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978-0-521-79072-7 - Comparative Criticism an Annual Journal: East and West:

Comparative Perspectives: 22

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## Comparative criticism

22

East and West: comparative perspectives

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## An annual journal

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Edited by  
E. S. SHAFFER

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY,  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521790727](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521790727)

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First published 2000

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-79072-7 Hardback

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## Acknowledgements

‘*Stabat mater*: reflections on a theme in German-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab poetry’ reproduces the text and translation of the poem ‘Give Birth to Me Again That I May Know’, from the volume *Victims of a Map – a Bilingual Anthology of Arabic Poetry* by Abdullah al-Udhari, by courtesy of Al-Saqi Books. Michael Hamburger’s translation of Paul Celan’s ‘Eспенbaum/Aspen Tree’, in the same article, appears by courtesy of Anvil Press Poetry Ltd.

Any permissions relating to Manohar Shyam Joshi’s *The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules*, Federico García Lorca’s ‘Divan of Tamarit’, Alejandra Pizarnik’s *Diana’s Tree* and Frank Martinus Arion’s ‘Autumn Reverie’ have been obtained by their respective translators.

The illustrations of Japanese court figures accompanying ‘Performance literature: the traditional Japanese theatre as model’ appear by courtesy of the British Museum. We should like to thank Ian Hamilton Finlay for granting permission to reproduce one in his series of *Heroic Emblems*, in ‘Afloat on the sea of stories: world tales, English literature and geopolitical aesthetics’. Thanks are due to the artist Gopi Gaswani and Living Media India Ltd for the illustration accompanying the translation of *The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules*.

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978-0-521-79072-7 - Comparative Criticism an Annual Journal: East and West:

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Performance traditions in the Japanese theatre. Arashi Kitsusaburō as Sakuramaru, by Gigadō Ashiyuki, 1822.

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*Comparative Criticism* 22, pp. xv–xxviii. Printed in the United Kingdom

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### *East and West—the twain shall meet : comparative literature crossing the waters*

It is hardly new that comparative literature is and should be concerned with non-European phenomena. It is concerned with them not only by definition but also by its historical evolution, whether that history is seen as starting in the Roman cultivation of Greek styles, in the polyglot cultures of Hellenistic Alexandria, in the long years of Christian reinterpretation of pagan inheritance, in the development of European vernaculars, in the rediscovery of the ancients, or in the foundations of the modern discipline in the eighteenth-century notions of 'world literature'. Its use by a variety of national cultures to accommodate, annex or absorb *Kulturgut* from outside has been characteristic of aspiring nations in the nineteenth century; its deployment by ex-colonial regions to find house room for languages and cultures first imposed from without is characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century. Recent attempts in some quarters to represent the study of comparative literature as dominated by 'dead white European males' with no concerns beyond their own already established hegemonies is a ludicrous misrepresentation of the rich history of the subject. This contention must be seen as part of the internecine academic struggles between comparative literature and cultural studies, mainly in the United States; in Britain, the advent of cultural studies has on the whole strengthened comparative literature, extending its range and strengthening the claims of interdisciplinarity. Commonwealth studies (a potentially uncomfortable title) too can be readily sheltered under this umbrella. The 'dead white European males' were themselves keen to look beyond Europe. To cite only one well-known example: Herder looked for new models and new inspiration for a German literature in the eighteenth century not only to the Greek and Latin classics and to other European literatures (notably English), but also to Oriental languages and literatures. Leading modern comparatists too have often followed the course of starting from their own and



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another literature, gradually extending their knowledge into non-European languages and cultures. For example, as Gregory Blue pointed out in volume 12 in his essay review, 'The Presence of China in Europe' of René Etiemble's *L'Europe chinoise* (2 vols.), Etiemble, one of the 'grand old men' of comparative literature, who held the chair at the Sorbonne, had interests ranging 'from China to Peru', and indeed to Japan. As director of the series 'Connaissance de l'Orient' (Gallimard) he introduced the Francophone reading public, by way of translations, to many of the classics of Asia and North Africa. In the same way, comparatists across the world set off from their own classical traditions and local languages to acquire others which may now be of compelling interest for the development of a modern literary and cultural movement. The study of comparative literature is perhaps above all a mode of constructing, enlarging and enriching a literary culture.

*Comparative Criticism* has by the same token been concerned with non-European phenomena since its inception in 1979. It nevertheless seems especially appropriate in the year 2000 to reaffirm and redefine those concerns. Indeed, they cannot be too often stated or too often exemplified. Extending range, straightforward as it sounds, can suddenly give rise to unforeseen theoretical and practical challenges. We are extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies of the University of London, who sponsored a workshop in June 1998 to discuss the problems that arose in teaching a Comparative Literature MA with strong non-European content, as Javed Majeed relates in his introductory account. From our opening Editorial Introduction in volume 1, 'Comparative literature in Britain', to our reassessment of the subject in volume 15, 'The Communities of Europe', we have attempted to trace and document the history of the discipline in this country, often neglected in international annals. With Joseph Th. Leerssen's *Bibliography of Comparative Literary Studies in Britain and Ireland 1950–1974*, published in five-year sections ending in volume 15, bringing his Bibliography 1800–1950 (included in his Aachen thesis) up to the first year (1975) covered by the annual Bibliography in *Comparative Criticism*, we demonstrated the long presence of the subject, well before its institutional history of university departments, chairs and degree courses began in the 1950s. To that history, both of the subject and of the institution, the SOAS MA adds significantly.

Amartya Sen, who received the Nobel Prize for his thoughtful and probing contributions to the economics of development, in a fine article,



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'East and West: The Reach of Reason' (*New York Review of Books*, July 2000) reminds us of how even a classic Western claim to reason as a prime value may be shifted by historical information not normally in Westerners' ken. He refers to Akbar's 'millennial' rethinking at the time the Islamic Hijri calendar came to an end in 1591–2 (a thousand lunar years after Mohammed's journey from Mecca to Medina in AD 622). Akbar, the enlightened Mughal emperor of India, noting the religious diversity of Indians, saw the need for peaceful coexistence and prepared the foundations of the secularism and neutrality of the state. Akbar's thesis was that 'in making moral judgements, we must not make reasoning subordinate to religious command, or rely on "the marshy land of tradition".' (Sen in turn draws on Irfan Habib, ed., *Akbar and His India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).) It is all the more worth returning to this rich source at a time when in the West, despite its continuing tendency to assert its superiority to the East on the traditional ground of rationality, the aspirations of the European Enlightenment are called in question and Nietzsche's scepticism is in the ascendancy. Sen underlines the need to support both Eastern and Western defences of reason, rather than contrast the two cultures, or abandon hope of rational action in the face of the distressing events of the twentieth century.

The current doubts about rationality in the West may also work for a new openness to other cultures and a salutary suspicion of simplistic contrasts. The contrast of cultures has been stressed again by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in his review of Marshall Sahlins, *How 'Natives' Think, About Captain Cook, for Example* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), and Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton University Press, 1992). In the Editor's Introduction, 'Discontent and the Myths of Civilization', to volume 8 we noted Sahlins's 'Captain James Cook; or, the Dying God', his Frazer Lecture given at the University of Liverpool in 1982 and published in revised form in *Islands of History* (Chicago, 1985). Since then Obeyesekere has attacked Sahlins's attempt to reconstruct the Polynesian culture that could both accommodate and then kill the visiting 'god' if he appeared out of season, and Geertz takes up the attack, claiming that Sahlins is 'a thoroughgoing advocate of the view that there are distinct cultures, each with a "total cultural system of human action", and they are to be understood along structuralist lines' (Geertz, 'Culture War', *New York Review of Books*, 30 Nov. 1995). Yet this is to overlook that Sahlins was undertaking an imaginative

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reconstruction of the culture of the Hawaiians, which ironized the view of 'natives' as credulously embracing the Western ship's captain as a god. Perhaps it was modern anthropological myth-making; but it moved in the direction of crediting the killers of Cook with a fully reasonable political system in which Cook was allowed to play a limited role.

Volume 8 of this journal was on 'National Myth and Literary Culture', and it opened with a quotation from Fernand Braudel: '...every historian worthy of the name has long ceased to believe in the usual framework of national histories', a programmatic declaration made as long ago as 1959 opening the way for his study of the civilization of the Mediterranean ('Discontent and the Myths of Civilization': Editor's Introduction, *Comparative Criticism* 8). That volume opened with Martin Bernal's article, 'Black Athena denied: the tyranny of Germany over Greece and the rejection of the Afroasiatic roots of Europe: 1780–1980', which preceded the publication of his controversial book *Black Athena*, and remains the best and clearest statement of his thesis. While the book doubtless overstates its case, it has nevertheless pointed out the way academic disciplines (in this case nineteenth-century classical studies across Europe, not least in Germany and Britain) may be unconsciously complicit in deeply questionable racial assumptions. According to Bernal, it was the best of classical scholarship, not the fringe, that produced theses about the conquest of Greece from the North, the conquest by the reason-bearers. His argument opened a wide seam of legitimate inquiry which continues (amid the noise of controversy) to this moment. That volume also included Mahmoud Manzalaoui's fine article contrasting Greek notions of tragic genre to those of Arabic, which broadened and refined our sense of the potentialities for tragedy. That volume represented a continuing concern with the comparatist topic and method known as 'imagology', that is the study of the image that one nation, people or group has formed of another, even as it altered under the shifting conceptions of national identity.

We have also been particularly concerned with what has become known as 'Orientalism', through the work of Edward Said, and we published D. W. Fokkema's thorough and penetrating review of Said's influential work and his subsequent revisions of his views in volume 18. As Trevor Lloyd points out in his review of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. v *Historiography*, in the present volume, it is a striking fact that Said's *Orientalism* is the most often quoted title in a work of serious historical scholarship by many hands. We have

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published bicentenary reappraisals and unpublished letters of Sir William Jones, professor of Poetry at Oxford and then judge in Bengal, who partially escaped Said's attack because he predated the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt that Said designated as the beginning point of 'Orientalism'. Jones was undeniably a major figure in the appreciation, translation and interpretation of Oriental texts and antiquities (Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit, but also Chinese), as Garland Cannon, editor of Jones's letters (some of whose unpublished letters we published in volume 3), pointed out. An essay by John Drew (in volume 8), whose book *India and the Romantic Imagination* was published by Oxford University Press India (1986), analysed an early example of the 'idealization' of India – the value placed on Indian spirituality at the expense of Indian reason that worries Amartya Sen. Volume 20 carried a substantial essay review by Nigel Leask of Partha Mitter's *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1992* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), a fit sequel to his ground-breaking *Much Maligned Monsters* (Oxford University Press, 1997), a study of Western (mis)readings of Indian art. Volume 9 on 'Cultural Perceptions and Literary Values' opened with Mitter's 'Can we ever understand alien cultures?', which draws on his own experience in pursuing both Western views of Indian art and Indian responses to Western art.

In our next volume we shall review the work of Franz Baermann Steiner, one of the first in the context of the academic discipline of British anthropology to discern the 'Orientalism' that Said has made more familiar. Steiner was a German-speaking Czech Jewish student who found himself in Oxford at the opening of the war, and stayed to become a Lecturer in Anthropology, and author of the influential book *Taboo*; his writings on Orientalism have now been edited by Jeremy Adler and Richard Fardon under the title *Orientpolitik, Value, and Civilisation* (Berghahn Books, 1999). In volume 16 we published some translations of his poetry, only now being belatedly recognized in the countries of his origin and his adoption, and a Special Bibliography of his writings including his anthropological work.

One of our major concerns has been with 'oral' versus 'written' culture around the world, and we have had material by leading comparative oral literature specialists such as Jeff Opland and Ruth Higgins on African oral epic, and John Miles Foley on Anglo-Saxon charms in the context of contemporary Yugoslav oral epic (in volume 2). Returning to the nub of the matter, we have given space to views of Homer as employing the essentially oral epic style of Asia Minor. The

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view, first formulated by F. A. Wolf at the end of the eighteenth century, that 'Homer' was a collective name given to oral folk lays that were performed in various versions by bards for centuries before being edited into a text in the sixth century BCE has been a powerful influence on Harvard classicist Milman Parry in the twentieth century and subsequent readings of 'formulaic expressions' in the language of the poem. This argument brought the fundamental form of canonical Western literature, Homer's epic, into touch with societies that may have been objects of inquiry by anthropologists. The difference between what we consider 'literature' on the one hand and tribal or cultural practices on the other is dramatically lessened. Explicitly anthropological commentators have been drawn upon to make this point, in particular the ground-breaking Victor Turner (in volume 9), whose studies of African rites of passage and social rituals of trial, judgement and punishment carried over into his theatrical work in which the insights of his fieldwork were transformed into dramatic enactments of human experience. Gordon Brotherston treated Inca ideology and the Spanish 'Golden Age', and gave an account of an exhibition on 'Painted Screenfolds of Mesoamerica', which together in volume 8 presented a fascinating attempt to reconstruct the largely lost culture of the Indians of South and Central America. Visual artefacts serve to resurrect the complex oral literature ploughed under by conquest.

Peter Caracciolo, opening the present volume, links the oral tale with a work of literature that fully entered the European canon in the eighteenth century with its French translation – the Arabian Nights, and he outlines with his customary zest and insight some of its later peregrinations in unexpected places.

Christopher Shackle's fine article in the present volume, an object lesson in comparative questioning of Western assumptions about the 'canon', carries on this central theme. In taking as canonical the sacred text of the Quran (Koran) for all Islamic countries, and the great tradition of Persian poetry as it still influences the language, the forms, and the effects of poetry in modern Urdu, Punjabi, and Siraiki, he reads three modern classics, a *ghazal* by the Urdu poet Ghalib, the Punjabi poet Sayyid Varis Shah's long narrative poem *Hir*, and the Siraiki poet Farid's *dīvān* (collection of lyrics), as they are now construed in a national struggle within the Indian sub-continent.

Western claims to reason have appeared especially strong in the scientific context. Han-Liang Chang gives an account of the role of some foreign thought, including that of the American pragmatist philosopher

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John Dewey, in the thinking of the revolutionary leader Hu Shih on 'scientific method' in the May 4th era in early modern China (1919–23). Ming-Bao Yue gives an account of the way these controversies affected the emergent movement of women writers. 'Translation' of 'liberating' Western ideas and texts could in some unexpected ways end by reaffirming either traditional Western positions or conventional Chinese ones. Such paradoxical results will have a familiar ring to feminists everywhere.

Opening volume 13 (1991) ('Literature and Science'), Joseph Needham (with Kenneth Robinson) presented his long meditated discussion of the capacity of the Chinese language to become a language of science, a reflection of his lifelong struggle to gain recognition for Chinese scientific achievements. He lays the ghost of the long-held Western view that China not only did not, but could not have developed a scientific and technological culture because of the nature of its language. This essay has still to be published in full in the final posthumous volume 7 of his monumental *Science and Civilisation in China*. In the meantime some of his colleagues have published *China and Historical Capitalism*, edited by Gregory Blue and Timothy Brook (Cambridge University Press, 1999). Our next volume will contain a review of this book, together with volume 7 of *Science and Civilisation* (providing it is out as scheduled at the end of the year). *China and Historical Capitalism* contains, among other themes of concern to Needham, a thorough-going survey by Emmanuel Wallerstein of all the research and debates on the claims of Western capitalism and the Baconian–Newtonian model in science to be entirely new and different and superior to all others. It is still this claim to a unique scientific civilization that stands in the way of Amartya Sen's recommendations to consider the forms of reason from East as well as West.

One of the major concerns of comparative literature, and of this journal, is translation. Translation has always been both an art form and an indispensable practical tool for making literature in a large number of languages available. In recent times translation has moved towards a larger role. In *Comparative Criticism* 6 (1984), on 'Translation in Theory and Practice', the Editor's Introduction 'Translation as Metamorphosis and Cultural Transmission' traced this shift towards the development of translation as a form of explication and towards a more varied 'cultural' employment of the term. Most importantly for comparative literature, its elaboration as a mode of explication replaced the function of various kinds of close reading which were being called

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in question – practical criticism, American ‘new criticism’, *explication de textes*, and *textimmanente Kritizismus*. In part, it may be seen as the move towards theorization of praxis that came for a time to seem compulsory. But the development of hermeneutic theory in the direction of ‘application’, which permitted the resuscitation of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics and translation theory (carried out by such critics as the group publishing under the title ‘Poetik und Hermeneutik’ and made familiar in English by George Steiner’s *After Babel*), was one of the more successful ventures of this kind. More recently, a book by Susan Bassnett paradoxically entitled *Comparative Literature* (1995) has made sweeping claims that comparative literature has been ‘replaced’ by translation studies; any such claim is unfounded and finally self-defeating for that very range from the specific art of verbal equivalences to critical analysis of nodal works and thence to wider cultural comparison that it has always been the business of comparative literature to facilitate and ensure. In the context of East-West comparative studies, there can be no doubt that the development of translation as explication opens the way to more flexible interchanges.

The British Comparative Literature Association Translation Competition, more recently co-sponsored by the British Centre for Literary Translation, has brought a considerable number of non-European works into print, both directly through its own prizes, which carry with them publication in *Comparative Criticism*, and through the encouragement those prizes have given to other publishers. We have also published considerable translation outside the competitions. In volume 8 *Comparative Criticism* published the modern Persian poet Sohrab Sepehri (1928–80), translated by Martin Turner and Abbas Faiz (First Prize-winners). The woman poet Farugh Farrokhzad, born in Tehran in 1935 – sometimes said to be ‘the most important woman poet in the thousand-year history of Persian literature’ – whose moving poem ‘Rebirth’ we published in volume 9, translated by Martin and Farah Turner, spoke of her mother/nation. Stefan Sperl’s essay, which deserves to stand as a classic essay in comparative literature, uses the ‘universal’ theme of the mother, and the analogy of ‘mother’ to ‘nation’, to compare convincingly poetry of the first order springing from quite different linguistic and ethnic origins, the German Jewish poets Else Lasker-Schüler and Nelly Sachs, and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Sperl’s essay is an act of reconciliation between currently opposed political entities. *Comparative Criticism* published Darwish’s fine poems in volume 18. In the case of Farrokhzad, her



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identification as a woman with the mother/nation that rejected her as a modernist and a feminist took a tragic form.

Other Middle-Eastern works have been presented in translation, both from Israel and from Arab countries. Special Prizes have been supported by the Spiro Institute, London, and the Iranian Institute. As Sperl has shown in his reconciling essay, people in conflict with one another have many themes in common; but as an Israeli prize-winning story (by 'Corinna' in volume 18) showed, recognition and mutual understanding of that sharing do not ensure peace.

We have also had outstanding Chinese entries, a Special Prize for Chinese having been supported from Hong Kong; we published in volume 15 a chapter from Liu Sola's modern novel of the Cultural Revolution, *Chaos and All That*, translated by Richard King (First Prize-winner), together with a translation by Jonathan Pease of a Chinese classic, Wang Ling's 'I Dreamed of Locusts'.

We have a particularly rich and varied harvest of translations in the present volume. Two winners of the annual Translation Competition sponsored by the British Comparative Literature Association/British Centre for Literary Translation Competition of 1998 are included as especially appropriate to the theme of this volume – the Hindi story, by Manohar Shyam Joshi, and the 'Divan of Tamarit', by Federico García Lorca, in which a major Spanish poet of the twentieth century uses the classic Arabic form of the *qāṣida*, imported into Spain in early medieval times. These two translations won Third (Equal) Prize in the 1998 Competition. This new translation of Lorca's beautiful poem, by Catherine Jonet, still a graduate student, is worthy to take its place among the many attempts at the impossible. The Hindi author, who as the translator and Hindi scholar Robert Hueckstedt points out in his Introduction, is long established, much cherished, and very successful in several media in his own country, shows himself here to be master of a milieu, skilfully combining comedy and controlled pathos. The extension of Rupert Snell's searching historical and stylistic account of the difficulties of translating Hindi poetry by Hueckstedt's illuminating account of prose writing in Hindi provides an introduction to a major literature. As Hueckstedt has shown elsewhere, while Indian writers using the English language have received considerable circulation and appreciation in the West, even such major writers with Indian roots as Salman Rushdie are often not familiar with the range of writing in Indian languages.

We are also delighted to publish this year's prize-winners, Celia de

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Fréine, whose poems in the Gaelic add to the current richness and power of writing in Gaelic, represented in volume 19, 'Literary Devolution: Writing Today in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England' by Nuala ní Dhomnaill, as well as by several poets writing in Scottish Gaelic. Whereas Nuala ní Dhomnaill is translated by her fellow Irish poets who write in English, Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, and Medb McGuckian, Celia de Fréine translates her own work. Her group of poems 'Of Cabbages and Queens', which won First (Equal) Prize in the 1999 Competition, is introduced by Bernard O'Donoghue, another distinguished Irish poet who writes in English. The problem of the maintenance of small languages, often with great literary traditions, so many of which are threatened with extinction, is a world-wide one, as urgent in the British Isles as in India.

We are also pleased to present Alejandra Pizarnik's *Diana's Tree*, with a Prologue by the major Mexican poet, Octavio Paz. Both have been translated from the Spanish by Cecilia Rossi, winner of the First (Equal) Prize in the 1999 Competition. These graceful short lyrics with their unexpected perceptions have a wide resonance beyond their native Latin America.

Finally, the newly established Special Prize for Translation from Dutch goes to several colleagues in the Dutch Department of University College London for their translation of Frank Martinus Arion's 'Autumn Reverie', which appropriately for this volume depicts the viewpoint of an arrival in the Netherlands from Dutch Guiana.

Our essay reviews take up the theme of East and West. As Samuel Johnson said, 'the Europeans have scarcely visited any coast but to gratify avarice and extend corruption: to arrogate dominion without right and practice cruelty without incentive.' Trevor Lloyd, reviewing the fifth and final volume of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, remarks drily that the worthy contributors, while abandoning the claims of the earlier *Cambridge History* (concluded in 1959) to the superior wisdom and lenity of the British Empire, seem to have forgotten how much the British have in common with other European countries in respect of this unanimity of exploitation, to the extent that the British Empire is treated without reference to the other European countries with whom they struggled for preeminence around the globe. They appear still to consider themselves, for good or ill, the only Empire-builders, rather than reconstructing the history and economics of European expansion in which they played an important but not entirely unique part.



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One of the most exciting recent departures is C. A. Bayly's ground-breaking work on communications within the Empire in India, *Empire and Information: intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870*, a new way of reading the history of all states ruled from without, indeed all states. To what forms of information does the government have access, and through what channels? How does this compare with indigenous sources and modes of communication? This is a new way of assessing the all-important translation between 'knowledge' and 'power' and the relations between ruler and ruled. Peter Robb reviews it here.

Gregory Blue on Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, reviews in depth a major book, whose French edition antedated Said's similar work on 'Orientalism'. Grosrichard centres on European fantasies of Turkish despotism and sexual power familiar to us from Montesquieu and other eighteenth-century commentators, but he analyses them from a Lacanian standpoint. Blue argues that Grosrichard has skewed the historical evidence, in particular in failing to treat these themes as they were invoked in discussions of China.

We are especially fortunate to have the Special Bibliography of Chinese–Western Comparative Literature Studies, contributed by Professor Han-liang Chang and his colleagues at the National Taiwan University, and to have had the help of Antony Tatlow, former Chair of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong, in amplifying their account. *Comparative Criticism* has periodically had bibliographies in particular fields (hermeneutics in volume 5 and translation studies in volume 6 may be of particular interest in the present context) as well as bibliographies of the work of individuals working in more than one language or medium; but this is the first extensive bibliography from the Chinese-speaking world, of course the largest single language in the world. Professor Chang modestly speaks of his Bibliography as 'parochial', and of course we could not hope to cover work in all Chinese-language areas in their relations with all other languages. But he presents here a core of theoretical work that developed with the growth of formal comparative literature studies in the post-war period, in Taiwan, the two Hong Kong universities (the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shatin), and increasingly in mainland China after the 'thaw' in the early 1980s. It also includes the quite extensive links developed by the Taiwanese and Hong Kong institutions with comparative literature as it developed in the West.

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We are very pleased to announce a new member of the International Editorial Board, Anthony Tatlow, formerly Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong, and now attached to Trinity College Dublin. Professor Tatlow is a well-known comparatist and Germanist, a specialist in Brecht studies who pioneered research into the reception of Brecht in Asia. We published in volume 6 an account of a ground-breaking conference he organized in Hong Kong which included performances of Brecht plays by companies from mainland China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, India and Japan.

I should like to thank my Editorial Assistant, James Thraves, for all of his doughty and detailed attention to the journal in the last two years. He is leaving to take up a coveted scholarship place on the Writing Program at Brown University in the United States in autumn 2000, and we wish him luck.

We are also most grateful to Dr Majeed for his careful scrutiny of the workshop papers selected for the present volume and his continued correspondence with contributors during the process of revision for publication. We welcome him as a Guest Editor. He has now moved to a new post in the English Department of Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, where we trust he will continue to advance the cause of East–West comparative studies.

The BCLA/BCLT Translation Competition is an annual Open Competition for all languages. Inquiries and requests for entry forms for the 2001 BCLA/BCLT Translation Competition should be directed to Christine Wilson, at the BCLT address given below. Entries and completed forms should be sent by the deadline 31 January 2001 to Dr J. Boase Beier, BCLT, School of Modern Languages, Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ. The judges of the Competition, drawing on the recommendations of specialist readers in each case, are: Daniel Weissbort, poet, translator, and editor of *Poetry in Translation*; Arthur Terry, translator from the Catalan, and formerly director of the MA in Literary Translation at the University of Essex; Stuart Gillespie, editor of *Translation and Literature*; and Elinor Shaffer, *ex officio* as editor of *Comparative Criticism*.

Three prizes will be awarded: First Prize, £350; Second Prize, £200; and Third Prize, £100. First and Second Prize will carry with them as before publication in *Comparative Criticism*. Third Prize and Commended entries may be published.

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Prize-winners will normally be invited to receive their prizes and to give a short reading, either at the annual BCLT St Jerome Lecture on Translation, or at the Triennial Congress of the BCLA, if it takes place in that year.

Prize-winners and other entrants may qualify for bursaries at the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia to support short residencies for specific translation projects. Direct application for bursaries may be made to the BCLT at the above address.

We are delighted that the publication of comparative theses and monographs which we had long envisaged is now thriving under the imprint of LEGENDA: the European Humanities Research Centre, Oxford University. The BCLA/EHRC Studies in Comparative Literature Series was honoured to publish as its first volume S. S. Prawer's book *Breeches and Metaphysics: Thackeray's German Discourse* (1997). Siegbert Prawer, Taylor Professor of German Emeritus in the University of Oxford, has long been one of the most eminent comparatists in this country. The second volume in the series (1998) was Charlie Louth's acute study *Hölderlin and the Dynamics of Translation* (1998), which began life as a Cambridge Ph.D. thesis; Dr Louth is now Lecturer in German at Bristol. The third is by Fiona Cox, *Aeneas Takes the Metro: The Presence of Virgil in Twentieth-century French Literature* (1999), originating in a Bristol Ph.D. Dr Cox is now Lecturer in French at Cork University. Peter D. Smith's *Metaphor and Materiality: German Literature and the World-View of Science, 1780–1955*, a challenging study of five German writers from Goethe to Brecht who have grappled with scientific ideas, appeared in 2000. Dr Smith's book began as a King's College London Ph.D. thesis, and as a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellow at University College London he has extended his work to further twentieth-century writers. Several more excellent books are in the pipeline. Proposals for shorter critical studies, editions, or translations, as well as for theses and monographs, will be entertained. Inquiries should be sent in the first instance to Dr Elinor Shaffer (School of Advanced Study, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU) and will be considered by the BCLA Publications Committee. Orders for books may be placed with Mrs K. Bannister, The European Humanities Research Centre, St Hugh's College, Oxford OX2 6LE or email: [enquiries@ehrc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ehrc.ox.ac.uk).

The Ninth British Comparative Literature Association Conference, on the topic of 'Money', will be held at the University of Wales,

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Swansea 23–26 July 2001; those interested in participating should contact the organizer, Dr Duncan Large (German Department, Swansea). Details are available on the BCLA website [www.bcla.org](http://www.bcla.org). Plenary papers will as usual be published in *Comparative Criticism*.

Future volumes, for which contributions are welcome, include volume 23 'Humanist Tradition and the Humanities in the Twentieth Century'. This is based on a major conference on 'Humanist Tradition in the Twentieth Century' held in London 1–3 June 2000, as a collaboration between the School of Advanced Study, University of London and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. It will appear in the alternative millennial year, 2001.

A volume on the Fantastic, the Gothic, and Jan Potocki's *Manuscript found at Saragossa* will follow in 2002. Potocki's major European novel, written in French 1797–1815, but published in full only in 1989, has begun to receive the attention it deserves in France, but as yet there is virtually nothing in English apart from the novel itself, translated in 1995 with an introduction by Ian Maclean, and available in Penguin. It was the subject of a major Polish film, directed by Wojciech Has in 1965, and circulated in a cut French version; the full-length original film was shown in Britain for the first time in May 1999, with English voice-over, at an international Colloquium on Potocki held at the University of London.

A further volume is planned on 'The Lives of the Disciplines: comparative biography' and will explore the art of biography in different disciplines.

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.

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*Comparative Criticism* 22, pp. xxix–xxxiii. Printed in the United Kingdom

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## Beyond Europe: a workshop

Themes, issues, problems

J. MAJEED

Some of the papers in this volume, now considerably revised and amplified, began life at a workshop held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in June 1998. The workshop emerged from the challenging problems the Comparative Literature panel at SOAS face in teaching an MA course in Comparative Literature in which African and Asian literatures play a central role. Our aim was to define a type of comparative literary practice in which Asian and African literatures might actually set the agenda alongside Western literatures. As a result, the workshop (for which I acted as convenor) was conceived of in terms of a set of problems and of choices which we felt we had to make as teachers regarding the direction of such a comparative literature. Our purpose was neither to oppose nor to conflate European and non-European literatures, but rather to see if we could work out strategies of comparative interpretation more appropriate to the polyglot, polyliterary world we live in.

The first question was the wider one: comparative literature's role in the changing map of the humanities. Much has been said about the relationships between comparative literature and other emerging disciplines such as cultural studies and translation studies, not to mention older established disciplines such as literary studies, history and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It is in part due to these shifting relationships that comparative literature is, as the American comparatist Charles Bernheimer puts it, 'anxiogenic', that is, productive of anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever one's views on these issues, given the focus on African and Asian literatures at the workshop and in this volume, there are two crucial relationships to consider. The first is the relationship between anthropology and comparative literature, especially the anthropology of aesthetics which focuses on art objects as material objects, and on how these objects work in their cultures of origin. A comparative literature

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project in which the agenda was set by Asian and African literatures would have to learn from anthropology, which as a discipline is itself comparative to the core. An important work here is the collection of essays edited by Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton which maps out a variety of approaches to the key question of how art objects achieve what they are meant to achieve in their cultural contexts. The focus here tends to be on the study of the perceptual bases of indigenous evaluative processes, on how people in a particular culture conceptualize the effects of their art works.<sup>3</sup> Alfred Gell neatly sums up the aims of an anthropology of art, when he argues that we have to 'retain the capacity of the aesthetic approach to illuminate the specific objective characteristics of the art object as an object, rather than as a vehicle for extraneous social and symbolic messages, without succumbing to the fascination which all well-made art objects exert on the mind attuned to their aesthetic properties'.<sup>4</sup> A comparative literature project which aims to give Asian and African literatures their rightful place would do well to focus on the aesthetic properties of works of art and the perceptual bases of evaluative processes. In the present volume, this approach is best exemplified in the paper by Christopher Shackle, who is careful to avoid interpreting Asian literatures as vehicles for extraneous social and symbolic messages alone.

The second crucial relationship the workshop set out to address is that between comparative literature and area studies. The question of the genesis and development of area studies has been on the agenda in the United States for some time. Vicente L. Rafael has given a perceptive critique of this genesis and development in a seminal article, pointing out that area studies, as 'the disciplined study of others', ultimately 'works to maintain a national order thought to be coterminous with a global one'.<sup>5</sup> More importantly for our purposes, he poses the question: 'If the identity of the region is historically the result of imperialist and nationalist imaginings, is it possible to conceive of counterimaginings that might result in the fragmentation and displacement of these hegemonic formations?'<sup>6</sup> The culture of area studies in the UK has yet to be subjected to this sort of critique, but it is clear that for too long African and Asian literatures have been treated as reflections of some sort of pre-existing cultural identity that could be neatly packaged for area studies programmes.<sup>7</sup> It is time to carve out a field for comparative literature which is not just separate from area studies, but in some ways actually subverts it. A reconstructed comparative literature would enable us to break the stranglehold of area