

Annual Report 2011-12

Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

1. Committee Programme at ACLA at Brown University (2012)

Based on the recommendation of the Committee at ACLA in Vancouver, the Comparative Gender Studies Committee organised and sponsored two three-day seminars at ACLA at Brown University in 2012. These were on comparisons of gender and sexual health and on comparisons of early modern sexualities. The programmes were both extremely well attended (6 seminars in all). The programmes for each seminar are listed below:

I. Gender and Sexual Health: Literary, Cultural, and Historical Comparisons

Sponsored by The Comparative Gender Studies Committee of the ICLA

Seminar Chairs: William J. Spurlin, Brunel University, London; Mattia Marino, Bangor University

Seminar 1

William J. Spurlin, Brunel University, London

“Queer Theory & Biomedical Practice: New Conjectures/New Comparisons”

Peter Rehberg, University of Texas at Austin

“After the Catastrophe: Narratives of HIV in the 21st Century”

Stephanie Hsu, Pace University

“Paraphilia and the Racial Other in Patricia Powell's *The Pagoda*”

John Robinson-Appels, Columbia University

“Modern Life as Immune Deficient and the Movement Away from Both HIV Diagnosis and Pharmaceutical Medicine”

Seminar 2

Thomas Lawrence Long, University of Connecticut

“The Mark of the Beast Is the Glory of the Pariah: AIDS Apocalypticism of Diamanda Galás and David Wojnarowicz”

Petra Dierkes-Thrun, Stanford University

“Queering Pygmalion in Almodóvar's *The Skin I Live In* and Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus*: Identity, Catastrophe, Catharsis”

Mattia Marino, Bangor University

“Satanic Streams of Sickening Sore Swan Skin: Nauseant Traumalgia in European Novels and American Music Videos

Jordana Marion Greenblatt, York University

“Edge of the Erotically Thinkable/Edge of the Panel: Safer Sex Comix and *Alex et la vie d’après*”

Seminar 3

Tegan Zimmerman, University of Alberta

“Transnational Feminism and Comparing Approaches to Women’s Health”

Lies Xhonneux, University of Antwerp, Belgium

“Rebecca Brown’s Literary Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Incompatibility of Identification and Desire”

Wenjuan Xie, University of Alberta

“The Transgender Trouble: A (Post)feminist Reading of Chinese Tales of Transgender”

Chris Coffman, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

“Embodying Gertrude Stein”

II. Comparative Approaches to Early Modern Sexualities in Literature and Culture

Sponsored by the Comparative Gender Studies Committee of the ICLA

Seminar Chair: Abdulhamit Arvas, Michigan State University

Seminar 1

Christina Christoforatu, Baruch College, SUNY

“The Coercive Reign of Eros and the Bounds of Sovereign Polity in Byzantine Secular Literature”

Esra Genc Arvas, Michigan State University

“Textualized Queen, Sexualized Queer: Producing Desire from Medieval to Early Modern Imagination”

Olimpia Rosenthal, University of Arizona

“A Transvestite Conquistador: Gender Relations and the Violent History of Latin American Colonialism”

Mark A. Brustman, Independent Scholar

“Intact, Procreative Eunuchs in Roman, Talmudic and Islamic Law”

Seminar 2

Reba Wissner, Brandeis University

“A Well-Conceived Deception: Transvestism and Gender Identity in Francesco Cavalli’s *Elena* (1659)

Haihong Yang, University of Delaware

“‘Here mixture is additional grown’: Women’s Friendship Poetry in Seventeenth-Century China and Britain

Pierre Zoberman, Université Paris 13

“Fictions and Fallacies of Empowerment: Women in Early-Modern French Comic/Realist Fiction”

Amalia Slobogian, McGill University

“Ugly (Erotic) Feelings in Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*”

Seminar 3

Janet Lynn Bartholomew, Michigan State University

“‘Naked as a Sign’: Quaker Nudity, Sexuality, and Trans-Atlantic Proselytizing, 1650-1700”

Amber H. True, Michigan State University

“Godless Cities and Godless Labor: Wenching and the Protestant Work Ethic in the *The Dutch Courtesan*”

Huili Zheng, Saint Vincent College

“Enchanted Encounter: Wang Tao and His Representation of the West”

The Comparative Gender Studies Committee also held its annual meeting at ACLA at Brown. The meeting was listed in the ACLA programme and 25 people attended, including President Françoise Lionnet. As 2013 is an ICLA year, the next annual meeting of the Committee will take place in Paris, though a programme is also planned for the ACLA 2013 conference in Toronto.

The Programme Sub-Committee and the Sub-Committee for Research and Dissemination continue their work on recommending topics for seminar programmes for ACLA and ICLA, and for publishing and disseminating publicly the Committee’s work, respectively. The Sub-Committee members are listed below:

Program Sub Committee

Abdulhamit Arvas, Michigan State University (USA)

Esra Arvas, Michigan State University (USA)

Petra Dierkes-Thrun, Stanford University (USA)

Jordana Greenblatt, York University (Canada)

Mehammed Mack, Columbia University (USA)

Pierre Zoberman, Université de Paris XIII (France)

Tegan Zimmerman, University of Alberta (Canada)

Sub Committee on Research & Dissemination

Liedeke Plate, Radboud University Nijmegen (The Netherlands) Co-Chair

Pierre Zoberman, Université de Paris XIII (France) Co-Chair

Petra Dierkes-Thrun, Stanford University (USA)

Ashley Dryburgh, University of Alberta (Canada)

Jordana Greenblatt, York University (Canada)

Stephanie Hilger, University of Illinois, Urbana (USA)

Richard House, University of Birmingham (UK)

Saran Mahasupap, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)

William J Spurlin, Brunel University, London (UK)

2. Plans for the ICLA Conference in Paris (2013)

The Committee has been allotted five seminars for its workshop at the ICLA in Paris in 2013. The topic of the overall seminar/workshop will be ‘Comparing Queerly/Queering Comparison: Transformative Approaches to Comparative Studies.’ Paper proposals have come in from all over the world, and we received over 30 abstracts for only 20 spaces on the programme. The Call for Papers appears below so as to give a sense of our focus on comparative gender studies (which will emphasise ‘queer’ this time). All papers have been evaluated and 21 were accepted for the ICLA programme. The Committee will also hold its annual meeting at ICLA in Paris.

Call for Papers, Comparative Gender Studies Committee, XXth ICLA Congress, Paris 2013

The Comparative Gender Studies Committee at ICLA has been in existence for 10 years, and at the 2013 conference in Paris, we seek seminar papers that bring innovative approaches to gender and sexuality that potentially transform the contours of comparative study. We are open to a wide range of topics and approaches, but we especially solicit papers that relate specifically to the announced conference themes around translation as a critical approach, ‘new theories,’ and ‘nations and beyond’ in comparing genders and/or sexualities. We also seek papers that address underrepresented areas of comparative enquiry and put pressure on traditional gender and sexual binaries—these could include, but are not limited to, the following areas: *i*) comparisons of early modern genders/sexualities, especially comparisons focusing on East/West encounters or comparisons outside of Occidental literary/cultural traditions; *ii*) comparative analyses of new conjunctions across disciplines, such as new intersections between postcolonial and queer enquiry, new analyses of feminist-queer interactions, or comparative analyses of how gender influences rhetorical practices and/or how rhetorical practices produce gender in particular periods and/or across cultures; *iii*) transgender as a site of comparison; *iv*) queering translation and theorising sites of untranslatability at the spaces where languages touch; *v*) explorations of the ways in which various forms of gender and sexual dissidence encounter one another, intersect, and merge in a transnational and diasporic world, while simultaneously transforming geopolitical, identity, or disciplinary borders. More broadly, how does comparing queerly, or queering comparison, challenge the normativities of the discipline and create new sites of knowledge production in

comparative literary and cultural study? Papers are welcome in English or in French, and the *comparative* aspect of the proposed paper should be made explicit in the abstract.

3. Publication and Dissemination of the Committee's Work

The following are forthcoming publications under the auspices of the Committee:

a) Special Issue of *Comparative Literature Studies (CLS)*

This special issue is based on the Committee's work at ACLA in Vancouver on queer translation and has been accepted by Prof Thomas Beebee, Editor of *CLS*. The contributors have been contracted subject to the submission of quality essays and peer review. The special issue is scheduled to appear in June 2014 and will comprise the following essays:

CLS Special Issue: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Translation: Literary, Historical, and Cultural Approaches

Guest Editor, William J Spurlin, Brunel University, London (UK)

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Introduction: Queering Translation

William J Spurlin, Brunel University London (UK)

Translating Backward: Queering Medieval Vernacularity

Ruth Evans, Saint Louis University (USA)

Homme peut-il vouloir dire *femme*? "Woman" and "Humankind" in the Translation of 17th-Century French Moral Literature

Pierre Zoberman, Université de Paris XIII (France)

Translation is Blind: Wilde's "The Disciple," Rilke's "Narcissus," and the Possibility of a Queer Echo

Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, University of Texas, Austin (USA)

Breaking the Code: Terminology and Homoculturality in Contemporary Mexico

Michael K Schuessler, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico)

Translatable Homosexualities? Franco-Maghrebi Writers and Transnational Spaces

Mehammed Mack, Columbia University (USA)

Afterword

Sandra Bermann, Princeton University (USA)

b) Special Issue on Gender and Sexual Health and Queering Disability Studies in the *Journal of Medical Humanities*

There is keen interest in the work of the Committee's ACLA panel on Gender and Sexual Health (see above) by the editor of the *Journal of Medical Humanities*. I will co-edit this with Rebecca Garden (Upstate Medical University) as we held a similar seminar at MLA in Seattle with the Committee on Science and Literature (so the comparative focus will remain). We are in the process now of collecting abstracts and writing up a formal proposal for a special issue.

c) Book Review

The publication below, which is a publication of the Committee, will be reviewed in *Literary Research/Recherches Littéraires*:

Hayes, Jarrod, Margaret R Higonnet, and William J Spurlin, eds. *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identity across Time and Cultures*. New York: Palgrave USA, 2010.

4. Budget and ICLA Support

The Committee has not had a budget, but would like to know what forms of support are available from ICLA to further its work, especially regarding support in organising a small conference at the universities of one of our officers outside of North America so as to ensure that those who live far from North America can also attend Committee meetings and participate more fully in the Committee's activities in the years in which there is no ICLA conference. Generally, the Committee meets and has seminar programmes at ACLA in the years between ICLA conferences. We are planning a conference outside North America for 2014.

5. Committee Seminars and Meetings at ACLA

The Committee meets successfully in the years in which there is no ICLA conference at ACLA. We have extended the range of our Committee membership through ACLA in Vancouver (2011) and Brown University (2012), and our membership includes graduate students early career academic scholars who are helping to shape the emergent discipline of comparative gender and queer studies. We hold seminar programmes at ACLA each year and we hold our business meeting there each year as well. The Committee is extremely grateful to ACLA Secretariat for its generosity and support in hosting our seminars and business meetings at ACLA, as it is a way of providing continuity and transition to the work that we do.

Submitted to the ICLA Executive Council on 01 August 2012,

William J Spurlin
Committee Chair