



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Kitty Millet, CHAIR
DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH STUDIES

1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

Tel: 415/338-3152
Fax: 415/338-6080

December 3, 2020

ICLA Research Committee on Religion, Ethics, and Literature / 2020

I. Scope

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 rethink 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, and ethics coalesce around an aesthetic and/or literary object. In this way, the committee proposes literature to be unique in its ontology.

II. Publication and Research

In 2020, the committee's research volume, *The Fault Lines of Modernity: the Fractures and Repairs of Religion, Ethics, and Literature* became 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 is included within its Cultural Histories collection. Consequently, it is marketed not only to comparatists, but also scholars within religion, philosophy, and other related fields.

Due to Professor Millet's new series *Comparative Jewish Literatures* (Bloomsbury), committee members working on Jewish texts within comparative literature have new opportunities for their projects. The series aims both to establish Jewish literatures as a subfield within comparative literature and to connect comparatists working with Jewish literary traditions to scholars within Jewish Studies in order to foster a deeper and richer understanding of the notion of the "Jewish text."

III. Conferences

The committee co-sponsored one 2021 ACLA seminar, with the ICLA Committee on Gender. It comprises 13 papers presented over 2 days and reprises aspects of the ACLA conference that was cancelled in 2020. While many of the papers formerly accepted last year are part of this venue, we were also able to add several new participants. Additionally, the committee's new research project, our first regional Zoom conference and workshop, will be sponsored by new committee officer, Dr. Zainab Mahmood. She will host via zoom a regional conference focused on East and Southeast Asian Literatures. That event is projected for Spring 2021 as well.

IV. Membership, General Information, and Officers

And

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY: Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno, Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy, Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

The research committee comprises 79 members, gaining approximately 3-6 members annually. We experienced a membership boost after the Macau Congress. We have four officers, Professor Kitty Millet (San Francisco State University) chairperson; Professor John Hawley (Santa Clara University), first vice president; Katie Lally, Doctoral Student (University of California, Santa Cruz), second vice president; Dr. Zainab Mahmood, Teaching Fellow in Comparative Literature (NYU/Shanghai), third vice president/secretary.

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.

And

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY: Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno, Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy, Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus