Now in its third year, “Music, Language, Thought,” a collaboration between the departments of Music (FAS) and Comparative Literature, continues to present events dedicated to exploring the intersections between philosophy, literary studies, and musicology. The series has its origins in informal conversations between graduate students and faculty from both departments, which centered on questions of critical aesthetic theory and the politics of the sensible. This year, we have continued to expand our disciplinary lens as we sustain our exploration of these issues.

Our first event of the 2010-2011 academic year included considerations of the history of science, evolutionary biology, and film studies. Sound, and the meanings it carries, was at the center of each of these widely divergent presentations. Myles Jackson, Professor of the History of Science at Gallatin and the Dibner Family Professor of the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at NYU Poly, opened with a paper titled “The Role of Physicists in Measuring and Defining Nineteenth-Century Musical Aesthetics.” Jackson used developments in physics, mathematics, and the standardization of pitch in nineteenth-century Europe to demonstrate not only the extent to which science and aesthetics were intertwined but also to illuminate the role of music in emergent German nationalism.

Kevin Bell, Associate Professor of English at SUNY Albany (and a graduate of our department!) also drew on the intersection of sound and politics in his reading of Christopher Harris’s film “still/here” (2000), which combines images of the decaying buildings on the North side of St. Louis with discordant sounds of life. At the center of the film as well as Bell’s presentation, titled “Non-Cognitive Aspects of the City: Sound as Break in Christopher Harris’s ‘still/here,’” were images of the ruins of an abandoned movie theatre. As with other motifs in the film, it highlighted not only urban decay and depopulation, but the evaporation of a vital African-American community and its history. Ana María Ochoa, Associate Professor of Music and Ethnomusicology at Columbia University, dealt with the ephemeral and the politics of recording in her presentation, “Orality and Orthography in Nineteenth-Century Colombia.” She explored nineteenth-century Latin American scholars’ efforts to create a uniquely American theory of music and (MLT cont pg 2)

Professors Javitch and Chioles Retire

This year we say a fond arrivederci to two stalwarts. Daniel Javitch has been here since 1978, filling one time or another every administrative position our Department (or Italian) could impose; John Chioles since 1981, visiting until 1985, then tenured. John has also loyalty accepted administrative tasks (especially many times as DUGS), but as his career has mostly been split half and half with his Chair in the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Athens, he has faced obvious temporal constraints.

Both are links to the earliest days of Comparative Literature at NYU, Daniel brought in by Robert Clements, the Department’s founding Chair, John by Anna Balakian, its second. As Clements retired the year Daniel came (is there a story here??!), the Department depended for most of the 1980s on two and a half “core” members and many hardy helpers from nearby Departments (not just our originator, then called “French & Italian,” but Spanish & Portuguese, German, English, Slavic, again as then called). Since John was brought here not just as a teacher but as a practical drama person, he was expected to work as well in NY theatre production: indeed directing extensively from Berkeley and San Francisco reps to the NY Public, the Greek National and from Stanford to Crete to Epidaurus. (JC cont pg 2)
Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso
Daniel Javitch

Daniel's Orlando Furioso is a "true classic of Renaissance scholarship."

Musical notation and the difficult relationship these scholars had with indigenous forms of music and sound. These tensions are highlighted in the history of Christian missions' occupations of indigenous lands in Colombia. Gary Tomlinson, Professor of Music at the University of Pennsylvania, gave the closing presentation, "Paleolithic Formalism," in which he took up cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker's assertion that music is "auditory cheesecake." MLT has touched on Pinker's controversial statement before, and here Tomlinson, drawing on evolutionary biology, argued for music, like language, as fundamental—rather than accidental—to human development. Music like language is a form of representation requiring and instantiating a level of cognitive capacity integral to human development.

Two more "Music, Language, Thought" events took place in the spring 2011 semester. The first, on March 4th, included Tamara Levitz (Music, ULCA) with a paper titled, "The Composer as Allegorical Critic: Interpreting Musical Modernism through the Lens of Walter Benjamin" and Martin Harries (English, NYU), "Still: Sarah Kane After Beckett and Joy Division." The final event of the year was a collaboration with the Music department's colloquium on April 20th. Further information on both can be found on our website musiclan guagethought.wordpress.com. "Music, Language, Thought,"

Dear Daniel and John,
We're torn! On one hand we're delighted to wish you continued success in your writing and research and much happiness in your new adventures. Novel writing, fly-fishing, elephant riding, ouzo sipping; the world is your oyster! On the other hand — simply and completely — we'll miss you. We'll miss the bright reflection of your scholarship and humanity at the heart of the Department. And, we'll miss your endearing everyday presence — Daniel forever foraging for scrap paper; taking care to look spiffy for that first day of class. John, marketing at Union Square; limiting himself to one tasty brownie per reception. We'll miss you as colleagues. And as friends.

With much affection and deep respect, All of us

(MLT cont. from pg 1)
Magali Armillas-Tiseyra is a six year graduate student in Comparative Literature; her dissertation is on novels about dictators in Latin American and African literatures.

(J/C cont. from pg 1)

So, the academic labor on the shoulders of the Department's minute core was mighty.

When I came in 1987, hired by Daniel, John and their skirted hardies just after Anna's retirement (full disclosure), so when I came in 1987, hired by Daniel, John and their skirted hardies just after Anna's retirement (full disclosure), so working toward their degrees. They did. One cannot exaggerate the scholarly intellectual work of advising such confidence entails.

Both of them saw and oversaw the dramatic expansion of the Department from the late 1980s through the 90s into the twenty-first century, from a familiar European to a global focus, from a tiny core faculty to a group of core and budgetary joint faculty (the latter pioneered during their oversight) that now sets NYU's Comparative Literature Department among the finest (and largest) in the country.

Besides enabling this growth, both have continued nonstop academic and creative work. John, besides directing, writes on both modern and ancient theatre (vital work on Aeschylus and Sophocles), as well as more generally on literary and dramatic theory. Most lately he has done a major new edition and translation of Cavafy (Harvard). But he is as well known for his own short stories as for his translations of Greek poetry, theatre and the novel.

Daniel has made his mark in another field: He is a Renaissance scholar of international distinction. Invited positions at Berkeley, Northwestern, EHESS (Paris), UCLA, Columbia, and NYU in Florence recognize his eminence, as well as associations with the Folger Institute, Trinity College Dublin and Harvard's Florence program. His 1978 Poetry and Courtliness remains a focal reference of Renaissance scholars and his Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso is itself a true classic of Renaissance scholarship. Its "successor" on the constitution of genre — the very idea of "literature" — is awaited with traditional bated breath: it will be a very important work! A member (and Chair) for years of the board of New Directions, he has also compiled, with Barbara Epler, a record of that publisher's founder James Laughlin's life and accomplishments, The Way it Wasn't From the Files of James Laughlin.

Our Department will have to work not to be slighter without both John and Daniel. We salute.

Tim Rees is professor Emeritus and Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence. With Patricia Penn Hilden and Shari Huhndorf, he has recently edited Topographies of Race and Gender: Mapping Cultural Representations (2008-9).
**“The Problem of Translation” - A Summer Dissertation Seminar**

Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Professors Emily Apter and Jacques Lezra will conduct a five-session graduate seminar “The Problem of Translation” in Summers 2011 and 2012. Graduate students in any discipline whose dissertation projects touch upon translation—its theory, practices, and history—were invited to apply, resulting in fellowships for Summer 2011 being awarded to graduate students from NYU, Princeton, Rutgers, and Columbia.

The seminars will meet five or six times in the course of the summer, from late June to mid-August. Each seminar meeting will be a day-long event, involving three related components: discussion of a set reading, a lecture or workshop by an invited speaker, and presentations by the graduate seminar members of their ongoing work. Invited speakers will include Peter Cole, Naomi Seidman, Andrew Piper, Bruno Bossteels, and others. Flowing from the work of these speakers and the research interests and scholarship of Professors Apter and Lezra, the seminar’s aim is to enrich and expand the scholarship of the graduate participants, whose dissertations will, in many cases, be advanced practically and conceptually by the exchanges, readings and presentations. "The Problem of Translation" will also serve broader disciplinary functions: to shed sustained light on a topic of increasing, but often disaggregated, interest to a number of humanistic fields; to set into conversation with one another scholars of the theory of translation, with working translators, and with scholars interested in the history of the practices and theory of translation.

New York University is particularly well suited to host this important scholarly project and conversation: translators knock knees here with theorists of translation, there are graduate programs in the practices and theory of translation, and the University committed itself in recent months to major publication ventures in the field of translation. And, of course, the city of New York is itself a sort of inexhaustible translation hub—commercial as well as intellectual.

Professor Apter (French, English and Comparative Literature) and Professor Lezra (Spanish, English and Comparative Literature) are scholars of literature and critical theory who focus their research and much of their teaching on the problem of translation. Apter published a book The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature in 2006 and edits the book series Translation/Translation with Princeton University Press (founded in 1998 the series now has some fifteen on its list, many of them prize-winners). Jacques Lezra, in addition to authoring seminal articles on translation, is the award winning translator of Paul de Man’s classic Blindness and Insight into Spanish. Both Professors Apter and Lezra come to translation studies from complementary critical positions and chronologically quite different periods—Professor Apter, from a formation in 19th, 20th and 21st century French, Francophone, English and American literature and criticism, and Professor Lezra, from a formation in the European literary and philosophical traditions of the 15th through the late 17th century. Together (along with Michael Wood, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Princeton), they are supervising the translation into English of Barbara Cassin’s monumental Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004) [Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon], which will be published by Princeton University Press. (The translators are Jeffrey Mehlman, Christian Hubert, Stephen Rendall, Nathaniel Stein, and Michael Syrotinski.)

Professors Apter and Lezra are also currently beginning work on books about translation: Apter, a book titled Against World Literature? The Politics of Untranslatability in Comparative Literature; Lezra a book titled The Indecisive Muse: A Translation and Lexical Culture in European Modernity.

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**Translation at NYU**

New York University is home to an increasing number of projects exploring the practices and theory of translation. Here are just a few.

**The Library of Arabic Literature** - a collaborative venture between The Abu-Dhabi Institute, NYU-Abu Dabi, and NYU Press whose Director, Philip Kennedy, is an Associated Member of the Department of Comparative Literature. As described in an NYU press release, “The Library of Arabic Literature will produce a library of the classic works of Arabic Islamic literature and culture in parallel-text editions -- Arabic and English running texts on facing pages. The translations -- the first of their kind in the Anglophone world -- will be produced in a clear, modern idiom and will be accessible by general readers and academics alike.”

**MA in Translation Studies** – a degree offered through the French department

**Theory and Practices of Translation** - a track of study offered through the Comparative Literature Department

**MS in Translation** – a degree offered through the School of Continuing and Professional Services

Richard Sieburth: Consummiate Translator

by Olivia Crouch

Richard Sieburth is forever translating. And, as a renowned authority on the history of translation, he’s proven that he can do it well. Amongst his translation are works by Friedrich Hölderlin, Walter Benjamin, Gérard de Nerval, Michel Leiris, Georg Büchner, Henri Michaux, and Maurice Scève. He has also done several editions of the works of Ezra Pound for New Directions and the Library of America.

In 1983 Professor Sieburth came to NYU’s French Department from Harvard, where he had previously held a joint appointment in French and Comparative Literature. He variously served as Acting Chair of the Comparative Literature Department and as Director of Graduate Studies in the French Department for eight years. Professor Sieburth has therefore had the privilege of witnessing the growth of the Comparative Literature Department and of NYU as a whole. Teaching in two departments allows him to work with a wide range of students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Professor Sieburth received his BA from the University of Chicago in 1970, where he began as a Chinese major, “because of Pound.” Although he eventually settled on a major in Comparative Literature, his study of Chinese fostered an ongoing interest in the movement of texts and ideas between the East and the West. In 2006 Dr. Sieburth co-taught a course on Walter Benjamin with Xudong Zhang, who was supervising a group of Chinese students translating The Arcades Project into Chinese. Over the summer of ’07, Sieburth and Zhang led a colloquium on Benjamin in Shanghai.

Professor Sieburth’s senior year at University of Chicago marked the release of Benjamin’s Illuminations, which he describes as “a real event, as big a deal for us at the University of Chicago as, say, Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club album.” In 1984 he was asked to translate Benjamin’s Moscow Diary, which led him to translate the first English installment of The Arcades Project. Most of his translation projects have been similarly unexpected, often the result of a suggestion from a friend or colleague and completed alongside other long-term projects. As he says, “you do your best work when you’re supposed to be doing something else.”

Most recently Professor Sieburth has translated the complete Prophesies of Nostradamus for Viking/Penguin, to appear next year in conjunction with a study by his French department colleague Stéphane Gerson on the history of the “hermeneutic delirium” surrounding these prophecies. Sieburth’s goal, however, is to present Nostradamus not as a prophet but as a relatively undiscovered 16th-century French poet, whose text can be read as a strange serial epic written in four-line epigrammatic fragments. Professor Sieburth preserved the rhyme and meter of Nostradamus’ nearly 4000 lines to reflect the poet’s vision of the world as constructed on the principle of analogy and rhyme.

Professor Sieburth’s work reflects the dictum that NYU is a university “of and amongst the city.” He has been involved in a number of theatrical productions, including a staged version of Diderot. His translation of Antonin Artaud’s, The Cenci was performed in 2008 at the Ohio Theater (although to his amusement, the audience of the Theater of Cruelty was warned that cigarettes would be smoked onstage)! He writes reviews, contributes to literary journals such as Cabinet, and frequently works with small local presses Archipelago, New Directions, and Ugly Duckling Presse, bringing his work outside of the strictly academic sphere. Some of his recent translations—including Michaux’s Stroke by Stroke, Emblems of Desire: Selections from the “Delie” of Maurice Scève, and Guillevic’s Geometries—reflect his interest in the relation between image and text. Professor Sieburth readily admits he is “lost in translation.”

Olivia Crouch is majoring in Cinema Studies and Philosophy and is an aspiring Germanist.

Graduate Student News (all good!)

Reinelda Baucic: Dissertation: “Educating for Women’s Rights in Three Late Eighteenth-Century Bestsellers: La Roche, Inchbald, and Rowson”

Lori Cole: Summer 2010 GSAS Predoc Fellowship

Monika Connolly: 2010 Penfield Fellowship

Robyn Creswell: Assistant Professor, Comp Lit, Brown University (starts in 2012)

Ozen Dolcerocca: Summer 2010 GSAS Predoc Fellowship

Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz: doctoral fellow with the DFG (Deutsche Forschsgemeinschaft, a German Research Foundation) Graduiertenkolleg (Doctoral Research Group), Lebensformen und Lebenswissen (“Forms of Life and the Know-How of Living”)

Micaela Kramer: 2011-2012 Dean’s Dissertation Fellowship

Daniel Lukes: 2010 Anais Nin Fellowship


Pu Wang: 2011-2012 Dean’s Dissertation Fellowship

Erica Weitzman: DFG Fellowship for the Graduiertenkolleg "Lebensformen und Lebenswissen" at Europa-Universität Viadrina and Universität Potsdam

Sonia Werner: Summer 2010 FLAS Award
My first inkling that what was taking place had already radically transformed the country was on arrival from the US, on 29 January, when the cab driving me from Cairo Airport was entering Alexandria alongside a line of army tanks. As the cab drove by Alexandria University campus in Chatby down to the Corniche, I caught a glimpse of what was to become a common sight in the following days: young men serving as traffic wardens, in the wake of the police’s withdrawal the previous day, except that remarkably in this instance, they were ushering civilian cars to the side to make way for the army tanks. I ached to take a picture, but an instinct acquired during my days in journalism prompted me to ask the driver if this would get him into trouble; take as many pictures as you like, he turned to me, no one will touch me: all this is a thing of the past.

The Egypt I saw in the days that followed, first in Alexandria then in Cairo, was a country in a state of blossoming. The attenuation of the state security apparatus was the least part of it; rather, it was about joy in rediscovering a collectivity and in collective action. Young and middle-aged; working class and middle class; Muslim, Christian and secularist – everyone spoke to everyone else. Not only at the demonstrations but on the trams and in the streets and shops people drifted in and out of conversations I was having with others as I did into ones they were having. New acquaintances, known only by their first names, were recorded in my mobile as “Noha Demonstration” and “Mohamed Tahrir.”

Most breathtaking of all were the twenty-somethings I met. The many checkpoints set up by neighborhood volunteers meant ample time to chat in a cab I shared on the way back from a demonstration in El-Shohada Square, in front of Alexandria’s main railway station, with Radwa, who had a BA in English literature. She mentioned in passing that she had left the demonstration early the day before and, with a group of women friends, rented a pick-up truck, donned gloves, and removed trash bags until they were exhausted. Was she part of the popular committees offering services in recent days? No, it is just that she felt that it was the more urgent thing to do right then.

Radwa spoke of how there would be much work of “rehabilitation” to be done post-revolution – this was late January, and she was already thinking ahead, apparently never doubting victory – work of increasing people’s awareness of their civic rights, since “we are only as strong as the weakest link in our society.”

The following day, also in Shohada Square, I met Mostafa, an English literature undergraduate whose placard, in English, read, “Democratic, Liberal, Secular State.” By late afternoon that day, Mostafa looked totally knackered: he had spent the night on the square, he explained, and had stayed up watching over a woman demonstrator as she slept because a man – a government infiltrator, he was sure – was trying to harass her. The Egyptian value of shahama (chivalry; gallantry) was one of the central ethics among the youth of the revolution, as I myself experienced over a week later when, in Tahrir on Thursday, 10 February, we were all waiting with bated breath for Mubarak’s speech in which he was expected to abdicate but did not. As restlessness grew and with little space in which to stand, a young man behind me asked if he could watch over me, kept his hand on my shoulder, and somehow managed to carve out space for me until I had reached a distant pavement; it was not before he had asked whether there was anything else he could do for me that he walked away.

The “Friday of Departure,” as 4 February was designated, coming two days after the “Battle of the Camel” in Tahrir Square, drew massive participation. Anxieties in Alexandria about the regime’s last-ditch measures were reflected in Saad Zaghloul Square where a man with a marker pen was calling to everyone to have their flags inscribed with anti-Mubarak ones. Mostafa and I were joined by Dalia, an Arabic literature graduate who described herself as an eternal student, having gone on, among other things, to study Hausa, and Hagar, a specialist in Ottoman archives whose every word bespoke a staunchly secularist stance. At one point, a veiled woman turned to me amid the chanting and enumerated, blow by blow, all the reasons why Mubarak had to go — “… unemployment is because of him; deviance among young men is because of him; spinst erhood is because of him…”

As we passed through Mazarita, an elderly man in house clothes stepped out on his balcony and threw his arms wide open as if to embrace the entire demonstration. Turning a street corner headed towards Soter tram station, our eyes were drawn to the rooftop of a tall building where a man had let the pigeons he breeds out of their coop and stood waving.

(Egypt cont pg 6)
huge flags while the pigeons circled the sky. As it happened, two placards seen at that demonstration harked back to the very beginning of the 1952 “Revolution,” suggesting a revision of that term.

In the square just outside Sidi Gaber railway station where the demonstration wound up, a young man had propped up against an army tank a framed front page of the long-defunct newspaper Al-Masri’s issue announcing the abdication of King Farouk. The event of that abdication was invoked in a placard seen earlier that read, in Arabic, “Farouk said no to spilling the blood of Egyptians / While the traitor brought Egypt nothing but afflictions.”

In the immediate, of course, these were gestures of rubbing Mubarak’s nose into his undignified refusal to abdicate as opposed to the dignity of Egypt’s last king. More broadly, they were gestures of conjointing of “the end” with the “beginning,” a folding over of the sixty-year legacy of the officers’ rule.

The most salient appeal to pre-1952 iconography, however, was in the arching back to the 1919 Revolution. The crescent and the cross with which that abdication placard was sealed, hallmark iconography of 1919, summoned in the small hours of 1 January this year right after the bombing of the Two Saints’ Church in Alexandria, were to become ubiquitous in the revolution that broke out on the 25th of the month.

The translations into action of that emblem of national unity – again, begun weeks before when Muslims went to churches on the 6th of January for Coptic Christmas eve mass to serve as human shields and express solidarity – were spectacular after 25 January. The Muslim-Christian simultaneous prayers for the martyrs; the Christians forming a cordon with their bodies around Muslims at prayer and vice versa – to these I add a spontaneous scene witnessed in Tahrir within an hour after Mubarak’s ouster: a Coptic priest whom several young men rushed to hug. A bearded young man embraced him, saying, “Since the revolution started, there was not a single attack on a church.” The priest replied, “Intou shaab masr” (“You are the [true] people of Egypt”).

For some years now, I have been writing about syncretism in Egypt as a religiously-inflected form of cosmopolitanism in response to increasingly conservative constructions of the nation.

In novels by Edwar al-Kharrat and Bahaa Taher, to take but two examples, I detected an appeal to inter-faith relations that parts company with traditional Western versions of cosmopolitanism understood as a secular worldliness. Instead, these two novelists acknowledge the imperative of upholding pluralism in a conservative context by reinscribing it in the religious terms of tolerance. These terms – the inter-faith exchange of culinary gifts on religious feast days; the syncretic intertwining of rituals from different religions – are drawn directly from an actually existing folk culture, not least as associated with the moulids (festivals for saints and religious figures).

But it had always seemed to me that a gap existed between the literary representations – which, after all, remain elite in their reach, unless a novel is turned into a television series – and the ancient, much-frayed reservoir of syncretic folk practices that are not primarily enacted with the national crisis in mind. The magnificence of the 25 January Revolution is precisely there, in that it was a non-elite assumption of agency in the articulation of inter-faith solidarity that firmly counters a sectarianism wrought by complexities yet to be fully unpacked in order to lay claim to egalitarianism and citizenship, so severely compromised in the past few decades.

I heartily agree with Ezzat El-Kamhawy who, in a previous column in this series, designated this “the Egyptian revolution of laughter.” A recent New York Times article (by Sharon Otterman and J. David Goodman; 25 February, 2011) described the feel of Tahrir in the days after the ouster as that of a “carnival;” this has its appeal, but I would see it more as a politicized moulid. The extended inter-faith sharing of time, of food, of space for prayer rituals, hallmarks of the traditional moulid, were all present here with the salient difference that the goal was of fulfilling aspirations of democracy and national unity in images now etched both locally and globally.

How these aspirations articulated with such acumen will be codified in future revisions of the constitution, particularly in the hoped-for annulment of article two which states that the sharia is the source of legislation, remains to be seen. Amid the scene of unprecedented joy and national pride in Tahrir on 12 February, the day after Mubarak’s ouster, one man stood in solemn silence, holding up the picture of his martyred son. Did he ever see justice for the martyrdom of his son done? Word has it that there are lawsuits and investigations, and also threats to those who have pressed charges. Further down the square, one of the demonstrators, gloved and wielding a broom as part of the wide-scale movement of purging the country, literally and metaphorically, was listening patiently to a woman who was saying that she has been watching all these events from home and was afraid for her son, a little boy she had with her. All we ask for, the young man answered, is that our families give us moral support; in years to come, what we did will become clearer. Every person who was martyred, he continued, had died “so that your son does not walk by the wall, but walks in the middle of the street.”
Kamau Brathwaite *Elegguas* (Wesleyan University Press, 2010)


Manthia Diawara *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (Prestel USA, 2010)

Contemporary African filmmaking is the subject of this insightful and exciting look at every aspect of the art form on the African continent. Focusing on new trends in African cinema from the 1990s to today, this book explores new cinematic languages and modes of production, films departure from nationalism and social realism, and the Nollywood film industry, among other topics.


Opening a groundbreaking methodological dialogue between Freud’s work and Althusser’s late understanding of aleatory materialism, Lezra shows how an ethic of terror in the political sphere of a radically democratic republic, can be built on what he calls “wild materialism.” This book combines the close reading of cultural texts with detailed treatment of works in the radical-democratic and radical-republican traditions. Polemically rehabilitating the term “terror,” Lezra argues that it can and should operate as a social universal.

Avital Ronell *Fighting Theory* (University of Illinois Press, 2010), *Lignes de Front* (Paris)

For *Fighting Theory*, psychoanalyst and philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle conducted twelve interviews with Ronell, each focused on a key topic in one of Ronell’s books or on a set of issues that run throughout her work. Ronell’s discussions of such issues are candid, thoughtful, and often personal, bringing together elements from several texts, illuminating hints about them, and providing her up-to-date reflections on what she had written earlier. Intense and often ironic, “Fighting Theory” is a poignant self-reflection of the worlds and walls against which Avital Ronell crashed.


Guillevic wrote *Geometries* (*Euclidiennes* in French) in the early sixties, after his friend, the poet André Frenaud, recognizing in his poetry an inclination toward mathematics, and more specifically geometry, encouraged him to pursue this direction. Guillevic places a series of geometrical figures before our eyes, as they might appear in a schoolchild’s primer, paired with poems that let us hear how these forms might speak.


In *Police Aesthetics*, Vatulescu examines the most infamous holdings—the personal files—with the secret police archives of Russia and Romania, as well as on movies the police sponsored, scripted, or authored. Through the archives, she gains new insights into the writing of literature and raises new questions about the ethics of reading. Her work opens a fresh chapter in the heated debate about the relationship between culture and politics in twentieth-century police states.
2010-11 marks the fourth year in which students and faculty of the Comparative Literature department presented work in the department Colloquium Series.

In contrast to the Colloquia of previous years, coordination of the once-monthly series was not the responsibility of a centralized graduate student committee. A loosely structured group of 10 graduate students met at the end of the Spring 2010 semester to consider how to program the Colloquium Series for the 2010-11 year. Most of the students in the group proposed events for a given month on the Colloquium calendar, and then took responsibility for coordinating the event on their own by reaching out to and establishing contact with the faculty members and graduate students involved.

As in all three years of the Colloquium’s history prior to the 2010-11, however, Sage Anderson continued to provide crucial logistical support for all of the events in the series, ensuring that wine, coffee, and other refreshments were available in the appropriate amount.

Pu Wang was primarily responsible for maintaining the official blog of the Colloquium, the Comparatorium.

The opening event in the 2010-11 series was a panel discussion entitled “Peripheral Marxist” in which Aaron Love, a PhD student in the department who defended his dissertation in fall 2010, presented work on “peripheries” in Marxist thought alongside Comparative Literature department Professor Kristin Ross and Associate Professor Ana Dopico, as well as Professor of English Martin Harries. Manu Goswami, an Associate Professor of History, had been invited to the event but proved unable to attend due to illness.

Graduate students Patrick W. Gallagher and Sonia Werner coordinated planning for the event. Professor Ross found that graduate students and faculty presenting work together was an experiment “well worth repeating,” adding, “It isn’t often that faculty and students engage intellectually outside the hierarchical structure of the classroom.”

Other events in the series included an appearance by Tahar Ben Jelloun, who shared a portion of his new novel, Leaving Tangier (Partir 2006), with the Colloquium and respondent Madeleine Dobie, an Associate Professor of French at Columbia University, in October. In November, Micaela Kramer and Patrick W. Gallagher presented dissertation chapters in progress in an event jointly entitled, “Somatic Solidarities.”

In December, Professor Boris Groys offered a presentation on “Time-Based Art.”

Patrick Gallagher is a 5th-year doctoral candidate whose dissertation project focuses on contemporary fictional representations of the post-industrial American city.

(Postponed) Visit by Tahar Ben Jelloun

by Tara Mendola

Leaving Tangier

Each participant received a free copy of Leaving Tangier.

On Friday, October 22, from 3 to 5 PM, CAMEL (Comparative Approaches to Middle Eastern Literatures) and the Comparative Literature Colloquium were delighted to present a seminar with esteemed French-Moroccan novelist Tahar Ben Jelloun. The seminar, originally scheduled for April 2010, was postponed due to the Eyjafjallajökull volcano which delayed all travel in Europe for nearly a month, preventing Mr. Jelloun from leaving Paris and stranding several members of the Comparative Literature department abroad. Due to the generosity of NYU Abu Dhabi in connection with the Comparative Literature department, our group was able to re-schedule for Fall 2010.

Mr. Jelloun spoke on his novel Leaving Tangier (Partir, 2006) in a discussion with Madeleine Dobie, Professor of French at Columbia. Mr. Jelloun has seen his work translated into over 40 languages and is the winner of the Prix Goncourt for his novel La nuit sacrée (1987). His more recent works Cette aveuglante absence de lumière (2001), and Le racisme expliqué à ma fille (2003) have received widespread critical acclaim, both in France and abroad.

Professor Dobie, author of Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language and Culture in French Orientalism (2001) has published extensively on Magrebi fiction, post-colonial theory, and French colonialism and orientalism.

Professor and Chair Jacques Lezra introduced both speakers and spoke of his own experience living in and leaving from Tangier. While Mr. Jelloun opened the discussion with his novel, the lively open seminar ranged from topics of exile and migration in an era of globalization to sexuality and gender in modern Moroccan fiction. Professor Dobie, in deciding to speak “at” rather than “at” Mr. Jelloun, served the role of interlocutor and seminar leader, keeping the debate vital for nearly two hours. To further facilitate such a discussion, all participants had been provided with a free copy of Leaving Tangier in advance of the seminar, and space was limited to a maximum of 35. Clémence Boulouque provided simultaneous translation for Mr. Jelloun, both during his presentation and the open discussion.

Tara Mendola is a fourth year graduate student studying late medieval French and classical Arabic literature.
For this year’s Undergraduate Majors’ Choice Lecture, the students of Comparative Literature selected Laurence Rickels to present on his thorough and exhaustive work, *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick* (2010). Professor Rickels’ title for the lecture was “From Here to California: Philip K. Dick, *The Simulacra* and the Integration of ‘Germany.’”

Laurence Rickels is professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of California in Santa Barbara and Sigmund Freud Professor of Media and Philosophy at the European Graduate School. He has published seven books and edited four collections of critical essays, including *Looking After Nietzsche* (1990), one of the most thoughtful and necessary collaborative works on Nietzsche to date.

With the book launch of *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick*, Laurence Rickels takes off for the outer spaces of critical and philosophical studies in order to land Philip K. Dick’s trek out of Faust’s Germany and onto P.P. Layout’s pad in Californian dreaming.

Of the hundreds of students who flocked to such well-designed courses as *The Vampire Lectures* (1999) and *The Devil Notebooks* (2008), many claimed to recognize the pre-cognitive scientist of fiction, PKD, as an influence to Laurence Rickels’ teaching and writing. One crucial feature of textually encountering Professor Rickels is that you can never take for granted literal and literary appearances: Through a relentless irony, he will explain and exemplify at one and the same time — a talent in the profession of professing something like truth or fact.

For this presentation, Professor Rickels shifted his focus onto the postwar predicament of the integration of Germany as “Our Problem.” This included the ethical-clinical problem of the violent psychopath as failure of interpretation and treatment that can at best be contained. In and around *The Simulacra*, Dick and his intertexts connect denial of mourning to a notion of productivity based on restitution and reparation without responsibility for the specified dead: the quintessential foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, now identified as the enabling context for the postwar German “economic miracle.”

*Laurence Rickels’ lecture “From Here to California: Philip K. Dick, The Simulacra and the Integration of ‘Germany.’”*

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**Alumni News**

**Alison Armstrong** (PhD 1989) teaches literature and writing at School of Visual Arts in the Dept. of Humanities and Sciences, writes essays and reviews for *American Arts Quarterly*, and book reviews for *Irish Literary Supplement*. She was the recipient of an NEH Summer Grant to go to Ireland (Galway/Dublin/Sligo) as part of a group project: “Reassessing Yeats,” in 2008. Her one act play “Ismene,” was published in the Summer 2009 issue of *Notre Dame Review*. In May 2010 she had an exhibition her paintings at Westbeth Gallery.

**André Cardoso** (PhD 2009) has been teaching English-language literatures at the Federal Fluminense University (Universidade Federal Fluminense -- UFF) in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, since January 2010. He is currently studying representations of utopia in recent British and American science fiction.

**Gabrielle Civil** (PhD 2000) is a tenured Associate Professor of English, Women’s Studies & Critical Studies of Race & Ethnicity at St. Catherine University.

**Robert McKee Irwin** (PhD 1999) has been named Chair of the Graduate Group in Cultural Studies at the University of California, Davis. Also, out this year: *Los cuarenta y uno: novela crítico social* by Eduardo Castrejón (pseudonym), edited and with a critical introduction by Robert McKee Irwin, prologue by Carlos Monsiváis (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010).

**Ned Jackson** (MA 1991) continues his illustrated ape-stories which he wrote with his artist-wife. In November of 2010, there was a well-received reading of scenes from his opera libretto, “Big Jim and the Small-Time Investors,” at the Center for Contemporary Opera.

**Martha Kuhlman** (PhD 2001) is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, English and Cultural Studies at Bryant University. The book she coedited with Dave Ball, *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*, was released by the University Press of Mississippi in the spring of 2010, and is already in its second printing. (Page 81 is missing but is available on the publisher’s website: http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/1292). Also, some weeks after turning in the manuscript, Martha had a baby boy, Nicholas Andrew Moffett, born on 8/23/09. [Congratulations, Martha! Welcome, Nicholas!]

**Margherita Pascucci** (PhD 2003) is teaching at NYU-London, Social Foundations III, from January to May 2011.
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