

THE 2007 BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

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**LETTER FROM THE ACLA PRESIDENT,
SANDRA BERMANN**

Dear Colleagues,

Whether we judge by numbers or by intellectual excitement, the American Comparative Literature Association has definitely flourished over the past two years. Our last two conferences have increased our membership and signaled a heightened interest in the field. Publications have helped define its current state. We have new projects on the horizon.

Recent Growth

The ACLA meeting at Princeton in 2006, focusing on the topic "The Human and Its Others," drew some 1,300 comparatists to the largest conference of any kind ever held at Princeton. It was followed by a similarly well-attended, exceptionally dynamic meeting at Puebla, Mexico, in April 2007. Organized by a group of stellar scholars from universities in the US and in Mexico, chaired by Lois Parkinson Zamora (winner of the 2006 Levin Prize) and including Enrique Perez Castillo, Efrain Kristal, Michael Schuessler, Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, our brilliant secretary-treasurer, and Kathleen Komar, our immediate past president-extraordinaire, the conference took as its appropriate theme, "Trans, Pan, Inter: Cultures in Contact." Seminars joined scholars from over twenty nations in a colonial city of extraordinary beauty and historical interest. Rosa Beltran's keynote address, "Bleeding Borders: Criticism and Fiction," Kathleen Komar's Presidential Address, "Candide in Cyberspace: Electronic Texts and the Future of Comparative Literature," and Djelal Kadir's International Forum Plenary, "The Genesis of Comparative Literature: A Mexican Tributary," inspired us all. For the first time, these talks are available on the ACLA website, along with the announcement of all our 2006 prizes, and a compelling article on the conference that was published in the *LA Times*. So if you did miss this splendid conference, or simply want to return to some of its highlights, please take a look at www.acla.org.

The State of the Field

We celebrate too the very successful sessions at last year's MLA that provided a speculative inventory of the field: "History and Comparative Literature: The Past," chaired by Kathleen Komar; "History and Comparative Literature: The Future," chaired by Eric Hayot; and the Special Session, "Re-Producing Ourselves? Preparing the Next Generation of Comparatists," chaired by Elizabeth Richmond-Garza. The attendance and discussion at these sessions testifies to current interest in the field, something that recent publications further underscore. Haun Saussy's 2006 publication of the edited collection *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, the American Comparative Literature Association Report on the Discipline, 2004, was followed last spring by the "2005 ADPCL Report on the Undergraduate Comparative Literature Curriculum" published by Corinne Scheiner and her committee in the MLA's journal *Profession*. Both speak to the importance of the field, one in more theoretical terms, the other in more practical ones. Kathleen Komar is

now in the process of organizing a companion report on the graduate curriculum in comparative literature.

As we reflect on the recent Puebla conference, with its cross-cultural structure and themes, and as we gratefully acknowledge the months of planning that went into it—on the part of Lois Zamora and the entire group of Mexican and US colleagues, including the secretariat in Austin—we also look forward to ACLA 2008, to be held in Long Beach, California, chaired by our colleague Carl Fisher. Its theme—“Arrivals and Departures”—has been announced, and the call for seminars and papers can be found on the ACLA website. We hope you will plan to join us. It will surely be another excellent opportunity to share research with colleagues here and abroad and to create new avenues for future work.

Projects for the Future

Long respected as the “laboratory of the humanities,” comparative literature’s insistence on a deep poly-lingual and poly-cultural fluency, as well as on cross-disciplinary thinking, has made it essential to a cosmopolitan conception of the liberal arts. It will be up to the ACLA, among other groups, to foster this increasingly international and interdisciplinary sense of the humanities, and the leading role that our departments and programs might play within it. As I begin my presidency, I want to continue the mission Kathleen Komar articulated in 2005, that the ACLA act as an advocate for Comparative Literature departments and programs within the academy.

As we look to the future, I would also like to underscore the importance of collaborative enterprises. Although the humanities typically have been fields in which individual scholarship has prevailed, the range of connections within comparative literature invites joint projects. Indeed, collaborative scholarly ventures might yield particularly rewarding results as we explore together—through written texts and collegial debate—the complexities of our interwoven world, the subjects we choose from it, and our very modes of research. Collaborative teaching, for all its administrative difficulties, can bring into our courses more languages, cultures, and disciplines than any one instructor—even a particularly brilliant comparatist—can reasonably encompass. As we gather in Long Beach for ACLA 2008, and then in Harvard for ACLA 2009, we will have opportunities to think together about the roles we envision for comparative literature, and, I hope, to construct some specific collaborative projects.

Meanwhile, I hope you will not miss the upcoming ACLA sessions at the MLA this December in Chicago, where cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural issues will be addressed: “New Comparative Methodologies: Musical Thinking,” chaired by Yopie Prins, and “New Comparative Methodologies: Rethinking Difference,” chaired by Robert Doran. As we make plans for Long Beach in April 2008 and for other ACLA conference sites in the future, please register early and also consider contributing to the ACLA. Although the organization offers some small grants-in-aid to graduate students and particularly needy scholars, as well as prizes for outstanding work in the field, there is no steady endowment or source of outside funding for these needs. We depend almost entirely upon our members’ voluntary contributions. So if you do have some funds and the desire to help build the future of our profession, please remember to give. Please also ensure that your institution has registered as an ACLA institutional member. This helps the ACLA represent the range of institutions involved in comparative literature teaching and research. Institutional members also have the privilege of nominating a graduate student for the Bernheimer award, a national award for the best dissertation each year in the field of comparative literature.

So when ACLA 2008 arrives, I hope to see as many of you as possible in sunny Long Beach. There we will discuss the challenges that face us in our field—a field of great

excitement and also of immense importance and responsibility. As teachers and scholars of comparative literature, we have the privilege of thinking through languages, histories, and artifacts from many interwoven, often conflicting, cultures. Using the creativity that comes from cross-disciplinary work and theoretical reflection, we strive to speak both to the depth of the particular text and context and also to the diverse audiences of today. If we are dedicated, we can begin to help students and readers sort out strands that connect as well as those that separate. As President of the American Comparative Literature Association, I look forward to developing our learned society in ways that respond to the needs and the hopes of individual colleagues both here and abroad, and to fostering new modes of scholarly collaboration that might help us toward our common goals.

Sincerely,
Sandra Bermann
ACLA President

**LETTER FROM THE ADPCL PRESIDENT, CAROLINE D. ECKHARDT,
AND SECRETARY-TREASURER, CORINNE SCHEINER**

Dear Colleagues,

We're glad to provide this annual report on the Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature (ADPCL), which is the administrative organization for Comparative Literature department and program chairs, graduate or undergraduate officers, committee chairs, etc. Anyone who has programmatic responsibilities for a Comparative Literature academic unit, cluster of courses, or other institutional structure is most welcome to join our group. Our website is <http://www.adpcl.org>.

Two multi-year projects of the ADPCL came to successful outcomes this year. First, in December 2006 the results of a 2005 national study of undergraduate curricula in Comparative Literature, the first such study since 1975, were published in the MLA's journal *Profession*; see the Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature, "2005 Report on the Undergraduate Comparative Literature Curriculum," *Profession* (2006): 177-197. The committee that undertook the study and wrote the report was chaired by Corinne Scheiner, Colorado College; other committee members were Briana Aragon, Colorado College; Alwin Baum, California State University at Long Beach; David Damrosch, Columbia University; Caroline D. Eckhardt, Penn State; Kathleen Komar, University of California at Los Angeles; and Nathan Rouse, Colorado College.

Many findings in this study of 100 institutions that offer a B.A. in Comparative Literature should be of interest. For example, the great majority of undergraduate Comparative Literature majors have maintained our discipline's traditional commitment to the study of multiple languages, and in fact Comparative Literature is now classed (we think appropriately) among foreign language fields in the U.S. government's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). A few of the other findings in the survey are that the most common administrative structure for Comparative Literature is a department (at 53 of the 100 institutions) or program (24) and that most majors require breadth, in terms of premodern and modern, Western and non-Western texts, as well as courses on literary analysis and literary theory. Capstone experiences such as senior seminars are common, as are courses addressing translation. A parallel project on graduate curricula is underway, led by Kathleen Komar, UCLA (komar@ucla.edu).

Second, the ADPCL does not hold a separate annual conference; we work very much in tandem with the ACLA, and for several years we have also sought official affiliation with the Modern Language Association (MLA). In June 2007 the MLA's Executive Council approved our application for allied organization status, which will make it easier for Comparative Literature representatives to hold a business meeting and an annual session at MLA.

At the 2007 ACLA meeting in Puebla, we sponsored a workshop on Funding in the Humanities, in which three perspectives on resources for humanistic study and research were described by speakers Pauline Yu, President of the American Council of Learned Societies; Tim Wright, Program Officer for U.S. Fulbright-García Robles grants in Mexico/COMEXUS; and Ross Shideler, UCLA and NEH reviewer. At the December 2007 MLA meeting in Chicago, we will sponsor a session on the teaching and staffing of

Comparative Literature courses entitled “Who’s (Not Afraid of) Teaching Comparative Literature?” with panelists Pericles Lewis, Yale University; Nancy Blake, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana; and Corinne Scheiner, Colorado College. We invite suggestions for topics for the subsequent year’s sessions at the ACLA meeting and MLA.

Other topics that the ADPCL has been discussing include resources for teaching World Literature—John Foster and Joel Foreman at George Mason University have led an NEH-funded workshop; and a collection of essays edited by David Damrosch, *Teaching World Literature*, will soon be published by MLA—and options for the assessment of student learning—many institutions are asking that academic units identify direct and indirect measures of instructional outcomes.

The ADPCL has again provided the annual listing of Comparative Literature units for the September Directory issue of *PMLA*. Please check this listing and let us know (adpcl@psu.edu) if your institution’s entry is missing or incorrect so that we can update it for the following year.

If your institution is not currently an ADPCL member, we invite you to join (see the website above), and we invite everyone’s suggestions for administrative or programmatic topics that the ADPCL can usefully address to represent our collective interests.

Sincerely yours,

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**ACLA PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
KATHLEEN L. KOMAR**

**Candide in Cyberspace:
Electronic Texts and the Future of Comparative Literature**

I'd like to do something a little adventurous today. Rather than talk with you about research I have already accomplished, I'd like to speculate about research I am just embarking on—and a topic that I think will figure prominently among those issues that shape the future of Comparative Literature.

Ironically, if there was ever a talk that should use technology, it is this one. And I was going to begin by showing you a short video clip—but, fulfilling all my fears about technology, the clip has been pulled from YouTube by the original Norwegian television comedy show that produced it. I have decided therefore to do things the old-fashioned way. So let me resort to good old venerable narrative to describe the video to you. Some of you may already have seen it. It was titled “Introducing the Book.”

The scene opens with a nervous medieval monk, Ansgar, sitting at his wooden worktable with a leather-bound volume lying closed before him. He peers anxiously at the book and awaits his colleague, Holger, who enters and says reassuringly, “Well we all need help with a new system.” He asks Ansgar if he has opened the book yet. Ansgar replies that even he has gotten that far—this wouldn't have required him to call for assistance from the monastery's “Help Desk.” Ansgar explains that he was afraid to do anything more than open the book for fear of losing text if he made a mistake. He asks for a demonstration. Holger patiently opens the volume and reveals the script inside. Ansgar frustratedly points out that the text just stops in mid sentence. Holger then explains “turning the pages” and that one can even turn them back to read again. An amazed Ansgar says, “Oh the text continues as you turn!” and practices turning while commenting that *scrolls* were much easier to use. Holger demonstrates closing the book and assures Ansgar that all the text is still safe inside. Ansgar, to be sure he has mastered the mechanism of the book, runs through the whole process of opening the cover and turning the pages once more—only to be confounded again by closing the book in the opposite direction and consequently being unable to reopen it.

What is humorous here is how quickly most of us see ourselves as Ansgars at our computers, afraid to touch anything lest we too lose our text. We may not be medieval monks, but we certainly feel archaic and not too many steps from wishing we could return to the scroll—or at least to the physical printed book. In this paper, I would like to explore some of the implications of electronic texts and the internet for our practice of Comparative Literature. I will not attempt to provide a sophisticated discussion of the technology or programming themselves—which my techno-savvy colleagues like N. Katherine Hayles could do much more effectively. Rather, I would like to come at this issue from the direction of the technologically naïve reader trained in old-fashioned theories of analyzing literary texts—theories such as close reading, structuralism, post-structuralism, historical and cultural contextualization. I will examine this issue as a Candide in cyberspace in hopes of envisioning what changes computers and the internet might present to parallel that movement from scroll to bound text that so vexed our medieval friend Ansgar.

My own curiosity about cyberspace was piqued when I stumbled onto the internet while working on a book on Klytemnestra. Unlikely as it seems, I discovered a remarkable array of eponymous websites for various members of the House of Atreus, including *Electra.com*, *Iphigenia.com*, and *Orestes.com*. *Agamemnon.com* was still available to be purchased from a website designer group when I first checked in 1999. By June 2000 the site had become Agamemnon Film, owned (appropriately, I think) by Charlton Heston and his son Fraser. I was fascinated to see the interaction between classical culture and cyberspace and wondered how the internet and computers would soon affect more than just my research projects.

In the past few years, our thinking about our world at large has been redefined by the ubiquity and indispensability of computers. Even the most established print news magazines such as *Time* have incorporated internet and computer vocabulary. The section that used to be called “Letters” is now labeled “Inbox” and the old “Notebook” has become “Dashboard.” Indeed, *Time*’s “Person of the Year” issue in January 2007 featured a cover picturing a computer with a mirrored screen that reflected the reader’s image. The “Person of the Year” was anyone who had entered the “information age” defined by computers and networks.

And this may not have been a bad choice. Our students are more likely to seek information on the web than anywhere else, and even those of us raised to love libraries and fingering our way through the old card catalogs are likely to turn to the web when we need information instantly. When students want to know about a book, they refer to blogs or to Facebook for comments. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* took up this issue in a piece entitled “Lit-Blog Wars,” in which Daniel Mendelsohn, a winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, says that he is especially proud to receive recognition from knowledgeable judges “in an era in which anyone who owns a Dell laptop is a published critic.”¹

We are faced with what has often been called a democratization of culture—a world in which each of us (and millions of others) can become instantaneous creators, consumers, and critics of texts, art, and music. And democracy brings challenges to authority—including our own as teachers and theorists. The real problem for those of us whose profession is the study of literature and culture is what status all this new electronic material has for us. When anyone who owns a laptop can publish—if by publish we mean make work available to a very broad audience—what is our relationship to all this material? How do we deal with the ephemerality of much electronic material? How do we not just conceptualize but interact with a burgeoning electronic culture that seems more and more unavoidable both in everyday life and in our professional lives as well? In this democratization, will any critical judgment survive? How do we define chaff in this system, let alone separate it from the wheat?

The issues I am raising here regarding electronic media and literature are obviously not new ones. A wide range of individuals and organizations has been studying them for some time. Critics such as N. Katherine Hayles,² Mark Poster,³ George Landow,⁴ Marie-Laure Ryan,⁵ Espen Aarseth,⁶ and Mark Hansen⁷ (among many others) have written about electronic media and its relationship to literature; and organizations such as The American Council of Learned Societies have produced volumes exploring cyberinfrastructure for the humanities and social sciences.⁸ Even the creation of new texts through writers’ workshops has turned to the electronic. Online projects such as The Frontlist (*thefrontlist.com*) or Francis Ford Coppola’s “Zoetrope: All Story” create virtual writers communities to critique one another’s work in progress.⁹

What has changed, at least for me—and I will argue for Comparative Literature as a whole—is that these are no longer areas I can avoid. My own research, teaching, and much of my academic service on campus is caught up in the electronic, one way or another.

Whether it is committees considering how to assure the security of the campus backbone while allowing free scholarly interchange among professors working together over long distances, or students producing references that turn out to be chat rooms in courses at other colleges, or my growing interest in electronic poetry and hyper texts, the electronic has crowded my professional horizon with structures I had thought I could evade. The repercussions have filtered into all aspects of my life as a comparatist. For example, when an undergraduate in one of my classes wants to introduce me to a brilliant new writer, the reference she gives me is likely to be a website rather than a printed book. Young authors publish in cyberspace on their own websites, and while some of this material is superficial, some of it we would all recognize as “literature.” It has sophisticated narrative structures, fulfills our familiar set of expectations about how stories work, and uses recognizable poetic forms, tropes, allusions, and imagery. This fact made me question my own skepticism about electronic literature.

Why did I think that work in cyberspace could not be literature simply because it existed in a virtual form rather than the old familiar printed one? Why should this work be less valued because it was on a website—where probably hundreds if not thousands more people might actually read it—rather than printed by a small literary press for a group of literary connoisseurs? A growing discomfort with my own assumptions and limitations made me think more deeply about what makes something “literature,” about how we might have to realign our methodologies and theoretical assumptions to accommodate new forms of literary activity, and about what all that might mean for the discipline of comparative literature.

Let me provide one further example of how new technologies might force us to rethink our paradigms. In a doctoral examination, we were discussing how the construction of narrative texts is similar to the construction of computer programs, how the operations that drive narrative might also drive the programmer at some deep level. The doctoral candidate, who was a superb reader of literary texts, was also an electronic game designer who had a thriving business creating sophisticated computer games.¹⁰ The question arose as to whether such computer constructions could rise to the level of what we think of as “literature.” Half of my colleagues on the examining committee were adamant that this was not possible, that electronic texts and internet material would never qualify as literature. However, the doctoral candidate pointed out that such games were inherently narratives and that our assumptions about how narratives should work were needed to construct the programs that underpin these games. It was not just a question of technology changing literature, but also the reverse.

The material embodiment of the text on a disk or in cyberspace discomfited some of us. However, the move from oral texts to printed pages might have been a similar technological shift, and literary texts predate and postdate the printing press. Does the amount of visual material in these texts disqualify them as literature? We have always had illustrated texts in which the illustrations play a crucial role in our reading (medieval illustrated manuscripts, for example, or illustrated novels or poems, not to mention the current development of graphic novels). It was not, therefore, the physical condition of the “text,” the move from what my computer-savvy students now call a “codex” text (by which they mean any text printed in a book form) to the computer disk or to the internet that called into question the literariness of the work.

The physical condition of texts has shifted several times—as our little story of Ansgar and Holger reminds us—from oral to written, from scroll to book, from hand-penned manuscripts to set type, from set type to photocopies, and now to digitalized documents. The physical embodiment of the text does not define its “literariness,” but it does trigger different techniques of composition and reception. When we move from oral to written

texts, we need fewer fixed epithets and repeated lines and phrases than an oral teller would require to remember his story. Fixed, printed texts also allow us to go back and reread, to discover subtle repetitions that affect our understanding and interpretation. We have a stable artifact from which we can derive many interpretations that we can then debate by referring to that artifact. One question we need to ask, then, is what differences an electronic environment creates for the composition and reception of a text?

Another issue electronic texts present is that of “control” in the text. How much is the text controlled by the author and how much by the reader or, more complicatedly, by the computer programmer? Does the fact that the reader of a hypertext constantly makes decisions that shape the action make it inherently different from a literary text or invalidate it as literature? Some printed texts allow the same latitude—Julio Cortazar’s Latin American text *Hopscotch*, for example, or Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*?¹¹ Does the interactivity itself make the work non-literary? Or does it take us back to a time when a live audience might call out to an oral teller that he was telling it all wrong and therefore might actually change the telling?

Let me explore these questions by describing my first experience with a hypertext volume. I bought Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*¹² at the suggestion of one of my computer-gifted graduate students. This hypertext clearly belongs to our familiar literary critical universe. The novel is rich in allusions to an earlier text, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. It participates in the feminist strategy of creating revisions of earlier texts¹³—in this case, it makes the monster female and gives both Mary Shelley and her female creation a voice. The narrative also incorporates pieces of texts from both male and female literary critics as well as giving the author, Shelley Jackson, a personal voice that surfaces in the text. So far we are in familiar feminist and literary territory. And much of what the novel accomplishes could be examined from these traditional perspectives. What makes the novel substantially different from other revisionary texts by contemporary women writers is the experience of reading itself. This experience begins with a shrink-wrapped CD.

I spent some time loading the CD onto my computer and becoming frustrated at being forced to wade through electronic instructions and “readme” files before I could get to the “real” narrative. It struck me in the process that it was precisely the narrative I was dealing with, but that its materiality had changed drastically. The narrative now at its most basic was not words—or even phonemes—but rather brief electrical impulses that were at such a deep level that my sensory equipment could not even process them. The tactile quality of a “codex book” had given way to a more abstract engineering and mathematical coding that was beyond or beneath my perception. A layer of programming and a type of software called “Storyspace” provided a deep “structure” for the narrative before I read word one.¹⁴ This immediately broadened my vision of “structure” in the more familiar narrative sense. It also made me aware that any discussion of genre for this text would have to include types of software and programming as well as types of literary narrative.

After finally installing the text, I began to read—or rather to double click on icons that held mysteries I had no way of anticipating. The reader of a hypertext moves through the narrative by being given a piece of text or an illustration that is connected to one or several “links” that the reader can choose. Each choice begins to create a narrative strand that has the possibility of branching each time the reader makes another choice of links (which occurs after about one page of text or illustration). One opening page may thus lead to hundreds of possible narratives. Instead of being the comfortably trained reader of texts with a set horizon of expectations, I truly became a Candide in cyberspace, naively moving from adventure to adventure with the click of a mouse—and experiencing Candide’s dumbfoundedness at how the world beyond my personal experience functions. While engrossed in the narrative, I was also in awe of the technology that

could deliver it to me in such a non-linear and interactive way.

My first impulse when I began to find actual pages of text in *Patchwork Girl* was to print them out as hard copy. Having grown up on structuralism, I wanted at least a minimal stability in the text so that I could trace the meanings created by juxtaposition, repetition, and variations within patterns. From my earlier work on multilinear novels that followed several narrators, plots, or motif strands, I was prepared for multiplicity and non-linearity.¹⁵ I was not prepared for the inability to track the same pattern more than once. I eventually learned that I could save an individual “reading” for future perusal, but that did not solve my problem. It simply made it faster to find again one of the many branching paths of the text that one might choose during any given reading. The site map was not really a blueprint to a stable arrangement but rather a dizzying series of possible choices—each of which created a slightly or hugely different narrative. I wanted desperately to stabilize this chaos into a hard copy. But I would need to interleaf so many different options that my narrative would again multiply into so many possibilities that Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome would hardly cover it. What was a reader to do with narratives that kept opening onto other narratives and characters—some of whom I had not met earlier or would not find again?

I was reminded of Hayden White’s admonition (echoing Foucault) in *Tropics of Discourse* that “if the present generation needs anything at all it is a willingness to confront heroically the dynamic and disruptive forces in contemporary life . . . we require a history that will educate us to discontinuity more than ever before; for discontinuity, disruption, and chaos is our lot.”¹⁶ Perhaps this new hypertext narrative answered White’s call in very concrete ways. It recalls White’s stress on the fact that history is a chosen narrative, a conscious construction among many possible constructions.¹⁷ This echoes the way in which N. Katherine Hayles discusses *Patchwork Girl*.¹⁸ She points out that this hypertext’s linking of intense present moments “reverses our usual sense that time is passing as we watch. Instead, time becomes a river that always already exists in its entirety, and we create sequence and chronology by choosing which portions of the river to sample” (section 48 of her essay). In effect, we become the shapers of the narrative (equivalent to White’s historian) in each link we select.

All of this made me reconceptualize what I thought of as “reading.” I would need to think of it more as exploration than as analysis of a stable (even if multilinear) novel. The act of reading was becoming irresistibly interactive. The hypertext did not unroll in time; it sat there and made **me** choose the direction and duration of that unrolling. It was like reading a *Tristram Shandy* in which all the many promised narratives were not only provided but multiply illustrated, fragmented, reassembled, extended into near infinity, and then piled on top of one another. Reiterability, structural stability, and the meaning I was used to deriving from them became frustratingly impossible. Backtracking led to new options rather than allowing me to reaffirm an interpretative move. I would begin to admire a page of prose only to have it end, forcing me to choose among several narrative strands. I had no way of charting the narrative in advance or jumping back to earlier passages as I read on. A narrative line following Mary Shelley’s experience of piecing together her female monster suddenly opened onto Shelly Jackson’s piecing together her own narrative from bits of her own voice, as well as that of an imagined Mary Shelley, the monster she creates, and many other feminists, creative writers, and literary critics. This gesture recalls the listing of the authors on the text’s title page as “Mary/Shelley Jackson and herself.” (The “herself” here is the patched together female character.) The sense of author, character, and reader here is multiple and crossing just as the text itself is.¹⁹

I was rapidly forced to understand that this kind of “reading,” like playing an electronic game, was not meant to end, the way reading ends on the final page of a bound

volume. The next time I opened the hypertext, I would be in a new universe of juxtapositions and therefore meanings. “Reading” this “book” was not going to allow me even a very multivalent “closure.” For a mildly compulsive interpreter of literary texts, this was a new experience. I didn’t mind open-endedness, but this was open beginning, middle, and endedness.

I had to confront the many critical concepts in my own thinking that were making this experience a frustration rather than a joy. First, my assumptions about “genre” were undermined. Many different genres (novel, essay, sociological and biological texts, fictitious personal journal, drawings) merged in this hypertext. That wasn’t so unusual; many of the multilinear novels I had worked on (Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, for example, or Joyce’s *Ulysses*) used similar strategies. The same was true for the multi-strandedness of *Patchwork Girl*, but the number of strands possible in the hypertext was greatly multiplied—and they refused to provide me with a platform for saying “aha, this juxtaposition of two scenes or strands ‘means’ such and such.” I was forever creating new juxtapositions and hence new structures and meanings. It was an embarrassment (and annoyance) of riches. Why did I find the challenge of reading very complicated codex texts enjoyable while being aggravated by the hypertext?

One of the problems for me was the concept of a narrator (reliable or not), a guiding consciousness that could lead me through the lexias of the text, deciding what to reveal at any moment and what to withhold—the shaper of the story.²⁰ But in this case it was I who was deciding which information would surface at any given moment, and not because I was purposely creating suspense or meaning. My clicking on links may have been a performative gesture, but not one I could control. I was moving blindly through lexias I had never seen, and could not anticipate, with the help and guidance of a machine, a cyber consciousness not a human one. Narration had become not the interaction of my consciousness with that of the author or his/her narrator, but an interaction among me, the author, the machine, and the programmer—the last two of whom could not have had intentional control of the process of creating meaning in this text. Lyotard’s words from *The Postmodern Condition* were echoing through my mind: “the narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements . . .”²¹ How did I get dragged into the process not of interpretation, but of composition itself? This was not just a metaphorical complicity, but a mechanical one as well. My nostalgia for even an unreliable narrator was overwhelming, and yet the excitement of interacting in a new kind of narrative adventure was nevertheless irresistible.

Most disorienting, however, was my inability to get at a concept of “wholeness” and unity in the experience of reading a hypertext. I can revel in the multiplicity, multivalence, and fragmentation in novels by Faulkner or Sterne because I feel that I have some control over their totality, that I have “read the whole book.” If I have not “mastered” the text, I have at least gotten pretty com-fordable with all its oddities. But in this reading universe, I come to a new text every time I sit down. I suppose it is conceivable that eventually I could follow every possible arrangement for the text, but even then I would have no stable record of it. This was a wholeness and unity that had to be tied to each act of reading; the narrative as a whole couldn’t be exhausted. It was theoretically finite (there are a set number of small pieces of text, or lexias), but practically endless. This hypertext is like its female monster, who forms a wholeness built of many disparate parts and lives, who is a composite of body parts that are tied to the narratives of the humans to whom they belonged. For a world of people who cruise the Internet by gobbling up random bits of information, by jumping among many small lexias, Shelley Jackson creates a text that shares in this habit of mind. It is built of discontinuities. Lyotard might appreciate its aptness for our time.

But Jackson also works with continuous flow. The many discontinuities are linked by the reader's constant movement among them. It is the process of movement that becomes the point, and the flow itself that creates meaning and literary value. Wholeness and unity consist ironically of discontinuity and flow. The speed of the electronic medium keeps the narrative blood flowing in her story. The sites the reader does not follow in any given reading remain skeletal. We must, in essence, keep reading to keep the narrative alive. In so doing, we are forced to play the author's narrative game according to the author's deep-structure rules. We cannot play by our old literary rules and retain our old literary expectations.

And yet we eventually revel in participating in the endless flow, in rethinking structure as constant process of inconstant fragments, in experiencing an aesthetics of instability or "open suspendedness." We become ourselves "patchwork girls." We are forced to rethink both our aesthetic categories and our own identities. This rethinking of ourselves also leads to a rethinking of the practice of Comparative Literature. We begin to understand that hypertexts demand a new kind of interdisciplinarity—not the familiar comparisons to art or history or film, but ones that will require interaction with computer science or engineering. We might need to understand programming language as well as literary language or to adapt our internet browsing techniques to critical analysis. We will certainly be challenged to allow the machine more and more into our cultural sphere since it is so heavily involved in the production of art and literature.

Indeed, hypertext technology is already "old" and is being upstaged by algorithmically created poetry and communal creative writing sites. Let me give you just a few examples of these new texts. Consider the following haiku:

Crazy moon child
Hide from your coffin
To spite your doom.²²

Most of us would judge this to be not a bad little poem. It taps into familiar images of impending death—the moon, the coffin. It takes a recognizable poetic form and makes a condensed but decipherable narrative sense. The surprise comes in learning that the author of this poem is Ray Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet—a machine driven by a program. Kurzweil analyzed the work of several contemporary poets and created algorithms that would generate similar linguistic structures and usages. As the website explains:

Version 1 of Ray Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet was written by Ray Kurzweil in the mid 1980s (in "C") and is described in Ray Kurzweil's book *The Age of Intelligent Machines* (MIT Press 1990) . . . Version 1 of RKCP was based on simple markov-like models (markov models are mathematical models similar in some respects to neural nets) to create language models of how the analyzed poets used words and word sequences, and then to write original poetry using these models.²³

In a test of audience responses, Kurzweil read 15 poems and asked the listeners to decide if the poems were written by human beings or by machines. The audience was correct less than 50% of the time. Critically, then, it is difficult to tell the artificial intelligence, the cyberpoet, from the human being. Does the fact that the texts are generated by a machine make the poems less literary? Let me provide you with one more example:

"Imagine Now And Sing"
Imagine now and sing,
creating myths
forming jewels from the falling snow.²⁴

Again, this is the Cybernetic Poet. Again, if we did not know this, we would undoubtedly count the poem as literature. It echoes earlier literary texts, (the *Aeneid*'s opening line, "I sing arms and the man," for example). Ironically, perhaps, the poem also calls to mind the singer Orpheus, the very image of the human being who makes song and poetry, and who often figures the creative capacity of the human poet. The little poem might even evoke Wallace Stevens's "Snow Man." The poem is thus securely situated in a context of literary allusion and experiences. We recognize it as a literary piece.

But if it is not the human author in the composition that marks it as literature, what does? Is there a magic inherent in the language itself that creates literature even without a human author? Partially. Language has the capacity to generate meaning beyond the control of any writer. Authors profit from this in that they can create texts richer in their many interpretations than they could have intended. This fact gave birth to our critical tenet of the "Intentional Fallacy" as an arbitrary and unfair limitation on the meanings of a text. Poetry, in particular, calls attention to language itself, to its form and condensation, in a more intense way than prose. The metaphor of poetry as dance and prose as walking comes to mind here and is instructive for its emphasis both on the creative activity of language in poetry versus its more pedestrian use in prose and on the highly structured nature of dance versus the uni-directed walking. Poetry is thus the perfect medium for the complexly structured but also creative activity of the machine.²⁵

However, I would also argue that this machine-generated poem, spawned by algorithms, still does have an author—or rather authors. The authors are Kurzweil and his programming colleagues, whose initial reading experience informs the programs they write to create new texts that will produce a similar experience for the reader. It is partly the language itself, then, but undeniably also the aesthetic experience and the mathematical genius of the programmers/authors. The author has not entirely disappeared; s/he has introduced another layer of formal rules, the mathematical rules of the algorithm on top of the rules of literary form.²⁶ The "author" or "authors" are several more layers removed from the final text, but they are there.

The fact that Kurzweil begins with the work of recognized poets to create the poetry-generating algorithms links his work irresistibly to the older order of literature. Like the poet in T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) whose new text realigns all the literary texts that precede it, Kurzweil reorders the entire realm of literature by the introduction of his new texts and by their method of composition. He is not, I would argue, outside of literature but rather ineluctably within it. The fact that he creates the persona of the "Cybernetic Poet" does not actually remove the human beings from the process. They simply have a mechanical and a mathematical aid in creating new poems; they are making what Brian McHale refers to as "prosthetic poetry."²⁷

Other poetic experiments that take a route less directly connected to the literary than Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet often produce less obviously literary results. Consider the following poem generated by a website called "Darwinian Poetry."

know though
clouds beating beyond the head
with cold knowledge
that
revealing
one dream is and
was again²⁸

Entitled simply "Poem #15286," this computer-generated offering is more of a challenge to our literary sensibility. It was created by a novel experiment in which randomly generated groups of words are subjected to a form of natural selection whereby certain groups

of words are eliminated by being voted out by those who visit the website. The visitor to the website, the reader, in effect participates in a group composition that involves no direct contact or discussion among the authors. Once the site visitor chooses a group of words or “poem,” their vote is recorded and two more poems appear culled from the choices of all the website visitors. The assumption of the site is that, by a kind of Darwinian natural selection, the random grouping of words will eventually emerge as meaningful poems. This procedure pushes the connection to earlier literary texts a bit farther away.

We could, however, as clever and conscientious interpreters of texts, wrest meaning from this poem. Clouds are often linked to the transcendent as well as the visionary or cerebral. The dream works nicely into this complex. And even the anti-grammatical “is and was again” could be seen as a clever displacement of temporal sense, a disruption of sequence and causality not uncommon in modernist and post-modernist writers. It is more of an effort, but we could see this poem too as a part of our literary universe.

What then is a poor literary critic to do with this new phenomenon? Do we surrender the human and see ourselves in a “post-human” world, as N. Kathryn Hayles has suggested.²⁹ Does the creation of texts by machines and algorithms push us into the realm of artificial intelligence and out of the literary?³⁰ Actually, I think not. These texts call into question our usual sense of “authorship” and control. If any of us still entertain the idea of individual human genius as the foundation of the poem, we will have to revise our assumptions to accommodate electronic poetry.³¹ The authorship in all of these examples is multiple. Either earlier poets contribute style and forms (as in the Kurzweil example), or many minds contribute to the composition of the poem (as in the Darwinian example). Both the author’s and the reader’s control is loosened by being multiplied among several participants.

This technique is not new, of course; surrealist poets and the poets of OULIPO (Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle), among others, have experimented with multiple authors and participants. But electronic poetry adds one more twist; one more formal level is interjected into the creation of the poem, a level that is not evident to the usual literary critical apparatus. Mathematical operations and algorithms control which combination of words may appear in the text. The machine and the programmer operate under limits that are not evident in the surface language of the text. We can recognize the haiku form, but not the mathematical formula that determines which words can appear. On the one hand, this means that the deep structure of the texts can remain obscure. On the other hand, our old assumption that structure can generate meaning in literary texts is given even more depth. In these examples, a deep structure generated by the algorithm itself adds to the juxtaposition of words in the surface of the text to create meaning. As in “normal” literary texts, the position of the words creates significance based upon our expectations as speakers of (in this case) English. When unexpected constructions occur that are allowed by the algorithm but not generally accepted by our grammar or semantics, we are forced to reconceptualize our normal grammatical world. It is a technique that poets such as Dylan Thomas or Rainer Maria Rilke anticipated by several decades.

In the face of cybernetic poets and electronic poetry, we must also rethink our ideas of overall vision and wholeness in a composition. When the computer is sifting language by the rules of algorithms, it is making small yes or no choices (like the base-two, on/off system on which the computer itself works). Unlike the human poet who may have some overall poetic or narrative construction in mind when s/he begins, the computer must constantly make small decisions. A classical example of this kind of processing was the attempt by computer programmers to create a program that would allow a robot to negotiate its way across a room. After attempting to write long complex programs, they dis-

covered that the most efficient method was not to attempt to program the entire course, but simply to program small local decisions that would allow the machine to make small but relentless progress (for example, the command, “if you encounter an object, turn right”). This process tends to undermine the more humanly familiar desire to convey a feeling or an idea or to share an intense experience through a poem. The lack of this kind of overarching desire on the part of the machine almost makes us yearn for the old fallacious “intention of the author.” The machine is not capable of poetic desire—or at least not yet.

But the mathematical and mechanical participation inherent in electronic poems is much more than the “monkey-at-the-typewriter” idea. This was the argument that if you sat a monkey down at a typewriter sooner or later he would write a story—by virtue of the ability of language to generate meaning. In the cases we have been discussing, the monkey would have significant mathematical assistance. The poems we have examined are not simply random events; a conscious human intellect provides the rules that govern them. It may not be “poetic inspiration” or a “direct outpouring of emotion,” but it is certainly a human consciousness or several human consciousnesses at work. And indeed two humanly conceived and constructed art forms—that of literature and that of mathematics—are being employed.

What I thought of as a discussion of “the future” in this paper rapidly became a shifting present. We are constantly being confronted with a new culture in which technology and literature begin to merge, in which science and what we have been used to calling “the Humanities” begin to coalesce. In order to deal with electronic texts comparatively, we must develop a new set of expectations vested in the mathematical models themselves, as yet another author, the programmer, collaborates in the composition of texts like these. And to return to my students, some of my graduate students who choose to investigate electronic texts and cyber literature of all kinds (ranging from cyber poetry to hypertext novels) are learning the language of the programmer in order to pursue their investigations; they are learning the language and culture of the machine.³²

Comparative literature has always been open to interdisciplinary work. That interdisciplinarity will now need to extend to our colleagues in computer science or design or mathematics. The sign system of language will align itself with other sign systems such as mathematics to produce new kinds of texts and new types of “comparative analyses.” These will require that we explore radically different cultures that are based not on geography, or even a common dialect, but rather on common technologies. I do not believe, however, that we will see the end of literature and of the human. We will still use our interpretative tools to decipher meaning. The text may be multiply authored, and it may use multiple sign systems, but it will continue to create meanings that human beings will continue to explore through literary and comparative analysis.

Endnotes

¹ “The Lit-Blog Wars” from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “The Chronicle Review” Vol. 53, Issue 31, p. B4. (April 6, 2007). Mendelsohn was gratified to receive his prize from “people who know what they’re talking about.” As the article points out, even the techno-savvy editors of the electronic journal *n+1* (a semi-annual print journal that provides new material on the web once or twice a week) question blogs about literature as conspiracies by the big publishing houses to get free advertising.

² See, for example, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

³ See, for example, *Information Please: Culture and Politics in the Age of Digital Machines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴ *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology. Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

⁵ *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999). This volume contains several interesting essays by Aarseth and a number of other theorists.

⁶ *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

⁷ *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

⁸ See *Our Cultural Commonwealth: The Report of the American Council of Learned Societies Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (ACLS, 2006) <http://www.acls.org/cyberinfrastructure/OurCulturalCommonwealth.pdf>

⁹ See Evan Hughes's article "Slush Life" for a discussion of these sites (*Boston Globe*, 31 Dec 2006: K2).

¹⁰ See Ian Bogost's dissertation *Unit Operations: Criticism after Literature*, UCLA, 2004. Despite this title, Ian is intent on showing the interrelationship between technology and literature rather than in superseding literature.

¹¹ One of my graduate students, Barbara Hui, has a wonderful paper comparing Danielewsky's work to *Patchwork Girl*: "Hypertextuality and a New Aesthetic Wholeness: Monstrosity in *House of Leaves* and *Patchwork Girl*." (Unpublished paper, March 12, 2003).

¹² See Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl by Mary/Shelley and Herself* (Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems, 1994. <http://www.eastgate.com>)

¹³ I examine the use of revisionary texts by female authors in my recent book *Reclaiming Klytemnestra: Revenge or Reconciliation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹⁴ In her paper, Hui argues that this underlying software program creates a work in *Patchwork Girl* that is "surprisingly . . . quiescent . . . It achieves its hypertextuality simply by virtue of the fact that it conforms to the structure encouraged by the software with which it was created. The format of the work is natural to the medium, and the experience of navigating the piece is unnatural to the reader only because the medium itself is an unfamiliar one" (p. 7). If the reader is an experienced reader/critic of electronic media, I think Hui is correct. For those of us to whom the medium is unfamiliar, the text is rather more challenging—particularly on the first reading. Subsequent readings of this kind of text become easier if not actually comfortable.

¹⁵ See my volume *Pattern and Chaos: Multilinear Novels by Dos Passos, Faulkner, Döblin, and Koeppen* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House Publishers, 1983).

¹⁶ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, 1985), p. 50.

¹⁷ White talks about constructing historical narrative and the interpretations that that construction implies in several of his works. He discusses employment specifically in "Historical Employment and the Problem of Truth in Historical Representation" in *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 27-42.

¹⁸ See Hayles's insightful article "Flickering Connectives in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*: The Importance of Media-specific Analysis," *Postmodern Culture* 10.2 (Jan. 2000). 25 Jan 2003. www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/textonly/issue100/10.2hayles.txt

¹⁹ Hayles discusses issues of gender and composition more extensively than I can here.

²⁰ Some of the thoughts here were triggered by a talk on "Omniscience" given by Jonathan Culler at the meeting "Narrative: An International Conference," March 27-29, 2003,

University of California, Berkeley.

²¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv. Originally published as *La Condition post-moderne: rapport sur la savoir* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

²² This poem was written by Ray Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet based on an analysis of poems by Kathleen Frances Wheeler. See the website: http://www.kurzweilcyberart.com/poetry/rkcp_how_it_works.php3

²³ See the website at: http://www.kurzweilcyberart.com/poetry/rkcp_historyofrkcp.php3

²⁴ A poem written by Ray Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet after analysis of poems by Wendy Dennis and Ray Kurzweil and love poems by various authors.

²⁵ Brian McHale, in his essay "Poetry as Prosthesis" (*Poetics Today* 21.1, Spring 2000, pp. 1-32), goes so far as to mischievously propose that "all forms of machine-generated text" be termed "poetry" and that "all types of spontaneous (i.e., nonmechanical, non-prosthetic) composition" be called prose (27). The suggestion is meant to be subversive and thought provoking. I would hate, however, to yield all the dancing to the machine and to relegate humans to the walking half of our metaphor. No machine dances without a human throwing the switch—and providing extensive programming.

²⁶ Espen J. Aarseth discusses the collaboration between humans and machines in the creation of a text in his volume *Cybertext: Perspectives in Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). He attempts to tease out the ways in which human interaction with the machine can take place at several points in the process (see p. 135 following).

²⁷ Thus, we might think of this poetry as aided by an artificial device, as a human being is aided by a mechanical device—what McHale, quoting David Wills (in *Prosthesis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), characterizes as a "prosthesis" (see McHale's "Poetry as Prosthesis," especially p. 24).

²⁸ Although I will provide the website here for historical accuracy, when I revisited it on May 6, 2007, it was already gone. Darwinian poetry seems to have given way to some other innovation. The ephemeral quality of the materials I am dealing with here is another challenge to our usual sense of how literature works. The website is: <http://208.28.114.21:8080/poetry/ReportingServlet?action=showPoem&id=15286>

²⁹ See Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

³⁰ Hayles has another fascinating article entitled "Is it Literature—or Art?" that deals with texts projected into space and then deformed by those who enter the space using special electronic equipment. I would love to explore such an electronic art/literary environment! See this article in the catalog *Second Natures*, written in connection with the Faculty Exhibition of the UCLA Design I Media Arts Department, Sept. 13-Oct. 26, 2006, for the opening of the Eli and Edyth Broad Art Center at UCLA.

³¹ McHale discusses this sharing of the composition of poetry with a machine as undermining or diluting the author's authority ("Poetry as Prosthesis," p. 24).

³² See Hayles's new volume *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) on this topic.



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Panel A.

New Comparative Methodologies: Rethinking Difference

Presider: Robert H. Doran (Middlebury)

1. Renee Barlow (Indiana University–Bloomington), "Diasporic Patterns: A Complex Systems Approach to the African Diaspora"
2. Lou Freitas Caton (Westfield State College), "Rethinking the Turn to Comparative Analysis in American Ethnic Studies"
3. Brian Lennon (Penn State University–University Park), "Essayism, or Comparison in Time"

Panel B.

New Comparative Methodologies: Musical Thinking

Presider: Yopie Prins (University of Michigan–Ann Arbor)

1. Marshall Brown (University of Washington), "The Music That Thinking Is"
2. Gregory Erickson (Mannes College), "Twentieth-Century Literature and Absolute Music"
3. Robert Kaufman (University of California–Berkeley), "Musical Thought, Literary Experience"

Special Session Arranged by the ADPCL

Who's (Not Afraid of) Teaching Comparative Literature?

Presider: Caroline D. Eckhardt (Penn State University–University Park)

1. Pericles S.B. Lewis (Yale University), "The Place of Comparative Literature in a Global University"
2. Nancy Blake (University of Illinois–Urbana), "What Do I Teach When I Teach Comparative Literature?"
3. Corinne Laura Scheiner (Colorado College), "Always Depending on the Kindness of Strangers: Staffing Comparative Literature at a Liberal Arts College"

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MEMORIAL NOTICES 2006-07

JEAN BAUDRILLARD
July 29, 1929-March 6, 2007

Comparative Literature has lost a provocative and important colleague. Jean Baudrillard, although a social theorist, best known for his analyses of modes of mediation and of technological communication, exercised a strong influence on literary and cultural critics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The scope of his writing made it an especially rich resource for comparatists, as he addressed such diverse subjects—from consumerism to gender relations to the social understanding of history to journalistic commentaries about AIDS, cloning, the Rushdie affair, the (first) Gulf War, and the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City.

He was born in Reims, France. After studying German language at the Sorbonne University and teaching it in a lycée, Baudrillard worked as a translator and critic and continued studying philosophy and sociology. After completing his doctoral thesis, *Le Système des objets* under the supervision of Henri Lefebvre, he taught sociology and in 1972 finished his habilitation “L’Autre par lui-même” and became a professor at the Université de Paris-X Nanterre. He served as Directeur Scientifique at L’Institut de Recherche et d’Information Socio-Économique at the Université de Paris-IX Dauphine and continued supporting the Institut de Recherche sur l’Innovation Sociale at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and was *Satrap* at the Collège de ‘Pataphysique’ until his death. Baudrillard also collaborated at the Canadian philosophical review *Ctheory*, where he was abundantly cited.

Developing from structuralism and diverging from Foucault, Baudrillard explored the implications of the notion that systems of signification and meaning are understandable only in terms of their interrelation and developed theories based not on power and knowledge but on the notions of seduction, simulation, and, the word most associated with his ideas, hyperreality. This view of signification as self-referential took on special importance in his work on contemporary global society, wherein technological communication has created an excessive proliferation of meaning and where the real has been reduced to self-referential signs of its existence. Scholars will long remember his ironic and poetic style and unexpected challenges to our conceptualization of the contemporary world from works such as *The Mirror of Production* (1973), *Forget Foucault* (1977), *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), *America* (1986), and *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991). He died of illness at the age of 77.

TANIA FRANCO CARVALHAL
October 27, 1943-September 10, 2006

Professor Tania Franco Carvalhal’s death is an irretrievable loss to comparative literature studies and to all those who knew her well. Tania Carvalhal was a distinguished scholar, an eminent professor (professor emeritus at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil), a sensible critic of the literary phenomenon, and a dynamic organizer of discussion forums in the area of comparative literature. She was one of the

visionary founders of the Brazilian Comparative Literature Association (ABRALIC), of which she was also the first president, and the president of the ICLA from August 2004 till her last days.

Carvalho began her career as a professor of French literature at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and received her doctorate from the University of São Paulo. After a year in Paris, studying with Roland Barthes, Jean-Claude Chevalier, and George Raillard, she returned to Porto Alegre. She began teaching literary theory and later comparative literature, but never abandoned her interest in French and Brazilian literatures. Carvalho's writings clearly reveal her profile as a true comparatist. She has published a book (*Literatura Comparada*, 1986) that has been widely adopted as a required text, as well as author and movement studies such as *A evidência mascarada* (1984), a study of Augusto Meyer's works, and a collection of essays, *O próprio e o alheio* (2003). Her erudite and graceful work embodies her preoccupation with the dialectical relationship between the local and the universal. She has devoted considerable attention to the study of Brazilian traditions, especially in the south of Brazil, as the long-time director of a Cultural Institute in Porto Alegre. She has also published numerous critical editions introducing non-canonical authors to new readers of Latin American literature. An energetic organizer of international conferences, Carvalho was a gifted teacher and administrator. Her foundational role in the ABRALIC and her collaboration and leadership in the ICLA leave a legacy of devotion to the field and international collaboration.

Adapted from the memorial notice by Eduardo F. Coutinho, cinematographer

MILAN DIMIĆ d. March 11, 2007

Milan V. Dimić, University Professor Emeritus of the University of Alberta at Edmonton, served Comparative Literature locally, nationally, and internationally, until his death in the city of his birth, Belgrade. His career began as an Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (Foundation) Research Fellow in the Department of Romance Languages and Comparative Literature at the University of Tübingen. By 1973 Dimić was Professor of Comparative Literature at Alberta, and in 1974 he founded the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. Until his retirement in 1998, he was appointed University Professor, for a career "beyond departmental and formal disciplinary boundaries." As an emeritus, he also spent several years as Visiting Professor, Department of English, Shih Hsin University, Taipei, Taiwan with the sponsorship of the National Science Council of Taiwan.

His was an illustrious career both as a teacher and as a dedicated and innovative member of our profession. His intellectual gifts, such as his ability to speak Serbo-Croatian, English, German, French, and Russian and to read a number of other languages, were apparent. He was a gifted and lauded teacher as well as an energetic administrator, serving as Founding Chair of Comparative Literature at Alberta and Vice-President of the ICLA from 1991-94. Among Dimić's awards and distinctions was his election in 1983 as the first scholar of Comparative Literature to the Royal Society of Canada, Academy of the Humanities. His essays and co-edited collections, such as *Acculturation* (1994) and *Diaspora Serbs: A Cultural Analysis* (2004), brought scholars together and explored his own interests in oral literature, Romanticism, Expressionism, popular literature, and literary theory. The legacy of the M.V. Dimić Research Institute for Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta is a fitting tribute to his career.

Adapted from a memorial notice by Jonathan Hart (University of Alberta)

CLAUDIO GUILLÉN**September 2, 1924-January 27, 2007**

Our comparative communities in the United States and Spain especially have lost a dear colleague, Claudio Guillén, the accomplished Spanish writer and literary critic. The son of poet Jorge Guillén, with whom he left his country in 1939 to live in exile in the United States, Guillén studied at Williams College before returning to fight fascism with Free French forces during World War II. Guillén specialized in comparative literature, which he taught from 1965 onwards at the University of California, San Diego, Princeton University, and Harvard University, returning to his native Spain, where he taught comparative literature at the University of Barcelona.

His first major work was *Literature as System* (1971), which searched for a theory of genre and of literary history but remained far from abstract theorizing. In *Entre lo uno y lo diverso* (1985), translated into English as *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* (1993), he discussed the “tensions existing between the local and the universal” from a predominantly hermeneutic point of view. Like his own internationalist background and life, which took him from Europe to the New World and as far as China, Guillén’s scholarship took special interest in the picaresque and was epitomized by the genre of the elegantly crafted essay. Appropriately, therefore, his invaluable scholarly work was widely celebrated in the festschrift *Sin fronteras* (1999), edited by Darío Villanueva and others. In 1999, he was rewarded with the National Prize of Essay for his essay “Múltiples moradas,” and in March 2002 he was elected a member of the Spanish Royal Academy.

Adapted from the memorial notice by Douwe Fokkema (Utrecht University)

WOLFGANG ISER**July 22, 1926-January 24, 2007**

Great sadness greeted the death of Professor Wolfgang Iser. At the time of his death, Professor Iser was one of the most prominent literary theorists in the world. A founder of the “Constance School,” along with Hans Robert Jauss and Juri Striedter, at the newly established University of Constance, he shifted the focus of German literary theory in the late 1960s from the author to the reader. Rather than ask what a work of literature means, he turned his attention to what a work does to the reader. His works of theory and criticism had a major impact on literary study in the United States with the publication of *The Implied Reader* (1972) and *The Act of Reading* (1976). In 1976, Iser came to UC Irvine as a visiting professor of German, joining the UC Irvine Department of English and Comparative Literature permanently two years later. Along with Murray Krieger, J. Hillis Miller, and Jacques Derrida, he helped make UCI one of the most important centers of literary theory in the world.

Expanding on his groundbreaking work on the effect of literature on the reader (*Wirkungsaesthetik*), he explored new territory by developing the field of “literary anthropology,” which speculates on how literature functions in the human experience. This phase of his career resulted in *Prospecting* (1989) and *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1993). Noted for his excellent readings of individual works as well as for his theoretical positions, he also published a major book on Shakespeare’s history plays, *Staging Politics* (1993), and numerous essays on Fielding, Pater, Joyce, and Beckett. In 1991 he retired from the University of Constance, but continued to teach at UCI until 2005. Extremely productive even after retirement, in 2006 he published *How To Do Theory* and lectured in nine countries, playing, as he had done for over 25 years, the role of international literary theorist.

Adapted from the official memorial notice from University of California–Irvine

ROLAND MORTIER
December 21, 1920-2007

Our field has lost Professor Roland Mortier, director of Eighteenth-Century Studies at the Free University of Brussels and a former president of the ICLA (1976-79). Holder of honorary chairs at the University of Leuven and at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, he has been a visiting professor at Toronto, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Cleveland, Maryland, Exeter, London, Paris-Sorbonne, Montpellier, Cologne, Pisa, Duisburg, and Jerusalem. Granted numerous honors, including honorary doctorates and national and international citations, he was elected to membership in the Royal Academy of Belgium in 1969.

From his early ground-breaking study *Diderot en Allemagne (1750-1850)* (1954) to later works such as *L'Originalité: une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des Lumières* (1982) and *La Poétique des ruines en France: ses origines, ses variations, de la Renaissance à Victor Hugo* (1974), his research remained centered in the eighteenth century and boldly interdisciplinary. His focus on cosmopolitanism in Europe richly connected history and literary production while expanding our appreciation of the relations between reason and sentiment in the period. His remarkable energy, producing eighty articles, three books, and five editions between 1990-2000, complemented a distinctive capacity for synthesis which developed close readings and rich contextualizations through crisp insights. Mortier's commitment not only to considering the works of major figures, such as Voltaire, but also to expanding the canon anticipated by forty years modern imperatives. Mortier leaves an exceptional legacy of what he himself calls "une discrète nostalgie" for a period that was formative for modern aesthetic, social, and political ideas.

RICHARD RORTY
October 4, 1931-June 8, 2007

Richard Rorty, a professor emeritus of comparative literature at Stanford University and public intellectual, was perhaps best known for revitalizing the philosophical school of American pragmatism. Born in New York City, he enrolled at the University of Chicago shortly before turning 15, and then earned his doctorate in philosophy at Yale University. His dissertation was titled *The Concept of Potentiality*. After spending two years in the Army, he received his first faculty appointment at Wellesley College before joining the faculty of Princeton University. Until coming to Stanford University in 1996, he was on the faculty at the University of Virginia. It was during his tenure at Princeton that he published his landmark book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), which would set the foundation for his later work arguing that the general distinction between objective and subjective realities is meaningless.

Rorty was one of the most famous and widely read philosophers of the late twentieth century, but he was also controversial, beginning in the 1970s, as he challenged the idea of philosophy as a discipline that could discern general and timeless truths about the world. Any attempt, Rorty argued, to obtain some kind of transcendent, unmediated knowledge about it was futile. Rorty saw philosophy and literature as part of the same conversation. In late April, he was awarded the Thomas Jefferson Medal for Distinguished Achievement in the Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences from the American Philosophical Society. Rorty also has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a MacArthur Fellowship, and he was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In addition to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty is the author of several popular and academically influential books, including *Consequences of Pragmatism*

(1982), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in 20th-Century America* (1998), and four volumes of papers.

Adapted from the official memorial notice from Stanford University

The ACLA would like to extend its best wishes to the family and friends of these colleagues and to those of any other members of our community who have passed away this year. Members are encouraged to send memorial notices to the Secretariat at *info@acla.org* for inclusion in the annual bulletin.

**RECOGNITION OF CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ACLA ENDOWMENTS
AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

The ACLA wishes gratefully to acknowledge the generous contributions made this year to our endowments: the Charles Bernheimer Endowment for Outstanding Graduate Research in Comparative Literature, the Haskell M. Block Endowment for the Support of International Students, and the general ACLA endowments. These funds, which honor the year's outstanding dissertation, fund graduate student travel to the annual meeting of the ACLA, and support the association's mission, assure and enhance the future of the field of Comparative Literature through our graduate students and colleagues by recognizing their achievements and assisting them to participate fully in the scholarly life of the association.

Particularly generous benefactors of the ACLA this year included: John H. Davis, Margaret Higonnet, Kathleen Komar, and Lois Zamora. We also wish to thank the dozens of members whose contributions have made possible the enhancement and growth of our travel grant programs.

The ACLA would also like to thank our institutional members for their support. The ACLA's 2006 institutional members comprised:

Columbia University
 Cuyahoga Community College
 Dartmouth College
 Emory University
 Millersville University
 Pennsylvania State University
 Rutgers University
 San Francisco State University
 University of Alberta
 University of Arkansas
 University of California–Berkeley
 University of California–Irvine
 University of California–Los Angeles
 University of California–Riverside
 University of Chicago
 University of Colorado–Boulder
 University of Connecticut–Storrs
 University of Georgia–Athens
 University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign
 University of Massachusetts
 University of Miami–Coral Gables
 University of Michigan–Ann Arbor
 University of Southern California
 University of Texas–Austin
 University of Washington–Seattle
 Yale University

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE PRIZES FOR 2007

The Harry Levin Prize

The Harry Levin Prize, given in alternate years with the René Wellek Prize, is this country's most prestigious book award in the discipline of comparative literature. Those books eligible for the Levin Prize emphasize literary history or criticism as opposed to theory; in the spirit of comparative literature, they are engaged with more than one national literature or with issues of literary study in general. The 2007 Levin Prize comprised books published in the triennium 2004-2006. The award was presented at the ACLA Annual Meeting (Puebla, Mexico) in April 2007.

The winner of the 2007 Harry Levin prize was Lois Parkinson Zamora (University of Houston) for her book *The Inordinate Eye: New World Baroque and Latin American Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Honorable mention was awarded to Wai Chee Dimock for her book *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). The Prize Committee for 2006-2007 was: Yopie Prins (chair, University of Michigan–Ann Arbor), Jonathan Culler (Cornell University), and Djelal Kadir (Pennsylvania State University).

Announcing the 2008 René Wellek Prize:

The Wellek Prize recognizes an outstanding work in the field of literary and cultural theory. The 2008 Wellek Prize comprises books published in the triennium 2005-2007, and the award will be presented at the ACLA Annual Meeting in Long Beach in April 2008. Please consult the ACLA website for additional information about the competition at: <http://www.acla.org/levinandwellek.html>

The A. Owen Aldridge Prize

The A. Owen Aldridge prize is awarded to the best graduate student essay selected from a competition. *Comparative Literature Studies*, at the Pennsylvania State University Press, publishes the winning essay, which is also awarded a monetary prize. The purpose of this competition is to encourage and recognize excellence in scholarship among graduate students and to reward the highest achievement by publication. This project is sponsored by *Comparative Literature Studies* in cooperation with the ACLA and supported by the Department of Comparative Literature at Penn State.

The winner of the 2007 A. Owen Aldridge prize was Tobias Boes (Yale University), for his essay "Apprenticeship of the Novel: The *Bildungsroman* and the Invention of History, ca. 1770-1820." The prize committee for 2006-07 was: Thomas Beebee (chair, Pennsylvania State University), Christopher P. Bush (Princeton University), Stephanie Moore Glaser (University of Copenhagen), and Eric Hayot (University of Arizona).

Graduate students are encouraged to submit a polished paper in English, approximately 15-20 pages long (double-spaced), following the MLA Style Manual, prepared for anonymous evaluation. The deadline for the 2008 Aldridge prize competition is Novem-

ber 15, 2007. Further information on the Aldridge prize can be found at: <http://www.acla.org/aldridge.html>

The Charles Bernheimer Prize

Each department or program in Comparative Literature in North America may nominate one dissertation completed during the current year (for the 2008 competition, a dissertation completed by September 15, 2007). The ACLA expects that the majority of dissertations nominated have been written by students enrolled in Comparative Literature, but a department or program may nominate a dissertation by a student enrolled in another program if it judges this the best dissertation in comparative literature of the year. The sponsoring department or program must be a current member of the ACLA.

The winner of the 2007 Bernheimer Prize was Karen Laura Thornber (Harvard University), for her dissertation "Cultures and Texts in Motion: Negotiating and Reconfiguring Japan and Japanese Literature in Polyintertextual East Asian Contact Zones (Japan, Semicolonial China, Colonial Korea, Colonial Taiwan)." The prize committee for 2006-07 was: Ronald Bogue (chair, University of Georgia), Sandra Bermann (Princeton University), and Steven Yao (Hamilton College).

To nominate a dissertation for the Bernheimer Prize, we ask you to notify the ACLA secretariat at info@acla.org of your nomination and to send copies of the dissertation directly to the judges. For the 2008 Bernheimer Prize, copies must reach the judges by November 15, 2007. Further information on the Bernheimer prize can be found at: <http://www.acla.org/bernheimer.html>

The Horst Frenz Prize

The Horst Frenz Prize is awarded to an outstanding paper presented by a graduate student at the annual meeting of the ACLA; the prize is awarded at the following year's conference. The Horst Frenz Prize consists of a \$250 gift certificate for books, a \$250 travel grant to attend the following ACLA Conference to receive the award in person, and publication of the essay in the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*.

The winner of the 2007 Horst Frenz Prize was Guilan Siassi (University of California—Los Angeles), for her paper "Dreaming the Body into Words: Translating Affect between Cultures in Khatibi's *Amour Bilingue*." Honorable mention was awarded to Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé (University of California—Berkeley), for her paper "Puzzle, Parable, and the Limits of the Imagination: The Literary Ethics of Kafka and Wittgenstein." The jury for the ACLA 2005 Pennsylvania State University was: Eugene Eoyang (chair, Lingnan University, Hong Kong), Virginia Jackson (Tufts University), and Pericles Lewis (Yale University).

Nominations of papers are encouraged from all ACLA members who participated in the annual meeting. The deadline for nominations is September 15, 2007. Nominations (including name, paper title, e-mail, etc.) should be sent to Eugene Eoyang at eoyang@ln.edu.hk. Further information on the Frenz prize can be found at: <http://www.acla.org/frenz.html>

2007 HARRY LEVIN CITATION

Lois Parkinson Zamora (University of Houston) for her monograph
The Inordinate Eye: New World Baroque and Latin American Fiction
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

The Harry Levin Prize is awarded by the American Comparative Literature Association for a book in literary history or criticism. It seems fitting for this year's ACLA meeting in Mexico to have recognized two books that offer new perspectives on American Studies, placing North America within a larger hemispheric and global context for comparative literature.

The 2007 Harry Levin Prize was awarded to Lois Parkinson Zamora for *The Inordinate Eye: New World Baroque and Latin American Fiction*, published by Chicago University Press. This book is a bold venture joining visual studies with literary studies to revise our narratives of art, history, and literature, and it is also a splendid example of the possibilities of Comparative Literature as an endeavor engaged with the materiality of its cultural and historical object of investigation. Parkinson Zamora succeeds admirably as a comparatist in visualizing the contrapuntal refractions of a historical and aesthetic reality that has been aptly called baroque. Introducing the "inordinate eye" as an alternative to the colonial and postcolonial gaze in Latin America, she emphasizes cultural legibility rather than literacy in her analysis of New World Baroque, and locates theoretical questions about "seeing" in an historical and geographical context that has long challenged the disciplinary faculties of Comparative Literature. Parkinson Zamora builds her masterful study on the methodological scaffolding that defines Comparative Literature as the field where heterogeneous elements, paradoxical realities, and heterodox visions converge.

Honorable Mention: Wai Chee Dimock (Yale University) for her monograph
Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

Honorable mention went to Wai Chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, published by Princeton University Press. Rediscovering the global dimensions of American literature, this book is extraordinarily wide-ranging in its historical reach and in the radically different cultural contexts brought to bear on American texts that should never look the same again. Tackling the troubled confluence of Comparative Literature and American Studies, where an incorrigible vocation devoted to comparisons clashes with a cultural exceptionalism that historically has deemed itself incomparable, Dimock's book deftly negotiates those cross-currents, helping to open up U.S. cultural history by examining it as an interlinked part of the rest of the world. *Through Other Continents* illustrates the potential of American Studies as an international field that is part of a larger global intellectual community.

Yopie Prins, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Chair

Harry Levin Committee Members:

Jonathan Culler, Cornell University

Djelal Kadir, Pennsylvania State

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
January 1, 2006-December 31, 2006

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ACCOUNT

Balance Forward 01/01/06	\$ 70,224.20
Income (Memberships)	\$ 60,105.60
Income (Donations)	\$ 1,910.00
Income (Conf. Registrations: Princeton/Puebla)	\$ 99,350.00
Income (Hotel/Transport Payments)	\$ 73,472.00
Income (Conf. Proceeds: Princeton)	\$ 6,000.00
Expenditures (itemized below)	-\$201,422.00
Final Balance	\$109,639.80

UT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURES/TRANSFERS

Journal subscriptions	-\$ 21,562.00
ICLA/SCLA joint memberships	-\$ 4,240.00
Prizes	-\$ 1,000.00
Membership dues (NHA and ACLS)	-\$ 1,111.00
Conference Expenses (MLA)	-\$ 1,781.59
Travel & Misc. Reimbursements	-\$ 4,082.59
Contribution to the ADPCL	\$ 3,000.00
Conference Wire Transfers (Princeton/Puebla)	-\$151,400.00
Travel Grants (student and faculty)	-\$ 7,700.76
Office Expenses and Server Fees	-\$ 819.21
Bank/Credit Card Fees	-\$ 4,349.85
CPA Tax Filing Fees	-\$ 375.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES/TRANSFERS	-\$201,422.00

Highlander/Pershing Investment

Value 01/01/06	\$110,067.38
Dividends	\$ 13,337.26
Value 12/31/06	\$123,404.64

University of Texas Contribution

Expenses (staff salaries and office expenses)	-\$ 42,350.00
UT Contribution	\$ 42,350.00

TOTAL ASSETS

COMBINED BALANCES 12/31/05	\$234,044.44
COMBINED BALANCES 01/01/05	\$181,271.09
NET CHANGE	\$ 51,773.35

Respectfully submitted by
 Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, Secretary-Treasurer