I am delighted, and somewhat intimidated, to come on board as the new Chair of the Comparative Literature Program at a time when so much thinking and writing, and myriad world upheavals are reshaping the (in)discipline of comparative literary studies and their interdisciplinary and transnational possibilities. From Germaine de Staël’s *Corinne or Italy*, *On Literature* and *On Germany*—foundational texts of Western European comparative literature—to the most recent work of Franco Moretti—which has influenced my own research on cities—I have been exposed to the old and the new practitioners of comparative inquiry and literary theory. My own work has focused mostly on modern Western European cultures, and nineteenth-century *flâneries* have structured my own intellectual peregrinations (via Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades project*), so I look forward to discovering and supporting the research and teaching of students and affiliate faculty working on literatures and cultures from Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, the Middle East ... and Europe. Their diverse methodologies and critical paradigms will enhance my knowledge of current conversations on the interactions (or collisions) between national literatures and world literatures, and on the shift from a Eurocentric focus for the discipline to a more global one. I will also seek answers for what the “comparability” of comparative literature entails and how it can be (or has been) achieved in an era of increasing transculturation.

Despite infelicitous budget cuts and pressures to fulfill the needs of majors and graduate students first in their own home department(s), our affiliate faculty have renewed their intellectual commitment to our innovative and rigorous curriculum. As a result, the Comparative Literature Program will offer once again a rich array of stimulating courses and seminars. I would like to express my gratitude to all colleagues who are contributing to our 2012–13 course offerings; I look forward to working with them. I would also like to extend the opportunity for teaching in comparative literature further across disciplines and incorporate more affiliate instructors who are interested in comparative study. Regarding instruction, I also wish to thank Katherine Kelp-Stebbins (doctoral candidate in comparative literature), our 2012–13 Lead Teaching Assistant, who is organizing workshops that will greatly enhance the pedagogical experience of our TAs in comparative literature. The first workshop, entitled: “A Resource-Full Community,” is planned for September 24, 2012, 1:00–4:00pm.

In the face of a depressed academic job market, our most recent doctors in comparative literature have been able to find wonderful ladder-rank positions. Congratulations to Dr. Anne Marcoline, now Assistant Professor of European Studies at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and Dr. Lily Wong, now Assistant Professor of Literature at American University. Please read the updated section of our web site on our graduate alumni, courtesy of Anne Marcoline: http://www.complit.ucsb.edu/people/recent-graduate-students. In early October 2012 we will welcome back Dr. Lisa Swanstrom, one of our alumni and an Assistant Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University (http://swanstream.org/). She will organize a job market workshop and a forum on professional development. Check our web site for information: http://www.complit.ucsb.edu/

I am looking forward to working with everyone involved in the Comparative Literature community, and with Joell Emoto, our new Graduate Program Assistant, who has already been a great brainstorming and working partner. Last but not least, on behalf of the Comparative Literature community, I would like to address my warmest thanks to Professor Susan Derwin for her wonderful work as the Chair of the Comparative Literature Program. Her creativity, energy, and dedication will be sources of inspiration to me. We all wish her the best as she takes her new position as Director of UCSB’s Interdisciplinary Humanities Center.

Catherine Nesci, Professor of French
Affiliate in Comparative Literature and Feminist Studies
http://www.complit.ucsb.edu/

Susan Derwin, professor of German and Comparative Literature: “What Nazi Crimes Against Humanity Can Tell us about Torture Today,” in *Speaking About Torture*, Elisabeth Weber and Julie Carlson, co-eds. (Fordham University Press); *Rage Is the Subtext: Readings in Holocaust Literature and Film* (Ohio University Press, April 2012).


Élide Valarini Oliver, professor of Portuguese and Comparative Literature: *Variações sob a mesma luz: Machado de Assis repensado* (University of São Paulo Press and Nankin Editorial, April 2012).


Fall 2011 to Summer 2012 Faculty Lectures and Presentations


**Francis Dunn**, professor of Classics: “On Middle Ground: Greek constructions of cultural identity,” “Visualizing Antiquity,” The University of Victoria, BC.


**Francisco Lomelí**, professor of Spanish and Chicano Studies: “El panorama de textos transfronterizos en la frontera México-Estados Unidos,” HispaUSA 8th International Conference on Chicano Literature, Toledo, Spain.


**Catherine Nesci**, professor of French, Comparative Literature, and Feminist Studies: “« Le prisme des songes, des hallucinations ». L’imaginaire fantastique de J. J. Grandville (1803-1847),” Ewha Womens University, Seoul, South Korea; “Le masculin et la catabase », Institut d’Etudes Françaises et Francophones, University of Basel, Switzerland; “Image détournées: le recyclage d’*Un Autre Monde* de Grandville dans le *Diable à Paris* de Hetzel (1868-1869),” University of Victoria, British Columbia.


**Sara Pankenier Weld**, visiting professor of Russian and Comparative Literature: “The Censor and the Child: Authorities and Aesopian Language in Osip Mandelstam’s *Two Tramcars*,” Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) Annual Convention, Washington, DC.
2012 Faculty Awards and Appointments

Susan Derwin, professor of Comparative Literature and German, was appointed the new director of the UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center (IHC). http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/

Jill Levine, translation of Jose Donoso’s The Lizard’s Tale has won the PEN Center USA 2012 award for Literary Translation. Congratulations to Professor Levine!

Catherine Nesci, professor of French, was appointed chair of the Comparative Literature program.

Eric Prieto, professor of French and Comparative Literature, was appointed Chair of the Department of French and Italian.

Fall 2011 to Summer 2012 Graduate Student Advancements: Degrees

Linda Kick, Ph.D.
Anne Marcoline, Ph.D.
Lily Wong, Ph.D.
Michael Grafals, M.A.
Shari Sanders, M.A.
Marcel Brousseau, ABD
Devin Fromm, ABD
Meaghan Skahan, ABD
Kuan-yen Liu, ABD

Fall 2011 to Summer 2012 Graduate Student Advancements: Field Exams

Marcel Brousseau: “The Last of its Kind: Monument Valley and Simulations of Landscape”.
Devin Fromm: “Reading Modern Mystery: Counter-Enlightenment, Analytical Detection, and the Politics of Investigation.”
Meaghan Skahan: the Latin American Neofantastic; Feminist spatial studies.
Kristie Soares: Spanish Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Philosophy.
Kuan-yen Liu: “A Comparative Study of Victorian British Darwinism and Late-Qing Chinese Darwinism: The Intersection between Biology and Philosophy.”

Fall 2011 to Summer 2012 Graduate Student Publications


Shari Sanders: “I Haven’t A Clue”: The Sound of Wisdom in Ursula Le Guin’s The Lathe of Heaven,” ACLA, Providence, RI; “Let It Be: Countering Crisis in Ursula Le Guin’s The Lathe of Heaven,” at CISM Music and Crisis conference, UCSB.


Meaghan Skahan: “Gendered Spaces in Modern Paris,” ACLA, Brown University, Providence, RI.

Krisitie Soares: co-organizer, second annual graduate performance conference, ::Bodies in Space: Flow/:::. See video on youtube: http://youtube/xYq5Ep4qLPI.


Silvia Ferreira was awarded a U.S. Department of State 2012 Critical Language Scholarship for Intensive Summer Institutes. She used the scholarship to travel to Morocco to study Arabic.

Katherine Kelp-Stebbins received the UCSB GSA Excellence in Teaching Award.

Kieran Murphy (Ph.D, 2009) won the Schachterle Essay Prize for his article “Electromagnetic Thought in Balzac, Villiers de l’Isle-Adam and Joseph Breuer” (SubStance 40.2 (2011): 127-147). The prize is awarded by the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts to recognize the best new essay on literature and science written by a nontenured scholar.

Shari Sanders received the UCSB Academic Senate Outstanding TA Award.

Events Sponsored by the Comparative Literature Program, Fall 2011 to Summer 2012

Conversations on the Sublime lead to Beautiful Reading Group

On Friday, October 29th 2011, we had a splendid display of intellectual sociability. We brought our own wines, and the tables were decked with sumptuous cheeses, delectable fruits and other assortments of sweets and savories. It was the first meeting of our new comparative literature reading group, with twelve colleagues coming together to discuss the sublime and the power of literature. Our little symposium would have made Socrates proud.

We started with Northrop Frye’s essay “Criticism as Education,” and discussed Frye’s bold idea that the “function of literature” is to “recreate the primitive conception of the word of power.” We had an interesting discussion about whether the function of literature was primarily one of feeling an aesthetic experience or if it had a more social role, one that helps us disentangle the webs of discourse and power that literary texts are often implicated in.

From Frye, we moved on to sections from Longinus’ On the Sublime, in which we see literature as power first eloquently argued (writing around the first century AD, Longinus, we should add, was an early practitioner of comparative literature, using not only Greek sources but Hebrew ones as well). For Longinus “the sublime is a certain eminence or perfection of language.” Sublime writing or speech throws its audience into transport; it takes us out of ourselves, strikes us with a powerful force like a stroke of lighting and exalts us into a contemplation of the greatness both of an idea and of our souls. Encountering this burning enthusiasm today, we cannot underestimate the importance the reception Longinus’ text had on 18th century theories of the aesthetic. In a neoclassical culture that once espoused beauty (and its suggestions of harmony, balance and symmetry) as the ultimate ideal of aesthetics, Longinus’ theory did much to push aesthetics into the direction of Romanticism.

Discussing Edmund Burke’s 1757 Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, we noted aesthetics shifting from the realm of language to one of experience. As Terry Eagleton put it, 18th-century aesthetics was born of a discourse of the body. For Burke the feeling of the beautiful is grounded in our feeling of pleasure, but the sublime is one in which we find delight in pain. The beautiful is something our imaginations can grasp, but the sublime takes us to feelings wherein “our imagination is finally lost.”

At the end of the night, although satisfied with cheeses and fruits, we were left hungry, still striving to understand this mesmerizing ideal of the sublime. We hope to make this reading group an ongoing tradition in our comparative literature program. We hope you might leave with sublime ideas, but we are sure you will find some beautiful, intellectual sociability.

—Michael Grafals
Comparative Literature Lecture Series: Françoise Lionnet

On April 24th, 2012, the Comparative Literature Program welcomed celebrated academic Françoise Lionnet for a lecture entitled “Indian Ocean Literature Between Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Amitav Ghosh.” Lionnet, a professor of Comparative Literature at UCLA, runs the Center for African Studies, and is the past president of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA). The second event in a series, this lecture was planned entirely by a committee of Comparative Literature graduate students who also came together to discuss Lionnet’s work at a rousing roundtable. Professor Lionnet’s talk examined Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s national mythologization of the shipwreck of the Saint-Geran, and showed how this mythology is problematized by archival research. She concluded by analyzing further historical reworkings of the shipwreck in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh.

—Meaghan Skahan
(Catholic University of Portugal, Lisbon): “The Risk Doctrine. Modernism, Fernando Pessoa and Big Business”.

Isabel Capeloa Gil is Professor of Cultural Theory at the Catholic University of Portugal. Her main research areas include intermedia studies, gender studies as well as representations of war and conflict. She is currently the Dean of the School of Human Sciences at the Catholic University of Portugal (Lisbon). In her paper, Gil studies the ways in which risk and uncertainty narratives have been dislocated from the discourse of economics into the realm of culture and literature, thus framing the production of knowledge in modernity and its reflexive self-awareness. Reading Fernando Pessoa’s *The Anarchist Banker* (1922) with Georg Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money*, Gil analyzed the contentious relations between the risk and uncertainty narratives in literary discourse.

Co-sponsors included: Speculative Futures: Critical Issues in America & The College of Letters and Science; The Interdisciplinary Humanities Center; The Series in Contemporary Literature; The Department of French & Italian; and The Department of Germanic, Slavic and Semitic Cultures.

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2012 Holiday Party

From left to right: Katie Kelp-Stebbins, Allison Schifani, and Lily Wong ascertain what stage of the image they currently occupy.

From left to right: Susan Derwin, Tilly Govender, and Ron Egan enjoy some good post-structural holiday conversation.

From left to right: Devin Fromm (left) and Eli Evans (right) debate whether Pynchon is a Steelers or a Packers fan.

From left to right: Claudio Fogu, Elisabeth Weber, and Megan Skahan wonder what order of things Foucault made for his catered affairs.

Would Serres also say that the hand is no longer a hand when it has taken hold of the vibraphone mallets?
“Food for Thought,” 2012

The UCSB Comparative Literature program concluded the 2011-2012 academic year by convening for its second annual potluck in which each participant brought a dish relating to his or her work. Without fail, the group shared delicious thoughts and thoughtful food.

For some, just desserts: The Comparative Literature Program’s 2011-2012 award winners. From left to right: Kristie Soares, Cory Hansen, Nicole Valencia, former chair Susan Derwin, and Wallace Wilson III.

From left to right: Nicole Valencia, Katie Kelp-Stebbins, and Emily Hunt doing their best to exemplify the name of the event.

Wolf Kittler, raconteur, embodying the survival of the oral tradition.
News and Notes from the Outside World

Fragments from a Year in South Africa
Marzia Milazzo

Located at the foot of the colossal Table Mountain and the Newlands forest (a conservancy area of spectacular natural beauty), Newlands is one of the most charming neighborhoods in Cape Town. It is a quiet, safe, picturesque, upmarket suburb. With its Cape Dutch style houses, luxury guesthouses, police patrolling the neighborhood on bicycles, White residents and Black cleaning ladies, Black nannies, Black construction workers, Black gardeners, Newland is, like Khayelitsha, Soweto, or Hillbrow, a product of apartheid that the post-apartheid state has not deracialized, and will not deracialize in the foreseeable future. In 2010, other students from the University of California and I were assigned housing in Newlands. It was possible, in our backyard, to ‘forget’ that we were living in a country where most people survive on less than 10 Rand ($1.25) per day, or in which most hospital beds are occupied by victims of HIV and AIDS. The quietness of Newlands often felt disquieting.

At the University of Cape Town (UCT), I studied and performed research on Black fiction, Black radical thought, and hegemonic racial discourse in post-apartheid South Africa. The academics at UCT are excellent, and the campus, which overlooks the city, is simply gorgeous. In South Africa, I also travelled through the country and lived in Soweto. As cliché as it sounds, I fell in love with the people, the literature, the music, the languages, and the landscape. With eleven official languages, several varieties of each language, and residents from everywhere in the African continent and beyond, South Africa is a treasure for sociolinguists and people who, like myself, revel in linguistic and cultural diversity. In 2012, I returned to UCT to conduct further research and write a dissertation chapter. I also studied isiZulu, thanks to a language grant provided by the UCSB Comparative Literature Program. This time, I lived in a small studio downtown. From my place, I could see people protesting in front of parliament almost daily. It is no wonder, in fact, that South Africa has been called the “protest capital of the world.”

Almost two decades after the formal end of apartheid, White people—less than 10 percent of the South African population—own 91 percent of the companies listed in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, 87 percent of the country’s farmable land, and approximately 85 percent of all wealth, salaries, and assets. Today, the ANC government builds RDP houses that are smaller than the average house built by the apartheid government; most people are not provided with any housing at all. While the government’s choice to implement neoliberal policies has not served the interests of the majority, poor people continue to make their voices heard. Grassroots movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo (the shackdwellers’ movement), and the Landless People’s Movement, Black-only organizations such as Blackwash and the September National Imbizo (SNI) that keep alive the legacies of Black Consciousness, and millions of individuals who experience the precariousness of racial freedom under democracy, continue to fight for justice. Apartheid is not over.
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