

編輯台簡報

本期第一部分「**比較文學學科論辯文獻**」，介紹美國比較文學重要學者 Emily Apter 於 2010 年發表的一篇論文：Apter 藉由還原 1970 年代 Paul de Man 與 Jacques Derrida 在耶魯大學(Yale University)所主張、實踐的比較文學教學論，倡議一套參考解構思潮及語言文字學的比較文學觀點，以此回應當前比較文學面臨的學科危機。「**比較文學方法與實際**」單元則有兩位學者撰稿，除了分享自身學養路徑的轉折，也分別剖析她們所理解的「比較視角」。中央大學中文系的呂文翠老師先有中國文學背景，爾後於輔大取得比較文學博士；她特別談到歷經西方理論洗禮後，如何在自己此刻的研究重心——中國近代文學與晚清文化——當中擷取她所認為更適切的觀看角度。中興大學台文所朱惠足老師則是外文系出身，日後赴日本研究日文文學，回台後開始發展台灣文學與沖繩文學的比較研究；她特別提到，台灣和沖繩之所以可以比較，除了有相同處外，更多的其實是兩者的差異——是這些差異促成了兩地可以彼此參照的關鍵要素。「**觀察與報告**」則為研究生設計了一個小單元。刻在美國加州大學洛杉磯分校(UCLA)攻讀比較文學博士的台灣學生吳建亨介紹 UCLA 一個特殊的理論學程，以及此刻他與同儕所參與的網路學術社群。於 The European Graduate School 取得傳播博士學位的新加坡學者 Tong See 則簡介這所座落於瑞士偏遠山城、對不少人而言帶有神祕色彩的學術殿堂——一般人或許只在 YouTube 上得以窺見在該校授課的世界頂尖哲學家的演說風采，或是對其豐盛的暑期課程心嚮往之，卻恐怕少有聽聞這所學校的正式學位課程；Tong See 分享了他在那裡所受到的訓練與學術啟發。

比較文學學科論辯文獻

Apter, Emily. "The Right to Translation: Deconstructive Pedagogy in Comparative Literature, 1979/2009." *boundary 2* 37.3 (2010): 29-56.

乍讀之下，這篇文章所談的是美國比較文學界再熟悉不過的一件事，即 1970 年代耶魯（Yale University）解構派對比較文學的重大影響：2007-08 年間，有關 Jacques Derrida 及 Paul de Man 在耶魯大學任教的部分資料陸續被整理出版，¹ 加以作者 Emily Apter 正好有機會取得兩位哲學家從未發表的著述與書信原稿，本文看來像是作者借助幾筆新素材，舊瓶新酒地回顧一個大家並不陌生的場景。然細究之下，作者其實有著不小的企圖：身為美國比較文學界的主力角色之一（在美國比較文學學會最近兩次的學科現況報告中，Apter 都參與了撰寫或回應工作），近年亦積極提出以「翻譯研究」（translation studies）精益求精、深化比較文學的論點，² Apter 在 2010

年出版這篇文章，事實上是在回應 2000 年代聲勢日益壯大的「世界文學」（world literature）主張。Apter 想說，世界文學或許是比較文學在新市場邏輯下的絕佳生存之道，然而那種包山包海的概念，無疑也會製造負擔；但我們如果可以重返 1970 年代的耶魯比較文學課堂，則我們或許可以從兩位解構大師身上找到有助解決此刻比較文學危機的些許線索，因為解構派對文學閱讀是有想法的，可以提供一套具有認識論基礎且又可實踐的技藝（*techne*）。

為了宣示解構派比較文學論對當代比較文學的有效性，Apter 在推論上做了幾個大膽——但並非毫無根據——的動作：其一，是強調解構派文學論與語言文字學（philology）的相近，凸顯解構派對文學的「方法」；其二則是主張，解構派的比較文學理念，是根植於他們對「翻譯性」的理解。

在 Apter 找到的新資料中，有 de Man 在耶魯法文系任教以及在比較文學系擔任系主任期間，對課程規劃的想法（包括他當時主張開設一門叫 Literature Z 的課，作為文學學生必修的基礎訓練）；也有 Derrida 寫過的一篇題為「比較文學概念及翻譯的理論難題」（“Who or What Is Compared? The Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation”）的文章。這些文獻中，不乏典型解構派的文學立場：例如反對平板的主題研究，反對讓文學淪為社會文化研究的樣本、歷史主義的附庸，等等。不過 Apter 卻也特別留意到，不論 de Man 還是 Derrida，都讓解構派比較文學與語言文字學密不可分：落實在 Derrida 身上，他在討論比較文學與翻譯性問題（以及他以哲學家身分受聘於比較文學系的微妙立場）時，牽扯的是諸如「翻譯」、「比較文學」、「體制」等字在不同

¹ 包括 Marc Redfield, ed., *Legacies of Paul de Man* (New York: Fordham UP, 2007); Jacques Derrida, "Who or What is Compared? The Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation," trans. Eric Prenowitz, in "Who? or What?—Jacques Derrida," ed. Dragan Kujundžić, special issue, *Discourse* 30.1-2 (2008): 22-53.

² Apter 曾受邀擔任本學會第十屆國際比較文學會議的主題演講者（2009 年 5 月），當時講題為 "The Problem of Untranslatability in Comparative Literature"。她對翻譯研究與比較文學關係的主要著述包括 *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton UP, 2006)。Apter 曾在 UCLA、Cornell University 擔任比較文學系系主任，目前任教於 New York University。

語言中的字義百態；顯現於 de Man, Apter 強調，de Man 十分明確將解構的系譜拉回以 Erich Auerbach 為範例的語言文字學傳統，即使這會招來「解構派不過是歐洲形式主義的分支」的批評。

而如果 de Man 在比較文學領域的重要性在於他有心為這門學科發揚一套可以落實的閱讀理念，則 Derrida 對比較文學的影響，則是預示了比較文學終將成為一門「翻譯性研究」（*translatability studies*）（Apter 44）。

Apter 指出，de Man 和 Derrida 當年在構思比較文學教學論時，不約而同都把比較文學和翻譯連結在一起：de Man 邀請 Derrida 至比較文學系授課，建議他開設的一門課是「翻譯與比較文學問題」（*Translation and the Question of Comparative Literature*）；而 Derrida 爾後則將其轉化為「比較文學概念與翻譯的理論難題」（*The Concept of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation*）。Apter 說，從一些字詞選擇的差異，即可看出 Derrida 如何看待比較文學與翻譯（性）的緊密關係。此外，Derrida 在教授這門課（1979-80）的前後，恰巧發展了一系列環繞「權利」概念的課程，包括「對哲學的權利」（*The Right to Philosophy*）、「對文學的權利」（*The Right to Philosophy*）、「大學的理由」（*The Reason of the University*）等，也曾針對班雅明（Walter Benjamin）「譯者的職責」（“*The Task of the Translator*”）一文特別開課。以 Apter 的說法，整體來看，這些都是 Derrida 對大學教育中文學所在位置的反覆思索：文學成為某種相連於誠命（*law*）、正當性、適切性的命題；而「比較文學」中的「比較」，有別於「比較政治」、「比較宗教」的「比較」，因為在後兩者中，「比較」是個形容詞（*adjective*），但「比較文學」中

的「比較」則是個述語（*predicate*）——換言之，「比較文學」的所指的是「文學是比較的」（*literature is comparative*），「比較」乃文學的內蘊質地。

Derrida 的這些思考，又脫離不了他對可譯性的理解：不只是比較文學工作者跨越不同語種時必須面對的語言系統替換問題，更有「文學在比較文學自身」（*compare literature with literature*）（*qtd. in Apter 51*）時所釋出的最根本的意義轉遞問題。簡單地說，「翻譯性」至此成為「比較文學」本質的代名詞。

此外，值得注意的是，Derrida 並未擺出無政府主義之姿，斷然拒絕體制（*institution*）：相反地，他表示，我們應該抵制一般人在教學與體制之間所畫出的刻板對立關係（*the reductive opposition between pedagogical life and institutional death*）：「如果要我挑選幾個名詞，代表對此種分立法則的排拒或抵抗的話，我會選的詞是 (1) 體制；(2) 文學；(3) 翻譯；以及，可想而知的（*consequently*）……(4) 比較文學系」（Apter 47）。用大白話攤開來說，Derrida 以為，對「體制」、「文學」、「翻譯」的再思，都可重新活化學院教育的生命；而一旦這些都成立，則繼續往下推展，得到的結果（他在前三點和第四點之間使用的字是 *consequently*），便是「比較文學系」——不是泛稱下的比較文學領域，而是一個具體的比較文學建制。

解構派日後在文學理論讀物中大多時候總被簡化成「意義不確定性」的主導者。如今有了新文獻、新解釋的出現，我們或許可以重新看見，Derrida 如何曾經企圖在大學教室「讓哲學與文學成為可以傳授的技藝、成為活潑有生命的實踐」（*teachable as *techné* or living practice*）（Apter 46）。

如前所述，Emily Apter 此篇文章的寫就，與其說是緬懷美好的舊時代，³ 不如說是要為當代比較文學尋找生路。儘管作者只在文章開頭點到了她對「世界文學」的疑慮，但通篇讀來，不難看出，Apter 所相信的比較文學的未來——而「世界文學」難以達成的——在於對「翻譯性」問題意識的自覺，以及對文字、文學性的敏銳：「翻譯性」指的是「文學」與「生命」碰觸後必不可免的意義轉碼、轉錄、轉換過程；而對文字的考究，則能突出這個「翻譯性」難題（與趣味）。換言之，Apter 想說的是，比較文學要做的，或許不是去相比兩個被視為文化產物的文學作品，而更應該試圖彰顯文學所能透析出的倫理課題。

引用書目

Apter, Emily. "The Right to Translation: Deconstructive Pedagogy in Comparative Literature, 1979/2009." *boundary 2* 37.3 (2010): 29-56.

（編輯部）

³ 作者自己也說，「解構派年代，恐怕是比較文學作為一門學科最後一次真正充滿自信的年代」(31)。

比較文學方法與實踐

比較文學於我

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我從比較文學的修習過程中得到思維訓練，惠莫大焉；我的研究中的比較文學方法路徑，委實難尋。傳統的文史研究，繼踵師承為不二法門；比較文學則轉益多師，橫無端涯。我則於縱橫折衝中，對「比較」既喜且懼，對文史既敬且畏。

不曾認真尋繹「比較文學」與我的關係，大致因為個人興趣或求學求知的過程中，口味駁雜，用情不專，時或貪玩分心，歧途遊離，儼然於我是常態。比較文學既規範我的閱讀，也縱容我的心性；既有緣溪行忘路之遠近，行到水窮處的焦慮，亦不乏輾轉蜿蜒後，驀至山陰道上，不期然遭遇落英繽紛、鶯飛草長的勝景，見證了多少目不暇給、不足為外人道也的賞心樂事。

大學時先修德語，再轉中文，繼而入比較文學專業。年輕時每慚愧沒有名門正派的血統，引以為憾，自報家門時則辭窮口拙，訥訥說不清楚；年齒漸長後，倒是益發自覺此一言難盡的「雜種」血緣，正是孕育奇異生命力與無窮創新活力的源頭。故而近年來，我雖任教於中文系，但經常在課堂上鼓勵學生放膽讓自己接受來自不同學門學科的洗禮，打破畫地為牢、傲倨山頭的壁壘分明，勇於將自己投擲到不

盡熟悉而又生機蓬勃的領域中，面對挑戰。或許這就是當年從中文碩士班畢業後，選擇就讀比較文學研究所博士班，帶給我終身受用不盡的珍貴資產吧！

1998 年秋天，進入由劉紀蕙教授擔任所長的輔仁大學比較文學所博士班，個人正式與比較文學研究結緣。當時甫完成碩士論文王禎和小說研究的我，正興奮地像海綿蓄水般吸收各派文學理論與批評流派。儘管大學與碩士班時期，在恩師施淑、楊澤的啟蒙之下，除了中西方文學與戲劇名著外，也曾生吞活剝了不少大師的理論經典，但若謂真正有系統地細讀，並不斷自我詰問這些理論與批評路數與己身研究課題及個人生命的關係，受惠於博士論文指導教授劉紀蕙教授以身作則的敏銳自覺，深遠良多。

此刻回想起來，我就讀比較文學博士班的四、五年期間，在劉所長擘劃課程與規劃下，得以由國內名師引導精讀研修：從佛洛伊德（Sigmund Freud）到拉康（Jacques Lacan），從盧卡奇（Georg Lukács）到班雅明（Walter Benjamin），從傅柯（Michel Foucault）到羅蘭巴特（Roland Barthes）、德希達（Jacques Derrida）、巴赫汀（Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin）、克莉斯蒂娃（Julia Kristeva）等……，領略現當代文化巨擘的理論精髓。更可貴的是彷彿眾流歸海，所裡每位博士生各自的專長與背景皆有不同：中文、英文、法文、德文、西班牙文、俄文；藝術、繪畫、音樂、電影、報刊、都市規劃與建築設計。在課堂上，每每因對不同文學或文化文本的闡釋與質疑、理論的有效性是否誤解誤譯而激辯起來，在各言爾志的過程中，往往因體察到自身專業領域的侷限與缺陷，而陷入自亂陣腳的

質疑否定，自卑的情緒如影隨形，精神上不無苦悶徬徨。現在回顧思量，殊不知這樣的狀態，恰恰逼使我在未嘗稍歇的意義尋索過程中，剝除了虛妄的自恃自大，在尊重差異中不斷修正、重新界定自身殊異性：故比較文學之於我，與其說是通過此學術訓練迅速與國際學界的前沿學說及新銳思潮接軌，毋寧說，它給了我一種勇於拆解自以為是的障地營壘，不斷敞開與異己、他者交鋒對話的自剖態度，在看似蹣跚行顛簸的過程中，經常面對一無依傍、四顧蒼茫的虛無處境，卻堅信前方終會出現由一盞如星火般照耀的遠景。

近些年，我的研究興趣集中在中國近代文學與晚清文化的研究，這一向被稱為「三千年未有之變」的年代雖成陳跡，換不同角度檢視，卻仍呈現未定型、無秩序的過渡特質，猶有詮釋空間。於是以十年工夫，面對晚清後半葉數十年間韓邦慶、王韜等一批上海文人的文學成就與文化活動，思量如何開闢屬於自己的一塊學術領地，其時心中嘈雜的理論迴響，暫時銷歇。

細想當年施淑老師在還沒有以台灣文學為名的系所的年代，就開始教授台灣文學課程，她所教授的內容多奠定在切身經驗上，很熟悉那一批作家以及他們所處的時空語境，因而能夠順理成章地帶入文學社會學的洞見思考，理論與研究之間毫無隔閡。楊澤老師出身台大外文系，大學時便與文友創立詩社，曾獲致「時報文學獎」敘事詩推薦獎的殊榮。其間也主持過比較文學學術刊物《中外文學》編務，赴笈美國普林斯頓大學取得文學博士後，回國擔任《中國時報》「人間副刊」主編，對1980年末葉以降台灣文壇風向與社會文化風潮的消長變遷，影響至鉅。他雖自謂非學院

中人，但曾在中文系與戲劇所開設「現代文學與習作」、「中西戲劇名著」的課程，課堂中批講議論乍看天馬行空，卻更鮮活示範了超越體制高牆的博洽文化人之寬闊視野。

諸位先生治學為文與文化實踐從不自限疆界的態度，引領我亦步亦趨：固然我所面對的晚清，多半已為沉響，裊裊餘韻卻又呼應當下；許多那一代徘徊在傳統與現代間的知識份子不斷苦思的文化困境，至今與我們企圖解決與正在面對的時代課題，未嘗須臾或離。近代文學在學術定位上前不著村、後不著店，既不具備古代文學研究儼然經典的崇高地位，亦非現當代文學研究每能迎向浪頭，衝激出多元多維的繁榮景觀。可正因它看似四無掛搭，學術研究的價值定位上經常遭受忽略，在所有當下現成理論與流行學說都派不上直接用場的領地裡，我卻尋得了既虛無又自由，既混沌又蘊含無限能量的廣闊空間。

不知該怎麼落實理論思辨與研究對象時，就一遍遍精讀王國維的〈紅樓夢評論〉，看郭沫若所稱「新史學」的開山名作，亦可謂現代中國比較文學研究之濫觴，如何融通希臘悲劇與德國哲學家康德（Immanuel Kant）、叔本華（Arthur Schopenhauer）的思想精粹，闡析詮解大觀園中虛實相生的文學世界，亟思解決人生苦痛之道；困惑於文學與史學的研究比重該如何拿捏時，陳寅恪對唐人小說與唐代社會的精要詮解來到我的視域，再次提醒我唯有通過對歷史條件與時代內涵綿密深邃的理解，才能貼近文學研究的核心本質；思索著重構文學研究者與創作者的心靈圖像時，不禁想起一邊撰寫教材《中國小說史略》，一邊正從〈補天〉為起點，

以《故事新編》為題，重新演繹中國古代神話的魯迅的身影。循著這些曾經腳踏東西文化，在異域文明與國粹傳統間曾矛盾抉擇的晚清民初知識人的思想蹤跡，體察他們不輕言「中西比較」的心路歷程，便益發彰顯出目今學界言必稱「跨」（跨學科、領領域、跨媒材、跨語際、跨文化、跨國界、跨族裔、跨階級、跨性別……），競相冠以「互文」、「場域」、「抵抗」、「顛覆」、「邊緣位置」、「身體論述」等標題的學位論文及研究論述如雨後春筍的現象，終究只能是學術產製在全球化浪潮席捲之下的灘頭浮沫。

現而今，我廁身中國近代文史，持論立場卻近比較文學／文化，前不似傳統，後不輕易言「跨」，乃因我現在的研究領域，文學與文化的比較首先必須潛心熟知對象，得有文史互證的堅實功底，再將比較文學／文化的學理精髓滲透於闡述，否則橫跨縱躍終是徒然。

比較文學曾經在台灣文學與文化研究中佔有一席之地，如今雖非退場，也面臨嬗變關口。面對二十一世紀融通古今、溝通中西的種種議題，並無萬靈藥方。正如前幾期電子報中諸位學界前輩與同仁指出，比較文學也許更是以化整為零、如影隨形的滲透態勢，借屍還魂般於充滿批判思辯的文學文化議題中，持續影響著又一代的知識社群與莘莘學子，也一如既往地讓曾經在學思道途上茫然四顧的我，點滴受惠。

我的比較文學方法

朱惠足

國立中興大學台灣文學與跨國文化研究所

進入中興大學台灣文學與跨國文化研究所任教已邁入第八個年頭，這些年來，我的研究方向聚焦於日治時期台灣文學研究、台灣與沖繩的後殖民文學研究。這篇文章主要將分享我從台大外文系畢業之後，如何透過一段迂迴的旅程，進入台灣文學的領域，並將其放置在比較的框架下進行思考。90年代中期赴日留學後，我觀察到日本的日本文學研究呈現兩個方法論上的極端：以作家研究的資料考證和文本分析為主的傳統「國文學」仍具有龐大勢力，一方面也出現在課堂與研究上運用解構、符號學等西方理論來解讀日本文學文本的新取向。令我訝異的是，「台灣」這個地名也與朝鮮、滿州國、南洋等日本其他舊殖民地或勢力圈，一同被納入所謂「日本語文學」的版圖範圍之內。雖然曾在大學時代修習的一門台灣文學課程中閱讀過賴和的作品，但在日本，我才第一次意識到，日治時期台灣文學背後的殖民歷史脈絡，如何使其脫離「台灣」的地理歸屬，成為跨國、跨民族、跨語言之交混性質的文化產物。對於台灣文學乃至台灣研究整體的陌生，使得我並沒有因此投入相關研究。然而，既然透過台灣文學可能具有的比較視野，而意識到「日本文學」中的異質性聲音之存在，我似乎也無法回到「純正」日本人作家以「純正」日語所書寫的作品中，而選擇了沖繩出身的芥川獎作家目取真俊作為博士論文的研究對象。戰後沖繩文學基本上以日語書寫，僅在對話中

夾雜沖繩地方方言，卻傳達了對於日本的國家制度與國家暴力的直接控訴，其中，目取真俊可說是政治性最為鮮明的作家。與戰後沖繩文學的相遇，讓我見識到文學如何藉由在地的獨特地政學位置與歷史脈絡，挑戰既有的國族概念，使得國族語言與文學表現形式產生縫隙與變質，達到內容與形式兩方面的顛覆效果。

以沖繩文學作為一個過渡，回台任教後很自然地便展開了日治時期的台灣文學研究。沖繩文學的研究經驗，讓我有意識地採用了日本人作家與台灣人作家相互比較的研究方法，藉由不同民族與殖民地身份的作家對於殖民現代性、台灣傳統習俗、人與土地的歸屬關係等議題所進行的不同文學再現，我試圖勾勒出殖民地台灣文學場域中混雜的主體位置與文化特質。這些思考的軌跡與產出結集於《現代的移植與翻譯：日治時期台灣小說的後殖民思考》（麥田出版，2009年）一書時，我試圖透過「移植」和「翻譯」兩個關鍵詞來將日治時期台灣文學加以理論化，突顯出台灣做為東亞國族主義夾縫中的島嶼，其文化生產呈現何種迂迴繞道的現代性經驗與主體位置，而產生有異於西方或中國、日本等東亞國家文學的面貌。

之後，我除了持續關注日治時期台灣文學中的異種族接觸經驗之外，並展開台灣文學與沖繩文學的比較研究。這項研究早在撰寫博士論文的階段，便已萌生相關想法，但必須在我對台灣文學有系統性的理解之後，才有可能付諸實行。目前相關研究仍在持續進行當中，無法預測將有什麼樣的想法產出，但主要的研究主題分為以下兩大方向：一個是日美勢力的文學再現，另一個則是以島嶼書寫為中心。在第

一個研究主題當中，台灣與沖繩的文學進行並置比較的物質性基礎在於：兩地作為鄰近的島嶼，有著共通的區域性歷史經驗，尤其就兩地與日本和美國兩大強權的相互關係來看，有著相似且極為相關的歷史境遇。然而，比起共通處或相似處，我觀察到台灣與沖繩間的差異處，反而是造成兩地做為彼此參照的重要因素。相較於台灣在1945年日本戰敗後便不再是日本的殖民地，沖繩至今仍為日本國的一縣；與此密切相關的是，1978年美國與中共宣告關係正常化後，駐台美軍便離開了台灣；沖繩雖在1972年回歸日本，在日美安保條約下，仍有百分之十八左右的土地為美軍基地，承受其帶來的犯罪、暴力、賣春、事故、環境破壞等問題，美軍基地的縮減或移設等協商也一直沒有具體進展。乍看之下，台灣似乎比沖繩更為幸運地擺脫了日本與美國兩大強權的政治與軍事支配，而更能發展其主體性。然而，與沖繩文學的相互參照，讓我留意到在戰後的台灣，日本與美國的新殖民主義其實是藉由更為軟性的文化與思想層面，持續操控並侷限著戰後台灣的主體性建構。因此，我希望能藉由日本與美國勢力的「現身」或「隱形」，進行台灣與沖繩這兩個「非國家」島嶼之間的相互對話。

然而，在抵抗日美強權的過程中，對於主體性的追求同時也蘊含著台灣或沖繩在地本質主義與「擬國族主義」的危險性。這導向了我的第二個島嶼研究的比較框架，在這個研究方向中，我試圖藉由台灣與沖繩的離島小說，來解構兩地在其本土化運動中陷入本質主義的傾向。相對於對立隔絕的「小島」，兩地的離島書寫突顯出本島「大島」在追求文化主體性之際，

產生了自我東方主義化傾向。同時，「小島」與「大島」間的不平等權力關係，促使我們反思台灣與沖繩在全球化下追求異質性的流行浪潮當中，必須更有意識地觀察自身所處的位置，摸索更具有永續發展性的文化策略。更為重要的是，將兩地的文學放置在島嶼書寫的脈絡下進行考察，可望藉由島嶼所具有的流動與開放性質，挑戰以陸地為中心的既有疆界與領土之概念，讓台灣與沖繩的文學與其他各區域的島嶼書寫之間產生共鳴，交織成更具生產性的思想。

回顧這一路走來的旅程，背後有著台灣文學研究從萌芽至進入學院體制的歷史過程。台灣文學具有多樣的面相，需要更多的研究者以更多元的角度來進行探索，我之所以選擇以比較文學的方法來進行台灣文學的研究，除了受到個人求學與研究之歷程與經驗的影響，同時更關乎我個人做為台灣出身的學者，試圖將台灣文學研究與世界其他地區具有類似歷史經驗與處境的文學進行對話與連結，從在地的位置介入全球性知識生產與文化政治學之努力方向。

Experimental Critical Theory Program at UCLA

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I want to thank Comparative Literature Association for inviting me to offer some observations on the state of affairs for theoretical studies at UCLA's Comparative Literature Department and say a few words on the way through which I keep in touch with intellectual communities. My discussion is organized into two sections. First, I discuss Experimental Critical Theory Program (ECT) at UCLA. This section offers a cursory look at the program's theoretical orientation, its ongoing modifications, the success it enjoyed and the practical constraints it encountered. In a good comparative spirit, I also draw on Prof. Ioana Luca's discussion of The School of Criticism and Theory (SCT) at Cornell University (see the Dec. 2012 newsletter) and highlight, via comparison, the advantages and disadvantages of ECT. I choose this topic because it has been a formative experience in my intellectual development and also because I feel that I am a little bit more qualified than others to say a few things about ECT simply by virtue of my seniority (four-year participation). In the second section, I move to a more general discussion about a few ways I employ outside the classroom context to keep abreast with the latest intellectual development.

The ECT Program consists of ongoing seminars held in Winter and Spring each academic year. The program has been in virtual existence since the early 2000s; it started out as a project and became an official program under Comparative Literature Department in 2009. Enrollment is by application. Each year around 20 students are

admitted to the program who, upon completion of two core seminars, two other approved theory seminars and a number of other requirements, will be awarded a certificate in Experimental Critical Theory. In the early days, the participants were primarily graduate students from English and Comparative Literature. But the program has become much more interdisciplinary over the years as the seminar gains wider appeal to students from other languages departments and Departments of Political Science, Philosophy, Art History, Musicology, etc. The program also has other participants than graduate students; scholars, intellectuals, and artists from neighboring institutions or those who happen to be around the LA area attend the meeting every now and then, and their presence greatly contributes to the depth and breadth of discussion. In addition to regular seminars, there are also symposiums open to the public; reading groups can be arranged too. All these, in a way, are geared toward the biggest one-week event slated for the end of the Spring quarter. The event takes different forms depending on the theme of the year. For example, the 2012 event, centered around the idea of "change" and "the world" in the work of Alain Badiou, had Badiou and other militant intellectuals discussing Badiou's book on the Arab Spring *The Rebirth of History*. The 2011 event under the theme "Philosophy, Art and Politics" featured, accordingly, conference, concert, performance, and film screening. Also as a part of the effort to enrich the experience, seminarians were given a chance to enjoy LA Opera's production of Wagner's Ring Cycle without paying a premium for tickets. Life indeed could be good for graduate students! So unlike regular seminars that end at Week 10 and that, most likely, start experiencing the waning of students' enthusiasm by Week 07, there is always a sense of anticipation and excitement here because of the change of scenery and the possibility to meet and talk with a group of people we usually read in books or watch on YouTube.

The seminar goes by the following format. A theme is chosen for each quarter or year. Initially, the seminar was organized in such a way that each week we brought in a renowned scholar and had

him/her address the theme chosen for that quarter. The speaker would assign the reading in advance, and they would pick their own focus and decide on the method of the delivery. The format has evolved over the past few years (for better I think). Let me explain the limit of the initial format by way of comparison with Prof. Luca's characterization of SCT as a house of theory with "not one window, but a million," a vision that also informs ECT's endeavor early on. There are objective and subjective conditions that lend themselves to the desire to be as diversified and inclusive as possible. Objectively, this was possible because the funding was then (prior to the UC budget crisis) sufficient enough for us to bring in different speakers every week. Subjectively, the desire to accommodate different theoretical approaches was addressed by inviting scholars of vastly different theoretical backgrounds to lead the seminar session. To be sure, contact and exchange are the oxygen for improvement and the best way to avoid intellectual atrophy. But given the quarter system under which we operate at UCLA, I have to say that I am not particularly fond of the availability of so many windows. Here's why: although participants addressed the same theme, the seminar suffered from a lack of continuity and coherence, due partly to their different theoretical approaches and partly to the lack of awareness of the internal dynamic and development of the group as a whole. The quarter system is the major reason for my reservations about making ECT a house of theory with a million of windows. It is not that I am pushing for some kind of theoretical monopoly; it is just that there are different ways to be inclusive. Under certain circumstances, a single window could be a portal to a view vastly more encompassing than 10 different windows loosely grouped together in name rather than in substance.

The quarter system has only 10 weeks, which is too short for an adequate appreciation of four or five different approaches. When we open up a window, we also need time to look at the view outside. The quarter system does not really afford the opportunity to look beyond the window. My first stint with ECT thus ends up feeling more like going window-shopping than anything else. And this process could become mechanical, the endless

repetition of the gesture of opening without exploring what is in store beyond the window. SCT has the advantage of having, on the one hand, four 6-week seminars and, on the other, a number of mini-seminars. Participants can decide on the core seminar of their own choosing and also get a taste of other mini-seminars on issues of their lesser research interests. The variety of its activities and the connected and coordinated paths of its social and academic events make SCT a highly productive platform for intellectual development. With ECT, however, we cannot have the cake and eat it. So the format of the seminar has to be tweaked and this change of direction also became necessary as the budget crisis went from bad to worse, making it difficult to bring in as many scholars. In the last two years, ECT has transformed itself and become more invested in the works of a few figures, with Badiou leading the way, followed by Lacan and Hegel. Rather than focusing exclusively on their works, we touch on issues, debates, genealogies, and controversies surrounding these thinkers, and the range of inquiries opened up by "one window" reaches out further beyond that afforded by my first-year experience with ECT. So a single theoretical approach can branch out into different directions, but this time in a more tightly woven thematic assemblage. As for the seminar format, instead of having a different academic big shot each week, we find it more productive to have someone staying for two or three weeks or have them come back on a regular basis, which contributes to an atmosphere of an intellectual community with a better sense of familiarity, direction, and coherence.

In all honesty, this renewed focus is not well-received by a certain section of the graduate population in my home department. As a result, ECT was mocked by some as providing an occasion for the Badiou orgy. This is often the result of an erroneous judgement made on the basis of impression. As far as I am concerned, today's ECT has more identity and character without sacrificing diversity and openness.

Now I want to move to ways through which I maintain connection with intellectual communities. One of these is, of course, the mailing list. But

sometimes I feel that this method meets some of my needs but not others. With more and more subscriptions, the influx of information could be overwhelming; furthermore, the discussion is quite uneven and sometimes ends abruptly or just digresses endlessly. Nowadays the thing I rely on most is called the Blogosphere. Blogs can be accessed with any browser, but they can be effectively organized with a RSS (Rich Site Summary) Reader (e.g., Google Reader) which would allow the user to receive updates of the subscribed blogs. Blogs have become increasingly popular among younger scholars to share information and communicate with like-minded friends. For many professors-cum-bloggers, the medium offers a new way of doing scholarship as they can post on a topic and receive immediate responses from their readers. The post could be a quick thought or lengthy elaboration; there are few constraints and formalities; the flow of exchange is faster too; it is a matter of hours and days, rather than months, before the bloggers receive feedback. Blogging thus offers an alternative model of doing scholarship, and there are already some exciting books published as a result of this mode of intense intellectual exchange.

Unlike the mailing list, each blog has its unique flavor, reflecting the blogger's theoretical and non-theoretical interests, their ways of argumentation, people they associate, and people they dislike. Selected information about books, conferences, reviews, etc. are posted there. In an age when everything becomes excessive, it is good to have information filtered by people with whom you share a degree of affinity. If you enjoy reading a particular blog, it is likely the case that you also find information posted there interesting. The best part is that you get to know other people's projects and have a chance to read manuscripts and draft translations which might not see the light of day for another two or three years. There are also some quick reviews of other people's books, or responses to people's criticisms. Of course, those views cannot be taken as the bloggers' definitive statements, but if you take time to compare what is written online and what eventually gets published, you observe the making of an idea or even a school of thought. Last but not least, the blogging culture

is sometimes peppered with gossips, acrimonious remarks and other ingredients that certainly help spice up one's boring academic existence.

Here are a few of my personal favorites: I read Levi Bryant's *Larval Subject*, Graham Hartman's *Object-Oriented Philosophy* to keep myself informed about the latest development of Object-Oriented Ontology which, according to some, is the most significant development in Continental philosophy in recent years. *Fractal Ontology* is another site I visit to access some of the unpublished translations of Gilbert Simondon and François Laruelle, who have become increasingly visible in the English-speaking world. Since the Blogosphere is an interconnected domain, I will spare myself the trouble of going through details. Interested readers can visit one of the aforementioned sites, take it from there, and expand their own distinctive spheres.

My EGS Experience

Tony See

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore

The experience of doing a Ph.D. at the European Graduate School (EGS) was fantastic. I applied for the Ph.D. program at EGS back in 2003 because I knew it would offer me a rare opportunity to study with some of the best philosophy and theory professors in Europe and in the United States. Some of the luminaries that I have studied with during my Ph.D. program include Jean Baudrillard, Manuel De Landa, Michael Hardt, and Jean-Luc Nancy. I also attended special sessions by thinkers such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. I also had the rare opportunity to meet and study with Giorgio Agamben during his conceptualization of theological issues relating to “glory.”

The EGS differs from conventional universities in that the sessions are usually held during May and August of each year where students have to attend intensive lectures and seminars that meet US standards for postgraduate courses. These are based on intensive online preparations that last for about a semester before the actual courses start. The coursework in the day is usually followed by evening guest seminars that are highly engaging. The then Ph.D. course director, Wolfgang Schirmacher, would engage each of the prominent thinkers after each seminar and usually come up with something that belongs to the order of “an Event.”

The EGS also differs from the other universities in that the professors typically do not stay in EGS throughout the year but only during the two sessions: what EGS does is gather all these thinkers all in the same place, having them teach us personally, and all in the same place. Sometimes, we learn the most from philosophical discussions and exchanges between the professors. Just imagine having a coursework which includes the experience of watching Agamben and Badiou discussing on the nature of the political.

The EGS sessions are normally followed by two years of dissertation writing process where

students get to develop an idea and work closely with a professor of their choice. As my research gravitated towards Heidegger after going through a fair bit of Hegel, Spinoza, Deleuze, and Foucault, I had the honor of working with Professor Schirmacher as my dissertation supervisor. The supervising sessions were as personal as they were intensive as we corresponded via emails; he even came to Singapore on several occasions for consultations.

Overall, I would strongly encourage anyone who has an interest in theory and who is fiercely independent to consider EGS, because it offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study with some of the best theorists and philosophers in Europe and the US.