

The Society for the Study of Southern Literature



May 2005
Volume 38, Issue 2

NEWSLETTER

Published at the University of Arkansas

Visit the SSSL Web Site at:

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From the Editor:

Greetings from the Ozarks, one of those borderlands that postmodern thinking has made so popular to talk about. Fayetteville is not too postmodern but it is a city where South meets Midwest, where you find a columned mansion straight out of the Old South standing next to a brick mansion straight out of Ohio. Right up the road in Bentonville is the real postmodern borderlands, however. That's where Wal-Mart headquarters is located. Enough said.

It's hard to tell exactly where Southern literature and criticism is going, but certainly both have a borderlands feel these days. I mean, we have moved away from the standard rural, small Southern literary subjects, haven't we? Or have we? Recently a reporter for *Time* called asking me to name the young Southern writers writing about the Southern urban experience. Well, hmm, there aren't too many that I know of, I said, adding that I was sure over time there will be more, as increasing number of Southerners grow up and live in cities. Okay, so what young-ish Southern writers can you name who write about the contemporary urban South? Off the top of my (often forgetful) head, I came up with Darcey Steinke, Frederick Barthelme, and Josephine Humphreys (sort of). Richard Ford's New Jersey, by the way, doesn't count, nor does Madison Smartt Bell's New York. Gotta be about the Southern urban experience. If you want to help out this poor *Time* reporter, e-mail me your suggestions, and I'll pass them along, giving you credit of course. I promise. Address: brinkm@uark.edu.

Borderlands criticism continues, as you well know, to be a hot field, particularly in Southern studies. Yankeeland just doesn't provide us enough contrast anymore for understanding the South. And, as I've said before, it's an exciting time in Southern studies, one that is generating much, much good work, work that is reconfiguring our understanding of ourselves and our region.

Before signing off, I want to thank Cassandra Edwards for her excellent work this past year as Associate Editor of the Newsletter. She's worked with enthusiasm, responsibility, and smarts. The new Associate Editor, who will begin with the next issue, is Grant Bain, another excellent graduate student here at the University of Arkansas. Grant no doubt will continue what's becoming the stellar tradition in Associate Editors—he's sharp, a recent convert to Cormac McCarthy, and a beautiful writer.

That's it for now. Have a good summer, one that's both restful and productive.

Bob Brinkmeyer

A Message from the SSSL President:

It will be hard for me to follow Bill Andrews as president of the SSSL. Bill did much to set our house in order. Our funds are safely invested, our bibliography is back in full operation, our last general meeting in Chapel Hill succeeded admirably in just about any way one might want to measure it, our presence on the Web is clearly established, and we are once again investigating major projects that offer to involve many of the SSSL's members directly. The Society owes Bill its thanks for seeing to it that our business was not only tended, but tended with great care and genuine concern. One other thing for which I am especially grateful is that our bylaws stipulate that past presidents remain on the Executive Council.

I am also enormously grateful to those officers who continue to serve and to those who manage our year-to-year operations. Having been the secretary-treasurer and editor of the newsletter years ago when all those jobs were one job and the newsletter was mimeographed on yellow paper, I am personally very much aware of the value of the contributions Jeff Abernathy, Bob Brinkmeyer, and Mary Weeks-Baxter make to our collective well-being as an academic society. The job of president of the SSSL would not be very pleasant without them; indeed these days it wouldn't be possible.

The prospects for the next two years, developing on the strengths of our recent past, look promising. Robert West has organized sessions for the MLA convention next December, and Gary Richards is our ALA coordinator. The SSSL sessions at SAMLA and SCMLA are not officially recognized in our bylaws, but George Hovis and others who are organizing programs under the SSSL rubric for these meetings are clearly promoting the SSSL's interests. Jon Smith and Riché Richardson are making arrangements and organizing the program for our next SSSL meeting which will be in Birmingham in Spring 2006; they along with Scott Romine, constitute a Publications Committee charged with examining and recommending projects for the Society. The committee will no doubt welcome all the recommendations it receives.

The SSSL bibliography is once again in full operation on the Web under the guidance of Mary Weeks-Baxter and her committee. The site has received well over two million hits since it went on-line a little over two years ago. Peter Scholing of the University of Groningen wrote the programs we are using, and he continues to monitor their operation and recommend changes. Gordon Garretson at Mississippi State has been the Webmaster for the bibliography since its inception. Gordon is leaving this spring; we owe him our thanks for his skills and dedication to the project.

We have four new members of the Executive Council— Martyn Bone, Deborah Cohn, Leigh Anne Duck, and Jennifer Greeson. I look forward to working with them and the other members of the Council to keep the momentum that Bill Andrews gave us.

Robert Phillips

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Society for the Study of Southern Literature Conference

Topic: "Labor, Literature, and the U.S. South"

Radisson Hotel, Birmingham

March 30-April 2, 2006

"White trash," "lazy Negroes," the "Southern belle": work and the privilege of leisure (or, more pejoratively, idleness) have helped shape a broad range of race, gender, and class representations not only in the national and global arenas, but also within the region itself. Most obviously in the continuing legacy of plantation slavery, this heritage of work and leisure has directed cultural flows and exchanges reaching far beyond the global or national South. In Black Reconstruction, W.E.B. Du Bois provocatively positioned black slaves in the U.S. South—the extent of whose agency in gaining their freedom had largely remained obscure—at the center of a "general strike" that in effect disrupted plantation economies, and he argued that this phenomenon actually held important implications for the development of the national labor movement. In more recent years, with the emergence of the South as the epicenter of U.S. industry fueling exponential increases in its Hispanic, East Asian, and South Asian immigrant populations, the region has functioned as a key channel for the nation in facilitating processes of globalization while playing an increasingly decisive (and controversial) role in shaping its political landscape—a role that has remained obscure, until very recently, in national debates. Yet the U.S. South remains a neglected topic in contemporary labor studies and, surprisingly, has not much factored into that field's theoretical discussions of empire and imperialism. Similarly, labor studies remains for the most part sorely neglected in southern studies.

Yet southern literature has consistently and complexly engaged the theme of labor. From Mary Chesnut's diaries to Charles Chesnut's "Po' Sandy," from William Faulkner's Haitian cadre of workers for Sutpen's Hundred to Zora Neale Hurston's recurrent fictional representations of life (and love) for men and women in labor camps in the South, from the copious leisure of Walker Percy's protagonists to the conspicuous labor of many of Richard Wright's, southern literary history richly reveals a region largely defined by its work and its play.

The Society for the Study of Southern Literature invites your submission of proposals for papers and panels on the topic of labor, literature, and the U.S. South for its upcoming conference from March 30 to April 2, 2006, in Birmingham, Alabama. Even prior to the civil rights era, Birmingham's burgeoning industry, including iron and steel manufacturing, nurtured the emergence of several populist movements such as Alabama Communism, and it reminds us, perhaps most symbolically through Giuseppe Moretti's hulking Vulcan statue (recently renovated and the largest metal statue ever cast in the United States) of the important place of the South in U.S. labor history. The conference hotel is located in Vulcan's shadow, less than a mile from the statue and just three blocks from the hip shops and restaurants of the Five Points South district.

Among some of the topics that might be discussed as they impinge upon Southern literary history are the following:

1. Labor or idleness in the work of canonical as well as more contemporary southern fiction writers
2. Labor or idleness in fashioning representations of gender, ethnicity, race and class in southern literature
3. Labor or idleness in the work of southern women writers
4. Labor and leadership in southern social and political movements

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Continued from the SSSL 2006 Conference - Call for Papers on Page 3:

7. Labor in the global South
8. Labor and love, including marriage and sexuality
9. Labor and immigration
10. Labor and religion
11. Systems of labor in the South, e.g. convict leasing and sharecropping
12. The prison industrial complex in the South
13. Poor whites and slaves
14. Labor in the classroom (i.e. teaching southern literature)
15. Writing the South
16. Representations of southern labor or leisure in film and art
17. Tourism in the South (plantations, Colonial Williamsburg, civil rights, etc.)

We strongly encourage interdisciplinary perspectives, especially those that might generate cross-disciplinary discussion across the fields of southern literature and southern labor and economic history. Proposals for panels and individual papers must be submitted as Word attachments by November 1, 2005, to Riché Richardson at rrichardson@ucdavis.edu. *All proposals must include the proposer's name and email address in the first two lines of the attached document itself.*

Call for Papers: Special issue of American Literature “Global Contexts, Local Literature: The New Southern Studies”

American Literature invites submissions for a special issue on literature and globalization, co-edited by University of Mississippi professors Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer.

Recent debates about globalism have usefully transformed the positioning and the cultural geography of Southern studies: a field historically marked by tensions between the national and the regional is now increasingly characterized by tensions between the local and the global. The editors welcome interdisciplinary and comparative work that focuses on the U.S. South in global contexts and that attempts to reconceptualize the South from various theoretical, literary, and cultural perspectives. Essays may examine the political, economic, or social effects of discourses of globalization on the geopolitical locale of the South and its literary productions; other approaches might seek to redefine the geographical and epistemological boundaries of the U.S. South by linking it to other “Souths” globally.

The deadline for submissions is 1 September 2005. American Literature has a blind submission policy, so authors should include their names only on the cover letter, which should also specify that the submission is for the special issue “Global Contexts, Local Literature.” Submissions, including a cover letter, may be sent as an e-mail attachment to am-lit@duke.edu or by regular mail to American Literature, Duke University, Room 327 Allen Building, 27707. Essays should be no longer than 11,000 words, including endnotes, and should follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. For more information, contact Professor Kathryn McKee, kmckee@olemiss.edu; or Professor Annette Trefzer, atrefzer@olemiss.edu.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Patricia L Bradley's "The Birth of Tragedy and *The Awakening*: Influences and Intertextualities" was recently published in the *Southern Literary Journal* (Spring 2005). Bradley is Assistant Professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University.

The Modern Language Association of America announced that its third annual William Sanders Scarborough Prize went to **Joanna Brooks**, of the University of Texas, for her book *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures*, published by Oxford University Press. **Thadious M. Davis**, of Vanderbilt University, and **Susan Gillman**, of the University of California, Santa Cruz, received honorable mentions. Davis's book, *Games of Property: Law, Race, Gender, and Faulkner's Go Down, Moses* was published by Duke University Press. Gillman's book *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* was published by the University of Chicago Press. The prize is awarded for an outstanding scholarly study of black American literature or culture.

Blue Ridge Heritage: An Informal History of the Family of John Nicholson Idol by **John L. Idol** was published by Parkway Press, Boone, North Carolina. Idol traces how an immigrant to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and his descendants absorb mountain ways and values, and begin to practice the means by which the settlers in the Blue Ridge earned a living. The book thus deals with hill country life before mechanization and records the transition to the age of modern communication, transportation, and technology. Although the book focuses on a particular family, the book generally describes Southern Appalachian family life from the Reconstruction Era to the beginning of the Clinton presidency. John L. Idol, Jr., past president of SSSL and native of Watauga County, North Carolina is now living in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

Race Mixing: Southern Fiction since the Sixties by **Suzanne W. Jones** was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in April 2004. Employing a dynamic model of text and context, Jones shows how forty contemporary writers—including Madison Smartt Bell, Larry Brown, Rosellen Brown, Bebe Moore Campbell, Thulani Davis, Ellen Douglas, Ernest Gaines, Josephine Humphreys, Randall Kenan, Reynolds Price, Elizabeth Spencer, Alice Walker, and Tom Wolfe—illuminate the complexities of contemporary race relations and the problems in defining racial identity today.

Joseph R. Millichap is now Professor Emeritus at Western Kentucky University. His recent publications include: "Caroline Gordon, Aleck Maury, and the Heroic Cycle" in *Southern Quarterly* (2004), "Robert Penn Warren's Classicism: Deciphering Dead Languages and Questioning Father Figures" in *rWp: An Annual of Robert Penn Warren Studies* (2004), and "Rewriting Sleeping Beauty in Caroline Gordon's 'The Petrified Woman'" in *Southern Studies* (2005).

Dorothy Dodge Robbins and **Kenneth Robbins**'s new collection of stories, essays, and memoirs, *Christmas Stories from Georgia*, will be published in October 2005, by the University Press of Mississippi. The volume includes works by such notables as Margaret Mitchell, Ferrol Sams, Lillian Smith, Joel Chandler Harris, Lewis Grizzard, and others as well as works by new and emerging voices. *Christmas Stories from Georgia* is the third collection managed by the Co-Editors and follows the successful publication of *Christmas on the Great Plains* (University of Iowa Press, 2004) and *Christmas Stories from Louisiana* (University Press of Mississippi, 2003).

SELECTED RECENT SCHOLARSHIP IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE

JOURNAL ARTICLES

African American Review

Banks, Kimberly. "‘Like a violin for the wind to play’: Lyrical Approaches to Lynching by Hughes, Du Bois, and Toomer." 38.3 (2004): 451-65.

Bergman, Jill. "‘Everything we hoped she’d be’: Contending Forces in Hopkins Scholarship." 38.2 (2002): 181-99.

Cochran, Robert. "Black Father: The Subversive Achievement of Joel Chandler Harris." 38.1 (2004): 21-34.

Cope, Virginia H. "‘I Verily Believed Myself to be a Free Woman’: Harriet Jacobs’s Journey into Capitalism." 38.1 (2004): 5-20.

Jirousek, Lori. "‘That Commonality of Feelings’: Hurston, Hybridity, and Ethnography." 38.3 (2004): 417-27.

Laudun, John. "Reading Hurston Writing." 38.1 (2004): 45-60.

Morgan, Thomas L. "The City as Refuge: Constructing Urban Blackness in Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods* and James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*." 38.2 (2004): 213-37.

Paulic, Edward M. "‘Papa Legba, Ouvrier Barriere Pour Moi Passer’: Esu in Their Eyes & Zora Neale Hurston’s Diasporic Modernism." 38.1 (2004): 61-85.

Thompson, Mark Christian. "National Socialism and Blood-Sacrifice in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Moses, Man of the Mountain*." 38.3 (2004): 395-415.

Whitted, Qiana. "In My Flesh Shall I See God: Ritual Violence and Racial Redemption in ‘The Black Christ.’" 38.3 (2004): 379-93.

American Literary History

Allen, Thomas M. "South of the American Renaissance." 16.3 (2004): 496-508.

Gonzalez, John M. "The Warp of Whiteness: Domesticity and Empire in Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*." 16.3 (2004): 437-65.

Heller, Dana. "Anatomies of Rape." 16.2 (2004): 329-349.

Hsu, Hsuan L. "Literature and Regional Production." 17.1 (2005): 36-69.

Jerving, Ryan. "Early Jazz Literature (And Why You Didn’t Know)." 16.4 (2004): 648-74.

Kennedy, J. Gerald. "‘A Mania for Composition’: Poe’s *Annus Mirabilis* and the Violence of Nation-building." 17.1 (2005): 1-35.

Kreyling, Michael. "Free Eudora!" 16.4 (2004): 728-57.

Levander, Caroline. "Consenting Fictions, Fictions of Consent." 16.2 (2004): 318-28.

Mancini, J. M. "‘Messin’ with the Furniture Man’: Early Country Music, Regional Culture, and the Search for an Anthological Modernism." 16.2 (2004): 208-37.

Matthews, John T. "Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back." 16.2 (2004): 238-62.

Rowe, John Carlos. "Culture, US Imperialism, and Globalization." 16.4 (2004): 575-95.

White, Ed, and Michael J. Drexler. "Colonial Studies." 16.4 (2004): 728-57.

SELECTED RECENT SCHOLARSHIP IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE

American Quarterly

Glickman, Lawrence B. "‘Buy for the Sake of the Slave’: Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism." 56.4 (2004): 889-912.

White, Ed. "Early American Nations as Imagined Communities." 56.1 (2004): 49-81.

Faulkner Journal

Bloshteyn, Maria R. "‘Anguish for the Sake of Anguish’—Faulkner and his Dostoevskian Allusion." 19.2 (2004): 69-90.

Dimitri, Carl. "Go Down, Moses and Intruder in the Dust: From Negative to Positive Liberty." 19.1 (2003): 11-26.

Fulton, Lorie Watkins. "Justice as He Saw It: Gavin Stevens in *Knight's Gambit*." 19.2 (2004): 25-48.

Horton, Merrill. "Faulkner, Balzac, and The Word." 19.2 (2004): 91-106.

Kriewald, Gary L. "The Widow of Windsor and the Spinster of Jefferson: A Possible Source for Faulkner's Emily Grierson." 19.1 (2003): 3-10.

Mark, Rebecca. "As They Lay Dying; or Why We Should Teach, Write, and Read Eudora Welty Instead of, Because of, as Often as William Faulkner." 19.2 (2004): 107-20.

Nelson, Lisa K. "Masculinity, Menace, and American Mythologies of Race in Faulkner's Anti-Heroes." 19.2 (2004): 49-68.

Petty, Homer B. "Perception and Destruction of Being in *As I Lay Dying*." 19.1 (2003): 27-46.

Ricardson, Daniel C. "Bridging the Gulf: An Analysis of a Brazilian Translation of Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*." 19.1 (2003): 61-76.

Tebbetts, Terrell. "*Sanctuary*, Marriage, and the Status of Women in 1920s America." 19.1 (2003): 47-60.

Wilhelm, Randall S. "Faulkner's Big Picture Book: Word and Image in *The Marionettes*." 19.2 (2004): 3-24.

Mississippi Quarterly

Aboul-Ela, Hosam. "The Political Economy of Southern Race: *Go Down, Moses*, Spatial Inequality, and the Color Line." 57.1 (2003-04): 55-64.

Bartling, Hugh. "Organizing the New South: Local Ecologies and Autonomous Strategies for Confronting Globalization." 57.1 (2003-04): 135-45.

Boyagoda, Randy. "Just Where and What Is 'the (comparatively speaking) South'? Caribbean Writers on Melville and Faulkner." 57.1 (2003-04): 65-73.

Cartwright, Keith. "Voodoo Hermeneutics/The Crossroads Sublime: Soul Musics, Mindful Body, and Creole Consciousness." 57.1 (2003-04): 157-70.

Faffik, David. "South of the 'Border,' or Poe's *Pym*: A Case Study in Region, Race, and American Literary History." 57.2 (2004): 265-88.

Iannini, Christopher. "The Vertigo of Circum-Caribbean Empire: William Bartram's Florida." 57.1 (2003-04): 147-55.

Mississippi Quarterly (cont.)

Jones, Carolyn M. "Race and the Rural in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *Cross Creek*." 57.2 (2004): 215-30.

Loichot, Valérie. "Glissant, Yoknapatawpha." 57.1 (2003-04): 99-111.

Lowe, John. "The Construction and Deconstruction of Masculinity in *The Yearling*." 57.2 (2004): 231-46.

Lowe, John. "Reconstruction Revisited: Plantation School Writers, Postcolonial Theory, and Confederates in Brazil." 57.1 (2003-04): 5-26.

Makowsky, Veronica. "The Changing American Hero and the 'Eternal Bitch' in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Sojourner*." 57.2 (2004): 247-53.

Malena, Anne. "The Translation of Louisiana into the South." 57.1 (2003-04): 85-97.

Newell, Carol E. "Folk Culture in Women's Narratives: Literary Strategies for Diversity in Nationalist Climates." 57.1 (2003-04): 123-34.

Rieger, Christopher. "Don't Fence Me In: Nature and Gender in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *South Moon Under*." 57.2 (2004): 199-214.

Robertson, Sarah. "Dislocations: Retracing the Erased in Jayne Anne Phillips's *Shelter*." 57.2 (2004): 289-311.

Samway, S.J., Patrick. "A Homeward Journey: Edwidge Danticat's Fictional Landscapes, Mindscapes, Genescapes, and Signscapes in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*." 57.1 (2003-04): 75-83.

See, Sarita. "Southern Postcoloniality and the Improbability of Filipino-American Postcoloniality: Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*." 57.1 (2003-04): 41-54.

Trefzer, Annette. "Imperial Discourses in Caroline Gordon's *Green Centuries*." 57.1 (2003-04): 113-22.

Stark, Joseph. "Motive and Meaning: The Mystery of the Will in Poe's 'The Black Cat.'" 57.2 (2004): 255-63.

Segrest, Mab. "Rebirths of a U.S. Nation: Race and Gendering of the Nation State." 57.1 (2003-04): 27-40.

Southern Literary Journal

Bentley, Greg W. "The Wounded King: Bobbie Ann Mason's 'Shiloh' and Marginalized Male Subjectivity." 37.1 (2004): 144-61.

Bloshteyn, Maria. "Dostoevsky and the Literature of the American South." 37.1 (2004): 1-24.

Brewton, Vince. "The Changing Landscape of Violence in Cormac McCarthy's Early Novels and the Border Trilogy." 37.1 (2004): 121-43.

Gray, Jennifer. "The Escape of the 'Sea': Ideology and *The Awakening*." 37.1 (2004): 53-73.

Hardin, Michael. "Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*: Invisibility, Race, and Homoeroticism from Frederick Douglass to E. Lynn Harris." 37.1 (2004): 96-120.

Jones, Paul C. "Burning Mrs. Southworth: True Womanhood and the Intertext of Ellen Glasgow's *Virginia*." 37.1 (2004): 25-40.

Miller, Shawn. "'Some Other Way to Try': From Defiance to Creative Submission in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." 37.1 (2004): 74-95.

Shillingsburg, Miriam Jones. "Simms in the War-Time Richmond Weeklies." 37.1 (2004): 41-52.

Southern Review

Essay:

Bass, Rick. "Taku" 40.4 (2004): 779-805.

SELECTED RECENT SCHOLARSHIP IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE

Southern Quarterly

- Bowles, Emily. "‘You Would Think Me Far Gone in Romance’: Eliza Lucas Pinckney and Fictions of Female Identity in the Colonial South." 42.4 (2004): 35-51.
- Clabough, Casey. "Will, Appetite, Alchemy, Faulkner, and Two French Poets: Fred Chappell’s *The Inking*." 42.4 (2004): 5-18.
- Juncker, Clara. "Women at War: The Civil War Diaries of Floride Clemson and Cornelia Peake McDonald." 42.4 (2004): 90-106.
- Millichap, Joseph. "Caroline Gordon, Aleck Maury, and the Heroic Cycle." 42.4 (2004): 73-89.
- Murray, Jennifer. "Approaching Community in Carson McCullers’s *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*." 42.4 (2004): 107-16.
- Plunka, Gene A. "Beth Henley’s *The Debutante Ball* and the Modern Neurosis." 42.4 (2004): 19-34.
- Rudnicki, Robert W. "‘Ineffable Sociabilities’: Criss-Crossing, Game-Playing, and Sight-Seeing with Walker Percy in His Delta." 42.4 (2004): 117-26.



Do you have ideas for future Newsletters? If so, let us hear from you!

We welcome your ideas and suggestions for the Newsletter, and we thank all those who have contributed to past issues. What would you like to see in future issues? We are especially interested in articles, essays, book reviews—any piece of writing you’d like to submit for consideration. Just drop us a line at the University of Arkansas, Kimpel Hall 333, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, or email us at sssl@uark.edu.

Time to Renew Your Membership?

In order to remain current and continue receiving SSSL notifications, please fill out and return the form on page 12 today! Also, be sure to renew your membership dues.

Moving?

Please send your new address (include both physical and email addresses) to:

Jeff Abernathy, Dean of the College, Professor of English, Augustana College, 639 38th Street, Rock Island, Illinois 61201.

Or email: abernathy@augustana.edu



Putting Membership Fees to Good Use

Some members have asked why they should support the SSSL through dues now that the newsletter is available online for free.

Former SSSL President, Bill Andrews, provides the following rationale:

- * Registration fees for our conferences are kept low to encourage graduate student attendance, and we use dues to cover conference expenses that the fees don’t cover.
- * Dues paying members can register for the biennial conference at a reduced rate, which non-members do not get when they register.
- * The Newsletter still has expenses: we pay a webmaster for his work. The Newsletter also has a graduate student editorial assistant at the U of Arkansas who has to be compensated for her work.
- * The work of the Bibliography Committee also requires technical support which in the past a single person (now retired) used to do for the Society at no cost. The labor required to input, download, and collate all the information the Bibliography Committee compiles in the future will require financial compensation.
- * The work of the Society, though it has no paid staff, requires occasional technical and/or secretarial labor that must be compensated, e.g., the audit of the Society’s financial records that we have hired a student to do.

SSSL at MLA

The Society for the Study of Southern Literature sponsored two panels at the 2004 MLA conference. Panel Chairs, Riché Richardson (University of California, Davis) and Barbara Ladd (Emory University) offer the following reports:

2004 MLA SSSL Session on “Sexuality and the Grotesque”

The session on “Sexuality and the Grotesque in Southern Literature and Film” at the 2004 MLA convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania drew approximately twenty-five audience members, including a range of scholars in the field such as John Lowe, Susan Donaldson, and Michael Bilber, and began with the announcement by President Bill Andrews of the 2004 Hugh Holman Award recipient. From a thematic standpoint, the session’s emphasis seemed significant and timely to the extent that it recuperated the grotesque as a long-standing topic of interest in southern literature as it reflected the increasing theoretical interest among scholars in southern studies in engaging the topic of sexuality.

Susan L. Edmunds, who teaches at Syracuse University with interests in 20th century American literature and culture, African American literature, and modernism, and who has authored books such as Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis and Montage in H.D.’s Long Poem and Grotesque Relations: History, Distortion and the Social Body in Modern American Domestic Fiction, presented a talk entitled “Getting the Gags: History, Sexuality and Grotesque Humor in Blanche McCrary Boyd’s The Revolution of Little Girls.” In the talk, Edmunds calls our attention to Boyd’s focus on gag as an organizing device in the novel to explore aspects of the character Ellen Burns’ past and some of the history that informs it, and uses excellent skills in close textual analysis to read the novel methodically and to trace images of choking and gagging. Edmunds examines issues of psychosexual trauma and recovery in the novel, arguing that it explodes the very discourse of psychotherapy. A particularly interesting and engaging aspect of Edmunds’ talk considers Boyd’s profound investment in the character Scarlett O’hara from Gone with the Wind and the classic vow “never to go hungry again.” Edmunds points to the trope of the black hole, the invocation of lynching, and of issues such as homophobia in the novel and ultimately suggests that it gives us a tool for addressing the issue of terrorism at home. This paper, it should be noted, also has important implications for food studies.

Nathan G. Tipton, who is currently completing a Ph.D. in Textual Studies at the University of Memphis, and whose essays have appeared in several periodicals and journals, presented a talk entitled “Look Away, Look Away: Patricia Highsmith’s Southern Otherness.” Tipton begins by highlighting biographical details about Highsmith and the “secret” of her southernness that became more salient after her death. He notes that even her interest in objects in southern material culture such as Confederate swords and a love for Gone with the Wind did not remedy her remove from the region in her lifetime. He points to her consistent fictional examination of identity flux through the lenses of gender and sexuality, argues that she aspired to create a non-southern identity that she could not fully escape, and compares her to writers such as Paul Green and Carson McCullers. For instance, He notes that Highsmith and Green were both intrigued by the fragmented nature of human identity. The talk focused on crime fiction and the anti-hero through an examination of Highsmith’s 1950 novel Strangers on a Train and the classic film adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock, and pointed to her revision of classic southern tropes. For Tipton, it is significant that Highsmith uses geography and the issue of southern honor to script characters such as Guy Haines and Charles Bruno. Tipton tellingly observes that in this work, the move North makes characters more rational and the move South makes them more unbalanced and incites violence. Furthermore, he notes the

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homoerotic tensions that characterize the relation of the two main male characters. When considering her southern evasions, it would also be fascinating to consider Tipton's examination of Highsmith in relation to passing, a phenomenon that has been classically related to race, and that has increasingly been explored in relation to gender and sexuality but not enough in terms of region. Moreover, Tipton's paper has important implications for current theoretical work on masculinity.

Deborah Wilson teaches at Arkansas Tech University and specializes in American literature, Southern literature, and film and has published on various authors, including William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty, and Ellen Douglas. In the session, Wilson gave a talk entitled "Queering the Gothic in Ellen Douglas' *A Lifetime Burning*." Wilson begins her talk by underscoring ways in which the grotesque causes divisions within the self and argues that Douglas deploys images of monsters to subvert their patriotic uses. Wilson illustrates how Douglas' method responds to the use of monsters in Southern literature, and particularly to those in the work of Faulkner. Furthermore, she points to how the queer themes of the novel participate in the gothic tradition and help to reconfigure gender and sexuality.

All three talks were rich and engaging and flowed extremely well together. The Q&A afterwards generated several interesting questions.

Riché Richardson, Panel Chair

2004 MLA SSSL Session on "The Borders of Southern Literature"

The Society for the Study of Southern Literature sponsored a session at the 2004 meeting of the Modern Language Association in Philadelphia on "The Borders of Southern Literature." Papers were selected by Dr. James Watkins of Berry College.

Professor Eric Gary Anderson of George Mason University spoke on "The Red Atlantic: Nationalist Cross-Dressing and Native Cultural Authority in the Florida Captivity Narrative of Jonathan Dickinson," taken from a book-in-progress on the Red Atlantic. Professor Anderson examined American Indian points of view as reflected in Dickinson's captivity narrative for evidence of the ways that Native subjects read whites in the contact zone and the ways that *our* exposure, as readers, to Native reading practice (as mediated as it is) undercuts the conventions of "captivity-narrative discourse" as it has been inscribed in literary history focused on Northern captivity narratives.

Professor Caroline Field Levander, of Rice University, spoke on "Confederate Cuba." In this paper, she explored the way that Lucy Holcombe Pickens's *The Free Flag of Cuba* imagines Cuba as "the South's own territory," a "pivotal crossroads for charting a . . . southern identity" separate from the United States. Drawing on the writing of U.S. and Cuban journalists of the period, Levander complicated Pickens's association of southern separatism with a Cuban "territory" and illuminated the "complex, and sometimes occluded, history of intervening sectional, regional, and national interests" in the 19th-century United States.

In "Life and Death in the Dirty South: Urban Ritual Grounds in Tayari Jones's *Leaving Atlanta*," Professor Jürgen Ernst Grandt of the University of Georgia argued that what Robert Stepto identifies as the "ritual grounds" of African-American vernacular literature are no longer, in the post-Soul era, to be found only in rural contexts. *Leaving Atlanta*, focusing on the Atlanta child murders, "(re)configures the urban South of the post-Soul generation as a symbolic territory," which "undermines not only the sense of community and indeed humanity of [its] inhabitants, but also (vernacular) language and storytelling itself."

Although we were scheduled for the last time slot of the convention, there were sixteen people in attendance and some time left for discussion of these three excellent papers.

Barbara Ladd, Panel Chair

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