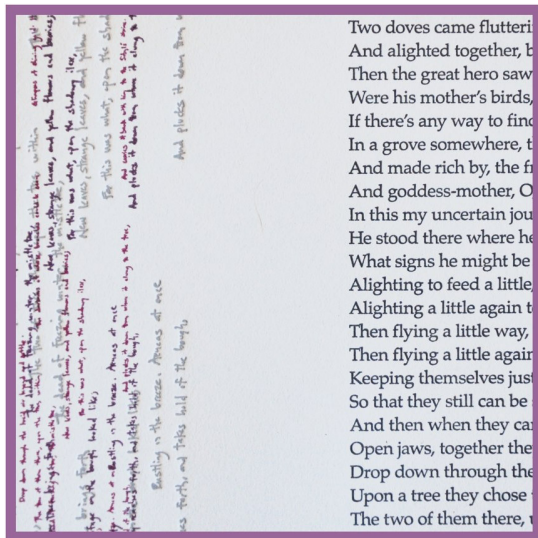


News and Announcements

David Ferry and Jane Hirshfield Announcements

An excerpt from Virgil's *Aeneid* translated by **David Ferry** and a previously unpublished poem by **Jane Hirshfield** are featured in the second and third broadsides in the ALSCW broadside series. You can read more about designer Zachary Sifuentes and see his other ALSCW broadsides on our [Broadside Gallery](#) webpage.

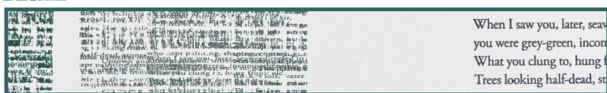
DETAIL



ALSCW Broadside Gallery: Ferry

Ferry, a lifetime member of the ALSCW, is an award-winning translator and poet currently teaching at Boston University. The second broadside in the ALSCW series features his translation of the Golden Bough passage from *The Aeneid*. The image is purple and gray, with an elegant and airy quality appropriate for the subject matter.

DETAIL



ALSCW Broadside Gallery: Hirshfield

Jane Hirshfield's previously unpublished poem "For the LOBARIA, USNEA, Witches' Hair, Map Lichen, Beard Lichen, Ground Lichen, Shield Lichen" appears on the third of the broadsides designed by Sifuentes for the ALSCW. After graduat-

ing from Princeton University and studying at the San Francisco Zen Center, Hirshfield began her career as a writer, teacher, and translator. Her work has been described as including elements of both western and eastern poetry, while using simple language that is subtly inviting to complexity.

The poem featured in the broadside presents a personal reflection on the metaphor of lichens and is set in Garamond next to a beautifully re-imagined cross section of map lichen. The image is green and gray, with the lines of the poem itself incorporated into the body of the lichen.

Longman Cultural Editions

We are still energized by our last great conference, and we wonder, if you had a chance to visit the book exhibits, if you saw the offer by Pearson Longman to receive your requests for a Longman Cultural Edition (those major works on the rack with the gorgeous covers) or a Longman Anthology of British Literature. If you'd like an examination copy, and you don't have the paper form for this request, you may send your request to

Joyce Nilsen: <Joyce.Nilsen@Pearson.com>

If you need a refresher, you may visit the Longman site at <<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/series/Longman-Cultural-Editions/10512.page>>

or for the Anthology <<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/course/British-Literature-Survey-I/91020238.page>>.

Since I'm General Editor of the Cultural Edition series, and on the Board of Editors for the Anthology, I had a special interest in bringing this exhibit to the conference, and would welcome your comments and feedback.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Wolfson
Chair, ALSCW Conference 2010
Immediate Past President, 2010-2011

ALSCW Conference 2011: Boston

Mark your calendar now for this year's annual conference, which will take place on the campus of Boston University, during the weekend of October 14-16. The Conference Committee for the 2011 conference is made up of:

- Greg Delanty** (St Michael's College, *ex officio*)
- Christopher Ricks** (Boston University, chair)
- Zachary Bos** (Boston University)
- David Mikiks** (University of Houston)

Elise Partridge (University of British Columbia)

Tim Peltason (Wellesley College)

Helaine Smith (The Brearley School)

Marina Warner (University of Essex)

Cavanagh's *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*: Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award

In keeping with the tradition set by past ALSCW presidents Christopher Ricks and Morris Dickstein, 2009 ALSCW president and current member Clare Cavanagh has been selected as one of the five finalists for the 2010 National Book Critics Circle Award in Criticism for her book *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (Yale UP, 2010). We offer Clare our congratulations and wish her the very best of luck in the finals.

For more information, visit the NBCC website: http://bookcritics.org/blog/archive/nbcc_finalists_in_criticism_2010/

Keats-Shelley Association of America Inaugural Annual Symposium in NYC

The ALSCW has enjoyed close ties to the Keats-Shelley Association. **Susan Wolfson** has been on the Board of Directors for two decades, and many ALSCW members are also associated with the KSAA. Susan and Past President **Christopher Ricks** participated in the KSAA's panel discussion on Jane Campion's *Bright Star* in September 2009, and in January 2011 Christopher Ricks received the KSAA's Distinguished Scholar Award. This KSAA symposium is the inaugural venture of an annual mid-May Manhattan event that will interest you all. Save the date!

This year's focus is a question with multivalent ramifications. If it is easy to identify "Regency" styles in art, architecture, and interior design, can the template define a literature? What might be its characteristics, contexts, generic constituents, modes of thought? A series of 20-minute, conversation-stimulating papers (about 15 in all, arrayed across the day, with lunch break) will address the question from a number of different vantage-points—such as:

- **Literary Imagination & Regency England**

Social-political jeremiads (*Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, *Queen Mab*, etc.); apocalyptic (both at the end of the Napoleonic wars—e.g. Hunt's *Descent of Liberty*—and in response to political oppression); liberalism and/or conservatism with respect to the arts and literature; middle-class and suburban literary cultures (the Hunt circle, etc., the cult of the poetess); cosmopolitan, multicultural, and imperialist literatures; political and literary satire; the cross-fertilization of the arts.

- **Literary Culture & History**

The rise (and turf wars) of the historical novel; the proliferation of (and gendering of) metrical romances; anthologies of fiction and poetry; "schools" of poetry; the competition of genres (fiction/poetry). How individual writers defined, admired, or critiqued "Regency" values.

- **Material Cultures of Books & Print Media**

Bibliophilia and bibliomania; book design; new publishing and marketing devices; the collecting of black-letter romances; the function and specialization of periodicals; the rise of class-focused publications

More news as plans develop: <http://www.rc.umd.edu/ksaa/>

In Memoriam: Thomas R. Mark

Thomas Mark, who taught in the English Department of Colorado State University for over four decades, died in his sleep at home on Friday, November 12. He was eighty-six years old. Professor Mark was born and raised in New York City, though he lived for several of his early years in Budapest, Hungary. He graduated from Stuyvesant High School in 1942 and joined the Army shortly thereafter, serving as a combat medic with the 102nd Infantry Division in the European Theater. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his heroism.

After his discharge, Mark attended Brooklyn College, graduating in 1949. He then went to Columbia University, where he was awarded a Ph.D. in English literature in 1956. While in graduate school, he began teaching at Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Colorado State University. He quickly fell in love with Colorado and often remarked, "There are only two places a civilized man can live, Paris and Estes Park." His courses on Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton challenged and delighted hundreds of students whose correspondence with him continued long past their college days. He was also among the faculty who helped the College in its transition to a University, separating the departments, such as English and Philosophy. While at CSU he was active in its administration, serving as Graduate Coordinator, among other posts. He retired in 1994 and received an Alumni Association Best Teacher Award in 1996.

Mark was awarded Fulbright, IREX Ford Foundation, and Collegium Budapest grants to study in Budapest in 1963, 1975, 1985, 1991, and 1996. He was a contributor to several scholarly journals, but his most important work was a translation of *The Tragedy of Man* by the Hungarian dramatic poet Imre Madách. It was published in 1989 by Columbia University Press and was awarded the Déry Tibor Prize in 1990. A second edition was published in Budapest in 1999 by Black Eagle Press and received the Füst Milán Prize.

Mark's love of music, which dated from childhood, led him to become involved in the local music scene. An active supporter of the Fort Collins Symphony, he also successfully organized a program to enable broadcasts from Colorado's classical music station to be heard in Fort Collins.

Married for fifty-seven years to Maxine Schlieker, he had two sons, Gregory, of Randolph, New Jersey, and Brian, of Den-

ver, and two much beloved grandchildren, Julia and William Heckman-Mark, of Randolph, New Jersey.

A memorial service was held at Colorado State in the Student Center West Ballroom on January 4, 2011. A Thomas Mark Memorial has been established at the Colorado State University Foundation.

Sofer Wins ASTR Prize

ALSCW member Andrew Sofer's 2009 *Theatre Journal* essay, "How To Do Things With Demons: Conjuring Performatives in *Doctor Faustus*," received the inaugural Oscar G. Brockett Essay Prize from the American Society of Theatre Research for the best refereed essay on theatre published by a scholar who is at least seven years beyond earning his or her doctorate. According to the prize citation, Sofer's "rigorous and insightful interweaving of theatre and literary history, performance and critical theory, and cultural analysis renders his essay a model of elegant scholarly inquiry."

Sofer's first book of poems, *Wave*, was published in December 2010.

For more information on the prize and prizewinner: <http://www.astr.org/awards/oscar-g-brockett-essay-prize>.

American Life in Poetry: Column 305

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

The great Spanish artist Pablo Picasso said that, in his subjects, he kept the joy of discovery, the pleasure of the unexpected. In this poem celebrating Picasso, Tim Nolan, an attorney in Minneapolis, says the world will disclose such pleasures to us, too, if only we pay close attention.

Picasso
by Tim Nolan

How can we believe he did it—
every day—for all those years?

We remember how the musicians
gathered for him—and the prostitutes

arranged themselves the way he wanted—
and even the helmeted monkeys

with their little toy car cerebella—
posed—and the fish on the plate—

remained after he ate the fish—
Bones—What do we do with this

life?—except announce: Joy.
Joy. Joy—from the lead—

to the oil—to the stretch of bright
canvas—stretched—to the end of it all.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation, [<http://www.poetryfoundation.org>] publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2008 by Tim Nolan, whose most recent book of poetry is *The Sound of It*, New Rivers Press, 2008. Poem reprinted from *Water~Stone Review*, Vol. 11, Fall 2008, by permission of Tim Nolan and the publisher. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

For information on permissions and usage, or to download a PDF version of the column, visit www.american-lifeinpoetry.org.

ALSCW Internship Program

Interviews for 2011-2012 academic year internships will be held in May 2011.



Meringoff Matching Fund

The ALSCW would like to extend its utmost gratitude to the following individuals, who together helped to raise a total of \$15,884 for the Meringoff Matching Fund. Their generous donations were made in response to an initial \$15,000 donation by **Stephen Meringoff**, who also offered to donate an additional \$10,000, provided ALSCW members were willing to match him.

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Roy Winnick
Susan J. Wolfson and Ronald Levao
Stephen Yenser

Welcome, New Members!

The Conversation Continues to Grow

Between October 29, 2010, and February 8, 2011, the following people joined our ranks:

Professor Meena Alexander - CUNY, Hunter College and the Graduate Center

Anne Babson - University of Mississippi

Timothy Beals - Cornerstone University

Mr. Louis Begley - New York, NY

Ms. Lyn E. Bigelow - Davis CA Senior High School

Kasia Buczkowska - New York, NY

Dr. Michael Colonnese - Methodist University

Dr. Bob Cowser - St. Lawrence University

Scott Crider - University of Dallas

Ms. Nicole Depolo - Boston University

Dr. Rebecca Duclos - Concordia University

Professor Richard Elia - Salem State University

Professor Gustavo Perez Firmat - Columbia University

Professor Charles Fox - Ritsumeikan University

Nicholas Garland - London, UK

Dr. Linda Gary - Tyler Junior College/Univ. of Texas at Tyler

Ms. Silvia Glick - Boston University

Ms. Emma Hamilton - Brooklyn, NY

Ms. Casy Hawkins - Sherborn, MA

Mr. Richard Hoffman - Emerson College

Gail Holst-Warhaft - Cornell University

Professor Mark Jarman - Vanderbilt University

Joshua Jelly-Schapiro - UC Berkeley

Sheryl Leonard - Ventura, CA

Anne Mallory - East Carolina University

Maxine C. Mark - Ft. Collins, Colorado

Dr. Wight Martindale - Lehigh University

Dr. Andrew Nash - University of Reading

Professor James H. O'Brien - Boston University

Ellen Rachlin - New York, NY

Ms. Elizabeth Reilly - Rutgers University

Ginger Rodriguez - Calumet College of St. Joseph

Dr. Jill Allyn Rosser - Ohio University

Dr. Theresa Schmits - Woodland Community College

John Silver - Pennington, NJ

Reverend Nicholas Simpson - College of Southern Nevada

Shavawn Smith - University of Nevada, Reno

Ms. Kimberlee Smith - UCLA

Dr. Kathleen Staudt - University of Maryland

Stephen Sturgeon - Boston University

Sassan Tabatabai - Boston University

Lorenzo Tibbitts - South Jordan, UT

Professor Nicholas Warner - Claremont McKenna College

Katleen Curtis Wilson - Alameda, CA

Frederick Wiseman - Cambridge, MA

Mr. Matthew Wozny - Harvard University

Dr. Gang Zhou - Louisiana State University

Mr. Jesse Zuba - Rowan University

New Lifetime Members:

Stephen Meringoff - Meringoff Family Foundation

Mr. Mark Moskowitz - Chester Springs, PA

Mr. Jeremy Travers - International School of Luxembourg



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- Annual Fund
- Broadside Gallery Gift (donation of \$500 or more)
- Circle of Friends (pledge of \$1,000 a year for three years)
- Internship Fund (for interns to attend the annual conference)

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