

UC DAVIS

Comparative Literature

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Greetings from the Chair!

2010-11 has been a year of congratulations and welcomes. First we welcomed our new faculty, Professor Noha Radwan, a scholar who specializes in postcolonial literature with emphasis in Arabic literature. The newly appointed Provost, Professor Ralph Hexter, a classicist and comparatist who focuses on reception studies also joined our department in January.

This has been a time for many achievements, and here I offer a brief overview.

First, congratulations to our 2011 graduates: (see page 1). You have been a stellar group and we are very proud of you and wish you good luck in your future endeavors.

Congratulations also to Kris Ide (BA '10), who will begin graduate studies at UC Riverside with a fellowship. Equal congratulations to Megan Macklin (BA '08), who will continue her studies at the University of Chicago with a five-year fellowship in Comparative Literature.

Congratulations to our recent PhDs in Comparative Literature: Belén Bistue, Masha Boston, Daphne Potts, and Brian Young.

Congratulations to graduate students Giovanna Montenegro who won a Fulbright to Germany and to Emelie Coleman, who has won a Fulbright to Tajikistan both in 2011-12.

Congratulations to Professor Jocelyn Sharlet who won a year-long fellowship to Istanbul, Turkey, and who just received tenure.

Congratulations to our incoming chair, Professor

Juliana Schiesari. Professor Schiesari is a highly regarded Comparative Literature scholar with a specialty in Italian Renaissance Literature and expertise in feminist and psychoanalytic theory. Her two recent groundbreaking books on the cultural representation of animals, *Beasts and Beauties* (University of Toronto Press, 2010) and *Polymorphous Domesticities* (University of California Press, 2012) put her in the forefront of the discipline of animal studies. Please join me in welcoming her and pledging our support to her as she takes on steering the department into our new future.

Finally, I congratulate myself as I step down from being chair to begin "la vita nuova," the new life, as Dante called it, and to spend more time gardening.



Prof. Brenda Deen Schildgen
Chair



SPRING 2011 ISSUE
Volume 5, No. 1



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

List of Graduating Seniors	2
Farewell Thoughts from Peer Advisor	3
2011 Amy Lee Memorial Essay Award: Winners	4-5
Graduate Program in Comparative Literature	6
Graduate Student Achievements	7
Spring Graduate Student Colloquium	8
Faculty News	9
Alumni News	10
Poems by Prof. Scott McLean	10
Photo Gallery: 2011 End-of-the-Year Celebration	11

2011 Amy Lee Essay Prize

Paul DeMorais is the recipient of this year's essay prize.

(More on Page 4)

Graduate Studies at UCD

New Directions in Graduate Education in Comparative Literature at UC Davis

(More on Page 6)

Graduate Students: Achievements and Fulbright Scholars

2 Graduate Students receive Fulbrights.

(More on Page 7)

Alumni Achievements

Belen Bistue receives the Allen Marr Prize for her dissertation

(More on Page 10)

Congratulations to our graduating seniors!

MAJORS

Katherine Rose Antaki
 Kaitlin Danssaert *
 Ehsun Forghany *
 Kaitlind Yvonne Gittings
 Glenn Rachel Hoban *
 Theodore (Ted) Milton Reiterman
 Megan Leeann Shelnutt
 Charles Frederick Soong
 David Sean Vergona *
 Edward Geoffrey Wildanger *
 May Yang

MINORS

Molly Louise Allison-Baker
 Morgan Tara Campbell
 Karishma Chand
 Christina Marie Danielson
 Sean Nathan Elihu
 Sonia Claire Ferrandiz
 Josephine Foucher
 Aberdeen Jeane Gielow
 Ryan Orion Govett
 Dane Alexander Johnson
 Ramanpreet Kaur
 Bianca Kimsey
 Kimberly Margaret Mah
 Nathaniel David Shriver
 Kelsey Marie Stroshane
 Rosalba Cortez Valdovinos
 Megan Lynne Van Aken
 Tiffany Wan
 Camille Dawn Wheat
 Hooman Yahyavi-Tajabadi

* *Recipient of this year's departmental citations award*

June 2011 Commencement Ceremony



On June 12th, 9 majors participated in the College of Letters and Science Commencement Ceremony. It was a well attended event with over 4,000 people in the ARC Pavilion. Along with these students, Profs. Archana Venkatesan (far left) and Brenda Deen Schildgen (far right) presented them on the stage when they received their diplomas.

In this picture, left to right: (standing) Kaitlin Danssaert, Kaitlin Harvey, Glenn Hoban, Kaitlind Gittings, Charles Soong, May Yang; (front) David Vergona and Megan Shelnutt.

Talks by Guest Speakers



Adriana Jacobs (February 22, 2011)

Dr. Adriana Jacobs presented a paper titled "With a slight accent: Translating Israeli Literature in the 21st Century." She received her doctoral degree at Princeton University. She now teaches and resides at Yale University.



Shaul Setter (April 28, 2011)

Shaul Setter presented a paper titled "Kafka, Yizhar, Genet: Textual Collectivities in Israel/Palestine." He addressed question of collectivity as it is formed around, within, and by literary texts. Setter taught a class on violence and resistance in 20th-century Jewish literature this spring term. He is a PhD candidate in the Dept. of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. He works on 20th century Hebrew and French texts and on literary and political theory. His dissertation, "The Departure from History: Writing at the Ends of Literature in Israel/Palestine," explores dissident concepts of history, historiography, and literary historiography in the face of political collapse.

Thoughts from Graduating Seniors

I had a fantastic time as a student in the UC Davis Comparative Literature department. Like many college students, I changed majors a number of times, and, like fewer, I even changed schools, twice. When I got to UC Davis, however, I knew immediately that I wanted to study Comparative Literature. Whether it was introductory Medievalism or Modernism with graduate students Josh Waggoner and Masha Boston, or my first quarter Mythology course with Prof. Brenda Schildgen, I do not know. What I learned from all three during that fall quarter was the importance of the comparative method, and the value of thinking deeply about the relationship between life, literature, and society. If I could do it all over again, I would only take more Comp Lit courses.

Geoffrey Wildanger

Geoffrey began his master's degree in Art History here at UC Davis this spring term.

It is still strange to me that I started out at Davis as a History major - even stranger that at that time I did not realize I was registered as a Psychology major. It is not that both of those majors are not as good as Comparative Literature. Comparative Literature has allowed me to take the best parts of both of those majors and apply them to the study of literature. It is one of the best kept secrets of the university. I wrote a senior thesis called *The Antithetical Meaning of Sparkly Vampires*, and was surprised at how many people in the department offered their support, which I needed in abundance once the gravity of writing 50 pages on *Twilight* really hit me. It has been a wonderful experience and I continue to receive advice and offers for letters of recommendation from graduate students and professors as I face the graduate school admissions process a second time next year. I cannot thank Profs. Neil Larsen, Seth Schein, and Kari Lokke enough.

Glenn Hoban

Glenn Hoban completed an honors thesis, titled *The Antithetical Meaning of Sparkly Vampires*.

Other Undergraduate News!

- Regina Dettmer, incoming senior, was elected and inducted to the Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society on May 5, 2011. Students who have achieved high GPA by the end of their junior or senior year are invited to be members in this prestigious society. Congratulations to Regina!
- Winona Wagner, incoming junior, will be the new peer advisor, joining Jeralynn Betts, during 2011-2012 school year.

Goodbye from Kaitlin

I will never forget the quote that hung above my favorite Elementary School teacher's desk — "Life is like a book. The further you get into it the more it makes sense" (anonymous). I identified with this saying as an eager nine year-old and still think of it today as I embark on the next chapter of my life into what is frequently referred to as *the real world*. It is hard to believe that my four years as an undergraduate student at UC Davis are coming to a close. I have been incredibly lucky to be surrounded by so many intelligent, caring, creative, friendly, wonderful people who have taught me much about literature, history, language, culture, and life. The UC Davis Department of Comparative Literature is an absolute gem and I feel so fortunate to be a part of it.

I entered UC Davis in September of 2007 as an enthusiastic freshman anxious to get involved in as many activities on campus as possible. I knew I wanted to be challenged. I knew I wanted to take classes with professors who knew me by name. I knew I wanted to study abroad. I knew I wanted to learn about the world, but I didn't know there was a major that perfectly suited my interests and passions until I walked into my first college class, Marc E. Blanchard's COM 25: Ethnic Writers. Professor Blanchard inspired me to learn about the stories that define humanity and to continue learning Spanish. Comparative Literature was ultimately the perfect major for me and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the texts, developing my writing skills, learning Spanish, and learning about the world through a global lens.

After three years of enjoying COM classes, studying abroad in Córdoba (Spain), and getting to know the department of Comparative Literature, I was thrilled to become the Senior Peer Advisor for the 2010-2011 academic year. From enjoying the amazing view of campus in room 812 Sproul and discussing the major with my peers during office hours to putting on colorful events with Joey, Maria, and Jeralynn and giving presentations in lower division COM classes; my job as peer advisor has been incredibly rewarding. The Department of Comparative Literature has so much to offer undergraduate students and I am proud to have promoted the major and brought undergraduate students together during our quarterly events.

I am preparing to apply to teacher credentialing programs in the Fall and pursue a career as a reading specialist for early elementary education. I am confident that the skills I have learned at UC Davis will also help me to be involved in reforming our nation's public schools. I would like to thank all the professors and staff who have been so supportive of me throughout out my undergraduate career. I would also like to thank Professor Schildgen, Professor Venkatesan, Joey, Maria, and Jeralynn for all of their hard work in making Comparative Literature the most wonderful major on campus.



Kaitlin Danssaert, BA '11

COM Major Paul DeMorais won the 2011 Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize:

“Goethe’s *Faust* and the Enlightenment: Mephisto, Progress, and the Dialectic of Good and Evil”

This year’s recipient of the Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize goes to Paul DeMorais for his essay titled “Goethe’s *Faust* and the Enlightenment: Mephisto, Progress, and the Dialectic of Good and Evil.” DeMorais is a junior-standing student who is currently pursuing a double major in Comparative Literature and English. He wrote this essay in COM 3 under the instruction of Kristen Bergman, PhD candidate.

Also, Sophomore Megan Miller Goldspring receives the honorable mention for her essay titled “*Nadja* as Freedom.” Goldspring is a Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavioral major, and she wrote this essay in COM 4 under Chris Tong’s instruction.

The Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize was initiated after Amy Lee, a graduate student in the Comparative Literature Program from 2005-2007, passed away in September 2007. This award is meant to reward well-written and well-argued student essays and is limited to essays submitted in the COM 1 through 4 series.

The 2010-2011 Committee consisted of Prof. Olga Stuchebukhov, Prof. Sheldon Lu, Kristen Bergman, Brian Davisson, and Joshua Waggoner.

“Goethe’s *Faust* and the Enlightenment: Mephisto, Progress, and the Dialectic of Good and Evil”

In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust*, the Satan-figure Mephistopheles paradoxically asserts that he is “Part of that force which would / Do ever evil, and does ever good” (1335-1336). The difficulty of interpreting the lines resides in the fact that the play establishes its own moral order: one cannot simply interpret Mephisto as a being who enacts solely evil or good because the play avoids such reductive categorizing distinctions, and rather emphasizes Goethe’s alternative moral aesthetic of the importance of continuous activity. As the Lord states, “Man all too easily grows lax and mellow... / And so I like to pair him with a fellow / To play the deuce, to stir, and to entice” (340-343). A reflection on Immanuel Kant’s Enlightenment philosophy, in conjunction with an analysis of the play’s depiction of passive “book” knowledge versus the more active experiential knowledge, reveals the play’s advocacy of activity as an agent of progress. The play subordinates the often negative consequences of progress as secondary to the activity that produces them not because the play condones evil but because it accepts the inevitability of evil at some point as a result of experimentation and of the learning process. Mephisto is thus ultimately best considered not as a figure of either good or evil, but as a figure of progress – a gradual progress achieved through the dialectic relationship between good and evil.

Comparing Kant’s philosophy of the Enlightenment with the French Revolution, in addition to their combined relationship to *Faust*, reveals such a view of progress at work in *Faust* that accepts the balance of good and evil as an inevitable component of the progress arising from experiential knowledge. This comparison reveals a conflict surrounding the issue of

freedom that reflects Mephisto’s relation to Faust: Mephisto empowers Faust in order to grant him the experiential knowledge that would allow him to escape the past’s influences and begin to make decisions for himself, yet negative consequences, like Gretchen’s disgrace, arise with that empowerment. Similarly, Kant’s philosophy of Enlightenment encourages a rejection of the totalizing influence of others in favor of the free use of one’s own rationality to form opinions and make decisions for oneself. Kant writes that “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s understanding without guidance from another” (54). Yet the French Revolution’s resulting Reign of Terror, which occurred not long after Kant’s work was published, seems to undermine Kant’s advocacy of pensive liberation in displaying the evil consequences of too much freedom to think for oneself. Nonetheless, Kant continues to view humanity as a species of inevitable progress, writing later that the French Revolution serves as a perpetual reminder of humanity’s potential that will continually inspire attempts to realize the republican ideals of equality (184). Similarly, the relationship between the Lord and Satan as represented in *Faust* confirms Goethe’s acceptance of the inevitability of evil’s occurrence in the face of progress: in *Faust*, good and evil – as represented through the Lord and Mephisto – are not violently opposed but are rather mutually dependent in a manner similar to the Chinese conception of yin and yang. Mephisto thus retorts that he is “The spirit which eternally denies! / And justly so; for that which is wrought / Deserves that it should come to naught” – the translation’s couplet rhyme reflecting the sense of a balanced order between creation and destruction, good and evil (1338-1340). When Faust enters the world and experiences new things, such as passion, both evil and good occur, yet there is also progress.

Faust’s seduction of Gretchen under the influence of Mephisto undoubtedly leads to harm, but Faust and Gretchen are both able to progress and learn as individuals. Although Gretchen becomes the fallen woman and murders her mother out of shame, Faust and Gretchen also begin to rationalize independently, and Gretchen acknowledges her right to experience her sexuality under the terms of mutual affection. Gretchen states that, originally, she “readily used to blame / Some poor young soul that came to shame,” yet her relationship with Faust leads her to question her former logic, and she fails to perceive any evil in the relationship itself (3577-3578). Goethe commends Gretchen by having her appear at the drama’s end amongst the angels during Faust’s salvation, and her language emphasizes a rebirth that metaphorically conveys the constant change and progression that results from active progress:

Behold! how all terrestrial cumbrance,
A worn out guise, cast off at length ...
He issues forth in youthful strength.
Vouchsafe me through new morn to lead him,

COM Major Paul DeMorais won the 2011 Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize:

“Goethe’s *Faust* and the Enlightenment: Mephisto, Progress, and the Dialectic of Good and Evil”

Too bright as yet for him to see. (12088-12093)

Thus, Gretchen not only achieves transcendence, but becomes a possible spiritual guide for Faust in a reversal of power that contrasts with their previous power relations. Faust also gains salvation because of his continual progression: after the horrible outcomes of his affair with Gretchen are made known, Faust rejects Mephisto and laments his heinous act – learning from it and progressing as a human being along the lines of an existential project. With Faust’s development, he begins to question even Mephisto and learns to think independently.

This relates to the play’s emphasis upon “the Word” (1224): while Faust initially bestows importance upon the word itself, seeking its precise equivalent for a German translation, he later acknowledges the word’s arbitrariness as a signifier and learns to value that which the word signifies rather than the word itself, which translates into a progressive view that allows him and Gretchen to rationalize independently of the Church’s totalizing authority. Faust later tells Gretchen that “Feeling is all; / Name is but sound and fume / Befogging heaven’s blaze” (3456-3458). This didacticism recalls Mephisto’s earlier statement that “The Church has a superb digestion, / Has swallowed whole countries without question...” (2836-2837). Mephisto’s critique of the Church gestures towards Kant’s philosophy of Enlightenment: Kant critiqued the Church as well for holding people within a state of immaturity, and the phrase “without question” in Mephisto’s lines implies the same lack of individualistic reasoning that Kant critiques. Later, Gretchen shifts away from her blind conformity to the Church’s authority – crying that, regarding her affair with Faust, “all of it that drove me here, / God! was so innocent, was so dear” (3585-3586)! Rather than blindly accepting that the word of the Church signifies God, and thus solely following the word of the Church, Gretchen and Faust begin to look beyond the traditional demarcations of morality and acknowledge that the “feeling,” or that which the word was meant to signify, has more value and is at times better suited to another “word.”

In contrast to this experiential knowledge, Faust’s early and more passive studies to acquire “book” knowledge prove to be limiting, and while the characterization of Faust’s inaction certainly conveys evil side-effects, there is hardly any good that results from it at that point in the play, as with his more active, experiential learning. At the play’s commencement, terms of imprisonment convey Faust’s position of mental stasis – terms such as “dungeon,” “entombed,” “tower,” “vault,” “choked,” “hemmed in,” and “stuffed tightly” (398-408). Goethe describes this sense of stasis as accompanied by a burdensome influence from the past, which again recalls Kant’s aversion to an excessive influence that prevents one’s own reasoning: Mephisto states that the law stems from “Age handing age ancestral flaws / Like an inherited disease,” which Faust also implies earlier regarding knowledge from the past in general during lines 603-605 (1974-1975). Goethe therefore represents learning

from books and from the past alone as stifling – as an impediment to active experimentation and its progress.

Thus, Mephisto’s role in *Faust* serves to catalyze progress, despite any negative consequences that may result from the experimentation of active learning, rather than personify evil within a binary of good and evil. Indeed, Mephisto echoes Kant when he states that “To shatter the innocent reasoner – there’s true tyrant fashion when seeking relief from any straits” (p. 127). Like Kant, Mephisto advocates the freedom to progress by the use of one’s own reason. In attempting any new action, such a venture into the unknown will possibly result in evil consequences just as much as in good, even if the good is only the acquired knowledge that the action produces harm. Mephisto’s language thus expresses both sides of the dialectic when discussing action:

So may then pleasure and distress,
Failure and success,
Follow each other as they please;
Man’s active only when he’s never at ease. (1756-1759)

It is Faust’s perpetual action that leads to his salvation at the play’s close, and the accompanying effects of good and evil are only natural elements that accompany the progress of new ventures, such as the French Revolution.

Works Cited

Kant, Immanuel, and Hans Siegbert. *Kant: Political Writings* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Faust*. 2nd ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

About the Winner:



Paul DeMorais is currently a third-year double major in English and Comparative Literature who also plans to minor in French. His academic interests focus on nineteenth-century literature, especially Romantic fiction, in addition to critical theory and gender and sexuality studies. He is currently planning a thesis on epistemology and the representations of madness in *Villette* and *Le Horla*. Charlotte Brontë, George Sand, and Virginia Woolf continue to haunt and inspire Paul’s literary ambitions.

Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature at UC Davis

The Comparative Literature Department at UC Davis offers a flexible yet rigorous program of graduate study. Students in the Ph.D. program develop their research skills in a first and second literature, and also demonstrate proficiency in a third language, along with research skills in that literature or in a special topic related to their dissertation project. While entering students normally have achieved proficiency in at least one language other than English, some graduate students in Comparative Literature also continue their language studies. Many of our students do research abroad. Department faculty teach thematic seminars on comparative literature, and offer a wide range of expertise, including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Persian, Russian, Spanish, and Tamil. Our graduate students work in one or more of these languages, and some students have also worked in other languages such as Czech, Icelandic, Korean, Navajo, Quechua, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

The Comparative Literature department works extensively with other language and literature and cultural studies faculty at UC Davis, so graduate students in Comparative Literature can also work with faculty in programs and departments such as Asian-American Studies, African and Afro-American Studies,

Classics, Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, East Asian Studies, English, Film Studies, French, German, History, Japanese, Middle East/South Asia Studies, Native American Studies, Portuguese, Religious Studies, Russian, Spanish, and Women and Gender Studies.

Comparative Literature graduate students develop their teaching skills in a wide range of courses. Normally, first and second year students teach discussion sections of genre-based lecture courses on world literature taught by our faculty. Subsequently, students teach small classes of their own in our Major Books of Western Culture series or Major Books of the Contemporary World under the supervision of one of our faculty members. Some Comparative Literature students have also taught in our World Literature series, our Literatures of East Asia, the Islamic World, and South Asia series, our Ethnic Minority Writers course, or in language programs and cultural studies departments. The Ph.D. in Comparative Literature enables students to develop their research and teaching skills to prepare for jobs in language and literature or cultural studies departments.

This note on the graduate program was written by Professor Jocelyn Sharlet, who serves on the graduate committee of the Comparative Literature Department.

Student's Perspective: Life on the 8th Floor

There really is only one way in which the Department of Comparative Literature has been in decline recently. Last year, during the renovation of Sproul Hall, the department gave up its 9th floor, penthouse perch to the Religious Studies department, which is only appropriate considering their heavenly object of inquiry. This move is unfortunate in that the offices on the ninth floor have three windows whereas our new eighth floor offices have only one, but in the grand scheme this is a small thing. In all other ways, life in the department is actually on the rise. I consider myself fortunate, in fact, because the eighth floor contains nothing but friends/colleagues (and it's extraordinary how significant the slash is). The flexibility of the program allows for a course of study tailored to one's interests, which means I've shared offices with one grad student who studies Danish film noir and another who won a Fulbright to investigate Chilean economics and industry under Allende and Pinochet. This diversity is also reflected in the composition of the faculty as an influx of new professors over the past decade has expanded the scope of the department to cover nearly all areas of world literature. If I chose tomorrow to begin studying Tamil literature, I would only have to go down the hall a few doors. The support of these friends, colleagues, and professors has been unwavering and invaluable because life on the eighth floor can be difficult. Nevertheless, it is difficult in exactly the way it needs to be. It tempers you without burning you up, and it teaches you to temper undergraduates as well. These students often come to visit me in my office, bringing questions and admiring the view. I look toward my one window and respond, "yes, now that you mention it, it is rather spectacular."

Joshua Waggoner is a fifth-year PhD candidate who is currently looking out his eighth floor window, waiting for inspiration to strike so he can finally start that pesky dissertation.

Comparative Literature Graduate Program

Our graduate program enables students to study several literatures in their original languages in a theoretically and historically informed context and from an interdisciplinary and multicultural perspective. Comparative Literature at UC Davis provides each student the opportunity to create an individual program tailored to that student's unique interests and goals. For more information, please contact:

- Graduate Program Director: Prof. Sheldon Lu, shlu@ucdavis.edu
- Graduate Program Coordinator: Mandy Bachman, mbachman@ucdavis.edu or (530) 752-5799

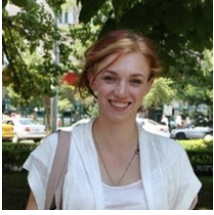
Visit our website: <http://complitgrad.ucdavis.edu>

Thank You, Olga!

The department would like to thank Prof. Olga Stuchebrukhov for all her years of invaluable service as the Teaching Assistant supervisor, specifically for COM 1 through 4 instructors. She is stepping down from this position after three years. Prof. Stuchebrukhov, is an associate professor of Russian and taught a graduate course for the department in Winter Quarter 2011. The dept. appreciates her time and effort mentoring the graduate students these past years.

Prof. Neil Larsen will serve as the TA supervisor for 2011-2012 school year.

Emelie Coleman and Giovanna Montenegro received Fulbright Program Scholarship



Emelie Coleman will be in Tajikistan in June on a Fulbright grant, researching reception of women's performance in literature and in practice. This will be her second trip to the country, and she is excited to weave together literary research, fieldwork and performance. In addition to her interest in Persian poetry, she is a musician and dancer, and will train in traditional Tajik dance and singing styles. Emelie is a principal dancer with Ballet Afsaneh, the Bay Area-based Persian and Central Asian dance company, and a company member of Wan-Chao dance. She is interested in intersections of performance, poetry and translation, and Persian culture in Central Asia and North India.



Giovanna Montenegro, fourth-year PhD candidate, will be spending the 2011-2012 academic school year at the Freie Universität Berlin under a Fulbright US Student Program scholarship. Giovanna will work on her doctoral dissertation on sixteenth-century travel narratives authored by German and French conquistadors, mercenaries, and missionaries in Brazil and Venezuela. In particular, Giovanna will conduct research related to the Welsers and their colonization of Venezuela in the sixteenth-century. During her stay in Germany, Giovanna also hopes to continue improving her knowledge of German (and Russian with the Russophone residents), and engaging with the German Comparative Literature and Latin American intellectual communities at the Freie Universität, the State Library, and the Iberoamerican institute. She is also looking forward to eating currywurst and döner, as well as treasure hunting in Berlin's many flea markets.

Graduate Student Achievements and Presentations

Ted Geier was an invited participant at the UC Davis Interdisciplinary Graduate and Professional Student Symposium held on April 21-April 23, 2011. He was a participant on the panel, "Animals in Human Society: Interdisciplinary Approaches" and his talk was titled, "Without Question: Animal Citizenship and Interspecies Communities." His fellow presenters were from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Science and the UC Davis Center for Mind and Brain.

Brian Davisson had an article accepted for publication in the journal *Symposium*. The article is titled "Exile, Allegory, and the Totality of the Nation: Miguel Ángel Asturias after the Guatemalan Revolution," and will appear in the July 2011 issue of the journal. He also will give a presentation at the 3rd Congress on Central American Cultural Studies, at CSU Northridge, on June 3, 2011. His talk is titled "El espacio en contra del tiempo en la Generación del 20."

Michael Graziano and **Natalie Strobach** have been awarded travel grants from the Department of Comparative Literature to assist with their participation at this summer's Collegium Phaenomenologicum in Città di Castello, Umbria, Italy. The theme for this year is "Philosophy, Truth, and Claims of Art." In addition to being accepted to attend this year's conference, both Michael and Natalie also applied and were chosen to present at the event. Natalie will deliver a paper titled "Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do," and Michael present "Borges, Artistic Practice, and the Politics of Space." The conference will take place through the month of July.

In addition, Natalie Strobach presented a paper at the 20th/21st Century French and Francophone Studies International Colloquium in San Francisco on April 1st. The title of this year's colloquium was "Human-Animal/Humain-Animal." She gave the paper "Beside Ourselves: Re-pairing the Image of the Human Animal" for her panel titled "Humanity in Cixous' Writings." Michael Graziano pre-

sented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in Vancouver, B.C. on April 1. His paper was titled "'Labyrinth of the Ideal: Borges, Ideology, and the Infinite," and it was part of a stream titled "Criticism and the Public Intellectual: Japanese Hihiyō and Its Intercultural and International Impact."

Monica Powers Keane presented a paper at the International Congress for Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo on May 12th, 2011. She was a participant on a panel called "Lovers and Go-Betweens" sponsored by the UC Davis Medieval Research Consortium and her paper was entitled "A Parodic 'Galeotto': an Examination of *Decameron* 3.3."

Giovanna Montenegro, fourth-year PhD candidate, received a Critical Language Scholarship to study Russian in Kazan, Russia this summer and a Tinker Foundation Field Research Travel grant for preliminary dissertation research in Caracas, Venezuela. She also presented a paper at the American Comparative Literature Association in Vancouver on April 1st, 2011. The title of her talk was: "The Cartographer and the Adventurer: Depictions of the New World and Reading Practices in the Early Modern Period." The paper was presented in a stream seminar entitled "Ubi Sunt: Mapping Past Worlds." Giovanna is also a co-organizer (along with Tim Johnson, Spanish) of the first Colonial Latin America Forum hosted by the Hemispheric Institute of the Americas on May 30, 2011.

Chris Tong received a fellowship to a summer seminar on Criticism and Theory at Cornell University.

Joshua Waggoner received a Davis Humanities Institutes Summer Fellowship.

Congratulations to **Brian Young** and **Masha Boston** for finishing their doctoral studies! Masha will return to campus this fall to teach two upper division courses for the Dept. of German and Russian.

Spring Graduate Student Colloquium: May 20, 2011

The department organized a Graduate Student Colloquium on May 20, 2011. Five graduate students presented papers on various topics. There was lively discussion after each presentation. The event was attended by many faculty members and graduate students from the department as well as from outside the department.

1. Giovanna Montenegro. "The Adventurer's Narrative: Staden, Federman, and Léry in Sixteenth-Century Venezuela and Brazil."
2. Brian Davisson. "Max Aub's Abstract Utopia, or Wishing Away Exile."
3. Monica Keane. "A Parodic 'Galeotto': an Examination of Decameron III.3"
4. Zoya Stanchits. "The Image of an Intellectual in Daniil Granin's *The Bizon* and Wang Meng's *Bolshevik Salute*."
5. Erin Grimm. "Narrative and Ethical Inertia in Ludwig Tieck's *Fair Eckbert* (1797) and Gerhart Hauptmann's *Flagman Thiel* (1888)"



Starting upper left corner, clockwise: (1) Giovanna Montenegro; (2) Monica Powers Keane; (3) Flyer for the colloquium; (4) Zoya Stanchits Popova (l.) and Erin Grimm (r.); (5) Monica talking to Prof. Seth Schein.

Seth Schein in Siracusa, Italy

Prof. Seth Schein spoke at the "Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Dramma Antico," which took place in the Palazzo Greco in Siracusa, Sicily, May 10-11, 2011. The theme of the conference was "Andromacha e Filottete, eroi fuori-luogo," and Seth, the only American scholar invited to participate, gave the opening lecture on "The Scene with the False Merchant in Sophokles' Philoktetes." This well-attended meeting was organized by l'Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico (INDA) in connection with the opening of the theater "season" in Siracusa, where Euripides' *Andromache*, Sophokles' *Philoktetes*, and Aristophanes' *Clouds* are being performed for six weeks by professional casts, with original music, in the relatively well-preserved ancient Greek theater. In addition to the two days of papers and discussions of *Andromache* and *Philoktetes* and their ancient and modern receptions, conference participants were able to attend the premières of *Philoktetes* and *Andromache* and to experience firsthand how ancient tragedy can come alive in performance, especially in such a setting. The choral singing and scenes of formal lamentation by both actors and chorus, which sometimes seem flat when merely read on the page, were especially thrilling and moving. It was an added pleasure to spend a few days on the little island of Ortigia, the oldest part of Siracusa, home over the centuries to Greek, Roman, Arabic, Jewish, Byzantine, Norman, and other cultures, the remains of which are visible everywhere in this distinctively multicultural corner of the Mediterranean.



A Busy Year for the CompLit Faculty!

The faculty has been active inside and outside the classroom pursuing new opportunities and earning accolades.

Awards & Honors

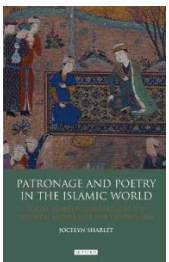
Jocelyn Sharlet received a fellowship from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey for 2011-2012 for her project *Altered States: Subjectivity, Spirituality, and Community in Islamic Mystical Literary Discourse*. She will be affiliated with Istanbul City University and the Center for Islamic Studies, where she will conduct research in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish for this and other projects.

Archana Venkatesan was a recipient of the 9th Annual ASUCD Excellence in Education Award. She was one of the 9 faculty in the College of Letters and Science that were selected by undergraduate students.

Books



Brenda Schildgen, translation of *Dante and the Orient* into Arabic (2010)



Jocelyn Sharlet, *Patronage and Poetry in the Islamic World: Social Mobility and Status in the Medieval Middle East and Central Asia (Library of Middle East History)* (Tauris Academic Studies, forthcoming)

Invited Talks

2011 will be a very busy year of travel for **Sheldon Lu**. He was invited to give talks and present papers at various places throughout the year. He gave talks and presented papers at the School of Design and the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (on Chinese architecture), at Rutgers University (on ecocriticism), and at the Annual Convention of the Association for Asian Studies in Honolulu (on Chinese poetry), all in April. He was invited to present a paper at the conference "Pain and Trauma in East Asian Cinema" organized by the Visual Arts Department at UC San Diego in May; he will give several talks at Beijing Normal University and Capital

Published Article(s)

Gail Finney has several articles forthcoming:

- "Little Miss Sunshine and the Avoidance of Tragedy." Forthcoming in *Humor and Gender; Gender and Humor*. Ed. Delia Chiaro and Raffaella Baccolini. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- "Ödipus in Hollywood: Familientrauma im zeitgenössischen Film." Forthcoming in *Freud und die Antike*. Ed. Hartmut Böhme, Inge Stephan, and Claudia Benthien. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Grillparzer's *The Poor Fiddler*. Forthcoming in *Nineteenth-Century Literary Studies*.

Brenda Schildgen:

- "Dante and the Holy Land Crusades." Rept. from *Dante and the Orient, Poetry Criticism* 108 (2010). Ed. Michelle Lee (hardcover print, e-book, and on-line service).
- Translation of *Dante and the Orient* (Illinois, 2002) into Italian (Salerno Editrice).
- "Thomas More and the Defense of Images in the Dialogue Concerning Heresies." *Moreana* 47 (Dec., 2010), 9-30.
- "Romancing the Gospel: Italian Vernacular Scripture in the Middle Ages." *Religion, Heresy, Mysticism in Italian Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2012).
- "Dante for contemporary satire: Sean Meredith's Dante's Inferno and Jean-Luc Godard's Notre Musique." *Rivista Studi Italiani* (2011).

Jocelyn Sharlet, "Tokens of Resentment: Medieval Arabic Stories about Gift Exchange and Social Conflict" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. "The Thought That Counts in Gift Exchange Poetry by Kushajim, al-Sanawbari, and al-Sari al-Raffa" Forthcoming in *Middle Eastern Literatures*.

Normal University in Beijing, China in June. He will give two lectures at National Chung-hsing University in Taiwan in September. He has been invited to give a presentation at the international conference "Contested Ground: Chinese Visual Culture after 1989" at the University of Kentucky in October, and has also been invited to participate in an international conference on the bilingual Chinese writer Lin Yutang at the City University of Hong Kong in December.

Class Notes!

Belen Bitue (PhD '10) has won the Allen G. Marr Prize for Distinguished Dissertation for her dissertation titled, "The Difficulty of Thinking Translation in Early Modern Europe." Dr. Bitue is Assistant Professor, Centro de Literatura Comparada, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina.

Andy Matt (PhD '06) is an editor and writer for the French journal *Magnificat*. His most recent piece for the journal is an introductory essay to a volume called *Praying with Saint Matthew's Gospel*.

Kristopher Ide (BA '10) has been accepted to MFA Program in Creative Writing for the Performing Arts at the the University of California, Riverside. He has also been awarded full financial support for the duration of his time at UC Riverside.

Megan Macklin (BA '08) has been accepted with a full fellowship to the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. She will study Spanish, German and Chinese literature.

Haomin Gong (PhD '08), an assistant professor of Modern Languages and Asian Studies at Saint Mary's College in Maryland, is a father now! His daughter, Stephanie, was born in May this year. Congratulations to Haomin!

Why Gardening Is Like Poetry

Because she turns over the soil
Sweeps aside pine needles turned brown
In a last dance with the winds
Moves them away
To find something yet older:
Fine-grained topsoil below the duff
That slips through our hands like time.
This is That — & changes
Under our hands. She is
In charge. She is not in charge.

The Hardest Love

This is the hardest love
Of all: ashes & smoke.
The touch
Of the everlasting in the wind
Where we stand alone
Wanting to say just one more thing.

Prof. Scott McLean
Senior Lecturer

Winter & Spring 2011 Social Events

Organized by our academic peer advisors (Jeralynn Betts and Kaitlin Danssaert), these social events were well attended by the members of the department — undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. People stopped by during their break time and enjoy some tea and cookies!



Top picture, from left to right: Jenna Dennis, Regina Dettmer, Kylie Negin, Kaitlin Danssaert, Jeralynn Betts, Glenn Hoban, Evan Loker, and David Dayton

Left picture: Kaitlin Danssaert and Jeralynn Betts preparing the delicious treats for the event.

End-of-the Year Celebration! (May 25, 2011)

Members of the department met on May 25th to celebrate the end of another successful and wonderful year. The year's department citations and the Amy Lee Memorial Essay Prize were awarded during the event. This event also recognized the leadership and hard work of Brenda Schildgen and Olga Stuchebrukhov, who completed their tenures as Department Chair and TA Supervisor.



ATTENTION ALUMNI

We would like to hear from you!
Please keep in touch with the
Department of Comparative
Literature by sending your news and
updates to one of the following:

- E-mail Prof. Archana Venkatesan
at avenkatesan@ucdavis.edu
- Mail to this address:

Department of Comparative
Literature, 213 Sproul Hall, One
Shields Avenue, Davis, CA
95616

Items may be edited for clarity and
space purposes.

Visit our website!

complit.ucdavis.edu

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 new *Marc Blanchard Undergraduate Travel Award*.

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

This Newsletter is published twice a year by the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of California, Davis.

Editor/Faculty Adviser:	Prof. Archana Venkatesan
Staff Adviser:	Joey Y. Almario
Undergraduate Representatives:	Jeralynn Betts '12 Kaitlin Danssaert '11
Graduate Representatives:	Christopher Tong

Contributors: Mandy Bachman, Emelie Coleman, Kaitlin Danssaert, Paul DeMorais, Glenn Hoban, Sheldon Lu, Scott, McLean, Giovanna Montenegro, Seth Schein, Jocelyn Sharlet, Shaul Setter, Archana Venkatesan, Joshua Waggoner, and Geoffrey Wildanger



We now have a Facebook group that you can join! It is a great way to meet fellow comparatists and stay updated on upcoming events!

You can follow the link to join:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=141304226988&ref=ts>