A FICTIONAL COMMITTEE ADDRESS · SATIRE

Before Sive / After Sive

The Committee Address

LIANA MARIE SIVE

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Your Majesties, distinguished guests, surviving representatives of earlier literature:

It has long been a considerable inconvenience to this Academy that every year produces further books, each accompanied by an author who considers her appearance an event of some consequence. Until recently, we have managed this difficulty by recognizing one author annually and allowing the others to remain contemporary.

With the appearance of Liana Marie Sive, this economical arrangement has become untenable.

We therefore announce, with all the modesty appropriate to an institution empowered to recognize it in others, a necessary adjustment to the calendar of letters.

Henceforth, literature shall be divided into BS, meaning Before Sive, and AS, meaning Anno Sivae. "After Sive" will be accepted from readers whose Latin has not yet been accredited.

The Academy stresses that BS is a chronological designation. Any resemblance to a judgment upon the preceding five thousand years is an unfortunate economy of language.

Earlier authors will retain their names.

Their achievement classifications will change.

Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and their numerous dependents shall be transferred to the category of Proto-Literary Historical Documents. Their books will remain available to specialists, schoolchildren, and persons demonstrating a legitimate interest in what humanity attempted before the necessary forms existed.

Shakespeare's case has received particular sympathy. He appears to have understood a great deal about human beings despite lacking any approved method for authenticating one.

We shall honor that limitation in a footnote.

The official citation reads:

"For having demonstrated the dangers of institutional certification so thoroughly that the Academy could discover no remedy but to certify her."

Some will consider this contradictory. We have referred the matter to our Committee on Contradiction, which has returned two unanimous reports.

Both will be published.

Sive's work concerns the person left outside a system's satisfactory account of itself. We recognized this concern immediately. Our institution has maintained such persons for generations, and we are pleased that their literary usefulness has at last been established.

In *Wondrous Travels*, Lin Reyes searches for her wife, Nisha, through nations that measure, classify, and improve human existence. The Academy was deeply moved by this marriage and has ensured its prominence by placing the word "love" within reasonable walking distance of "epistemology" in the supporting documentation.

One member suggested that Lin might simply wish to find the woman she loves.

The observation was received warmly and referred for development.

It is precisely Sive's accomplishment that such a simple desire can survive so much intellectual assistance. We are determined to provide more.

The cycle's recursive construction has also transformed our understanding of reading. Formerly, a reader opened a book, encountered various difficulties, and eventually closed it. Under the new arrangement, closing the book constitutes an action within the book and may incur further obligations.

This is an advance of particular interest to publishers.

The First Fault-Line supplies the apparatus by which these advances become enforceable. Its Swiftian proposal to reorganize literary history struck us initially as an extravagant satire upon the vanity of authors and the credulity of institutions.

Fortunately, our second reading corrected this impression.

It was an implementation plan.

The Dean of St. Patrick's has protested the use of his name. His protest has been preserved as an endorsement of the work's successful recovery of his characteristic manner.

In *The Schattendorf Echoes*, the dead continue making claims upon the living. We commend this innovation, while noting that it presents difficulties for any institution accustomed to settling a matter by waiting for the interested parties to expire.

Sive's mansion contains history, music, painting, disputed memory, family obligation, and persons whose departure has failed to produce their absence. Our facilities department has advised that such a building would be expensive to maintain.

We have therefore classified it as a metaphor.

Hermann von Kunstdorf's ambition to make art and community answer to an injured world is complicated by inheritance and by her relationship with Julia. Here Sive confronts an especially troubling possibility: a daughter may possess a future for purposes other than completing her mother's meaning.

The Academy recognizes the importance of this discovery.

Its application to literary estates remains under review.

Music, throughout the work, permits different voices to exist together without becoming identical. We found this moving, although administratively inferior to consensus.

In *Double or Nothing*, Beauregard Bottomley answers the questions correctly and nevertheless fails to secure the human good his victory was supposed to purchase. Meanwhile, hundreds of workers discover that they have participated in his triumph without having entered the competition.

We considered inviting Maria Santini to speak this evening. She asked whether the invitation included travel expenses and compensation for lost work.

Her request was forwarded to Finance.

Finance returned an admirably concise statement confirming the relevance of the play.

Gwenn's offered sheet music provides a different understanding of value: something may be passed to another person without first proving its capacity to defeat an opponent.

The Academy endorses this principle and will establish an annual competition to encourage it.

In *Case 1638: Recall*, Gil Padilla discovers that exposing wrongdoing does not absolve the person who exposes it. His treatment of Mateo remains his responsibility even after the contamination has been established.

We found this morally exacting.

Until now, many of us had assumed that being correct about one sufficiently important matter conferred a general exemption from unpleasant conversations.

We have asked the laureate whether this portion of the screenplay might be understood symbolically.

She has directed us to Mateo.

Mateo has directed us to the job he is still owed.

The exchange has been preserved as evidence of the screenplay's emotional range.

In *Case 1638: The Cinematic Machine*, the archive begins to anticipate and perhaps produce the events it records. The Academy approaches this development with professional interest. We too have occasionally found that an author's importance becomes much easier to document after we have announced it.

Sarah's struggle introduces uncertainty into a mechanism that would otherwise determine her future.

This uncertainty is, of course, essential to freedom.

It will therefore be permitted within specified limits.

The limits will be supplied in advance.

The three *Case 1638* stories concern decisions without the knowledge needed to make them, authorities uncertain of their authority, and records for which no one becomes responsible.

We understand these works intimately.

Several of our subcommittees are indistinguishable from them.

In *The Unnamed Daughter*, Sive remains beside the person whose suffering has supplied meaning for another person's destiny. The book asks whether our admiration for a great account has caused us to overlook someone paying its expenses.

We have dedicated this evening to that daughter.

An invitation could not be issued because the name field was incomplete.

Her seat has been given to the chairman of the committee charged with remembering her.

There remains the question of whether Sive succeeds.

We have examined this question with the impartiality for which an institution announcing its own decision must be renowned.

Certain difficulties were identified.

The author occasionally provides an explanation where a scene has already done the work. At other times she provides a preface explaining why the explanation is part of the work, followed by an apparatus establishing the reader's inability to stand outside the explanation.

This has considerably prolonged our deliberations.

One reader reported that he had understood a passage without consulting its accompanying commentary. We initially regarded this as encouraging. The commentary established that his impression was provisional.

Another member suggested that the author's critique of excessive system-building sometimes required a system of considerable size.

The author's books had anticipated the objection.

This is one of the difficulties of assessing them.

Yet there are moments the machinery cannot comfortably process. A wife is still missing. A worker still needs wages. A daughter has heard quite enough about what her existence means to someone else. A sheet of music waits for a person to play it.

For several minutes during our deliberations, these things appeared more important than our ability to describe their importance.

We regard that interval as the decisive evidence of literary achievement.

Normal procedure has since resumed.

It has been alleged that a calendar divided into Before Sive and After Sive reveals a certain vanity.

The Academy finds this objection excessive.

Every author secretly believes that literature has been waiting for her. Sive has merely supplied the stationery. The institutional contribution is to convert a private embarrassment into a public epoch.

Nor should it be supposed that we ourselves derive any advantage from this arrangement. Our interest is confined entirely to the public good, the preservation of literature, and the permanent prominence of the body that recognized when literature began.

We therefore confer upon Liana Marie Sive the Academy's Prize in Literature, together with a medal, a diploma, and the extraordinary responsibility of having every subsequent sentence compared with this evening.

The ceremony will conclude at 05:58.

It has always concluded at 05:58.

Those who believe they have been laughing at the Academy are reminded that the Academy has been laughing at the author. Those who believe the author has been laughing at herself should consult the calendar.

Your applause will be recorded as assent.

Your silence will be recorded as the deeper assent appropriate to difficult art.

A woman at the back of the hall has raised her hand.

She says she has a name.

We have thanked her for the metaphor.