Letter from the Chair

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the 2011-12 academic year, with an especially warm greeting to our outstanding new cohort of first-year graduate students and wonderful mix of visiting scholars. As both Chair and DGS this year, it has been a pleasure to work closely with all of you over the past months.

The fall term has been particularly vibrant, stimulating, and productive. Our Renato Poggioli Graduate Colloquium Series, which meets monthly, began in October with a presentation from Martin Hägglund, who is presently at the Harvard Society of Fellows. Students interested in presenting works-in-progress (for instance, a seminar or conference paper, a prospectus, an article draft, etc.) should contact Björn Kühnicke (kuhnicke@fas.harvard.edu) to request a slot. I also plan on inaugurating a new symposium on “Music and Language,” which will be organized together with the Music Department. An opening event is being planned for the spring.

In addition, we have an exciting roster of guest lectures this year. On October 13 poet and playwright Jean-Christophe Bailly (Professor at the École Nationale Supérieure in Blois) spoke in our department. His brilliantly provocative book, *Le versant animal*, has recently appeared in translation with Fordham as *The Animal Side*. Jacques Lezra, Professor and Chair of Comparative Literature at New York University, gave a stunning and provocative talk entitled “For Bestiality: Mediation more ferarum” on November 17. We have also enjoyed lectures from Lisa Folkmarson Käll (Uppsala University) and Victoria Höög (Lund University), which were organized by two of our visiting scholars, Louise Nilsson and Laetitia Nanquette. I was particularly pleased with the exhibition I organized in conjunction with the Swiss Consulate and Pro Helvetia. The show featured the work of Swiss artist and actionist Pavel Schmidt: “Franz Kafka: Ver-schrieben & Verzeichnet/Written & Drawn”—a collection of 49 images addressing previously unpublished fragments from the Kafka archive. The exhibit ran from September 13 – October 16 at the Sert Gallery in the Carpenter Center. On September 29, we hosted a lively panel discussion, with critical interventions from Stanley Corngold (Princeton), Andreas Kilcher (Zürich), Almut-Barbara Renger (Berlin), and our own Judith Ryan. Pavel Schmidt then offered his own response, followed by a casual reception. Many thanks to those who were able to attend.

In the spring, on April 5, we are thrilled to welcome the internationally acclaimed Egyptologist and cultural theorist, Jan Assmann (Professor Emeritus, Heidelberg), who will give this year’s Renato Poggioli Lecture. Assmann’s innovative books on Egyptian religion and its European afterlife, the legacy of monotheism, and theories of cultural memory have had an important and lasting impact on Comparative Studies. We are all anticipating an engaging and altogether inspiring lecture.

With warmest wishes for a great year,

John Hamilton

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Harvard’s graduate program in Comparative Literature is one of the most dynamic and diverse in the country. Our two dozen faculty members and four dozen graduate students hail from six continents; we teach and publish on work from all periods, several dozen languages, and an ever-increasing variety of sites. We recently restructured our entire program so as to reflect better the needs of both students and the academy in the twenty-first century. New course and language requirements allow students to engage more fully in sophisticated comparative work from their first year at Harvard. We also have significantly strengthened faculty feedback and advising from the first year through the completion of the PhD.

In the summer and fall of 2010 Professor David Damrosch (Chair), Wanda Di Bernardo (Department Administrator), Isaure Mignotte (Program Assistant), Stephanie Frampton (Departmental Teaching Fellow), and I (DGS) revised both the Guide for Graduate Students and the Comparative Literature Teaching Fellows Handbook. These publications clarify expectations for graduate students and reflect the department’s commitment to facilitating student advancement to the degree.

Last fall, Isaure and I digitized the records of all our first- through fourth-year graduate students, making it easier to determine students’ progress. We also followed up with all fifth- through eighth-year graduate students to make sure that dissertation writing was proceeding smoothly and chapter meetings were being held regularly. The aim was to have, by the end of the 2010-11 academic year, all students back on track to meeting requirements and all Incompletes resolved.

As Director of Graduate Studies I tried to foster a departmental culture that encouraged the professional mentoring of all our students. In this spirit, and to complement the Department’s very successful Dissertation Colloquium directed by Professor John Hamilton, I organized the Comparative Literature Professional Development Seminar Series. This series met monthly during the fall and spring semesters and covered teaching, dissertation preparation and writing, publishing, and preparing for the job market, as well as general questions of shaping research agendas and developing a scholarly or nonacademic career. Professors David Damrosch, Christopher Johnson, and Judith Ryan, Lecturer Phoebe Putnam, as well as graduate students Stephanie Frampton, Jamey Graham, and Dennis Tenenboym, assisted in making these evenings great successes.

We were particularly gratified this spring that six of our current and recent graduates accepted ladder faculty and prestigious postdoctoral positions at other institutions, and that four have accepted Lectureship and other positions at Harvard. (For more on their success see “Banner Year for CL Job Applicants”).

In February, the Department’s Admissions Committee extended offers of admission to a brilliant, wonderfully diverse group of new PhD candidates, and we are pleased to welcome six new students this fall.

With its comfortable lounge and meeting and seminar rooms, Comparative Literature’s new home in the historic Dana Palmer House provides the perfect setting for exceptionally collegial scholarly exchange, and we invite you to stop by for a restorative cup of coffee or tea.

- Karen Thornber
2010-2011 DGS
Despite the continued economic crisis and the decrease in literature and area studies positions nationwide, 2010-2011 was a truly stellar year for Comparative Literature job applicants. Nearly all current and recent CL graduate students who went on the market in 2010-2011 landed interviews for ladder faculty positions at leading universities, and many accepted offers for excellent jobs and postdoctoral fellowships. In conversations and email exchanges, the fortunate candidates expressed their sense of relief and gratitude at the end of a long and often grueling process.

Beginning in July last year (2010), Professors Judith Ryan and Karen Thornber, Placement Officers for the Department of Comparative Literature, met individually with students who were on the market, proofread job application materials, held mock interviews, were available for consultation at the MLA, helped with job talks, and assisted with negotiating offers. In September 2010, Professors Ryan and Thornber hosted a workshop, open to all CL graduate students, devoted to job-search strategies, and in October 2010, Professor Christopher Johnson joined Professor Thornber in hosting a workshop on expectations for junior faculty, so that students could compete more effectively with applicants who already had academic positions. For graduate students who were continuing on the job market as well as those who were new to it, a meeting took place in early May 2011; the meeting oriented potential applicants to steps they should take over the summer to gather materials and strengthen their dossiers.

Feedback from some of the successful candidates provides a vignette of last year’s placements. Working in one of the challenging fields for job placement, Sally Livingston said, “I feel very lucky that I’ve gotten one of the rare jobs for comparative medievalists, and in a department (Ohio Wesleyan) in which I can teach courses that parallel those of our own department.” Like Sally, Jacob is enthusiastic about the prospect of doing comparative work in his new position, where he will “have one institutional foot each in Comp Lit and Slavic.” Phoebe Putnam expressed her delight in joining Stanford’s English department as an ACLS faculty fellow. She quoted the “magical words” of her prospective department chair, who noted that she would be able to “teach things that give [her] intellectual energy” and to “write [her] book,” Land Lies in Water: Panoramas and the American Poem. Fatin Abbas, who is pursuing an MFA at Hunter College after receiving her PhD in the fall of 2011, is “very excited” to be able to spend two years focusing on creative writing, a long-standing interest of hers even during the production of her doctoral dissertation.

As of late April 2011, the following Comparative Literature graduate students had accepted ladder faculty and postdoctoral positions: Jacob Emery (CL 2006, 2004-2011 Tutor in the Literature Concentration) went to Indiana University as Assistant Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures; Jen Hui Bon Hoa (CL 2011) moved to Yonsei University as Assistant Professor, Underwood International College, Seoul; Sally Livingston (CL 2008), (Lecturer in Comparative Literature and in History and Literature, 2008-2011) took up a position at Ohio Wesleyan University as Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities-Classics; Dennis Tenenboym (CL 2011) is spending the academic year 2011-12 as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and will move to Columbia University as Assistant Professor in the Department of English in the fall of 2012; and Tamar Abramov (CL 2008), (College Fellow in 2010-11, Department of Comparative Literature) joined the Society of Fellows at the University of Chicago as Collegiate Assistant Professor. Phoebe Putnam (CL 2009, Lecturer in History and Literature 2009-2011), joined Stanford’s English department as an ACLS Faculty Fellow. Other appointments include Jamey Graham (CL 2011), who has been awarded a position as Lecturer in History and Literature, Christine Lee (CL 2011), named Lecturer in Literature, and Stephanie Frampton (CL 2011), who received a GSD/GSAS Curatorial Fellowship from metaLAB at Harvard and is developing “The History of Writing in the Harvard Collections” exhibit this year. Anita Nikkanen (CL 2011) is our Departmental Teaching Fellow for the 2011-2012 school year, and Svetlana Rukhel (CL 2011) is a College Fellow in the Slavic Department. Fatin Abbas (CL 2011) has entered an MFA program in Creative Writing at Hunter College (CUNY), while Christina Svendsen (CL 2010) is continuing as a Lecturer on Literature in our department.

Our heartiest congratulations to our current and recent graduates!

- Judith Ryan and Karen Thornber
2010-2011 Placement Officers
You started as a Professor of Comparative Literature and retired as a Professor of Comparative and World Literature. Do you see a seismic shift here?

I remember two rather brief conversations I had with my faculty advisers at Harvard in 1970. I had been there for about a year and was beginning to be somewhat restive about the limitations that were being imposed on me by graduate school. By that time, I was already actively auditing three or four seminars and courses each semester in addition to taking the normal four seminars for credit. I was just hungry to learn, and it didn’t occur to me then that I was doing anything that might be considered odd or atypical. These classes were in Philosophy, the Intellectual History of Europe, and Latin. My advisors then were Professors Walter Kaiser and Harry Levin, neither of whom I ever met with for more than a few minutes at a time. I had begun my graduate studies with a declared specialization in three literatures—English, French, and German—and in the modern period, Romanticism to the present. At the end of my first year I had shifted around to put German as the major field and English and Spanish (Peninsular) as minor fields. I was doing Latin on my own and was not anticipating formal examinations in Latin literature. However, since my main areas of study as an undergraduate had been in Literature (English, primarily, but also Spanish and French) and Philosophy, and since my love for Philosophy had not diminished, I asked Professors Kaiser and Levin on two occasions to be allowed to present the History of Western Philosophy as a separate and additional field for my general examinations, what we here at Illinois call the preliminary examinations. This is how my advisors became aware of the number and nature of the courses I was auditing. In a tone that I still remember as being sympathetically dismissive, each of them answered that it was not permitted to add Philosophy as a formal field. (Yet I was not asking to substitute Philosophy for one of my literatures; I was asking to add to them.) Both Professors Kaiser and Levin went on to say that I was a student of “literature,” with the adjective “comparative,” and that I was not formally a student of “philosophy” or of an interdisciplinary subset called “philosophy and literature,” or indeed of anything else other than literature. They encouraged me to drop my audits and went on to say that I shouldn’t be trying to make a difficult field like Comparative Literature even more difficult for myself. That experience was perhaps the first time that the profession defined “Comparative Literature” to me in such a way that told me in no uncertain terms what was legitimate and what was not. The comparison was to be between and among literatures, not between and among literatures and other disciplines. That may sound quaint today, given the explosion in literary theory since the late 1970s and given the increasing interdisciplinarity of education generally, but that is the way that Comparative Literature at Harvard was in the 1960s and ‘70s: traditional, conservative, rigorous, demanding, and rather sure of itself concerning the nature of the field.

Anyway, I silently disobeyed my advisors and, without telling them, continued to audit Latin, intellectual history, and philosophy classes (symbolic logic with Quine; Plato, Kant, Hegel, aesthetics, phenomenology, and ethics with other professors). Although I chafed under the command not to study philosophy, I eventually came to appreciate one of the important consequences of that command: the literatures that I did study at Harvard I came to control as well (or as badly) as graduate students who were single-literature specialists in single-literature departments. I became comfortable linguistically with each of the literatures I studied and, because of that, became comfortable with philology, with archival research, and with wide swaths of literary history from the Middle Ages on. Ironically, perhaps, after leaving Harvard I became one of the co-founders of a journal called Philosophy and Literature, which is now edited out of the University of New Zealand, and I co-edited two or three of its inaugural issues before I left the University of Michigan-Dearborn for the University of Illinois. So I got to continue my “philosophy” after all. And I never stopped reading philosophy. In fact, once I got to the University of Illinois, I taught philosophers like Plato, Descartes, Marx or Nietzsche almost every year for 30 years.

“Literature” at Harvard during my graduate school days meant primarily Western and European literatures. Once in a while a graduate student did Sanskrit or Hebrew, but classical languages for us meant primarily Greek and Latin. I don’t remember Comparative Literature graduate students specializing in Chinese, Japanese or Korean literatures, for instance, though more than one student did specialize in Russian (Donald Fanger had recently joined the department).

Nowadays, the study of literature is more than just that of literature, and more than just that of Western literature. In a way, my career has been a long and continuous rebellion against certain aspects of my excellent graduate education at Harvard, for from the moment I left Cambridge I began to champion interdisciplinarity and the globalization of literary study, including more “peripheral” cultures like Latin America and India. At the same time, however, I have maintained a fierce devotion to the study of literatures in their original languages. My devotion to that principle has been such that in my scholarship I have refused and still refuse to analyze literary texts or authors if I do not control them in the original. This principle has limited the range of my analyses, of course, but it has also prevented me from making superficial assumptions or from writing textual commentaries based on translations. And I have tried over the years to infuse a similar devotion to that principle in my graduate students.

Yes, the shift from “Comparative Lit-
erature” to “Comparative and World Literature” has been seismic, and our program at the University of Illinois has been one of the pioneer programs in making this shift. We reshaped ourselves in the mid-1980s. Our concerns then as now were and are not so much to make the paradigm shift (that probably would have happened at some point without us, anyway), but to make it responsibly. The great danger in becoming a “Comparative and World Literature” program is in losing the commitment to the original languages of the literatures studied. If that commitment is lost, then the downward slope becomes slippery indeed. That is my general fear for the profession as a whole.

Do you think that the recent resurgence of world literature betokens the move in literary studies toward alterity studies and that the institutionalization of world literature is the next "gimmick" after multiculturalism and postcolonialism? Does this resurgence resemble them in its mandate to "do" the Other on the cheap, that is, without any real knowledge of source cultures and their languages?

A large and complex question. I am not quite sure what you mean by “be-token.” Anticipate? Prefigure? There is a chicken-and-egg problem here, and I don’t know enough about the history of alterity studies or world literature (whose world?) to hazard a strong opinion about which set of terms is driving the other. The concept of alterity in Western culture has been around at least since Homer, and Greek anthropology-ethnography drew its strength from conceptualizations of the Other – barbarian, inhuman, monstrous, incapable of language (of Greek, that is), eater of raw rather than cooked food, a non-cultivator of grain etc., etc. The concept may be traced from Homer through Herodotus and beyond, into Latin literature. One sometimes forgets that the letters of Julius Caesar were among the first documents in Latin culture to establish justifications of colonization by trumpeting the values of the civilized over those of the barbarian. His descriptions of the Gauls, for instance, as uncivilized and superstitious practitioners of human sacrifice, as mostly lawless people, resemble countless descriptions throughout the history of conflict and colonization. Such descriptions resurface with particular strength during periods like the colonization of the New World, the expansion of the American frontier, and the European contests in the 19th century which carved up Africa. In the 1960s, a scholar named Herbert Lüthy wrote that the history of colonization was nothing less than the history of humanity itself. Though that seems to me to be an exaggeration, it is certainly undeniable that all too frequently the contacts between nations and cultures are transformed into struggles between unequal powers, hence colonization in one form or another. And literature reflects that.

I have no quarrel at all with world literature, alterity studies, or colonial-postcolonial studies. In fact, the history of comparative literature not as an academic field but as an activity, something that in the West begins with the Greeks being read and adapted by the Romans, is in my view the history of most of literature. My quarrel is with those who think that these concepts are new. They’re not. To think that they are reveals a kind of provincialism, an insularity of training and education. A reasonable knowledge of several languages, of the development of their literatures, and of the history of philosophical and social thought might diminish some of the professional giddiness we sometimes experience when confronted with what appears to be a new theory or philosophy, a new approach or a new critical terminology.

Is world literature the next “gimmick” in university education? I don’t know. It need not be. However, if done “on the cheap,” without some connection to the original sources and without a disciplined sense of literary and intellectual history, it will reduce literature and literary history to the lowest common denominator. That is predictable. We should not kid ourselves: simply because we teach something called “world literature” does not mean that we actually are bona fide professionals in “world literature” itself. No one person can be. With hard work, most of us can probably acquire a reasonable expertise in six or seven literary traditions and their languages but beyond that we have to rely on translations and on the scholarship of specialists. Even so formidable a polyglot as Sir William Jones – founder of the Asiatick Society of Bengal in 1784 and able to use some 28 languages in his work – felt constrained by his linguistic limitations.

As far as multiculturalism and postcolonialism are concerned, here, too, I believe that there is a good way and a bad way to do them. The good way is with linguistic competence and a sound knowledge of literary, intellectual, and cultural history. The bad way is without that competence or knowledge.

What do you think about the recent history and influence of theory in Comparative Literature and in the national languages – the reign of French theory, the backlash against it, American provincial cooptation of French theory, the minority role of German stains of theory, for example. Do you see this as an inevitable chain of events? Where has it left us?
In the late 1970s, Paul de Man visited our campus and spoke to a critical theory study group that I was then involved with. In the evening, at a reception, I happened to be standing next to de Man when a colleague of mine who was a long-time friend of de Man approached him and asked him how he felt about dressing up some of his old ideas with a new theoretical vocabulary. I have always remembered the cynicism in de Man’s answer as he acknowledged the truth behind that remark: “Well, it sells; if it seems new that is how you make a splash.” After de Man died, and after the revelations of his Nazi sympathies and collaborationist writings had come out, I remembered those words again and wondered if deconstruction itself were somehow his unconscious – or perhaps fully conscious – defense, ex post facto, for the cynical opportunism and relativism of his writings in the 1940s.

In the early 1990s, Charlie Bernheimer asked me to contribute an essay to what would become Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism. I turned him down because I had too much on my plate at the time and felt that I couldn’t have met the deadlines. In retrospect, I should have participated, for, as it turned out, I had a somewhat different take on the meaning of multiculturalism and its significance to our discipline than Charlie did. In essence, I felt differently about how best to expand the methodological boundaries of our discipline. Charlie did ask me to critique a draft of his introduction before the book was published. I read it and commented that he was reducing too much of comparative literature to current fads, diminishing the importance of the knowledge of languages, and misreading the significance of the non-literary in our field. When the book was published, I saw that my comments had had little effect. A couple of years later, when Charlie and I met at a conference, he told me that I had been more right than he had realized but that he had been seduced at the time by some of the trendy voices then being heard with particular strength. He said that if he could do it over, he would have done it differently. But Charlie was taken from us soon after, and I regret that our conversations could not have evolved over the years, for we had a “natural” bond, both of us having been dissertation students of Harry Levin.

Theories and critical approaches have always been part of our highly self-conscious field. I don’t see that as a weakness. But I do see an unquestioning reliance on theory as a danger to the independence of critical thought and even to thinking itself. Over the years, I have seen graduate students at Illinois become so enamored of a particular critical approach that they were unable to see anything except through that particular lens. Limited by a critical terminology and certain patterns of thought, they tended to see in their texts or authors only what their critical approaches allowed them to see. Because of these potential pitfalls, I have always insisted to my dissertation students that their work be grounded in more than one critical approach and that they use mostly plain style so that their thinking, not their terminology, would carry the argument. The students who took my advice to heart generally wrote dissertations that were somewhat shorter than most, clearer, less dependent on specialized critical terminology, and thus more accessible to a wider audience.

You ended your question by asking where the influence of theory in Comparative Literature and national literature departments has left us. Curiously, partly because of the backlash against theory, the field is becoming more traditional and respectful of the old virtues of literary and historical contextualism. All that is to the good, especially if we can retain some of the theoretical sophistication of the past two decades, for that will encourage the next generation to build on our work rather than to reject it and us along with it.

Yet at the same time that the field is becoming a bit more traditional, it is becoming also more narrow and provincial. Theory, initially seen as a broadening influence, now also can be seen to have had a narrowing effect. Many of today’s students are studying fewer languages and literatures than they did before, and they don’t feel at all guilty about that, and many are also feeling comfortable about doing their scholarly work in translation, and they don’t feel guilty about that, either.

Has Comp Lit totally lost its way? Has it been/Should it be replaced by more “relevant” or meaningful institutional homes such as Humanities Centers, Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinary Programs, Transliterature Studies, World Literature, or just plain “English Literature Now Does the World”?

I don’t believe that we have lost our way – yet. I have two basic reactions to this kind of question. First, as we age we tend to view the past with more nostalgia than the past perhaps warrants. If one looks at the major statements about Comparative Literature from its major practitioners, most of them project, to a degree, a feeling of crisis, of siege. This is natural in a discipline whose existence directly depends on extremely high standards and also on the anxiety that those high standards will not be met, either by us or by those departments seeking to colonize our territory. Second, this question recognizes what I think of as “the challenge of success.” The comparative perspective has become so successful academically that it is now becoming the norm, whatever name you give it: transnational, international, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and so on. While the perspective is being adopted everywhere in the academy, the intellectual rigor and the training that legitimize that perspective, endowing it with a solid foundation, are not being similarly adopted. The result is an inevitable decline in academic standards.

What can we do about all this? Probably not very much. We can try to make the various centers and programs in our institutions adhere to linguistic stan-
A Comparatist’s Life: Michael Palencia-Roth

dards, to a solid foundation in the history of criticism and theory, as well as to that upon which both are founded, namely philosophy and the history of ideas. We can ask that specialization in a field be complemented by broader contextual studies. We can ask that work in a field actually be grounded in the texts of that field and not be the result of unfounded speculations, however interesting. But institutions, as well as people, tend generally to take the easier path.

Comparative Literature has not lost its way. Like all organisms, it must adapt or die. I am confident that as practitioners of the discipline we will adapt. I am hopeful that in doing so we will retain the central strengths of the discipline. That is now no longer up to me; it is up to my colleagues and students who come after me.

You have had a successful career in terms of scholarship, teaching, and service. How have you balanced these, and what do you tell your graduate students about life in the profession?

The cliché is true that all three are important, but for me everything has flowed from teaching. Teaching is first; it is the bedrock of my existence. But there are many ways of teaching. The classroom is only one of them. There are tutorials, long conversations, office hours, the direction of theses and dissertations, the advice on jobs, and so on. One teaches students and sometimes colleagues even when one might not be aware that one is doing so – simply by the way that one lives or approaches questions or problems, or treats individuals in the more private moments of our lives. I have even tried, but with only modest success in the final analysis, to “educate” my university about the nature of our discipline, about the value of a humanistic and historically grounded education, about internationalism and multiculturalism. Finally, my scholarship flows from my teaching – with the large exception of my work on Gabriel García Márquez, whom I did not actually teach in a class or seminar until rather late in my career. The germ for many of my essays have come from “aha” moments in the classroom and then from following up those moments in that semester or in other semesters. So the teaching fertilizes the scholarship and then the scholarship fertilizes the teaching. There is a wonderful symbiosis in all this, a kind of rhythm of discovery and the deepening of knowledge and understanding that in my case I got from active teaching. And, in retirement, I do miss that part of the academic life, though I don’t miss its politics, internecine squabbles, petty jealousies and those cyclical budget crises that make all of us anxious and miserable from time to time.

What do I tell my graduate students? It’s a wonderful life.

You took early retirement. Why? And what are you doing these days?

I developed serious problems with my vision in early 2004 which made reading and teaching rather difficult. Several operations have improved my vision, but that brush with blindness pushed me toward the decision to husband my time and energy in order to be able to complete those long research projects which I had delayed out of devotion to my students. I retired in May 2007 and am now very happy to have done so, though the first few months were unsettling. Being emeritus has permitted me to do things and accept invitations that my teaching schedule prevented. I have done more traveling than usual – for instance to Paris several times in the past couple of years, to set up a conference and to work with UNESCO, the École pratique des hautes études, and the Sorbonne. Sponsored by the United Nations, I also traveled to Japan and, as a result of that and other visits, have just accepted a position at Reitaku University, Japan. It’s a wonderful life.

Michael Palencia-Roth is Trowbridge Scholar in Literary Studies and Emeritus Professor of Comparative and World Literature and Latin American & Caribbean Studies at the University of Illinois. He is also Senior Adviser at the Research Center for Moral Science, Institute of Moralogy in Reitaku University, Japan. This article has been re-printed with permission from “Michael Palencia-Roth Answers Dorothy Figueira” (Interview) in Festschrift for Michael Palencia-Roth, special issue of The Comparatist, Vol. 33 (May 2009): 5-12. Contributors to the Festschrift included David Damrosch, Paul J. Heald, Eugene Eoyang, Caroline D. Eckhardt, Gerald Gillespie, and Margaret R. Higonnet.
Dorrit Cohn Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

On Saturday, April 9, 2011, the International Society for the Study of Narrative bestowed on Dorrit Cohn, Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Literature Emerita, the Wayne C. Booth Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to narrative theory and the teaching of narrative at its annual conference, hosted this year by Washington University in St. Louis. Though not able to attend, Dorrit was apprised of the award and received a plaque at her residence in Lexington, MA, just before moving to Durham, NC, to be closer to one of her sons. An academic panel was organized with a paper revisiting the enduring contribution of Cohn’s approach to the rendering of consciousness in fiction, *Transparent Minds* (1978, 2nd ed. 1984, trans. into French and Modern Greek), and a paper discussing Cohn’s explorations of the distinctions of fictional and non-fictional discourse, rehearsed among other places in her award-winning book *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999). Additionally, comments were read saluting Dorrit, including ones by Harvard’s Susan R. Suleiman and Maria Tatar. The formal citation bestowing the award was written and read by one of our department’s graduates, Irene Kacandes, AB 1981, AM 1984, PhD 1991 (currently a professor and chair at Dartmouth College). Cohn’s work was assessed as “foundational for much of the subsequent development of narratology”; she was thanked for the “unforgettable readings of authors we thought we knew and for introducing us to several we might never have encountered otherwise”; and she was lauded for her integrity in all matters, intellectual, pedagogical, and collegial. (For the full text, see [http://narrative.georgetown.edu/awards/booth-cohn.php](http://narrative.georgetown.edu/awards/booth-cohn.php).) Despite illness, Dorrit Cohn has stayed active in retirement, learning Attic Greek to further her investigations of Plato, and translating the work of Jean-Marie Schaeffer (*Why Fiction?* U Nebraska P, 2010). She is a Corresponding Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

- Irene Kacandes
PhD 1991

Texts in Turmoil: Global Health and World Literature

This year I've been working on my third book – *Texts in Turmoil: Global Health and World Literature* – which analyzes how literatures from around the world have grappled with global health concerns. Creative engagement with diseases whose etiologies and consequences transcend linguistic, national, and regional borders is exceptionally revealing when studied in the context of worldwide cultural and resource currents since 1945, particularly those occurring along the arc from lands near the East China Sea (China, North and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan) to areas around the Indian Ocean (Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa). As the first study of post-1945 literary flows among these sites, my book strives to reconceptualize understandings of national, regional, and global cultural contacts, transformations, and identities, as well as changing relationships between (world) literature and (global) medicine across time and space. *Texts in Turmoil* discusses literary negotiations with both infectious and non-communicable diseases, and with widely recognized pollution diseases as well as ailments with probable but unproven connections to environmental conditions. Most discussion of creative writing on global health understandably focuses on how texts portray human physical and psychological suffering. In contrast, my book is less concerned with deliberations on human anguish itself than with how texts address and change perceptions of health and disease, both individual and collective. Creative works frequently depict individuals and societies confronted with illness as tormented not only by bodily affliction but also by the inadequacy of existing conceptions of health and disease. Not only are individuals and societies pushed toward developing new standards for thinking about infirmity; in the case of diseases with global manifestations these new norms themselves struggle to move within and through multiple cultures, nations, and languages. The difficulties facing peoples afflicted with global diseases thus are even more complex than is usually understood. Creative works on these challenges from East Asia and lands surrounding the Indian Ocean force readers to consider how large-scale disasters transform understandings of disease and what space, if any, remains for healing. When examined together, these texts also dismantle postcolonial paradigms, bringing to the fore overlooked cross-cultural contacts, both those within postwar East Asia and those between this region and South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. By focusing on how literatures throughout these areas confront global problems, *Texts in Turmoil* attempts to reveal the nature and significance of the vibrant transcultural interactions flowing between East Asia and regions bordering the Indian Ocean during the last half century.

- Karen Thornber
Harris K. Weston Associate Professor of the Humanities
2011 Faculty Prizes:

We are pleased to announce that John Hamilton is the recipient of the 2011 Petra Shattuck Excellence in Teaching Award.

We are pleased to announce that Christopher Johnson won the 2010 Premio Valle-Inclán (joint winner) for Selected Poetry of Francisco de Quevedo: A Bilingual Edition from the Translators Association of the Society of Authors and the Times Literary Supplement.

We are pleased to announce that Karen Thornber won two major international awards for her book, Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature: the International Comparative Literature Association’s Anna Balakian Book Prize for the best book in the world in the field of comparative literature published in the last three years by a scholar under age forty; and the John Whitney Hall Book Prize of the Association for Asian Studies for the best book in Japanese studies.

2011 Departmental Prizes:

Congratulations to Christine Lee and to Daniel Frim, graduate and undergraduate recipients of the Susan Anthony Potter Prize for 2011.

Congratulations to Rita Banerjee for receiving the Tom and Laurel Nebel Graduate Fellowship for her dissertation writing and research.

Undergraduate Prizes:

We proudly announce that four of the twenty-two 2011-12 Hoopes Prizes in the Humanities were awarded to undergraduate concentrators in Literature. The Hoopes Prize is given for the purpose of promoting, improving, and enhancing the quality of education . . . in literary, artistic, musical, scientific, historical, or other academic subjects made part of the College curriculum under Faculty supervision and instruction, particularly by recognizing, promoting, honoring, and rewarding excellence in the work of undergraduates and their capabilities and skills in any subject, projects of research in science or the humanities, or in specific written work of the students under the instruction or supervision of the Faculty.

The Literature Winners are:

Rebecca Cooper, “Quo Vadis: The Life and Literary Philosophy of David Foster Wallace.” Sally Livingston, advisor; Christopher Johnson, mentor.


Oliver Strand, “The Web on the Wall, the Moon in the Sea: Reality, the Imagination, and Modernist Aesthetics.” Björn Kühnicke, advisor; Dan Albright, mentor.


We are pleased to announce that Marina Connelly won the first annual Barbara Johnson Memorial Prize for her Junior Essay, “Words for God: a Study of Religious Text as Psychoanalytic Transient Phenomenon.”

2011 Individual Achievement Green Carpet Award:

The Office for Sustainability awarded Isaure Mignotte with an Individual Achievement Green Carpet Award for her outstanding dedication and hard work towards campus sustainability at Harvard.
James Engell  During academic year 2010-11, he served as the GlaxoSmithKline Senior Fellow – an illuminated codex with an Old Spanish translation of the Hebrew Bible and over a thousand exegetical glosses (mostly Jewish, some Christian) which jointly constitute one of the most important vernacular Bibles of the European Middle Ages. Thanks to a generous grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, he will sequester himself on Arragel’s behalf, along with a few other colleagues and friends, in semi-monastic fashion and coordinate their joined efforts, the fruits of which should see the light long before Harvard celebrates its 400th anniversary.

John Hamilton enjoyed a particularly productive sabbatical year. He worked primarily on finishing a book-length project entitled Careless & Carefree: Security in the Western Tradition, A Comparative Philological Approach and took advantage of many opportunities at the National Humanities Center, working on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He also gave a public lecture at the Center, “What Is College For?” which was an updated and expanded version of a talk he once presented to parents of juniors at Harvard College. He has recently published on Samuel Johnson and has articles soon appearing in the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics and the Virgil Encyclopedia, as well as two additional articles on Johnson. The text that he conceived and co-edited, Environment: An Interdisciplinary Anthology, published in 2008 by Yale University Press, is now widely used in programs in environmental studies. He continues to teach rhetoric in General Education, as well as undergraduate and graduate courses and seminars in eighteenth-century literature and comparative Romanticism.

Luis Girón-Negrón Since the summer of 2010, he has devoted every spare moment he could find, in between teaching and leisure coffees at his other “office” in Café Pamplona, to a long-term collaborative project that will enjoy his undivided attention during a year-long sabbatical (2011-2012): i.e. an annotated critical edition and study of the 15th-century Biblia de Arragel – an illuminated codex with an Old Spanish translation of the Hebrew Bible and over a thousand exegetical glosses (mostly Jewish, some Christian) which jointly constitute one of the most important vernacular Bibles of the European Middle Ages. Thanks to a generous grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, he will sequester himself on Arragel’s behalf, along with a few other colleagues and friends, in semi-monastic fashion and coordinate their joined efforts, the fruits of which should see the light long before Harvard celebrates its 400th anniversary.

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Christie McDonald’s two most recent collaborative projects were published in 2010: Rousseau and Freedom (edited with Stanley Hoffmann) and the collective volume edited with Susan Suleiman, French Global: A New Approach to French Literary History. She and her husband, Michael Rosengarten, also just completed their first year as Co-Masters of Mather House at Harvard.

Judith Ryan was awarded a Humboldt Research Prize in recognition of her scholarship; the prize was conferred at Schloß Charlottenburg, Berlin, in June 2010. She is using the award to support her project on German colonialism, a book tentatively called “Colonial Fever.” In the meantime, her book The Novel After Theory will be published by Columbia University Press in 2011.
Karen Thornber recently received two major international awards for her first book, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Harvard 2009): the International Comparative Literature Association’s Anna Balakian Book Prize, for the best book in the world in the field of Comparative Literature published in the last three years by a scholar under age forty; and the John Whitney Hall Book Prize of the Association for Asian Studies (the largest area studies association in the world), for the best English-language book on Japan. While on leave last year, funded by a Chiang Ching-kuo (Taiwan) Foundation Junior Scholar Grant, she completed her second book, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, forthcoming from Michigan as a lead title in fall 2011. She now is writing her third book, *Texts in Turmoil: Reimagining Regions and Worlds*, which examines postwar cultural contact among East Asia and South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa in the context of global health concerns and resource control; this project is funded by a grant from the Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul). In addition, Karen is completing a volume of Japanese poetry translations. This year she also has published articles on eco-criticism (eco-feminism), transculturation, intertextuality, postwar intra-East Asian cultural contacts, and Japanese literature of the atomic bomb. In 2010-2011 she gave talks on her various projects at Columbia, Michigan, Rutgers, UC Davis, UCLA, and Yale, as well as in Canada, Japan (where she gave the keynote address at a conference on intra-East Asian comparative literature), Korea, and Vietnam (where she gave four workshops for the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences in Hanoi), and at a number of international conferences and smaller workshops. As DGS, Karen enjoyed working closely with our graduate students; in addition to assisting individual students with all aspects of the newly revised graduate program, she launched the monthly Professional Development Seminar Series, which covered everything from teaching to dissertating and the job search. All graduate students were warmly invited to these events. William Mills Todd, III spent academic year 2009-2010 on leave (although still writing recommendations and reading dissertations). He spent much of the year finishing a number of articles: “Moral Hazard of the Russian Peasant” (coauthored, for *Journal of Political Economy*), “Открытия и прорывы советской теории литературы в пост-сталинскую эпоху” (for the NLO Press in Moscow), pieces on Russian encyclopedias and on “thick journals” for a French volume on Russian “places of memory,” a paper on Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *Golovlevs*, and a chapter on “Literary Institutions in Russia” for a French history of Russian literature. He attended the AAASS Convention in Boston, where he gave a paper on the serialization of fiction in the nineteenth century, and the International Dostoevsky Society Symposium in Naples, where he compared Dostoevsky and Tolstoy as writers of serialized fiction. He was honored (and roasted) in two panels on “Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative” at the AAASS Convention. The highlight of the year was a month in Los Angeles spent grandparenting his new granddaughter and working on his book *In The Fullness of Time*, which is under contract with Harvard University Press.
**Graduate Student News & Profiles**

**Rita Banerjee** is writing on the development and concerns of South Asian literary modernisms from the mid-20th century in languages such as Bengali, Hindi, and English for her dissertation, entitled *Understanding South Asian Literary Modernisms Beyond the Postcolonial Paradigm*. At the 2009 and 2011 ACLA Conference, she organized and hosted a seminar entitled “Re-envisioning South Asian Literatures” which examined the local and global reach of South Asian literatures as well as the place of South Asian literatures and languages within global literary canons and networks, respectively. She is currently editing a volume of papers based on these conference meetings with Richard Delacy and Amardeep Singh. In 2011, she presented a paper, entitled “Beyond the Anxiety of Influence: Engagement and Experimentation of Bengali Authors with Local and International Poetics” at the SSEAS Graduate Student Conference at UC Berkeley, and in July 2011, gave a guest lecture, entitled “Beyond the Subaltern Taboo: Rural Narratives in South Asian Literary Modernisms” at the Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany. Her first collection of poems, *Cracklers at Night*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2010, and her novella, *A Night with Kali*, has recently been digitized by the Brooklyn Art-House Co-op and was featured in art galleries nationwide this summer as part of *The Fiction Project* (2011) tour. Her new writing is forthcoming in *The New Renaissance and DesiLit* and her poetry has recently been featured KBOO Radio’s APA Compass in Portland, Oregon. She is currently a Visiting Scholar in the SSEAS Department at UC Berkeley for the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Guy Smoot** will be a Teaching Fellow at Harvard for David Damrosch’s course “the Philosopher and the Tyrant,” and an Adjunct Lecturer at Brooklyn College teaching in “Classical Cultures” in Spring 2012. Guy is writing his dissertation on “the Poetics of Ethnicization in the Homeric Iliad.” He is hoping this year to make progress with his dissertation and publish a number of his papers on Ancient Greek Epic and Tragedy.

**Luke Taylor** is in his fifth year of the Comparative Literature program and is beginning to write his thesis, *Figures of Digression in the Renaissance*. His interests focus on rhetoric, genre, and travel in early modern Spain, Italy, and England. He also enjoys teaching across a broad range of topics as a TF and Tutor in the Literature Concentration, and mentoring students more generally in his role as Resident Tutor at Cabot House. His favorite kind of digression involves several coffees and Café Pamplona. He was delighted to receive the Susan Anthony Potter prize for a graduate comparative essay last year.

**Dennis Y. Tenen (Tenenboym)** finished his dissertation and is now a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society. In September of 2012, Dennis will be joining the faculty of Columbia University as an Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities and New Media in the department of English and Comparative Literature.

**Undergraduate Student News & Profiles**

**Nell S. Hawley** (AB 2011) is a former Literature concentrator whose focus was Sanskrit Epic and Drama. Her senior thesis, “Bhasa’s Karnabharam: A Bold Look at a Beloved Hero,” examined an early South Asian playwright’s surprisingly hilarious take on one of the most sympathetic characters in the Sanskrit epic Mahabhara. Nell has been studying Sanskrit since her first day at Harvard and now works as a Sanskrit tutor in New York City. She blogs in and about Sanskrit daily at sanskritnyc.com/blog. While at Harvard, Nell was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Junior 24, graduated summa cum laude, and received a Hoopes Prize for her senior thesis.

**Lauren Ianni** is a senior Comparative Literature Concentrator with a Secondary Field in Visual and Environmental Studies. For her thesis, she is exploring how spaces of environmentally, technologically and self-imposed threat are constructed through cinematic space of threshold. Outside of Comparative Literature, she works as a Curatorial Innovation Fellow for the metaLAB at Harvard and as co-director of the annual Harvard Student Art Show.

**Molly O’Laughlin** (AB 2011) For her Literature degree, she wrote a thesis entitled: “Georgette! : A Translation with Commentary.” She presented another paper, “Dancing the Nation,” at the Gordon College Literatures and Linguistics Undergraduate Colloquium in March. Molly is currently living in New York City, employed as an intern for Archipelago Books and as a bookseller for Books of Wonder.

Sara Bartel (AB 2006) is currently in her second year of law school and finds that literary theory is a fantastic background for wrestling with - and embracing, to some degree - the ambiguities of legal texts and doctrines. Theory also haunted her more explicitly in her first interview for a summer internship. She ended up chatting about Derrida with a philosopher-turned-environmental-lawyer who was at Yale in the early 80s! From deconstruction to statutory construction - same ghosts. Her well-wishes to all colleagues, new and old!

Bruce A. Beatie (PhD 1967) has been retired for four years from Cleveland State University, where he taught for 37 years and chaired the Department of Modern Languages for the first seven of those years. He is now Professor Emeritus of Comparative and Medieval Literature. In those years, he published 29 scholarly articles – the first (and the one most frequently cited by other scholars) began as a term paper in Professor Paul Benichou’s class on the Spanish popular ballads. The research he does now is mostly on popular fiction (science fiction and mystery novels), and he does a lot of book-reviewing. After his first wife died in 1989, he remarried; for the last 20 years Beatie and his wife have lived in Berea, Ohio.

Alexander Beecroft (PhD 2003) is Associate Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature, and Director of the Comparative Literature Program, at the University of South Carolina. His book, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation*, was published by Cambridge University Press in January 2010, and he is currently at work on a new project, titled *An Ecology of Verbal Art: Literature and its Worlds, From Local to Global*, for which he has been awarded a Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship from the ACLS for 2011-12. He is also the Secretary-Treasurer designate for the American Comparative Literature Association for 2011-2016.

Alethea Black’s (AB 1991) work has won the Arts & Letters Prize, has been cited as distinguished in *The Best American Short Stories*, and has appeared in numerous literary magazines. Her debut collection of short stories, *I Knew You’d Be Lovely* (Broadway Books/Random House) hit the bookstores this past year. It has been called “smart ... full of heart” by Joan Silber and “downright brilliant” by Robert Olen Butler. The penultimate story features a character known as Ace who took the SATs stoned and still got a nearly perfect score, has a tattoo of Chaucer on his left bicep, and is attempting to rewrite the Bible in the anapestic tetrameter of Dr. Seuss. He is, naturally, a Harvard graduate.

Joshua Billings (AM 2007) recently finished his dissertation in Classics at Oxford, entitled *A Genealogy of the Tragic*. It considers the theory of tragedy in German Idealism from the perspective of classical reception, arguing for a comparative and genealogical viewpoint on the place of tragedy in modern thought. He has recently published on Hölderlin and Plato (*Classical Receptions Journal*), the union of the arts in the eighteenth century (*Journal of the History of Ideas*), and has contributed chapters on the tragic chorus in German Idealism and Benjamin’s reading of Hamlet (both volumes expected from CUP in 2011). This year he is a Junior Research Fellow at...
St. John’s College, Cambridge, and the next year he will begin a job as Assistant Professor of Humanities and Classics at Yale. It was a particular pleasure to have John Hamilton speak at Oxford this past fall, and he is looking forward to being within train distance of his friends and colleagues in Cambridge, MA!

Tamara Chin (AB 1997) is an assistant professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago.

Howard Clarke (PhD 1960)
After leaving Harvard in 1960, he taught for nine years at Oakland University and twenty-two years at the University of California, Santa Barbara, writing five books in the areas of Greek and Roman epic. After early retirement from UCSB in 1991, he switched to Christian beginnings and published The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers (Indiana, 2003). He also worked for seventeen years as a lecturer on cruise ships in and around the Mediterranean, retiring in 2010.

Jenny Davidson (AB 1993) is an associate professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia. She has published two academic books (the more recent is Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century [Columbia UP]) and three novels, and blogs regularly at Light Reading (jennydavidson.blogspot.com). A post-tenure sabbatical has just allowed her to draft two new books: a little book on literary style (Austen, Proust, James, Barthes, Hollinghurst, etc.) and a novel that transposes The Bacchae to contemporary Morning-side Heights.

Mary Di Lucia (PhD 1993)
This year, she has been home caring for Isaac, who was born in September 2010. On that front, she has been getting involved in the leadership aspects of an organization called Attachment Parenting International, which is Winnicottian in a much more hands-on way than she ever imagined back in grad school. Meanwhile, she has some new work out at Painted Bride Quarterly and /nor, but most excitingly, she has been doing some regular collaborations with the artist Laura F. Gibellini from Madrid. One of her works is featured in her book Construyendo un Lugar/Constructing a Place, Madrid: Complutense, 2011. And just this past September, “Variations on a Domestic Interior” was performed at “Salon: Laura F. Gibellini” in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, at the ISCP, where she is a fellow.

Cara Eisenpress (AB 2007), is the co-author of the cookbook-memoir, In the Small Kitchen: 100 Recipes from Our Year of Cooking in the Real World, which was published by William Morrow/Harper Collins in May 2011.

Nergis Ertürk (AB 1999) is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Pennsylvania State University, University Park. She received her AB in Literature from Harvard and her MA, MPhil, and PhD in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University. She is the author of Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey, a study of Turkish language politics and comparative methodology, Oxford University Press, 2011. Her scholarship has appeared in the journals PMLA, Modernism/Modernity, boundary 2, and New Literary History. From 2006-2008, she was Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Binghamton University, SUNY. She was a fellow at Columbia University’s Institute for Comparative

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Wendy B. Faris (PhD 1975) is professor and chair of the English Department at the University of Texas at Arlington. She is the author of Carlos Fuentes (Frederick Ungar, 1983), Labyrinths of Language: Symbolic Landscape and Narrative Design in Modern Fiction (Johns Hopkins, 1988), and Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative (Vanderbilt, 2004), and the co-editor (with Lois Parkinson Zamora) of Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community (Duke, 1995). She continues to work in the fields of modern and contemporary fiction in Britain, France, Latin America, and the U.S. Her research and teaching interests include modernism, Virginia Woolf, and Bloomsbury, magical realism, primitivism, and the relations between modern and contemporary painting and literature.

Ally Field (PhD 2008) is in her 3rd year as an Assistant Professor of Cinema & Media Studies at UCLA. She is currently completing a book titled Filming Uplift and Projecting Possibility: The Image of Black Modernity, on African American uplift films of the 1910s and the film production of southern agricultural and industrial educational institutions. She is also co-editing a book on the “L.A. Rebellion,” a group of African American filmmakers that came out of UCLA in the 1970s-1990s. She is always happy to talk with current and former Comp Lit students about the job market, film studies, or anything else: afield@tft.ucla.edu.

Dana Gioia (AM 1975) has just been appointed the Judge Widney Professor of Poetry and Public Culture at the University of Southern California, which is Gioia’s first academic appointment. From 2003-2009, Gioia served as the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts where he created a bipartisan coalition that significantly raised the agency’s budget while launching the largest programs in NEA history. More recently he has been the director of the Harman-Eisner program in the Arts at the Aspen Institute. Gioia has published three books of poetry, the most recent of which, Interrogations at Noon, won the American Book Award, and three books of criticism, most notably Can Poetry Matter?, which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle award. He has also edited over twenty anthologies of poetry and fiction. He is the recipient of 11 honorary degrees and numerous awards, including the 2010 Laetare Medal. Gioia has also written two opera librettis. He is the father of two sons (the older son, Ted, an English major at Harvard). Gioia currently divides his time between Washington, DC, and California. His new book of poems, Pity the Beautiful, will be released in early 2012.

Daniel Fried (PhD 2003) is currently Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and East Asian Studies at the University of Alberta. His research interests include: the history of Chinese literary criticism, especially as it compares with European traditions; intellectual history considered as sometimes-more-than-mere epiphenomenon of social, economic, and cultural histories; Daoist textual traditions and influences; and comparative methodologies and post-theoretical theory.

Jonathan Goldman (AB 1995) Following college, he went to medical school at Stanford and completed internal medicine and oncology training at UCSF
and UCLA. He is practicing in Santa Monica. He works in early drug development and research-es lung cancer. He married Sarah Rettiger (Harvard ’96, Religion) and they have two daughters, Esther and Mira (3 and 2 years old).

**Jeffrey Green** (PhD 1973)
Since 1979, six years after receiving his degree and moving to Israel, after a brief stint teaching at the Hebrew University, he has been a freelance translator, or, in other words, an applied comparatist. He was also a Hebrew book columnist for the Jerusalem Post for six years. His book, *Thinking Through Translation*, was recently reissued by the University of Georgia Press in a Print on Demand version, and he has written a travel book on Naples and Sicily, *Largest Island in the Sea*, published by Vox Humana, which is available through Internet vendors. He has also published a book of poetry and two books in Hebrew, and co-authored a book with Professor Calvin Goldscheider of Brown University based on interviews with a survivor of the Jewish community of Tarnow, Poland, due to be published within the next few months. His recent interests include playing jazz saxophone, ceramics, and studying Jewish texts. He would be gratified if fellow alumni read the blog that he wrote after the death of his son in a hiking accident in Peru: marjef.blogspot.com.

**Emily Haddad** (PhD 1997)
After six years chairing the Department of English at the University of South Dakota, Emily Haddad became Associate Dean for Academics in USD’s College of Arts and Sciences in January 2011. She continues to teach English and she published an article in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* last spring.

**John Hamilton** (PhD 1980)
After four years in the Harvard Comparative Literature PhD program in the early 1970s, John Hamilton joined the State Department Foreign Service and completed his dissertation while at the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark, his first post abroad. After a twenty-eight-year career spent in Europe and Washington, DC, dealing with political-military issues, John retired from the State Department in 2004 and now does business-development work for a major information-technology contractor handling cybersecurity and other tasks for the State Department. He would be happy to talk to Harvard literature students or alumni about careers in diplomacy and/or information technology. He can be reached at jahamilton@post.harvard.edu.

**Maurice Harmon** (AM 1957)

**Ayako Takahashi, Molly Klaisner, and Valerie Henitiuk**

**Elena Fratto and Anna Aizman**

**Emily Haddad and UCLA.**

**John Hamilton and Emily Haddad.**

**Dara Horn** (PhD 2006) is an award-winning author of three novels, and was chosen by Granta magazine in 2007 as one of the Best Young American Novelists. Her first novel, *In the Image* (Norton 2002), received a 2003 National Jewish Book Award, the 2002 Edward Lewis Wallant Award, and the 2003 Reform Ju-
Hsuan L. Hsu (AB 1998) is an Associate Professor of English at UC Davis. His first book, Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Cambridge), was published in 2010.

Maire Jaanus (PhD 1968) is focusing on the concept of jouissance in the late Seminars of Jacques Lacan to construct some bridges between literature, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and neuroscience, fully aware that these fields are fundamentally heterogeneous and disjunctive and that the gap between the neuron and the signifier seems irremediable. She is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Barnard College and the Columbia School of Graduate Studies. She is co-editor with Jacques-Alain Miller of Culture and Clinic (C/C), a new journal coming out with Minnesota University Press. She is the author of Literature and Negation (CU Press, 1979), Georg Trakl (CU, 1974), "Estonia’s Time and Monumental Time" and “Estonia and Pain” in ed. Violeta Kelertas, Baltic Postcolonialism (Rodophi, 2006), “Tammsaare and Love,” in Interlitteraria (Tartu University Press, 10/2005), and the Introduction and Notes for a new edition of Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov (Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004). Kirja ja Kirjandus, a collection of her writings on Estonian and European literature, was published in May 2011. She is also on the Editorial Board of (Re)turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies at Missouri University; Cultural Formations, a new international journal on new media, youth, subjectivity, and education, with a strong conceptual, humanities (and arts) emphasis, based at Teachers College, Columbia; and on the International Editorial Collegium of Methis: Studia Humaniara Estonica, a new journal of literary scholarship, published jointly by the Department of Estonian Literature, Tartu University, and the Estonian Literary Museum.

Michelle Jaffe (PhD 1998)’s current work in Comparative Literature is more empirical than theoretical: she has spent the past decade killing people and heisting valuable documents/jewels/clues on the pages of mass market novels which have been published in over twenty countries and a dozen languages. As a comparative literature student she studied the way the advent of the printing press changed value and mean-
Alumni News & Profiles

Regina MJ Kyle (PhD 1971) After teaching in the departments of Comparative Literature and English at Harvard, Regina Kyle moved to Dallas as the founding Executive Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and English at UTD. After this, she moved to Washington, DC, as vice president of a higher education association, then vice president for Washington operations of a San Francisco-based consulting firm. Since 1983 she has been the owner of the Kyle Group, a firm specializing in innovations in education and economic development. She has worked with colleges and universities, school districts, corporations, and foundations on education issues. She returned to the Boston area in 1991 and in 2009 moved to Louisville, Kentucky, the site of much of her present work. In 2008 the Gheens Foundation and the Jefferson County Public Schools gave her their Creativity and Entrepreneurship award for 25 years of work with them. Spalding University awarded her a doctorate “honoris causa” in 2009 for her lifetime work in education.

While continuing her consulting work, she is teaching Ethics and Leadership in Spalding University’s doctoral program. She is also working on a book on transforming education in our schools. Regina Kyle is interested in renewed friendships with colleagues and students from 1964-1973 at Harvard and Radcliffe. She may be reached at kylegroup@aol.com.

Melissa Lee (AB 2003) is an independent producer based in Los Angeles, Beijing, and Hong Kong. Her first produced film, Dear Lemon Lima, with 2011 Academy Award winner Melissa Leo, was released theatrically in March 2011. Under the umbrella of her production company, Bago Pictures, she is developing several feature film projects and most recently produced Circumstance by writer/director Maryam Keshavarz, which premiered in the US Dramatic Competition at this year’s Sundance Film Festival and won the US Dramatic Audience Award. The film was distributed theatrically August 2011 in the US by Participant Media and Roadside Attractions.

Sally Livingston (PhD 2008, Lecturer 2008-2011) has accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the Humanities- Classics department at Ohio Wesleyan University. She will teach continental Medieval and Renaissance literature, as well as thematic comparative literature topics. Her book, Marriage, Property, and Women’s Narratives, will be published later this year by Palgrave Macmillan.

Mark H. Kuo (AB 1990) is currently a venture capitalist based in Shanghai. Although he is now distant from the pure art of literature, Harvard’s Lit concentration provided him with the historical, cultural and linguistic foundation to thrive in China. He looks forward to re-connecting with classmates.

Carmen James (AB 2008) graduated in May with a Masters in Philosophy and Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and entered the doctoral program this year. She has been teaching for the last two years at Riverdale Country Day School in the elementary school and she conducted research on cities, culture, aesthetic experiences, and education in Buenos Aires last summer. She has presented at the Middle Atlantic States Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting (February 2010), Academy for Education Studies 2010 Critical Questions in Education Conference (November 2010), Graduate Student Conference On Philosophy and Education (GSCOPE) (October 2010), and Philosophy and Education Book Presentation at Teachers College (September 2011).

Jen Hui Bon Hua and Henry Bowles

Prof. Karen Thornber, Stephanie Frampton, and Cotton Seed
Alumni News & Profiles

Anne Lounsbery (PhD 1999) Her research and teaching remain focused chiefly on 19th-century Russian prose. Last year she was on sabbatical thanks to a 12-month grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She used the time to finish writing Life is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Novel, a book manuscript that is under advance contract at Yale University Press. When not on leave she serves as Director of Graduate Study in NYU’s Department of Russian & Slavic Studies, where she welcomes queries regarding that department’s new PhD opportunity in the Russia field (the Interdisciplinary Specialization in Russia).

David Lurie (AB 1993) is Associate Professor of Japanese History and Literature in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. His first book, Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing, will be published by the Harvard University Asia Center in Spring 2011.

David Maier (AB 1997) is currently leading Novartis Oncology in Slovakia. He lives in Bratislava, the latest stop in his nomadic wanderings. Dave travels a lot, collects art, and sometimes even reads.

Sarah Manguso (AB 1996) is the author of the memoir The Two Kinds of Decay (2008), the story collection Hard to Admit and Harder to Escape (2007), and the poetry collections Siste Viator (2006) and The Captain Lands in Paradise (2002). Her next book, The Guardians, a prose elegy, is forthcoming next year from FSG and Granta Books. Honors for her writing include a Hodder Fellowship and the Rome Prize. She lives in Los Angeles.

Christina Mamakos (AB 1994) is a painter working and living in London and Athens. Recent presentations of her work include water’s wet, a video installation project at the Chelsea Art Museum in New York (2011); ...these are not real people..., a painting and installation show in the city of Athens and at Siakos-Hanappe Gallery, Athens (2011); Scape at Total Art Space, Dubai (2007); Silent Dialogues at ACG Art, Athens (2008); Mare Nostrum, a sponsored installation with P37 Gallery, Athens (2006); as well as numerous private large-scale commissions. In 2010 she was a resident at Kala Art Institute (Berkeley, CA) and at the Vermont Studio Center (Johnson, VT).

Ernest Meyer (AM 1950) After spending the academic year 1949-1950 studying comparative literature, he enrolled in medical school. Although from 1956 to 1962 he practiced general medicine in a rural setting in the mountains of Virginia, and from 1967 to the present, ophthalmology in Cambridge and Belmont, Massachusetts, his life has remained focused on German literature. Some of what he has written is accessible at home. earthlink.net/~ernstmeyer/.

Benjamin Morgan (AB 2001) is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Chicago. His research and teaching focus on the intersection of literature, science, and aesthetics in the Victorian period and early twentieth century. In his recent research, he has looked at how Victorian psychologists explained the pleasure felt during simple experiences of beauty, and how this scientific discourse informed aesthetic practices from writing literature to crafting everyday objects. He is currently working on a book, The Matter of Beauty, which investigates aesthetic experiences that do not involve contemplation or reflection: responses, in other words, that take the artwork to be a material object that directly affects the body in specific and discernible ways. Focusing on late-Victorian science and literature, the book evaluates the use of physiology in literary and aesthetic criticism, the importance of personal “creativity” for ideologies of individualism, and materialist accounts of the self within aestheticism and decadence. Part of

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his motivation is to ask whether a materialist aesthetics can successfully account for literature, insofar as the latter is the least “material” of the arts. He is also working on articles about the notion of an animal sense of beauty in the Victorian period and about the relation of William Morris’s romances to his political principles.

Michael Palencia-Roth (PhD 1976), Trowbridge Scholar in Literary Studies and Emeritus Professor of Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois, was born and raised in Colombia. His undergraduate degree is from Vanderbilt University in English and Philosophy; his graduate degrees are from Harvard in Comparative Literature. He taught for 30 years at the University of Illinois, taking early retirement in May 2007 in order to dedicate himself to research and writing. At the University of Illinois he directed the Program in Comparative and World Literature for six years (1988-1994) and was affiliated with three other academic units: the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies; the Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese; and the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory.

He has published books and monographs on Gabriel García Márquez, Thomas Mann, James Joyce, the conquest period in Latin America, the Holocaust, Comparative Literature as a discipline, and comparative civilizational analysis. His approximately 70 other publications include major encyclopedia articles on Latin American authors, as well as essays on Germanic subjects, English literature, Latin American literature, the Spanish colonization of the New World, Sir William Jones in India, Chikuro Hiroike and Western thought, and theoretical issues in cross-cultural analysis. He has been awarded several major national fellowships, including two each from the Newberry Library, the John Carter Brown Library, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and has delivered invited and keynote lectures in many different countries.

He has been president of three international learned societies: the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, the Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature, and the Association of Colombianists. In spring 1997 he was appointed Distinguished Extramural Professor of Humanities and Literature at the Universidad del Valle (in Colombia); in June 1998 he was decorated in Colombia with the “Order of Merit in Art and Culture Pedro Morales Pino” for his contributions to Colombian letters. In fall 2008 he was appointed Senior Adviser to the Institute of Moralogy at Reitaku University, Japan.

Currently, in addition to brief essay projects in various stages of completion: Cannibalism and Conquest: Civilizing the New World; Las pasiones otoñales de Gabriel García Márquez; and The Sacred Stones of Chikuro Hiroike: The Way of Moralogy.

Laura Ponce (AB 1995) On November 15, 2010, Laura Ponce became the new Executive Director for Project BRAVO, a nonprofit and Community Action Agency. Project BRAVO’s mission is to maximize resources for an improved quality of life for the economically disadvantaged residents of El Paso County.

Christina Pugh (PhD 1998) is an associate professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she teaches in the Program for Writers (the department’s doctoral program in creative writing) and is currently Director of Undergraduate Studies. She has published two books of poems: Restoration (Northwestern University Press,
2008) and Rotary (Word Press, 2004), which received the Word Press First Book Prize. She has also published a chapbook, Gardening at Dusk (Wells College Press, 2002). Her poems have appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, Poetry, TriQuarterly, Ploughshares, and other publications. Her honors include the Grolier Poetry Prize, an AWP Intro Journals Award, an individual artist fellowship in poetry from the Illinois Arts Council, the Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship from Poetry magazine, and the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. She has recently completed work on another book of poems, Grains of the Voice (inspired by the work of Roland Barthes), which was supported by a Ragdale Foundation residency and a faculty fellowship at the Institute for Humanities at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She also continues to publish criticism, including an article titled “On Sonnet Thought,” forthcoming in Literary Imagination.

Phoebe Putnam (PhD 2010) is delighted to have joined Stanford’s English Department this year as an ACLS New Faculty Fellow. During her time there, she will be completing her book, Land Lies in Water: Panoramas and the American Poem, which argues for the 19th-century panorama painting’s impact on literary perception and poetic form. She will also be teaching courses at the undergraduate and graduate level on poetry and poetics, green literary traditions, and 19th- and 20th-century American literature and the visual arts.

Anne Lovering Rounds (PhD 2009) is a senior editorial assistant in history and politics at Cambridge University Press. She has been adjunct faculty at Metropolitan College of New York and in the English Department at Fordham University. She is also communications director for the Argento New Music Project, a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to performing, producing, and drawing awareness to the work of contemporary composers. Her work on the soundscapes of Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway was published in the journal Literary Imagination this year.

Lawrence Rhu (PhD 1987)’s edition of The Winter’s Tale was published in April 2011 in the Evans Shakespeare series from Cengage.

Mari Ruti (PhD 2000) is Associate Professor of Critical Theory at the University of Toronto, where she teaches contemporary theory, psychoanalysis, continental philosophy, phenomenology, poststructuralism, and feminist and queer theory. She is the author of The Summons of Love (Columbia UP, 2011), A World of Fragile Things: Psychoanalysis and the Art of Living (SUNY Press, 2009), and Reinventing the Soul: Posthumanist Theory and Psychic Life (Other Press, 2006). She has also recently completed a manuscript entitled The Singularity of Being: Lacan and the Immortal Within, and published her first mainstream book, The Case for Falling in Love (Sourcebooks Casablanca, 2011).

Eliot Schrefer (AB 2001) After getting his Literature degree in 2001, he published his thesis in Animation Journal, then flirted with graduate schools before settling down to write fiction instead. His first novel, Glamorous Disasters, was published by Simon & Schuster in 2006, followed by The New Kid in 2007. In Spring 2011, he was preparing to travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo to research and write a novel about the politics of the country intertwining with the plight of the bonobo apes.

Gregory Scruggs (AB 2008) was on a Fulbright study/research grant in Rio de Janeiro in 10-11. He interned at UN-HABITAT’s Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, worked on urban mobility issues, and continued to absorb and write about Brazilian music and culture.

Miryam Segal (AB 1993) is Assistant Professor at Queens College, The City University of New York, and received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Berkeley. Her book, A New Sound in Hebrew Poetry: Poetics, Politics, Accent, was published in Spring 2010. A volume which she co-edited, Vixens Disturbing Vineyards:
The Embarrassment and Embrace-ment of Scriptures, also appeared in 2010. She was awarded the Prize for Innovative Scholarship in Gender and Women's Studies by the Association for Jewish Studies Women’s Caucus in 2011.

Laurence Senelick (PhD 1972) is Fletcher Professor of Drama and Oratory at Tufts University. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is also a founding member of the Center for the Humanities at Tufts. His recent anthology The American Stage: Writing on the Theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner received a full-page commendation in the Times Literary Supplement and was honored by a panel at Columbia University. In October 2010 he directed Ben Jonson’s The Alchemist at the Balch Arena Theatre. Last summer he taught in the new Mellon School of Theater and Performance Art at Harvard.

Alice Speri (AB 2009) is a second year PhD student in Comparative Literature at NYU. Her research focuses on resistance movements and literature in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Caribbean. Alice also received a Master’s from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and continues to work as a reporter while pursuing her doctorate.

Annie Stone (AB 2010) is putting her thesis research on children’s literature to good use at HarperCollins Children’s, where she works with Maria Modugno and Margaret Anastas in the early childhood group. She happily juggles old classics like Goodnight Moon with the latest bestsellers (Fancy Nancy and Splat the Cat are two of her favorites).

Nick Sylvester (AM 2004) is the drummer of the New York-based rock band Mr. Dream. Their debut full length, Trash Hit, came out on March 1. This spring the band toured the US with Sleigh Bells and CSS.

Ximena Vengoechea (AB 2008) is a graduate student in Comparative Literature and Art History at Johns Hopkins University. In 2011, Ximena was invited to participate in a young researcher’s seminar at l’Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes in Paris, where she presented “Matisse: Artiste, Géné-ticien? Contours d’une nouvelle méthodologie,” on the artist’s painting process and self-documentation from 1932 to 1939. Other projects in 2011 included contributing to research for the Baltimore Museum of Art’s spring exhibition, “Seeing Now: Photography since 1960,” and researching at the Walters Art Museum for an ongoing reinstallation of its 19th-century painting wing. She is currently serving as Editorial Assistant for Modern Language Notes: Comparative Literature.

Janet A. Walker (PhD 1974) teaches courses in world literature, postcolonial literatures and theories, Japanese literature in translation, and the novel in Europe and Asia in the Program in Comparative Literature at Rutgers University. She is currently working on a book on space, place, and modernity in Japanese fiction from 1886-1937. She was a Guest Researcher at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies, Free University-Berlin, from May to July, 2010. She published a review article, “The True History of the Nineteenth-Century Japanese Novel,” in Modern Philol-
Steven F. Walker (PhD 1973) is Professor of Comparative Literature at Rutgers University. He has a new book (Midlife Crisis and Transformation in Literature and Film: Jungian and Eriksonian Perspectives) coming out soon from Routledge, which had published an earlier book of his (Jung and the Jungians on Myth) in 2002. He gave the keynote address at the conference “Myth, Literature and the Unconscious” at the University of Essex (UK) last September. In the last year or so he has published two articles: “Borderline Personality Disorder and the Enigma of Tartuffe” (Quadrant: The Journal of the C.G. Jung Foundation of New York for Analytical Psychology) and “Nabokov’s Lolita and Goethe’s Faust: The Ghost in the Novel” (Comparative Literature Studies).

Jenny Weiss (AB 1999) received an MPhil from the Graduate Center at CUNY in 2007. She lives in Brooklyn and works in the Education group at Scholastic Inc.

Charles Witke (PhD 1962) Since retiring from the University of Michigan, Department of Classical Studies, ten years ago, he has remained active as a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome pursuing paleographical research at the Vatican Library. His principal publication recently is “Recycled Words: Vergil, Prudentius and Saint Hippolytus,” in Romane memento: Vergil in the Fourth Century, ed. Roger Rees, London, 2004. He continues on the editorial board of Medievalia et Humanistica, contributing reviews regularly on late antique and medieval works, and he reads occasional manuscripts for various university presses. His work also includes serving as parish priest on the staff of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Ann Arbor, and occasionally in Rome and Venice.

Correction:
Mary Di Lucia, formerly Mary Di Lucia-Miller, received her PhD in 1993. Her dissertation was entitled “The Sabine Version” and was advised by Barbara Johnson.
Submission Guidelines

Dear Faculty, Students, and Alumni:

The Department of Comparative Literature and the Literature Concentration at Harvard University publishes an annual newsletter during the Spring or early Fall Semester of each year.

If you would like to participate in the 2012 Newsletter, please send us a personal profile describing the current research work you are conducting, any awards or accolades you have received, your most recent publications, fields of interest, and any other information worth sharing. The profile need not be long—from a sentence or two to a long paragraph. **Please submit your profile as a third-person narrative.**

For alumni profiles, please include your class year, degree information, and most recent contact information (i.e. e-mail or phone) where we can reach you in case editorial questions arise. In addition to or as an alternative to providing a faculty, student, or alumni profile, you can submit an article related to the field of Comparative Literature, departmental proceedings at Harvard, or your own area of research and writing. All articles submitted to the newsletter should be between 250 and 500 words long. Please also include a photo of the author or text mentioned, if possible.

Please e-mail all profiles, news updates, and articles to Wanda Di Bernardo and Isaure Mignotte by **June 15, 2012**, at: dibernar@fas.harvard.edu mignotte@fas.harvard.edu

Stephanie Frampton, François Proulx, Susan Suleiman, Olga Zhulina, and Serge Ryappo

Again, the deadline for the 2012 Newsletter is **June 15, 2012**!