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## Comparative criticism

15

The Communities of Europe

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# Comparative criticism

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## An annual journal

The Communities of Europe

15

Edited by

**E. S. SHAFFER**

READER IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND EUROPEAN HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA



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YITZHAK OREN is the pen name of Itshak Nadel. Nadel was born in Siberia to Russian-Jewish parents in 1917, grew up mainly in China, and moved to Palestine in 1936 to read literature, history and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Since the 1940s he has been a major figure in Hebrew literary life, with contributions to the literary press and periodicals, and translations of major Russian literary works into Hebrew, as well as his own original works. Work

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Acknowledgement is made to Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH for permission to publish translations of poems in Paul Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952) and *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955); to S. Fischer Verlag GmbH for permission to publish translations of poems in Paul Celan's *Sprachgitter* (1959) and *Die Niemandsrose* (1963); and to Suhrkamp Verlag for permission to publish translations of poems in Paul Celan's *Atemwende* (1967), *Fadensonnen* (1968) and *Zeitgehöft* (1976).

We wish to thank Editorial Losada of Argentina for permission to publish translations of poems from Pablo Neruda's *Obras Completas*.

We are grateful to Liu Sola for permission to publish translations of excerpts from her novel *Hundun jia li-ger-leng (Chaos and All That)*; to Yitzhak Oren for permission to publish the translation from the Hebrew of 'Andartat ha-Tehiya' ('A monument to a new life'), first published in Tel Aviv by *Keshet*, 15 (1962); and to Yves Bonnefoy, who has kindly granted permission to publish translations of poems from *Ce qui fut sans lumière*.

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

*Comparative Literature in Britain and Europe*

In volume 1 of this journal, published in 1979, we considered the history of the discipline of Comparative Literature in this country and its state at the time the journal was inaugurated. The picture then was one of a subject that had long existed and been represented by distinguished practitioners in this country, yet one which had only recently, since the founding of the 'new universities' in 1963 in the wake of the Robbins Report calling for university expansion and modernization, begun to take on institutional presence. Its historical existence was amply proven, and even the name itself had long been in evidence. Matthew Arnold spoke of the 'comparative literatures' in 1848, declaring that attention to them over the previous half century showed 'that England is in a certain sense far behind the continent'. The first book entitled *Comparative Literature* was published by H. M. Posnett in 1886 in 'The International Scientific Series', devoted to post-Darwinian developments in all the sciences, of which comparative literature aspired to be one, employing the 'historical method' described by J. S. Mill in his *Logic*. (For an account of the probing early work on the method of comparative literature, see my Introduction to volume 2 (1980), 'The "Scientific" Pretensions of Comparative Literature').

But the organization of comparative literature in Britain in institutional terms – the establishment of degree programmes, chairs, departments, and journals – had lagged behind Europe and North America. (See 'Comparative Literature in Britain: organization', in *Yearbook of General and Comparative Literature*, 30 (1982).) Chairs had been established in Europe from 1871, and in North America from the first decade of the twentieth century. Without these appurtenances and material proofs the subject seemed shadowy. The first appointment in this country was that of Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes as Lecturer in Comparative Literary Studies in Manchester in 1953, with the support of the distinguished medievalist and Professor of French, Eugène Vinaver. In 1963 a number of degree courses and departments had

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sprung into being in a climate of enthusiasm for a more open university system, including a wider range of subjects and fresh interdisciplinary pursuits. At Essex University, a Department of Literature was formed within a School of Comparative Studies, with Donald Davie as Professor of Literature. Sussex University and the University of East Anglia formed Schools of European Studies and English and American Studies; at East Anglia, J. W. McFarlane was appointed Professor of European Literature; at Sussex, A. K. Thorlby was appointed as the first Professor of Comparative Literature in 1967. The home 'fields' of these appointees were diverse: in the case of Hughes and Thorlby, German Romanticism; in the case of Davie, English contemporary American, and Russian, poetry; in the case of McFarlane, Norwegian and drama (he was the translator of Ibsen's plays for the Oxford Ibsen). At the time of writing the introduction to volume 1 there were three professors of Comparative Literature, one at Sussex, two at East Anglia. The only undergraduate course leading to a B.A. in Comparative Literature was offered at East Anglia, where one or two modern foreign languages were studied to Honours level in conjunction with English and comparative literature; the Universities of Essex, Sussex, Warwick (with its Department of English and Comparative Literature), and York (with its Department of English and Related Literatures) had undergraduate programmes with strong comparative elements, although with less language work.

At post-graduate level, which was often considered most appropriate for comparative work, there were M.A.s in Comparative Literature at East Anglia, Manchester, and Sussex; at Essex, there were M.A.s in Literary Translation and in the Sociology of Literature; at Warwick, a Graduate School of Comparative Literature. At Oxford there was a B.Phil. in General and Comparative Literature.

If now we raise our heads above the parapet to survey what has happened to our subject in the years since volume 1, we may do so with some trepidation. There has been a major crisis in the universities, and the years since 1981 have been siege years. Small departments or subject areas in interdisciplinary subjects have come under particular fire. The 'cuts' have caused widespread retrenchment and many 'voluntary' redundancies, as well as considerable administrative regrouping. The ratcheting down of funding has been inescapable, and continued throughout the government's U-turn in the mid-eighties from a policy of reduction in size of student intake to a sudden demand for an increase in student numbers, with still less funding. The two Research

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Assessments that have taken place on a national scale have addressed themselves to returns on research from a pre-established list of subject areas; comparative literature has never figured in the list of subjects assessed. Reporting under other heads in part reflects the fear of institutions to appear to have any but large, traditional subject groupings with professorial or (in the jargon of the eighties) 'managerial' heads. The returns of comparatists have been included in other units' returns, under the headings of the individual language departments or of European Studies. Comparative Literature in general was forced – or chose – to parade under other banners.

Given these parlous circumstances, we may be surprised less by what has been lost than by how much remains, and how much has been added.

At the undergraduate level, most of the comparative literature courses just named remain. At East Anglia, despite administrative reshuffles and redeployments, and the loss of one of the chairs, the degree programme is still intact, and has been joined by a joint degree in Comparative Literature and Philosophy (reflecting the strength of literature and philosophy combinations in several institutions), and in Literature and Art History, which shares its first-semester course with Comparative Literature. At Essex, an undergraduate Minor in Translation is now offered. At Glasgow, a first-year course has been devised that is largely comparative in nature, including classics in translation and an interesting selection of non-canonical texts.

At the post-graduate level, the M.A. in Comparative Literature at UEA, founded in 1974, remains (joined from 1993 by an M.A. in Translation Studies, and both strengthened by the presence of the British Centre for Translation Studies); at Essex the M.A. in Literature Translation remains and the M.A. in Sociology of Literature is now the M.A. in Cross-Cultural Studies); and at Warwick, the Graduate School of Comparative Literature has become the Graduate School of Comparative Literature and British Cultural Studies, with a professorial head, Susan Bassnett. There have been considerable alterations, some through 'natural wastage' (as the unhappy phrase has it), some through political interventions: the M.A. at Manchester and that at Sussex have been discontinued, the latter through the retirement of A. K. Thorlby. At Manchester the Department of Comparative Literary Studies was disestablished in 1988, and members of it moved into the French Department. Given the pioneering role of the University of Manchester in the establishment of comparative literary studies in Britain, the loss



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of the Department of Comparative Literature Studies and most of its undergraduate offerings, as well as of the M.A., is especially saddening; but one active member remains, Penny Brown, with strong interests in Spanish and women's studies, although now administratively under the aegis of French Department. Two new M.A. programmes have been established, in contemporary poetry and in fiction, with a stress on creative writing; some teaching in the European novel remains. At Oxford, the B.Phil. in General and Comparative Literature disappeared when all B.Phil. degrees were abolished in favour of the more familiar M.Phil.; there is now an M.Phil. in European Literature.

If some have been lost, new and enterprising post-graduate degrees have been founded: the M.Sc. in Comparative Literature at Edinburgh in 1982, based on the excellent range of modern languages (strengthened by a new Scandinavian Department, after the closure of several Scandinavian Departments in other parts of the country); and the further development of Comparative Literature at Kent at post-graduate level with strong links to communications and image studies. (See the account by Bernard Sharratt in *Comparative Criticism* 11, 'Communications and image studies: notes after Raymond Williams'.) At Queen Mary and Westfield College in London an M.A. in European Studies was set up; Malcolm Bowie, Professor of French, set up the Institute of Romance Studies in parallel with the long-established Institute of Germanic Studies, but with a programme more adventurously comparative and interdisciplinary than its name indicates. Bowie moved to Oxford as Marshal Foch Professor of French in 1992, but the M.A. and the Institute continue.

In surveying this scene after fifteen years, thirteen of them under severe financial and political pressure, we can take some satisfaction in the fact that despite losses that we feel keenly, on balance comparative literary studies are alive and well in Britain, and even in some respects strengthened. The crisis led to a good deal of drawing in of horns, but also to innovation under pressure, and to the adoption, sometimes in rapid succession, of new courses and practices that may have taken much longer to be tested and to establish themselves in normal times.

Interdisciplinary courses in the visual arts, film, and media studies have become more common. Cultural studies have been an area of growth. In the United States, where much emphasis has been placed on 'political correctness', cultural studies have often acted to curtail or call into question traditional comparative literary studies, which are sometimes regarded as dominated by a 'canon' of 'great names' largely

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white, European, and male; in Britain cultural studies have for the most part proved an ally and a means of survival. This may be because awareness and conscious study of ethnic and other minority cultures was long overdue. There can be little doubt either that the growing awareness of the European Community in this country has improved the position of a wide range of courses related to area studies and to broader cultural and social programmes, including languages, in many combinations.

The very recent abolition of the binary system in higher education, that is, the divide between universities on the one hand and polytechnics and colleges of higher and further education on the other, and the wholesale promotion of polytechnics to university status, cannot yet be assessed in its effect on comparative literature. There will clearly be a great deal of activity, some of it certainly in the subject areas we have named that are congenial to polytechnics but that have shown themselves generally popular options in the universities in recent years. There are some signs that comparative literature will be seen as one way forward in these new universities, as it was in the new universities of the 1960s.

One heading under which comparative literature is flourishing is that of 'Eng. Lit.' understood in a vastly expanded way. English is now a 'World Language', and knows no bounds. Comparatists must always welcome their subject being taken up by others who earlier resisted it, even while then having to struggle to maintain it as an institutional division known as 'Comparative Literature'. The more generally acceptable its aims, methods and perspectives become, the more unwilling others are to acknowledge it as a separate discipline. Comparatists are accustomed to this process, and view it with some irony. But it is a familiar phenomenon in intellectual and institutional history and an important mode of survival, indeed of expansion.

If we have survived these years, there is no cause for complacency. The position of the university sector has worsened in crucial ways: in funding and salaries, in the independence of research, and in all the processes, now much curtailed, that used to be known as academic freedom. (See my introduction to volume 11 (1989), 'The Future of the Disciplines', and Wolf Lepenies' essay in that volume, with its keen insights into the intense difficulties of maintaining 'academic freedom' in universities subject to political and economic control.) Yet the events of this period may have the salutary effect of reminding us that our belief that we possessed and enjoyed academic freedom was in many ways an illusion, and that like all freedoms it is an ideal that requires constant

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struggle to assert and defend. Within this situation it is not only for 'comparative literature' that we are concerned but the humanities as a whole, whose position has slipped so far below that of the sciences. Nor is it enough to defend the humanities as against the sciences. The sciences themselves have been cut to the bone, threatening Britain's international role in scientific research, and eroding the industrial base. Any report at this juncture on any one subject or discipline is merely an 'interim report', and all of them are in need of our constant support.

During this difficult period in Britain the British Comparative Literature Association, founded in 1975 at the first Conference on Comparative Literature to be held in Britain, at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, has maintained the discipline as best it could, through a series of congresses and workshops, translation competitions, and publications. *Comparative Criticism* has attempted create and maintain an international profile for the subject as practised in Britain. A second journal and newsletter, *New Comparison*, has attempted to give houseroom to members.

Since Britain joined the International Comparative Literature Association in 1977, the ICLA has continued to add to the number of national associations and individual members affiliated to it. New national associations have set up their own journals; we have noted the associations and journals in Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, and in Chinese-speaking areas. Reviews of successive volumes of the *Comparative History of European Literature*, including Stephen Bann's review of the volumes on *The Avant-garde* (in our volume 7), and Gary Handwerk's of *Romantic Irony* (in the present volume). The ICLA Committee on Literary Theory has been particularly active since its founding in 1986, holding annual colloquia since 1988. These activities represent international cooperation, often fraught with difficulties and real disagreements about the nature and methods of literary history, which continued to permit representation of the countries of Eastern Europe through the Cold War period that ended in 1989.

Our contributors in this volume remind us further that 'the communities of Europe' which must make up the 'European Community' are constantly regrouping and redefining themselves, often in extreme conditions of war, exploration, exile and emigration, and in less extreme forms of dissension and disunity. Henry Gifford (one of the *doyens* of our subject in this country, and the author of *Comparative Literature*, which addressed itself crucially to the nature of modernist poetry) writes on the rôle of writers in culture. J. M. Ritchie describes

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the effects on twentieth-century European writers of displacement from their communities and alienation from their languages. Susan Bassnett considers the shifting boundaries of Europe, the fables that still lurk at its fringes – ‘here be monsters’ – even in the educated imagination. The interaction of European culture with the non-European is explored in Armin Paul Frank’s depiction of dialogue between Europe and North America. Malcolm Bowie takes us deeper into the problems of the relations between the disciplines, in this case, psychoanalysis and the visual arts, suggesting some new possibilities, and Harold Fisch takes us into the complexities of interpretation itself as a mode of community. Hazard Adams, the distinguished American critic, remembers the impact of Northrop Frye, a member of the Board of this journal whose death we mourn, on his own and subsequent generations of humanists. Douwe Fokkema scrutinizes recent discussions of the ‘canon’. Educational systems and particular disciplines within them – and their journals – can be no exception to, indeed should present a central model for, the need to rethink and reform, to carry out continuing internal reviews, not merely to respond to external pressures.

Part II, ‘Literature, Translation, and Performance’, is in this volume given over to the winning entries in the British Comparative Literature Translation competition of 1991, which was divided into several sections. For this year, in honour of the European Community, prizes were offered for translations from any languages used in the Community. Specialist readers and judges selected the fine contribution by John Felstiner, his translations from the Spanish of Pablo Neruda – a Latin American poet, but writing in Spanish, a language of the EC; all manuscripts were anonymous, so we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the winner of the first prize was a translator already well known for his work. Second prize went to Lisa Sapinkopf for her versions of Yves Bonnefoy, certainly one of the finest poets (and translators from the English) in the European Community. A number of further commendations were made; and several of these contributions will appear in later volumes. In the entries for the Special Prizes, there were a gratifying number of outstanding translations. In Chinese, Richard King’s powerful and resourceful rendering of Liu Sola’s politically and linguistically challenging novel *Chaos and all that* about the harrowing recruitment of children during the Cultural Revolution won the first prize, with Jonathan Pease’s rendering of a classic Chinese poetic text by Wang Ling as second prize. In the category of Hebrew, Yiddish, or writing in any language on a Jewish theme, the range was

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startlingly wide, from the Hebrew classics to the modern Hebrew of the first prize-winner, Marzell Kay, the translator of the well-known Israeli writer Yitzhak Oren, and the great German-Jewish poet Paul Celan, writing in German, translated by John Felstiner, who won second prize in this category. No prizes were awarded this year in the categories of Swedish or of Persian.

We are grateful to the generous donors of the Special Prizes: the K. P. Tin Foundation, Hong Kong; the Spiro Institute, London, who have established this prize in honour of Hannah and Jacob Lieberman; the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation and the Swedish Embassy, London; and the Foundation for Iranian Studies.

The results of the 1992 Translation Competition will be published in volume 16. The next Translation Competition, for which the deadline for entries is 15 December 1993, will again be an open competition, not confined to EC languages. The following Special Prizes will also be available: for translation from the Swedish; from the Persian; and from Hebrew, Yiddish, or from any language on a Jewish theme. The prizes in each case will be £350 for first prize, £150 for second prize, and will carry with them as before publication in *Comparative Criticism*. Commended entries may be published. Prize-winners and other entrants may qualify for bursaries at the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia to support specific translation projects.

Inquiries and requests for entry forms for the next BCLA Translation Competition (*deadline* 15 December 1993: please note change of deadline) should be directed to Dr Nicholas Crowe, St John's College, Oxford University, Oxford OX1 3JP. The judges of the competition are: Edwin Morgan, the well-known Scottish poet; Daniel Weissbort, poet, translator, and editor of *Poetry in Translation*; Arthur Terry, translator from the Catalan, and formerly director of the M.A. in Literary Translation at the University of Essex; Peter France, Professor of French at Edinburgh University, and noted translator from French, Russian, and Chuvash; and Elinor Shaffer, *ex officio* as editor of *Comparative Criticism*.

The BCLA was host to the International Comparative Literature Association Literary Theory Colloquium, on the topic of 'The Third Culture: Literature and Science', held at the Institute of Romance Studies at London University 13–17 April 1993; this was the sixth annual Literary Theory Colloquium, and will be published by DeGruyter as a volume in the series 'European Culture'.

The BCLA held a conference at the University of Essex on 2–3 July

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1993 on 'Word in Time': on Poetry, Narrative, Translation, in honour of Arthur Terry, retiring president of the Association and Professor in the Department of Literature, specializing in Hispanic literature.

The next triennial Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association will be held at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in August 1994.

There is a call for papers for a Special Issue on 'Postcolonial Literatures' of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, eds. Steven Tötösy and Sneja Gunew, the Research Institute for Comparative Literature, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2E6.

Submissions of articles, translations, and original writing in English for volumes 17, 18 and 19 are welcome. The theme of volume 16 will be 'Revolutions and censorship'; we shall be concerned with writing affected by censorship whether official or accidental, and with responses to it such as self-censorship and conversion, whether forced or voluntary, imprisonment and displacement by exile or death. Joyce's famous phrase enjoining 'silence, cunning and exile' on the writer who would be the conscience of his race has had to be the watchword of many writers in our times. This theme has been broached in earlier volumes, for example, in Lesley Milne's examination of the censored and uncensored versions of Bulgakov in volume 14, and in this volume in Malcolm V. Jones's review of the gradual reconstruction of Mikhail Bakhtin's work from the effective obscurity of his inner exile in Russia; but it proved too large and challenging to contain merely as an aspect of 'The Communities of Europe'. J. D. Adler, Professor of German at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, will be collaborating editor.

The theme of volume 18 will be 'Walter Pater and the culture of the *fin-de-siècle*'; we are glad to welcome back as collaborating editor Stephen Bann, Professor of Cultural History at the University of Kent, who collaborated on previous volumes, 3 and 11. This volume marks a new departure, as we have not hitherto included the name of any individual in our title; but it seems highly appropriate, as we approach the millennium, to engage with the figure who perhaps more than any other embodies the notion of the English *fin-de-siècle* of the last century. A conference will be held round this topic at Kent in July 1994.

Volume 19 will be on the topic of 'Literary devolution: writing now in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England'. It will be in conjunction with the Triennial Congress of the British Comparative Literature

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Association, to be held in Edinburgh in July 1995, which will make an occasion for regional voices to be heard. For this volume we would welcome original writing in any language or dialect now or ever in use in Great Britain. Current translations from past or present writing are also welcome. We hope to have an extensive selection of current writing, as well as essays dealing with the historical and contemporary significance of 'devolution' in the arts.

Guidelines for contributors are available on request, containing information on house style, illustrations, permissions, and copyright. The annual deadline for submission of manuscripts (two copies) is 1 March of the year preceding publication. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, *Comparative Criticism*, Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU.

E. S. Shaffer