

## Arabic Comparative Literature Standing Research Committee

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### Introduction

The Arabic cultural scene with its multifarious patterns and systems offers the realm of humanities and the inter-, cross-, and multidisciplinary horizon of comparative literature a rich body of artistic and literary works (classical, modern and contemporary) in various genres that have transformed and traveled across time and space brimming with influences and emitting their own specificity as they range outside the boundaries of culture and language. Multilayered as it is, that body is not only collectively produced in the Arabic language but also in the many national languages of different regions in the Arab world<sup>1</sup>, the languages of the former colonizers, or those of the host countries wherein Arab writers migrate.

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<sup>1</sup>Tamazight in Morocco is a case in point.

As a consequence of the aforementioned diversity, comparative literature studies manifest a variety of approaches in the Arabic cultural scene where Arabic - which comes on top of the list as the major tongue of production - is also accompanied by proliferating contributions in French, English, Spanish, German, Dutch, etc, especially during the third millennium. The latter witnessed great efforts exerted by Arabic comparatists to consolidate the literary-cultural dialectic via adopting the cultural turn of comparative literary studies which focuses on the democratization of human culture. The current dynamic nature of comparative literature in the Arab region, therefore, emerges from capitalizing on new cultural phenomena to expand the horizon of comparative research and to reequip the comparative literary stage which was founded in the second half of the last century, connecting the classical and modern heritage of Arabic culture (as in Arabic-Persian Studies, Moriscos in Arabic studies, Modern Arabic Renaissance and European Cultures) via the developments introduced by Arab comparatists in the various comparative spheres with the purpose of connecting national Arabic interests with those on the international arena, and establishing new comparative spheres that celebrate diversity and otherness while maintaining harmony and affinity.

Among the different fields of comparative literary studies that are being developed by Arab comparatists are the following:

- Translation studies, namely, repatriation and translation between two national languages and what these entail in relation to the binary of “the Self and the Other” which relies on traditional translation theory.
- Comparative studies in the field of Francophone and Anglophone literature with a focus on the act of writing as a space ripe with confrontations and encounters among multifarious languages and cultures.
- Establishing the nexus between comparative literary studies and moving Arabic identities which provides literary productions that enrich not only Arabic cultural systems and structures but also those

of non-Arab through which Arab writers (immigrants and diasporas) produce their art either in Arabic (or their original national language) or in the language of their adopted new cultural environment.

Within the inter-meshing frameworks of Comparative Literature and Moving Identities Studies in the post-colonial era, the phenomenon of Arab diaspora writers, namely, expatriates and the displaced, contributes, as a promising comparative project, to facilitating the negotiation and representation of Arabic comparative studies within and outside traditional academic circles at universities. It also provides a space for a viable encounter between Arabic and International comparative literatures (East and West); considering that the literature of immigration and diaspora is an academically and scholarly appealing topic for comparatists worldwide.

- Examples of newly developing academic Arabic comparative literature projects subsume the dialogue of literatures within the same culture (i.e., comparing Moroccan literature written in classical Arabic and Tamazight), and the project of establishing a link between Culture and Sustainable Development.

## **Overarching Objectives**

1. The facilitation of dialogue between Arab and International researchers in the field of Comparative Literature via:

a. The identification and introduction of Arabic contribution and achievement in the field of comparative literature in a collective critical work with both Arab and International contributors.

b. The translation into English of appraised Arabic critical work and research in the field of comparative literature.

c. Holding a biennial conference in an Arabic or international university which provides a chance for exchange of ideas among Arab and international comparatists, and which deals with topics that

pertain to the relation of Arabic Culture with various manifestations of human cultures.

d. Bolstering relations between Comparative Literature Departments at universities in the Arab world and other universities and academic institutions and universities worldwide where researchers are involved in studies related to modern and classic Arabic culture.

2. Promoting emerging critical approaches and methods in comparative literary studies that characterize the Arabic cultural scene, namely, transculturality : the dialogue of literatures across national borders (and within the same culture) and the literatures of moving identities (literature of migration and exile), the transregional and transhistorical flow/travel of ideas, concepts, theories, movements across languages and media, domestication and foreignization in Literary Translation Studies, and other cultivated, developing or emerging research interests generated by recent interaction with international updates in the critical and literary field like those related to cultural production/industry, mediality (the tourist imaginary, animation and comics, etc), discursivity, digital humanities.

A series of coordinated workshops and lectures dealing with the aforementioned are to be publicized and held online.

3. Publications will begin with a Newsletter by January 2025, then, a Journal by April 2025 (tentative). The peer-reviewed biannual journal will be dedicated to Arabic comparative literature, theory and practice, its multifarious encounters with world literature from an interdisciplinary perspective.

4. An online one-day colloquium will be announced in December 2024 to be held in April 2025.

### **Early Career Academics And Post-Graduate Students**

The ICLA Arabic Comparative Literature Standing Research Committee encourages early career academics and post-graduate students in

Comparative Literature programs to become active members in the committee's research development plan (in-progress) for researchers who are working on comparative projects either individually or collaboratively.

As one of the ICLA Research Committees, the Arabic Comparative Literature Standing Research Group is concerned with developing, enhancing, and disseminating research in Arabic comparative studies ranging from the ranks of early career academics to professional scholars in the field.

The committee will dedicate a section of its ICLA page to address prospective/already involved students/researchers in Arabic comparative literary studies. The page will provide

- short texts/videos introducing ideas, concepts, thematic concerns, new grounds, key research questions, and gaps to be filled in the field of Arabic comparative studies, etc.
- Scholarly guidelines and tips for approaching and writing comparative research in the field.
- the process of contributing to the online monthly newsletter and biannual journal of Arabic Comparative Literature Standing Research Committee.

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