

Annual Report 2014-15

Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

1. Permanent Status of the Committee at ICLA

At the meeting of the ICLA Executive Council in Beijing in 2014, a vote was taken and passed to award the the Comparative Gender Studies Committee permanent status within the ICLA in recognition of the work it has accomplished over the past ten years since its inception in 2004. This includes the innovative seminars sponsored by the Committee at every ICLA conference since ICLA 2004 (Hong Kong), all of which draw large audiences and continue across the days of the conference; the Committee's sponsoring of annual seminars at the ACLA; the seminars sponsored yearly by the Committee at the Canadian Comparative Literature Association; the Committee's record of published and ongoing work; the Committee's international presence; and the Committee's membership, which now extends to all six continents, and which has resulted in new memberships to the ICLA, particularly graduate students. The members of the Committee were delighted with the news and wish to express their thanks to the Executive Council for recognising its work.

2. Committee-Sponsored Programme at ACLA in Seattle (2015)

The Committee sponsored a three-day seminar at the ACLA annual conference from 26-29 March 2015 in Seattle on Queer Temporalities, organised and chaired by the Committee Secretary, Chris Coffman. The seminars were all very well attended and enabled the Committee to pick up new members. The Committee-sponsored programme of seminars is listed below:

Comparing Queer Temporalities

Seminar Moderator: Chris Coffman, University of Alaska, Fairbanks Sponsored by the ICLA Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

- Seminar 1: Friday, March 27th
 - “WWI and Queer Times: Miss Ogilvy and Chris Baldry’s Painful Returning from/to the Battlefield” Jinhwa Lee, Rutgers University
 - “Proust's Queer Time” Adeline Soldin, Boston University
 - “Queering Lyrical Time: Felt Asynchrony in Frank Bidart’s Metaphysical Dog” Cathy Irwin, University of La Verne

- “Sexy Banalities: Consuming the Baroness’s Timely Stuff” Michael Sloane, Western University
- Seminar 2: Saturday, March 28th
 - “Queering the Fantastic or How to Delve into Latin American Queer Temporalities” Héctor García, Loyola University Chicago
 - “Ever Queerly, Gazing Forward: Queer Childhood and the Postcolonial Rememory” Robert LaRue, The University of Texas at Arlington
 - “Islamic Orality as Queer: Oral Tradition and Queer Sexualities in La nouba, A Jihad for Love, and Berbagi Suami” Sahin Acikgoz, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
 - “Affect, Queer Body and Time-image of Trans-Asian Migrants: Tsai Ming-Liang’s I Dont Want to Sleep Alone” Ivy I-chu Chang, National Chiao Tung University
- Seminar 3: Sunday, March 29th
 - “The Fantasy of Reproductive Futurism in The Virgin Machine” Chris Coffman, University of Alaska Fairbanks
 - “Queer Survival: The Ever-After of Ira Sachs’s Last Address” Roshaya Rodness, McMaster University
 - “Temporal Drag Ballet” Selby Wynn Schwartz, St. Mary’s College of California
 - “Our Technosexual Condition: Queer Temporalities and the Time of the Machine” Alla Ivanchikova, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

3. Committee Annual Business Meeting in Seattle (2015)

The Committee held its annual business meeting at ACLA in Seattle and discussed plans for seminars to be held at ACLA in 2016 in Boston and for the ICLA in Vienna in 2016. The Committee also welcomed new members and ratified its statement of purpose which appears below:

The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee works to further the comparative study of gender and sexuality in literature and culture through organising innovative seminar programmes at the ICLA and at other conferences, such as the ACLA. The Committee supports research and publication in the relatively new fields of comparative gender and comparative queer studies. We define ‘comparative’ in its broadest sense as an approach to the study of literature and culture that includes: a) traditional comparisons across national and linguistic borders as these relate specifically to gender and/or sexuality; b) comparative

work across historical, postcolonial, and transnational contexts focusing on gender and/or sexuality; and c) scholarship using gender and/or sexuality as sites of comparison themselves, or as they intersect with race, class, ethnicity, national and religious affiliation, and other sites of difference. We also support research on the gender and queer politics of textual and/or cultural translation in all historical periods. The work from our seminars is published in international peer-reviewed journals and in edited collections with major academic presses. Anyone with a scholarly interest in comparative gender/queer studies is invited to join the Committee, and we especially welcome graduate students.

4. Committee-Sponsored Conference in South Africa (2015)

For quite some time, the Committee's leadership has been concerned about the Committee only meeting every three years at the ICLA and at the ACLA in the years in which there is no ICLA conference. But since ICLA will meet in Europe twice in a cycle, and the annual meetings of the ACLA are confined to North America, the leadership was concerned about so many meetings being held in the Euroamerican axis, and about its members in the southern hemisphere not being able to attend meetings and seminars in the years in which there is no ICLA. At the Executive Council meeting in Beijing, it was decided to honour the Committee's request for a sum of US \$2000 to put toward a conference in South Africa.

On 6-8 April 2015, the Committee held its first conference in the southern hemisphere at the University of Pretoria on 'Gendered Modernities in Motion.' The conference was organised by Committee Member, Andries Visagie at the University of Pretoria. The conference was co-sponsored by the ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee and the Southern Modernities Research Group at the University of Pretoria, and was timed together with the South African Society for General Literary Study (SAVAL), which held its annual conference 9-10 April 2015 at the same venue. The Committee Chair, William J Spurlin, introduced the conference and spoke about the work of the Committee. There were 20 papers presented at the Gendered Modernities conference, and several graduate students from South Africa who presented papers, and who are members of SAVAL, have also joined the ICLA and will be joining us for the first time at ICLA in Vienna next year.

The Committee would like to thank formally the ICLA Executive Council for its generous support of this initiative.

5. Committee-Sponsored Programme at CCLA/ACLC, Ottawa, Canada (2015)

The Committee sponsored for a second year in a row a one-day seminar at the Canadian Comparative Literature Association/Association Canadienne de Littérature Comparée which will now be an annual event. The seminar was organised by Tegan Zimmerman, a Committee member, and following seminar was given:

Sex and Capital

Chair: Tegan Zimmerman, Grant MacEwan University

Sponsored by the ICLA Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

01 June 2015

“Re-presenting Muslim Women in an Era of Military Benevolence”

Mehraneh Ebrahimi, Western University

“Mothers as Capital in Belinda Starling’s *The Journal of Dora Damage* (2006) and Joyce Lebra’s *The Scent of Sake* (2009)”

Tegan Zimmerman, MacEwan University

“Storytelling: Paul Morris and the Mythological Circulation of Desire”

Ricky Varhese, Independent Scholar

6. Call for Papers for the Committee-Sponsored Seminar Series for ICLA 2016 in Vienna

The Committee’s Executive Board, following suggestions at the Committee Business Meeting at ACLA in Seattle, voted on and developed the following proposal and call for papers for the seminar we will sponsor at ICLA next year. The Committee has requested slots on the programme for five seminars.

(Queer) Relationality: Gender and Queer Comparatists at Work Sponsored by the ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee

Because the comparative examines literary and cultural texts relationally rather than what is assumed to be ontologically given, how might we theorise the ways in which genders, sexualities, languages, temporalities, identities, and cultural spaces touch? How might we examine spatial and cultural notions of physical proximity in comparative gender and queer studies frameworks? Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes in *Touching Feeling* that the term ‘beside’ is generative because ‘it comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations’ (8). What is crucial to queer relationality is not only the act of comparison, but a critical examination of the space ‘in between,’ which is not a space separating discrete categories, bodies, or languages, but binds, transforms, and translates them quite queerly. How might an emphasis on relationality demonstrate, in new ways, the multiplicity of inflections and intersections between gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, national and religious affiliation, and disability? Finally, what are some of the political stakes of a relational analysis, when we consider, for example, relations of language and violence and other

power relations? To what extent can the relational, the trans, the liminal, the mediating space 'in between' operate as a potential site of rupture, of epistemological or social transformation?

Paper topics might include feminist/queer relations; transgender; gender and violence; queering translation; bodily proximities/distances; global/local relations; transnational relations and/as queer spaces; queering public/private relations and relations between the academy and the everyday world; rethinking kinship, family, and community relations; relations between gendered/sexual subjects and nation-states, etc.

7. Publications of the Committee

The following is the Committee's full list of forthcoming and published work. There are current plans to publish selected papers from amongst the twenty presented at the seminars sponsored by the Committee on 'Comparing Queerly/Queering Comparison' at ICLA in Paris and seminar papers from this year's ACLA seminar in Seattle on 'Comparing Queer Temporalities' as an edited collection.

Gender and Literary Studies. Special Issue of *Comparative Critical Studies* 6.2 (2009). Guest Editor Margaret R. Higonnet.

Von Flotow, Luise, ed. *Translating Women*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010.

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

The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: Literary, Historical, and Cultural Approaches. Special Issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* 51.2 (2014). Guest Editor William J. Spurlin.

Comparatively Speaking: Gender and Rhetoric. Special Issue of *Intertexts* 18.1 (2014). Guest Editors Liedeke Plate and Pierre Zoberman.

Critical Healing: Queer and Disability Studies Interventions in Biomedicine and Public Health. Special Issue of *Journal of Medical Humanities*. Forthcoming 2015. Guest Editors William J. Spurlin and Rebecca Garden.

Submitted to the ICLA Executive Council on 09 June 2015,

William J Spurlin Brunel University London (UK) Committee Chair