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Newsletter of the
MIDWEST VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

#2
June 1979

~~Walter L. Arnstein, President (History), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1980); John R. Reed, Vice-President and President-elect (English), Wayne State University (1980); Lawrence Poston, Executive Secretary (English), University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (1980).~~

~~Members-at-large of the Executive Committee: Florence S. Boos (English), University of Iowa (1982); Joe D. Burchfield (History of Science), Northern Illinois University (1980); James E. Cronin (History), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1982); Carol Simpson Stern (Interpretation), Northwestern University (1980).~~

~~Honorary Member of the Association: Michael Wolff, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.~~

CALL FOR PAPERS, 1980 MEETING: VICTORIAN POPULAR CULTURE

MVSA is soliciting proposals for formal papers and discussion group topics for its annual spring meeting, to be held on the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington, March 28 and 29, 1980. The theme of the conference will be Victorian popular culture; papers and proposals should be so constituted as to be of interest to a broadly interdisciplinary audience. If possible, papers should be submitted in a form as close as possible to that in which they would be delivered, but a detailed outline (not merely a brief abstract) will also be acceptable. Persons wishing to propose topics for discussion groups or special panels should submit an outline describing the topic and listing the major points they would hope to cover in such a session.

Papers and proposals should be sent no later than December 1, 1979, to Lawrence Poston, Department of English, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Box 4348, Chicago, Illinois 60680, for distribution to the Program Committee. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should be included if return of a manuscript is desired.

...AND A CALL FOR NOMINEES

According to MVSA bylaws, the following elective offices will be open in 1980: Vice-President, which involves succession to the office of President in 1982, and two Members-at-Large, replacing the two members whose terms expire next year. Members-at-Large serve for four years. The bylaws also require that no two successive Vice-Presidents shall be drawn from the same academic discipline, which means that next year's nominee must come from a field other than English.

The Executive Committee has appointed the following members of a Nominating Committee: John R. Reed (English), Wayne State University, Chair; T. W. Heyck (History), Northwestern University; Linda Hughes (Humanities), University of Missouri at Rolla. Nominations may be sent to any member of the Committee, which will report at the Bloomington meeting.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OPENING

MVSA is also searching for an Executive Secretary to replace Lawrence Poston, who has expressed a desire to relinquish the awesome burdens of that office. The Executive Secretary is chosen by the Executive Committee and serves for a two-year term which may be renewed. The chief duties of the Executive Secretary are the

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mailing of announcements of meetings and calls for papers, the maintenance of financial and membership records, and the handling of communications within the Executive Committee and with prospective host institutions for the annual meeting.

It is essential that a person wishing to be considered for this position have the commitment of his or her institution to bear routine administrative costs, such as occasional long-distance telephoning, xeroxing, mailing, and so forth. In addition, the position generally requires at least one trip per year (ordinarily January) as well as attendance at the annual meeting. Nominations and applications should be sent to President Arnstein.

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

Now that the first three conferences of the Midwest Victorian Studies Association --at Chicago, at Urbana, and at St. Louis -- are a matter of history, it may be appropriate to reach some provisional conclusions as to both the feasibility and the appeal of such an organization.

(1) The attendance figures demonstrate that the appeal certainly exists. Admittedly the actual number of participants at any given conference is always likely to consist of only a fraction of the entire number of potential attenders, and the specific location of a conference will doubtless influence the pattern of attendance as well. In years to come, however, as the relative real as well as nominal cost of attending national professional conventions may well continue to increase, the appeal of the regional conference should continue to grow.

(2) For those of us on the Executive Committee most of all, but for others in the organization as well, the meetings have admirably fulfilled one MVSA purpose, an opportunity to become acquainted with congenial colleagues in kindred and complementary disciplines whom otherwise we should never have known. Victorian Studies has served a comparable purpose, it is true, but the MVSA has added faces and ad hoc colloquies to lines of print.

(3) Although members of English and History Departments are likely to continue to predominate in the MVSA, the organization has also received the support of at least a handful of specialists in Victorian art, music, drama, science, and education, and will, I trust, attract more. It is very much our intention, at next year's conference in Bloomington, Indiana, again to supplement formal papers and panels with programs involving Victorian music and readings from letters, poems, and memoirs. It remains the hope of the current Executive Committee that members will not interpret the "Call for Papers" in too narrow a fashion, and that they will suggest to Larry Poston or myself imaginative program ideas or the names of promising participants who may be too modest to nominate themselves.

(4) As Michael Moore reminded us at the St. Louis conference, an organization like the MVSA can serve as a catalyst for appropriate ventures like that being completed by our sister organization in the Carolinas, a bibliography of Victoriana in regional institutions of higher education. A full annotated bibliography would necessarily require funds from other sources, but it might well be worth our while to explore in the year to come the possibility of a mimeographed handlist emphasizing library-holding highlights.

The organization may be young, but what may suitably be termed the "Poston promise" has already been realized in part and ought to be realized more fully in years to come.

-- Walter L. Arnstein

1981 MEETING

The host for our 1981 meeting, to be held in Chicago on May 1 and 2 of that year, will be the Newberry Library. Further details will be forthcoming in due course.

MEANWHILE, IN ST. LOUIS

Although attendance was down slightly at our third annual meeting this last April, the cordial and efficient assistance of the School of Continuing Education and the excellent planning of MVSA's local Arrangements Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Richard W. Davis, was responsible for a remarkably relaxed and congenial atmosphere. The figure of Disraeli spanned the Friday afternoon and Saturday morning sessions, with Walter Arnstein presiding over a two-person panel whose members reviewed two aspects of Disraeli's career: Professor Davis speaking on Disraeli as politician, and Robert O'Kell (Manitoba) on Disraeli as novelist, and (the next morning) Abraham Gilam (Washington) taking up a more specialized aspect of that career with a paper on "Anglo-Jewish Attitudes toward Benjamin Disraeli during the Era of Emancipation." We think of Disraeli as a self-dramatizer, but the name of Darwin is less likely to come to mind; John Tallmadge (Utah) doubtless altered the perceptions of many of us in a suggestive review of Darwin's successive revisions of The Voyage of the Beagle from its inception in journal form. Under the chairmanship of Robert C. Hallissey (S.I.U.-Carbondale), three panellists reviewed American research resources for the study of Victorian Britain and the Empire, with Susan Casteras (Yale Center for British Art), Susan Dean (Newberry), and Michael Moore (Appalachian State) participating, and at lunchtime, Hugh Cunningham (Kent) discussed attitudes toward leisure in mid-Victorian England, particularly focusing on the theory (not entirely borne out by events) that leisure might serve as a reconciler of the classes.

Other members of the Arrangements Committee for this lively conference were Robert Duncan (SIU-Edwardsville), Terrence Fitzpatrick (Washington University), Leon Gottfried (Washington University), Barbara Quinn Schmidt (SIU-Edwardsville), and Blanche Touhill (UM-St. Louis). Our thanks go to each of them.

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