

CFP GSA 2023 "Comparison Literature Revisited: Genres, Forms, Media", October 5-8, 2023, Montréal (15.03.2023)

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Call for Papers

Date:

October 5, 2023 to October 8, 2023

Location:

Quebec, Canada

Subject Fields:

Composition & Rhetoric, Cultural History / Studies, German History / Studies, Humanities, Literature

As an epistemological practice or as a social custom, comparison has been the subject of much debate in recent decades. "Why compare?," R. Radhakrishnan has asked in an essay that spells out the asymmetries implicit in many acts of comparison which have come into view from the critical perspective of postcolonial theory. In his recent book "Are we comparing yet?," Haun Saussy pursues the question of whether there can be something like a 'just comparison.' In the discussions over the ethics and politics of comparison, little attention has been paid to how comparison takes shape in literature: In what ways does literature perform or trigger comparisons - and to what end? By investigating aesthetic modes and forms of comparison in literature, the panel series aims at opening up new perspectives on cultural and social practices of comparison.

The question of how literature compares goes back to ancient rhetoric which has provided us with a detailed catalogue of various figures of comparison, including metaphor, metonymy, simile, parable, etc. However, despite - or due to - the familiarity of those rhetorical figures of comparison, the question of how and why literature compares has only rarely been reflected upon in more general terms. In particular, forms and modes of literary comparison that do not fit the existing rhetorical categories have yet to be analyzed and systematized. In a 2009 essay, Rebecca Walkowitz has suggested to think of literary comparison beyond rhetorical terms by envisioning the genre of "comparison literature" - a kind of literature which circulates globally, experiments with formal structures of comparison, invokes practices of translation and reflects on gestures of ethical, national, and generic comparison. The panel series takes this approach as a point of departure: It invites panelists to question and revisit the notion or to investigate and discuss texts that

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may be considered “comparison literature.”

The notion of “comparison literature” may prove productive as an approach to transnational, translingual, and/or transmedial literature of the present day. What role do acts of comparing play in multilingual texts such as Uljana Wolf’s poetry (*False Friends*, 2009)? In what ways do typographic experiments, as can be found in texts by Wolf Haas (*In Defense of the Missionary Position*, 2012), prompt modes of ‘comparative reading’? How is comparison modeled in transnational narratives like Iris Hanika’s novel *Echo’s Chambers* (2020)? Lastly: Is “comparison literature” a phenomenon limited to contemporary literature – what are its historical precursors and what may be specific to today’s “comparison literature”?

The panel series seeks to explore the rubric “comparison literature” and to discuss to what extent it can be a productive framework for literary studies. It invites contributions that collect, analyze and discuss texts, which may be considered “comparison literature,” and that develop ways of describing specifically literary modes of comparison. Lastly, it is interested in relating modes of literary comparison to larger debates on the politics and ethics of comparison.

Possible contributions may address but are not limited to the following questions:

- How does literature compare? To what end?
- How does comparison manifest itself on a textual/formal/visual/narrative level? What are literary or aesthetic forms and practices of comparison? What are textual signals of literary comparison?
- How can we describe and analyze literary comparisons?
- How can we locate comparison: in the text itself, in its reception through the reader? What may phenomenological approaches to literary comparison look like?
- How does the aesthetics of comparison relate to its politics/ethics?

- Is “comparison literature” a contemporary phenomenon? What are historical expressions of “comparison literature”? How has literary comparison changed throughout history?

Please send your abstract of approximately 350-500 words and a short CV (max. 2 pages) to kristina.petzold@uni-bielefeld.de and elisa.ronzheimer@uni-bielefeld.de by **March 15, 2023**. Please note that you must be a paid member of the German Studies Association to participate in the panel series. Information on membership is available on the GSA website (<https://thegsa.org/member-services/my-membership>). Travel costs and accommodation need to be self-funded.

The panel series is organized by Kristina Petzold and Elisa Ronzheimer (Collaborative Research Center 1288 “Practices of Comparing”, Bielefeld University: <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/sfb/sfb1288/>).

Contact Info:

Kristina Petzold, M.A.
Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin
Sonderforschungsbereich 1288 „Praktiken des Vergleichens“
Teilprojekt D05 „Vergleichendes Lesen“
Universität Bielefeld
Universitätsstraße 25
33615 Bielefeld
Gebäude X A4-202

Contact Email:

kristina.petzold@uni-bielefeld.de