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Comparative Literature and Applied Cultural Studies, Or, a Report on the XIVth Triennial Congress of the ICLA/AILC (University of Alberta, August 15-20, 1994)

STEVEN TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK

INTRODUCTION

To describe a scholarly conference on literature is of value, I suggest, in the following context: in addition to the obvious intellectual perspectives and results of a literary conference, its general logistical, administrative, institutional, and financial aspects belong to the field of study best termed the "literary system," within the larger context of cultural activity, cultural participation, and cultural production. Especially today, when the "business" and the situation of the study of literature is under attack more than ever, the mechanisms of a literary conference reveal aspects of the current situation of the study of literature in general and, in the present case, of Comparative Literature in particular.

My description of the organization of the XIVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association / Association de Littérature Comparée also responds to several aspects of the opinion expressed in "A Report to the ACLA: Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Century" in the Fall 1994 issue of the *ACLA Bulletin* — *American Comparative Literature Association*. To begin with, I agree with the authors of the ACLA Report that owing to changes in our discipline, "the term 'literature' may no longer adequately describe our object of study."¹ Indeed, in my own work on literary theory I have been promoting the

¹ However, I should like to state that on the crucial point of "naming" and the market and symbolic importance of "naming" I diverge from the approach expressed by the authors of the Bernheimer Report. While I agree with the authors that the parameters of the study of literature have undergone significant changes and thus new definitions and action are necessary, I do not agree with a re-definition away from the focus of our study, namely *literature*. We should maintain that the focus of our study is *literature*, and in our case *Comparative Literature*. This means that I would insist on keeping the name of the discipline. However, *how* one does the study of literature with Comparative Literature is in need of the suggested re-definition and its institutional, intellectual, ideological, political, etc., implementation. For alternate views of the history and present situation of Comparative Literature as a discipline see the recent volume by Gossman and Spariosu; on the argument of expanding Comparative Literature from its Eurocentric base see Miner; Wang.

notion of a "systemic and empirical"² approach, that is, the observation and interpretation of the whole field of literary life in a cultural and socially-interactive communication and media situation. This approach to literary and comparative study including the notion of *Applied Cultural Studies* suggests that factors such as the administration and the politics of our profession, e.g., conferences and their organization in their administrative mechanisms, finances, their relationship with academic, government, and public spheres, as well as the discussion about their intellectual parameters belong to the domain of the systemic study of literature and cultural activity. At the same time, most of the by now established subjects of Cultural Studies proper could also remain within the parameters of the new approach I propose to term *Applied Cultural Studies*, so within the discipline of Comparative Literature. In other words, a literary conference represents a cultural indicator and is as such worthy of scholarly investigation.

Further, in such a framework of the discipline as I briefly indicated, students of Comparative Literature should study — in addition to traditional subjects such as genres, periods, specific authors and texts, the close reading of texts (*explication du texte*), etc. — also such subject matters as readership, aspects of reading, the history of the book and publishing, the politics of the profession, the marketing and maintenance of scholarly communication through conferences and other means, questions of authorship, pedagogy, the field of translation, etc., and could include a *practicum* with a publisher or publishing house where they would gain insight into and would experience such as the technologies of publishing, the markets of literature, its financial aspects, copy-right, advertising and distribution, etc. For example, the Systemic and Empirical Approach applied to readership research and the cultural industry reveals much not otherwise explored or thought of in our discipline and I show this with reference to canon formation in Canadian literature in one of my recent articles, "Toward a Theory of Cumulative Canon Formation: Readership in English Canada" (1994c).

The approach of the Systemic and Empirical Approach also includes in its framework topics of recently discussed problems in Comparative Literature and in Cultural Studies. In particular, the expansion of Comparative Literature to an East/West dialogue (see Wang) and, in the specific comparative Canadian context, to Canadian Ethnic Minority Writing (see Cavell following and

expanding on Blodgett and Pivato-Tötösy-Dimić; see also Padolsky and Paolucci). For arguments, following the Systemic Approach to include "minority" and "marginal" literatures such as Ethnic Minority Writing, the Colonial and Postcolonial situation, Feminist Writing, Gay and Lesbian Writing, etc., see, for example, Mignolo; Tötösy (1994b, 50). For a discussion on the study of literature, communication theory, and the impact of the electronic highway — another area of *Applied Cultural Studies* — see Tötösy (1995b).

In order to further underline why I chose the form and content of the report as presented, I would like to refer readers to works dealing with the study of literature such as Murray Krieger's *The Institution of Theory*, Norman N. Holland's *The Critical I*, Alvin Kerman's *The Death of Literature*, or Peter Washington's *Fraud: Literary Theory and the End of English*, and to the works of scholars who study literature from a "systemic" and/or "institutional" point of view such as Pierre Bourdieu (*champ littéraire*), Jacques Dubois (*l'institution littéraire*), Niklas Luhmann (social systems), Siegfried J. Schmidt (system, literature, and the empirical), Itamar Even Zohar (the polysystem), or the works of Constructivists (Radical, Cognitive, etc.) such as Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Gebhard Rusch, and Siegfried J. Schmidt. For the impact of the Systemic and Empirical Approach on Comparative Literature see also Yves Chevrel's recently translated volume (by Farida Elizabeth Dahab), *Comparative Literature Today: Methods & Perspectives*.

The above studies all tackle aspects of the study of literature which can be and were in many instances applied to Comparative Literature. Briefly put, the discipline of Comparative Literature within the embattled field of literary study of whatever type is under attack not only because of dwindling financial resources everywhere but because of intellectual reasons as well; so with reference to Washington's or Kerman's books, for example. In my view, this attack within the academe and by the general public, including governments, is not altogether without foundation and the changes and challenges discussed in the 1994 "ACLA Report" and during the recent ICLA Congress indicate are clear evidence of the need to continue to reformulate the discipline and to implement these formulations. It is no small matter that all currently "popular" literary theories (i.e., popular and producing incisive works) arose from traditional "national" disciplines such as English, French, German, or, if not from a national literature then from such areas as Feminist theories and criticism, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, and others. For this, but for other reasons as well, a world congress such as that of the ICLA/AILC is of some importance. And here is my point of departure for a description of the Congress: How did, in many if not all of its aspects, the XIVth Congress do in the context of the literary system? How did the Congress, its organization, the hosting University, the city, the province, the country as the "general" public — involved in a cultural activity — and the participating scholars, represent in their interactions and mechanisms

2 *Nota Bene*: "systemic" and not "systematic" and "empirical" and not "empiricism" or in the context of "empiricism" (see, for example, Schmidt 1994, 135, 156). Also, see throughout in the corpus of the Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature which I discuss in a number of my recent articles (1992, 1994 a,b,c,d.) and in my book on Canadian literature (1993), including the epistemological bases of the approach (1995a). It is of some note that the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) includes, more recently, the categories of systems theory and literature, systems theory and its application to literature, etc., in its International Bibliography.

the status and situation of the discipline of Comparative Literature as an area of intellectual / scholarly inquiry and as a structure existing in the context of the politics of education and the politics of scholarship?

In the following — as one of the organizers of the Congress — I will present my report on the XIVth triennial Congress of the ICLA/AILC from an "insider's" point of view.

BRIEF HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ICLA/AILC

The ICLA/AILC was founded in 1954, at Oxford University, within the framework of the VIth Triennial Congress of the Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes (FILLM). Officers elected at that time included, among others, Fernand Baldensperger, T.S. Eliot, Jean-Marie Carré, and Carlo Pellegri. Meetings of scholars working in Comparative Literature were organized as far back as 1900. Efforts to establish an international association of scholars were made from 1928 onwards. The meeting held in 1950 at the University of Tübingen led to the formation of the ICLA/AILC, prior to its first Congress held in Venice in 1955. Since then, triennial congresses have taken place around the world.

The statutes of the ICLA/AILC adopted at the General Assembly in Venice and amended in Fribourg, Bordeaux, Innsbruck, New York, and Paris (and again in Edmonton) state that the main objective of the Association is "to foster the study of literature undertaken from an international point of view. It attempts to realize this objective through international cooperation." Today, the ICLA/AILC is one of the larger international associations in the humanities. Its membership consists of individual scholars but maintains links with national associations.³ From its inception, the Association has been perceived as the major agent in promoting international research in Comparative Literature. Several committees such as the Commission on Structures, the Commission on Research Development, and the Commission on Publication Policy fostered this original aim.⁴ In addition, two Standing Committees, "Translation" and "Literary Theory," have helped to develop specific strategies for dealing with research since 1974, and in 1994 the ICLA/AILC Executive Council established the Committee for Commu-

nication and Information for the purpose of facilitating communication among several levels of the Association, to develop a database of Comparative Literature worldwide, to develop a cumulative bibliography of Comparative Literature on the Internet, and other sources of information. The Co-ordinating Committee of the ICLA/AILC has been publishing since 1974 the series *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*. The ICLA/AILC also publishes regularly the biannual bulletin *Literary Research / Recherche littéraire*.⁵

At the XIVth Congress, the membership elected the new Executive Council for 1994-97 as follows: **President:** Gerald Gillespie (Stanford), **Vice Presidents:** Jean Bessière (Paris), Paul Comea (Bucarest), Amiya Dev (Calcutta), and Yue Daiyun (Beijing); **Secretaries:** Virgil Nemoianu (Washington, D.C.) and Manfred Schmeling (Saarbrücken); **Treasurers:** John Boening (Toledo) and Holger Klein (Salzburg); **Members of the Executive Council:** Silvie André (Tahiti), Theo D'Haen (Leiden), Carlos Garcia Gual (Madrid), Hendrik van Gorp (Leuven), Mohamadou Kane (Dakar), Kawamoto Koji (Tokyo), Alexander Kudelin (Moscow), Svend Erik Larsen (Odense), Margarida Losa (Porto), Paola Mildonian (Venice), Zacharias Siflekis (Thessalonica), Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (Budapest), Gideon Toury (Tel Aviv), Walter Veit (Melbourne).

The Executive of the ICLA/AILC appointed for the next three year term the following: **Editors:** Steven Sondrup (Brigham Young) *ICLA/AILC Bulletin*, Roseann Runte (Toronto) and Darko Suvin (Montréal) *Literary Research / Recherche littéraire*. **Chairs of Administrative Committees:** Yves Chevreton (Paris, Structures); Milan V. Dimić (Alberta, Nominating); John Neubauer (Amsterdam, Congress Liaison); Haga Toru (Tokyo, Finance); and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (Alberta, Communication and Information). **Chairs of Research Committees:** Mario J. Valdés (Toronto, Coordinating); Ziva Ben-Porat (Tel Aviv, Literary Theory); Theresa Hyun (Toronto, Translation); Tania Franco Carvalhal (Porto Alegre, Questions and Methods of Comparative Literature);

⁵ Unfortunately, the ICLA/AILC has no learned journal of its own. This, I am told, is so for the reason that consecutive ICLA executives felt that the implementation of an international journal could infringe on the existence and scholarly impact of the numerous national journals of Comparative Literature. In my opinion, this is a misguided argument and does not serve the discipline or the ICLA/AILC as a scholarly organization. To the contrary, an *International Journal of Comparative Literature: The Official Journal of the ICLA*, for example, similar to the role played by journals of many other analogous associations, would significantly enhance both intellectually and organizationally — the scholarly and political exposure and dialogue of the discipline. Its editor could either be the current president of the ICLA/AILC or another Executive member for the regular period of the ICLA/AILC Executive (three years but subject to re-election). In my opinion the scholarly value of *Literary Research / Recherche littéraire* is limited. It publishes, biannually, a limited number of selected and brief book reviews only. This would be of greater value if it were part of a *bona fide* journal of the ICLA/AILC. It is my understanding that *Literary Research / Recherche littéraire* will now be published in a different and expanded format.

³ During the preparation of the Congress we received many inquiries about how to join (or maintain) membership with the ICLA/AILC. Briefly, scholars who reside in a country that has a national Comparative Literature Association are often automatically members of the ICLA/AILC if they are members of their own national association. Scholars who reside in a country that has no national association may join the ICLA/AILC either directly or by joining another national association. All scholars, if they prefer this route, can join the Association individually.

⁴ At the XIVth Congress the Commissions on Research Development and Publication Policy were suspended, the Commission on Structures continues its work.

Maria Alzira Seixo (Lisbon, Travel Literature); Rien Segers (Groningen, Comparative Cultural and Literary Identity); Earl Miner (Princeton, Translations and Raptures in Lyrical Literature).

Successive General Assemblies have elected as **Honorary Presidents**: René Wellek (New Haven); Jacques Voisine (Paris); Roland Mortier (Bruxelles); Eva Kushner (Toronto); György M. Vajda (Budapest); Douwe Fokkema (Utrecht); Earl Miner (Princeton); and Maria Alzira Seixo (Lisbon).

A statistical analysis of the ICLA/AILC Executive for the period 1955 to 1994 reveals the following: One person was an Executive member for longer than 12 years; eight persons were newly elected in 1994 and never served previously; fourteen have served one prior term for three years; two persons have served twice previously (six years each); in all the average service of Executive members has been 2.1 years.⁶ While the statistics about the members of the Executive suggest an acceptable turn-over of service, during the preparations of the Congress I received many comments from younger colleagues indicating some disillusionment with the ICLA/AILC as a scholarly organization, specifically with reference to the Executive. These colleagues felt that the Association neglected to attract younger members and particularly women into the ranks of the Executive. In the opinion of these colleagues — and I tend to agree with them — this resulted in the maintenance of the intellectual status quo (read: stagnation) of the discipline — an opinion similar to the discussion in the Bernheimer Report in the *ACLA Bulletin*. At the XIVth Congress, for example, there were to my knowledge at least two younger Comparatists proposed for the elections. Although both are prominent internationally with their publications and academic status, they were not placed on the slate of possible new candidates. There is, perhaps, some indication that the situation may change, however. I was told by several colleagues that my own election to chair the new Committee for Communication and Information is a precedent-setting and surprising event, because I am — in the academic hierarchy so important for the ICLA/AILC — a term-appointee at my home institution, i.e., without a tenure-track position. I must also add that my task and involvement with the Congress organisation was also uncharacteristic. It was so because of the terms of my appointment (quoted in part below in the section "Administrative Aspects"), which gave me meaningful and appropriate latitude in the decision-making process. It was unusual, as far as my understanding of previous ICLA/AILC Congress organizations are concerned, in that the General Organizer — the individual ultimately responsible for the successful and competent course of the Congress as a whole — accorded to me more than the usual authority to act in all aspects of the Congress organization: intellectual, institutional, administrative, and financial. Under the prevailing circumstances this is to the credit of the General Organizer.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE XIVth CONGRESS

The theme of the Congress was designated as *Literature and Diversity: Languages, Cultures, Societies / Littérature et Diversité: Langues, Cultures, Sociétés*. This theme, proposed by University Professor Milan V. Dimitić (University of Alberta), ICLA/AILC Vice-President for 1991-1994 and the General Organizer of the XIVth Congress, was described as follows.

In a world where an estimated 6,000 languages and literatures co-exist in about 187 states — of which less than 10% are ethnically unified — and where cultural spheres do not coincide with state frontiers, the monocultural, monolingual, and homogeneous nation-state model cannot claim universality. Hence, for scholars of literature comparative literary studies have become an important area which allows focus on both the more traditional international approaches to literary phenomena and the problematization of literary phenomena in a national context. The proposed theme of the Congress should allow for historical, methodological, and theoretical explorations of literature in both an *international* and *intra-national* perspective where literature is viewed as communication in a social context. It invites application of diverse contemporary methods of literary scholarship as well as interdisciplinary and pluridisciplinary approaches. The Congress expects to attract submissions of presentations dealing with literature in historical, methodological, theoretical, and analytical perspectives in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity. (Excerpt from the *Call for Papers, Provisional Program*; and *Program* of the XIVth Congress)

INTELLECTUAL PARAMETERS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE XIVth CONGRESS

Measured by the conference and immediate post-conference comments and impressions and by correspondence (letters, telephone calls, and e-mail), the XIVth Congress achieved, overall, the desired intellectual goals. The Congress was structured into six main sections: 1. *Literature and Identity*, 2. *"Foreign" and "Domestic" Contacts*, 3. *Literary Genres, Language, and Culture*, 4. *Literature and Other Forms of Cultural Expression*, 5. *Regional Studies*, and 6. *Methods and Paradigms of Comparative Literature and Cultural Diversity*. Section one drew the largest number of abstracts proposing papers and actual presentations while it was thematically the most disparate. At the same time, in sections one and two mostly, there were also sessions with limited or no audience. This was the result of the fact that a large number of delegates did not arrive and did not notify the Congress organization of their withdrawal. On the other hand, many sessions were well attended and provoked lively discussions. It was also observed that most of the prominent, internationally renowned participants of the Congress attended many sessions and participated in the ensuing discussions. This participation is obviously important, especially for the younger generation of Comparatists. The two Workshops and the majority of the Round Tables were

6 This analysis was provided by Gerald Gillespie, President of the ICLA/AILC for 1994-97.

very well attended, with challenging and fruitful discussions. This is obviously the result of the thematic cohesion of these sessions. It is of note that most plenary speeches elicited a highly favourable response by the Congress participants and enjoyed a relatively high attendance.

Here are some of the suggestions which were made, at the end of the Congress, by the chairs of each main section. Section One (Chair, Haga Toru, Tokyo): The "ghettoization" of sessions should be avoided. In other words, five speakers from the same country do not create an optimal intellectual exchange as these scholars usually know each other and they would not have to come to an international conference to speak and to listen to each other. Section Two (Chair, John Boening, Toledo): a positive development in the Congress was that there was a focus on *alterité* in the section, reflecting recent directions in literary theory, and that the usual Eurocentric focus has been displaced. This was evident in the number of sessions: of twenty-four sessions only three focused on European topics, all others on Asian, Pacific, Latin American, or East Asian topics. Section Three (Chair, Roseann Runte, Toronto): Too many papers were presented from traditional points of view; too often texts were analysed which were not well known by an international audience. To avoid such situations, speakers should prepare samples of such texts for distribution. One respondent to this suggestion voiced the opinion that instead of distributing samples, English and French summaries of the primary texts could be prepared by the speaker (Ekaterini Nikolarea, Alberta). Section Four (Chair, Claus Clüver, Indiana): A number of sessions simply did not materialize; a higher level of "mixing" should be performed in the sessions so that isolated discourses are avoided; there was no plenary session organized for the topic of this section. Section Five (Chair, Tania Franco Carvalhal, Porto Alegre): Again, scholars from the same country should not be grouped together. It should be mentioned that this was not done intentionally by the organizers. Rather, it was the result of the thematic nearness of the papers. Section Six (Chair, Uri Margolin, Alberta): More attention should be paid to themes of intercultural transfer and metatheoretical questions of such transfers; the quality of papers was varied.

Some other suggestions were made by members of the audience, for example that the chairs of sessions should report on their impressions to the overall chair of each section (Farida Elizabeth Dahab, California State). An involved discussion ensued about the official languages of the Congress. It was felt that if English and French are the only "real" official languages of the ICLA/AILC, non-Western scholars often cannot participate in certain sessions if they do not speak both. While this is a problem, the discussion did not bring about a practical solution: it would be impossible to have sessions where the language of presentation and discussion would be Korean or Hungarian, for example, or even Chinese, because then again the risk of "ghettoization" would emerge. The solution of simultaneous translation was suggested (François Lachance, Toronto).

This is a possibility; however, it would require a significant amount of funds. Obviously, here is a situation where perspectives and perceptions of "colonialism" disadvantageously overlap with considerations in the intellectual, logistical, and financial areas of conference organization. Further, it was felt that presentations were often lacking in form; the opening towards the Social Sciences was a positive feature of the Congress (Walter Veit, Melbourne).

With regards to Congress thematics, "A Report About Previous ICLA/AILC Congresses: Facts and Trends" prepared by Roumiana Deltcheva, Eduard Vlasov, and Milan V. Dimić (Alberta),⁷ suggested the following. With the exception of the 1st Congress, all congresses demonstrated a thematic variety in the international context usual in Comparative Literature. Crosscultural and gender themes were introduced with the IVth Congress and literature and the other arts was a topic since the IXth Congress. The presentations at the XIVth Congress demonstrated trends expressed in the Bernheimer Report and which I also mentioned. Namely, that the study of literature is increasingly undergoing redefinitions in the sense that the question, "What is Literature," has become more complicated than ever before — if such is possible. Consequently, many papers were presented in which the tools (theoretical and methodological) of the study of literature were drawn from a wide variety of other disciplines. This perspective of the XIVth Congress reinforces the view that our discipline has grown in scope. Nevertheless, I regret that there were, outside of my Round Table on Reading and Readership, no papers on aspects of literature such as the publishing industry, the politics of publishing, the question of literature as an institution, etc. For instance, the planned Round Table dealing with the impact of the "Information Highway" and the information sciences — including computers — on the study of literature did not materialize owing to the lack of participants. On the other hand, I am happy to state that my suggestion to organize a Round Table on "Literary Theory and Women's Ethnic Minority Writing" resulted in a dynamic and well attended event (chaired by Livia K. Wittmann, University of Canterbury).

Margarida Losa (Oporto) published an article about the Congress in the Portuguese journal, *Jornal de letras, artes e ideias* 14.625 (September 28-October 11, 1994): 18-19, entitled "Para que serve um congresso mundial de literatura?" The author discusses, among others, one of the nagging questions about the discipline and a question that is also discussed in the Bernheimer Report, namely the question of the study of literature and Comparative Literature *and* — or Cultural Studies. In essence, she comes to the conclusion, drawing on the plenary speech by Walter Moser (Montréal) — and I agree with both wholeheartedly —

7 Parts of the Report will be published in the next issue of the *CRCL/RCLC* (21.4 December 1994) in a follow-up Report about the XIVth ICLA/AILC Congress by Milan V. Dimić if the existing *lacunae* in the corpus can be filled by that time.

that there is meaning and space for the study of *literature*. She also raises the issue of international communication through literature and suggests that Comparatists were privileged to conduct such a dialogue.

The publication strategy for the papers presented at the Congress is as follows. In an important departure from previous ICLA/AILC practice there will be no conventional *Proceedings*. Already in 1992 it appeared to me that traditional *Proceedings* would be a disadvantageous form of publication, because many libraries would not buy *Proceedings* under the present strained financial circumstances and universities often do not like or even recognize publications in *Proceedings* (at least in North America and in many European countries). This argument was accepted by the Executive at the October 1993 meeting in Venice. Thus, thematic books will be constructed by the General Editors from those papers which would be judged acceptable by groups of readers appointed by the General Editors and the President of the Association. At its first meeting, the newly elected Executive the ICLA/AILC appointed Milan Dimić and myself General Editors of the thematic books. At this point, we have a tentative offer for one larger volume in traditional hard-copy book-form and the rest of the papers for publication on CD-ROM by the French publisher Honoré Champion and there is an alternative option for publication of a series with Peter Lang (which, however, is contingent upon camera-ready copy and payment for the duplication and binding). Each volume will be edited by a designated editor and will include a preface by the General Editors, an introduction by the volume Editor(s), a cumulative bibliography, and an index.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL / FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE CONGRESS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

The General Organizer, Milan V. Dimić did not receive substantial teaching relief and as there was no administrative help available from the University — thus putting the General Organizer in a difficult position with regards to both the logistical and the general organizational responsibilities towards the Congress — the position of an "ICLA/AILC Congress Executive Secretary" was advertised and a selection committee struck. I was selected and then appointed in the rank of Assistant Professor for the organisation of the Congress, April 1992 to March 1995, including the processing (correspondance, editing, etc.) and publication of the papers of the Congress. The term contract stated that, "the position of the Executive Secretary for the ICLA/AILC Congress at the University of Alberta includes the co-ordination of all aspects of the organization for a successful hosting of the Congress. ... In the fulfilling of these duties, you are expected to have personal initiative and authority, but to operate in agreement with the local Executive Committee of the Congress organization, the proper bodies of the

ICLA/AILC, and under my [Dimić] supervision." My task was facilitated by the help of two Graduate Students, appointed as Editorial Assistants to the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* (Ms. Marie-Andrée Lachapelle and Ms. Liz Fulton).⁸ The graduate student assignment is specified as a maximum of 12 hours/week during the academic year only (September to April). Consistent volunteer assistance was provided by Dr. Ekaterini Nikolarea (1992-94), at that time a doctoral candidate of Comparative Literature. Occasional volunteer assistance was offered by Dr. Ruth Martin (1993-94) and Ms. Ping-Ping Lee (1993). The Research Institute for Comparative Literature and the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* provided office space and technical equipment (two computers, two Laser printers, telephone, fax, internet) and I provided the use of a computer and Laser printer when working at home evenings and week-ends.

There were several aspects of the Congress organization I would like to mention. The response for the Call for Papers was overwhelming. In total, we received more than 900 abstracts. The abstracts were first assessed by groups of specialists appointed by the ICLA/AILC; in agreement with the ICLA/AILC Executive, the Organizers had the authority to decide whether to accept late submissions and proposals questioned by the juries. We opted to be liberal in our arbitration because we felt that the more rigorous examination and selection should take place at the time of publication.

The readers of the abstracts (for each of the six main sections of the Congress one *comité de tri*), all performed their task functionally, efficiently, and in an exemplary manner. In the case of the first two main sections, where the largest number of abstracts were submitted, the task was particularly heavy. Abstracts submitted to the two Workshops and to the eighteen Round Tables were assessed by the respective chairs. These abstracts were mailed either to the chairs or to the Congress organization office, from where we mailed them to the chairs. Chairs were responsible to send to our office their final list of names and titles. Late abstracts were dealt with in a generous manner and we accepted them up to July 1994.

The Congress-ICLA/AILC Liaison Committee (Chair, Wladimir Kryszinski, Montréal) was instrumental in the selection of plenary speakers, proposed by the Conference organization. It should be mentioned that owing to limited funds, it

8 The help of the Graduate Assistants was a result of my function as assistant editor and desk-top publisher of the journal since 1989, a function in which I was responsible for the training of assistants in the desk-top publication of the journal. This expertise of information and computer technology, as well as much institutional data already compiled in my work for the journal enabled the Congress organization to use both to its financial and administrative advantage.

was impossible to attract certain "big names." However, we were fortunate to be able to invite the eminent Portuguese novelist, José Saramago. This invitation was made possible through the financial generosity of the Portuguese Fundação Gulbenkian. All other plenary speakers carried the cost of their participation.

The thematic selection of abstracts into cohesive sessions in each of the six sections was performed by the General Organizer. This task obviously necessitated the reading of all abstracts. The structuring of thematically cohesive sessions was done in a way which, apart from a few instances where a thematic unit was impossible to create from the proposed papers or where participants requested to be scheduled on particular days, resulted in an intellectually satisfying conference structure. The chairs of sessions, whenever possible, were selected from the list of participants in the same session. This was an attempt to avoid "orphaned" sessions, because of absent chairs. However, the desired result was not always achieved because of last minute cancellations or no-shows. Another aspect of the selection of session chairs was our belief that chairs should be offered also to junior scholars and Graduate Students. After the Congress, this strategy was publicly objected to by one group of colleagues. While we understand that in some academic cultures chairs of conference sessions are offered exclusively to senior scholars, we felt guided by the principle that a conference experience, coupled with chairing a session, is most advantageous for junior scholars and Graduate Students while already established senior scholars are in no need of such a honorific function. We also felt that the function of a session chair does not always require the experience and intellectual shine of the more senior and established scholar. I hope that such a modicum of cultural bias did not exceed an appropriate level of acceptability.

In the final count, 434 Congress participants registered by payment of registration fees. A number of others had their fees waived and no strict control was attempted over local scholars and other persons interested in one or two sessions or individual speakers. In total, the Congress had between 550-600 participants. It should be mentioned that from the over 900 prospective participants, i.e., those who sent in their abstracts, a large number did not arrive. Only about 100 indicated to the Congress organization that they would not be able come, so that the Final Program included many participants who never came to Edmonton. In the final count the following countries were represented: Argentina (8), Australia (7), Austria (2), Belgium (9), Belarus (2), Brazil (31), Canada (105), Chile (1), China (19), Denmark (1), France (17), Germany (24), Greece (2), Hong Kong (10), Hungary (6), India (13), Italy (6), Israel (2), Japan (27), Korea (2), Kuwait (1), Luxembourg (1), Malta (1), Mexico (4), The Netherlands (9), New Zealand (3), Poland (5), Portugal (14), Puerto Rico (1), Rumania (2), Russia (2), Slovakia (1), Slovenia (3), South Africa (9), Spain (4), Sri Lanka (1), Sweden (2), Switzerland (3), Tahiti (1), Taiwan (7), Tunisia (1), United Kingdom (5), USA (61), Yugoslavia/Serbia (1) — 434 in total. These numbers do not include local Graduate Students, faculty, and spouses of other

participants who attended but did not present papers and therefore did not register.

In the previously mentioned research report, "A Report About Previous ICLA/AILC Congresses: Facts and Trends" Delcheva, Vlasov, and Dimić compiled the statistical data of all Congresses except the Ist, XIth and XIIIth and provided a statistical evaluation of the numbers and geographical origin of the participants and the topics of the Congresses. Overall, previous ICLA/AILC Congresses showed the participation of scholars from nine African, fourteen Asian, two Australia/Oceanian, twenty-five European, three North American, and six South and Central American countries. The findings also indicated that the most stable and consistent participants in the congresses were from the following countries: Nigeria, India, Israel, Japan, Australia, Belgium, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the former Yugoslavia, Canada, the USA, Argentina, and Brazil. With regards to gender representation, the authors found that there was an obvious male predominance with few exceptions. From the African and Asian countries (with some exceptions concerning Israel and Japan) there were basically only male participants. There is a stable female representation throughout the congresses on the part of the USA, Canada (after the Vth Congress), France, and Poland. As far as the XIVth Congress is concerned, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil showed a higher female than male representation.

The Congress companion program fell well short of our expectations. Apart from a recital generously offered by the well-known New Zealand baritone and Comparatist Peter Russel, there were no cultural or performing events or official receptions held. However, the French Consulate hosted Congress participants from France (18) and the Executive Council and members of the Co-ordinating Committee were hosted for a dinner by the Chair of the University of Alberta Board of Governors, John T. Ferguson. Milan Dimić hosted two luncheons for the Executive and the Co-ordinating Committee in the Faculty Club and a hot buffet at his residence — including the Executive, members of the various committees, selected prominent Comparatists, and local University of Alberta dignitaries; about 75 persons — and I hosted a light-snacks and cocktail party at my residence for about the same number of colleagues. We also organized a gala banquet including a dance performance by various Canadian ethnic minority groups.

Cultural events usual at ICLA/AILC Congresses were sacrificed owing to the scarcity of funds. The lack of "state" receptions, also usual at ICLA/AILC and other similar world congresses, is explained by the non-involvement of the City of Edmonton and the Province of Alberta (for this see "Institutional and Financial Aspects" below). It was also suggested that the Congress should have had one day designated for socializing (Margarida Losa, Oporto). While this is a valid suggestion, we decided against it because in that case even more parallel

sessions would have been necessary, further restricting the possibility of participation and audience. Instead, several excursions were offered after the Congress and a large number of Congress delegates participated in such excursions to the Rocky Mountains and as far as the Yukon and British Columbia.

Travel arrangements and part of the accommodation arrangements of Congress participants were made by P. Lawson Travel, a travel agency otherwise contracted by the University of Alberta. The University provided moderately priced housing at its Student Residences and participants could register rooms in a hotel situated directly on campus. All participants were advised that travel and accommodation arrangements were their own responsibility and they received all pertinent information in the Provisional Program in February 1993. Interestingly, a very large number of colleagues phoned, sent faxes and e-mail with requests for accommodation arrangements or even airport pick-up. In these instances I referred to the explanations provided in the Provisional Program and advised that regretfully we have neither the staff nor the funds to assist in such matters. According to reports received, the travel agency performed its task to assist the Congress in ways which were judged fair to excellent. Some complaints came in about the unilingual (i.e., English) service the travel agent was able to provide. However, in most cases the travel agent faxed the French text over to me and I translated the request. Originally (in 1992), the travel agent offered one free airline ticket for the purchase of sixteen tickets. Because of the difficulties of the airline industry, this number was raised to 55 by 1994. Unfortunately, not enough airline tickets were purchased from the designated airline to qualify for even one free ticket. It should also be mentioned that the travel agent provided *volunteer* assistance for the supervision of the book display room for the duration of the Congress.

The closing banquet of the Congress was attended by about 300 delegates. Considering the collective experience of Congress participants, the service and the food of the banquet rated high to excellent (the cost of the banquet was Can\$ 30.00, low by any standard). The banquet included several speeches and a forty minutes stage performance by Portuguese, Chinese, and Scottish dancers. The cost of the performance was drawn from the financial gratuity we received from the hotels, based on reservations and actual payment of rooms.

From an organizational and administrative point of view, I find it important that the data and the experience gained with one Congress should be passed on to the next. Thus, I already forwarded to the Leiden office of Theo D'Haeen the electronic file containing the names and addresses of all XIVth Congress registrants (also of those who finally did not participate), as well as an electronic file containing over 4,000 language and literature departments world wide. Further co-operation is self-evident.

INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The XIVth Congress was officially hosted by the University of Alberta. Professor Milan V. Dimić, who was designated by the University of Alberta and the ICLA / AILC Executive Council as the General Organizer of the Congress, received written confirmation from the then President of the University (1988) who wrote that "I should like to invite the International Comparative Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée to hold its XIVth Congress at the University of Alberta in 1994. ... Should our proposal meet with the ICLA/AILC's approval, we would like to invite the members of the ICLA/AILC Bureau and the Co-ordinating Committee to meet in Edmonton before the Congress. After the Congress, we would be willing to help prepare the *Proceedings* for publication. The University of Alberta would provide Professor Dimić with the authority and conditions needed to organize a major scholarly congress and the activities which are related to such an event" (August 12, 1988). This statement was essentially repeated by the new President of the University in a letter of February 17, 1990: "I write to assure you that the invitation for the above meeting [ICLA/AILC Congress] to be held at the University of Alberta still stands and that you can assure your colleagues at the upcoming meeting in New Delhi of this." Similar assurances and promises were made verbally and in writing by several successive Vice-Presidents of the University of Alberta. However, institutional support — not only in the context of administrative and clerical help or straight-forward financial grants — turned out to be remarkably limited as I will illustrate further on. This situation was, in part, a result of the radical financial down-turn of the University of Alberta, but probably also of political and philosophical views held by the various levels of the University of Alberta administration and its view of the Humanities. The consequence was that the administration of the Congress organisation was performed under strenuous circumstances. To give just one example, one Associate Vice-President (Research) of the University wrote in a memo of April 26, 1994 in answer to our request to provide support for colleagues from financially disadvantaged countries the following:⁹ "I am also advised that President Horowitz' comment to provide 'conditions needed to organize a major scholarly congress' does not imply any promise of support for the expenses of disadvantaged participants. The University has already provided some support; I understand that you have received \$3000 from the Conference fund, and that President Davenport has agreed to host a dinner for about 30 members of the Executive." Apart from the

9 This application to the Central Administration was presented in the hope that in lieu of administrative help, the University might consider assistance for the intellectual success of the Congress, i.e., the facilitation of bringing in noted scholars from countries which usually have difficulties in subventioning international travel.

fact that the office in question lost track of its previous funding of 10,000 and the fact that even 13,000.00 in total by the University of Alberta do not, by any stretch of the imagination, constitute financial support in the spirit of providing the "conditions needed to organize a major scholarly congress and the activities which are related to such an event," the rejection by the office of the Vice-President (Research) to support scholars from economically disadvantaged countries, is curious, to say the least. Importantly, this statement is inconsistent with general University of Alberta practices and with the existence of a large number of specific programs designed to facilitate the presence and contribution of scholars from economically disadvantaged countries.

The University of Alberta Department of Comparative Literature and Film Studies¹⁰ did not accept — after initial enthusiasm up to 1990 and after budgetary cuts — to host the Congress organization or to provide direct support for the organization of the Congress. This is why the Research Institute for Comparative Literature — a non-teaching unit, financially dependent on outside sources (including communication costs) except for the office space provided by the University and whose Director is Milan V. Dimić, its Assistant Director myself — housed the organization of the Congress and had to find all financial and organizational means to host the Congress. However, in September 1994 the Department did provide some retro-active financial support in the amount of Can\$ 3,000 for the payment of a minimal amount to student volunteers during the Congress.

The existing regulations of the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Arts also prohibited direct fundraising for the Congress by the organizers. This was necessary, according to the University administration (Central Administration and the Faculty of Arts' Development Office), because the University could not allow fundraising by individual units but only by the University's Central Administration, "so as to achieve the best results." In other words, corporations — in the current difficult economic situation — should be approached only by the University as a whole. On the one hand, this approach appears to be logical, on the other hand, the Congress Organization should have then received the

necessary funding portion from the University's fundraising: we did not. The Central Administration of the University provided in total Can\$ 13,000 for the organization of the Congress, while the Faculty of Arts provided Can\$ 1,000 as its financial support, hardly sufficient to organize a Congress of the size of the ICCLA/AILC. Finally, partially honouring the commitment made by the previous Presidents of the University, the Dean of Arts approved in November 1994 a subvention of Can\$ 2,000 for support of the thematic books to be organized from the Congress papers (see quote from letter above; see explanation of the publication procedure above).

The most surprising aspect of the University's non-involvement, in my opinion, is that the University did not see the value of capitalizing at least on the economic impact (Edmonton Tourism assessed the economic impact of the Congress to 1.5 million dollars), as tied to public relations strategies, of the Congress.¹¹ After all, almost 600 participants arrived from all parts of the world. Would it have not made sense to draw attention to this — by the University's Public Affairs Office — by calling in the media to report on the participation of the largest ever humanities conference at the University of Alberta? This especially in the context of the current debates about the university and academic life, in order to attempt to justify to the taxpayer what we actually do at the university and why!

The City of Edmonton provided folders for the Congress participants free of charge and an underground metro pass for those participants who took rooms away from the campus. No official, including the mayor, responded to our invitation to participate in any of the Congress ceremonies. The local media, although all local radio and television stations received information about the Congress (Program, a fact sheet, etc.) from me, expressed no interest in reporting about the gathering. After many telephone calls and after the Dean of Arts personally intervened, *The Edmonton Journal* agreed to place a few paragraphs about the Congress in the newspaper (Allen Panzeri, "Scholars from around the world attending literature conference at U of A," Thursday, August 18, 1994, p. B4, totalling 117 words, including quotations of what I told the Education Writer of the newspaper).

The Province of Alberta provided no support, financial or other. The reasons for this are mainly political, at least in my reading of the situation. The conservative government of the Province did not appreciate the theme of the Congress and the fact that it was an international gathering — in the context of

10 Generally speaking, in Canada Comparative Literature was not very successful in the institutionalization of the discipline. Apart from the Alberta Department, there is an undergraduate Program at McMaster University and at the University of New Brunswick, a Graduate Centre of Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto, an undergraduate and graduate Department at the Université de Montréal, and a graduate Program at the University of British Columbia. The graduate program at McGill University was shut down two years ago. In addition, as of 1994 the Alberta Department ceased to exist as an independent unit as it was merged with Religious Studies, and with April 1995 it will be merged into a mega-department of Modern Languages and Comparative Studies (Comparative Literature and Film Studies, Germanic Languages, Romance Languages, Slavic Languages, and Religious Studies). On the bright side, the University of Western Ontario will start a new graduate (M.A.) Program in Comparative Literature in September 1995.

11 How little the Congress rated with the administration and the Office of Public Affairs in any context, is further indicated by the fact that in the *Folio* (the official bulletin of the University) in a four page article, "The Year in Review" by Michael Robb, there is no mention of the Congress.

the current Canadian debate (more, rejection) of the idea of multiculturalism.¹² What the provincial politicians and bureaucrats failed to understand despite several meetings, was that the ICLA/AILC Congress would not take upon itself to promote or contest the hotly debated and unpopular government policy of multiculturalism (i.e., what we do as scholars is the *study* of the social facts, impact, and mechanisms of culturally diverse societies, as expressed in and through literature.) After many letters to various provincial politicians from the Premier down, not a single politician agreed to attend the opening or closing ceremonies of the Congress. The Multiculturalism Section of the Provincial government twice rejected our application to host Alberta authors (even though it was their own suggestion that they would consider funding if we organize local Albertan writers for a special session of literary readings and discussion, open to the general public).

The Federal government provided in total Can\$ 27,500 (20,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and 7,500 from the Department of Heritage). The International Council for Canadian Studies provided Can\$ 5,000 for the support of Chinese colleagues. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade provided Can\$ 5,000 to support Comparatists from Eastern Europe and Russia. Without any doubt in my mind, without the financial grants provided by the various branches of the Federal government, the Congress could not have taken place.

Special mention is appropriate of the Japanese Comparative Literature Association, which provided US\$ 5,000 for the support of Chinese scholars (19 Mainland Chinese colleagues participated) and the Canadian Comparative Literature Association provided Can\$ 1,000 (minus the amount for the accommodation costs of the Association's President). We received US\$ 10,000 from the ICLA/AILC and US\$ 2,500 from UNESCO (CIPSH).

With reference to financial costs necessary for the support of colleagues from economically disadvantaged countries, it should be mentioned that about 60 or more participants had their registration fees waived and that they received

various amounts to defray travel and accommodation costs. This has been traditionally one of the major costs of ICLA/AILC congresses.

The above total revenue of funds accounts for two years, spread over the period 1992 to 1994. It must be mentioned that from the total revenue I was salaried for the larger part of my task. That is, 2/3 of my assistant professor salary was paid from April 1992 to August 1994 and 1/3 was paid from my work as assistant editor and desk-top publisher of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*. As things stand, there is no revenue left from the Congress to financially honour the full period of my appointment to March 1995. The remaining amount of about Can\$ 500 to 1,000 is needed to pay some still outstanding bills and to proceed with the editorial work and the administration of the thematic books arising from the Congress papers. On the other hand, the Congress did break even financially and that was no small task to achieve under the circumstances I outlined above.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the XIVth Triennial ICLA/AILC Congress was a success despite the financial difficulties and the minimal amount of institutional support. Of course, the business world or the business-oriented university administrator would say to this that the fact it could be done proves that greater support was unnecessary. I am not arguing with this approach, in fact, they may be right. But what I am arguing about is the general lack of interest in and involvement with the Congress on the part of the University of Alberta, the City of Edmonton, and the Province of Alberta. And, taking a business point of view, I am arguing that the lack of interest and involvement is a manifestation of little or no business acumen. My argument is — again, from a strictly pragmatic point of view and disregarding here my contention that the Humanities and the study of literature in its various forms represent a necessary and vital cultural and business activity — that it does not matter what the scholars at a literary conference are talking about. What should matter for the University, the City, and the Province is the money the delegates bring in and, even to a higher extent in our age of globalization and global markets, the potential of and for international contacts.

The intellectual fruits of the Congress will be gauged by the contents and impact of the publications from the Congress papers and through the less tangible mechanisms of new contacts, new ideas, and new projects developed by the participants. And yes, had I known about the difficulties we would encounter, I would have done it still.

University of Alberta

12 This is an important aspect of the history of the Congress because at the beginning, in the period of 1988 to 1991 or so, the then (provincial) government was very much in support and was very interested in the theme of the Congress. With the election of a more conservative government this interest vanished: as our Premier Ralph Klein likes to state, "That was then, this is now." This evolution of the prevailing political attitude may explain the fact that of our list of Congress patronage, which includes the Governor General of Canada and distinguished politicians (e.g., the Premier of Alberta, the Mayor of Edmonton, various provincial ministers of government, etc.) and representatives of the business and academic communities, only the Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, the Dean of Arts, and the President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Ottawa) participated in some of the Congress functions.

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REVIEWS

*DAVID QUINT. *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. 433 pp. US\$ 49.50 cloth, US\$ 16.95 paper.

This excellent study of the entanglement of epic in problems of empire and imperialism is likely to establish itself as the standard work for a generation of scholars in a postcolonial world. Quint looks back to Achilles and to the fateful moment when Odysseus first set foot on Polyphemus' island. In a wide-ranging epilogue he also writes about MacPherson's *Ossian*, romantic theories of the epic, and Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* as a film that powerfully works through many motifs of the epic tradition. But the chief focus of the book is on the European epic from Virgil to Milton, the kind of epic that used to be called "secondary" or "literary." For Quint, the epic is inescapably defined by questions of empire. The pre-imperial Homer therefore belongs to the prehistory of epic. And the history of epic comes to a fitting conclusion in Milton's radical opposition to empire, whether conceived in its external mode as territorial expansion or in its internal mode as the extension of state control over the individual.

Empire, unlike trade, is a zero sum game. The winners and losers of empire are therefore the inevitable subjects of the epic poet. This simple distinction provides the central framework for Quint, who sees the epic tradition as the interweaving of the epic of the winner and the romance of the loser. With many appropriate qualifications, the Virgilian tradition is that of the winner, whereas the losing side derives from Lucan, remembered best for his one-liner about Cato Uticensis, who in his suicide "chose" a classy defeat over a tawdry victory: *victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni* ("If the victor had the gods on his side, the vanquished had Cato").

Empire and poetry stand in an uneasy relationship. The triumph of empire would be the end of narrative, for "peace is poor reading" (Thomas Hardy). Fortunately or unfortunately, the triumph of empire or the end of history have never been and are not now anywhere in sight. In his splendid analysis of the shield of Aeneas, Quint shows how even in the epic of winners trouble and narrative resist pacification: the last item on Aeneas' shield, *ponem indignatus Araxes*, shows the wild river at the Easternmost stretch of the empire chafing under a bridge imposed recently but not for long.

Virgil and Lucan provide the framework for an exceptionally rich and