

Annual Activity Report 2017-18

Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

1. Statement of Purpose (new)

The Comparative Gender Studies Committee works to further the comparative study of gender and sexuality through organizing innovative seminar programmes at the ICLA and at other conferences, such as the ACLA, and through supporting research and publication in the fields of comparative gender, sexuality, queer and trans* 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, queer and trans* politics of textual and/or cultural translation in all historical periods. The work from our seminars is published in international peer-review journals and in edited collections with major academic presses. Anyone with a scholarly interest in comparative gender, sexuality, queer and trans* studies is invited to join the Committee, and we especially welcome graduate students.

2. Elected Officers

Officers serve a three-year term with the option to serve only one additional term of three years if they so choose. Terms of office expire at the ICLA conference in the year given in parentheses.

President/Chair (2022)

Liedeke Plate, Radboud University (NL)

Vice President (2022)

Jordana Greenblatt, University of Toronto and York University (Canada)

Secretary (renewed through 2019)

Chris Coffman, University of Alaska, Fairbanks (USA)

Elected Executive Board Member:

- Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, University of Texas at Austin (USA) (renewed through 2019)
- Rita Terezinha Schmidt, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) (2022)
- Tegan Zimmerman, Stephens College (USA) (2022)

3. Annual Business Meeting of the Committee: 2017

The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee held its annual business meeting for 2017 on July 8, 2017 at ACLA 2017 in Utrecht. The business meeting is open to its members and to anyone with a scholarly interest in comparative gender and comparative queer studies. In line with its open door policy, the business meeting was advertised in the ACLA 2017 programme booklet, which served to attract new members.

First, the committee discussed whether or not to add 'queer' or 'sexuality' to its name but decided against it. The statement of purpose was revised: we have added 'queer' and 'trans*' to it (and removed the phrase 'relatively new fields'). See 1. above. We decided on "(Un)believably Queer?" as the theme for the committee-sponsored meeting at ACLA 2018: and discussed possible themes for ICLA 2019. We also discussed publication; and the possibilities afforded by the new ICLA website.

4. Annual Business Meeting of the Committee: 2018

The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee held its annual business meeting for 2018 on March 31, 2018 at ACLA@UCLA. The business meeting was advertised in the conference programme booklet, attracting new members.

There were two main points on the agenda: meeting(s) in 2019 and publications. The committee decided to meet at both the ACLA and the ICLA in 2019 because not all committee members may be able to attend ICLA 2019. We discussed ways to attract more graduate students, as this year we had too few according to current ACLA rules; as well as how to reach out to prospective participants in Asia and Australia. We also discussed publications in progress.

One important issue that came up and that is particularly relevant to this report is the desire of the members of this committee to be part of the conversation about which plenary speakers to invite at ICLA and perhaps also ACLA. The committee feels that in this day and age, its work should not be limited to a (always well attended) 3- or 5-day seminar, but that it should also be visible in the conferences' main events such as keynotes and plenary meetings and speakers. Seeking alliances with other committees -- as was done in the past, for instance with Translation Studies -- might be a fruitful avenue for making comparative gender, sexuality, queer and trans* studies more visible within the association while also making its conference programmes as a whole more inclusive of a diversity of approaches to comparative literature and of different genders and sexualities.

5. Publications

Over the years, the Committee has published a number of special issues in such journals as *Comparative Critical Studies* (2009), *Comparative Literature Studies* (2014), and *Intertexts* (2014), as well as several edited volumes, such as *Translating Women* (ed. Luise von Flotow, 2010) and *Comparatively Queer* (eds. Jarrod Hayes, Margaret Higonnet and William J Spurlin, 2010). All of these works have made important interventions in the field. The committee has several other projects in line, including edited collections and special issues based on the papers presented at recent committee-sponsored meetings. Also, past president Margaret Higonnet is preparing a report on the role of gender-focused committees in changing both the structures of learned societies and the development of new areas of research.

6. Website

The Committee has its own website: <https://sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/icla-comparative-gender-studies-committee/executive-board>; as well as a distribution list: icla-gender-studies-committee@lists.alaska.edu. To contact us, send an email to Liedeke Plate (L.plate@let.ru.nl; president) or Chris Coffman (cecoffman@alaska.edu; secretary).

Respectfully submitted June 4, 2018
Liedeke Plate, President