

Introduction to Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror

Sophia A. McClennen  
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Henry James Morello  
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://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>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

---

### Recommended Citation

McClennen, Sophia A.; and Morello, Henry James. "Introduction to Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2007): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1007>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1007)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

*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." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. 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](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

**Volume 9 Issue 1 (March 2007) Editorial**  
**Sophia A. McClennen and Henry James Morello,**  
**"Introduction to *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror*"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/1>>

---

**Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2007)**  
**Thematic Issue *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror***  
**Edited by Sophia A. McClennen and Henry James Morello**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/>>

---

---

**Sophia A. McCLENNEN and Henry James MORELLO**

**Introduction to *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror***

The three operative terms that frame our project, "representing," "humanity," and "terror," escape definition and demand attention in equal measure. That these terms designate essential areas of concern at the same time that they resist designation constitutes the central challenge of this collection of essays. To further complicate the matter, it is the interplay between these terms that is of greatest interest to us just as the details of this interplay are even more elusive. What does it mean to represent humanity in an age of terror? How do we define terror and how do we understand the ways that terror affects the definition of humanity? Why is it that the representation of terror often depends on a distorted (i.e., racist, fascist, xenophobic, etc.) representation of humanity? And, most importantly, can representation rescue humanity from the forces of terror or is it always implicated at some level with the transformation of experience into reified abstraction and objectified consumption?

As the following studies show, these questions are followed by more. At the center of these questions is a crucial dilemma regarding the relationship between the particular and the universal. According to Hannah Arendt, "Particular questions must receive particular answers; and if the series of crises in which we have lived since the beginning of the century can teach us anything at all, it is, I think, the simple fact that there are no general standards to determine our judgments unfailingly, no general rules under which to subsume the particular cases with any degree of certainty" (vii). It is precisely at the moment when representation begins to overflow its borders and stand in for a larger sense of humanity or the world that it begins to call attention to itself. When the particular is represented in such a way that it spills beyond its limited boundaries, it forces reflection and judgment and it demands critique. And when that representation is of terror, especially the terror inflicted by human beings against others, its powers of representation require even more critical analysis. The photos that came out of the torture chambers of Abu Ghraib, for instance, called attention to a number of the issues that concern us here. Did the photos capture the terror of the Iraqi prisoners, making their fear both visible and palpable, or did they turn the terror of the moment into spectacle, into a dehumanized media extravaganza? Or did they do both in different degrees in different contexts? However we view them, the photos unquestionably point to the link between the particular and the universal. For at the same time that they capture a single moment in the lives of individuals, they simultaneously uncover a massive tragedy, one that inevitably begins to link the second the camera snapped with other historical moments. One of our constant concerns in this collection is what to make of this relationship, how to understand the complicated ways that representation both reinforces and challenges existing relations of power, and how to analyze these structures of signification that alternate between the metaphoric, the symbolic, the metonymic, the repressive, the deconstructive and more.

Another shared theme in this volume relates to the practical consequences of these patterns of questions. The authors of the essays that follow all demonstrate that the need to constantly question and to engage in permanent critique does not contradict the need to seek answers, to advocate for social change, and to critically intervene. Arendt, writing in response to the horrors of the Holocaust, spoke of the way that she witnessed the disappearance of judgment. If we fret constantly about the pitfalls of generalizations, she claimed, we fail to provide particular answers to particular problems. Arendt suggests that ironically it is horror (or for us terror) that leads to speechlessness, a suspension of judgment in the face of the lack of representability of horror (56). What bothered Arendt was the distinction between "speechless horror" that avoids judgment and remains sentimental and emotional and "disgusting experiences where people's conduct is open to normal judgment" (56). Such a gap in engagement is untenable for Arendt, because it is precisely this reluctance to think through the crisis that ensures its return. Parallel to Arendt, the essays in this volume offer strategies for critically intervening in this debate while simultaneously accompanying these interventions with dialogue and reflec-

tion. In short, these essays demonstrate that theoretical reflection and practical commitment depend on one another.

A further common concern exposes the dark counterpoint of Arendt's "speechless horror." Alongside the silence of terror lies its ugly voice: the voice of those that speak terror, that do not hesitate to explain it, rationalize it, justify it, and profit from it. It is the voice of those that matter-of-factly speak of permanent war, of collateral damage, of disposable life that worry and provoke us. The silence of the alienated individual who has lost the language of public engagement, of social commitment, and of ethical indignation is filled by the screeching din of tyranny, militarization, fundamentalism, and global capital (on this, see, e.g., Arendt; Bauman; Giroux). This fact, that terror always has its representatives and that these representatives threaten the possibilities of human life, haunts these essays. For however reluctant some may be to collectively support a shared idea of humanity, there seems little doubt that the authoritarian worldview is only too quick to conger up categories of life that can be discarded, disappeared, destroyed, and displaced. How are we to weigh our desire for careful scrutiny of representation and of the master narratives of humanity against such an onslaught? The essays in this volume suggest that, while we pose the questions that necessarily frame our consistent desire to reflect on these problems, we can, indeed we must, offer resistance to those that position themselves as the voice of humanity but who really are its threat.

And speaking of threats it goes without saying that the events of 9/11/2001 prompted our interest in editing this collection. While many of the essays in this volume do not directly address the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks and the ensuing age of terror, there is no question that the event and its aftermath form the critical backdrop to this project even if that backdrop simply serves to compare this moment of terror with others. It is perhaps ironic and certainly tragic that Arendt's epigraph refers to a different century and a different series of crises that begged to be a lesson for the future and yet seem to be repeated in uncanny and horrific ways in the present. As we consider the difficulties of representing humanity in an age of terror, we are struck by the extent to which the physical violence of terror is always accompanied by representational violence. If we have learned a lesson from the crises analyzed by Arendt it is that one of the most devastating effects of terror is that the words used to speak about it are violated as well. George Steiner's thoughts about the Holocaust, for instance, could easily be applied to the war on terror: "Use a language to conceive, organize, and justify Belsen; use it to make out specifications for gas ovens; use it to dehumanize man during twelve years of calculated bestiality. Something will happen to it. ... Something will happen to the words. Something of the lies and sadism will settle into the marrow of the language" (101). The eerie echo of these words as they signify today constitutes one of the fundamental preoccupations of this project. Because in conjunction with the tragic fact that they translate into the present moment lies the extraordinary power of Steiner's prose. He writes of the assault of evil on language while simultaneously resisting that evil. In a similar fashion it is worth remembering that Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's reflections on the culture industry end with an analysis of the effects of Fascism on language:

The general repetition of names for measures to be taken by the authorities makes them, so to speak, familiar, just as the brand name on everybody's lips increased sales in the era of the free market. The blind and rapidly spreading repetition of words with special designations links advertising with the totalitarian watchword. The layer of experience which created the words for their speakers has been removed; in this swift appropriation language acquires the coldness which until now it had only on billboards and in the advertisement columns of newspapers. Innumerable people use words and expressions which they have either ceased to understand or employ only because they trigger off conditioned reflexes; in this sense, words are trade-marks which are finally all the more firmly linked to the things they denote, the less their linguistic sense is grasped. ... By now, of course, this kind of language is already universal, totalitarian. All the violence done to words is so vile that one can hardly bear to hear them any longer. (Adorno and Horkheimer <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>>).

Adorno and Horkheimer remind us of the ways that fascism, market mentalities, and mass media conspired to construct the language of totalitarianism.

It would be fair to say, we think, that all of the contributors to this project have a deep fondness for words, for their utopian possibilities, and for the way they spark the imagination of the future, and speak of the past. Correspondingly, all of us share a deep concern for the ease with which language can become the communicative accomplice to terror. Certainly for us as guest editors of this thematic issue of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* it was the violent rendering of the language of the war on terror that prompted us to envision this project as a response. It seemed necessary, almost urgent, to counteract these violations with alternative representational practices dedicated to representing an/other view of how humanity responds to terror. The task is complicated all the more, though, by the fact that challenging the language of terror cannot mean re-inscribing words with their "lost" or "original" meaning. Such a strategy would be necessarily incomplete and could potentially replace one regime of signification for another. Nor would deconstruction and the destabilizing of all meaning serve as a viable tactic. This new era of terror requires new strategies of resistance and new forms of thinking about the difficulties of representation. We believe that counter-discourse and deconstruction as they were practiced from the 1960s to the 1980s may no longer be sufficient weapons of attack in the current regime of signification. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri point out that the structures of power today do not operate solely according to binaries, meaning that a strategy of deconstruction and discursive hybridity can no longer be posited as tyranny's antidote. "We suspect," they write, "that postmodernist and postcolonialist theories may end up in a dead end because they fail to recognize adequately the contemporary object of critique, that is, they mistake today's real enemy" (137). The discourse of power today, as it alternates between the language of religious fundamentalism, global capitalism, neoliberal ideology, and neoconservatism, borrows indiscriminately from the traditional conservative lexicon and from that of anti-foundational and anti-essentialist discourse. Shortly after the 9/11/2001 attacks, for instance, a complex discursive tactic emerged from the Bush administration that alternated between describing the event in Manichean terms and deploying the language of difference. How else can we explain the rhetoric of "with us or against us" coupled with that of exporting democracy? On the one hand, boundaries are drawn between enemy nations and friendly ones, while on the other hand, those boundaries themselves are displaced and deconstructed making an enemy nation simultaneously a friendly one. It is this complex logic that allowed the United States to attack Iraq with "shock and awe" and countless civilian deaths in one breath, while also speaking about its success in bringing democracy to a liberated people in another.

In addition to the well-worn newspeak of war, new phrases like "extraordinary rendition" revealed the horrifying ways that language can be made to serve unacceptable purposes. The ease with which these phrases became trademarks for the war on terror and insinuated themselves into everyday speech demanded a response. Salman Rushdie wrote about the phrase at length:

Beyond any shadow of a doubt, the ugliest phrase to enter the English language last year was "extraordinary rendition." To those of us who love words, this phrase's brutalisation of meaning is an infallible signal of its intent to deceive. "Extraordinary" is an ordinary enough adjective, but its sense is being stretched here to include more sinister meanings that your dictionary will not provide: secret; ruthless; and extrajudicial. As for "rendition," the English language permits four meanings: a performance; a translation; a surrender -- this meaning is now considered archaic; or an "act of rendering"; which leads us to the verb "to render" among whose 17 possible meanings you will not find "to kidnap and covertly deliver an individual or individuals for interrogation to an undisclosed address in an unspecified country where torture is permitted." Language, too, has laws, and those laws tell us this new American usage is improper -- a crime against the word. Every so often the habitual newspeak of politics throws up a term whose calculated blandness makes us shiver with fear -- yes, and loathing. (Rushdie <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/ugly-phrase-conceals-an-uglier-truth/2006/01/09/1136771496819.html>>).

Rushdie's critique exposes how the choice of these words to signify illegal kidnapping and torture was calculated to deploy seemingly innocuous language to represent terror vaguely. As soon as the phrase wormed its way into the public lexicon two things became immediately clear: while the public

may not have had a fixed idea of what the phrase meant, they were sure that they did not want it applied to them. This signifying gap is significant because it is the crack in the phrase's meaning that makes it meaningful. Understanding this process of making meaning constitutes an essential task generated by this current phase of the "war against terror."

Many have documented the Bush regime's stunning abuse of the representational potential of language and a full investigation of this practice is beyond the scope of this introductory essay (for more on this, see, e.g., Corn; Berlant). A key example of the lexicon of terror's indiscriminate use of master narratives and the discourse of difference appears in the way that enemies were named, loosely, after 9/11. The designation of the prisoners in Guantanamo's Camp X-Ray, later renamed Camp Delta, as "enemy combatants" was an early sign that language would be deployed as a prime weapon in the war. And like the new technologies used in Baghdad, this linguistic arsenal would bear the signs of postmodernity. The use of the term "enemy combatant" was chosen precisely for its lack of signifying fixity, its absence from juridical discourse, and its malleability to the desires of the Bush regime. At first, the term, while obviously loose and while extra-judicial, seemed to be applied by the Bush government to a fairly specific cohort, but that ruse would eventually break down when the administration devised the Military Commissions Act -- legislation that abandoned *habeas corpus* and that gave the government free reign to designate enemy combatants and imprison them indefinitely with no due process. As Jennifer Van Bergen explains, this legislation is an extraordinary example of how an authoritarian worldview is coupled with loosely signifying language: "the Act envisions and institutionalizes a whole new worldview. In this new world, there is no longer a distinction between a criminal and an enemy combatant" (<<http://www.counterpunch.org/vanbergen10142006.html>>). What is more, the concept of criminality under the Act includes anyone who poses a threat to the current system. Again the idea of what constitutes a threat is left open to include anyone who "supports" terrorism, where supporting terrorism is taken to mean anyone who does not support the Bush administration. The logic is circular, the language is fluid, and the consequences are socially and historically devastating.

Lest there remain any doubt as to whether this current phase of terror has appropriated the critical potential of deconstructing meaning, we need only reconsider the Bush regime's discussion of Human Rights. Even if we disagree as to what "human rights" can and should mean, it is clear that without linguistic and juridical vehicles for condemning the war on terror's treatment of human beings both within the United States and abroad there can be no form of accountability for acts of torture and terror. Imperfect as these terms may be, without them impunity reigns free, a fact clearly appreciated by the Bush administration. At about the same time that the administration was explaining how it would define "enemy combatants" under the Military Commissions Act, claiming that despite what appeared to be a category of humanity that avoided definition they could provide clear parameters for how to legislate the term "enemy combatant," they were also suggesting that they could not adhere to the Geneva Conventions because the language of the document was too vague. In a press conference on the subject President Bush declared: "This debate is occurring because of the Supreme Court's ruling that said that we must conduct ourselves under the Common Article III of the Geneva Convention. And that Common Article III says that there will be no outrages upon human dignity. It's very vague. What does that mean, 'outrages upon human dignity'? That's a statement that is wide open to interpretation" (<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060915-2.html>>). Wide open to interpretation? It seems to us that while defining an outrage on human dignity may be difficult, it is not "wide open to interpretation." Nor are we convinced by Donald Rumsfeld's linguistic trick of describing the torture victims at Abu Ghraib as victims of prison abuse. Here we find ourselves struck by the conceptual limits of deconstruction's social project, faced squarely with the right's seizure of deconstruction's dismissal of critical foundations which they then use to create a linguistic quagmire that ensures their ability to project terror indefinitely and infinitely. What was originally conceived of as a

rejection of totality has now become the method of totalitarianism. Donald Lazere has noted that the celebration of difference and the particular absent political vision meant that many of the original critical groundings of postmodernism and deconstruction have been abandoned and that this retreat has had conservative consequences: "although most of the advocates of these theoretical lines consider themselves and their causes as politically liberal or progressive, their insistence on unlimited proliferation of localism and diversity -- coincident with an age of unprecedented concentration of economic ownership, political power, and social control by multinational corporations and the right wing in America -- has had profoundly conservative consequences in obstructing the kind of unified opposition that progressive constituencies need to counter-act the right" (257). Calling for a reconsideration of the critical possibilities of deconstruction, these events have placed into relief the need to imagine ways to reinforce the representational potential of words while simultaneously deconstructing the language of terror. In short, our challenge is to find a way to rescue phrases like "an outrage against human dignity" from the signifying oblivion of being too "vague" while also deconstructing the phrase's repressive potential. Certainly the term "human" demands critical reflection especially when the "state of exception" creates categories of existence that facilitate violence against humans who are afforded no humanity (see Agamben). Add to that the "disposability" of large sectors of society and it is clear that there is much work ahead if we are to imagine how to represent a world consonant with human dignity (see Giroux). The essays in this volume begin this process.

A few words must be said about why we felt that this project was best situated within a journal of comparative literature and comparative cultural studies and in its book form as an annual of the journal (forthcoming) in the Purdue series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies <<http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/comparativeculturalstudies.html>> & <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/seriespurdueccs>>. Certainly some of the voices included here will seem out of place in a field that has often been considered to be overrun by narcissistic self-reflection, irrelevance, and theoretical abstraction (on this, see Kadir). Moreover, traditional comparative literature's role as an alibi for Western imperialism might be seen to contaminate any project interested in undoing the persistent shell game that has led the field to move from World Literature to multiculturalism and back to World Literature (see Bernheimer; Damrosch). It seems to us, however, that there is no better academic space than that of comparative cultural studies from which to engage in these debates. First, the well documented history of the field's complicity with notions of Western superiority, its veiled constructions of the literary equivalent of bare life alongside its posturing cosmopolitanism, and its legacy as the cultural arm for regimes of truth have served to accentuate the difficulties of creating critical work from within academic structures situated within global hegemony. As Djelal Kadir explains in "Comparative Literature in an Age of Terror" the field has been responsible for both producing irreducible difference and manufacturing consent. Like area studies, the visibility of comparative literature's critical quandary promises no naïve illusion about academic freedom's abilities to translate into social freedom (see McClennen). No productive criticism of the representation of terror can emerge without due attention to this context (on this, see Giroux, *The University in Chains*).

With this legacy and context in mind it is journals like *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* and theories of comparative cultural studies that have attempted to push the field in a new direction, one that actively works to dismantle such imperialist and authoritarian knowledge structures (on this, see Tötösy de Zepetnek). As Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek explains in his principles of comparative cultural studies, "To 'compare' does not -- and must not -- imply a hierarchy: in the comparative mode of investigation and analysis a matter studied is not 'better' than another. This means -- among other things as listed below -- that it is method that is of crucial importance in comparative cultural studies in particular and, consequently, in the study of literature and culture as a whole" (259). Consequently, at the center of the field's potential as well as its pitfall is the comparative method, for it is only through repressive comparative methods based on irreducible difference that we can decide that

the enemy combatant is not one of us, just as it is only through a dialectically comparative counterpoint that we can appreciate the difference of context in conjunction with relationality, thereby seeing the complex web of connections that we have to the enemy combatant. This means that comparative work must be the starting point for any consideration of how to engage the representation of humanity in an age of terror. Kadir has suggested that it is via comparative work that we can begin to unpack the critical tendencies that allow regimes of terror to reign while also recuperating the critical associations that can unravel them: "Comparative Literature, in other words, must negotiate among cultural productions and discursive formations that arrogate to themselves the immunities of incomparability and the impunity of exceptionalism. A logical starting point for this task might be the very commonality of immunity from comparison such cultures share in their respective mythoi of exceptionalism. Viewed as symptoms of a dialectical paradox, rather than granted the unimpeachable status of antinomy that they would embody in their vehemence, the cultures that define the beginning of the new century as comparatively intractable might be reminded that intractability is itself a tract. This could well be the threshold of a *negotiated comparative literature* that the discipline of Comparative Literature has to pursue at the beginning of the twenty-first century ("Tlon" 133).

The essays included here reflect a comparative project that is fully cognizant of the ties between politics, power, and representation. That this relationship is relational, differential, dialectical, and contrapuntal means that it is only through an expanded, progressive view of the project of comparative literature as reconceived in the work of this journal as comparative cultural studies, that we can adequately address these critical constructs. In an age where the divisions between people seem to be deeper and more unbridgeable than ever, there exists a need to come to terms with how such divisions are manifested and maintained. The answer is not an idealistic image of a global village, but rather, a nuanced, critical reflection on how such divisiveness is deployed and who profits from it. The fact that these ideas all depend on cultural representation as their communicative media means that those of us who work in the field of cultural criticism are on the front lines. Comparative work offers a way to respect difference as a relational concept rather than as a justification for the wholesale annihilation of bare, disposable life (see Agamben; Giroux). Attention to the biopolitics of terror, in fact, rests on a comparative critical practice, one which at times is not always consciously explicit in the minds of its scholars. To wit many of the scholars included in this volume may not formally consider themselves comparatists, even though we editors consider their work to exemplify critical approaches that can enhance the field.

Beyond taking an irreverent view of how the contributors to this issue participate in a comparative project, we had a number of other objectives in mind. There was no question that the parameters of the topic were such that we could never expect to have "representative" essays of "representative" moments of representing humanity in an age of terror. Even if we could have done such a thing, we would not have wanted to. It is true that we made an effort to contact scholars working in different parts of the world and we are pleased with the chorus of voices brought together, but again we knew that any commitment to geographic diversity would quickly devolve into a form of jingoism contrary to our purposes. There were two categories, though, that we did hold to as a measure of the critical diversity we believed necessary. First, we worked to bring together activists, artists, and scholars, and many of our contributors, such as Ariel Dorfman, Alicia Partnoy, and Howard Zinn, wear each one of these hats. The idea was to bring theory and practice into direct contact while simultaneously eschewing the rarefied discourse of much academic comparative work. Our second category of diversity concerned varieties of representational forms. We sought essays that discussed a broad array of media and discursive practices and the articles selected range from discussion of photography to poetry to classical music to film to prose to legal discourse and more. That said, we experienced much anxiety about what was left out, the critical angles, cultural practices, and intellectual perspectives that were not represented. We hope it is clear that this volume intends to begin a dialogue rather than end one.



In the interest of encouraging our readers to choose their own paths of interpretation and reflection we refrained from grouping the pieces according to categories. Because the essays included offer myriad combinations of critical connection we chose to present the pieces alphabetically so as to allow readers to play their own game of intellectual hopscotch, picking their own path. The first essay, South African poet and scholar Gabeba Baderoon's "Reading South African Media Representations of Islam after 11 September 2001" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/2>>, uses the lens of the camera and the context of South Africa to reflect on the events of 9/11/2001. With its sizable Muslim minority and Apartheid past, South Africa offers an intriguing and salient view of the events and of the larger questions related to representation and humanity. In "Globalizing Compassion, Photography, and the Challenge of Terror" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/3>>. Ariel Dorfman continues the examination of photography in times of tragic loss spanning the cases of Chile's 9/11 to the US's 9/11. At the core of Dorfman's essay is a central question: Does the shared practice of using photos to represent terror help build bridges across humanity? Does it help to globalize compassion or does it justify isolationism and protectionism? And behind these questions lies an even more disturbing concern: How do we mourn those who leave behind no photographic record? In his paper "Collateral Damage and the 'Incident' at Haditha" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/4>>, Tom Engelhardt shifts from the visual to the verbal as he methodically dismantles the use of war language employed by military and government officials in order to dehumanize human beings and to justify the murder of innocents from My Lai to Haditha.

The civic role of higher education is Henry A. Giroux's focus in "Democracy's Promise and the Politics of Worldliness in the Age of Terror" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/5>>. Giroux's paper explores Jacques Derrida's project of addressing the promise of democracy and Edward Said's concept of worldliness. He argues that education is central to the political tasks of reclaiming public space and opposing the new authoritarianism. In "A Monk's Tale" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/6>> theory is put into practice as Sam Hamill describes how poetsagainstwar.org was created as a response to George W. Bush's plan to "Shock and Awe" Iraq at the same time that Laura Bush invited him to the White House to celebrate "Poetry and American Voice." Hamill's personal narrative is followed by Barbara Harlow's examination of the intersections between personal stories and history. In her paper "'No Short Cuts' Landmines, HIV/Aids and Africa's New Generation" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/7>> Harlow focuses on two novels by Henning Mankell that spotlight landmines and Aids in sub-Saharan Africa. Harlow quotes Mankell who once said, "Western apathy towards Africa keeps me awake at night," and her analysis delves into the problem of apathy, tragedy, and representation. The next two essays challenge the idea of western apathy as they examine the active abuse of the othered body. In "The Tortured Body, the Photograph and the U.S. War on Terror" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/8>> Julie Gerck Hernandez combines the visual and the rhetorical as she exposes the Bush administration's attempts to manipulate the narrative that would be associated with the torture photos at Abu Ghraib, adeptly comparing them to the photographs of post-Civil War racial lynching. Li-Chun Hsiao's article "Barely Life, the Slave, the Black Body, and Representations of the (In)human" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/9>> challenges the ideas expressed by Henning Mankell and analyzed in Harlow's paper. By examining George Sand's novel *Indiana*, through the lens of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, he claims that the west, through a political philosophy that finds its antecedents in the concept of "bare life," has shown considerably more antipathy than apathy toward Africa and Africans.

Nicholas Manganas, in his paper "Mass-Mediated Social Terror in Spain" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/10>> looks at the narratives of terror related to the 11 March 2004 attack in Madrid as disseminated by several forms of media including text-messaging as well as mass media. Manganas finds that these new narratives disseminated by new forms of media in

the digital age continue to struggle with historical memories and the national narratives of the Franco era. Jonathan H. Marks focuses in his paper "Al Qaeda through the 'TerrorScope' and the Logic and Language of Torture" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/11>> on the language and logic of the legal discourse of torture in an atmosphere of terror. He claims that understanding this process after 9/11/2001 requires attention to the various forms of exceptionalism and the reigning social panic that have accompanied the legal discourse justifying the US government's practice of torture. Attempts to understand the causes of terrorism in a post 9/11/2001 world have been met with open hostility. However, Elaine Martin finds that literature and film have historically searched for answers to the causes of terrorism. In her article "The Global Phenomenon of 'Humanizing' Terrorism in Literature and Cinema" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/12>> she traces the representations of terrorists in film and literature from as early as Friedrich von Schiller's *The Robbers* (1871) through post-9/11 films such as Tom Tykwer's *Heaven* (2002). In "The Humanities, Human Rights, and the Comparative Imagination" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/13>> Sophia A. McClennen addresses the divide between the humanities and human rights advocates. She suggests that a comparative cultural studies that is grounded in an ethical commitment to examine the relationship between culture and society is integral to any effort to promote global respect for human rights. Next, Michael McIrvin's "Poetry and the Aesthetic of Morality" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/14>> maps out the decline of language and ruminates on the ability/inability of poetry to serve as a counter to the language of *otherness* put forth as a response to the attacks of 9/11/2001. Asking questions about the problems of representation from the angle of mass media, Bill Nichols examines in "The Terrorist Event" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/15>> how the US media attempted to create meaning out of the horrific event of the terrorist attacks. Nichols breaks down the event and scrutinizes how it was presented, framed, and cast for consumption.

With Alicia Partnoy's article "Textual Strategies to Resist Disappearance and the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/16>>, the discussion shifts away from 9/11/2001. Her essay demonstrates how the Argentine Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo use literature to build international solidarity. In the same way that Dorfman's essay suggests that photography resists the erasure of memory, Partnoy describes how the literature of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo helps to create and recreate historic memory of the disappeared. Next, Carolina Rocha writes in "Bearing Witness through Fiction" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/17>> about Argentine fiction as she explores how writers attempted to bear witness to the terror of the "dirty war" through the project of "active witnessing." David Schroeder's essay "Ariel Dorfman, Franz Schubert, and *Death and the Maiden*" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/18>> focuses on Dorfman's decision to link the music of Franz Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* to his play about the challenges of transitioning from dictatorship in Chile. Schroeder suggests that Dorfman could not have chosen a better interlocutor for a play that investigates the role of art in mediating the effects of social devastation. Joseph Slaughter's essay "A Question of Narration and the Voice in International Human Rights Law" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/19>> brings the language of international human rights law into conversation with critical theory. Via a call to construct a cross-disciplinary (and thus comparative) dialogic approach to human rights, he suggests that the struggle for human rights is best understood as a struggle for narrative power. In "Media in a Capitalist Culture" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/20>> Barbara Trent examines the impact that economic markets, media financing, and Hollywood monopolies have had on the flow of information and the possibilities for distributing alternative media. She offers her personal experiences in the making of three films as a guide for activists who hope to challenge that domination. Trent's call for media activism segues well with the last paper in our collection, Howard Zinn's essay on "Artists in Times of War" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/21>>. Zinn explores the transcendent nature of the artist. By blending poetry with history in an attempt to question our civic duty, Zinn presents us with a

piece that is moving, lyrical, and powerful, and that challenges all of us to find a way to use art and scholarship as a form of social protest.

Finally, Henry James Morello offers a "Selected Bibliography of Comparative Studies on Human Rights Culture" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/22>> that, like the papers in this volume, try to bridge comparative cultural studies with human rights activism.

### Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." 1944. *marxists.org* <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>> .
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Responsibility and Judgment*. New York: Schocken Books, 2003.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Life*. London: Polity, 2005.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. New York: New York UP, 1997.
- Berlant, Lauren. "The Epistemology of State Emotion." *Dissent in Dangerous Times*. Ed. Austin Sarat. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. 46-80.
- Bernheimer, Charles, ed. *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995.
- Bush, George W. "Press Conference of the President." *The White House* (15 September 2006): <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060915-2.html>> .
- Corn, David. *The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception*. New York: Crown, 2003.
- Damrosch, David. *What is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.
- Giroux, Henry A. *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*. Boulder: Paradigm, 2007.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*. Boulder: Paradigm, 2006.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Stormy Weather: Katrina and the Politics of Disposability*. Boulder: Paradigm, 2006.
- Giroux, Henry A. *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy*. Boulder: Paradigm, 2004.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- Ignatieff, Michael. "Getting Iraq Wrong: What the War Has Taught Me about Political Judgment." *The New York Times Magazine* (5 August 2007): 26-29.
- Kadir, Djelal. "Comparative Literature in an Age of Terrorism." *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Ed. Haun Saussy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006. 68-77.
- Kadir, Djelal. "Comparative Literature in a World Become Tlon." *Comparative Critical Studies* 3.1-2 (2006): 125-38.
- Lazere, Donald. "Postmodern Pluralism and the Retreat from Political Literacy." *JAC: Journal of Advanced Composition* 25.2 (2005): 257-93.
- McClennen, Sophia A. "Comparative Literature and Latin American Studies: From Disarticulation to Dialogue." *Comparative Cultural Studies and Latin America*. Ed. Sophia A. McClennen and Earl E. Fitz. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2004. 111-36.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Ugly Phrase Conceals an Uglier Truth." *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 January 2006): <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/ugly-phrase-conceals-an-uglier-truth/2006/01/09/1136771496819.html>> .
- Tötösy de Zepetnek, Steven. "From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies." *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2003. 235-67.
- Steiner, George. *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*. 1958. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.
- Van Bergen, Jennifer. "Bush's Military Commissions Act and the Future of America." *Counterpunch* (14-15 October 2006): <<http://www.counterpunch.org/vanbergen10142006.html>> .

Author's profile: Sophia A. McClennen teaches comparative literature, Spanish, and women's studies at The Pennsylvania State University. In her research, McClennen focuses on cultural responses to extreme social conflict such as that associated with war, imperialism, state formation, dictatorship, patriarchy, and globalization. Her first book, *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time Language and Space in Hispanic Literature* (2004), is a comparative study of exile literature from Spain and Latin America. Her second book is *Ariel Dorfman: An Aesthetics of Hope* (2008). She has also co-edited, with Earl E. Fitz, a volume on *Comparative Cultural Studies and Latin America* (2004). She has published on comparative cultural studies, inter-American studies, and Latin American culture in journals such as *College Literature*, *Comparative American Studies*, *MELUS*, *World Literature Today*, *A contracorriente*, *Revista de estudios hispánicos*, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, and *Cultural Logic*. E-mail: <[sam50@psu.edu](mailto:sam50@psu.edu)>

Sophia A. McClennen and Henry James Morello,

"Introduction to *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror*"

page 11 of 11

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2007): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol9/iss1/1>>

Thematic Issue, *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror*. Ed. Sophia A. McClennen and Henry James Morello

---

Author's profile: Henry James Morello teaches comparative literature, Spanish, and film at The Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include theatre and film from Latin America and Spain, posttraumatic culture, and comparative cultural studies. He has published on the uses of the internet by the Zapatistas in Chiapas and he is currently working on a book project *Posttraumatic Theatre: A Transatlantic Perspective*. E-mail: <[morello@psu.edu](mailto:morello@psu.edu)>