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ICLA Research Committee on Religion, Ethics, and Literature

The research committee investigates the philosophical and theoretical roles of religion and ethics in relation to literature, as well as explores the fraught relationship between secularism and post-secularism. It examines global literary phenomena as instances of subject formation in order to think new relationships between these three disciplines. We are particularly concerned with the modern displacement of religion, and modernity's epistemological underpinnings as these aspects reflect judgments about the world, culture, and its relationship to a religious past. While the examination of religious imagery, symbolism and the role of myth will not be the purview of this committee, the signifiers of religion in as much as they motivate "an ethical turn" in the text is a key element of the committee's purview.

As a result, the committee has a wide-ranging concern with the interstitial space that literature makes visible, a space that is not reducible to the literary, religious, or ethical, and yet intersects with all of these nodes of expression. In other words, we question the epistemologies and categories that underwrite the ways that religion, literature, and ethics coalesce around an aesthetic object.

In 2018, the committee published its first research volume, *The Fault Lines of Modernity: the Fractures and Repairs of Religion, Ethics, and Literature* with Bloomsbury. In September, 2019, the committee's fifth year, the title will be available in paperback. A collection of thirteen essays, the contributors represent early career researchers, graduate students and senior scholars in comparative literature and related disciplines. Its essays engage a range of theoretical projects, encompassing literary traditions in Russian, German, French, Hebrew, English, Hindi, Afrikaans, and Japanese. The collection is listed as part of Bloomsbury's Religion, Philosophy, and Literature division, and marketed not only to comparatists, but also scholars within religion and philosophy.

The committee sponsored one ACLA seminar, comprising 8 papers, and one ICLA panel of 4 papers. We ended the year with 73 members and in 2019 added 4 new members, bringing the membership to 77. The membership comprises a broad and global cohort at every rank within the profession.

Professor Millet has accepted the role of editor-in-chief of a new series with Bloomsbury, *Comparative Jewish Literatures*. The series aims at doing two things: 1) establishing Jewish literatures as a subfield within comparative literature; and 2) becoming a "home" for comparatists working with Jewish

literary traditions. The first projected volumes for the series will be published in 2021 and will include Professor Millet's own *Kabbalah and Literature*. The series projects to publish between 3 and 5 books a year under the Bloomsbury imprint.

For the research committee, the new series opens up a new set of ethical questions pertaining to Judaic principles and concepts and their literary expression within national literatures. It is Professor Millet's hope that committee members will submit proposals for the series that look at Jewish literatures comparatively within the national traditions paying special attention to what "the Jewish text" might be and how such a text might differ intrinsically from other literary texts.

The committee remains committed to identifying venues in which members can submit their research for peer review and publication. In 2019 Professor Millet also edited a special edition of *religions*, on "Jewish Secular Culture." The special issue had articles by two of the members of the committee: one on Hungarian Jewish writers and the coffee house as a site of intellectual foment and the other on Schoenberg, Appelfeld, and the Jewish text of dissonance in Hebrew and German.

The committee website contains a copy of our quarterly reports, lists our sponsored panels at different conferences, provides a list of our members, updates our publications progress, and offers instructions for membership (<http://online.sfsu.edu/kmillet1/faultlinesgrp.html>). Although Professor Kitty Millet (kmillet1@sfsu.edu) chairs the committee, committee members remain actively engaged in growing the committee, determining its next events, and targeting potential audiences. The committee remains active in the national comparative literature associations and offers at least one multi-day seminar at the ACLA annually.