

Annual Report 2012-13

Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

1. Committee-Sponsored Program at ACLA in Toronto (2013)

Because of increased membership in our Committee through our presence at ACLA, the Comparative Gender Studies Committee sponsored a 3-day seminar at ACLA in Toronto in April 2013 even though we are not required to meet separately in a year in which there is an ICLA conference. As many of our members are graduate students based in North America, travel for an international conference abroad is often cost prohibitive as faculty usually get first preference for travel funds over graduate students. However, the Committee did not hold an annual business meeting in Toronto since that will take place at ICLA in Paris.

The seminar on gender and monstrosity (see below) provided a useful occasion to explore collaborating and publishing more on this subject. The seminars in Toronto led particularly to two lines of further research: an interest in diachronic comparisons and the significance of visual and performance elements in and beyond literary works. Exploring resemblances and differences between monstrous representations across chronological and historical boundaries emerged, in particular, through a discussion of early modern works in Germany, Spain, and France. The visual and performance aspects of the papers emerged in papers about pornography and horror novels, a North Korean film on family relationships, and Mexican masculinity. The group has been in touch about publishing a special issue of a journal on this subject, and the seminar was beneficial to the ongoing research projects of those involved.

The following is the program at ACLA which was very well attended and generated much discussion about research on the topic and its dissemination:

Seminar: Sex Shocks Across Borders: Gendering Mobility and Monstrosity

Sponsored by the Comparative Gender Studies Committee of the ICLA

Seminar Chairs: Mattia Marino, Bangor University; Christopher Larkosh, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

Seminar I

Mattia Marino, Bangor University

“Gut Gulps: Global Grotesque Stagings from Günter Grass and Pier Paolo Pasolini to Lady Gaga and John Updike”

Christopher Larkosh, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

“Submarine Contact: J.G. Noll’s *Acenos e afagos*”

Liesl Allingham, Virginia Tech

“Mobility and Desire in Eighteenth-Century Passing Women Narratives”

Renata Lucena Dalmaso, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
 “Uncanny Borderlands: Problematics of the geographic metaphor of gender embodiment and crossing”

Seminar II

Michael Broder, Brooklyn College, CUNY
 “*Quod Tamen Ulterius Monstrum*: Sex and Gender Monstrosity in the Satires of Juvenal”

Vartan Messier, Queensborough Community College, CUNY
 “Monstrous and Misguided Masculinities across the Atlantic”

Saran Mahasupap, Independent Scholar
 “Monstrous Beauty: ‘Katoey’ as queer monsters in Contemporary Thai Culture”

Pierre Zoberman, Université Paris 13 SPC
 “Early Modern Textual Monsters: Across the Sea, Across Texts”

Seminar III

Héctor García, Loyola University, Chicago
 “Transgressions From the South: Migrating Queer Images of Mexican Men”

Kristin Collins-Breyfogle, Mercyhurst University
 “Power, Identity, and Honor: Re-casting Sodomy as a Categorization of Sexual Violence in the 19th-Century Caucasus”

Darren Elliott-Smith, University of Hertfordshire
 “Queering Carrie: Appropriations of the Monstrous Ingenue in Queer Horror”

Areum Jeong, University of California, Los Angeles
 “Performing a Transgressive Persona in Kim Ki-young’s *The Housemaid* (1960)”

2. ICLA Conference in Paris (2013)

a) Committee-Sponsored Program

The Committee will sponsor a series of five seminars over five days at the ICLA Paris on the topic ‘Comparing Queerly/Queering Comparison: Transformative Approaches to Comparative Studies.’ Twenty papers have been selected for the program centred around the following sub-themes for five seminars of four papers each. Details of each seminar will be given in next year’s report.

Seminar I: (Queering) Translation
 Seminar II: Feminist-Queer Comparisons
 Seminar III: Crossing Time, Crossing Cultures
 Seminar IV: *Fin de Siècle* and Today
 Seminar V: Contemporary Popular Culture

b) Committee Business Meeting

The Comparative Gender Studies Committee will hold its annual meeting on Wednesday, 24 July, at 11.00 am – 12.30 pm at ICLA in Paris.

On the agenda is a discussion of other possible places to meet in years in which there is no ICLA conference besides ACLA so as not to privilege those in North America. We remain grateful to ACLA for granting our Committee space for seminars and a business meeting in their program, but we also hope to increase participation of our Committee members in other parts of the world. The Program Sub-Committee and the Sub-Committee for Research and Dissemination continue their work on recommending topics for seminar programs 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, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen (Germany)
 Mehammed Mack, Smith College (USA)
 Pierre Zoberman, Université de Paris 13 (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 13 (France) Co-Chair

Petra Dierkes-Thrun, Stanford University (USA)
 Ashley Dryburgh, University of Alberta (Canada)
 Jordana Greenblatt, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen (Germany)
 Stephanie Hilger, University of Illinois, Urbana (USA)
 Saran Mahasupap, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)
 William J Spurlin, Brunel University London (UK)

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 the journal *Comparative Literature Studies (CLS)*. There have been some changes in contributors as some of the original contributors to the ACLA seminar were not able to submit their papers; other papers were selected from abstracts submitted to the journal in response

to a general call for papers on the topic. The papers have now gone through three drafts, and I am currently reading the final drafts. Sandra Bermann will act as respondent, and I will write the critical introduction now that all the papers are completed. The special issue is due in January 2014 for publication later that year.

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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Queering Translation Studies: New Approaches
William J Spurlin, Brunel University London (UK)

A Queer and Embodied Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance
Aarón Lacayo, Rutgers University (USA)

Homme peut-il vouloir dire *femme*? Gender and Translation of 17th-Century French Moral Literature
Pierre Zoberman, Université de Paris XIII (France)

Strategies of Translating Sexualities as Part of the Secularization of Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Russia
Sergey Tyulenev, Durham University (UK)

Translation is Blind: Reflections on Narcissus and the Possibility of a Queer Echo
Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, University of Texas, Austin (USA)

Tick as Appropriate: A) Gay; B) Queer; or C) None of the Above: Translation and Sexual Identity in Lawrence Venuti's *A Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed*
Serena Bassi, University of Warwick (UK)

Untranslatable Desire: Inter-Ethnic Relationships in Franco-Arab Literature
Mehammed Mack, Smith College (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

We have received an acceptance/contract for a special issue of the *Journal of Medical Humanities*. This work comes out of our ACLA panel on Gender and Sexual Health in 2012 at Brown University as well as out of work at the Modern Language Association in conjunction with the MLA Division on Literature and Science in 2012 in Seattle, so this will be an interdisciplinary comparative endeavour. I will co-edit the special issue with Rebecca Garden (Upstate Medical University). The proposal has been submitted and accepted by the journal editor and papers in response to a call have been received, with the following papers selected:

JMH Special Issue: Critical Healing: Queer and Disability Studies Interventions in Biomedicine and Public Health

Guest Editors: William J Spurlin (Brunel University London; UK) and Rebecca Garden (Upstate Medical University; USA)

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Introduction: Queering Disease, Disability, and Gender/Sexual Health
William J Spurlin, Brunel University London (UK)
Rebecca Garden, Upstate Medical University (USA)

Cruising as Prevention: Queer Interventions in Narratives of Disability
Marty Fink, Concordia University (Canada)

The Banality of Anal: Safer Sexual Erotics in Gay Men's Health Crisis' *Safer Sex Comix* and Ex Aequo's *Alex et la vie d'après*
Jordana Greenblatt, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen (Germany)

Critical Fanonism and the Paraphilias in the *DSM-V*
Stephanie Hsu, Pace University (USA)

Not British, Just Brittle: Disability, Displacement, and Sex in the Writing of Firdaus Kanga
Stephanie Yorke, University of Oxford (UK)

d) Book Review

The publication listed below, which is a publication of the Committee, has been reviewed this year:

GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 19.2 (2013): 264-266 (USA). Review of *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identities Across Time and Cultures* (Eds. Jarrod Hayes, Margaret R. Higonnet, and William J. Spurlin; 2010) by Petra Dierkes-Thrun.

A review of this same book is forthcoming in *Literary Research/Recherches Littéraires*

4. Budget/ ICLA Support

The Committee remains concerned about only meeting in the off-ICLA years at ACLA in 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 programs in the years in which there is no ICLA conference. We would like to plan a conference outside North American for 2014, perhaps in Australia or India, and would like to seek ICLA funds to support this endeavour along with whatever support can be provided by the hosting institution.

5. Final Comment on the Status of Research Committees and the ICLA Executive Council

We remain highly concerned about the marginalised status of the Research Committees in relation to the ICLA Executive Council (EC). While the Chairs of the Association's Research Committees are not elected by the general membership of the ICLA, they are nonetheless elected by their constituencies, which come out of the general membership, and Research Committee Chairs are therefore not EC imposters. The work of the Research Committees is quite central to the ICLA, given that the work that they do helps set future directions for research, not only for ICLA, but for the discipline of comparative literature. In addition, this particular Committee has been, and continues to be, very active and has worked hard to increase membership and bring in new graduate students to ACLA in the off-years, when there is no ICLA conference, especially over the past two years (2011 in Vancouver and 2012 in Providence). After building momentum and working with us over the past two years, these graduate students will be attending their first ICLA conference in Paris. During this same period, I have worked with French graduate students and early career academics in France, and they will be attending ICLA in Paris and speaking on their research at our seminars. The Gender Studies Research Committee has therefore brought in new graduate students and other new members, thereby expanding the membership of the Association; yet the Committee, like others, has a marginalised role on the EC in terms of voting power and lacks a voice in the decision-making processes of the EC and the governance of the ICLA. This issue has been raised for discussion at EC meetings previously, yet it does not seem to come to the table for discussion. The marginalised status of Research Committee Chairs on the EC should not remain as this lowers the incentive for Research Committees to make a meaningful contribution. We see no reason, other than the vagaries of historical precedent and internal politics, not to recognise Research Committee Chairs as equal representatives of the ICLA on the EC; otherwise, the EC reflects a hierarchical and elitist mode of governance by a professional academic society that remains out of touch with, and indifferent to, the work of its membership, and this can impact negatively on increased membership and widened participation. This urgent point needs to be brought to the agenda of the next EC meeting in Paris.

Submitted to the ICLA Executive Council on 21 June 2013,

*William J Spurlin
Brunel University London (UK)
Committee Chair*