

Southern Discourse

Newsletter of the Southeastern Writing Center Association



Fall 2000

Volume 4, Issue 1



Lisa Ede to Speak at 2001 SWCA Conference

By Caroline Murnane
Agnes Scott College

Few people possess Lisa Ede's level of dedication to writing centers. Ede has directed one or more writing programs since she began her teaching career in 1975, the last twenty years of which she has spent as the director of the Center for Writing and Learning at Oregon State University. During her time at Oregon State, Ede has transformed her center into a hotbed of learning, collaboration, and technology and paved the way for dozens of other writing centers across the country. She has written extensively on writing centers, contributing dozens of chapters and articles to various books and journals. Her own books include *Work in Progress: A Guide to Writing and Revising*, and *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, which challenges the widely held assumption that writing is simply a solitary act. Ede's research in the study of collaborative writing makes her a particularly appropriate choice for keynote speaker at the upcoming SWCA conference in Auburn.

In her speech, Ede plans to reflect on her twenty years at Oregon State and the changes that have occurred throughout. In the beginning, she says, "It was one horrible budgetary crisis after another—very much the old story of writing centers." Ede feels that one of the most positive changes she's noticed over the years is a general acceptance of the writing process movement. Teachers and students at Oregon State now better understand that those who work in writing centers wish "to work with writers on writing, not to be remedial. Students who come now understand that revising is a part of the writing process." The school also has a well-developed program that focuses on writing across the curriculum. Since the program was instituted in 1990, 350 faculty members have gone through train-

ing and gained a heightened awareness of the writing center's purpose. As a result of the training, the writing center has earned a great deal of faculty support and admiration.

Despite the work of revolutionaries like Ede, we all know that the usual writing center problems have not simply faded into the background. Although writing centers grow increasingly sophisticated and technologically advanced by the day, they must also fight the same old public misconceptions and attitudes. "It's always an uphill battle," says Ede. "Writing centers are always going to run the risk of having their mission misunderstood." Misunder-



Lisa Ede, keynote speaker of the 2001 SWCA Conference.

standings about literacy in our culture continue to push their way into the workings of the education system from elementary school to college, and "teachers of all levels think it's the fault of teachers at the preceding level." Then, of course, there's money. Says Ede, "We spend inordinate amounts of time trying to keep the centers alive." Alive and flourishing: during the last ten years, Oregon State's writing center has made huge technological advances, developing an online writing lab, webpages, and an online hotline to which students can send their papers and questions. They average around 1000 conferences per term, a high percentage of which are held with graduate students.

To Ede, the most rewarding aspect of her job is working with the writing assistants in the Oregon State center. "They do a wonderful job of self-selection," she says. "They're quite extraordinary." Fitting words for Ede herself.

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Theorizing *Southern Discourse*

By Christine Cozzens
Agnes Scott College

Like the student who after numerous revisions finally discovers her thesis, after three years of editing this newsletter, I am finally figuring out the editorial philosophy that guides *Southern Discourse*. Encounters with the many SWCA members and others who've written articles have contributed much to that philosophy, whether they knew it or not, as have my own sometimes rocky, always stimulating experiences with editors from the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic Celtic Quarterly*, and other publications both in and out of the field of writing. Starting with this number of the newsletter, I hope to make some of this philosophy more apparent in our editorial practices and even in the content of what *SD* offers its readers.

Southern Discourse addresses a community of writers and teachers or tutors of writing. Writing and editing for such an expert and potentially critical group adds pressure to the already tense business of publishing. When my editorial assistant and I translate a piece from an email or disk submission to our layout software (MS Publisher), we try to make the fewest number and lowest magnitude of changes possible to allow the author's original and distinctive voice to come through.

Of course we edit grammatical or punctuation mistakes and typos, and we know the author would want us to. Nothing is more embarrassing than going into print with a big fat grammar error for all to see, and all of us make these mistakes—it's the nature of writing. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is our guide in these matters. If you don't know this book, I recommend you pick up a copy; for sheer rationality, comprehensiveness, and straightforward presentation of rules and practices, it has no peer. We also alter some awkward or hard-to-follow phrasings if they cause us to trip in the reading. Again, we hope we are doing what the authors would want us to do. But assuming we've received the article by the deadline, we don't rearrange, recast, or substantially rework passages unless we check with the author first, or better still, unless we get the author to do it herself. That's one difference between *SD* and most publications, where an itchy finger on the cut and paste commands seems to be the norm.

That being said, I do admit to having certain writing peccadilloes, and (I blush to say), editing a newsletter offers one glorious chance to declare my stylistic preferences—within

How to Submit Articles to *Southern Discourse*:

Articles should be sent to Christine Cozzens via email (in the body of the message or as an attachment) or disk (MS Word preferred). Please note the following deadlines:

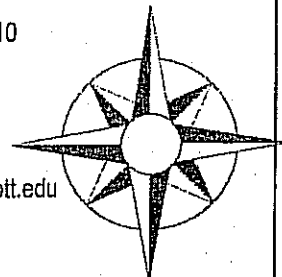
Spring 2001: March 1st
Summer 2001: May 1st
Fall 2001: October 1st

reasonable limits—to the world. To cite a few embarrassingly eccentric examples, I dislike sentences that begin with *however* (meaning "on the other hand")—an old-fashioned view, I know—because that placement diminishes the role *however* plays as a kind of fulcrum for two ideas when used after a semicolon. I also go after (note how aggressive one's language becomes when one starts talking about language!) non-substantive words or phrases: *it is, there are* when a more substantive noun and verb combination is available; *as it were* and its relatives; and loosely-used words like *indeed* that simply fill space. And I ~~hate~~—yes, HATE—the use of typo/graphy to make a point!!!!!! "Find the right word," I tell my students; "change the syntax," but don't cheat by playing games with your all-too easy formatting commands.

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Auburn University to Host SWCA Conference 2001

By J. Russell Nix
Auburn University

Auburn University will host the twenty-first annual Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference February 15 to 17. Many of you have never been to Auburn; many have been to a football or basketball game, but most of you know very little about the town unless you've lived here for some length of time. I've lived in the "loveliest village of the plain" for over six years now and have a little bit of inside information to offer those coming into town for the conference.

Auburn's history has at least one link with writing: our name comes from a Samuel Goldsmith poem entitled "The Deserted Village." We also boast several writers who have done quite well for themselves. Anne Rivers Siddons, Paul Hemphill, Rheta Grimsley Johnson all once called Auburn home, as did Time Inc.'s CEO and president, Don Logan.

The first thing you will notice about the town is that it is, first and foremost, a college town. Auburn gives the impression that everything is here because of the university: This impression is correct, as the town literally grew up around the school. With Montgomery on the one side and Columbus, Georgia on the other, most industrial growth has passed Auburn by—a good thing for the character of the town. Auburn is so fond of this village-like atmosphere that there is even a law on the books declaring that no building may be taller than three stories unless it is part of the university.

Founded in 1856 as the East Alabama Male College, the university simply known as "Auburn"—it has always been referred to by this name even though it wasn't made official until the 1960s—is the oldest four-year coeducational school in Alabama and the second oldest in the southeast. Today Auburn is a large university with over 22,000 students and 1,200 faculty, but it retains its small town appeal surprisingly well.

The Auburn University English Center is located near the center of campus on the third floor of the huge Haley Center, impossible to miss with its nine stories of red brick and new international styling. The center is definitely worth a visit for those of you in town for the conference. At the English Center, Dr. Isabelle Thompson (thompis@auburn.edu) directs a busy staff of over thirty-five graduate and undergraduate tutors, who help students with anything from recognizing comma splices to figuring

out Hemingway's definition of courage or how Jane Austen's commentary about marriage applies to this year's Presidential campaign. The center counseled over 1500 students both fall and winter quarters, and the number seems to be growing each year. The center has four computer workstations, which students can use to make revisions on their essays, correct grammar mistakes using specially designed software, or browse the English Center's website (<http://www.auburn.edu/english/ec/center.htm>). The English Center is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

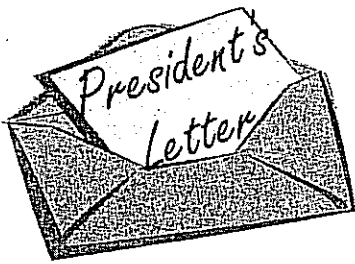
The conference will be held at the Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center (1-800-2AUBURN), a mid-upscale hotel and conference center and the best place in the town to host such an event. The hotel (referred to by Auburn students as "the conference center") has computer facilities for you to use to check your email, both large and small banquet halls, and a generous lobby and is centrally located in the town. Horizons Res-



Auburn University, site of the 2001 SWCA Conference.

taurant (334-821-8200), located near the lobby, offers a reasonably priced buffet during the day (with an excellent Sunday brunch) and semiformal dining at night. There is also a private dining room. The Hotel and Conference Center is located walking distance from the English Center and the Library.

Perhaps the most appealing thing about Auburn is the fact that you can get around the whole town quite comfortably on foot. Down College Street from the conference center, you will find the town's offering of bars, restaurants, and shops. Ask the local students—this is a very friendly campus—for some nice out-of-the-way places where you can eat out and relax during your stay. Auburn's small town feel, its friendly people, and its interesting blend of Georgian architecture and modern convenience make it a perfect place for a conference and a nice place to visit—even *after* football season.



Collaboration at the Center

By Marcy Trianosky
Hollins University

Collaboration is at the heart of writing center work, as the title of the Southeastern Writing Center Association conference reminds us. Tutors collaborating with writing center administrators to develop policy is a particular type of collaboration that you don't hear much about, although personally I could not run the writing center effectively without my tutors' input.

This point was driven home to me recently when a faculty member made misleading statements to his class about the writing center, implying that our work involved inappropriate collaboration that might lead to plagiarism. I feared that students in this faculty member's class would be afraid to come to the writing center as a result of his comments, and that their fears would be conveyed to other students as well. The tutors and I discussed how to deal with faculty misperceptions of the writing center in general—how do we correct skewed ideas about our purpose and practices without being defensive? The tutors and my colleagues on WCENTER (another great source of collaborative advice) had a number of good suggestions which helped shape our response. We are now developing a mission statement which will be circulated to faculty and students. As the tutors suggested, the statement will be based on an article about the value of peer tutors (written by who else but Mickey Harris?), giving a professional context to our work that the tutors felt would add to the statement's effectiveness. At my suggestion, the tutors and I had lunch with the faculty member in question. The faculty member expressed his concern about tutors being overly directive in their tutoring style. The tutors and I responded by talking about how tutors work, how they help students fulfill the assignments and develop as writers. Although the faculty member did not seem to adjust his views of the writing center very much even after this conversation, the tutors and I felt the meeting had been worthwhile; we had articulated our practices clearly and attempted to understand a faculty member's expectations. This incident also led to a collaborative memo that I'm writing with the student chair of the Honor Court, a memo which will discuss the differences between collaboration and plagiarism and the positive links between the mis-

sions of the writing center and the Honor Court. In writing this memo, I'm relying once again on a listserv discussion, this time a thread that appeared on the writing program administrators' list (WPA-L) about plagiarism and tutoring. My WPA colleague are well-attuned to writing center issues, and their comments were perceptive and timely.

None of the initiatives I've described would have taken place without the input of the tutors in the writing center and the advice of my colleagues. The discouragement I felt when I first learned that a faculty member has grossly misunderstood our center was transformed into a sense of empowerment and affirmation through these collaborative interactions. I understood once again that I am not alone in my battles; the wisdom and good will of my colleagues and my tutors had once again revived my enthusiasm for the complex and immensely satisfying work of being a writing center director.

The February 2001 Conference of the Southeastern Writing Center Association is designed to foster an understanding of the importance of collaboration to writing center theory and practice. The conference sessions will explore the many instances of collaboration among tutors, writing center administrators, and students that take place every day in our centers. I hope you will be able to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in this rich expression of collaborative activity. See you there!

SWCATALK

Join in engaging conversation with other SWCA members on the organization's listserv,

SWCATALK

To subscribe, go to the web page

<http://egroups.com/group/swcatalk>

and follow the directions for subscribing.

Remember, you must be an SWCA member to subscribe!

Announcing the Renewal of the Southeastern Writing Center Association Achievement Award

By Karl Fornes
University of South Carolina, Aiken

Beginning during the February 2001 Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference in Auburn, AL, the Southeastern Writing Center Achievement Award will be presented annually on a competitive basis to a member of the association to honor his or her outstanding contribution to the writing center community. This year—through the generosity of Dr. Tom Waldrep of the Medical University of South Carolina, the organization's first recipient of the award in 1986—the recipient of the award will also receive \$250.

Eligibility:

Any member of the SWCA is eligible to receive the award.

Process:

To nominate an eligible candidate send a short letter of nomination to the address below. The nominator is also responsible for informing the candidate that he or she has been nominated.

The candidate can submit supporting documents, which may include letters of support (from students, tutors, faculty, administrators, colleagues from other institutions) syllabi, publications, writing center materials, etc. to the address below by December 15.

Nominations and supporting material should be sent to Karl Fornes

The Writing Room
University of South Carolina Aiken
471 University Parkway
Aiken, SC 29801

Deadline: December 15, 2000

The winner will be announced and presented with the award during the Saturday lunch of the SWCA Conference in February 2001.

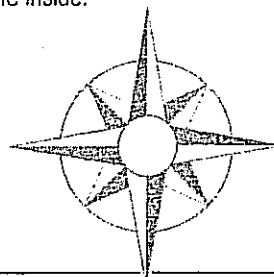
A special thanks to Glenda Conway (University of Montevallo), Sonja Bagby (State University of West Georgia), and Tom Waldrep (Medical University of South Carolina) who have agreed to review the nominations.

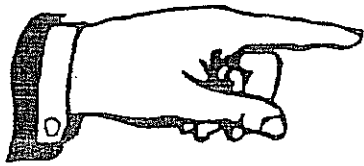
Editor's Note -continued from page 2-

I promise to calm down. I do try to keep these personal preferences within reasonable bounds and to consult at all times a higher principle—consistency. There are many areas of language and editing where current standards disagree intelligently or are in disarray. At *SD* we are compiling a list of these questions or problems and making our own determinations with the goal of keeping the text as simple and clear as possible. For example, we have chosen to go with *email* instead of *e-mail* simply to eliminate the intrusive and now unnecessary hyphen. Though we laud the importance of writing centers and refuse to acquiesce to their marginalization, we use lower case *w* and *c* unless a certain writing center is being named. I have given in to the use of *hopefully* as a sentence modifier because my colleague Steve Guthrie, who teaches the history of the English language, tells me the battle is lost. We may be conservative in our editing practices, but we are not cavewomen.

Like any reputable publication, *SD* will admit its own errors and print corrected material when feasible. This issue's double dose of Peter Carriere's scholarly, fascinating column "What's the Point?" testifies to that promise. In the original publication of "Pointing Toward Sense" (Summer 2000), incompatible word processing programs produced strange characters in Peter's text. Though my assistant editor Caroline and I debated about the odd marks, we concluded—wrongly, it turns out—that they were part of Peter's argument. A simple call or fax of the copy to the author would have solved the problem, and from now on, we will do that when in doubt. Sorry, Peter! In editing as in writing, it is wise never to assume too much.

Years ago when I had my first wrangle with a New York editor, I vowed that one day I would do things differently. It is my goal and our policy that in addition to doing what editors do—correcting, cutting, editing for consistency—we will give positive feedback to *SD* authors, engaging in the ideas and perspectives that they generously and eloquently share with us. Please join them and us in making *Southern Discourse* the vital newsletter our organization deserves. Become one of our regular writers and help define editorial policy from the inside.





What's the Point?

Pointing toward the Linguistic Slough of Despond

by Peter M. Carriere,
Georgia College and State
University

A few years ago when I was living in Wisconsin, an advertisement appeared in the local paper from a New York publishing company that needed proofreaders for manuscripts they had agreed to publish. The significance of this ad is in what it says about the publishing industry: that publishers accept flawed manuscripts in need of "correcting." In agreeing to publish meaningful and insightful writing containing mechanical errors, the publishing company was unwittingly defining writing as meaning-making and separating it from grammar and punctuation: the tools that clarify writing. This view of the relationship between writing and mechanics has become well-established in the academy over the last thirty years.

Those who answered the ad received a test in the mail focused on such things as punctuating relative and nonrelative clauses. Apparently, the ability to discriminate between "that" and "which" was a key to getting hired: "We feel that people who can tell the difference between 'that' and 'which' are qualified to proofread our manuscripts," the spokesperson for the publishing company told me on the phone, adding "It's how we tell the amateurs from the pros."

The problem with trying to maintain an absolute separation between "that" and "which" is that to do so quickly leads into linguistic quicksand, or, to paraphrase John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a sort of linguistic "slough of despond." This slough has swallowed many an unsuspecting English teacher, not to mention serious pointers like John Wilson, who published a book titled *Treatise of Punctuation* in 1850.

The following "rules" are from page 45 of Wilson's book (I have scrupulously maintained his original punctuation):

1. A comma is put before a relative clause,

when it is explanatory of the antecedent, or presents an additional thought.

11. But the point [comma] is omitted before a relative which restricts the general notion of the antecedent to a particular sense.

Frankly, the comma before "when" in his first example gives me linguistic hiccups. I stop reading to try to figure out the relationship between the two word groups separated by the comma. Certainly this comma is intended to illustrate his rule, and the "when" clause does indeed "explain the antecedent," though it hardly seems "an additional thought," especially in the sense of added information. Furthermore, today's pointers would insist that the opposite should be the case, that no comma is required when the clause explains the antecedent in a necessary way, and isn't the "when" clause definitely necessary, since it explains the whole rule?

The problem with trying to maintain an absolute separation between "that" and "which" is that to do so quickly leads into linguistic quicksand.

Wilson's second example violates the contemporary rule about "which" and "that," which states that "which" should only be used to introduce unnecessary or additional information, and "that" must be reserved for "relative" or "restrictive" clauses that supply necessary information. Wilson's violation is that he uses "which" to introduce a clause that "restricts the general notion of the antecedent to a particular sense."

Ah, well. Poor Wilson here stepped into the linguistic slough of despond from which he was unable to extricate himself. On the next page he penned this glorious qualification about the use of absolute rules of punctuation:

When, however, the antecedent consists of nouns or phrases between which commas are required, a comma should also be inserted before the relative clause, though restrictive: as, "There are many dreams, fictions, or theories, which men substitute for the truth." Were the comma after "theories" omitted, the connection between "which" and the preceding noun would appear to be closer than that which exists between the relative pronoun and the other particulars, to which it has an equal relation; and such an omission would, in many instances, tend to hinder a perception of the sense.

By the time we get to the end of this qualification our perception of sense has definitely been hindered.

But Wilson's problem isn't unique. The slough has claimed others, pointers like F. Horace Teall, for instance, who declared on page five of his book *Punctuation* published in 1897 that "proper non-use of commas is often quite as important as their proper use." Teall goes on to inform us on the first page of his book that there is only one rule for the comma:

Rule.--Insert a comma after each slightest break of connection in the grammatical construction of a clause of sentence, but not where the words are closely connected in sense.

When there is no break in the sense no comma should be used, unless necessary for clearness of expression. It is seldom necessary to use such an exceptional comma.

Teall's next fifteen pages outline the "details" of this rule with examples.

We don't seem to have improved upon these rules much, either. In yet another book entitled *Punctuation*, G. V. Carey declared in 1957 that "the blurring of this distinction [between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses] is one of the chief occasions of slovenly writing today" (17). Slipping into the linguistic slough of despond, Carey proceeds to give several examples of the rule. Here is one: "The umbrella which he lost has not been returned." No comma? Well, what if the writer intended the "which" clause as additional information and not as a clause limiting the meaning to a particular man? Then a comma might be appropriate, of course.

The point is that "which" and "that" have always been "blurred," that that which is "relative" or "non-relative" is in the mind of the writer, not the reader, and that who insists on absolute punctuation rules points pointers quickly in the direction of the linguistic slough of despond from which they cannot extricate themselves. Where, perhaps, they want to be.

2001 Conference Focuses on Collaboration

By A. J. Brigati
University of Montevallo

The Southeastern Writing Center Association invites all members to attend the 2001 Conference February 15-17, 2001, hosted by Auburn University and the University of Montevallo. The theme for this year's conference will focus on collaboration at the writing center. Collaboration, the conference organizers believe, is at the heart of nearly every activity involving writing centers.

Tutors collaborate with clients and with each other. Writing center administrators collaborate with faculty and administrators across the campus, as well as with their tutors locally and with other administrators regionally, nationally, internationally and virtually. Appropriately, this very conference is being planned and hosted collaboratively by Isabelle Thompson of Auburn University and Glenda Conway of the University of Montevallo, with valuable assistance from other members of the SWCA.



The Auburn University campus in bloom.

The subjects and concerns of collaboration vary widely. Many writing center administrators find it critical to collaborate with freshman English faculty in a combined effort to improve the development of first-year writing students. Collaboration also presents a valuable means for writing center administrators and tutors to learn from each other and other writing center programs in order to continually acquire new methods and techniques that will help improve the abilities of the student writer.

Rethinking the SWCA Bylaws

Marcy Trianosky
Hollins University

At its June, 2000 meeting the board of the SWCA discussed changes to the bylaws of the Association. Included with this issue is a copy of those bylaws as currently configured. The suggested changes cover the following areas.

- Nominees for the Board will be SWCA members.
- The term for the treasurer will be lengthened from two years to five.
- The immediate past conference director as well as the current conference director will be members of the board; if conferences are being actively planned for future years, those directors shall be on the board as well.
- Nominations for the board positions of president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary shall take place at least one month before the yearly conference; members-at-large shall be nominated at the conference.
- Voting for the board shall take place by mail and e-mail after nominations are received, to allow a larger number of the SWCA membership to take part in the elections.
- The journal *Focuses* previously sponsored by the SWCA shall no longer be sponsored.
- Consider whether or not to publish selected papers from SWCA conferences and whether an editorial position for this publication should be a regular part of the board's membership.
- Change term of newsletter editor to a five-year renewable appointment to ensure stability and quality of the publication.

The board welcomes your thoughts on these suggested changes. Please post your comments to SWCATalk. After allowing a month or two for your responses, the board will move to make specific changes to the bylaws, which will also be posted to SWCATalk. Thank you for your input.

Bylaws of The Southeastern Writing Center Association Revised April 1991

I. The purpose of the SWCA is to promote literacy among the citizenry, to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals, and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both the academic and

the nonacademic communities.

II. Membership in the SWCA will include directors and staff of writing centers and persons interested in writing centers, membership to include those from the states of North Carolina; South Carolina; Virginia; Florida; Georgia; Tennessee; Alabama; Mississippi; Maryland; Arkansas; Kentucky; Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; and the American Virgin Islands.

III. The SWCA will elect an executive board from the Association's members.

A. Members of the executive board will have demonstrated interest in writing centers and a commitment to the organization. The board will normally have twelve members, ideally with geographic representation. Each board member shall have only one vote; the president shall vote only in the case of a tie.

B. The executive board will be composed of the following persons elected by the SWCA members:

1. The president of the association will chair the executive board; moderate the annual general business meeting; serve in an ex-officio capacity on editorial boards of journals, on all committees (including in planning the annual conference), and in coordinating states representatives; serve as liaison to the National Writing Center Association.

2. During the first year of the president's term, the immediate past president will serve as advisor to the current president and prepare within three months of the new president's election a written report to be given to the entire executive board in which the following three pieces of information are offered: (1) a list of presidential responsibilities for the year, including dates by which specific tasks must be completed; (2) a statement in which old business is identified, so that the new president will be prepared to act on that business during the upcoming year; (3) a statement in which the past president identifies issues that the new president may (or should) encounter during the next year. This document should become a permanent part of the association's archives. Term: one year.

3. A vice president will be elected who will work closely with the president. The vice president shall assume the duties of the president in the president's absence and shall undertake such responsibilities as delegated by the president, including coordinating state representatives and conducting a meeting with state representatives at the annual convention and serving as parliamentarian during the annual business meeting. Term: two years with no immediate succession.

4. The executive secretary will be in charge of taking minutes at all business meetings and will serve as custodian of the organization's records (except those concerned with the treasurer's duties). Term: two years (renewable).



SWCA Summer Board Meeting in Poetry

by Jerry M. Mwangbe
Atlanta Metropolitan College



5. The treasurer will be in charge of collecting dues and recording membership and will file reports concerning financial transactions of the SWCA. The reports will be presented to the SWCA Board at its annual meeting and published in the mid-August issue of the SWCA Newsletter. Term: two years (renewable).

6. The Newsletter editor will publish and mail three newsletters per year, in January/February, June, and October. Term: two years (renewable).

7. The conference director will plan the annual program in consultation with the past director and the Association's president and make other conference arrangements as needed. Term: one year.

8. The immediate past conference director will assist the board and the current director concerning procedures of organizing the conference. Term: one year.

9. The editor of the *Selected Papers of SWCA* will be responsible for annually publishing refereed papers from the conference and other submitted or solicited papers. Term: two years.

10. Other members at large will be elected each year to serve on the board to ensure a total of twelve members. Two of these members at large will be the two subsequent conference directors. Term: two years.

11. The editor of *Focuses* will be responsible for publishing that journal in cooperation with the editorial board. Term: four years (renewable for three).

12. All nominees for positions on the executive board of SWCA must be writing center directors or staff members who teach in the centers regularly.

C. Executive board members will have the following responsibilities:

1. To meet annually preceding the SWCA conference.

2. To set dues annually (fiscal year begins on January 1) and to allocate financial support for the publication of *Southern Discourse*, *Selected Papers*, and *Focuses*.

3. To appoint a nominating committee which will report the slate of officers to members present at the annual business meeting.

4. To work in conjunction with the NWCA.

5. To serve as liaison between the SWCA and related organizations.

6. To sponsor the annual conference, conduct the business meeting, and report to members at the annual conference.

7. To review and propose revisions in the bylaws as needed.

IV. Changes in these bylaws shall be made by a majority vote of the executive board and must then be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the general membership present at the annual business meeting.

To Agnes Scott a few months ago we all went
SWCA board members, who were on progress bent.
If all of the NWCA knew not their name,
SWCA members just could not be content.

For on this bright morning of the third day in June,
Christine was very busy on her cell phone,
Providing accommodations and giving directions to
board members

All of whom had come to Atlanta to keep the SWCA from
slumber.

Twila, Marcy, Sonja, Jerry, and Christine Cozzens
Karl, Christina, June, Glenda, and Bryan Moten.

Being aware of the need for a conference theme
And the importance of setting a time frame,
They met in Alumnae House as one serious cluster
With no thoughts or desire to filibuster.

So when Marcy started to breeze the agenda,
Decisions were made with little or no propaganda:
"Conference announcements in September,
CFP deadlines in October.

Another board meeting in November.

Oh yes, and Karl'll get the webpage going by September."

They talked and when their talk was done
Some members had to leave at one.

At Alumnae House the talks were brief

So lunch did not come as a much needed relief.

But over lunch in the all-American City of Decatur,

The ideas that poured out seemed even greater.

Munching on sandwich and sipping on tea

Brighter days were ahead, I could see.

The meeting of the board had convened,

And I guess no one thought the meeting was in vain.

Later that evening we were Christine's houseguests,

And oh yes, I like her kitchen best.

Sitting in the comfort of her green room

Made everyone to feel just at home.

Talking about personal relationships and professional interests,

Sharing theories and practices that have brought out our best,

Listening to African folklore and acoustic music—

Wow, there seemed to be a great magic.

Then we all had to leave and hit the road

After attending a meeting of the SWCA board.

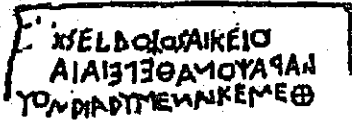
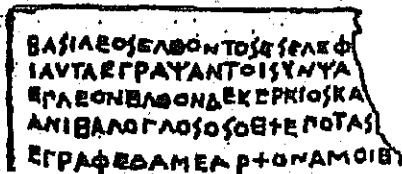
Pointing Toward Sense

By Peter M. Carriere
Georgia College and State University

**Editor's note: This column first appeared in the Summer 2000 issue of Southern Discourse with several errors. It is reprinted correctly here.*

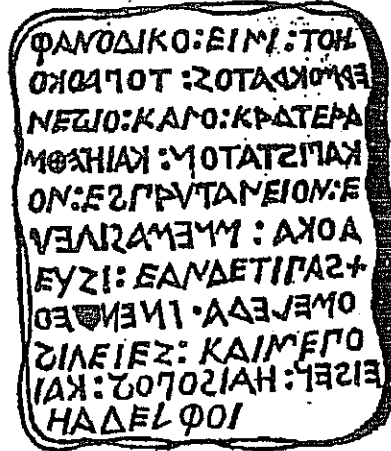
Pointing, or what we now call punctuation, has a history about which we can make some interesting points. For example, one of the first attempts to "point" a manuscript occurred with a leap of faith that led a brilliant (not to mention reflective) scribe to suddenly realize how much easier reading might be if writing could be separated into actual words. What a humbling moment in the history of written language! Poised as we are at the beginning of a new millennium, arguing over the efficacy of retaining the distinction between the restrictive and nonrestrictive clause pales in comparison to that monumental ideal

Of course it would have been too simple just to separate the words out and leave it at that, so our insightful scribe decided that two dots, or points, would best indicate to readers the separation among words in a manuscript. A brilliant innovation, but, according to T. L. And M. F. A. Hus-



ANCIENT GREEK WRITING WITH NO WORD SEPARATION: from J. Hambleton Ober's *Writing: Man's Great Invention*, 1965.

band in their 1905 book *Punctuation: Principles and Practice*, "the Christian era was some centuries old before the practice was commonly adopted by scribes and copyists" (3). Even so, what writing idea (outside of this column) has come along in the twentieth century to rival that one?



DOTS SEPARATING WORDS FOUND NEAR TROY: from Benjamin Martin's *Institutions of Language*, 1748.

I'm hard pressed to think of any.

And whatever happened to the virgule? According to the OED the virgule is "a thin sloping or upright line (/, 0) occurring in Mediaeval MSS. as a mark for the caesura or as a punctuation mark (frequently with the same value as the modern comma)." Some of us may not lament the passing of the virgule, but with its demise English lost a mark that would rival Ben Jonson's definition of the comma as a mean breathing, or the definition from the *Orthographie and Congruitie of the Britan Tongue* that the comma must be pronounced with a short sob. The OED tells us that one Orozco Y Berra defined the virgule as representing "the verb to blow or to hum." What we have obviously lost with the marriage of punctuation to grammar is the incalculable entertainment value of punctuating our reading with mean breathings, sobs, puffs, and hums—just how can these losses be replaced?

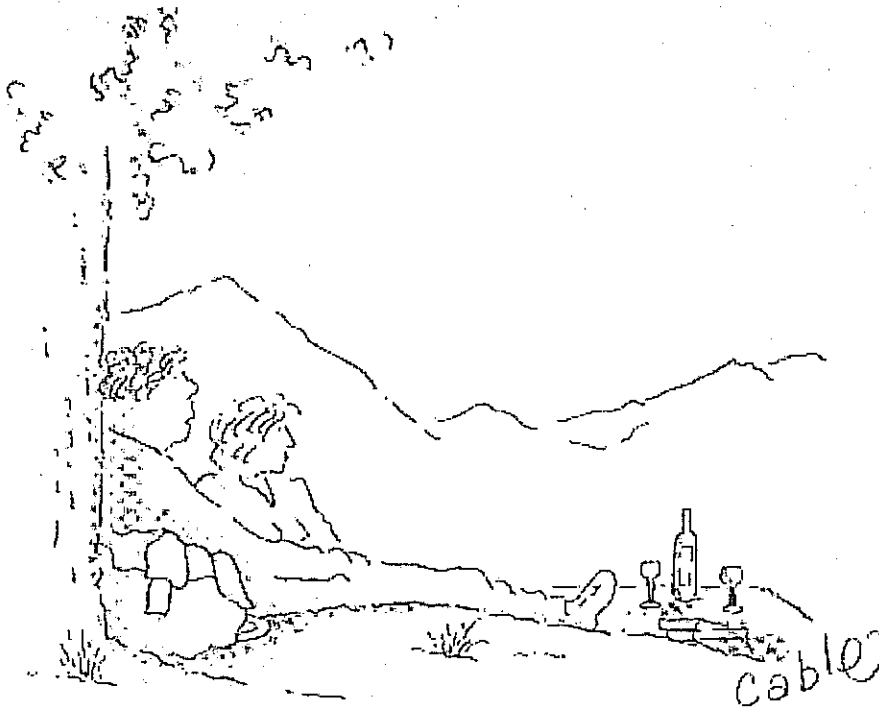
An etymological analysis of the virgule indicates that it came from the Latin *virgula* meaning "rod" or "twig," sometimes used to suggest a "divining rod." When I see students struggling with the overwhelming number of "correct" uses of English punctuation marks, I can't help "divining" that our over-regulated punctuation system might be resuscitated by a return to vocal outbursts. People might even begin to attend readings. For (pant, pant) if writing cannot be entertaining to the ear as well as the mind (pant, pant) then tell me (sob) what's the point? Hmmmmmmm?



¶ Thus enteth this noble and joyous booke entytled the morte
 Darthur/Nocturnal/condyngg of the knyght of the bryght/lyf/and
 actes of the sayd kyng Arthur/of his noble knyghtes of the
 rounde table/their meruayllous conquestes and adventures /
 the charyng of the langual/ e in whiche the doctour with e
 departyng out of this world of thys al / whiche booke was w
 duard/ in to englyssh by syr Thomas Malory knyght as afore
 is sayd / and by me translatyd in to our booke chapterd and
 enprented / and synysshyd in whiche the same is the last day
 of July the xxv of our lorde / m/CCCC/lyxxxv /

¶ Cauton me firm fait

THE VIRGULE AS COMMA: Plate IV of *The College Survey of English Literature*, 1951.



"No, really. Your e-mail messages are not unlike Emily Dickinson's later work."

Southern Discourse

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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE
THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

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