

2014 Report on the Work of the ICLA's Research Committee on Literature and Neuroscience, Chaired by Professor Suzanne Nalbantian

This committee is continuing its interdisciplinary investigation of higher brain functions such as memory, consciousness and creativity. Since the group sessions on consciousness at the Paris ICLA Congress of last July 2013, a two –and- a-half-day symposium has been planned for this October 21-24, 2014 at the Banbury Center of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island, New York.

This next conference aims to bring together comparatist scholars and neuroscientists for the interdisciplinary investigation of creativity. The neuroscientists will describe the functioning of the brain in creative acts of scientific discovery or aesthetic production. The comparatists will describe instances of creativity that they analyze in the composition of major literary works, of musical compositions or of works of visual art. During the conference, two keynote lectures will be given, one by a major novelist (yet to be selected) and the other by the musician and composer of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Bruce Adolphe, each giving their accounts of their own process of creativity.

The conference will cover such topics as : 1) Mechanisms of Creativity: How creativity is linked to brain structure and function; MRI tracking creativity in the brain; 2) Components of Creativity: Memory, Emotion, Decision-Making and Intelligence; 3) Pathology and Creativity; 3) Creativity and its Reception: Empathy with reader and viewer.

Among the thirteen committed speakers and participants are neuroscientists Jean-Pierre Changeux, Robert Stickgold , Paul Matthews, Nancy Andreasen, and Rex Jung; neurophilosopher John Bickle, art critic and history of science scholar Erne Fiorentini; and comparatist/literary critics Suzette Henke, Peter Schneck, Mark Hussey, Donald Wehrs, and Suzanne Nalbantian.