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MCGILL EAST

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Dear Alumni and Friends,

The 2002-2003 academic year was a banner one for East Asian Studies at McGill University. Overall enrolments have never been higher, and growing number of students are pursuing Majors and Honours as well as graduate degrees. The contribution of new faculty members, Peter Button in Chinese Literature and Anne McKnight in Japanese Literature, has made all the difference in extending and refining our undergraduate and graduate programs. Moreover, in recognition of the increasing importance of East Asian Studies, the library has made additional efforts to build our CJK collection. We must also thank the Arts Undergraduate Society for their extremely generous contribution to our collection of Chinese, Korean and Japanese audio-visual materials.

The Centre sponsored a number of events over the past year. Professors Stephen Owen and Kathleen Ryor visited McGill as guest lecturers in the Paul Hsiang series on traditional Chinese poetry. The Japanese Film lecture series included speakers on Japanese war film, CGI in current Japanese cinema, and on new media in China and Japan. The Centre also had the opportunity to invite Joy Kogawa's participation in the McDonald-Currie Lecture series, in honour of the establishment of Asian Heritage Month in Canada.

I hope that all of you with an interest in East Asian Studies at McGill University will continue to follow our activities and to participate in them. You are welcome to join our listserve; simply write to the email address on the back of this newsletter.

Best regards,

*Thomas Lamarre
Director, Centre for East Asian Research*

This year witnessed the continuation of the Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry, endowed by Professor Paul Hsiang to encourage the study of classical Chinese poetry at the McGill Department of East Asian Studies. In fall, Professor Stephen Owen of Harvard University presented on "Eagle-Shooting Heroes and Wild-Goose Hunters: The Late Tang Moment," and in winter, Professor Kathleen Ryor of Rice University 1

“We like to conceive of Chinese poetry in terms of self-expression, whether the poet is simply reflecting on his own life or responding to larger concerns of state and society. Even before the Tang, however, we begin to see a competing view of poetry as a craft, a view that found its first mature instantiation in poets of the second quarter of the ninth century.

“The paper takes its title from a fragment of the preface to an anthology of 837, in which the poets represented are compared to “masters of eagle-shooting,” a height of skill rather than a depth of personal feeling. Their craft, which focused on the parallel couplet, was essentially anonymous; and the kind of poetry they created remained a model for learn-

ing poetic composition and a popular level of poetic practice for the next millennium.

“In striking contrast to the flamboyant poetic vo the nrp3iTJ-y-

“MERCY IN AN AGE OF WAR”

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Also mentioned is the historical example of the pilot, who transformed a site of religious faith into ground zero with the dropping of the second and last atom bomb. These three atrocities, literary, religious, and historical, share a desire for the negation of the Other.

In opposition to these three sites of violence is Ms. Kogawa’s radical interpretation of mercy. Mercy, as she foreshadowed in her earlier seminar, can be found in fiction-writing, which, for Ms. Kogawa, is an act of self-effacement and humility. Just as fiction provides a potential answer to the oppression of historical narratives, so too are there alternatives to the martial atrocities of the atom bombs and the religious atrocities of required filial sacrifice.

Mercy can be found in the acts of Father Zabelka, the Catholic chaplain who prayed over each atom bomb, asking God to grant them speed and efficacy. Father Zabelka later made a pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, speaking out strongly against war, and asking the bomb’s victims to grant him forgiveness for his crimes.

Finally, there is religious mercy in another face of God, embodied, for Kogawa, in the Mahayana bodhisattva of mercy, Kuan Yin. Kuan Yin is the name Kogawa gives to the ram that offers up its life in place of Isaac’s in the parable of Abraham’s near-sacrifice.

Ms. Kogawa’s strong religious conviction not only informs her subject matter, but moreover, it confers upon her, as an author, a positive responsibility to grapple with the atrocities of the modern era. In “Mercy In an Age of War,” she explained not only the logic of her writing, but also its ethical imperative, demonstrating not only its dangers, in the potential of historical Truth to silence victims, but also its rewards, in the potential of fiction to return to those silenced the voices of which they have been robbed. The Centre of East Asian Studies would like to express its gratitude to Ms. Kogawa for her moving and heartfelt lecture.

KOREAN NIGHT 2003



Thanks to the untiring efforts of Professor Myunghee Kim and all of her Korean language students, Chae Wha Lee, the President of the Montreal Korean Community, Kwang Soo Han and Angela Song, Korean Dance instructors, and many others, McGill’s annual Korean Cultural Night, held on Friday, April 3rd, 2003, was, once again, a roaring success. The event, which involves both a feast of Korean foods and a series of performances and presentations by members of Montreal’s Korean community and by McGill students, is meant to draw together University members and Montreal residents to celebrate Korean culture.

The program began with a Mask Dance performed under the direction of Professor Kim, and was followed by speeches by the Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies, Professor Thomas Lamarre, and the Consul General of the Korean Consulate in Montreal, Jong-Moo Choi. The evening continued with a musical performance, a theatrical presentation of “Princess Pyongang and Ondal the Fool,” a vocal duet, an always popular fan dance, and a closing address by this year’s coordinator, Janice Joo.

On Friday, April 4th, following Korean Cultural Night, Ambassador Ki-ho Chang from the Embassy of Korea in Canada concluded the festivities with a more serious discussion of “Current Developments on the Korean Peninsula.” He focused his timely and pertinent remarks on the new South Korean administration, on nuclear arms, and on the current state of North and South Korean relations.

Chinese Speech Contest
March 22nd, 2003

In this year's 8th Annual Chinese Speech Con-



Guest Lecturers, continued from page 6...

Dr. Pierre Asselin, Assistant Professor, Kapiolani Community College
Lecture



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