Indiana University's Comparative Literature Program hosted the 1993 annual conference of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) on March 25-28. More than 300 participants enjoyed 57 panels and more than 150 presentations. Titled "Re-Orientations: Comparative Poetics, Relations Between the Arts, and Cross-Cultural Issues in Film," the conference had as its overall theme the catalytic effect of an encounter with the "other." The three foci of interest in the title represent an attempt to combine the broad concerns of the ACLA with the traditional concerns of IU's Comparative Literature Program: East-West relations, inter-arts studies, and film studies.

Most of the papers presented at the conference fell squarely within these traditional concerns or extended to the IU program's more recent interests—cultural studies, translation, literary theory, the Bible as literature, and medieval studies. Also, in keeping with comparative literature as a discipline, many participants took advantage of the broad scope of the theme to explore traditionally ignored or marginalized areas. Three papers explored the television series "Star Trek"; several panels and presentations dealt with erotica and pornography; one presentation examined uses of U.S. photography in Nazi propaganda; another, jazz improvisation.

One unique feature of this year's conference was its emphasis on Chinese comparative literature, as the conference was also a joint meeting between the ACLA and the American Association of Chinese Comparative Literature (AACCL). Such a combination of interests made sense, according to Eugene Eoyang, in order both to "integrate more organically the concerns with Chinese comparative literature in the larger organization and to expose the AACCL with comparative literature not related to China." The participation of the AACCL in this year's conference was also appropriate because Bloomington is the home of the organization's founders. The AACCL co-sponsored eight panels. John Deeney of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Sun Jingyao of Suzhou University were the featured speakers at the AACCL's general meeting.

In addition to the wide variety of panels, the conference offered participants three plenary sessions. Wendy Steiner spoke on "Aesthetic Fetishism," and Stanley Cavell offered a presentation titled "What Did Derrida Want of Austin?—Derrida's 'Signature, Event, Context' Seen Through Austin's 'Excuses' and Sense and Sensibility." Leo Ou-fan Lee and Eugene Eoyang offered an AACCL plenary presentation on "China and the West: Views from the/Each Other."

Other opportunities available at the conference were two "key works" panels devoted to specific texts: Ricardo Quinones' The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature and Wai-lum Yip's Lyrics from Shelters: Modern Chinese Poetry, 1930–1950. The Film Studies Program of IU's Comparative Literature Program screened the films Ju Dou, The Year of Living Dangerously, and An American Friend, each of which was the focus of one or more papers at the conference, as well as Citizen Kane, for conference participants.

The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction offered a luncheon that showcased highlights of its
collection.

Planning for the 1993 ACLA conference began four years ago at the 1989 conference, when Bloomington was suggested as a possible future site. Two years later, Indiana University was approved as a site by an ACLA advisory board, and IU accepted a formal invitation to host the annual conference in 1993. When Professor Harry Geduld took the chair of the Comparative Literature Program in 1990, he was accompanied by a conference fund, which was earmarked for use in 1992. The opportunity to host the ACLA, however, led to a consolidation of efforts. Support for the conference also came from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Research and University Graduate School, and the Office of Vice President and Chancellor Kenneth Gros Louis. The local program committee included comparative literature professors Eugene Eoyang (chair), C. Clifford Flanagan, Harry Geduld, David Hertz, Ilincia Johnston, Barbara Klinger, and Giancarlo Maiorino and graduate student Yaohua Shi.

This ACLA conference introduced several innovations in the structure of the conference itself. Eoyang instituted a new system of paper pre-distribution, with the goal of improving the discourse of the conference. Prior to the conference, all papers were requested from all presenters to allow distribution of the papers to fellow panel members before the actual presentation. This innovation attempted to overcome a common failing of conferences, namely the tendency of some presenters to read their written texts, rather than present their ideas. According to Eoyang, “if the text can be pre-distributed to panel members, more time at the conference can be used for responses, discussion, and clarification. The early submission and distribution should be seen as an opportunity allowing time to be spent more efficiently to advance and exchange ideas, to share and receive criticism, to appreciate the benefits of discourse enhancement. The paper is well on its way to being refined and improved as well.”

Copies of papers were also available during the conference. Instead of waiting to receive papers long afterwards, participants could purchase them at a local copyer for only the cost of copying. This service was also available to those unable to attend the conference, and at least two dozen people took advantage of it. The greater availability of papers widened the scope and influence of the conference and made the total constituency of the conference greater than the number of those who attended.

These innovations created logistical problems that the conference organizers struggled to overcome up until the final hour. The announcement of all accepted papers to the ACLA’s membership-at-large and the pre-distribution process required submission deadlines two months before the conference. At that time, a final schedule was impossible, and conflicts were inevitable, due to unfinished or unsubmitted papers. The joint meeting of the ACLA and the AACLI created additional scheduling problems, because the conference coincided with the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies. In order to accommodate both conferences, AACLI panels were scheduled early. The great diversity of paper topics made arranging the papers into thematically unified panels another challenging task. In the end, the conference organizers completed the final schedule a week before the conference itself.

A strong positive response to the opportunities provided by the ACLA conference came in the form of graduate student participation. Graduate students presented one-third of the papers at the conference, and their involvement was encouraged and honored by the inauguration of the Horst Frentz Prize for the best graduate student paper and presentation. Only papers submitted early were eligible for the prize, and a local committee chose several nominees. During the conference, an external jury of three, representing the West, the Midwest, and the East, attended each nominee’s presentation. When evaluating the nominees, the jurors sought a balance between solid scholarship and an effective presentation style, in order to reinforce the idea that scholarship is multi-faceted. The first Horst Frentz Prize was awarded at the ACLA banquet, to give attention to both the prize and the winner. Chris Kearns of IU’s Comparative Literature Program received the prize for his paper “The Tell-Tale Heart: Poe’s Detective.” Shailja Sharma of the State University of New York at Stony Brook was given honorable mention for her presentation on “Race and the National Question in ’80s Britain.”

Graduate student participation was not limited to giving papers. The conference organizers depended heavily on a devoted body of student volunteers, who assisted with conference organization, the copying and distribution of papers, registration, moderation and time-keeping, and other tasks. The student volunteers included Liangyan Ge, Zhijie Jia, Lahcen Haddad, Simon, niece, Dorothea Royn, and Michael Wurth.

The conference planners at IU also saw the ACLA conference as an opportunity to attract alumni back to their alma mater. In summer 1992, a mailing to comparative literature alumni invited them to consider revisiting IU via the ACLA. Twenty-eight alumni of the IU Comparative Literature Program presented papers at the ACLA as a result.

One IU alumnus contributed more than a paper during the conference. Barry Ivker received his PhD in comparative literature in 1968 and began exploring painting and collage in 1971. In addition (continued on page 3)
**Departmental update**

- **Students** who received prizes awarded by the Comparative Literature Program at the 1993 annual picnic, held on April 10, are **Michael Wurth**, the Gilbert V. Tunungi Award; **Elliot Robin**, the Newton P. Stalken Memorial Essay Prize; **Stephen Barendse**, the A.I. Award for Distinguished Teaching; **Michelle Brown**, the Undergraduate Award; **Claire Sanders**, the Anne Geduld Memorial Prize for Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts; and **Dayna Kalleras**, the Mary F. Campbell Award.

- **Peter Bondanella** was named Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at the IU Founders Day Ceremony on March 7. Comparative literature was the only department in the humanities to receive this distinction in 1992-93.

- **Professor Matei Calinescu**'s book *Rereading* was published in April by Yale University Press. The book analyzes fictional works by Borges, Nabokov, Proust, Robbe-Grillet, and Henry James, among others, and looks at the distinctions between reading and rereading from the perspectives of the age, situation, and gender of the individual reader.

- **Professor Eugene Eoyang**'s book *The Transparent Eye: Translation, Chinese Literature, and Comparative Poetics* has been published by the University of Hawaii Press. Eoyang was also elected vice president of the American Comparative Literature Association at its 1993 annual conference in Bloomington. He will assume the presidency of the ACLA in 1995 for a two-year term. He will be the second member of the IU Comparative Literature Program to hold the ACLA presidency. The late Horst Frenz was ACLA president in 1972-74.

- **Graduate student Philip Holden-Moses** (ABD) was invited by the English department of Ohio University to give a lecture on "Petified Men: Adaptations of Co-Dependence in Stone Boy" in May. Holden-Moses will also be presenting a paper, "Illuminated Views: Play, Politics, and Mnemonics in Kurosawa's *Dodes-Ka-Den*," at the 18th annual West Virginia University Colloquium on Modern Literature and Film in September.


- **Graduate student Chris Kearns** (ABD) delivered two papers in spring 1993: "Borges after Eco: Being Lost in the Rhizome of Knowledge" for the Twentieth-Century Literature Conference in Louisville, and "Curriculum Development as Communicative Action: A New Paradigm Through Community-Based Education" for the International Living Learning Center Conference in Michigan, both in spring 1993. Kearns also received the Horst Frenz Prize for best presentation by a graduate student at the 1993 ACLA conference in Bloomington, for his paper "The Tell-Tale I: The Other before Poe's Desecrator."  


- In 1992, **Professor Bronislava Volkova** published an article in *Slavonic Survey and Slavonic Review* and *Classical Quarterly*. Her volume of poetry titled *The Courage of the Rainbow: Selected Poems* was published by Sheep Meadow Press in 1993. He also presented a lecture on "The Unbearable Heaviness of Being, or Is It Lightness? Kundera's Values" at IU in February. Volkova's work was featured on two radio programs produced by Czechoslovak Radio early this year.

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**ACLA '93**

(continued from page 2)

...tion to a paper on "Erotic Fiction in England and France in the Early 1970s," he presented to the Comparative Literature Program an abstract painting titled "The Twain Shall Meet." He was especially influenced by Eastern art while creating this work, and it represents for him a meeting of Eastern and Western minds. He had wanted to give something to the IU program for a long time, and the ACLA conference, with its strong emphasis on East-West relations, seemed the perfect opportunity. "The Twain Shall Meet" is now on display in the comparative literature office in Ballantine Hall.

The title of Ivker's painting appropriately represents the ACLA conference for other reasons. The conference not only gave participants the opportunity to come together and share in the great diversity of their interests. It also allowed them to rediscover what comparatists have in common with one another. An understanding of such a common identity is crucial in a discipline in which the motivating force for scholarship is diversity, difference, and encountering and understanding the Other. IU comparative literature alumnus **Michael Webster**, who received his PhD in 1988 and teaches at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., summarized this common ground in his reaction to the 1993 ACLA Conference: "One thing surprised me: Despite being a discipline that is continually in an identity crisis, comparative literature and its practitioners maintain certain consistent attitudes or habits of mind: a healthy skepticism towards intellectual fads, a rigorous yet supple comparative methodology, and an open-minded willingness to read (or view) texts from many different traditions."
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