COMPARATIVE LITERATURE CONFERENCE

Les Lieux imaginaires de la littérature comparée / Imaginary Locations of Comparative Literature

Vendredi 12 Juillet

9:15 Opening remarks

9:30-11:00 Moderator: Françoise Meltzer (University of Chicago)

Thomas Pavel (University of Chicago), "Ouvrir les fenêtres, démoli r les cloisons"

Olga Solovieva (University of Chicago), “Movement Through Time and Space: Dersu Uzala from Arseniev’s Diaries to Kurosawa’s Film”

11:30-1:00 Moderator: Haun Saussy (University of Chicago)

Philippe Roussin (CNRS), “République des Lettres ou démocratie littéraire ?”

Ziva Ben-Porat (University of Tel-Aviv), “Paris and Jerusalem/Ukraine and Israel as Cognitive Models in Tel Aviv”

2:30-4:00 Moderator: Frédéric Ogée (Université Paris Diderot)

Boris Maslov (University of Chicago), "On the Theory and Practice of Cross-Historical Literary Comparison, ca. 1860-1940"

Françoise Lavocat (Université Paris-3 Sorbonne nouvelle), "La fiction est-elle une catégorie occidentale et contemporaine ? Lieux de l'élaboration d'une théorie"

4:30-6:00 Keynote

Jean-Marie Schaeffer (CNRS, EHESS), “Mélancolies goethéennes”
Philippe Roussin
Quels liens entre littérature mondiale et avènement de sociétés démocratiques ? On se propose de poser la question en rapprochant les réflexions contemporaines de Goethe et de Tocqueville sur la démocratie littéraire au début de la seconde Démocratie en Amérique.


Françoise Lavocat
Je propose de réfléchir à l'émergence de la notion de fiction dans la théorie littéraire en me demandant dans quelle mesure il s'agit, ou non d'un concept contemporain et occidental. Je pense en particulier à la controverse entre François Jullien et Xang Longxi sur cette question. Cette réflexion est aussi nourrie des difficultés que j'ai rencontrées en réalisant mon collectif "fiction et culture", ne parvenant à trouver personne, en Amérique du Sud, en Inde, qui partage ma définition de la fiction, que je croyais universelle, mais qui est de fait étroitement liée à celle de Jean-Marie Schaeffer et à l'EHESS. Je propose donc de réfléchir aux lieux et aux modalités de diffusion de cette théorie de la fiction et de réfléchir à sa problématique universalité.


Ziva Ben-Porat
Israeli literature exemplifies the problematics of a number of basic comparative literature assumptions in a number of ways: critical terms (such as post-Modernism) which are sometimes used differently challenge the idea of a common language for comparatists; imported models and conceptualizations that come to represent different notions reveal the limitations of straightforward reliance on notions such as influence and interference; and mistaken or unlikely interpretations illustrate the clash between shared/similar formal representations and the cognitive models used for processing them. My contribution focuses on the latter, tracing the ways in which Israeli poets (of European origin) read by younger Israelis (second or third generation in Israel from different backgrounds) exhibit their awareness of such conflicts and attempt to guide their readers with limited success.
Berkeley PhD: Poetics of Literary Allusion (1973) – the field of intertextuality has remained a constant research subject, moving from Allusion to Parody, rhetorical Intertextuality, communication theory based typology of intertextual relations, and software for constructing explicated examples (CULTOS project of the EC IST 7th call).

Work on the relations of ‘reality’, cultural concepts, and artistic representations, has begun in the 1980’s, includes numerous articles and a book on the subject, using autumn and Jerusalem as case studies. Current research project: A comparative study of Jerusalem representations in poetry and photography.

Work on popular culture: pop and rock songs, comics, and computer games. Research of traces of the European Canon in cyberspace: in particular in personal blogs and in computer games. Current work on narrative in/as games (to be presented in the ICLA Congress).

Olga Solovieva

The paper pursues the trajectory of the expedition diaries written by the explorer of Siberia, Vladimir Arseniev, from Imperial Russia to Imperial Japan and back to the Soviet Union via their Japanese cinematic reception, which resulted in global acclaim. The imaginary location of a pre-colonial pan-Asian space that Akira Kurosawa created in Dersu Uzala contains many sedimented layers of the political and cultural history of the twentieth century, which Comparative Literature is best equipped to uncover, if only it ventures out of the cultural comfort zones of the big cities into the uncharted terrain of uncomfortable endeavors.

Olga Solovieva is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies from Yale University. She has written several articles on Akira Kurosawa’s reception of Russian Literature and curated a festival of Kurosawa’s Russian films at the Logan Center for the Arts in May 2013. Currently, she is working on a book with the title The Russian Kurosawa.

Thomas Pavel

Ouvrir les fenêtres, démolir les murs

The paper, presented in French, discusses the way in which narrative genres – and more generally plot-based literary genres – reflect on human action making constant reference to human motives, norms, and ideals. I will ask whether the literary representation of these motives, norms, and ideals is cross-historically similar or profoundly different according to the period. Roland Barthes’ Sur Racine will help me formulate a non-historicist answer. I will then look at the literary concerns that seem to endure across centuries and discuss the notions of memory and anamnesis. Precisely because narrative genres – and perhaps all literary genres – are to some extent independent of the historical accidents that brought them to life, we do not need to compartmentalize literature into tiny, well-defined areas, historical or national. On the contrary, we can, we should open the windows and demolish the walls.

Thomas Pavel, professor of French & Comparative Literature as well as the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, is the author of The Poetics of Plot (1985), Fictional
What does it mean to compare texts and literary forms not in terms of their placement within a literary or national tradition, but based on their paradoxical coexistence within a single historical moment? What kind of dialogue and mutual illumination is possible between oral epic and Tolstoy, or between peasant folk tale and modernist prose, which ostensibly belong to different cultural “phases” yet, in fact, collide? In this talk, I discuss three moments of such a productive encounter and suggest that they provided a crucial impetus for the evolution of modern thinking on literature, comparative and otherwise: one centering on the prose of Nikolai Leskov in the 1920-30s, the other on the quest for ethnographic comparanda for Homeric epic from the 1870s to the 1920s, and the third on responses to extant peasant epic in Russia in the 1860s.

Maslov’s research centers on Ancient Greek and Russian literatures, as well as on the theory of comparative literature. Currently he is working on two book projects. One is a co-edited volume entitled Persistent Forms: Explorations in Historical Poetics, which includes previously untranslated work by Veselovsky and Bakhtin as well as original contributions. The other, a monograph entitled Pindar and the Emergence of the Literary, investigates the formation of the categories of authorship, poetic image, and literary genre in Archaic Greece.