



American Comparative Literature Association

Dear ACLA members,

Greetings from Durham, NC.

One of the funny and rather tragic jokes of the pandemic was the one about the relationship between the online meeting platform and the séance. *"I think there's someone who wants to join us!" "Hello! Hello! Are you there?" "Can you hear us? Just give us a sign!"* The witnessing of death makes the joke in poor taste. But the technology of its deliverance has nonetheless underscored something about language across spaces, and the manner in which telecommunications facilitate togetherness and ensure at the same time that we stay apart.

March brought us back together in person for the first time since 2019, with all the pleasures and challenges afforded by that in the uncertainty of an ongoing pandemic. With the knowledge of losses suffered, absences palpable, an acceleration of worldwide protest around police violence against blacks and the "non-being" "the non-human" and sometimes the "non-analogous" nature of blackness, and many things often reluctantly learned, the online platforms that have guided us and exposed us through the last few years have enabled some form of interaction. They have also revived important questions around spectacle and event, and around presence and absence. They have shifted an articulation of a worldwide "we" that has been constituted through the technologies of simultaneity—of streaming and online meetings, and recordings of them. The spectacular and the everyday were framed by absence and distance with the shadow of *the meanwhile* and of the exigencies of daily violence hanging over us. And they have forced us once again to question the work performed and foreclosed in the use of the enunciative false pronoun "we."

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The joke is funny because it makes simultaneous the inefficiencies of the new media and what we expect of them alongside the older monstrosities in the machine, the attempt to communicate with the absent other through a medium, the shadow of death over the living, the address demanding a sign, and the strong likelihood that our address will not reach the other even as we persist in trying, translating, and demanding. Everyone is made absent in their insistent presence manifested in becoming pixelated or delayed, spoken through an interpreter whether machinic or human, sinking into our wallpaper, turned into a voice behind a photo or a name that invites us to imagine a presence behind it somehow made more real by that name. That name, presented as a signature, is apparently further specified in its singularity ironically by third person pronoun —the pronouns that according to the comparative linguist Emile Benveniste indicate in many languages “non personhood,” absence, substitution, or a syntactic representation or objective reference. Like the proper name, the third person pronoun belies the singularity and exposes the threat to it by the conventions of naming, of legacy, and of the mark of gender. The joke also highlights what Barbara Johnson in her work on apostrophe, lyric poetry, and abortion refers to as an impossible task of “directly addressing not a second person, but a third person.”

Non-personhood, non-being, non-existence; these categories that have reemerged in our time around media, gender, the machinic, translation, and the figure of the black and the legacies of colonialism in the context of a global pandemic and a planetary environmental demand old and new ways of thinking across languages, literatures, media, and periods. As we move forward with next year’s in-person meeting in Montréal, we are also rethinking ACLA’s larger project beyond the conference itself with its signature seminar style; the highlighting of scholarship in our field through awards and publications; and an understanding of the shifting terrain of the profession, our field, and the new technologies changing our scholarship and our labor. To that end, we will be entertaining the ghost in the machine a few times this year by holding some online events, inviting members to contribute to the state of the discipline report, and developing further understanding of the histories and futures of our field.

Finally, I want to thank our secretariat (Danielle Fanucchi, Brigid Kennedy, Dina al-Kassim) and members of the Board (especially Rei Terada, President Emerita for her wonderful leadership and Presidential Address; Nicoletta Pireddu, Program Committee

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Chicago conference and puzzling through a pre-pandemic contract that was not of their making. Thanks to all of you who dedicate their time to ACLA. *Bravi!*

Ranjana Khanna

ACLA President

MEET THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE ACLA BOARD

Karyn Ball, 2nd Vice President

Karyn Ball (PhD Minnesota) is Professor of English and Film Studies specializing in literary and cultural theory at the University of Alberta. She is the editor of *Traumatizing Theory: The Cultural Politics of Affect in and Beyond Psychoanalysis* (2007) and the author of *Disciplining the Holocaust* (2008). She has also guest edited a special issue of *Cultural Critique* on "Trauma and Its Cultural Aftereffects" (2000) and a special issue of *Parallax* on the concept of "visceral reason" (2005). With Susanne Soederberg of Queen's University, Ball co-edited a special issue of *Cultural Critique* on "Cultures of Finance" (2007); with Melissa Haynes, a special issue of *ESC* on "The Global Animal" (2013); and, with Stefan Mattessich, a special issue of *Cultural Critique* on "pornocracy" (2018). Her articles have appeared in *Cultural Critique*, *Women in German Yearbook*, *Research in Political Economy*, *Differences*, *English Studies in Canada*, *New Literary History*, *Alif*, the open-access journal *Humanities*, the *Journal of Holocaust Studies*, *Angelaki*, *Law and Critique*, *Oxford Bibliographies*, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory*, and *History and Theory*.

Jini Kim Watson, Program Committee Chair

Jini Kim Watson (PhD Duke Literature) is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at New York University. Her research and teaching fields include decolonization and the global Cold War, spatial and urban theory, and inter-Asian cultural and postcolonial studies. She is the author of, most recently, *Cold War Reckonings: Authoritarianism and the Genres of Decolonization* (Fordham UP 2021) which received honorable mentions for both the ACLA's René Wellek Prize and the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize. She served as Secretary-Treasurer to the ACLA during 2019-2020 and is excited to take up the role as Program Chair.

Zeena Yasmine Fuleihan, Graduate Student Committee Chair

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College Teaching. Her research looks at the relations of fantasy, sexual violence, and the colonial encounter through postcolonial literatures, torture cases, psychoanalysis, and theories of violence and desire in the Middle East and North Africa. She holds an MA in Contemporary Literature, Culture, and Theory from King's College London and a BA from Macalester College. In addition to graduate study, Zeena has worked in publishing at Coffee House Press, as a teacher of creative writing for adults with developmental disabilities, and as editor of *Mizna: Prose, Poetry, and Art Exploring Arab America*.

Xena Amro, Graduate Student Representative

Xena Amro is a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literary Studies at Northwestern University, with a home department in Middle East and North African Studies. She is a graduate assistant at the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa. She has an MA in English Literature from the American University of Beirut. Her research interests include pre-modern Arabic literature, Islamic philosophy, archival practices, travelogues, global modernism, translation studies, and Nahda literature.

Call for Nominations to the Horst Frenz Prize

The Horst Frenz Prize is awarded to the best paper presented by a graduate student at the annual meeting of the ACLA. The Horst Frenz Prize includes a \$500 cash award, complimentary registration to the ACLA Annual Meeting, and a travel reimbursement grant of up to \$500 to attend the following year's ACLA Annual Meeting to receive the award in person.

If you heard an outstanding presentation by a graduate student at the [2023 Annual Meeting](#), please pass along as much information as possible (name of presenter, paper title, e-mail, etc.) to the ACLA Secretariat via the ACLA's Horst Frenz Prize [nomination form](#). It is helpful to explain why you admire the paper. Nominations are accepted through September 15, 2023.

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ADPCL Workshops

The ADPCL, with the support of ACLA, will hold "Leading a Comparative Literature or Interdisciplinary Program" workshops as part of the [MLA Summer Seminars](#).

Join the workshops in Washington, DC, or online for the MLA's signature professional development events for department and program leaders:

- ADE-ALD Summer Seminar: Centering the Humanities
 - June 1, 2023, Washington Marriott Georgetown
- MAPS Leadership Institute: Humanities in the World, Humanities at Work
 - June 27, 2023, Online

For more information and workshop registration, visit maps.mla.org/seminars.

Looking Forward: ACLA's 2024 Annual Meeting

We're excited to announce the 2024 Annual Meeting will take place March 14-17, 2024, at the [Palais de congrès de Montréal](#). In the coming weeks, we will share information on the call for papers, registration, and other information. We look forward to seeing you in Montreal!

State of the Discipline Report

The Bylaws of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) mandate that a

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previous reports (1965, 1975, 1995, 2006, and 2014) have become landmarks in the history of the discipline, chronicling its developments intellectually and institutionally. Taken together, those reports tell a story of Comparative Literature's increasing openness to the world beyond Europe, a widening range of interdisciplinary approaches, and a gradual democratization of the process of producing the Report itself: from prescriptive statements issued by eminent scholars at elite institutions to the wide-open format of the 2010s, in which a large number of comparatists from a broad spectrum of institutions and ranks contributed to a mosaic of comparative practices.

We invite you to share your perspective on the developments, transformations, continuities, challenges, opportunities, and any other aspect of significance for Comparative Literature at the present time. We welcome essays of 1,000-5,000 words, to be submitted through the "Submit an Entry" link on [the State of the Discipline website](#). The website will remain open for submissions until November 1, 2023. All submissions will be reviewed by the Editorial Committee. The online version of the Report will be launched in 2024.

For the full call and more information on the State of the Discipline Report, [click here](#).

[The ACLA welcomes donations](#) to sustain the organization and to support scholars in our community. Donations to the Support a Scholar fund continue our tradition of providing financial support for contingent faculty and graduate students who wish to attend the Annual Meeting. These grants help support our most vulnerable members at a time when we see increasing cutbacks in university budgets and the effects of economic downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your donation will help ensure the highest and most diverse participation at our annual conference. Donations to the General Operating Fund help to sustain the organization. Any donations will go toward our general operating budget and support our conference planning, prize awards, and membership program.

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Calls for Papers

- [Call for papers](#) for the 2023 Imagining America National Gathering, "Radical Reckoning: Invoking the Elements for Collective Change," held in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 20-22, 2023 (due May 31).
- [Call for papers](#) for panel: "Considerate la vostra semenza": Dante's influences on second-generation Italian authors" for the PAMLA 2023 Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon - October 26-29, 2023 (due May 31).
- [Call for chapters](#) for edited volume "Postcolonial Ecofeminist Literature" (due June 1).
- [Call for papers](#) for "Form & Transformation," Comparative Literature Graduate Conference at The Graduate Center at the City University of New York (17th November 2023) (due July 3).
- [Call for papers](#) for THE T. S. ELIOT STUDIES ANNUAL, volume 6 (due July 15).
- [Call for proposals](#) for *Nuevas Poligrafías: Revista de Teoría Literaria y Literatura Comparada*, Issue 9, "Crime Fiction and Its Contemporary Avatars" (due August 15).

To post a call for papers to the [ACLA website](#), email info@acla.org with the deadline and your CFP in PDF format.

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Job Announcements

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- [Associate Research Fellow](#), Harvard University, Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program. Apply ASAP.
 - [Research Fellow](#), Harvard University, Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program. Apply ASAP.

To post [a job announcement](#), email info@acla.org with the deadline, application link, and any additional information.

Is your ACLA membership expiring soon? [Check](#) your membership status and [renew](#) today!

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