Annual Activity Report 2019-20

Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies

International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

1. Statement of Purpose
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. Elections for new officers were held at the business meeting of the committee in Macau on August 1, 2019, 11-12.30. It was listed in the ICLA General Congress Programme.

President/Chair (2022)
Liedeke Plate, Radboud University (NL)

Vice President (2022)
Jordana Greenblatt, University of Toronto and York University (Canada)

Secretary (term ends in 2025)
Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, University of Texas at Austin (USA)

Elected Executive Board Member:
- Rita Terezinha Schmidt, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) (2022)
- Tegan Zimmerman, Concordia University of Edmonton (Canada) (2022)
- Pierre Zoberman, Université Paris 13 (France) (2025)
3. Annual Business Meeting of the Committee: 2019
The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee held its annual business meeting 2019 at
the ICLA congress in Macau. In line with its open door policy, the business meeting was
advertised in the ICLA International Congress 2019 programme booklet.

4. Annual Business Meeting of the Committee: 2020
In the years in-between ICLA congresses, annual business meetings of the committee take
place at ACLA. The Annual Business Meeting of the Committee 2020 was scheduled to take
place March 21, 2020. It was listed in the ACLA programme. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic,
the ACLA annual conference was cancelled. The elected members of committee met to
discuss plans for the future through Zoom on October 18, 2020.

5. ICLA General Congress in Macau, July 29 - August 2, 2019
The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee organized a panel (two sessions) at the
ICLA General Congress in Macau in July - August 2019 on the topic of “Comparative Gender
Studies: Rooms, Media and Expressions of One’s Own”. With papers by Rita Terezinha
Schmidt, Rafael Eisinger Guimarães, Robert LaRue, Liedeke Plate, Thomas J. Garza, and
Elizabeth M. Richmond-Garza.

6. Committee-Sponsored Programme at ACLA 2020 in Chicago (cancelled)
The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee co-sponsored a three-day seminar at ACLA
2020 in Chicago, entitled ‘An Ethics of Gender?’, in collaboration with the ICLA Committee
on Religion, Ethics, and Literature (chair: Kitty Millett). It was cancelled due to the COVID-19
pandemic. A new proposal has been submitted for ACLA 2021.

7. Committee-Sponsored Programme at ACLA 2021 (Montreal)
The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee has submitted a proposal for ACLA 2021
entitled ‘An Ethics of Gender?’, in collaboration with the ICLA Committee on Religion, Ethics,
and Literature (chair: Kitty Millett).

8. ISHR (Radboud University, NL)
The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee has submitted a proposal for International
Society for the History of Rhetoric (ISHR) 2021, on the role of topoi/commonplaces in the
construction and queering of gender identities. ISHR 2021 has been postponed till 2022.

9. Publications
The members of the ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee contribute widely to
journals and books and many of those publications are peer reviewed. Over the years, the
ICLA Comparative Gender Studies 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. In 2018, the journal *Whatever: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and
Studies* was launched. ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee members are involved,
as editors and on its scientific board.
In the latest issue of Recherche Littéraire/Literary Research, a review of the state of the art in comparative gender studies appears. Although authored by the chair of the committee, it is the product of many conversations and collaborations among the member of the committee, as mentioned in the first footnote: Liedeke Plate, “Comparative Gender Studies: Where We Are Now.” Recherche littéraire/Literary Research 36 (2020): 149–76.

Past president Margaret Higonnet wrote 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, with special focus on the work of the ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee. The article “Gender in Learned Societies,” is to appear in Beyond Babel: Learned Societies and the Global Renewal of the Humanities. Ed. Tom Clark. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, forthcoming.

Many publications often take a long time to ripen and make their way into print. Past president William Spurlin’s book Contested Borders: Queer Politics and Cultural Translation in Contemporary Francophone Writing from the Maghreb will be appearing in 2021 with Rowman and Littlefield, London.

Recent articles that have come out of presentations and discussions at seminars organized by the committee include:

The committee is exploring possibilities for a joint publication (e.g., edited volume), based on unpublished papers presented at seminars organized by the committee.

The committee was featured in the Spotlight section of the AILC/ICLA Newsletter of November 2020: “Spotlight on... the Research Committee on Comparative Gender Studies,” AILC/ICLA Newsletter 5 (2 Nov. 2020): 5–7; “Braquer les projecteurs sur... le Comité de Recherche sur les Études Comparatistes de Genre,” AILC/ICLA Newsletter 5 (2 nov. 2020): 20–22. See https://www.ailc-icla.org/recent-newsletters/

10. Website
The Committee’s webpage on the ICLA website can be found here: https://www.ailc-icla.org/committee-on-gender/.

Respectfully submitted November 29, 2020
Liedeke Plate, President