

# UCDAVIS

# Comparative Literature

## DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

### Greetings from the Chair

**S**pring is always an exciting time of year. Amongst our graduating seniors, we have several who have won departmental citations for outstanding performance in Comparative Literature. They are: **Elaine Mae Chow, Hallie Elizabeth Kiernan, Kylie Larissa Negin, Christina Novakov Ritchey, John Daniel Rosenthal, and Winona Wagner.** Congratulations to all of them for their outstanding work! Among the graduate students who are travelling this summer to do research and who have been awarded research travel funds are **Amanda Batarseh** (Palestine and Israel), **Amy Riddle** (Tunis, Tunisia), **Elizabeth Lore** (Lyon, France), **Megan Ammirati** and **Tori White** (Oregon Shakespeare Festival archives), **Navid Saberi-Najafi** (UC Berkeley library), **Pat Cabell** (Mexico City), **Ted Geier** (London, England) and **Zhen Zhang** (Beijing, China). We wish all of them much success in their summer research endeavors! After three years in

Languages and Literatures, including his work as Undergraduate Adviser and Newsletter Designer for Comp Lit, **Joey Almario** moved this year to an exciting new position on campus. We welcome his successor, **Amy Lowrey**, Undergraduate Adviser for Comp Lit as well as French and Italian, German and Russian, Religious Studies and the Minor in Human Rights. Meanwhile, **Chris Meares** has taken on the design and publicity work for Languages and Literatures, including our newsletter. This spring, we celebrated the retirement of **Dr. Scott McLean** at our annual party. Dr. McLean has been an integral part of our community and a wonderful teacher to many of the undergraduates. We will miss not having Dr. McLean with us in the future. Finally, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful summer holiday and I look forward to seeing all of you in the Fall!

*Juliana Schiesari*

The Comp Lit Department gathered to celebrate the end of the year, graduation, undergraduate awards and Scott McLean at the annual party on May 31. See the interview with Dr. McLean on page 9.



Scott McLean reads poetry



Anne Nguyen & Kimberlee Hu



Scott McLean opens his gift,  
*Chabman's Homer*. poem on p. 12



Brenda Schildgen, Fran Munton & Rachel Duke



Myha Do &  
Giovanna Montenegro



Juliana Schiesari & Kylie Negin

**SPRING 2013 ISSUE**  
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## Congratulations to Spring 2013 Graduates!

**Elaine Chow**

**Jacob Hodes**

**Sarah Jimison**

**Hallie Kiernan**

**Christina Novakov-Ritchey**

**Jacob Persing**

**Winona Wagner**

Felicitations to **Michiko Elizabeth Wright**, who graduated in March

2013.

And thanks to *Winona Wagner*, who served as peer adviser for two years!

We wish all our Comp Lit new graduates the best of luck in their post-graduate endeavors!

Please send news and new contact information to Jocelyn Sharlet, Faculty Undergraduate Adviser or Amy Lowrey, Staff Undergraduate Adviser.



## Departmental Citations

The Departmental Citation is awarded each year to comparative literature majors who have demonstrated their commitment to academic excellence in the field of comparative literature by achieving the highest GPAs in the major. This year's winners are **Kylie Larissa Negin, John Daniel Rosenthal, Elaine Mae Chow, Hallie Elizabeth Kiernan, Christina Novakov-Ritchey, and Winona Eleanor Wagner**.

## Comp Lit Undergrads Win Honors and Awards

**Sarah Hinds-Friedl**, who is completing a double major in Comparative Literature and Women and Gender Studies, was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and most prestigious national academic honorary society in the United States. Phi Beta Kappa was founded in 1776 at The College of William and Mary and chartered in 1968 at UC Davis. Hinds-Friedl enjoys her double major combination because both WGS and COM view literature as an approach to understanding society and culture. She studied abroad in Argentina last summer. Hinds-Friedl is on the board of directors of the Student Alumni Association, where she has planned career-building and resume-building events for undergraduate students. She plans to apply to law school. This year, she particularly enjoyed reading *Jane Eyre* and its prequel, *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, in Gail Finney's course on women writers.



**Christina Novakov-Ritchey**, Comparative Literature Major, received high honors for her senior thesis written under the supervision of **Noha Radwan**. Novakov-Ritchey investigates the use of a story from *One Thousand and One Nights* in the story "La femme en morceaux" ("The Woman in Pieces") (1997) by the Algerian writer Fatima-Zohra Imalayen, best known as Assia Djebar (1936-). Novakov-Ritchey shows how the author interrogates the power structure by challenging the parameters of violence, tradition and history, drawing on the theoretical works of Frantz Fanon, Julia Kristeva and Eric Hobsbawm.

**Jake Cannon**, who is doing a major in Political Science and a minor in History, is the 2013 winner of the Amy Lee Prize, awarded each year for the best essay in COM 1-4 in memory of **Amy Lee**, (1976-2007), graduate student in Comparative Literature. Cannon wrote "The Homeric Morality of El Cid" in COM 2, taught by Megan Ammirati in Fall 2012.  
[http://complit.ucdavis.edu/sites/complit.ucdavis.edu/files/attachments/cannons\\_essay.pdf](http://complit.ucdavis.edu/sites/complit.ucdavis.edu/files/attachments/cannons_essay.pdf)

The runner-up was **Kimberlee Hu**, a major in NPB. Hu wrote "The Commonality of the Desire for Stability in the 1950s and the 1960s" in Daphne Potts' COM 4 in Winter.



**Congratulations to Comp Lit winners of honors and awards—keep up the good work!**

Are you considering Study Abroad? If you are a Comp Lit major, minor, or a student who has completed four Comp Lit courses, you are eligible to apply for the Marc Blanchard Undergraduate Travel Award.  
<http://complit.ucdavis.edu/resources/awards-and-prizes#blanchard>

## Graduate Adviser and Graduate Students Travel to Los Angeles to Share New Work at the Conference on Global Modernities

**Sheldon Lu**, Graduate Adviser and Professor of Comparative Literature, organized a group of Comp Lit graduate students to present at the Conference on Global Modernities, May 3-4, 2013, at Cal State Los Angeles. The conference offered a scholarly forum for critical discussions that move beyond the limits of current and established debates, encouraging an interdisciplinary dialogue with an emphasis on the experiences, critical examinations, and artistic expressions that have been recorded in print or other formats by scholars representing different fields and countries in the world. **Amy Riddle**, first year graduate student (Wolof, French, Arabic), presented “Modernity and the Niger Delta in Helon Habila’s Oil on Water.” **Amanda Batarseh**, second year graduate student (Italian, Arabic), presented “The Arab Renaissance (Al-Nahda) and the Reception of Greco-Roman Classical Antiquity.” **Elisabeth Lore**, A.B.D. (French and Spanish), presented “Mediating Authors: Literary discourse as an open discussion on immigration in Luis Alberto Urrea’s Into the Beautiful North and Azouz Begag’s Camping à la ferme.” In addition to these presentations, **Sheldon Lu** delivered a featured lecture at the conference entitled “Global Modernity and Local Condition: Debates about China” and led a discussion of modernity in China with the respondent to his lecture, Dr. Toming Jun Liu of Cal State, Los Angeles. You can find out more at the conference website:

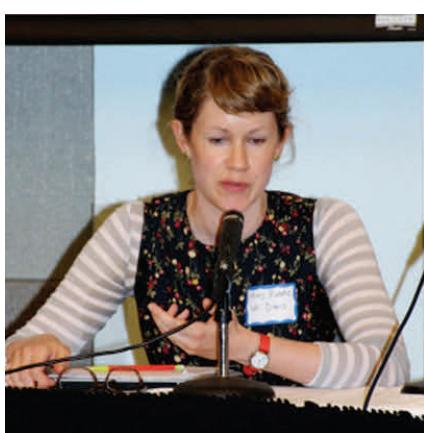
<http://eastwestconferenceatcalstatela.blogspot.com/>.



Sheldon Lu (center)



Elisabeth Lore



Amy Riddle



Amanda Batarseh (center)

## Comp Lit Faculty Give Invited Lectures that Lead the Way at National and International Conferences and Lecture Series

In addition to Sheldon Lu's featured lecture at the Conference on Global Modernities where he led a group of our graduate students, three other faculty members represented UC Davis and the Comparative Literature Department by giving invited lectures in the US and abroad this year. **Archana Venkatesan**, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Religious Studies, delivered a talk entitled "The Other Trinity: Saurashtra Histories of Karnatak Music" at the conference *Histoire de l'art et archéologie de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud-Est* held at the Université de Sorbonne in Paris in February

2013. **Brenda Schildgen** delivered an invited lecture at Cambridge University entitled "Civitas and Love: Looking backward from *Paradiso 8* to *Purgatorio 8* and *Inferno 8*" on May 17, part of the four-year lecture series Cambridge Vertical Readings of Dante's Comedy, which is available online six weeks after delivery, and which will be published in a series of four volumes. **Juliana Schiesari** gave the plenary address at the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies conference in February, entitled "Horses, Humans and the Analogical Imagination in the Italian Renaissance."

## Focus on Translation in the Comparative Literature Department

Translation is central to the field of comparative literature in many ways. This year, **Archana Venkatesan** won a grant to work as a Shivdasani Fellow at the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies during the Hilary Term (January-March 2013). While at Oxford, she completed her manuscript, *A Hundred Measures of Time*, a study and translation of the *Tiruviruttam*, a ninth century Tamil devotional poem by the poet Nammalvar, which is scheduled to be published by Penguin Classics in 2014. Here is a preview:

### *Tiruviruttam* 68

மலர்ந்தேயோழிந்தில் மாலையும்மாலைப்பொன்வாசிகையும் \*  
புலந்தோய்தழைப்பந்தர் தண்டுறநாற்றி \* பொருகடல்குழு  
நிலந்தாவியனம்பெருமான்தனதுவைகுந்தமன்னும் !  
கலந்தாரவரவேதிர்கொண்டு \* வன்கொன்றைகள்கார்த்தனவே

*malarntē olintila mālaiyum mālai-p-poṇ vācikaiyum  
pulam tōy talai-p-pantal taṇṭu ura nāṛri-p-porukatāl cūl  
nilam tāviya em perumāṇ taṇṭu vaikuntam annāy  
kalantār vāravu etir koṇṭu van konraikal kārttanavē*

*A Hundred Measures of Time* complements Venkatesan's earlier translation of another Tamil devotional poem, *The Secret Garland: Translations of Tiruppavai and Nacciyar Tiramoli* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Venkatesan followed up on her translation of Indian devotional poetry by organizing the fifth annual lecture in India Studies. Professor Janaki Bakhle, Columbia University, delivered a public lecture entitled "Biography of a Fundamentalist: Hinduism, Nationalism, and the Other Side of Gandhi's India" on April 12.



Archana Venkatesan, center

### Her Friend Said:

Oh girl who is like the Vaikuntha  
of the great lord  
who spanned this world surrounded by the swirling  
ocean  
the lovely *konrai* have put out their buds  
waiting for your lover's return

but they haven't yet bloomed  
into dense garlands of gold  
that hang down from a thick canopy of leaves.

From the *Tiruviruttam* of Śatakopan-Nammalvar, a 9th century Tamil mystic and poet.

## Translation in Comp Lit

Graduate students in Comp Lit have made a place for translation in their recent work. **Chris Tong** (Chinese, German, French and Japanese) presented a paper on his translation of Wen Yiduo's "Dead Water" (1928) from Chinese to English at the Conference on Ecopoetics at UC Berkeley, February 21-23, 2013. Tong explains that this poem is not only an exemplary modern Chinese poem, but also an ecological poem. It confronts the reader with images of pollution, presaging the environmental problems that China now faces.

### "Dead Water" by Wen Yiduo

This stagnant pool of water gives no hope;  
A clear breeze cannot raise half a ripple.  
Why not toss in a few more scraps of metal?  
Let's throw in bits of leftover food as well.

Perhaps copper will produce emerald green  
And metal cans rust into peach blossoms;  
Let the layer of grease weave into silk  
And the mildew foment a rosy haze.

Let stagnant water mull into green wine,  
Covered in foam, clusters of pearls floating.  
The little bubbles giggle and grow big;  
Mosquitoes break them to get to the brew.

Such a hopeless pool of stagnant water  
Can boast of some liveliness after all.  
If the frogs cannot stand the loneliness,  
then the stagnant water can even sing!

This stagnant pool of water gives no hope;  
This is where one will never find beauty.  
Why not give ugliness and evil a chance  
and see what world they can make of it?

*Translated by Chris Tong*

### 〈死水〉聞一多

這是一溝絕望的死水，  
清風吹不起半點漪淪。  
不如多扔些破銅爛鐵，  
爽性潑你的賸菜殘羹。

也許銅的要綠成翡翠，  
鐵罐上鏽出幾瓣桃花；  
再讓油膩織一層羅綺，  
黴菌給他蒸出些雲霞。

讓死水醇成一溝綠酒，  
飄滿了珍珠似的白沫；  
小珠們笑聲變成大珠，  
又被偷酒的花蚊咬破。

那麼一溝絕望的死水，  
也就誇得上幾分鮮明。  
如果青蛙耐不住寂寞，  
又算死水叫出了歌聲。

這是一溝絕望的死水，  
這裏斷不是美的所在，  
不如讓給醜惡來開墾，  
看他造出個什麼世界。

## Translation in Comp Lit

**Elisabeth Lore** (French and Spanish) published a translation of a scholarly essay on the concept of zombification in Caribbean culture, "*'We are the mirror of your fears': Haitian Identity and Zombification*" by Franck Degoul, in *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, ed. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro, Fordham University Press, 2011. Here is a selection:

**We are the mirror of your fears...  
Haitian identity and zombification**  
Franck Degoul, PhD & Docteur en Anthropologie

Car effectivement, la zombification est donnée, dans les représentations, comme le fruit d'un savoir secret et jalousement gardé. C'est ce qui se donne à comprendre dans le fragment suivant où, sous une forme plus récente et plus « pacifique », cette mobilisation stratégique de la zombification dans l'imaginaire prend également corps dans le champ des rapports de savoir/pouvoir. L'occupation dont il est question n'est plus ici d'ordre politico-militaire, mais relève plutôt de l'ordre du savoir : le savoir sur la zombification recherché par les américains et qu'ils tentent de constituer. Le récit suivant, recueilli en campagne haïtienne, met en effet en scène un étudiant curieux, venu des Etats-Unis – tout cela m'a été spécifié dans les discussions qui ont suivi la narration de ce récit –, et qui, désireux de percer le mystère entourant cette pratique, se rend en Haïti où il y fait la rencontre d'un bôkô (sorcier) :

« (...). C'était un curieux qui était venue en Haïti, voulant avoir des données – tout come vous ! (rire) – sur la zombification. Et puis on m'a raconté que ce type-là est allé voir un bôkô, et puis, bon, il lui a offert de l'argent pour avoir une démonstration de ce que c'est la zombification. Le ounan lui a demandé s'il voulait que l'expérience soit réalisée sur lui-même. Alors il a dit : « Bon, pas de problème, tout simplement je veux savoir de quoi il s'agit exactement, je veux vraiment savoir ce que c'est que la zombification. » Et puis il a payé une partie de la somme avant l'expérience, et puis il a également accepté que la démonstration soit faite sur sa personne. Et puis, effectivement, je ne sais pas comment ils ont procédé – si c'est par le biais d'une poudre, si c'est par le moyen d'une poudre, ou bien si c'est par – enfin, un rite quelconque, je ne sais pas –, mais effectivement l'étranger a été...s'est retrouvé mort ! Et puis après un certain temps, eh bien le ounan l'a fait revenir à la vie, et puis après quoi il a payé et puis... mais il a dit que c'était une mauvaise expérience, qu'il ne voulait pas la reprendre (rire) ! Il a été obligé de repartir tout de suite (rire) ! Peut-être qu'il y a eu une certaine douleur, je ne sais pas exactement ! »

Si notre étudiante/chercheur ne parvient pas à mettre au jour le secret de la zombification, il en fait néanmoins les frais en constatant que cette pratique a tout de la réalité. La morale de l'histoire est qu'un bôkô rusé demeure un bôkô rusé, et qu'en outre, ses pouvoirs ont une efficacité certaine : il s'enrichit ici aux dépends de son jeune cobaye, qui ne pourra plus jamais nier que la zombification existe. Mais c'est que sa venue en Haïti était exclusivement motivée par la production d'un savoir qui, précisément, constitue au niveau local un enjeu de taille : la possibilité d'existence d'une puissance souterraine haïtienne dans le champs de forces qui a été délimité plus haut. Aussi le bôkô a-t-il agi de façon adaptée à ce rapport de force qui empruntait le canal d'expression de la relation savoir/pouvoir foucaldienne : tout savoir produit à l'étranger sur la fabrication des zombis ne serait-il pas la condition d'exercice d'un pouvoir de cet « ailleurs » – américain en l'occurrence – sur Haïti ? En démontrant l'efficacité de cette pratique – par une démonstration de force – sans néanmoins en révéler la formule, le bôkô de l'histoire affirme donc une suprématie haïtienne tout en la protégeant de son éventuelle annihilation par cet « Autre » non-haïtien avec lequel, par nations interposée, Haïti est en relation de lutte de tensions.

Degoul, Franck. **"We are the Mirror of Your Fears: Haitian Identity and Zombification."** *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*. Trans. Elisabeth M. Lore. Eds. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro. Fordham University Press: NY, 2011.

In truth, zombification is represented as the fruit of a jealously guarded secret knowledge. That is what we come to understand from the following quote, which explains that, under a more recent and more peaceable form, this mobilization strategy of zombification in the imaginary takes shape equally in areas relating to knowledge and to power. The occupation in question is no longer at the politico-military level here, but is raised to the level of knowledge: the knowledge of zombification as it was researched by the Americans and their attempts to represent it. The following story, collected in the countryside of Haiti, tells of a curious student who had come from the United States – all this was explained to me in the discussions that took place after the this story's narration – and who, desiring to penetrate the mystery surrounding this practice, went to Haiti where he met a bôkô (sorcerer):

“(...) It was a curious person who had come to Haiti, wanting some facts – just like you! (laughter) – about zombification. And someone told me that this guy went to see a bôkô, and then, well, he offered him money for a demonstration of zombification. The ounan [Voodoo priest] asked him if he wanted to experience the zombification himself. So he answered: “Okay, no problem. I simply want to know exactly what it entails. I really want to know what zombification is.” And then he paid a portion of the fee for the experience, and then fully accepted the fact that the demonstration would be performed on his person. And then, indeed, I'm not sure how they proceeded – if it was by means of a powder, if it was done with a powder, or if by ...anyway, some sort of ritual, I don't know – but actually the foreigner had been...was found dead! And then after some time, well, the ounan brought him back to life, and then afterwards, he paid the rest of his fee, and then...but, he said that it was a terrible experience, that he would never want to do it again (laughter)! He felt a need to leave right away (laughter)! Maybe, he had some sort of pain, I don't know exactly!”

If our student/seeker did not succeed in exposing the secret of zombification, he, at the very least, succeeded in paying the price of observing the real existence of the practice. The moral of the story is that a sly, crafty bôkô will always be a sly, crafty bôkô, and that, moreover, his powers are truly effective: he grew rich at the cost of his young guinea pig who could no longer deny that zombification exists. However, the student/seeker's trip to Haiti was exclusively motivated by the production of a knowledge that clearly established a serious issue at the local level: the possibility of the existence of an underground Haitian power amongst the forces that have been defined above. Also, the bôkô has acted in a way that adapts this power relationship in a manner that exemplifies Foucault's theory of the knowledge/power relationship: Would not all knowledge produced abroad about the making of zombies be operating under the framework of conditions of power of this “elsewhere” – American power in this case – on Haiti? In demonstrating the effectiveness of this practice – by a demonstration of force – without nevertheless revealing the secret, the bôkô of the story affirms a Haitian supremacy, all the while protecting this supremacy from its eventual annihilation by this “Other” non-Haitian with whom, through other nations, Haiti experiences constant conflict and tension.

## Poets, Writers and Social Change

**Noha Radwan** delivered an invited lecture entitled "The Storm in their Winds: Reading Palestinian and Israeli Narratives of the Occupation" at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Berkeley in March.

Students, with the help of Radwan, organized a poetry reading on the quad to commemorate the leading Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), on his birthday, March 13. Undergraduate Arabic student **Saliem Shehadeh** read a prose poem and Comp Lit Graduate Students **Amy Riddle, Amanda Batarseh, Kevin Smith** and **Patrick Cabell** read "Think of Others" in Arabic and English translation.

فَكْرٌ بِغَيْرِكَ  
مُحَمَّدُ دَرْوِيشَ

وَأَنْتَ تُعْدُ فَطُورِكَ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
لَا تَشْسَنْ قَوْتَ الْحَمَامِ  
وَأَنْتَ تَخْوُضُ حَرْبِكَ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
لَا تَنْسِ مَنْ يَطْلُبُونَ السَّلَامَ  
وَأَنْتَ تَسْدِدُ فَاتُورَةَ الْمَاءِ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
مَنْ يَرْضَعُونَ الْغَمَامَ  
وَأَنْتَ تَعُودُ إِلَى الْبَيْتِ، بَيْتَكَ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
لَا تَنْسِ شَعْبَ الْخَيَامِ  
وَأَنْتَ تَنْامُ وَثَحْصِي الْكَوَاكِبَ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
ثَمَّةَ مَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ حِيَزًا لِلْمَنَامِ  
وَأَنْتَ تَحْرَرُ نَفْسَكَ بِالْإِسْتِعْرَاتِ، فَكَرْ بِغَيْرِكَ  
مَنْ فَقَدُوا حَقَّهُمْ فِي الْكَلَامِ  
وَأَنْتَ تَفْكِرُ بِالآخَرِينَ الْبَعِيْدِينَ، فَكَرْ بِنَفْسِكَ  
قُنْ: لِيَتَنِي شَمْعَةً فِي الظَّلَامِ

Think of Others  
Mahmoud Darwish

As you fix your breakfast, think of others. Don't forget to feed the pigeons.  
 As you fight in your wars, think of others. Don't forget those who desperately demand peace.  
 As you pay your water bill, think of others who drink the clouds' rain.  
 As you return home, your home, think of others. Don't forget those who live in tents.  
 As you sleep and count planets, think of others. There are people without any shelter to sleep.  
 As you liberate yourself with metaphors, think of others who have lost their right to speak.  
 As you think of others who are distant, think of yourself and say "I wish I was a candle to fade away the darkness".

Radwan also co-organized a lecture and seminar by the Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim on May 7. In works such as *The Committee* and *The Smell of It*, which have been translated into many languages, Ibrahim offers a critical perspective on social dislocations and forms of oppression in contemporary Egypt. Radwan complemented her work on events honoring Mahmoud Darwish and Sonallah Ibrahim by co-organizing and participating in a series of presentations on contemporary revolutions and opposition movements in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Iran on February 22, and by delivering a public lecture entitled "Why Palestine?" on May 15 in conjunction with Palestinian Awareness Week.



Noha Radwan reading poetry on the quad



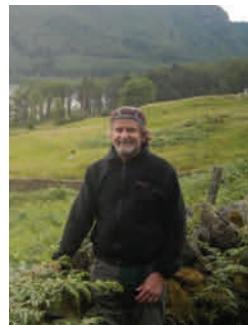
Saliem Shehadeh



Kevin Smith and Patrick Cabell

## Scott McLean Reflects on his Career in Comparative Literature

Scott McLean received his Ph.D. from UC Santa Barbara in 1978. He taught at UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, Purdue University and Swarthmore College before he began to teach at UC Davis in 1985. He has taught at UC Davis for twenty-seven years, and his courses this year include COM 6: Myths and Legends and COM 146: Myth in Literature. The department is in the process of arranging emeritus status for Scott after his retirement in June 2013. Comparative Literature major Sarah Sumpter interviewed Scott this spring for our department newsletter:



There is a guitar case on the brightly carpeted floor, a witty plastic Shakespeare action-figure and the benign gaze of a Bodhisattva regarding me carefully from the desk to my right, and a poster of the Beatles' iconic Abbey Road album cover on the far wall amidst an orbit of colorfully Xeroxed administrative flyers. After taking several classes

with professor of German and comparative literature Scott McLean over the past few years, this is the first time I have ever visited his personal office, and the thoughtful eclecticism of the room reminds me warmly of all the contributors that he encourages his students to recognize to this human conversation that we call literature: the sound and rhythm, the poetry and the history, the mythology and the biology of the Word, all speakers in their own right.

Suffice it to say, Scott McLean is all about giving a good story its dues, so when I begin our interview with the questions "Why did you choose UC Davis? What drew you here?" I should know better than to expect abridged answers. I'm not disappointed.

Although McLean has been teaching at UC Davis since the early 80's, he fell in love with the profession after he was hired to lecture at Swarthmore College, a private liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. "I loved it there – the classes were small and intimate, and the students had some of the brightest minds you can imagine. Far more intelligent than you or me."

McLean would go on to teach at the prestigious Purdue University and at UC San Diego before taking a brief respite to work as a carpenter in the company of poet Allen Ginsberg. "I was laying up a house when I was 34 when I realized 'This is not how I want to spend the rest of my life...' I missed being in a classroom." Shortly after, he was asked to teach a seminar at UC Santa Barbara, where he had received his Ph.D. in his own time as a college student, before moving on to UC Davis

when "word got out that they were looking for a poet."

"About that degree," I stop him briefly to ask, "I heard you started out as a student of biology. What made you switch to such a different field?"

McLean smiles, reminiscing. "Well, I started with fisheries biology, but then in 1965 the movie Doctor Zhivago came out, and Julie Christie was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life... Zhivago went into isolation and wrote what he called 'Lara poems' to his lover, and right then and there I decided that was what I wanted to do: go live out in the woods somewhere and write poetry about an incredibly beautiful woman who loved me." While the outcome of his epiphany didn't take quite as romantic a turn, he did answer the call to the arts by switching his academic focus to German and comparative literature.

When he did begin his career at UC Davis in 1985, however, McLean would find himself a part of an effort to bring both of his avenues of interest – the scientific and the linguistic – into a single comprehensive program. Supported by then Department of Comparative Literature heads Ruby Cohen and Bob Torrence, and the collaborative efforts of the department with Professor of microbiology Mark Wheelis, Professor of botany Micheal Barbour, professor of geology Eldridge Moore, and professor of physics Dan Cox, the UC Davis Program in Nature and Culture was born.

"In the early 80's I witnessed Dave Robertson teaching Thoreau and thought we should teach something more comprehensive bridging the gaps between biology and literature," says McLean. "It was a program about epistemology; about how you learn the world...It was one of the things I was most proud of in all my teaching."

Although it has since been dissolved, spirit of the program has lived on in focus of the courses McLean has since provided for undergraduate students. Whether enrolled in "Myth in Literature," "Nature in Literature" or "Poetry in Rock and Roll," Professor McLean continues to encourage students to explore the various

## Continuation: Scott McLean

ways in which human language and storytelling can help to develop a greater awareness of ourselves, as a species and as individuals, in relation to the natural world. When I ask him what he hopes each of his students leaves the classroom with at the end of the day, his response is apt: "If anything, I hope they keep in mind that literature and stories can be the most important thing in a person's life. Without them we don't have the means of self-reflection to find who and what we are."

McLean notes that time spent working with colleagues, especially renowned comparative literature professor Patrick Vincent, with whom he taught a class on Romanticism, was also an important highlight of his long career at UC Davis. "He was incredibly sharp, incisive, knowledgeable...in short, first rate. I learned a lot from him, and it was an honor to teach with him." He has equally cherished experiences with the students themselves: "Sometimes I think I learned more from them than they did from me."

As I quickly jot down a few final words in my notebook, the thrum of the university's automated bell system marks the end of our hour together. Professor McLean has another class to teach and I have one to attend, but it's difficult to leave the room of a man who has helped me find so much more depth in perspective in how and what I write and read – in "how I live the world" as he would say – in any kind of haste. A lifetime of thanks would not be enough, but I make my feeble attempt anyway with a farewell hug. I know I am only one of many who will miss a teacher with so luminous a spirit.

Thank you, Scott McLean.

*Interview by Sarah Sumpter*

**Sarah Sumpter** is a fifth year psychology and (pending) comparative literature major. She has been Scott's student in his courses *Myth in Literature*, *Nature in Literature*, *Poetry in Rock and Roll and Myths and Legends*. She became interested in myth after she purchased her first mythology book on Japanese myths and legends in Japan Town in San Francisco when she was 11 or 12. She grew to love mythology and folklore, especially Northern European (Norse, Finnish, Slavic) and native North American mythologies. When she is not reading mythology, Sumpter runs for the UC Davis Women's Cross Country Team and runs the 5,000 meter and 10,000 meter distances for the UC Davis Women's Track and Field Team.

## Research Groups Led by Comp Lit Faculty and Grad Students Organize Events

The Interdisciplinary Animal Studies Research Cluster, led by **Ted Geier** and **Juliana Schiesari**, sponsored by the Davis Humanities Institute, collaborated with the Animal Behavior program to host **Frans de Waal** for a Storer lecture and roundtable event with **Jerrold Tannenbaum**, Veterinary Science and Law, **Roberta Millstein**, Philosophy, and **Karl Frost**, Ecology. The group, which also includes Comparative Literature graduate students **Cloe-Mai Le Gall-Scoville** and **Tori White**, is developing future workshop and conference events for the upcoming academic year in collaboration with faculty and graduate participants at UC Davis and other UC campuses. [http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page\\_id=1026](http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page_id=1026)

The Critical Theory Reading Group spring series of events was organized by **Angela Hume**, English Department and **Kevin Smith**, Comparative Literature Department. The group met on April 24 and May 8 to discuss Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* as well as Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" and some Benjamin-Adorno correspondence.

The Reception Studies Research Cluster, led by **Brenda Schildgen** and **Archana Venkatesan** and funded by a grant for interdisciplinary and collaborative work, organized three events. On January 25, graduate students from three departments presented their work. **David Dennen**, Music Department, presented "Reception in and of a 19th-Century Odia Song Cycle" (or alternatively "Indian Song Cycle"). **Nicole Budrovich**, Art History Department, presented "Virgil in Art: Roman Identity and Spectacle in Provincial Mosaics." **Amanda Batarseh**, Comparative Literature Department, presented "The Arab Renaissance (Al-Nahda) and the Reception of Greco-Roman Classical Antiquity."

## Continuation: Research Groups

On March 1, Schildgen and Venkatesan organized an event that showcased new work by graduate students in the humanities on the theme of the cross-cultural reception of Virgil. **Tori White**, Comparative Literature Department, presented "Boying Greatness: Youth, Adulthood, and Comedy in Marlowe's Dido Queen of Carthage." **Zhen Zhang**, Comparative Literature Department, presented "Virgil's Reception in the 'Third Rome': A Study of the First Russian Translation of Aeneid." **Ryan Wander**, English Department, presented "Vergilian Whitman, Whitmanian Vergil: Whitman, Vergil, and a Poetics of Ambivalence."



**Zhen Zhang and Ryan Wander**

On May 3, the Reception Group gathered for a lecture by **David Gundry**, Assistant Professor of Japanese, entitled "The End of Parody: Haikai, Hierarchy and Authority in Iharu Saikaku's *The Life of an Amorous Man*."

The Reception Studies Research Cluster is organizing a conference entitled Receptions: Reading the Past Across Time and Space on September 27-29 at UC Davis. The conference will feature an opening talk entitled "Epic Worlds" by Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor **Ralph Hexter**, Distinguished Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature and a keynote lecture entitled "Recycling the Epic: Gilgamesh on Three Continents" by **Wai Chee Dimock**, William Lampson Professor of English and American Studies at Yale University.

<http://receptionstudies.ucdavis.edu/>

In addition to leading new research groups, Comp Lit faculty regularly participate in the research groups that make up the intellectual fabric of our university community. In Spring 2013, **Kari Lokke** joined an interdisciplinary team of scholars to investigate the concept of trash in culture and society. In this seminar, Lokke and her colleagues considered the role of trash in economic sustainability and the cultural re-contextualizing of discarded materials.

[http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page\\_id=444](http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page_id=444)

## Megan Ammirati Represents Comp Lit at the UC Davis Interdisciplinary Graduate and Professional Students Symposium

Ammirati presented "Comedy in Spite of Henrik Ibsen: Hysterical Heroes and Pragmatic Heroines in Chinese Theater" on April 4. She explains that ever since the twentieth century, Chinese theater has been associated with an entire range of emotions and genres with the noted exception of comedy. Humor is conspicuously missing from the modern understanding of Chinese drama, primarily because early playwrights looked to Henrik Ibsen as a model. This tragedian was such a powerful force of inspiration for dramatists worldwide that he presented a rather inconvenient problem for comedic playwrights: how does one advocate for humor when a theatrical community is thoroughly devoted to social reform? Yang Jiang and Ding Xilin were two of the only canonized Chinese playwrights who attempted to explore comedy at the height of Ibsen's influence. Their plays wittily reverse many of Ibsen's standards: excerpts of action replace his suspenseful climaxes and new visions of male and female behavior stand in for his well-worn archetypes. Yang Jiang and Ding Xilin were able to playfully subvert the theatrical expectations of 20th century China.

## New Research and Strategies for the Job Market at the Comparative Literature Graduate Student Colloquium

Graduate Adviser **Sheldon Lu** organized the annual Graduate Student Colloquium. Faculty and graduate students from Comparative Literature and other literature and cultural studies departments gathered on May 24 to hear new work on a range of topics. In the first session, **Kristen Bergman Waha** (English, French, Tamil) presented “I will not believe till I am sure: Conversion, Reading and the Search for Evidence in Annie Besant’s *An Autobiography* (1894)”; **Cloe Le Gall-Scoville** (French, English and German) presented “Un courage plus que masculin: The Creole Heroine of George Sand’s *Indiana*”; and **Patrick Cabell** (English, Spanish and French) presented “Groans from the Other World: Pynchon, McCarthy, and the Super-sensible.” In the second session, **Victoria White** (Spanish, French, Latin and English) presented “Queanly Lyric: The Petrarchan Poetics of Elizabeth I and Veronica Franco”; **Zhen Zhang** (Chinese, English, Russian, French and Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian) presented “Acmeism and the Exotic Orient: Chinoiserie in Nikolai Gumilev’s Poetics”; and **Megan Ammirati** (Chinese, English and Spanish) presented “Memorializing Martyrs: Staging Theater History in Republican China.” Following these presentations and discussions of new research, Professor Lu organized a Comp Lit Professionalization Workshop on the same day so that graduate students from Comparative Literature and related disciplines could discuss their plans for the job market and hear presentations on strategy from **Toby Warner** (Assistant Professor of French), **Chunjie Zhang** (Assistant Professor of German), **Archana Venkatesen** (Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Religious Studies), and Teresa Dillinger (Internship and Career Center).



Tori White



Patrick Cabell, Kristen Bergman Waha,  
and Cloe Le Gall-Scoville



Megan Ammirati



Kari Lokke, Professor of  
Comparative Literature



Zhen Zhang



Xiaomei Chen, Professor of  
Chinese and affiliated with  
Comparative Literature

## On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

By John Keats

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet never did I breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

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### SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT

Your charitable, tax-deductible gift to the Department of Comparative Literature is greatly needed and appreciated. Your support will be used for the highest priority projects in the department to support both undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, programs, and facilities.

The department currently offers the following awards: *The Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize* and the *Marc Blanchard Undergraduate Travel Award*.

For more information, contact the Main Office at (530) 752-1219.

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