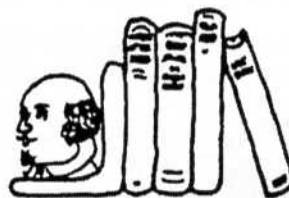


BIBLIO-NOTES



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News from the Chair

I suppose it is a curse and a blessing for everyone involved that the EALS Section Chair holds office for only one year. On the one hand, there is the great joy of throwing the scoundrels out each year; on the other, the members must cope with the earnest enthusiasm of each new chair. But I will not miss this opportunity to wax lyrical on our section.

EALS is the fastest growing section in ACRL. I remember being taken aback when I first joined ALA and ACRL, that there was no sanctioned group for English and American literature librarians, for I have always felt that a library's heart was its literature collection. It was more relief than surprise when Michaelyn Burnett told me about our previous incarnation, the EAL Discussion Group.

It is fascinating to look at the roster of EALS members, where some people list their work address and department for mailings. Our members include public librarians, school librarians, rare book librarians, reference librarians, catalogers, and bibliographers, all here because we share an interest in English and American literature and librarianship, and understand its importance to all libraries.

Everyone grumbles about ALA meetings (the prices! the shuttle buses!), and I do my share, but I enjoy the EALS meetings at ALA tremendously because of the people who attend; some old friends, some new acquaintances, and always a congenial, intelligent group willing to openly discuss issues of importance to the profession. Especially now, as both the discipline of English and American literature, and the profession of librarianship, are expanding their scope and changing so rapidly, we need

more than ever a place to discuss ideas and developments, and our members bring fresh energy to the task. I am confident that we can maintain the collegial nature of our group, both electronically and in person, as we expand our membership.



Outgoing Chair Tim Shipe is flanked by incoming Chair Perry Willett and Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect Betty Day

I neglected to thank our outgoing officers at the meeting in New York, but I think a special thanks should go to Tim Shipe, the outgoing chair, who worked so hard to get the bylaws written, and to generally shepherd us into ACRL Section-dom. Also, many thanks to last year's program committee for having put together such a wonderful program for the meeting—hearing Edward Albee, Ming Cho, Estelle Parsons and the others was the highlight of this ALA Convention for me.

Perry Willett, Chair
EALS

Book Review

The *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*. Ed. Stephen Regan. Published for The English Association. Oxford: Blackwell; Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1994-. Annual. \$90.00

This first volume of a projected annual series is a companion to *The Year's Work in English Studies* (1921-) and, indeed, continues the

chapter on literary theory that appeared in *YWES* from 1982-93. The key features are: eight chapters that review English-language books and articles (1991 covered in vol. 1) in several areas, a list of books received (about 225), a section of essays, and an index. The eight chapters cover: 1) critical theory in general, 2) rhetoric and deconstruction, 3) psychoanalysis, 4) feminism and gender studies, 5) historicism, 6) colonial discourse and postcolonial theory, 7) art history, and 8) popular music. Future volumes will also cover media and film studies, and the section of commissioned essays will be on different topics. Vol. 2 has appeared but I have not seen it.

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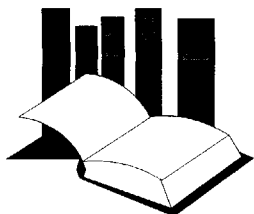
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The only rival to *YWCCCT* is "Recent Work in Critical Theory" published annually in *Style* (originally a review essay now an annotated bibliography). *Style's* coverage is broader because it includes numerous essay collections and studies on individual authors and totals nearly twice as many items, but seems less focused and a less authoritative selection of the best work (it's primary author is William Baker, English librarian at Northern Illinois University). Neither annual review pretends to be an exhaustive bibliography, but this is a difficult field to be bibliographic in. Of the serial bibliographies the *MLA International Bibliography* has the largest and broadest selection of entries, but its coverage is, at best, spotty: for example, of the thirty-one books reviewed in chapters 1 and 6, the *MLAIB* cites only fifteen, less than half! Clearly, specialized bibliographies such as *YWCCCT* remain essential.

The essays are fair, non-polemical, and sympathetic with their subject. Treatment does vary in the different chapters. The chapter on feminism, for example, is by several writers and proceeds topically from feminist theory through black women's writing and criticism, international and postcolonial feminism, European feminism, lesbian feminism, psychoanalysis and feminism, representation, and finally to gender studies and masculinity. In contrast, the chapter on historicism is by one reviewer and proceeds from name to name, from Trotsky through Lukacs to Bloch, Benjamin, and others. The British emphasis and point of view may be a drawback in the chapter on popular music,

but on the whole the volume is quite relevant to North American scholars. It looks beyond English-language theorists and critics and so seems to survey current international critical and theoretical discourse (in English).

There are flaws of course. The list of books received is useful, but the long lag between year covered and year published makes this less useful for selection than for double-checking selection later. The index is barely adequate: it omits titles of books and journals, and



it provides scanty reference to extensive topics such as Marxism. Nowhere are theory, cultural, and critical defined. Books are privileged over journals. Several times reviewers prefer journal articles over books, but these articles are not included in the bibliographic lists or the index, not adequately cited, and not fully recognized conceptually. If criticism and theory are a dialogue, then the most lively stage is the journal in which article can be quickly followed by counter-article, letters respond, dispute, and elaborate, and announcements of new books and upcoming conferences keep readers informed about the whole field. This point leads to the further thought that the year's conferences, seminars, new courses, programs, and centers, announcements of book series, textbooks and anthologies, and even biographical and institutional events—theorist X hired away by University Y, given a named chair, set up with a research center and budget—all ought to be reviewed. We need a review of the year's "work," not just its publications. Nevertheless, *YWCT* provides an important means, albeit imperfect, for scholars and librarians to keep up with the field of critical and cultural theory.

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Death of Anita Lowry

It is terribly sad to note the passing of Anita Lowry, the head of Information, Research and Instructional Services of the Main Library at the University of Iowa. Although not an EALS member herself, Anita touched many EALS members through her work with electronic texts, her instruction at the Rutgers/Princeton Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities (CETH) Summer School, her writings, and her general good humor and deep insight. I had asked Anita to participate in a proposed panel sponsored by EALS on electronic texts and libraries at the 1997 ACRL National Conference in Nashville, and was very happy when she agreed.

I worked with Anita at my first job at Butler Reference of Columbia University in New York, where she was the Deputy Head at the time. I noticed that everyone listened carefully when she chose to speak, because they knew that she would make a significant contribution to the discussion. She was not shy about speaking her mind, but saved her words for moments in which they would have the greatest impact.

My contact with her has since been limited to conferences and other brief interactions, but I can probably remember each one, and I learned something from her each time. She may not have known this, but I chose her as one of my mentors. I learned from her a great deal about this profession, how by bringing passion, compassion and ideas, one person can make a difference in the lives of others.

Our profession will be poorer, as we who knew her and learned from her struggle to cope with her loss.

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Internet Training for English Graduate Students

For nearly twenty years I have taught English graduate students how to conduct scholarly research. In the 1970's the focus was almost exclusively on print tools. In the 1980's, commercial databases, particularly those marketed by DIALOG, provided speed and, in the case of interdisciplinary topics, a comprehensiveness that could not be easily matched by print sources. In the 1990's, no scholar can pretend to have mastery of the research apparatus of their discipline without some knowledge, and skill, in navigating the World Wide Web.

At George Washington University, the course entitled "Introduction to Graduate Studies in English" has an electronic component. In addition to preparing mock conference papers, and writing essays on traditional literary subjects, students must keep a journal of their experiences on the Internet. Each student is required to:

- communicate with the instructor and me through e-mail
- subscribe to a minimum of two electronic lists
- review the contents of two electronic journals
- visit several Web sites in their projected area of specialization
- subscribe to the class electronic list and post/respond to messages

I have tried to make students' work easier by placing every thing they need on my home page. The one site I emphasize the most is the **Voice of the Shuttle** (<http://humanitas/ucsb/edu/shuttle/english.html>), created and maintained by Alan Liu, an English Professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Professor Liu groups sites by traditional literary periods, as well as by genres, national literatures, and by popular cross-disciplinary subjects, such as gender studies. I also link key electronic journal mega-cites, such as the CIC Journals Collection, and sources that I know students will find particularly valuable, such as those explaining how to cite electronic

materials and communications.

One of the things I have learned over the years is to check in with students about six weeks into the semester, to ensure that everyone is successfully subscribed to groups, and is linking to resources that he or she finds valuable. Factors that I cannot control, but which affect student attitudes, include:

- the volume of student traffic in the computer lab, which determines whether my students are able to secure a terminal
- the quality of communication on a list (i.e., is it too "chatty"?)
- the number of e-journals that have full-text, not just tables-of-content
- the speed with which Web files are transmitted to students' computers
- the quality of Web sites, some of which, like e-lists, are superficial

Based on journal comments from previous years, the electronic communication unit is one of the most popular offered by the instructor. Students have the opportunity to see the richness of diverse scholarly materials, from illustrated medieval manuscripts to the full-text of 19th century women writers. Perhaps most valuable is the networking that begins in these classes: through the course's own e-list, students begin to discuss and analyze literary issues more collaboratively, and to see academic discourse as an ongoing process that is not relegated to a specific day and time; through the academic e-lists, they inaugurate collegial relationships that may assist them with job searches and with dissertation writing. Interestingly enough, a growing number of jobs are announced in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and on e-lists, that require knowledge of computer-based research methods as well as more traditional professional specializations. I think that, increasingly, students who take this course will have an edge in getting positions over those who stuck to print resources or, at best, never extended their electronic expertise beyond OPAC database searches.

If you would like to see the kinds of resources I have placed on my home page, the URL is: <http://gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~scottlib>

Scott Stebelman

**Recent Studies of Interest to English
and American Literature Librarians
by Scott Stebelman**



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