Director’s Note

Exactly a century ago, the end of World War I was marked by the founding of the League of Nations and the creation of the first programs of study in Comparative Literature in the United States. Exactly fifty years ago, a group of colleagues met on the UT Austin campus and created our own graduate program. In both 1918 and 2018, the inspiration and commitment for these undertakings relied upon the conviction powerfully expressed by Senator J. William Fulbright that “having people who understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine.” While some of our program’s founders are gone, and we miss our beloved late colleague Sid Monas especially in this anniversary year, both long-standing and newly arrived colleagues among the faculty and students continue the mission of our program, one which was recognized by our external reviewers whose Fall 2018 report noted that the Program “is poised to be a full participant in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world” and that it is a “crown jewel” to be “protected and burnished until it shines not only inside UT-Austin but everywhere else as well.” The excellence of our students, alumni and faculty, who combine intellectual with institutional agility, continues the legacy of Comparative Literature itself as creating spaces where international humanities can intervene in repairing, reinforcing and enhancing a too-often frayed global fabric.

In both the early and the mid twentieth century contexts, difference and diversity were often framed in terms of race, ethnicity, nation, and empire as the global conflicts of the period attest. At the same time, questions of gender and sexuality, of what it means to be human and humane, were being contested in ways which Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw captured with her 1989 coinage “intersectionality.” Our annual GRACLS conference chose as its theme for 2018-19 “Beyond the Breakdown: Reviewing our Disciplines and our World” and extended our explicit transnational and multilingual project to include the many worlds and boundaries that exist for intersectional identities. In dialogue with Drs. Alison Kafer and Sami Shalik, we took time to consider, in dozens of papers and in a collegial and inclusive plenary conversation, the many borders and boundaries which divide but also invite and demand crossings. In the pages that follow, you will read about both our local initiatives and communities and about how the members of our program consistently engage with and shape the field, both nationally and internationally, through their projects, presentations, and publications. Award-winning teaching, major translation projects, conference keynotes, and community-based interventions epitomize how research, teaching and service are mutually reinforcing, creating both a strong program and enhancing diverse learning communities in Austin and beyond.

Svetlana Boym invites us to be suspicious of “restorative” nostalgia, which attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home, and to undertake instead wistful, ironic, doubt-filled “reflective” nostalgia. This newsletter participates in such reflective nostalgia, which is to say it does not follow a single plot, instead inhabiting different time zones while cherishing shattered fragments of memory and individual details. We hope that you enjoy the many stories that emerge and return from our “home” in Calhoun Hall.

I would like to end by thanking Anne Bormann for her nearly two years of service as our graduate program coordinator. Without her efforts, and the invaluable assistance of our own graduate student, Alex Thomas, we would not have this beautiful newsletter. In the next couple of weeks we will be welcoming our new program coordinator, Elizabeth Davis.
Fall 2019 Courses and Degree Recipients

Degree Recipients

Master of Arts:
Spring 2019:

Andra Lee Bailard, Literary Layering: Translations of Alessandro Manzoni’s Promessi Sposi as Multilingual Palimpsests

Doctor of Philosophy:
Spring 2019:

Rama Hamarneh, Unsettling Communities: Representations of Indigenous Identity and Mobility in Jordanian and Canadian Short Narratives


Mark Alan Smith, To Burn, To Howl. To Live Within the Truth: Underground Cultural Production in the US, USSR, and Czechoslovakia in the Post World War II Context and Its Reception by Capitalist and Communist Power Structures

Amy Vidor, Testifying to Auschwitz and Algeria

Summer 2019:

Chienyn Chi, Literatures of Madness: Theory, Historiography, and Aesthetics of Nervous Conditions in 20th Century Empire

Jamila Davey, Assia Djebar’s Literary and Theatrical Engagements with Women and Gender in the Islamic Past: Epistemology, Experience and Ethical Agency

Reinhard Mueller, Shifting Plausibilities: Innovations of Thinking Between Philosophy and Literature: Nietzsche and Joyce

Fall CL Proseminar: Professional Strategies for Comparatists in Field Studies

Coordinated and moderated by Dr. Lynn Wilkinson (Germanic Studies), Graduate Studies Committee Chair in Comparative Literature

August 31
Welcome and Introduction to the course by Dr. Lynn Wilkinson. Associate Professor of Germanic Studies, Comparative Literature, and Women’s and Gender Studies with teaching and research interests in Comparative Literature; European literature and culture 1789-1925; Scandinavian drama and film; modernism; the novel and narrative traditions; women writers; gender studies; literary and cultural theory.

September 7
Dr. Elizabeth Richmond Garza, U.T. Regents’ and Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor of English, Director of the Program in Comparative Literature with teaching and research interests in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European drama; Oscar Wilde; the Gothic and Orientalism; decadence; detective fiction; aesthetic and literary theory; literature and the fine arts.

September 14
Dr. Karen Grumborg, Center Director and Associate Professor in Middle Eastern Studies. Besides comparative/global gothics and space/place, her interests include: intersections of literary modernism in Norwegian and Hebrew; “juxtapositional” comparative methodologies; Hebrew translation culture; and a regional, comparatively grounded conceptualization of Hebrew within the Middle East region and in the context of multiple histories.

September 28
Comparative Literature Conference with organizers Ayca Akçamete, Bianca E Quintanilla, Caroline Kraft, and Kathleen Field.

October 5
Dr. Alexandra Wettlaufer, Professor of French with teaching and research interests in 19th-century literature, visual arts, culture, and gender studies in France and Britain.

October 19
Dr. Michael Harney, Professor of Spanish and Portuguese with research and teaching interests in Comparative Literature, literary theory, and cultural theory; medieval and early modern literature; and film and media.

October 26
Dr. Sabine Hake, Professor of Germanic Studies, with interests in Weimar culture and German cinema, primarily from the first half of the twentieth century. She is interested in the relationship between cultural practices and aesthetic sensibilities, on the one hand, and social movements and political ideologies, on the other.

November 2
Dr. Esther Raizen, Associate Dean for Research with interests in modern and classical Hebrew language, linguistics and literature; teaching Hebrew as a foreign language; Jewish history and culture, Holocaust studies; computer-assisted instruction and computational linguistics, assistive technology; education administration; student development; and women and war.

November 9
Dr. César Salgado, Associate Professor of Latin American and Comparative Literature with teaching and research interests in colonial and postcolonial New World baroque literatures, the “Orígenes” group and journal in Cuban literary history, James Joyce and Luso-Hispanic modernism, the politics of archival fashioning in Caribbean studies, and contemporary literary theory.

November 16
Dr. Naomi Lindstrom, Gale Family Foundation Professor in Jewish Arts and Culture with teaching and research interests in gender, Latin American Jewish Studies, literary translation, sociology of the arts, and the comparative study of Jewish life in the Americas.

November 30
Dr. Wayne Rebhorn, Mildred Hayek Vacek and John Roman Vacek Chair of English with interests in the social and political dimensions of literature and rhetoric in the European Renaissance, including Boccaccio, More, Rabelais, DuBellay, Shakespeare and Milton.

December 7
Conclusion
A Word from the Co-Presidents of GRACLS  

By Diana Silveira Leite and Monica Mohseni Sisiruca

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

GRACLS would like to congratulate you all on a successful 2018-2019 academic year! This year was a busy one for both GRACLS and the Program in Comparative Literature. During the fall, our program underwent its first ever external review with stellar results. We also welcomed a fantastic new cohort, and once more hosted the annual GRACLS conference for the comparative literature graduate community. In the spring we continued our tradition of holding Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam roundtables for interested students. Overall, we’re looking at another successful and comparative year!

Our program’s external review took place in fall 2018. A review committee composed of Dr. Sandra Bermann, Princeton University; Dr. David Damrosch, Harvard University; and Dr. Michael Palencia-Roth, University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana, met with our program’s graduate students and discussed many of the issues currently affecting them. Reviewers reported the program to be remarkably strong, with a culture of enthusiasm and dedication. Many thanks to all the students and faculty that took the time to participate and meet with our external reviewers. A special thanks goes to Marlena Cravens for her invaluable support and work in compiling the student survey data that went into our program’s report. To our Director, Dr. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, GRACLS would like to extend a very warm and heartfelt thank you. Our program would not be where it is were it not for your unwavering support and dedication.

GRACLS remains committed to strengthening UT’s Comparative Literature community by providing a platform for student concerns and forging ties of support and opportunity. In the fall we welcomed our 2018 incoming cohort, Caroline Kraft, Kathleen Field, and Binca Quintanilla. We wish you all great success in your graduate careers! In September, we also hosted the 15th Annual GRACLS Conference. This year’s theme was, “Beyond the Breakdown: Reviewing Our Disciplines and our World” and saw a keynote conversation between Dr. Alison Kafer, Southwestern University, and Dr. Sami Schalk, University of Wisconsin Madison. Organized by Andra Bailard and Sarah Ropp, this year’s conference sought to expose and “break-down” the assumed universalities within the discipline, while also “building-up”, or making previously unexplored connections. The 16th Annual GRACLS conference, planned by Aycan Akçamete, Binca Quintanilla, Kathleen Field, and Caroline Kraft will be titled, “On-Stage and Off-Stage: Body, Archive, and Performance” and held in the spring semester.

Spring saw a return of GRACLS’ staple professionalization events. In April we held the Qualifying Exam Roundtable and the Comprehensive Exam and Prospectus Information Session, in which faculty and advanced students gave suggestions and strategies for tackling the program’s challenging requirements. Look forward to next semester’s exciting early career and professionalization events!

2019 - 2020 GRACLS Officers

Co-Presidents: Diana Silveira Leite and Monica Mohseni Sisiruca  
Secretary: Andra Bailard  
Social Coordinator: Liza Goodstein  
Curriculum Representatives: Alex Thomas and Marlena Cravens  
Conference Organizers: Aycan Akçamete, Caroline Kraft, Katie Field, Bianca Quintanilla  
Digital Officer: Claudio Moura de Oliveira

Student News and Profiles

First Year Student Profiles (2018-19)

By David Kornhaber, former Graduate Advisor

I am very pleased to highlight the Comparative Literature graduate student cohort for 2018-2019. These three emerging scholars were selected from a global pool of applicants across a broad array of fields. The strength of their backgrounds and scope of their interests speaks to the rigor and breadth of the Comparative Literature Program. It has been a pleasure to work with these students this year.

Kathleen Field comes to us from Tulane University in New Orleans, where she received undergraduate degrees in English and Latin American Studies. She also completed coursework at La Universidad de la Habana in Cuba. A native of Florida and long-time resident of New Orleans, she is developing a project on Gulf Coast culture across the US, Mexico, and the nations of the Caribbean.

Caroline Kraft comes to UT via Brown University, where she completed her B.A. in Comparative Literature. She also completed coursework at L’Université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV). A native of Texas, she is interested in the intersections of nineteenth-century French literature and twentieth-century literature of the American South, particularly in relation to questions of the Gothic.

Another Texas native, Bianca Quintanilla holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Stanford University. She is interested in applying the frameworks of Comparative Literature to the study of Chicano literature and the literatures of the U.S.-Mexico border. She is particularly interested in the work of Sandra Cisneros, though her studies have ranged from Persian poetry to the European novel.

From left to right: Caroline Straty Kraft, Katie Field, Bianca Quintanilla
Marlena Cravens

“From Relación to Military Strategy: Rewriting the Unknown through Paleography”

This spring, I have been volunteering as the remote paleographer for The Bryan Museum. Located in the historic Galveston Orphans Home, The Bryan Museum holds a vast collection of “fine art, artifacts, documents, and books” related to Texas’s history as a Mexican state and its role in the formation of the American West. Fascinating items currently on display range from a 1555 edition of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s Relación to Antonio López de Santa Anna’s notes on military strategy, which he used during the Texas Revolution and the Battle of the Alamo. Other items include old firearms, hundreds of spurs, rare maps, and Spanish missionary art from as early as the 16th Century.

Within the Bryan Museum, the archive holds approximately 250 unidentified Spanish-language texts, and this is where they needed a paleographer. These documents relate to the administration of peoples and control of land in the provinces of Coahuila and Texas, when both were overseen by the First Mexican Republic (1824-1835). However, this important collection—roughly dated to 1827-1835—speaks more broadly to rising tensions between Texian (early Anglo) and Tejano (early Mexican) settlers of Texas and their Mexican administrators. As a whole, this unknown collection ultimately offers the narratives of these three groups, interwoven with Irish, Atakapan, German and many others, during the Texas Revolution. None of the texts were catalogued or identified due to the difficult nature of the handwriting and the use of Spanish colonial legalese and abbreviations; however, with the support of the Program in Comparative Literature and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Knight also initiated the Gulf/Caribbean Studies student organization, which has met twice so far to plan for a Fall 2019 speaker series and workshop event. Additionally, she received a FLAS fellowship for the semester-long study of Brazilian Portuguese.

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As a paleographer, I have worked to read the “unreadable” and to identify the individuals in these documents, allowing their experiences and disputes to complicate the mosaic that is Texian and Mexican colonial history. Upon the release of the finding aid, these unknown, uncatalogued documents will reveal further to scholars the roles that identity politics, regionalism, language, and race had in the displacement and settlement of peoples in what was then northern Mexico.
Attending the Institute for World Literature (Tokyo, Japan)

by Xinyao Xiao

For me, the IWL 2018 program was most helpful for the things that happened outside of the classroom. I talked to three professors during their office hours, all of which turned out to be very useful: a key insight offered by Dr. Katherina Piechocki about my dissertation topic made its way into my prospectus and became what I now see as a contribution my project can make; Dr. Wiebke Denecke suggested an approach for a side project of mine that has now flowered into a journal article; a short chat with Dr. Longxi Zhang about the job market was illuminating and will be useful in the long run. The IWL’s strong suit, as I see it, lies in the diverse cohort of faculty and students it brings together each year, with whom we as Ph.D. students in Texas may not easily get in touch otherwise. Conversations I had at IWL 2018 turned out to be instrumental for my research as well as my professionalization.

Inside Literature

by Kaitlin Shirley

Reading World Literature (founded in 2014 by Kaitlin Shirley when she was a Comp. Lit. PhD student) grew into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and rebranded as Inside Literature this past year. Inside Literature continues to provide university-level instruction to pre-trial inmates at the Travis County Correctional Complex, teaching three- to six-week literature courses focused on one text. IL currently offers six to ten courses per term (Spring, Summer, and Fall) to minimum, medium, and maximum security male and female populations in English and Spanish. To date, Inside Literature has served over 1,000 students in 41 seminar-style courses taught by 36 volunteer instructors. We recruit graduate students and community members with advanced degrees in literature or related fields to co-teach our courses. Inside Literature is thrilled to continue our partnership with the Program in Comparative Literature and welcomes applications from Comp Lit graduate students to teach for Inside Literature.

A Book Project: Translated by Comp Lit’s very own...

by Reinhard G. Mueller

- Book Cover Text: from the back of the book (by Werner Stegmaier)

The very first thing one does in all situations of life is orient oneself. Decisions of orientation, which are mostly made under uncertainty and the pressure of time, largely determine subsequent decisions. But what is orientation? The problems of orientation are as old as humankind, the word is used everywhere, but the concept has never been thoroughly investigated. The philosopher Werner Stegmaier comprehensively clarifies for the first time the conditions and structures of orientation, including those of our sexual, economic, media, political, legal, scientific, artistic, religious, moral, and ethical orientations. He thereby establishes a new philosophical language and offers a philosophy for our time.

- What Philosophers are saying:

“As if I unexpectedly slipped down into a deep vortex, I am swirled around in a way that I can neither put a foot down, nor swim to the surface. Nonetheless, I will work my way out…” (René Descartes, Philosopher)

“As often as my speculation seems to lead me too far from the paved road of common sense, I stand still and seek to orient myself. I look back at the point from which we started, and I seek to compare the two guideposts I have.” (Moses Mendelssohn, Philosopher)

“A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I do not know my way about.’” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosopher)

“The second O, orientation – as the repository of our genetic heritage, cultural tradition, and previous experiences – is the most important part of the O-O-D-A loop since it shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act.” (John Boyd, Military Strategist)
Attending the meetings of the Graduate Student Association

By Boya Lin

In spring 2019 the GSA meetings passed significant legislation concerning the welfare and wellbeing of UT grad students, including a resolution in support of graduate student funding, which adds a strong voice to the cause of increased graduate student worker funding. The meetings also offered grounds for open debates on the changing policies of UT apartments for grad students, where diverse perspectives were represented and given consideration.

A Book Project: Translated by Comp Lit’s very own...

by Aycan Akçamete

From the original German Postdramatisches Theater by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2015 abridged version); to be published in 2019 by Imge Publishing House (Ankara, Turkey).

Having introduced the term “postdramatic theater” into the discussions of theater philosophy and performance studies, Lehmann’s groundbreaking work offers a panorama of “new theater” beginning from the second half of the twentieth century.

He scrutinizes and dwells on the diverse and idiosyncratic forms that have emerged “after drama” in Europe, pointing to the postdramatic dismissal of the dramatic text and de-hierarchization of theatrical means.

The brilliance of the work lies in the fact that Lehmann investigates the art of spectating and performing in a new media age, when all other forms of art have already gone through sweeping and radical changes – unlike theater.

In redefining what theater means, Lehmann provides vivid examples from renowned practitioners such as Robert Wilson and Heiner Müller, while also situating postdramatic forms not only in opposition to but also in connection to former theatrical traditions introduced by figures like Aristotle, Schechner, Schiller, Hegel and Brecht.

The Unexpected Art of Learning a Language

By Marlena Petra

Last summer, I explored the way that language acquisition builds off of the spaces that we immerse ourselves in and the work that we undertake using language.

For one rainy month, I delved into archives in Madrid, Seville, and Toledo. Amidst familiar streets, people, and food, it felt like a return home. I had missed Spain, where I had lived in 2015 with FLAS support. With more confidence in the esoteric art of paleography, I worked with the old manuscripts that had so intimidated me before. I also visited my aunt Birgit and uncle Justo, my familia madrileña, where we’d chat over tapas and tercios. However, I didn’t anticipate how archival research would influence my Spanish later that summer at the Middlebury Language School. Indeed, at Middlebury, I realized I had problems spelling certain words. I left a scribble in a margin for my professor during a quiz: “I don’t know how to spell this word anymore. I think I’ve read too many medieval books.” When I got the quiz back he’d added underneath my note: “I can tell from your grammar, but that doesn’t mean it’s wrong!” Petrified, I spent many sessions struggling to modernize what I saw as aberrations brought about by the archives.

However, while I was stern with myself about keeping to modern Spanish language norms, there were other mistakes I couldn’t avoid—ones that I had learned immersed in Spanish, spending time with family. “This mistake,” indicated my professor in the margins very often, “is very Madrid, septentrional!” He later emphasized that they were regionalisms and they weren’t wrong; they just weren’t “standard.” My Spanish mornings in the archives and afternoons with family, snacking on membrillo y manchego, transformed my language into something unique, inflected by the texts I studied and the region I lived in.

At some point, my Spanish had evolved to represent all of the things that I love and value. This intimacy between language and self rests at the very core of our work in Comparative Literature.

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External Review Reflection

by Amy Vidor

This past year, the Comparative Literature program diligently prepared for our first external review. The Graduate Organization for Comparative Literature Students (GRACLS) recognized this an opportunity to highlight the diversity and excellence of our graduate students. Marlena Cravens, Nina Cline, Kaitlin Shirley, and I conducted an internal review of our peers. We learned that Comparative Literature graduate students are affiliated with over twenty on-campus departments, programs, and centers including Middle Eastern Studies, the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies, and the Center for Women's and Gender Studies. All graduate students have taught at least one course, and over 75% have even created their own courses. Teaching language, literature, and writing courses has allowed students to develop critical job skills and build exemplary teaching portfolios. Students also hold archival and/or digital humanities positions. Finally, many of our students volunteer through educational organizations like Inside Arts, Jewish Studies, and the Center for Women's and Gender Studies. All graduate students have taught at least one course, and over 75% have even created their own courses. Teaching language, literature, and writing courses has allowed students to develop critical job skills and build exemplary teaching portfolios. Students also hold archival and/or digital humanities positions. Finally, many of our students volunteer through educational organizations like Inside Arts.

When our colleagues arrived last fall, we presented our findings. The reviewers generously welcomed our input. They very kindly marked his civilization, for—as Marlow notes—“All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.” After running the trading post somewhere in central Africa for a time, Kurtz’s behavior changes; he went from the man who wished to suppress savage customs to one who would conclude: “Exterminate all the Brutes!” Marlow traumatic narrative situated Kurtz in a complex network of colonial power relations, exposing the ideals of the civilizing mission as monstrous. In discovering this avatar of modern European power, Marlow also finds the “heart of darkness” in modern civilization. Kurtz’s famous last words—“The Horror! The Horror!”—apply to the experience of modernity and its ramifications, indicating that the idealistic mission masked the real horror of conquest and its aftermath. In this presentation, I will discuss how Conrad’s narrative form engenders a way of theorizing trauma and modern horror in Heart of Darkness.

Abstract from the 2018 Meeting of the Society for Comparative Literature and the Arts

By Thais Rutledge

Modernist “Horror” and the Civilizing Mission in Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness presents readers with Marlow’s impressionistic narrative of his journey up the Congo River some years before the frame narrative’s tale takes place. This retrospective vision helps to reinforce the sense of trauma, or something like a form of PTSD, on the part of the narrator and his subject. On his way up the river, Marlow witnesses the many atrocities committed by those who took part in the mission civilisatrice, the “civilizing mission” used to justify the invasion and colonization of Africa; more specifically, it was the mission created by King Léopold II of Belgium to “open to civilization the only part of [the] globe where Christianity has not yet gotten penetrated.” While Conrad’s novel examines imperialism and its mission, it also exposes imperialism’s negative influence upon a place, space, and an individual. In exploring this savage territory, Marlow encounters a monster, but not one native to the Congo Basin. Mr. Kurtz was the epitome of the civilized figure, a poet, scholar, businessman, and leader. His very presence marked his civilization, for—as Marlow notes—“All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.” After running the trading post somewhere in central Africa for a time, Kurtz’s behavior changes; he went from the man who wished to suppress savage customs to one who would conclude: “Exterminate all the Brutes!” Marlow traumatic narrative situated Kurtz in a complex network of colonial power relations, exposing the ideals of the civilizing mission as monstrous. In discovering this avatar of modern European power, Marlow also finds the “heart of darkness” in modern civilization. Kurtz’s famous last words—“The Horror! The Horror!”—apply to the experience of modernity and its ramifications, indicating that the idealistic mission masked the real horror of conquest and its aftermath. In this presentation, I will discuss how Conrad’s narrative form engenders a way of theorizing trauma and modern horror in Heart of Darkness.

Student News and Profiles

Incoming Graduate Students

By Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, (2018-19 Interim Graduate Adviser)

I am very pleased to introduce the incoming Comparative Literature graduate student cohort for 2019-2020. These five emerging scholars were selected from a global pool of applicants across a broad array of fields. The strength of their backgrounds and scope of their interests speaks to the rigor and breadth of the Comparative Literature Program. Special thanks go to the Comparative Literature admissions committee and the expert readers from across the program who helped select our next generation of Comparative Literature scholars. We are excited to be welcoming them to Austin in the fall.

Oscar Chaidez graduated from the University of Las Vegas with a double major in English and Psychology and a minor in French. His research interests include Latin American, U.S., and contemporary literature and culture with particular interests in graphic violence, border studies/liminality and globalization. Oscar focuses on the border in general, and that between the United States and Mexico in particular, as a place of crisis characterized by dissonance, trauma, a universal impossibility of integrity and belonging.

Having received her bachelor’s degree from Sabanci University Social and Political Sciences and studied abroad at the University of Amsterdam, Ipek Şahinler completed a master’s degree in Comparative Literature at the University of Edinburgh. An experienced teacher and translator who has worked in Turkey, Britain, Bolivia and Peru, Ipek’s scholarship emerges from Queer Hispanic Studies to seek new perspectives on the Middle East with the goal of developing queer studies in Turkey both as a methodology and as a new form of critical engagement within literary texts and other forms of cultural production.

With an undergraduate degree in History and Literature, Silvana Scott comes to the program from American University in Washington DC. Her research interests focus on queer Latinidad and Media Studies working primarily in English and Spanish. Silvana’s senior thesis focused on how a transcultural approach to a Netflix Latinx miniseries reveals the show as both a product and creator of categorical differences revealing and destabilizing them simultaneously.

Amber Taylor completed her bachelor’s degree in English Honors and French at Wayne State University. Working in Russian and Spanish in addition, Amber’s scholarly interests include African American and French Literatures with a focus on the intersection among postcolonial studies, Marxism, narratology and transatlantic studies that is characteristic of authors such as Jean Toomer, Marie NDiaye and Charles Chesnutt.

After taking her undergraduate degree in English from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Nanjun Zhou completed her master’s degree in Comparative Literature at the Free University of Berlin. Working across Chinese, English, and German, as well as Russian and Japanese, Nanjun’s research inquiry considers the reception of English and German Romanticism and Modernism in China. Following the suggestions of continental philosophy and the Frankfurt School, she focuses on the influence of authors such as John Keats, Oscar Wilde, and Rainer Maria Rilke on modern Chinese authors.

Amber Taylor

Nanjun Zhou

Oscar Chaidez

Ipek Şahinler

Silvana Scott
He also gave four invited lectures: "From Vampire to Empire: The Literary Vampire from Dracula to Dracula," at U Wisconsin-Madison, "Putin’s Trump Card: Two Presidents and Global Affairs" at The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, "Saying There’s a ‘Purdue Doctrine’ in Global Affairs?" at the Purdue University Global Affairs Center, and "The Nature of Modern Arabic Literature and Culture" in Contemporary Jewry, as well as a translation of The Seven Madmen by Roberto Arit. She was appointed to the board of the new journal Latin American Jewish Studies.

Dr. Carol Hanbery MacKay, English and Comparative Literature Professor and Core Faculty of Women’s and Gender Studies, conducted the 25th Annual 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers Symposium, the keynote address was presented by Dr. Aanika Ghosh. MacKay also delivered two other conference papers, "The Burgoeing Anti-Imperialism of Anne Besant’s Our Corner" for "Locking Outward," the keynote address given by Dr. Derek Price, on October 2, 2018, and “Re-re-membering Her Life-Story: Annie Besant Reboots Her Autobiography” for "Monuments and Memory," the Interdisciplinary 19th-Century Studies Conference in March 2019.

Dr. John Morán González, director of the Center for Mexican American Studies and Renaissance Studies, and "Reverberations of Violence, Memory, and History," a NEH-funded conference held in January 2019 at the Bullock Texas State History Museum. In addition, his co-edited book, "Revoicing the Great Wall of China," was recognized as a 2018 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title.


Dr. Geraldine Heng’s second book, The Invention of Race in the European Pacific, was awarded the European Society for Comparative Media Studies MA’s and Jeane Scaglione Prize for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures.
England and the Jews: How Race and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West  
by Geraldine Heng

For three centuries, a mixture of religion, violence, and economic conditions created a fertile matrix in Western Europe that racialized an entire diasporic population who lived in the urban centers of the Latin West: Jews. Geraldine Heng explores how religion and violence, visited on Jewish bodies and Jewish lives, coalesced to create the first racial state in the history of the West. It is an example of how the methods and conceptual frames of postcolonial and race studies, when applied to the study of religion, can be productive of scholarship that rewrites the foundational history of the past.

La futuridad del naufragio: Orígenes, estelas y derivas (“On Shipwreck as Futurity: Orígenes, Its Wakes and Drifts”)  
by César Salgado (co-edited with Juan Pablo Lupi)

This collection of critical essays surveys the legacies of the influential Orígenes circle of writers led by the Cuban visionary poet José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) and their eponymous literary journal, published in Havana from 1944 to 1956. The volume’s agenda was inspired, on one hand, by the graduate seminar “Orígenes in Context” that Salgado has taught on and off since 2005, and, on the other, by a series of events commemorating the birth centennials of key Orígenes writers (Lezama Lima in 2010, Virgilio Piñera in 2012) and the anniversaries of their publications (seventy years of Orígenes in 2014, sixty of Ciclón in 2015, fifty of Paradiso in 2016). Twelve specialists were commissioned chapters based on their presentations at these events. The first six analyze Orígenes’ national, hemispheric, and transatlantic interventions in high modernist literary politics during the journal’s years of publications. The next six follow the vicissitudes of Orígenes writers and poets and of and followers and detractors after 1959, during the Cuban Revolution. Rather than approach Orígenes as an esthetically or ideologically consistent cultural enterprise, this volume explores its multiple “shipwrecks”: the many dissents, break-ups, and re-launchings that have both dogged and nurtured the project and its legacies since its beginnings.

Weeping for Dido  
by Marjorie Curry Woods

Saint Augustine famously “wept for Dido, who killed herself by the sword,” and many medieval schoolboys were taught to respond in emotional ways to the pain of female characters in Virgil’s Aeneid and other classical texts. Marjorie Curry Woods takes readers into the medieval classroom, where boys identified with Dido, where teachers turned an unfinished classical poem into a bildungsroman about young Achilles, and where students studied and performed classical works. Woods examines teachers’ notes and marginal commentary in manuscripts of the Aeneid and two short verse narratives: the Achilleid of Statius and the Ilias latina. She focuses on interlinear glosses and shorthand, in relation to questions of agency within, but also potentially outside an African context. “Naked Agency: Genital Cursing and Biopolitics in Africa (Duke University Press, in press) by Naminata Diabate (Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Cornell University)

“This is an expansive, but nuanced, and thought provoking study of female nakedness as political intervention around Africa. Naked Agency offers a rich analysis of the many potential meanings of defiant disrobing as a signifying shorthand, in relation to questions of agency within, but also potentially outside an African context.” — Moradewun Adejunmobi, coeditor of Routledge Handbook of African Literature

Forms of Disappointment: Cuban and Angolan Narrative after the Cold War (SUNY, forthcoming)  
by Lanie Millar (Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Oregon at Eugene)

In Forms of Disappointment, Lanie Millar traces the legacies of anti-imperial solidarity in Cuban and Angolan novels and films after 1989.

Modern Indian Literature as World Literature (Bloomsbury Academic Press, forthcoming)  
by Bhavya Tiwari (Assistant Professor of Modern and Classical Languages, University of Houston)

This book shows that modern Indian literature is neither the sum total of all the literary and linguistic traditions, nor a one-on-one comparative juxtaposition of single literary texts; instead, it is a spatial and temporal raising, raising questions of politics, circulation, language, gender, genre, aesthetics, and myths in local and world literatures.

Tropical Riffs: Latin America and the Politics of Jazz  
by Jason Borge

Jason Borge traces how jazz helped forge modern identities and national imaginaries in Latin America during the mid-twentieth century. Jazz functioned as a conduit through which debates about race, sexuality, nation, technology, and modernity raged. For Latin American audiences, critics, and intellectuals the profound penetration into the fabric of everyday life of musicians like Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Charlie Parker represented the promises of modernity while posing a threat to local and national identities. Brazilian antijazz rhetorical branded jazz as a challenge to samba and emblematic of Americanization. In Argentina jazz catalyzed discussions about musical authenticity, race, and national culture. And in Cuba, the widespread popularity of Chano Pozo and Dámaso Pérez Prado challenged the United States’ monopoly on jazz. Outlining these hemispheric flows of ideas, bodies, and music, Borge elucidates how “America’s art form” was, and remains, a transnational project and a collective idea.

24 Hours of Men  
by Lisa L Moore

“The poems in Lisa L. Moore’s chapbook rename and reclaim time and race, gender and relationship. They move gracefully between public witness and intimate recollection. Moore navigates pain personal and political, writing about her son’s near-fatal car accident and police killings of citizens of color. She examines religion as both cause and cure of wounds in poems such as “Nephews” and “Maudny Thursday At the Megachurch,” which ends, after the speaker emphasizes her secular detachment, with the confession, ‘But the host burns in my hand.’ “Inauguration” establishes an orientation to feeling that is deeply rooted in place, from its opening line – ‘And so I turn the heart’s soil’ – to its last – “this broken ground my prayer,” in a way that recalls the work of Seamus Heaney and Louise Glück.” — Jason Myers, ECOTHEO REVIEW

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Sid Monas, 1924-2019

The Program in Comparative Literature mourns the loss and celebrates the life of one of its much loved and longest-serving faculty members: the Russian historian and literary critic Sidney (Sid) Monas. Monas died in Los Angeles, on March 29th of this year after a long decline. He was 94 years old.

Monas was born on Sept. 14th, 1924, the only child of David and Eva Monas, who had immigrated to New York from Ukraine to escape political turmoil. Two decades later, Monas fought in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 during WWII. He was captured by the Germans and became a prisoner of war, barely surviving starvation, disease and Allied bombings before the liberation of his POW camp by General Patton. When he returned to the US in 1945, he read with surprise and amusement his own obituary in his hometown newspaper, which had reported his death many months earlier, and delighted his family and friends, who thought that they had lost him.

Monas resumed his academic studies at Princeton University, which he had begun before the war. Although by his own account Monas was never comfortable at Princeton in those Jewish-quota days, he revered his teachers and threw himself into the study of history and of his first love, literature and poetry. Monas was also deeply influenced by his close friend and classmate William Arrowsmith and by his Princeton roommate W.S. Merwin, later honored as Poet Laureate of the United States, and who died two weeks before Monas this spring. Monas received his B.A. in Public and International Affairs from Princeton in 1948. He then went on to study at the Russian Research Center at Harvard University, where he earned his Ph.D. in History from Harvard in 1955.

Monas’ distinguished academic career began with early-career teaching at Amherst College (1955-1957). He served as Assistant Professor at Smith College (1957-1962), and as Professor of History and Comparative Literature at the University of Rochester (1962-1969). Shortly after his arrival at UT in 1969, Monas played an influential role in the expansion of the Comparative Literature program. Together with a number of distinguished scholars, he helped to create a new curriculum for the program that broke with the older Eurocentric model for comparative literary studies previously adopted at Harvard and Yale Universities. The new program at UT included classical and modern languages including Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Persian. Monas, who held a joint appointment in the History Dept. and Slavic Languages Program at UT, taught classes at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Russian intellectual history—a novel concept at the time—exploring the influence of social, historical and philosophical ideas in the public sphere, and featuring and stoking his unique ability to synthesize concepts from diverse disciplines. Monas also taught a popular Russian literature course entitled “Tolstoyevsky,” as well as courses on Marxist hermeneutics (at a time when virtually no other courses at the University of Texas offered even basic readings in Karl Marx), historiography, and an English Department class on Shakespeare and Dostoievsky.

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It leads to discussions—and sometimes arguments, which she encourages, if they are respectful—about the “goodness” of humanity, and the meaning of life.

“Russians always love to talk about the meaning of life,” Alexandrova laughs.

Outside the classroom, Alexandrova works with several local theater companies as a cultural expert. Her most important work, though, is teaching.

“I love all kinds of students—when they’re open-minded, when they’re closed-minded, when they come with preconceived notions of what Russia is,” she says. “They become citizens of the world when they study different cultures. It can prepare my students to go to Russia or Russian-speaking regions, work at a think-tank, or in American embassies. They email me later and it’s so gratifying. They can function in Russia and understand the different cultures. It can prepare my students to go to Russia or Russian-speaking regions, work at a think-tank, or in American embassies. They email me later and it’s so gratifying. They can function in Russia and understand the different cultures.

Roanne Kantor appointed to Stanford University’s English Department

Congratulations to Roanne Kantor on her recent appointment. Roanne’s primary field is Global Anglophone literature and its relationship to other literary traditions of the Global South. She also works on the conditions for interdisciplinary research in the humanities, especially literature’s interface with medicine and the humanistic social sciences. She is also a translator and the winner of the Susan Sontag Prize for Translation.
Call For Papers

On-Stage and Off-Stage:
Body, Archive, and Performance

Conference Organizers: Ayca Akgün, Caroline Kraft, Katie Field, Bianca Quintanilla

The 16th Annual
Graduate Conference in Comparative Literature
February 28-29, 2020

The Program in Comparative Literature and The Graduate Student Conference Committee are seeking proposals for the 16th Annual Conference on Comparative Literature entitled “On-Stage and Off-Stage: Body, Archive, and Performance”. The 2020 Conference seeks to bridge the gap between research on performance studies and the various practices in theatrical and non-theatrical performance. Therefore, we would like to encourage, discuss, and act upon the nuanced spaces between the following: on and off stage, the staged and the unstaged, the planned and the improvised, practice and theory, scripted and unscripted. We hope to challenge the assumed hierarchies among players, playwrights, theorists, critics, translators and audience members, and to open the floor for a conversation between the opposite sides of assumed binaries of performance and theory.

Just as our conference theme aims to break down and expand upon the boundaries between disciplines and practices, so too will the actual format of the conference. To this end, applicants are encouraged to submit proposals for panels, roundtables, or performed pieces. We invite work that engages with themes such as, but not limited to:

- performing gender and sexuality
- archive, archiving performance and performing the archive
- otherness, immigration, the subaltern, camouflage, espionage, erasure
- circum-atlantic performance
- coloniality, postcoloniality and decoloniality
- geography, space and place
- history and historiography
- corporeality in performance
- organizing and activism
- theatrical practices including but not limited to theater criticism, acting, directing, scenography, costume and lighting design
- animal studies, ecocriticism, geocriticism
- circus arts
- acts of care
- supremacy and performance of power
- surveillances, partial perspectives, visibility and invisibility, terror
- creative writing and/or slam poetry
- performing science
- performing research

The deadline for paper abstracts will be announced in late August. For additional information about the conference and for panel proposals of 3-4 speakers, please contact gracls2020@gmail.com, or the organizers: Ayca Akgün (akgun@utexas.edu), Bianca E Quintanilla (bquintanilla@utexas.edu), Caroline Kraft (ckraft@utexas.edu), and Kathleen Field (kfield@utexas.edu).

Re-cap on 15th Annual GRACLS Conference

15th Annual Conference: Beyond the Breakdown: Re-viewing Our Disciplines and Our World

by Andra Bailard and Sarah Ropp

The 15th Annual Graduate Conference in Comparative Literature took place September 28-29, 2018 on the UT campus. The theme was “Beyond the Breakdown: Re-viewing Our Disciplines and Our World,” and over 25 presenters representing 12 departments participated. Dynamic conversations occurred not only across disciplines, but also trans-institutionally and transnationally, with panelists traveling to Austin from several other universities and video-conferencing in from Iran. The conference culminated in a thoughtful, stirring keynote conversation entitled “Interdisciplinary Scholarship, Intersectional Activism” between Dr. Alison Kafer and Dr. Sami Schalk.

As organizers, we sought to infuse the conference with the spirit of “bridges, not walls” at every possible level. From a conceptual standpoint, this meant a theme based around building productive connections across and between disciplines, texts, ideas, and people— one that stressed the re’s of this difficult, important work: recursivity, reciprocity, revision, reflection. We worked together with our fabulous keynoters to conceive of a plenary that reimagined the traditional solo address as a hierarchy-breaking conversation between an advanced scholar, an as-yet untenured professor, and the junior scholars in the audience. From a concrete, logistical standpoint, it meant expanding accessibility and inclusivity measures wherever possible, attempting to attend to all present as holistic bodyminds.

For making this year’s conference such a deeply rewarding success, we are grateful to various programs, centers, and departments across campus for their generous financial support; to Dr. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, Anne Bormann, and our team of volunteers for their invaluable assistance; and to our panelists, keynote presenters, and audience members. To see photos or learn more, please visit graclsconference2018.wordpress.com.
The 2019-2020 Fulbright U.S. Student Program is currently open for applicants. The program offers grants for study and research abroad, and is available for most countries. The competition will close at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on October 9, 2018.

For six years now this endowment has funded advanced research students in our program, allowing them to undertake original archival research and to write up their research. For the seventh year of the award, the program has decided to use the available funds to supplement the studies of current students doing important work in Middle Eastern studies.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fernea Endowment and the College of Liberal Arts, we are able to supplement the studies of Hamza Iqbal, Jamila Davey, Michael Reyes Salas, and Ayçan Akçamete.

The competition will close at 5:00 p.m. on October 9, 2018.