

## The Report of the Coordinating Committee for a Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages

June 28, 2008

Our activities during this year were considerably helped by the frequent use of e-mail communication, superbly orchestrated by our Secretary, Margaret Higonnet (University of Connecticut), as well as by a new website created by Luc Acke, the assistant to our Treasurer, Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp), who made Mr. Acke available to us from her institutional budget. The site has the following address, [www.ua.ac.be/chlel](http://www.ua.ac.be/chlel). First materials for the website were provided by Margaret Higonnet and our Vice President Daniel Chamberlin, while project directors sent in their reports and proposals. This website has an open section with the CHLEL Mission Statement as well as the CHLEL By-Laws established in 2006. The opening page offers also links to a listing of the committee members (attached to this report as Appendix I), and to the AILC/ICLA site at <http://icla.byu.edu/www/index.html>. Of even greater practical importance to us is that the Antwerp website has a CHLEL Members only area, protected by a password, where we have posted book reports, book reviews, and other useful material for our deliberations. In addition, John Benjamins Publishing Company keeps an excellent site ([http://www.benjamins.nl/cgi-bin/t\\_seriesview.cgi?series=CHLEL](http://www.benjamins.nl/cgi-bin/t_seriesview.cgi?series=CHLEL)) with all the details of the 23 volumes we have published. Benjamins has recently allowed browsing the content of volumes online, with the possibility of paying a small fee for printing or copying pages, which will surely have a significant positive impact in their distribution. Benjamins is happy with their collaboration with us and willing to renew the contract with us, due for renewal later this year.

The Committee held its annual meeting in Paris at L'Ecole Normale Supérieure on 19 June 2008, followed by a symposium on "Les transformations du littéraire dans la perspective d'une histoire comparée des littératures," in which 28 scholars participated reading papers or/and chairing sessions. (The program is attached as Appendix II.) Margaret Higonnet, with extraordinary organizational talent, patience, and attention to detail organized the business meeting and the colloquium, with the help of Eva Kushner. In preparation for our business meeting we requested that all members of the committee submit written comments on the reports of ongoing projects and proposals for new ones. This previous reflection helped produce a focused, expeditious, useful, and cordial meeting.

We are glad to report that this year saw three important publications:

***History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe. Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Volume III: The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions.***

Edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope (Virginia Commonwealth University) and John Neubauer (University of Amsterdam). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007. xiv, 522 pp.

This volume, with 54 contributors, has four parts: I. Publishing and Censorship; II. Theater as a Literary Institution; III. Forging Primal Pasts: The Uses of Folklore; and IV. Literary Histories: Itineraries of National Self-Images. The fourth volume of the East-Central Europe project, edited by Professors John Neubauer (University of Amsterdam) and Marcel Cornis-Pope (Virginia Commonwealth University, USA) will be sent to reviewers this fall and will be submitted to

Benjamins in 2009. The first two volumes have received a number of very favorable reviews. The most recent, in *Comparative Critical Studies* 4 (2007): 468–71, classifies it as a “significant and monumental venture,” highlighting “the novelty and sheer richness of the material, along with the impressive expertise of its authors,” adding that it “will serve as a definitive account for years to come.”

***Modernism***. Edited by Astradur Eysteinnsson (University of Iceland) and Vivian Liska (University of Antwerp). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007. xii, 1043 pp. (2 vols.)

This study is divided into eleven sections: 1. De-limiting Modernism; 2. Reassessments; 3. Tradition, Avant-Garde, Postmodernism; 4. Time and Space; 5. Mind and Body; 6. Technology and Science; 7. Literature and the Other Arts; 8. Social and Political Parameters; 9. Cultural Conjunctions; 10. Routes and Encounters; and 11. Locations: Case Studies. This book has 65 contributors and covers a wide geographical range, from Latin America to Russia, from Finland to Italy. This publication has been nominated for the Modernism Studies Association annual prize.

***Romantic Prose Fiction***, edited by Gerald Gillespie (Stanford University), Manfred Engel (University of Oxford) and Bernard Dieterle (Université de Haute Alsace, Mulhouse). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008. xxi, 733 pp.

This is the concluding volume of the five-volume Romanticism series. It is divided in three parts: I. Characteristic Themes; II. Paradigms of Romantic Fiction; and III. Contributions of Romanticism to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Writing and Thought. 36 scholars contributed essays to this volume. The five Romanticism volumes are now available and Benjamins is promoting them with a special offer for the whole subseries.

These three books are theoretically sophisticated, painstakingly edited, beautifully presented, and major contributions from a comparative approach to their respective fields.

As for the immediate future, there are three major projects well under way:

1. The third volume dedicated to the Renaissance, "**Maturations et mutations (1520-60)**," edited by Professor Eva Kushner (University of Toronto, Canada), has already been reviewed by two external reviewers and approved. Professor Kushner is in the final stages of revising the translations and verifying the apparatus. She reports that she expects to complete this volume and submit it to Benjamins later this year.
2. The **Comparative Literary History of the Iberian Peninsula** which is now approaching completion was first considered by the Committee at a meeting in Paris in 1999, presented by Professor Darío Villanueva, who recently was honored by becoming a member of the Spanish Royal Academy. Under the direction of Professor Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), this book project has received several subsidies from the University of Santiago in the last few years. This manuscript will form two volumes, the first of which should be complete and ready for review later this year or early next year. The review process and any revisions may require 6 to 12 months (submission to Benjamins by late 2009). The second volume is expected to be ready for review by 2011.

3. Also well advanced is the first volume of the monumental **Comparative History of Nordic Literary Cultures**, edited by Professors Seven Sondrup (Brigham Young University, USA) and Mark Sandberg (University of California, Berkeley). This multi-volume project is organized around the idea of region instead of nation, not defining its object through similarity of linguistic group, citizenship, or ethnicity, but instead geographically as the sum of all the literary cultures that have existed in a certain area. In this case, that entity is “Norden” (The North). Consequently, the project examines both the shared and divergent literary cultures that have emerged in this area throughout history. The four planned volumes of the project, to be published sequentially, deal with temporal nodes, spatial nodes, figural nodes, and nodes of transmission. The completion of the four volumes is scheduled for 2010–2012. The Nordic Literary History Project is partly funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, from whom it has received a substantial grant. It has its own website, <http://icla.byu.edu/scandinavian>.

At the Paris meeting we heard preliminary presentations for new projects which were well received and encouraged by the committee, without yet accepting them. First were four new projects for a shorter book series on general problems for the History of European Comparative Literature which we started last year and for which we had solicited proposals. Professor Daniel Chamberlin, our Vice President, presented a preliminary project on Oral literature. Professors Vivian Liska and Thomas Nolden are commencing work on a volume on the concept of Europe, while Professors Inocencia Mata and Laura Padilha are starting a volume on Lusophone Africa and Portugal. Finally, Professors Fridrun Rinner and Franca Sinopoli are relatively advanced in the planning of a short volume on migration into Europe and literature.

A few collaborators and I (Randolph Pope) have started work on a comparative history of Realism in the literatures of European languages. The Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism, the Avant-garde and Postmodernism are covered by our series, but the Middle Ages, Realism and Naturalism still present a considerable gaps. Judging from past experience, Realism is a five-year project, to be finished by the summer of 2013.

Respectfully submitted,  
Randolph Pope