

## CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture ISSN 1481-4374 Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

Volume 5 (2003) Issue 3

Article 1

An Introduction to Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture

Benton Jay Komins Tulane University

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb



Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, and the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, Purdue University Press selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

### Recommended Citation

Komins, Benton Jay. "An Introduction to Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture." CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 5.3 (2003): <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1190">http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1190</a>

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 1036 times as of 03/04/14. Note: the download counts of the journal's material are since Issue 9.1 (March 2007), since the journal's format in pdf (instead of in html 1999-2007).

# CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb</a> Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture (ISSN 1481-4374), the peer-reviewed quarterly of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, is published by Purdue University Press @Purdue University online in full text and in open access. The journal publishes scholarship following tenets of the disciplines of comparative literature and cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies" in a global, international, and intercultural context and with a plurality of methods and approaches: papers for publication are invited to <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/submit.html">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/submit.html</a>; for the aims and scope of the journal consult <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebaims">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebaims</a>; for the journal's style guide consult <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebstyleguide">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/clcwebstyleguide</a>. In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its Library Series <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/library">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/library</a>. Work published in the journal is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, in Humanities International Complete, and in the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America. CLCWeb is member of The Council of Editors of Learned Journals <a href="http://www.celj.org">http://www.celj.org</a> and it is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, CLCWeb is mirrored on the website of the British Comparative Literature Association <a href="http://www.bcla.org/clcweb/">http://www.bcla.org/clcweb/</a>, it is preserved at research libraries in the Stanford University lockss system <a href="http://www.lockss.org/lockss/">http://www.lockss.org/lockss/</a>, and it is archived in the Electronic Collection of Library and Archives Canada <a href="http://www.collectionscanada.ca/electroniccollection/">http://www.collectionscanada.ca/electroniccollection/</a>>. CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture is affiliated with the Purdue University Press hard-copy monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies and selected papers of the journal are published in thematic annuals in the series <a href="http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/comparativeculturalstudies.html">http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/comparativeculturalstudies.html</a>. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 5 Issue 3 (September 2003) Article 1

Benton Jay Komins,

"An Introduction to Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture"

<a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/1">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/1></a>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.3 (2003)
Thematic Issue *Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture*Edited by Benton Jay Komins

<a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3</a>

### **Benton Jay Komins**

#### An Introduction to Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture

Many contemporary analyses of popular culture strive to demystify objects and performances in the context of hegemonic culture. Scholars and critics ask us to question the importance of the popular within ideology, especially the ways in which popular culture impacts our own subject positions. But what happens when we expand the scope of this critical discussion comparatively, across a broad range of cultural, historical, ideological, and linguistic contexts? The authors of the five essays in this thematic issue of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* demonstrate that there are indeed benefits to comparative critical analysis of popular artifacts and performances. From the brutality of a Belgian *fin-de-siecle* puppet show to the submerged queer subtexts and iconography of *Wonder Woman* comic books, this volume highlights the eclectic and creative meanings that become associated with popular cultural expressions in disparate contexts.

In "Symbolism, Popular Drama, and Politics and Art in Belgium, 1886-1910" <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/2/">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/2/</a>, Joan Gross discusses the ways in which the violence of Belgian colonialism in the Congo came to manifest itself in the popular cultural realm -- in a play by L鯰old Leloup, a text by Maurice Maeterlinck, and a speech by lile Vandervelde. Expanding Michael Taussig's argument, Gross suggests that these authors exploit the symbols and traditional narrative of *The Massacre of the Innocents* in response to the contemporaneous colonial terror in Africa. In a lighter vein, Charlotte Headrick's essay examines the ways in which the flavors of New Orleans punctuate Lillian Hellman's oeuvre. In "New Orleans and Its Influence on the Work of Lilian Hellman" <a href="hellman"">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/3/>, Headrick argues that both Hellman's life and her work were shaped by her early years in New Orleans. Noting the importance of Creole cuisine in the city, Headrick discusses Hellman's many references to foods that are unique to New Orleans. We are given insight into this author's fascination with New Orleans cuisine, according to Headrick, with her last published work, a cookbook filled with spicy Creole dishes. In the third paper, "Holy Fools, Secular Saints, and Illiterate Saviors in American Literature and Popular Culture" <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/4/">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/4/</a>, Dana Heller examines the holy fool figure that surfaces in American literature and popular culture. Heller contends that the holy fool has been a central figure in the national myth of the United States. She locates this holy fool figure, or divine idiot, across a wide range of genres and historical moments, discussing exemplary works that include the texts of Jack Kerouac and Flannery O'Connor, and the popular films Forrest Gump and The Green Mile. Next, in "Heidegger, the Erotics of Ontology, and the Mass-Market Romance" <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/5/">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/5/</a>, Deborah Lutz focuses on the image of the dangerous lover in pulp romances. She argues that the much-exploited figure of this lover might be conceived of as an allegory of Heideggerian theory. Especially important in Lutz's analysis is the "immanence of love" which links romance to philosophy. Finally, in the last paper in the volume, Brian Mitchell Peters details in "Qu(e)erying Comic Book Culture and Representations of Sexuality in Wonder Woman" <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/6/">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/6/</a>, the queer aspects embedded in the namesake comic book hero. Peters discusses the ways in which the Wonder Woman comic changes over time, revealing "a consistent duo of queer subtexts -- gay masquerade and lesbian jouissance." Peters notes that this continually repeated duo not only elicits queer responses -- it also bows to pervasive cultural homophobia. The collection concludes with a "Selected Bibliography of Work in Cultural Studies and US-American Popular Culture" <a href="http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/7/">http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss3/7/>, compiled by Marta Guirao and Benton Jay Komins.

I hope that the scholarship in this issue will provoke new connections and insights in the study of popular culture in a comparative context and I trust that the material of *Comparative Cultural Studies* and *Popular Culture* will prove useful to the widest possible range of readers as facilitated by the

availabilities of new media, in my opinion the most advantageous and obvious mode of publishing scholarship in the humanities available to us today. I would like to thank the editor of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature ad Culture*, Steven Totosy de Zepetnek, for his support of this project, the advisory board of the journal for their interest in the thematic issue, and editorial assistant Marta Guirao for her outstanding work with *Comparative Cultural Studies and Popular Culture*.

Editor's Profile: With a Ph.D. in comparative literature from Harvard University and after teaching at universities in the U.S. and abroad, Benton Jay Komins is studying law at Tulane University 2003-. His main areas of interest are nineteenth- and twentieth-century American, French, and German literature and culture, popular culture, theories of pedagogy, the visual arts, and theories of subjectivity. Komins is the author of a number of articles in the field of comparative literature and cultural studies, included in such journals as *Comparative Literature Studies*, *The Comparatist*, *Pretexts*, *College Literature*, *Profession*, *Pedagogy*, *The Mid-Atlantic Almanack*, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, *and CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*. Komins is now completing a book with David G. Nicholls, to be published by Smithsonian Books and entitled *Transatlantic Threshold: History*, *Race*, *and African Memorial Spaces*. Komins serves on the editorial board of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*. E-mail: <br/>

| Spikomins@law.tulane.edu | Spikomins@law.tulan