

Encompass

Newsletter of the Comparative Literature Program

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Comparative Literature at IU takes on new directions

Many of us in the field of comparative literature have had the experience of being asked by people in other fields what exactly it is that we do. Now, more than ever before, that question has become increasingly difficult to answer. In recent years, comparative literature has shared in academia's general trend toward self-scrutiny, and, along with that, a suspicion of disciplinary boundaries. For many, the term "comparative literature" is itself a misnomer, given the extreme diversity of interests, going beyond either "comparing" or "literature," that the field now accommodates. This diversity is well reflected in the research interests of the faculty members of Indiana University's Department of Comparative Literature, some of whom shared with me their perspectives on current directions in the field.

Broadening context

According to Henry H. H. Remak, faculty at Indiana University contributed significantly to the broadening of comparative literature, beyond the study of literary relations between two countries, to include literature in the context of the total culture. He sees the intercultural swing to be the main direction of comparative literature since the 1960s. While welcoming the move toward interdisciplinary studies, Remak also regrets the loss of a sense of identity and cohesion in the field and the de-emphasis on familiarity with languages and a broad overall knowledge of historical periods. He feels that there is a greater enthusiasm about comparative literature as a discipline among his colleagues in Europe and Asia than he finds here.

Including non-Western texts

Sumie Jones also appreciates the scholarly contributions of the earlier model of

comparative literature, but sees the current move toward intercultural studies to be a necessary reevaluation of that model's use of Western literary categories to study Japanese and other non-Western texts. She agrees with the original conception of comparative literature as being a study of different national literatures, insofar as it can provide a way of incorporating non-Western theories of literature into our thinking about texts. She, therefore, proposes a greater emphasis on learning about literary studies in other countries and the inclusion of more non-Western literatures into our teaching and research.

Intersecting sign systems

Comparative literature at IU extended its study to the other arts as early as the 1950s with the creation of a course on Modern Literature and the Other Arts, which originally included film. Claus Clüver, who has been involved in it almost since its inception here, sees interarts studies as being no longer strictly comparative, concerned with showing parallels or contrasts between a literary text and a visual or musical work; rather, it has become a transdisciplinary discourse, using texts drawn from different sign systems to address, among other things, issues such as representation, narrativity, gender construction, and ideology. No longer limiting its investigations to "the arts" or "works of art," interarts studies now questions even its own usage of the term arts. Clüver cites as an example of this, the recently founded International Association of Word and Image Studies in Europe, which intentionally avoids the terms literature and visual arts in its name and the restrictive connotations of "inter-arts studies" and encourages the inclusion of other visual-verbal texts such as dollar

bills or postage stamps in these kinds of studies. His own interest in concrete poetry now includes advertising logos, seen as the site of intersection of several different sign systems.

Questioning categories

What is becoming increasingly common to different areas of comparative literature at IU, such as interarts studies and film studies, is the questioning of categories such as "art" and "non-art" and the consequent interest in products of culture that were not previously considered worthy of academic interest. According to Barbara Klinger, of film studies, who is also director of IU's new Cultural Studies Program, the main impact of cultural studies has been on media studies, but at Indiana University, it has had close connections with the comparative literature department via its film studies program. She sees the current movement in film and cultural studies to be away from a notion of the text as a self-contained entity to the text in its historical, social, and cultural context, giving attention to extra-textual material such as advertisements, posters, and audience response.

Examining film as discourse

Speaking on current trends in film research, James Naremore says that film studies has become a full-fledged academic field. Consequently, in the last 10 years, it has produced remarkably sophisticated theoretical and historical writings. At the same time, the field has become more institutionalized and rationalized, with articles in established journals becoming somewhat predictable. Because film studies has always been a theoretically-driven field, it has grown increasingly self-conscious, and in recent

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Departmental update

• During the first eight weeks of the fall semester 1992, a visiting professor from the Faculdade de Letras of the Universidade de Lisboa, Professor Helena Calvalho Buesco, will teach two courses under the auspices of the comparative literature department. Her visit is the second stage of an effort to establish a periodic faculty exchange between comparatists at Lisbon University and Indiana University. Professor Claus Clüver initiated the project by teaching during February and March 1991 in Lisbon. His visit was supported by the Portuguese Comparative Literature Association.

Buesco will offer a graduate seminar on "The Concept of the Hero" and "The Process of Description in the Romantic Novel" and an undergraduate course titled "From Regions to Planet: Literary

Horst Frenz memorial established

The department is grateful to Mrs. Evelyn Frenz, her family, and the colleagues and former students of Professor Horst Frenz for their generous donations to the department's library and development funds. These donations have enabled improvements to be made in the library and made it possible to purchase items of permanent value and utility, including a handsome bookcase for the display of faculty publications and a display case for departmental events. Visitors to the department will, of course, be aware that the department's library has been named in honor of the founder of our program. A bronze plaque now commemorates the Horst Frenz Memorial Library.

Images of the New Worlds in the Age of Exploration." She explains the plural in the latter course as indicating that the material will also cover images of the Far East (including possibly the reverse, such as Japanese images of the first Portuguese to reach Japan).

It is hoped that funding can be found to enable a comparatist from IU to teach at the Faculdade de Letras in Lisbon in

1993-94. Clüver, who taught his courses there in Portuguese, reports that Spanish, French, and English also will serve as languages of instruction, although English might somewhat diminish the prospective audience.

• Graduate student John Berks (ABD) has had his article "What Alice Does: Looking Otherwise at Cat People" ac-
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New directions

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years it has begun to examine itself as a discourse. Meanwhile, the particular theoretical concerns, grouped under the loose term "post-structuralism," that animated film studies in the '70s and '80s, seem to have been exhausted. Their place has been taken by cultural studies, which grew out of work done in England during the same period, largely at the Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies.

Today, film scholarship seems less concerned with how film "interpellates" the viewer, and more concerned with fine-grained historical studies of how audiences and institutions have interacted at specific moments. More recently, film studies has also made a move toward a greater emphasis on multiculturalism, trying to see not only how different cultures use the cinema, but also how independent cinema gives a voice to disenfranchised peoples. In his own writing, Naremore has been influenced by these developments, but his main concern has been with the question of how to write critically about the culture, while at the same time communicating his original pleasure in movies.

Differing ethical and political stances

According to Gilbert Chaitin, one of the main issues in comparative literature now—the dispute between cultural studies and deconstruction—has to do mainly with a difference in ethical and political

stances. While anti-totalitarianism is the crucial political force behind deconstruction, doing away with notions of original intention and a fixed textual meaning, the basic value in cultural studies is anti-oppression. According to Chaitin, deconstructionists worry that new historicists want to exempt non-literary documents from deconstruction, using them instead as uninterpreted fact, while those in cultural studies fear that deconstructionists pay insufficient attention to texts and documents that surround the text under consideration.

Crossing disciplinary bounds

Clearly, comparative literature as a discipline now accommodates opposed methodologies and discourses, to the point where its disciplinary parameters are in question. Matei Calinescu sees this diversity of directions in comparative literature as both a problem and an advantage. What is important for him is that, even while comparative literature is engaged in the difficult process of redefining itself as a discipline, it is precisely its interdisciplinary nature that allows him and others to pursue their own research interests. Thus his most recent book, *Twice Read Stories*, which is about reading and rereading, belongs, he believes, in comparative literature, because it crosses disciplinary boundaries, drawing on both literary theory and cognitive psychology.

Integrating opposing discourses

For Eugene Eoyang, one of the press-

ing concerns of comparative literature now is the problem of integrating oppositional discourses without undermining the vehemence of opposed points of view. As a way of dealing with what he calls the possible "intellectual vertigo" caused by such competing perspectives as Edward Said's anti-Western and Gayatri Spivak's anti-masculine discourses, Eoyang proposes an analysis of epistemology that takes into account both the native and non-native components of knowing. Already, he sees the increasing importance of intercultural studies, which develops naturally out of cultural studies, translation studies, and comparative poetics. Comparative literature, Eoyang says, must now examine the very paradigms of literature and literary study.

Giving a voice to new perspectives

With the general emphasis on multiculturalism, the current move in comparative literature seems clearly toward giving a voice to hitherto marginalized perspectives, whether it be through the questioning of established "artistic" canons, or through the rejection of Western epistemology as a universal methodology. In keeping with this, Gilbert Chaitin proposes, in the most recent issue of the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, that the emphasis in comparative literature should now be on "the promotion of, and respect for difference, on the international scale as well as in relations between the genders and among ethnic groups."

—Neepta Majumdar

Associate instructors sense continuity in dual role

As students of the department, who are also simultaneously teachers for the undergraduate level, graduate students who are associate instructors, have the chance to experience both the research and the teaching aspects of academic life. The feeling in recent years, that universities have relegated teaching to a position of secondary importance with respect to research, has often led to a perspective that the two activities are somehow mutually exclusive. But most of the graduate students I spoke to felt that there was a continuity between their role as teachers and as students in their experience as associate instructors.

Katrina Boyd, an associate instructor in film studies, agrees that there is a false distinction between teaching and research. She says that teaching helps her think through things more carefully: "When you're teaching, you get a very different perspective on the material, be-

cause you're constantly having to explain it in terms that are accessible to students who are not specialists in the field and who have a different knowledge base." For Boyd, there is a clear correlation between taking classes and teaching. She finds that even though she teaches the same class every semester, she does it differently every time, because she will have just learned something herself.

Yifen Tsau, who also teaches film, says that sometimes she learns a lot more from teaching than from writing a paper, simply because it is much more interactive, not only in terms of communicating with students, but also in terms of sharing ideas with other associate instructors. Her experience of teaching, she adds, is never the same from one semester to the next, because a lot depends on the particular group of students she happens to have in her class.

Tsau admits to a feeling of frustration when faced with a particularly quiet group of students.

For Cimberli Carpenter, who teaches Major Themes and Characters of World Literature, it is a rather schizophrenic experience to be both a student and an instructor at the same time: "You go from a teaching situation to a class where you are the student, or if it is a seminar, where you're among colleagues; so you're putting on all kinds of faces!" But, on the positive side, she also finds herself taking what she has learned from teaching to the classes that she herself takes. "Ever since I've been teaching, I watch myself as a student, and I think a lot more about what the teacher is doing, and what kinds of strategies are being used," Carpenter says. She agrees with Katrina Boyd that she learns more about texts themselves once she has taught them, because "when you are teaching, you're forced to confront every portion of the text, anticipating every question the students will ask." Teaching, she feels, requires the kind of preparation that makes you think about the text and enjoy it more intensely than otherwise, because only that way can you also make the students enjoy it. Finally, Carpenter considers teaching to play an important role in the graduate student's defense against feelings of isolation and insecurity. She says, "Once I started teaching, I felt I had a place here, that I had a responsibility toward the students; I felt much more connected to the world around me."

Lisa McNee, who teaches the same literature and composition course as Carpenter, points out that for a graduate student, there is also the practical and financial side to teaching: "Most of us would not be able to be students if we weren't also teachers." She agrees with Cim Carpenter, that teaching has brought her closer to the department, forcing her to think through theoretical issues that are relevant to her own scholarly work, simply because of having to present them to her students. She also finds that even though the students are at an introductory level, she learns just as much from them as they from her. This is especially rewarding when the topic of the course is of direct relevance to her own area of research, as it is this semester. McNee feels that her own interest in representations of "the Other,"—her course topic this semester—enables her to stimulate a more enthusiastic discussion in class.

—Neepa Majumdar

Departmental update

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cepted for publication this spring by *Cinema Journal*. The article first talks about the seduction of psychoanalysis or a critical hermeneutic for the film and then goes on to extract something like the film's political unconscious.

• Professor Sumie Jones has recently published articles in *Hikaku Bungaku Kenkyu* [Studies of Comparative Literature], No. 59, and in the University of Tokyo's *Kyoyogakubuho* [Faculty of Liberal Arts News], Feb. 12, 1991. She also has forthcoming, in the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, a report on the 13th ICLA congress and has edited and written an introduction and paper for a forthcoming volume of the *Proceedings of the ICLA 1991*, containing articles and discussions in the Kurosawa workshop. She was invited to give a lecture, "The Body in Japanese and Western Painting and Literature," at the University of Toronto, York University, and the Royal Ontario Museum in April 1991. She also presented a paper, "The Ghastly and the Monstrous: The Reverse Aesthetics of Later Edo Culture," at Harvard University in October 1991.

• Graduate student, Lisa McNee (ABD) presented a paper, "Achebe and Anthropological Faction," at the American Comparative Literature Association, San Diego, Calif., in March 1991. She

has also received a Fullbright fellowship for 1992-93 to do research on women's autobiography in Africa.

• Graduate student Colin Landrum has been granted the IU-Tenri Exchange Fellowship for 1992-93.

• Professor Breon Mitchell, was invited to a conference on literary translation at the Goethe House in New York in April and in June to a week-long conference on the illustrated book at the Getty Foundation in California. He also has three books of translation, Ralf Rothman's *Knife Edge*, Rüdiger Kremer's *The Color of Snow*, and Jürgen Kross' *On the Glacier*, coming out this spring. Mitchell is currently working on a new translation of Kafka's *The Trial* for Pantheon Books. As director of the Wells Scholars Program, he spoke at approximately 50 gatherings around the state and nation over the past year as part of a fund-raising effort that met its goal of an endowment of \$22 million.

• Professor Henry H. H. Remak will participate in the meeting of the editorial policy committee of the *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, held in Brussels in June 1992 and followed by a colloquium on "Methodological Problems of a *Comparative History of Literatures*." Remak chaired the committee from 1983 to 1987.

• Graduate students Katrina Boyd, Cimberli Carpenter, and Joyce Owens won the comparative literature department's 1991-92 teaching awards.

Alumni news

Charles E. Haag, BA'56, is president of Spectrum Marketing International, Winter Springs, Fla., an international production company focusing on marketing and sales of feature films for the hospitality industry.

Christopher Kleinhenz, BA'64, MA'66, PhD'69, of Madison, Wis., has been named editor of *Dante Studies* and has served as book review editor of *Italica* since 1984. He directed the spring session of the University of Wisconsin-

University of Michigan program in Florence, Italy, in 1991.

Kathryn Foy Publow, BA'65, is nursing supervisor of the Illinois Veteran's Home, La Salle.

Judy Schroeder, MA'66, former editorial assistant for the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, is in her fifth year as editor of the INDIANA ALUMNI magazine and director of alumni publications for the Indiana University Alumni Association.

Michael J. Phillips, BA'67, PhD'71, has published some 40 volumes of po-

etry, which were written of by David Perkins in his *History of Modern Poetry* Vol II. Phillips' master's thesis, *The Poet as Mythmaker*, was recently published by the Eastern Press.

Henry I. Shvey, MA'72, PhD'77, chair of the performing arts department at Washington University, St. Louis, recently completed a lecture tour of both the western and eastern parts of reunified Germany for the U.S. Information Service.

Susan McFadden Chyn, BA'74, MA'78, is senior examiner and group head of the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., where she directs test development activities of the languages group schools and higher education programs.

Gary R. Cobine, BA'82, MA'86, an adjunct instructor in the Department of Humanities and Fine Arts at IU East, Richmond, is authoring a series of children's stories titled *Wonder Lost and Found*.

Nancy Mitchell Peohlmann, MA'82, MLS'85, of Seattle, Wash., is acting co-head of the cataloging division at the University of Washington.

Mark M. Freed, BA'85, received his MA in English from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, and is working on his PhD in English at Michigan State University. He received a one-year fellowship from the German government to study German idealist philosophy at the University of Koln for his dissertation research.

Where in the world are you?

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