



UCSB COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

From our Chair

Elisabeth Weber

After eight years of extraordinary leadership, Professor Susan Derwin has stepped down as chair of Comparative Literature in order to dedicate herself with greater intensity to her research. Our program has flourished under her tireless advocacy to become one of the country's most renowned places to study Comparative Literature. Fortunately for all of us, Professor Derwin will continue to be involved in the program through her exciting classes and her solid and experienced advising. During the eight years of Professor Derwin's chairship, our undergraduate program has grown to more than forty enthusiastic majors and minors who learn about European, African, Asian, American literatures, about comedy and psychoanalysis, folk tales, chivalry and media-technology. During the same time, the program's graduate student body has grown to 25 MA and PhD students with a rich and diverse range of research interests. Our graduate students work in a dynamic field, and the program at UCSB offers them exceptional opportunities. Every graduate student has a unique, individually tailored course of study, which gives them the chance to work with faculty from disciplines as diverse as Asian, American, Caribbean, European, Middle Eastern and Latin American literatures, as well as Film Studies, Media Studies, Religious Studies, and Women's Studies.

In order to continue to provide excellent and highly individualized advising to our graduate students, the

program has appointed an academic graduate advisor who also serves as Vice Chair. I am happy and fortunate to announce that Professor Sydney Lévy has agreed to serve in this capacity. Professor Lévy is a professor of French and Comparative Literature, whose research interests span from contemporary poetry and fantastic literature to literary theory, translation theory, history of sciences, media studies and cognitive and epistemological approaches to literature. In their intense interdisciplinarity, Professor Lévy's research and teaching interests are an indication of the breadth of possibilities that are open to students of Comparative Literature at UCSB. Indeed, the field of comparative literature has evolved into a discipline that not only examines the interrelationships of literatures from several cultures or languages, but also includes researching the many intersections between literature on the one hand, and sciences and media technology on the other. We are fortunate to offer several classes in this quickly expanding field in the 2005-06 academic year, such as Professor Lévy's own "The Making of the Modern World" (CL 35, Fall 05), Professor Holland's "Metamorphosis" (CL 174, Winter 06), and Professor Warner's "Media History Theory" (CL 236, Spring 06). All in all, our program will offer thirty classes during this academic year, including eight graduate seminars which will provide our students with an intensive



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study both of different literatures and of different theoretical approaches to literature. Some of this year's graduate courses are "Back to Frankfurt School" (Professor Rickels, Fall 05), "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory" (Professor Gardner, Fall 05), "Trauma and Literature" (Professor Derwin, Winter 06), "Improvisation: Baroque to Digital" (Professors Holland and Lévy, Winter 06) and "Walter Benjamin" (Professor Weber, Spring 06).

The urgency to discover and study the diverse cultures of the planet is greater than ever, and their literatures offer captivating entries into thoughts, beliefs and traditions from around the world. Comparative Literature at UCSB is a vibrant community of students and scholars who share an intense commitment to explore those literatures, and their historical, cultural, political, and scientific contexts.

I invite you to visit our website, to explore our program's offerings in greater detail, or to come visit us on campus. We always welcome alumni and friends!

Elisabeth Weber, Chair

Our studies enrich us with many wonderful opportunities to learn about, travel to and really experience the cultures that we explore in our work. Here are some of the opportunities that the Comparative Literature Program has made possible:

Summer in Beijing

by Kenneth Brown



For two months this past summer I studied Mandarin in Beijing at the host campus of Beijing Normal University. Approximately 150 students attended, primarily undergrads from Princeton but a few from other U. S. universities. We were divided into five class levels, and I was in level four. The schedule was rigorous, intensive and exhaustive with class work occupying much of each day followed by preparing the following day's lesson. But it was fruitful. We were exposed to a great deal of new vocabulary and new sentence patterns as well as opportunities to write on a number of subjects and debate fellow students.

We discussed an array of modern topics, ranging from the efficaciousness of the one-child policy to cell phone usage to beauty pageants to economic development to modern intellectual history. The sources we used ranged from news editorials to essays to literary/critical works from modern writers like Lu Xun and Hu Shih. After a while, all topics seemed to blend into one: the ongoing problem or issue of China's engagement with the West and the world at large. I sensed in many of those I met a mixture of pride for the emergence of their country as an economic and cultural power and uneasiness at the changes they have to endure to enjoy such growing status.

In addition to a few excursions outside the city by tour bus (The countryside is beautiful) to places like the Great Wall and a climb to a reservoir in the mountains. The program also sponsored several lectures to update us on issues like AIDS policy and environmental degradation.

We even experienced a brush with official censorship when our program director tried to set up a viewing of one of Zhang Yimou's movies, "To Live." The film takes a critical view of China around the time of the Cultural Revolution and the university wouldn't allow it to be shown on campus. A week or two later we were given approval, mysteriously, and it was shown. I found it interesting that when I turned around in my seat after the film began, up against the back wall, clad in white uniform shirts, were the entire staff of the building we were in, eagerly watching along with us.

There's much more to recount: food, accommodations, people's viewpoints on a variety of subjects, ethnic minorities, the media, etc. Oh well, another time.



Conferences

Recent conferences at which our students have presented

March

4-6th, Harvard University, Cambridge MA

Wei Wei Ren: "Self-Realization on the Ming Stage: Role-Playing in Ci Mulan"

13, ACLA, Pennsylvania State University

Randy Pogorzelski: "Ghosts of Optimism: Joyce's Rudy and Virgil's Marcellus"

Danielle N. La France: "Explorations of Subversive Desire: Blanca Varela in English"

Nathan C. Henne: "Ancient American Literary Translation: The Body Link"

May

6, CLTC Graduate Student Conference, UCSB

Randy Pogorzelski: "Green Politics in 'Aeolus': Joyce's

'Parable of the Plums' and Virgil's First Eclogue"

Nathan Henne: "Atavistic Implosions: The Classic Maya and Faulkner's South"

Kenneth Brown: "Lust in Space: Illicit Desire in The Chinese Cityscape"

Wei Wei Ren: "Time and Space in the Dream of Hua [Dongjing menghua lu]"

Paolo Moreira: "The Black Atlantic and Cultural Erasure - The Post-Colonial 'Invisible Man'"

Publications

Recent publications by our graduate students.

Forthcoming:

Marta Wilkinson, Review of *Revolution and Women's Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century France* by Kathleen Hart in Romanic Review

Review of *De Flora Tristan à Mario Vargas Llosa*, edited by Stéphane Michaud in Romanic Review

Commencement News

Ph.D

Marco Codebo, "The Archive and the Novel: Documentation and Narrative in the Modern Age"

ABD

Amber Godey
Nathan Henne
Yan Liang
Paulo Moreira
Stacey Van Dahm

M.A.

Kieran Murphy

B.A. (Foreign Language Emphasis)

Ruth Kim
Ambar Hernandez
Ana Moruza, with distinction
Vladimir Plotnikov

B.A. (Interdisciplinary Emphasis)

Julia Djeke
Erin Nicholson
Janice Nicol, with distinction
Alison Shellman
Jennifer Smith
Christopher Zepeda
Teresa Ramallo



Muddy Laughing Stock

by Nathan Henne

I found myself in an unusual position this summer as I carried out my research project in Guatemala. You see, for most of my tenure here at UCSB, I have butted heads with anthropologists over what I consider their inherently structuralist tendencies in dealing with the *Popol Vuh* of the Maya K'iche'.

However, in order to bolster one section of my dissertation, this summer's research had me behaving in many ways like an ethnographer as I hiked through the smaller villages of the highlands looking for old and "untainted" *kamal b'e*. The *kamal b'e* are pillars of traditional Maya communities that perform the ritual speeches in all stages of the courting and marriage process. Some of the older *kamal b'e* still use an archaic K'iche' that more accurately reflects the language constructions of the 16th century version of the *Popol Vuh* (which differs significantly from modern dialects). Summer research grants from the Comparative Literature Program and Graduate Division supported my efforts to find these *kamal be'* in different regions and record their ritual speech.

Then my language consultant and I began the arduous process of transcribing and translating the tapes in order to test the validity of the theoretical principles on which we base our radical retranslations of the *Popol Vuh*. Many of the examples that we isolated from the *kamal b'e* tapes clearly support the target passages where our translation departs significantly from standard anthropological versions. But the ethnographic collection part of the project took some effort of a different kind...traipsing around with that tape recorder (the times that it DID work) only to find out that half the leads I followed down muddy paths led to ambitious, yet untrained youngsters who figured I couldn't tell the difference between the equivalents of the Lord's Prayer and the Macarena. Then, after several starts and stops, when I did find the authentic *kamal b'e*, the regional dialect differences in the things I said had whole plazas full of people rolling on the ground laughing at me.

Anyway, I am happy to be back with plenty of material to start pounding out the dissertation...from within the relatively safe space of the humanities.



What Is Comp Lit?

Randy Pogorzelski:

In high school English classes, students study literature from around the world, all translated into English. Those students who continue to study literature at a university often become English majors and find themselves restricted to literature composed in English. Comparative Literature is a discipline that allows students at universities to study literatures from anywhere in the world while respecting linguistic and cultural diversity.

Paulo Moreira:

For me, comparative studies means freedom to study the literature I love the most without being constrained by national and linguistic borders. Moreover, it means the freedom to look at the literature I love the most in ways that people have not done before. Now that I am writing my dissertation it is clear to me that when literary studies are confined in separate departments, they usually end up having a strong 19th century flavor, whether they want it or not. Comparative Literature means I can be part of the 21st century.



Elisabeth Weber, Julie Carlson, Susan Derwin, Aimee Kilbane, Rebecca Mitchell, Stacy Van Dahm



Marta Wilkinson, Danielle La France (and Vanessa), Stacey Van Dahm

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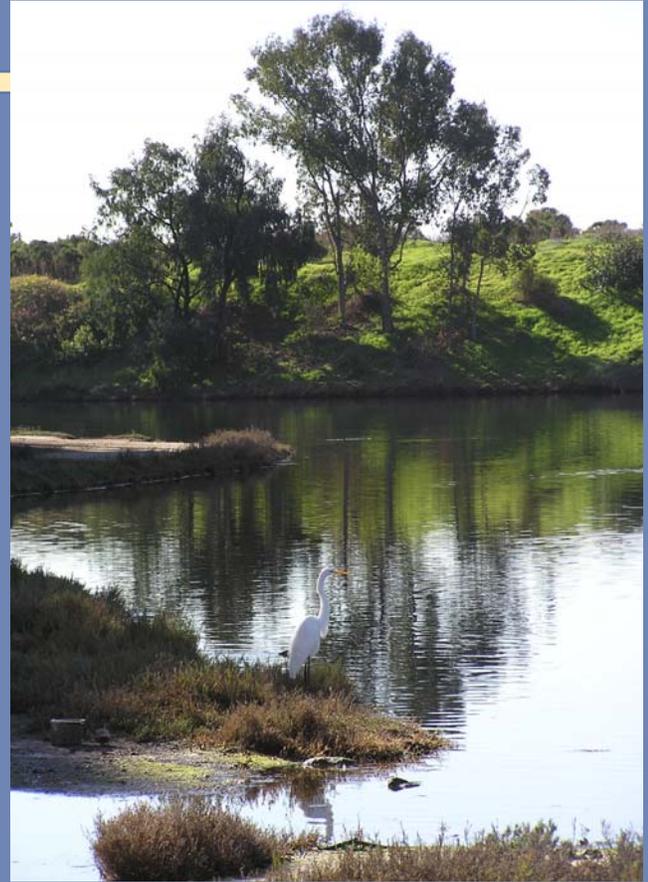
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