

ON THE COVER

From the Director

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The Centre for East Asian Research had been facing administrative challenges last summer when I assumed the Acting Directorship in August 2009. By the time I assumed the Directorship in March 2010, we had met those challenges. We have maintained high caliber lecture series and academic activities in spite of the difficulties. Scholars from Japan, France, the UK, the US, and Montreal, presented their research on China, Japan, Korea, and Myanmar in our interdisciplinary Centre for East Asian Research Speaker Series and the Japan Seminar series. Professor David Knechtges of the University of Washington delivered the Hsiang Lecture on Chinese Poetry. Our graduate students working in various fields related to East Asia were exceptionally active in presenting their research and seeking out dialogue with peers and senior scholars in various venues, both at home and internationally. Our undergraduate students were, as always, highly successful in the annual Chinese and Japanese speech contests, both on the local and national level, garnering many accolades. You are invited to peruse reports on these achievements in the pages of this newsletter.

Among the many highlights of this year's faculty achievements, first mention goes to Professor Robin D.S. Yates (History/East Asian Studies), who was elected to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada for his outstanding contributions to Canadian intellectual life. Both he and Professor Thomas Lamarre (East Asian Studies/Art History and Communications Studies) were awarded the prestigious James McGill Professorship – a renewal in the case of Prof. Yates – in recognition of their distinction in research. In 2009, Prof. Yates published *Women in China from Earliest Times to the Present: A Bibliography of Studies in Western Languages*, inaugurating a new series with Brill, edited by Grace Fong, "Women and Gender in China Studies." Prof. Lamarre developed the first critical approach to Japanese animation in his 2009 book *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Anima-*

tion (University of Minnesota Press). Furthermore, Prof. Lamarre (co-investigator), with Professors Michael Cowan (PI, German Studies) and Alannis Thain (English), won funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation to build the Moving Image Research Laboratory for investigation into relations between developments in moving image technologies and understandings of the moving body. This year also celebrates the publication of Professor Kenneth Dean's monumental two-volume oeuvre *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plain* (Brill, 2010), co-authored with his long-time collaborator Professor Zheng Zhenman of Xiamen University.

Professor Gwen Bennett started her appointment in East Asian Studies/Anthropology supported by a generous grant from the Luce Foundation's Initiative on East and Southeast Asian Archaeology and Early History. She took graduate students from the two departments during the winter break to Sichuan province to conduct an archaeological survey in her Chengdu Plain project, providing them with invaluable hands-on field experience. Next, we extend our very warm welcome to Professor Victor Fan, who will be joining East Asian Studies as Assistant Professor of Modern Chinese Literature and Film Studies. Colleagues and students alike are excited to see his dual talents in both academic and artistic fields.

Finally, for this year's activities achieved under difficult circumstances, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to colleagues, graduate students, and the new administrative support staff, Ms. Livia Nardini and Ms. Angela Lapenna, whose efficiency and esprit de corps have provided me with indispensable help in so many matters, and, last but not least, to generous donors who continue to support our speaker series and library resources. The Centre will not be able to grow and flourish without all of their contributions.

Professor Grace S. Fong
Director, Centre for East Asian Research
Chair, Department of East Asian Studies

New East Asian Studies Faculty: Professor Victor Fan

Professor Victor Fan is a new faculty member joining the East Asian Studies Department this fall. Professor Fan received his BM in composition at the Eastman School of Music, his MFA in film and television production at USC, School of Cinematic Arts and his PhD in Comparative Literature and Film Studies at Yale University. His areas of interest include film and media theory and philosophy, classical Chinese literature and philosophy, modern Chinese literature, Chinese cinema and media, postcolonial theory and queer theory. Professor Fan is also a filmmaker, composer and theatre director and was a teaching fellow in the Theatre Studies Department at Yale University. This fall Professor Fan will be teaching Chinese Action Film (EAST216) and Approaches to Chinese Cinema (EAST353).



CEAR: What is the relation between your artistic endeavours and your academic pursuits?

Victor Fan: Artistic endeavours and academic pursuits are always inter-related for me. When I was a child, I loved playing what we may call “dissonant” chords on the piano. A piano teacher of mine stopped teaching me because she found me more interested in experimenting with these “angst-ridden” dissonant chords than playing Bach and Mozart. For me, these chords were not all “angst-ridden.” Each chord instantiates a certain relationship, a certain colour, or a certain mode of affection. For me, this experience illustrates how artistic endeavours and academic pursuits are inter-related. In a way, my “childlike penchant” (to borrow a term from Walter Benjamin and Miriam Hansen) to bang on the piano was immediately met with a joyful fascination with “theorising” it; meanwhile, thanks to my parents and my piano teacher, I began to learn how human affections and sensations interact in a social context, and how historical contexts keep negotiating the boundaries between what is considered sanctioned and unsanctioned.

In a more serious register, the relationship between artistic endeavours and academic pursuits of course involves a set of ontological, epistemological, and historical questions. In the Chinese context, it is always inspiring to look into the multiple texts of the *Honglou meng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) to catch a glimpse of the historical consensus and dissensus among scholars and poets on this question. It is fascinating to see how a piece of fiction is created and constructed based on what we call “artistic endeavours” of the author(s), and layers of academic “authoring” and “creating” through commentaries that blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, prose and poetry, image and language, artistic expression and criticism.

CEAR: How will your background in the arts inform your ongoing research and pedagogy at McGill?

Victor Fan: Because of my background in the arts, I am very drawn to questions about the *topos*, i.e., how we may go back to the configurative elements that form the underlying assumption of our discussion, and by questioning and rephrasing some of these elements, how we may end up changing the rules of our discussion. In some ways, the child in me who loves to bang on the piano is still at work. I tend to begin my research with “listening” to a dissonant chord that may seem disharmonic at first; I would then find out how such a “dis-chord” may inform us about our accepted notion of harmony and sanctioned intervals in the first place.

Currently, I am working on a couple of projects. One of them is on China and Hollywood, with the objective of finding an alternative way to discuss the relationship between these film industries beyond the binary models of the “national” and the “global,” and instead take into account notions such as intersubjectivity, mutual interference, and mutual addiction on both the production and the spectatorial levels. Another project of mine is a translation project on Chinese film theory, with the underlying aim of thinking about what it means to think “theoretically” within the specific modes of modernity, inter-cultural dialogues, semi-colonial conditions, gender and sexual inequities in the history of Chinese cinema.

My teaching owes a lot to my work in the theatre, especially when I was under apprenticeship with theatre artist Danny Yung. In a seminar situation, starting from a very general question, a *topos* will usually emerge from the specific agendas we bring to the table. My job is to question and switch the configurative elements one at a time in hopes of locating deeper and deeper problems in certain underlying assumptions we have. In a lecture, the idea is to suggest as many different ways to look at the same topic as possible, and to point out how these different ways of looking may contribute to a state of mutual interference.

Interview by Jennifer Germann



Landscapes, Settlements and Emerging Social Complexity in the Chengdu Plain of Sichuan, China

Professor Gwen Bennett

Assistant Professor, Departments of East Asian Studies and Anthropology

Excavations at the 1500-1100 B.C.E. Sanxingdui site on the Chengdu Plain of Sichuan in 1986 uncovered two sacrificial cache pits containing many never-before-seen objects. The pits' life-size bronze masks with their enigmatically smiling faces, some of which have gold foil coverings, multitudes of elephant tusks, and elegantly carved jade weapons clearly evidence the sophisticated but still unexplained nature of this society, while bronze vessels in the style of the Central Plains indicate its far-reaching ties. These objects provided strong evidence to scholars who were proposing new ideas for the beginnings of Chinese civilization in the late 1980s and 1990s—ideas that have now revolutionized how we conceive of China's past. Late 20th century archaeological investigations at Sanxingdui and in other regions destroyed the traditional idea that Chinese civilization rose in one region-- the Central Plains region, and slowly spread outward from there. The volumes of new archaeological data from these projects have clearly shown that Chinese civilization grew out of the commingling of influences from multiple sources, and that many regions once thought to have been hinterlands in relation to the Central Plains instead were important contributors to its development.

Of course, new understandings give rise to many new questions: the ancient society that built the city at Sanxingdui might represent one of the earliest states in East Asia, yet almost nothing is known of the political, social, or natural landscapes preceding, contemporaneous with, or postdating its emergence. To study these issues, I started an archaeological survey project in 2005 with colleagues from Harvard, National Taiwan University, Peking University, and the Chengdu City Institute of Archaeology to investigate remains on the Chengdu Plain of Sichuan. We chose to center our survey around the site of Gucheng, one of nine newly discovered walled settlements on the Chengdu Plain that pre-date the Sanxingdui period by approximately 1,000 years. We are collecting data within a 314 km² region through archaeological and geological surveys that document the changing relationships between human settlement and landscape in this geomorphologically dynamic region. These data are allowing us to examine the degrees to which physiographic, cultural and political factors affected patterns

of landscape use during different periods. We expect to find that settlement patterns changed through time where early settlements were associated with features of the natural environment in the pre-Sanxingdui "Baodun" period (ca. 3000-1500 B.C.E.), and Bronze Age settlements gradually shifted to patterns more clearly influenced by cultural factors such as transportation routes, landscape modification, and political centralization.

Academic schedules and the flooded rice paddies in the Chengdu Plain during summer mean that our fieldwork is confined to winter vacations. However, Sichuan's four-season agricultural schedule means that crops are always present, so we have had to adapt old investigative methods and develop new ones to cope with problems of visibility. These include systematically examining farm field surfaces for broken Han Dynasty and earlier period pottery sherds that might represent an underground archaeological site, collecting similar information by sub-surface soil samples to help us understand vegetation-covered areas, using a magnetometer to give us pictures of the underground architecture at archaeological sites so we don't have to dig, and investigating landscape development processes through geomorphology. We will complete our 314 km² survey area around the site of Gucheng in our 2010-2011 season, after which we will extend our survey towards Yufucun, the next Baodun period walled settlement to the south in 2011-2012, our last field season. Two McGill graduate students participated in our 2009-2010 field season: Lin Fan, a PhD student in EAS and Art History, and Sean Desjardins, a PhD student in Anthropology, and I plan to take more McGill students along with me in coming seasons. Fieldwork has been supported by grants from the Luce Foundation and the Wenner Gren Foundation.



Project summary continued on p. 11, by graduate student participant LIN Fan

2009-2010 Speaker Series

Professor Gregory Lee



On September 10, 2009, the Centre for East Asian Research had the pleasure to host a talk by Professor Gregory Lee (Transcultural and Chinese Studies, Jean Moulin University, Lyon), an authority on modern Chinese literature and poetry. Entitled "Writing 'China's Lost Decade: Cultural Politics and Poetics 1978-1990'," Prof. Lee's talk centered on the process of writing his most recent book, published in June 2009.

Prof. Lee discussed the problems of framing the 1980s in China, a decade that has largely been ignored by scholars and commentators, who usually do not focus their study on the years between Zhou Enlai's death in 1976 and the Tian'anmen events of 1989. Reflecting on his own experience of living in Beijing during this transitional decade, Prof. Lee based his research on a lot of archival material that he collected himself, including photographs, recordings and interviews with prominent poets and intellectuals of the time such as Ai Qing, Bei Dao, and Duo Duo. Prof. Lee described this period as a time when writers of poetry felt the right and the duty to enter the public political sphere. However, this intellectual flourishing was largely an underground movement, and, although writers produced petitions, magazines and plays, they still operated under the threat of government censorship.

Prof. Lee also commented that paralleling this revival of literary culture, the spread of television competed with poets for the public sphere. He noted that, in 1978, virtually no one owned a television set, whereas it became commonplace to watch television by 1989. This socio-cultural shift, when compounded with the disillusion of intellectuals and writers after the events at Tian'anmen, drove most dissident literary production outside China. It was on this note that Gregory Lee concluded his talk, emphasizing the importance of looking back, and our duty in generating an open reflection on the past.

Professor Hiroko Kawanami

On October 22, 2009, the Centre for East Asian Research presented a talk by Professor Hiroko Kawanami (Religious Studies, Lancaster University, UK; Numata Visiting Professor at McGill 2009). A specialist in Theravada Buddhism and a former nun herself, Prof. Kawanami combines practice and study into her research on Myanmar Buddhism. Her talk, titled "The Powerful and Powerless Charisma: Buddhist Monks in Myanmar," focused on the fluid relationship between charisma and power in Myanmar Buddhism, taking three influential and well-known monks as case studies.

The first type of charismatic monk that Prof. Kawanami presented is the state-recognized scholar who devotes his life to the study of scriptures. His popular appeal stems from his compassionate nature as well as his attention to students and lack of pride or anger. Whereas this scholarly monk derives power from the respect he inspires, the 'preacher monk' attracts followers because of his persuasive skills. This second type of Myanmar monk travels across the country and even internationally to give sermons and missionize. With far-reaching vision but worldly focus, he engages in community development projects to make a difference in the lives of people. The third type of charismatic, popular Buddhist monk is the Arhat, or meditator. As opposed to the scholar monk, the meditator has no academic credentials but a deep, insightful wisdom. Often an ascetic monk, he is believed to be a force of nature and thus communicates with the land as well as with spirits and animals.

Professor Kawanami concluded her talk by highlighting the variety of words used to refer to 'power' in Myanmar. Distinguishing between *ana*, a temporary political or military power gained by force, and *awza*, the reverential authority that virtuous and moral monks can command without coercion, she noted that the monastic fraternity has come to represent a different source of authority and a potential challenge to state power in Myanmar. Although these monks are in effect 'powerless' by having no civilian rights, their charisma can inspire their followers to engage in a movement for change.



Professor Sarah Allan

On November 6, 2009, the department had the pleasure to host a talk by Professor Sarah Allan (Dartmouth College), a leading scholar of Early Chinese Culture, author of several acclaimed books including *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art and Cosmos in Early China* (1991). Entitled "He Flies like a Bird, He Dives like a Dragon, Who is that Man in the Tiger Mouth? Or: Shamanic Images in Shang and Early Western Zhou Art," Professor Allan's lecture surveyed the diverse occurrences of the motif of a man being eaten by a tiger in early Chinese material culture, and argued that these were representations of shamanic trance.

Professor Allan first outlined the most common physiological effects of shamanic trance, experiences that are shared by most cultures. Shamans are often reported to experience states of altered consciousness that enable them to transcend the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead. They sometimes see transformations of animals into humans, or of humans into animals. The experience of flight is also common to natural or induced trances.

Using evidence from recent excavations at Erlitou tombs, Prof. Allan also noted that the *taotie* motif, known for its appearance on a wide range of Shang and Zhou bronze vessels, might have been carved on lacquer and other perishable materials before casting techniques were advanced enough to support detailed motifs. Interestingly, recent tomb findings include *taotie*-like turquoise ornaments with large eyes that were laid flat on the chest of the dead person, emphasizing the power of vision. Other tomb furnishings accompanying the body included ritual paraphernalia such as drums, bells, and wine vessels, which could be associated with a shaman's profession.

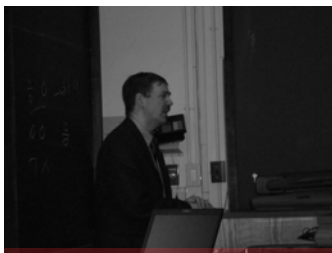
Prof. Allan presented a number of slides in which pottery shards, jade pendants and bronze vessels all bore strikingly similar motifs of a smiling, crouching man with his head in a tiger mouth. She pointed out that tigers were the most ferocious animals in the Chinese tradition, being one of very few man-eating animals. A man in a tiger's mouth would be certain to be devoured and move toward the realm of the dead, but this figure is smiling and ready to spring up, unafraid of death because he will return. In connecting the overlooked man-in-tiger-mouth motif and the *taotie*, Prof. Allan outlined a convincing picture of the lasting influence of shamanic experiences in early Chinese art.



Professor Paola Zamperini

On March 2, 2010, the Centre for East Asian Research hosted a talk by Professor Paola Zamperini, scholar of Chinese Literature at Amherst College. It was in an engaging and challenging – but nonetheless pleasantly lighthearted – manner that Professor Zamperini explored the cultural and literary roles and implications of the short novel, “A Tale of an Infatuated Woman” (*Chipozi zhuan*). Long one of the most popular erotic texts in China, this work, marketed as a cautionary tale for women, chronicles the progress of its protagonist, Shangguan A’na, as she searches for and masters the pleasures of the flesh, breaking all social taboos in the process. Professor Zamperini explained that, by drawing on literary conventions established by earlier Chinese erotic fiction and Taoist sexual texts, *Chipozi zhuan* allows its readers to draw certain conclusions about the Qing perception of sex, pain, pleasure, and female orgasm. As she also pointed out, however, *Chipozi zhuan* can be read in a very transgressive way: A’na never repents of her sins and, well into old age, denies any regrets, finding pleasure instead in the retelling of her tale. Despite its cautionary format, respect for the social order, and observation of Taoist sexual conventions, then, “A Tale of an Infatuated Woman” remains, to use Professor Zamperini’s words, a rather “racy” text, chronicling the awkward relations between the pain and pleasure of sexual excess.

By Guillaume Lamothe



Prof. Mark Byington

*The following lectures were also presented
in the speaker series:*

Professor Fabrizio Pregadio

March 17, 2010

Visiting Scholar, University of California, Berkeley

“From the Inner Gods to the Internal Elixir:

Daoist Views of the Embryo and the Infant”

Professor David Odo

April 1, 2010

(Anthropology, Photography, Japan; Harvard University)

“Views from the Edge: Photographs, History
and the Construction of the Ogasawara Islands”

Professor Mark Byington

April 9, 2010

Early History Project, Korea Institute, Harvard University



Audience listens to lecture by
Prof. Mark Byington

Graduate Student Presentation Series

The annual East Asian Studies Graduate Student Presentation Series is an excellent opportunity for graduate doing research related to East Asia to share their work with their peers and professors. The topics are diverse, and the presentations insightful. The series provides graduate students with a space in which to share their work in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere, with a short feedback and discussion period after each presentation.

Six graduate students presented papers on topics related to East Asian Studies in the 2009-2010 Presentation Series, held at Thomson House in February and March. This year’s series drew a variety of presenters and topics.

Special thanks to Jennifer Germann for organizing the series!

Andrew Griffin (M.A. student)

“Four Years at Nanjing University of (T)CM: Why Study Traditional Chinese Medicine?”

Albert Travis Joern (M.A. student)

“The Physical Culture of Martial Arts in Republican China”

Wang Zhifeng (Ph.D. student)

“Public Image and Self-narrative in the *Lianyinshi ji*”

Wang Wangming (Ph.D. student)

“The Literary Space within the Bao Family in 18th Century Jingjiang, Jiangsu”

Rebecca Robinson (M.A. student)

“Mourning Rituals in Early China”

Morgan Steacy (M.A. student)

“A Way of Revolution”

Visit from the Association for Korea-Canada Cultural Exchange

On May 13th, 2010, the Department of East Asian Studies received guests from the Association for Korea-Canada Cultural Exchange. Twelve members of the association, including the President, Mr. Sang-Beom LEE, had a two-hour meeting with Professor Fong, Ms. Kim, and Professor James Thomas. The Association discussed ways that they can contribute to the development of Korean Studies at McGill, and the Association generously promised to donate over two hundred Korean books to the CJK library collection this year. After the meeting, they enjoyed a visit on campus and a short tour of the Korean collection at the library.



The Association for Korea-Canada Cultural Exchange was established in 2001 with the goal of contributing to and encouraging exchange activities between the two countries. In 2009, the Association gave Korean Studies at McGill \$5,000 CDN for the year 2009-2010. The support is to be used for Korean Studies courses and academic or cultural activities related to Korean Studies. The Association has generously agreed to give funding again for the year 2010-2011.

Their Mission:

Cultural Exchanges between the two countries

Support for Korean Studies in Canada

Exchanges of Scholars between the two countries

By Myunghye Kim



Korean Studies Student Panel 2010

On Friday, April 9th, Korea Studies students gave presentations on topics related to their own interests in Korean Studies.

Alexander McAuley:

Starcraft and Status: Video Games and the Popular Culture of South Korea

Sangwon "Sony" Lee:

International Marriages in South Korea

Eun "Courtney" Cho:

Anti-Americanism in South Korea

Catherine Bhaskar:

Language Change as a Reflection of Gender and Generational Relations in South Korea

Japan Seminar Speaker Series

The 39th Japan Seminar (October 15, 2009)

Professor Mark Watson (Department of Anthropology, Concordia University)

“Rethinking Indigeneity: Japan in Comparative Context”

The 40th Japan Seminar (March 10, 2010)

Matthew Penney (Department of History, Concordia University)

“Overcoming Amnesia: War, Memory, and Popular Culture in Japan”

The 41st Japan Seminar (April 2, 2010)

Professor HARADA Masazumi (Gakuen University)

“Fifty Years of Minamata Disease: A Report on One of the World’s Worst Cases of Health Damage Caused by Environmental Pollution”

On Friday, April 2, 2010, the Department of East Asian Studies was privileged to host a talk by Professor HARADA Masazumi of Gakuen University, based on his 50-year research career on Minamata disease, or mercury poisoning caused by industrial wastewater. Minamata disease was first discovered in 1956 in Minamata city, Kumamoto prefecture, Japan, and is caused by the ingestion of fish and shellfish (or other edible products) containing methyl mercury. In Kumamoto, organic mercury accumulated in the food chain as a result of Chisso Corporation’s release of heavily polluted industrial wastewater in the Minamata Bay and the Shiranui Sea for more than 30 years. In spite of decades of animal and human deaths, as well as the development of congenital forms of the disease, Chisso and the government did little to prevent the pollution. About 25,000 people are still awaiting court or government decisions on their claims for compensation.

Professor Harada has also researched cases of Minamata disease in other parts of the world. He has investigated similar cases of chronic and congenital mercury poisoning in various locations in Canada, Brazil, China, and other countries. Professor Harada, who began his investigations of Minamata disease in Canada in the early 1970s, has done research on mercury poisoning on First Nations reservations in Manitoba and Ontario, and appeared in a CBC interview and short documentary before arriving in Montreal.

Finally, Professor Harada touched on some of the complex medical, social, economic, ethical, and juridical aspects of the problem, pointing out that there is a commonality in most of these cases of mercury poisoning; that is, it is those communities that are already socially and economically disadvan-

taged that suffer disproportionately from Minamata disease and related illnesses. Struggling fishing communities, Canadian First Nations, and other aboriginal communities around the world were and are the groups hardest hit by corporate and government inattention and irresponsibility regarding industrial waste and its human, animal, marine, and environmental impact.

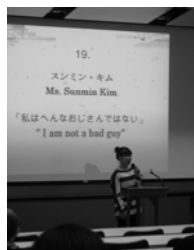
Professor Harada was also joined by Professor HANADA Masanori of Kumamoto Gakuen’s Faculty of Social Welfare. Professor Hanada spoke in more depth about the non-medical issues related to Minamata disease, further contextualizing the ways in which the disease and narratives about it have circulated in the past 50 years.

Following the two scholars on their current tour around Canada were members of a film crew from the prefectural television company, Kumamoto Kenmin Terebi. Over refreshments after the presentation, the crew interviewed some members of the audience about their feelings, impressions, and opinions regarding issues raised by Professors Harada and Hanada’s discussion. The talks, as well as these interviews, will be compiled into a documentary by Kumamoto Kenmin Terebi, to be televised in Japan.

A very special thank you goes out to Professor Livia Monnet of the Université de Montréal for organizing the talk, as well as Professors Tom Lamarre and Hajime Nakatani of McGill EAS for arranging for the space and advertising.

By Jodie Beck

Japanese Speech Contest 2010



The 21st Japanese Speech Contest of Quebec was held on March 7th at UQAM, and the 21st National Speech Contest was held on March 28th at York University. Students put in a great deal of effort and creativity into their work; congratulations to our winners!

Beginners Category

First Prize: **Sunmin Kim**

Intermediates Category

Second Prize: **Granato Bianca**

Special prizes (for performance, humour, etc.):

George Smith, Yisin Shen, Wei Zheng, Gregorio Rabunal

Advanced Category

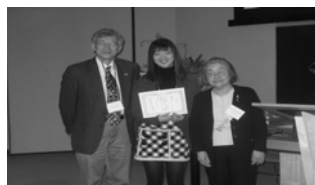
First Prize: **Keum Yeo-Anna Brochet**

Third Prize: **Vinci Ting**

Special Prizes: **Irina Borgos, Ariane Desgagnés-Leclerc**

Open Category

First Prize: **Cherry Gao**



Keum-Yeo-Anna
Brochet (centre)

Chinese Speech Contest 2010

The annual Chinese speech contest of university students from Quebec, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Ottawa Regions was held on March 20th at UQAM. Thanks to all our participants, and congratulations to our winners!

First Level Competition

Sebastien Lesieur (Second Prize)

Second Level Competition

John Whitney (First Prize)

Rosalinda Lorigiano (First Prize)

Third Level Competition

Loksan Harley (Second Prize)

Open Category Competition

Tyler Cohen (First Prize)

Theodore Widom (Third Prize)

Tyler Cohen, winner of the preliminary selection, will go to China for the 9th Chinese Bridge World University Students Chinese Competition, to be held in Beijing in July.

Loksan Harley, winner of the Award of "Experiencing China Youth Program," will go to China in July on an invited cultural tour.

Hsiang Lecture Series on Chinese Poetry

Professor David R. Knechtges

University of Washington

“How to View a Mountain in Medieval China”

October 23, 2009

At this fall's Hsiang Lecture on October 23, 2009, Professor David Knechtges led the audience on a vigorous jaunt through an array of European and Chinese perspectives on mountains leading up to the frenetic activity of the mountain exploring poet, Xie Lingyun (385-433), as he delivered his talk entitled, “How to View a Mountain in Medieval China.” Dr. Knechtges is renowned not only as an expert on the Chinese literary genre of *fu*, variously translated as “rhapsody,” “rhyme-prose,” or “exposition,” considered to be one of the most difficult genres to study, but also for taking up the daunting task of translating the *Wen xuan*, the most revered anthology of the Chinese literary tradition.

Beginning with images of the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges around Seattle which he frequently gazes upon from his office at the University of Washington, Professor Knechtges then moved through an intriguing encapsulation of dominant European perspectives on mountains. While in the 19th century, Europeans began to express great admiration for “mountain splendour,” in previous centuries, a very negative view prevailed, in which mountains were described as “warts,” “blisters,” or “rubbish heaps.” In addition, their physical presence was considered to be far inferior to the heights and colours of the “mind's eye,” as expressed by such influential thinkers as St. Augustine and Petrarch. In China, the Confucian *Analects* described mountains in a more positive light, as the place enjoyed by the person of benevolence (*ren*). Mountains also became centers of Buddhism and Daoism, as their immovable presence was likened to Daoist immortality and the stillness and tranquility of Buddhism.

Xie Lingyun, celebrated as the “creator of mountain poetry” in China, came from one of the most distinguished aristocratic families of his times, which owned a large estate in SE China. Inspired by travels through his estate, Xie Lingyun composed a *fu* entitled “Exposition on Dwelling in the Mountains” (*Shanju fu*), which

reflects his dedicated study of Buddhism. As it had originally emerged in the Han court, *fu* employed an ornate style in its grandiose descriptions of the splendours of imperial palaces and parks. In adopting the *fu* to write about the countryside, Xie illustrates the majesty and beauty of its everyday plants, animals, and farmers, and, like the imperial palaces of earlier *fu*, his mountainous estate is rhetorically placed at the center of the universe, where it serves both as a microcosm for the universe and as a bodhi-mandala, a geographical embodiment of Buddhist enlightenment.

Unlike earlier writers, notably Tao Yuanming and Lu Ji, who questioned the necessity of physical withdrawal to attain a detached presence of mind, Xie presents himself as a solitary blazer of trails into unexplored territory, whose explorations can be read as a metaphor for Buddhist practice. Yet, Xie's poetic journey ends with the sedentary activities he undertakes alongside monks who come to practice “tranquil dwelling” on his estate. Ultimately, Xie's kinetic activity and sensual perception of the various features of the mountains fail to provide Buddhist insight. Xie gracefully displays the delusion of the senses through synaesthesia, describing one sense in terms of another, and in the closing lines of his *fu*, he laments how he has failed to obtain the “triple sight and five eyes,” Buddhist terminology for the instantaneous vision of all things and all times, only achieved through silent meditation.

On a final note, Professor Knechtges warned against the popular view of Xie as an early environmentalist. Despite Xie's enjoyment of the mountains and his rhetorical posture as a renunciant devoted to poverty, he was in fact a demanding taskmaster commanding a large core of slaves to work his land and enhance his wealth, not to mention his infamy for indulging his senses through frequent drinking bouts.

By Chris Byrne

“Techniques of the Image”: Graduate Student Symposium

On November 13, 2009, three university departments joined forces to organize a graduate symposium titled “Techniques of the Image.” Co-sponsored by the University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy and the Departments of East Asian Studies and Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University, the symposium featured presentations of papers by five graduate students from both universities, and provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas that cross the boundaries between philosophy, art history, and East Asian studies.

The symposium opened with a presentation by Tai van Toorn (AHCS, McGill) on her article titled “Intimate Enclosures: Framing the English Portrait Limning, 1585-1610.” Van Toorn’s talk focused on the tension between miniature portraits and their frames, and underlined the intimate encounter that the owner would experience when viewing limnings. Particularly, the multiple forms that the miniature portraits could take—lockets, small boxes, or locket pendants—emphasized the sense of touch and of close proximity to the person represented. She noted that the portraits’ small size allowed viewers to completely surround them, creating a new space beyond the two-dimensionality of the painting.

Next, Aya Kawamura (University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy) analyzed the relationship of Aleksandr Rodchenko’s compositions and constructions with their frames in her paper, “Framed Images: Aleksandr Rodchenko’s Abstract Paintings, Photographs and the Concept of Construction.” Illustrating her talk with the Russian avant-garde artist’s early abstract paintings, graphic designs, and photographs, Kawamura demonstrated that Rodchenko’s works were largely composed in proportion and accord with the shape and dimensions of their frames.

In a presentation entitled “Inflection and Inclusion: Perspectivism in Minimal Art,” Toru Arakawa (UTCP) explored the relationship between subject and object in the works of Donald Judd and other Minimalist artists of the 1960s. Arakawa commented on the formal properties and ambiguous structure of Judd’s works as well as on the sophisticated order of their parts, based on mathematical number series. Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze’s understanding of the Baroque, he argued that Judd’s Minimalist sculptures were inclusive of viewers because they could be experienced from any standpoint. This inclusive quality, when coupled with logical composition, reflects Judd’s personal preference for the fusion of thought and feeling in the encounter with his works.



Misato IDO

In the second panel, Misato IDO (Harvard-Yenching Institute, UTCP) discussed her paper, titled “Commemorating the Past: the Construction of Narrative and Image in the Folding Screen of *Fuji no Makigari*.” In her presentation, Misato analyzed the folding screens depicting the historical event of Minamoto no Yoritomo’s hunting expedition on Mt. Fuji in 1193, which symbolically proved the general’s military abilities before God, or *Kami*. She commented on the close relationship between the narrative illustrated on the folding screens and *Kowaka*, a form of performing arts with little movement popular among the samurai class, and argued that the *Fuji no Makigari* narrative, whether performed or portrayed, could have served to unify samurai communities with shared idioms and stories.

Finally, Gyewon Kim (AHCS, McGill), presented her paper titled “Tracing the Emperor: Photography and the Creation of Sacred Geographies in Japan,” in which she examined the photographic records of the Meiji emperor’s grand-scale tours of Japan. Since the camera was used not to portray the emperor but to capture what his gaze fell upon, the photographs were later used to sacralize local landmarks and monuments. Kim pointed out that the photographs were an index of both the emperor’s trace and the passing of time at those landmarks, marking Japan’s geography as both sacred and historical.



Gyewon KIM

The symposium was followed by a casual dinner during which the participants discussed ideas and study interests.

Experiencing the Past in the Sichuan Basin

Compared to the harsh and gloomy winter in Montreal, the winter months in the subtropical Chengdu Basin (Sichuan, China) are much more temperate and enjoyable, especially during those warm sunny afternoons. The area surrounding Pixian, a district in the northwest of Chengdu City, is where Professor Gwen Bennett (Departments of Anthropology and East Asian Studies) has been conducting her archaeological project every winter since 2005.

During the most recent season undertaken between early December 2009 and early January 2010, Sean Desjardins (PhD student in the Dept. of Anthropology) and I (PhD student in the Dept. of East Asian Studies) participated in the project as graduate students from McGill University.

As soon as we were in the field, we immediately understood the reason for choosing to work at this time. Besides winter being vacation time for professors and students, it was also the period when the land was at its maximum visibility, despite more than half of the countryside still being covered by flourishing vegetables and

rice paddies. For a person like me who is accustomed to living in the north, six to seven hours' work per day was never too long, as it was a great pleasure to walk through and gaze at the vast green fields, bamboo groves, and pomelo orchards.

Our colleagues came from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds in terms of their specialties, languages, and affiliated institutions, and this provided an abundant source of knowledge for everyone to draw upon. The whole team was divided into four streams: surface survey, auger sampling, remote sensing, and geomorphology. A professor or an independent researcher took the lead of each stream, but the students were rotated among them in order to acquire full mastery of all the components.

Our training began with learning how to identify pre-historic shards (before the second century BCE) and not be confused by the post-Song shards (after the tenth century) or modern bricks. Every time we found a pre-historic shard, we used a GPS receiver to record its location and marked the location on the map. It was fulfilling to see the increasing

number of highlighted marks as time passed. The map we used was made in the 1980s. Although it was a large scale, topographical map with tremendous detail, the landscape has changed enormously during the past two decades. A factory or building construction site, for example, might block your way at anytime, but since it is not on the map, you have no idea of its size. However, the difficulty posed by the map also brought unexpected fun, when we had to engage with the friendly but extremely curious local people to confirm our location. We also received other "bonuses" from the project: although our work focused on the remote past, we frequently stopped at the local altars or temples to admire the vitality of the burgeoning popular religions of rural China.

In all, the trip was rewarding, not least of all those tangible lived experiences: the sounds of the streets, the colors of the night market, the aroma of the Sichuan hotpot, and the rhythm of people's daily lives...

By LIN Fan

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