

Annual Activity Report 2019-20; updated until May 2021*

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)

* Updates are highlighted.

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 & 2021

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. **The Annual Business Meeting 2021 is planned to take place through Zoom in May 2021.**

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: online)

The ICLA Comparative Gender Studies Committee **co-sponsored a three-day/four sessions seminar** at 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:

- Greenblatt, Jordana. "The Banality of Anal: Safer Sexual Erotics in the Gay Men's Health Crisis' *Safer Sex Comix* and Ex Aequo's *Alex et la vie d'après*." *The Journal of Medical Humanities* 40.1 (2019). (came out of the 2012 ACLA session)
- Greenblatt, Jordana. "Aerial, Apparatus, Assemblage: Pain, Pleasure, and the Circus Body Without Organs." *Sexualities* (accepted and forthcoming; came out of presentations at committee-sponsored seminars at CCLA 2017 and ACLA 2017)
- Rita Terezinha Schmidt, "Des-figuring the female body: textualities outside the law". In: *Mundopoética: geopolitics of the literary*. Eds. Cinara Ferreira and Andrei Cubga. Porto Alegre, CLASS, 2020.
- Zoberman, Pierre. "Genre et littérature au xviii^e siècle: *La Princesse de Clèves* et ses enjeux politiques." *Lublin Studies in Languages and Literature*, vol. 43, n^o 1 March 2019).

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.aile-icla.org/recent-newsletters/>

10. Website

The Committee's webpage on the ICLA website can be found here: <https://www.aile-icla.org/committee-on-gender/>.

Respectfully submitted May 13, 2021
Liedeke Plate, President