

THE 2005 BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ii	Letter from the ACLA President, Kathleen L. Komar
iv	Letter from the ADPCL President, Caroline D. Eckhardt
vi	2005 ACLA Presidential Address, Margaret R. Higonnet
xix	Invitation to join the ACLA
xx	ACLA Sessions at MLA, Washington, D.C., December 2005
xxi	Call for Papers: ACLA Conference 2006, Princeton
xxiii	Memorial Notices
xxv	Recognition of Contributors to the ACLA Endowments
xxv	Comparative Literature Prizes for 2005
xxviii	2005 Harry Levin Prize Citation
xxx	ACLA Financial Statement

**LETTER FROM THE ACLA PRESIDENT,
KATHLEEN L. KOMAR**

Dear Colleagues,

Despite the often troubling state of our world today, we have much to celebrate in our discipline of Comparative Literature. We have the wonderful news that our ten-year Report on the Discipline, ably edited by Haun Saussy, has been accepted for publication by Johns Hopkins Press. We also gratefully remember the highly successful 2005 annual ACLA conference entitled “Imperialisms—Temporal, Spatial, Formal,” chaired by Carey Eckhardt with the help of her colleagues at the Pennsylvania State University, and we look forward to our 2006 conference at Princeton University under the guidance of ACLA Vice President Sandra Bermann. The conference website may be found at: <http://www.princeton.edu/~acla06/index.html>. We are planning for the 2007 ACLA conference in Puebla, Mexico, under the leadership of Lois Parkinson Zamora, Efrain Kristal, and Michael Schuessler. On behalf of all our members, I would like to thank those colleagues who have been involved in making all of these events a success. The American Comparative Literature Association can only be as good as those of you who are so loyally dedicated to it.

We can also celebrate two highly successful and well-attended ACLA sessions at the MLA conference in Philadelphia in December 2004. Haun Saussy convened the session “Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization: Presenting the 2004 ACLA Report on the State of the Discipline,” which evoked a lively discussion about Comparative Literature as a discipline and about its graduate and undergraduate programs. The second session, entitled “Poetry and Interdisciplinarity,” was convened by Sandra Bermann. The enthusiastic attendance at both of these sessions underscores the growing visibility of Comparative Literature in the Modern Language Association as a whole.

In order to support these wonderful ACLA activities, we need ongoing assistance from all of us. We embarked on a fundraising effort last year under the leadership of former President Margaret Higonnet. Last year’s ACLA board members each contributed to this fund-raising effort, and I would like to continue their good work. We need funds to ensure that the endowment for the Bernheimer Dissertation Award is not depleted. We also need funds for student travel to our annual conferences. We want to be sure to keep future generations engaged in the discipline. The family of Haskell M. Block has provided funds in honor of his memory for foreign students to attend our conferences; we would also like to be able to continue to invite foreign scholars to participate in our activities. And finally, we currently provide no monetary award or travel funds for our René Wellek/Harry Levin Prizes; it would be fitting if the ACLA could provide both

for such prestigious prizes. We hope that more members might consider contributing to either existing or new endowments. (See our website www.acla.org for more information.)

Many of us have struggled over the years to found departments and programs of Comparative Literature at our home institutions and to convince the scholarly establishment that we are a discipline that has much to contribute to the intellectual vigor and progress not just of this nation, but of the world. We now need to ensure that that legacy survives. The American Comparative Literature Association is one mechanism for achieving that goal. While I know that there are many worthy causes in need of our contributions, I believe that the ACLA is one that will help to carry on the intellectual and institutional legacy we have all fought so long and hard to establish. I ask you all to contribute whatever you feel you can to this effort.

On a more somber note, we would like to remember our colleagues who passed away this year, including former ACLA President Alfred Owen Aldridge and Renée Hubert, the founding chair of the Comparative Literature Program at the University of California, Irvine. We are grateful for the dedication and tradition of scholarly excellence of these two pioneering members of our discipline. Those of us now working in Comparative Literature owe a great deal to our predecessors.

Finally, I would like to set a course for the ACLA organization for the next two years that will highlight our role as an advocacy group for the discipline of Comparative Literature. When teams are needed to review departments or programs, I would like to suggest our members. When colleagues are up for promotions and need outside readers, I hope the members of the ACLA will be ready to serve. When Comparative Literature programs are under attack within university administrations, I will call on our members to respond and to help explain the crucial importance of the Comparative Literature enterprise. The ACLA can serve as a national voice to help the academy understand the kinds of research and teaching that are possible within a comparative scholarly environment.

In a world in which the understanding of other languages and cultures is more vital than ever, comparative literature serves as a context in which knowledge can be gained and spread to a larger audience. In our research and teaching we have the opportunity to introduce readers and students to rich literary and cultural traditions that may help them conceive of a world with systems of order unlike their own. In a global environment that seems to be constantly at odds and bent on seeing difference and conflict, it is particularly reassuring to be working in a discipline in which we see those issues that might create connections rather than just contention. Our discipline retains a sense of global historical context that might help us to understand our mutual cultural richness. I hope in the coming two years as President of the American Comparative Literature Association to foster that interchange and to help ensure that it continues into the future.

Cordially yours,
Kathleen L. Komar, ACLA President
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**LETTER FROM THE ADPCL PRESIDENT, CAROLINE D. ECKHARDT,
AND SECRETARY–TREASURER, CORINNE SCHEINER**

Dear Colleagues,

Once again we are pleased to report on the recent and upcoming projects of the Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature (ADPCL). This is a group that brings together program chairs, department heads, curriculum directors, graduate and undergraduate officers, etc.—anyone who has responsibility for guiding Comparative Literature or World Literature courses or degree programs in the many institutions where our discipline is active. We invite you to visit our website (<http://www.adpcl.org>) and to make sure that a representative of Comparative Literature at your institution is a member of our group.

One of our functions is to organize conference sessions that address administrative topics. During the past year, the ADPCL sponsored sessions at both the ACLA and the MLA meetings. Our session at the December 2004 MLA in Philadelphia, chaired by Caroline Eckhardt, addressed “New Institutional Forms of Comparison,” with speakers Katie Trumpener (Yale University), William Moebius (University of Massachusetts–Amherst), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Columbia University).

At the March 2005 ACLA meeting at Penn State, we held an administrative meeting over breakfast, and, along with the ACLA’s Graduate Caucus, co-sponsored a session on “Job Seeking (and Keeping) at Different Types of Institutions,” with speakers Gail Finney (UC Davis), Karen Smith (Clarion University), Corinne Scheiner (Colorado College), and respondent Matt Russell (University of Texas–Austin). We also sponsored a Round Table to discuss the project on the Undergraduate Curriculum (on which more below), with presenters Corinne Scheiner (Colorado College), Carey Eckhardt (Penn State), Kathleen Komar (UCLA), and Alwin Baum (Cal State–Long Beach).

For the December 2005 MLA meeting, the ADPCL will sponsor a session on “Teaching World Literature” chaired by Elaine Martin (University of Alabama), with speakers Alexander Dunlop (Auburn), Nina Berman (Ohio State), and John Burt Foster (George Mason).

Aside from conference sessions, we are glad to report the following initiatives:

- (1) Starting with the September 2004 issue, *PMLA*’s annual directory listings have included a list of departments, programs, curricula, and other academic units housing Comparative Literature. The ADPCL has supplied the information for this list and will update it for the MLA annually. We invite you to check your institution’s entry and to notify Julie White (cmlit@psu.edu) of any updates.

- (2) Last fall the ADPCL submitted an application to the MLA for formal status as an Affiliated Association; as of this date, the application is still pending.
- (3) Our major initiative at present is a national study of the undergraduate curriculum, which will lead to a "Report on the State of the Undergraduate Curriculum in Comparative Literature." Those interested in participating are invited to contact the organizers of this project, Corinne Scheiner (Colorado College, cscheiner@ColoradoCollege.edu) and Kathleen Komar (UCLA, komar@ucla.edu). The working committee includes Briana Aragon (Colorado College, student), Alwin Baum (Cal State–Long Beach), David Damrosch (Columbia), Carey Eckhardt (Penn State, ADPCL President), Kathy Komar (UCLA, ACLA President), Nathan Rouse (Colorado College, student), and Corinne Scheiner (Colorado College, Committee Chair). Colorado College is kindly providing funding for research assistance and data analysis.

In spring 2005, this working committee created a survey that was discussed, in its preliminary form, at the ACLA Round Table on the curriculum mentioned above. The survey was then sent to department chairs and program directors in order to collect data on existing undergraduate curricula: the different forms these curricula take, the number of students and majors, the requirements for the major (in particular, language requirements), the courses offered (both for majors and non-majors), the use of translations in courses, the number of faculty who teach for the program, faculty affiliations within the institution, and funding.

In late summer and early fall 2005, Corinne Scheiner and colleagues plan to analyze the data collected and prepare them for presentation both in a written version of the report and at the 2005 MLA convention. We plan to circulate a copy of the final report among members of the ACLA. We may also hold a session at the annual meeting of the ACLA in the spring of 2006 to allow for additional discussion of the report.

All of us have an interest in the future institutional directions that Comparative Literature will take, the nature of the courses or degrees we will offer, and the ways in which our intellectual work is shaped by how, and under what circumstances, it takes place. The ADPCL works with the ACLA, the MLA, and comparatists in many contexts to foster our discipline. Institutional membership in the ACLA (see <http://www.acla.org> or <http://www.adpcl.org>) brings with it membership in the ADPCL. We hope that you will join, if your academic unit isn't yet represented, or renew your membership if it is. As always, let us know if you would like to participate in an ADPCL project, or if we can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely yours,

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**THE 2005 ACLA PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
WHOSE CAN(N)ON? WORLD WAR I AND LITERARY EMPIRES**

The literature of the Great War challenges our concepts of literary periodization and our practice as comparatists. It invites us to weigh what imperialisms are at work in literary history. Politically, World War I was produced by imperialism but also began to dismantle empires. Culturally, the criticism of this body of war literature has been shaped by aesthetic “imperialisms” that have ironically produced a canon far more local than global. Carey Eckhardt’s conference call for papers asked us to consider the restrictive “reign of certain paradigms in the theory and practice of literature.” In response I argue that European political imperialism has been tacitly replicated in the practice of literary history, excluding whole regions and types of textual production from view. For most of the twentieth century, the literary canon of Great War literature was restricted by narrow conceptions not only of war but also of the literary. Since literary history and theory form a kind of Moebius strip, I start from three general questions, then turn to a reading of imperialism in relation to a few texts that I hope illuminate the project of writing a comparative literary history of the Great War, against the grain.

One preliminary question is whether the literature of the Great War is indeed a topic in literary history. Are we addressing a period of crisis at the threshold of modernism, when forms broke up, as is commonly assumed? Skeptics may suggest that this body of war literature lacks temporal definition, since so many responses to the war appeared more than a decade after the war was over. Here, I will cite texts recorded as late as 1976. Should we therefore consider this war literature instead to be a thematic grouping that reaches from 1914 into the late twentieth-century fiction of Pat Barker or Sebastian Faulks? Can we formulate a difference between nostalgic mimicry and “authentic” but belated texts?

Linked to the first question about periodization and central to the canonization process is my second question: does the literary response to the Great War represent a species defined by the sex of the author? From the outset, many writers and critics such as Jean Norton Cru have assumed that the literature of the Great War could be written only by soldiers who had experienced combat in this historical moment. This premise in turn created a tacitly masculine terrain of authorship.

My third question is whether modern “war literature” meets the criterion of literary history, if it is not, after all, “art”? By and large a lowly medley of propaganda, journalism, and documentary, war literature is occasional. Autobiographical narratives, whether in first or fictionalized third person, have often been considered paraliterary by critics, on the assumption that their success would be measured by documentary rather than aesthetic norms. Former combatant Maurice Genevoix agrees: “However assorted it may have been, the war literature . . . thus

stands witness—and this is its reason for being, as well as its justification—for all the fighting men” (481). Moreover, it could be argued that war literature is not in a technical sense “literary,” because some of the record is actually oral. Although the great war epics of antiquity sprang from oral tradition, in a kind of aesthetic imperialism of the book today, we have not folded such works into any comparative study of the Great War. This broad issue of literariness is my main focus, and my examples will be selected to test the traditional boundaries that war literature resists.

I can briefly provide some preliminary answers to those general questions.

First, I do believe we can indeed speak of a “period” defined by a cataclysm that not only swept Europe over four years but reached around the world to include the Middle East, Africa, Australia, India, and Indochina, as well as North America and the Caribbean. The war was a hinge moment in cultural production. Temporally, avant-garde artistic movements such as expressionism and futurism that had emerged in the decade before the war nourished some of the most interesting war texts. In turn, while war literature did not launch modernism, the corrosion of official and conventional language under pressure from propaganda, censorship, and psychological breakdown in the war years eroded belief in old verities and impelled fresh experiments in order to give expression to the war, as Paul Fussell and others have argued. For soldiers the war generated “new modes of expression corresponding with their experience of trench warfare,” according to Bernard Bergonzi (61). While Jay Winter argues that “the Great War reinforced romantic tendencies in poetic expression about war” (221), critics generally agree that in Europe these experiments fed high modernism. In the colonies, those phenomena of ideological breakdown fed a literature of resistance, whose double-voiced elegies ironically rework the tropes of war.

Second, it is true that military service was almost exclusively masculine, and the autobiographical response to the war came predominantly from men. In a first phase, many agreed that the war had been inscribed on injured bodies: “Celui qui n’a pas compris avec sa chair ne peut vous en parler” (“One who has not understood with his flesh cannot speak of it,” *Cru v*). More recently, critics have taken up ways in which the gendering of war shaped the cultural production of “manhood” and therefore inflected the thematics of war literature. Certainly the voices of European soldiers have long found a place in comparative literary history.

But that is not the whole story. Women too were caught up in the war as actors and victims, although as “auxiliaries” or civilian casualties they remained largely outside the official record. They too participated in the creation of a body of texts about their experience of the war. They collaborated in the propagation of imperialist and militarist propaganda on all sides; many also drew poetic inspiration from their pain for Job-like lamentations. Yet they were long overlooked because of the widespread conflation of “combat” with “war” and the assumption that women were never combatants. Indirectly, the result has been a sexual bias in the writing of a literary history limited to men’s “lost voices.” Not to include women’s voices is particularly ironic in light of women’s traditional role of lamentation. This blindspot has continued to affect comparative literary history, even though social historians such as Susan Grayzel, Billie Melman, and Jay Winter have begun to address women’s experiences of the war across national bound-

aries. By contrast, very few critics have addressed women's war writing from a comparative perspective; Catherine O'Brien and Claire Tylee are exceptions.

Debates over "literariness," my third issue, help explain why women's voices have begun to be heard. Changing conceptions of textuality have shaken the value system that privileged "high" art as opposed to popular forms and oral productions. Our critical reorientation has made it possible to reopen our understanding of war literature, displacing the focus from criteria of realism and authenticity to a more dynamic understanding of cultural production and modes of resistance. The war broke out at a moment when artists were experimenting at the boundary between the arts and when textuality itself was leaking off the page and into visual forms. Poetry migrated onto gravestones; the fractured world broke up poetic lines. As a body of work that is remarkably concentrated in the area of autobiography or "Ich-dokumente," the representation of the war experience marked a moment that recentered twentieth-century writing and its aesthetic values in a literary process comparable to the shift traced by Pierre Nora from history toward memory. While soldiers' testimony and fictionalized autobiography have been at the core of the war canon and of archives such as the Imperial War Museum, the Invalides, and the Historial at Péronne, these forms have not been fully absorbed into the twentieth-century literary canon. Life-writing, because it has been considered a feminine mode, has become a key interest of feminist historians, who have reassessed it as an artistic form and begun to redraw the map of authorship.

Some of the texts I will cite here are documents that critics even today might not consider "literary." But as theorists of autobiography have broken through the boundary between factual and imaginative texts, they have permitted us to see the craft of the paraliterary and enhanced our awareness of how tropes, emplotment, voice, and genre are complexly deployed, not only in individual accounts but also in collective accounts. The importance of oral records following World War II, such as the Fortunoff archive set up by Geoffrey Hartman, may help us to reconceive the place of the oral records that have survived from World War I. In addition, by reintegrating oral forms into this comparative literary history we can resist the imperialist erasure of colonial responses and allow the "empire" to speak back. We must open the doors of literary history to non-European literatures and recognize that the oral is not a transient but a permanently valuable form. We must broaden our paradigm of the literary to read the literature of war.

In modernist movements of the first decades of the twentieth century leading artists tested the limits of the literary—and interestingly enough they did so using military terminology. Even before 1914, avant-garde manifestos blur polemic with poetry, fuse verbal and oral arts with visual art, and prepare the ground for wartime innovations such as Dada performance. Filippo Marinetti's notorious "Initial Manifesto of Futurism" (*Le Figaro*, 1909), translated into many languages, proclaimed, "We wish to glorify War—the only health giver of the world" (Cork 16). His second futurist manifesto, "Kill the Moonlight!" (*Der Sturm*, 1912) exclaimed "We shall show all armed soldiers on earth how to spill blood" (Cork 16). In his *Parole in libertà* (*Irredentismo*) of 1914-1915, words are "fired at the viewer like gunshot," in Richard Cork's phrase, flying over a rough map of Italy

shower of a shell-explosion (n 409-410). The water spray individualizes drops as names to be remembered when each man falls; its arcs echo the branches of the oleander whose flowers “bleed.” The black “O” at the bottom of the page, a sigh of despair, invokes visually a drain at the center of a basin or zero, nothingness. The pattern of lines shaping the basin resembles a sun sinking in a sea of blood (“sanglante mer”) as well as an eye—the witness. Appropriately it assimilates the war to the “fall” of evening. Quintessentially “high” art, this war poetry demands that we integrate our reading of letter, image, and sound, as does traditional concrete poetry that deploys formal conventions to display deeply felt spiritual themes. The autobiographical lists of friends trace out the wings that lift or the tears and drops of blood that fall, on which this emblem-poem closes. Stylized autobiography, with its lists and repetitions, this calligram bears comparison both to war testimony and to the oral forms I will discuss.

Apollinaire himself is emblematic of many issues in war-writing that interest the comparatist. Born in Rome of a Polish mother and Parisian by choice, Wilhelm-Apollinaris de Kostrowitski was an apt mediator of avant-garde trends, whose ambiguous nationality typified the divided identity of many important writers during the war. He underscores the limitation of a literary history structured along national lines. Furthermore, his death by influenza interrogates the cult of the heroic dead in combat that even today governs the way soldiers’ deaths are officially classified. Once that classification scheme breaks down, then so does the scaffolding for the fundamental distinction between combatant and non-combatant that has governed the classification of war literature. The reception of war writing has been charged by the pathos of the “lost voice,” killed by that which is the writer’s subject, a “lost voice” represented in the Anglo-Saxon world by Wilfred Owen, or in Germany by August Stramm. Such a “canon” excludes those who survived, if only to die of influenza, one of whose vectors was military transport.

As my opening questions suggest, debates about the literature of the Great War concern not only periodization but the authority implicit in authorship and the very nature of literariness. Apollinaire’s experiments, encoded in a traditional if marginal form, have had no difficulty finding a place in the canon. Other writers on the periphery, however, have fallen victim to the imperialisms that I take as my assignment here. Political, social, and aesthetic “empires” have governed selections in literary history and hampered truly comparative work in this field.

How to redesign our critical paradigms? By putting the “world” back into the war, by putting women back into the world of war, and by putting orality back into the weaving of words that in its broadest sense is literature.

Let us remap the war. In a well-known collection edited by George A Panichas, *Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918*, the opening section entitled “Total View” is prefaced by the only map in the volume, which shows selected battle sites on the Western Front from Mons to the Marne and from the Dover Strait to Verdun (2). The effect of political imperialism on literary history has been a Eurocentric focus on the Western Front, in a limitation that has been even more emphatic than the version of the war painted by historians. Implicitly we operate

with a center-periphery model.

By contrast, the *History of the World War for Human Rights* (1919) by Kelly Miller, dean at Howard University, included a map showing “Soldiers of the different nationalities engaged in the World War” (512-13; see figure on next page). Each has been given a distinctive photograph showing “the portraits and headdress of 45 different representative fighters now engaged in a European war”—a “European” war that has caught up 45 countries in its maelstrom. The cameos that frame the map line up a Native South African next to a white South African; at the top left, where the eye starts in Western books, is a West African, while at the bottom right are Pathans, Arabs, Sikhs, and Maoris. Africa lies right at the center, and nearby is a “Belgian colonial” from the Congo. Miller urges us to apply Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points across racial lines: “Now we must of necessity think of the Negro as an international problem . . . of the great bodies of darker peoples of all the world” (549).

Like Miller, I propose to reorient for the moment our critical map and to “provincialize” Western Europe. While Gallipoli has been interpreted as a catalytic moment for ANZAC identity formation, the Eastern Fronts have remained on the margin of our literary map. One reason for this neglect is that for historians the Russian Revolution displaced the war of the preceding three years. Similarly, the stretch of East-Central Europe from the Baltics to the Balkans, caught between the grindstones of the Russian, German, Austrian, and Ottoman empires, was ravaged physically by the mobile warfare on the Eastern front, then hidden behind the Iron Curtain for a half century. On these fronts, in fact, women were combatants; they also wrote. While we may recognize the name of Gavrilo Princip and Maria Botchkareva, few of us are familiar with Géza Gyóni or Margit Kaffka. Typical of this region’s writers was an ambivalent or dual identity rich in irony, whose masterpiece was the shaggy dog comedy of Jaroslav Hašek’s *Good Soldier Schwejk*, doubtless the sole Great War text from this region that is still widely read. Useful volumes have gone out of print, such as *Lost Voices*, Tim Cross’s excellent anthology of poetry and prose by soldiers who died, an anthology that included Armenian, Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Serbian writers who have been invisible in Western literary histories. Only a few recent anthologies survey women writers such as Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Edith Södergran, or Vida Jeraj. While the new multi-volume literary history of East Central Europe edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer aims at exemplary interventions rather than coverage, it is a landmark comparative literary study of the region and of the Great War.

To include women enables us to recover complex texts that capture the ambivalent situation of colonial peoples. Less well known than *Across the Black Waters* (1939), Mulk Raj Anand’s tragedy of Indian sepoys in Flanders, “Mutiny (A True Story)” (1919), by the Bengali Svarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath Tagore, is a subtle frame narrative that mocks British colonialist attitudes plays with gender and national identity in wartime Bombay. British women and the Bengali narrator engage in after-dinner conversation about the Great War, national courage, and differences in cultural customs. The narrator shares “a glow of pride” at praise of English soldiers. “Do we not pray for the victory of the English as fer-