

Classical Leanings

—David Mirhady

On February 22-23, 2002 an interdisciplinary conference hosted by the Classical Association of the Canadian West on the theme 'Classics and the Humanities' took place at SFU's Harbour Centre campus. The conference was supported by both the Institute for the Humanities and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. David Mirhady, faculty member of the Humanities Department and an associate of the Institute for the Humanities, was the co-ordinator of the conference.

"Classical Leanings" brought together approximately seventy classicists and other humanists from twelve institutions in Canada and four in the United States. It forged new ties in the teaching and research of ancient philosophy, literature, rhetoric, science, and law. The conference enjoyed a tremendous *esprit de corps* as humanists from diverse disciplines came together with classicists and took delight in finding common cause. It thus fulfilled entirely its original objectives.

Many of the papers took a form different from traditional academic papers, as the presenters dealt particularly with interdisciplinary and pedagogical issues. This sort of working 'outside the box' came as a bit of a revelation, I think, especially to the classicists, as they sought to make contact with other humanists. The conference web site at www.sfu.ca/cacw2002/final.htm remains available and presents a mechanism for the dissemination of the papers, though fewer participants have taken this opportunity than might have been hoped. Most seem to want to rework their papers for presentation within their own disciplines, where, I suspect, they get better recognition. Participants included graduate students from several universities, college and university instructors, and several members of the public, who were especially welcome.

There were several highlights in the program for me, including Matthew

Clark's presentation on using classical rhetoric in understanding contemporary literature and Bella Vivante's comparison of Homer's *Odyssey* with contemporary Native American literature. But Brent Shaw's plenary presentation on "The Image of Spartacus," a *Rezeptionsgeschichte* tracing the understanding of Spartacus from the early modern period until now, offered participants a tremendous model of interdisciplinary scholarship for emulation. An ancient historian, Shaw traced out the background to several novels and theatrical productions in various European and non-European contexts, and even shed light on a couple of Canadian angles to the story.

Kootenay School of Writing Fall 2002 Program

—Ted Byrne

Andrew Klobucar conducted a seminar entitled "The Jargon of Eden: Investigation in Digital Poetics." This seminar surveyed the technological and material, or objectivist, aspects of text production within modernism. It argued for a text-generational based digital poetics rather than the simple use of the computer to extend the graphic aspects of earlier technologies. It included a demonstration of Klobucar and David Ayre's work in related software development.

Greg Placanouris, a student at SFU, conducted a seminar entitled "Aetheric Mask/Rausch: Psychopharmacology and the Life and Work of Walter Benjamin." This seminar examined Benjamin's use and theorization of his experiments with hashish and mescaline. We read and discussed the recently translated "Protocols" of these experiments.

A book launch took place with

reading and discussion of *Surrealist Subversions* (Automedia 2002), edited by Ron Sakolsky. Sakolsky is a co-founder of Black Liberation Radio (now Human Rights Radio) and co-editor of a number of important anthologies and of a recent special issue of *Race Traitor*, "Surrealism: Revolution Against Whiteness."

Readings were given by Robert Mittenenthal and Vancouver poets Judith Copithorne and Jacqueline Turner. Robert Mittenenthal, a Seattle poet and member of the Sub-Text collective, also led a discussion of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* and of a paper recently read in Seattle by Michael Hardt, "Twilight of the Peasant World."

Upcoming events include a launch of a new issue of *W* magazine with work by Roger Farr and Brian Carpenter and a presentation and discussion of Margot Butler's "Swarms in 'Bee space'" (*West Coast Line* #35). Roger Farr is Managing Editor of *West Coast Line* and teaches at Capilano College. Margot Butler is currently teaching at SFU.

Ted Byrne is a director at the Trade Union Research Bureau in Vancouver and is a member of the Kootenay School of Writing Collective.

The Institute for the Humanities was pleased to continue its support of programming at the Kootenay School of Writing in 2002.