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From Comparative Literature to Comparative Cultural Criticism – Theories and Trajectories–

من الأدب المقارن إلى النقد الثقافي المقارن – النظريات والمسارات-

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Abstract:

Comparative cultural criticism is an interdisciplinary field that explores cultural phenomena, such as literature, art, cinema, media, and discourse, across cultural, national, linguistic, and temporal boundaries. It emphasizes interactions, exchanges, mutual influences, and cultural differences, while remaining attentive to the historical, political, and social contexts in which these phenomena emerge. In Western contexts, comparative cultural criticism developed as part of an internal evolution within Western intellectual traditions and their self-reflective critique. In contrast, within the Arab world, it has been shaped by a broader renaissance project aimed at fostering self-understanding and engaging with global cultures from a position of dignity and independence.

The future of the field requires moving beyond the binary opposition between the West and the Arab world. A multipolar framework is needed, one in which all cultures offer their unique perspectives and comparative cultural criticism becomes a true site of dialogue, recognizing plurality while preserving cultural specificity. This vision entails that Arab critics take bold theoretical initiatives rather than limiting themselves to repetition or defense. It also calls upon Western critics to embrace epistemic humility and to acknowledge the diverse centers from which knowledge is generated.

Keywords: comparative cultural criticism – cultural phenomena – Western critics – Arab critics – culture.

الملخص باللغة العربية:

النقد الثقافي المقارن هو حقل معرفي متعدد التخصصات يدرس الظواهر الثقافية مثل الأدب، الفن، السينما، الإعلام، الخطابات وغيرها. عبر حدود ثقافية أو قومية أو لغوية أو زمنية. يركز على التفاعلات، التبادلات، التأثيرات المتبادلة، والاختلافات بين الثقافات، مع الاهتمام بسياقاتها التاريخية والسياسية والاجتماعية. ينبع النقد الثقافي المقارن في الغرب من ديناميكية داخلية في تطور المعرفة الغربية ونقدها لذاتها، بينما في العالم العربي فهو جزء من مشروع نهضوي لفهم الذات والتفاعل مع العالم من موقع كرامة واستقلال.

المستقبل يكمن في تجاوز ثنائية الغرب والعرب نحو نموذج متعدد الأقطاب، حيث تساهم كل ثقافة برؤاها، ويتحول النقد الثقافي المقارن إلى فضاء حوار حقيقي يعترف بالتعددية ولا يلغي الخصوصيات، هذا يتطلب من النقاد العرب جرأة في الابتكار النظري وعدم الاكتفاء بالنقل أو الدفاع، ومن النقاد الغربيين تواضعا معرفيا واعترافا بتعدد مراكز إنتاج المعرفة. الكلمات المفتاحية: النقد الثقافي المقارن، الظواهر الثقافية، النقاد الغربيين، النقاد العرب، الثقافة.

1. INTRODUCTION

More than ever, there is an imperative to engage with other civilizations, particularly the more developed ones, in order to benefit from their experiences. Advancement and progress are rarely achieved in isolation; rather, they often result from cross-cultural engagement. Historical examples underscore this point: Arab civilization experienced significant growth and intellectual flourishing, especially during the Abbasid period, through interactions with Greek and Indian civilizations. Similarly, Western

civilization built its foundations and rose to prominence through engagements with earlier civilizations, including the Arab world. It is difficult to identify a civilization that has evolved entirely in isolation from others.

In today's world, globalization plays a pivotal role in fostering proximity between civilizations, both culturally and socially. This process of convergence has been facilitated by advances in communication technologies and by increased travel, particularly among intellectuals and

scholars, across countries and regions. The world has, in many ways, become a global village, perhaps even an open house.

Amid this ongoing process of cultural interaction and exchange, the concept of “comparative cultural criticism” emerged. It is grounded in an epistemological foundation and humanistic philosophies that allow for the application of a deliberate and reflective critical methodology. This field has come to encompass areas such as technological narratives, science fiction, visual culture, postcolonial discourse, feminist theory, globalization, and more.

The intellectual roots of comparative cultural criticism can be traced to a group of prominent thinkers and critics, including Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Theodor Adorno, Umberto Eco, Antonio Gramsci, among others.

Several contemporary Arab critics were influenced by these Western intellectuals. Notable examples include Ghunaymi Hilal, Edward Said, and Hussam Al-Khatib, as well as other figures associated with comparative cultural criticism. These scholars have explored shared cultural patterns among civilizations and societies, aiming to preserve elements that contribute to the advancement of civilization and to reject those that hinder it.

This article adopts both descriptive and historical approaches to address several central questions, which are summarized as follows:

- What is comparative cultural criticism?
- Who are its leading figures in the West?
- What influence has comparative cultural criticism had on contemporary Arab culture?
- Who are the most prominent Arab scholars in this field?

2- Defining Comparative Cultural Criticism:

Comparative cultural criticism may be viewed as a human-centered mode of critical inquiry. One of its principal aims is to explore the dynamics of influence and reception within human literatures, as well as the ways these elements manifest across global epistemic systems. It also

seeks to identify and examine the shared characteristics among these literatures. Comparative cultural criticism has been defined as “the study of literature with a global character, that is, literature whose influence and resonance transcend the boundaries of its national language, while taking into account the points of convergence or divergence among them, whether within a specific region of different literatures or across the whole world”.¹

This field promotes interaction among literatures and cultures, fostering closer relations among peoples through their intellectual and cultural heritage. Greek literature, for example, distinguished itself through its capacity to assimilate and reframe what it borrowed from other civilizations with a distinctively Greek identity. As stated, “the Greek miracle is the miracle of cultural collision between the Greeks and Eastern culture; Homer’s epics emerged in the Eastern colonies along the coasts of Asia Minor, reaching the West through Eastern political refugees fleeing the Persians, who carried Eastern culture with them and disseminated it in the lands to which they came. It interacted with their culture and thereby produced a major impact on the structure of that culture and tinted it with its own color. Western culture, in particular, began with the publication of ‘Homer’s’ works in the form of a book. The interaction of Greek literature with others is also evident in the translations of the ‘Odyssey’ and the ‘Iliad’ into the languages of the world”.²

One of the most precise definitions in this field was provided by Guyard, a student of Marie Carré, who stated: “Comparative literature is the history of international literary relations. The comparative researcher stands at linguistic and national borders and observes the exchange of themes, ideas, books, and emotions between two literatures or several literatures”.³

Based on this traditional French perspective, comparative literature is characterized by several core features:

- It is a branch of literary history and functions as a complement to it. Over time, it gained independence, not only

from literary history but also from literary criticism and theory.

- Comparative literature was significantly influenced by the historicist framework of the nineteenth century and by the era's positivist philosophy.
- The discipline is not merely about balancing or juxtaposing literatures; rather, comparison serves as an essential methodological entry point. It allows the researcher to identify similarities and correspondences, or differences and divergences, between literary works.
- In its traditional formulation, comparative literature emphasizes linguistic difference as a prerequisite for comparative inquiry. This requirement later attracted criticism, with some arguing that it was imposed "in order to serve dependency, rather than to serve differences among peoples"⁴.
- The discipline focuses on national literature and national language, treating national literature as the central axis around which comparative studies are conducted.
- It is particularly concerned with tracing concrete connections and historical relationships between literatures, making literary history its foundational pillar.
- Comparative literature evaluates the degree of a writer's originality, or lack thereof, and examines the effects of influence in shaping literary production. In this context, studies of influence evolve into a form of literary criticism.
- Influence does not always imply convergence with the source of influence; in some cases, the relationship between the influencing and the influenced parties may be one of resistance or opposition.
- Influence studies are inherently complex. Consequently, Carré and Guyard placed substantial emphasis on reception studies and the concept of creative reception.
- The scope of comparative research is broad, encompassing fields such as linguistic studies, literary genres, themes

and myths, the influence of individual writers across literatures, source studies, intellectual currents and literary movements, and imagology (the study of cultural representations and images). This latter domain, which has emerged more recently within comparative literature, owes much of its development to travel literature, which serves as a key reservoir of knowledge that one people may use to understand another.

Comparative cultural criticism, in turn, represents a modern critical approach that integrates the mechanisms of comparison and cultural analysis. It focuses on the relationships among various literatures and cultures, while also analyzing discourses, practices, and cultural representations as systems that generate meaning and power. In essence, it involves the study of cultural phenomena across a single cultural or national boundary, not solely to compare them formally, but to investigate the cultural, social, historical, and political contexts that gave rise to them, as well as the dynamics through which they interact and exert mutual influence.

2-1 Objectives of Comparative Cultural Criticism:

A) Uncovering mechanisms of power:

Identifying structures of power and domination, whether colonial, patriarchal, or Western-centric, that are embedded within cultural and literary discourses.

B) Deconstructing centralisms:

Challenging cultural centralisms such as Eurocentrism and Western centrism, and giving prominence to voices from the "margin" and the "marginalized," including women, colonized populations, and minorities.

C) Understanding cultural representations:

Analyzing how the culture of the "Other" is depicted in the texts of a different culture and uncovering the stereotypes associated with such representations.

D) Studying cultural cross-fertilization:

Tracing processes of influence and reception, translation, exchange, and cultural

interaction, and examining how meanings are generated within the spaces where cultures intersect.

E) Linking the text to its broader context:

Connecting literary texts to their wider cultural frameworks, including philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology, and media studies.

2-2 Characteristics and distinguishing features:

A) Methodological pluralism:

It is not restricted to a single methodology; rather, it draws upon and benefits from a variety of approaches, including deconstruction, semiotics, discourse analysis, among others.

B) Crossing disciplines:

It transcends rigid academic divisions between disciplines.

C) Attention to the margin:

It assigns greater significance to marginalized cultures and social groups that have been neglected by dominant discourses.

D) A critical impulse:

Comparative cultural criticism aims to question and dismantle the concepts and assumptions that are perceived as “natural” within a given culture.

E) Contextuality:

It rejects reading texts in isolation and insists on interpreting them within their cultural, historical, and political contexts.

2-3 Comparative Cultural Criticism in the West:

The nineteenth century marked the foundational phase of this form of criticism, particularly in France. French academic institutions concentrated on linking French literature with neighboring literatures, aiming to unify and consolidate European cultural identity. This initiative led to the establishment of the *Journal of Comparative Literature* in France, which brought together numerous leading French comparatists. The French school played a pioneering role in shaping the field of comparative studies, successfully extending its influence and defining comparative approaches both

theoretically and in practice with its own distinctive character.⁵

In early 1954, comparative cultural criticism underwent a significant structural transformation, prompting the creation of an international association for comparative cultural literature in the Italian city of Venice, a historical crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures. One year later, an international conference was held in the same city, bringing together comparatists to discuss the future of comparative literature. This conference marked the first truly global emergence of the field, gathering prominent figures from Europe, America, and the East to exchange perspectives, theories, and ideas, and to contemplate the future of the discipline. The event took place within an international context shaped by intense ideological confrontation between the capitalist West and the socialist bloc led by the Soviet Union, as well as between colonial powers and anti-colonial liberation movements.⁶

Comparative literature, in several respects, was deeply influenced by the German school, which enriched it with significant insights into German folk culture, an element contributing to the cohesion of German society. “Alongside the German school, we also find another school that is no less important or influential: the Slavic school, which endowed comparative literature with a distinctive imprint consistent with the Marxist view of culture and with the specificities of Soviet cultural life. It was able to break Western centralism and restore recognition to diverse human literatures, away from hierarchy and exclusion.”⁷

The development of comparative cultural criticism continues to expand across world literatures. In the final quarter of the twentieth century, the field absorbed new contributions from various domains of knowledge, most notably from cultural studies.

2-4 Some of its most prominent figures in the West:

The twentieth century, particularly the 1990s, witnessed the rise of numerous inquiries regarding the aims and scope of comparative cultural criticism, the nature of its methodologies, its relationship with adjacent disciplines, and even its relevance as a key branch of literary studies. Among the critics who seriously addressed these questions are Steven Tötösy, Gayatri Spivak, Susan Bassnett, and others.

A) Steven Tötösy (Steven Totosoy):

The American scholar Steven Tötösy is recognized as one of the prominent academic figures in the field of comparative literature and cultural studies. His research interests span a broad spectrum of topics closely related to literature, cinema, and new media. He is also engaged in the study of literary history and bibliography, postcolonial studies, audience reception, and the cultures of Europe, the United States, and Canada, in addition to ethnic minority studies and conflict resolution.

Tötösy has been an active contributor across various media platforms and is credited with revitalizing and advancing the theory of comparative literature by evolving it into the field of comparative cultural studies. He held a professorship at the University of Alberta and served as director of a research institute specializing in literary studies. Additionally, he worked as an editor for the *Revue canadienne de littérature comparée* (Canadian Journal of Comparative Literature). His published works include texts on comparative cultural studies, a recently issued compilation of studies in comparative literature, world literatures, and comparative cultural studies, as well as the volume *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, and Application*.⁸

In this book, Tötösy aims to redefine the scope and function of comparative literature.

B) Gayatri Spivak (Gayatri Spivak):

Gayatri Spivak is an activist, philosopher, literary critic, and translator. Born in Calcutta, India, she holds a professorship at Columbia University in the United States. Her work focuses on the movement of texts, ideas, and forms of authority across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Spivak's

contribution to comparative cultural criticism can be outlined as follows:

- **Deconstructing Eurocentrism (deconstructing eurocentrism):** Spivak critiques Western discourse, demonstrating how, even in its seemingly "humanistic" or "liberatory" forms, it often perpetuates colonial hierarchies.

- **Cross-cultural reading (cross-cultural reading):** She advocates for the simultaneous reading of "Western" and "non-Western" texts. This method is not limited to surface-level comparison but aims to reveal the power structures embedded in the act of comparison itself. She applied this framework in her analyses of English and Indian literature, addressing how British novels represent colonized subjects, how Indian writers use the English language, and how these factors shape their discourses.

- **The role of the intellectual (the role of the intellectual):** Spivak emphasizes that the intellectual must engage in constant self-criticism and recognize their role within systems of power that may contribute to the silencing of subaltern voices. She argues that the intellectual should seek to disrupt the structures that maintain subaltern marginalization and strive to foster the conditions necessary for transformation.

- **Translation as a political act (translation as a political act):** As a seasoned translator, Spivak argues that translation extends beyond linguistic transference; it is a negotiation between languages and cultures. She stresses the importance of prioritizing the source language by interpreting the text within its own cultural and linguistic framework, resisting the imposition of concepts from the target language. This approach serves as a form of resistance to cultural hegemony.

Spivak asserts that authentic comparative cultural criticism is not merely a juxtaposition of two cultures. Rather, it is a critical inquiry into the underlying conditions that make such comparison possible, as well as the power structures and authorities that sustain or inhibit it.

C) Susan Bassnett (Susan Edna Bassnett):

Susan Bassnett is a British literary critic and theorist, born on 21 October 1945. Her scholarly work focuses on comparative literature and translation studies. She studied English and Italian at the University of Manchester and earned her PhD from Lancaster University. She served two terms as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Warwick, where, in 1985, she established the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies.

Her most significant intellectual contributions may be summarized as follows:

- **Defending the autonomy of Translation Studies:**

Bassnett is recognized as one of the foundational figures of "Translation Studies" as a distinct academic discipline, independent from its traditional categorization as a subsidiary branch of comparative literature.

- **Linking translation to cultural context:**

In works such as *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, she stresses that translation is not merely a process of textual transference, but an act of cultural negotiation and exchange.

- **A critical vision of comparative literature:**

In *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Bassnett advocates moving beyond Eurocentric paradigms by expanding the field to include non-European literatures and by relating literary evolution to issues of identity and national culture.

3- The Impact of Comparative Cultural Criticism among Arabs:

This field is considered one of the most dynamic, and simultaneously most contentious, critical areas in the contemporary Arab intellectual context, as it directly engages with questions of identity, existence, and modernity that remain central concerns.

The roots of comparative cultural criticism in the Arab world can be traced to the writings of Taha Hussein, especially in *On Pre-Islamic Poetry*, where he argued for the application of Western critical methodology to Arab cultural heritage, a stance that

provoked considerable intellectual controversy. This approach is also reflected in the work of Mohammed Arkoun, who sought to deconstruct religious discourse through Western critical frameworks, most notably in *Critique of Islamic Reason*.

The 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation of Arab critics who adopted this orientation with greater analytical focus. Their contributions addressed several key dimensions of Arab comparative cultural criticism, such as the following:

- **The question of identity and the Other:**

This line of inquiry examined how Arab identity is formed in relation to the West, and how Arab discourse represents the Western Other, ranging from alienation and assimilation to, in some instances, antagonism.

- **The problematics of center and margin:**

These critics explored literatures of former colonies, minority literatures, and women's literature, emphasizing the voices and narratives excluded from dominant literary canons.

- **Heritage and modernity:**

This area of focus addressed how Arab heritage, across its various textual forms, including narrative, jurisprudential, and theological, can be reinterpreted through critically informed cultural readings that reveal internal mechanisms of authority and control.

- **Orientalism and reverse Orientalism:**

This involved analyzing Arab responses to Orientalist discourse, particularly those that reproduced binary oppositions such as self/other and good/evil, which they ostensibly aimed to challenge.

Cultural critics such as Izz al-Din al-Manasra, Hussam al-Khatib, and Ahmed Abdelaziz have interpreted the evolving challenges facing comparative literature since the 1990s as evidence of a renewed crisis. In response, they have proposed theoretical and methodological alternatives for advancing the discipline within Arab

universities. These proposals reflect the conditions of a time marked by diminishing boundaries and intensifying cultural interconnection.⁹

Globalization has played a central role in the expansion of comparative literature across Arab academic institutions:

“Comparative literature enters the twenty-first century, the century of globalization, amid loud questions and debates about defining its method, its logic, its domain, its future, its research tools, and its relationships with other systems. Hardly any other epistemic system rivals it in this respect, particularly in the world of the human sciences and, more broadly, the world of science as a whole. This may be attributed to the relative newness of this system and to the eruption of disagreements and disputes within it and around it before it has reached maturity and consolidated its foundations. Yet it may also stem from the nature of its methodological and epistemic extensions into diverse forms of contemporary knowledge, such that its roots and branches are powerfully shaken by the major tremors affecting organically adjacent systems, especially literary criticism and literary theory.”¹⁰

Historically, Arab intellectual life has been rich in comparative engagements between Arabic literature and the literatures of both Islamic and non-Islamic civilizations. During its golden age, Islamic civilization functioned as a cultural crucible in which diverse civilizational elements, Indian, Persian, Greek, Byzantine, Egyptian, and others, were fused into a unified cultural system.

3- Pioneers of Comparative Cultural Criticism among Arabs:

Arab intellectuals came into contact with Western culture and were influenced by its literatures and diverse artistic forms. This influence was subsequently embodied through a process of acculturation that contributed to an Arab civilizational renaissance, whose early manifestations appeared in comparative studies that generated reciprocal influence and interaction between the literature of the self and that of the Other.

Among the most prominent Arab comparatists who enriched the Arab intellectual tradition through their scholarly contributions is the critic Ghunaymi Hilal, who is regarded as one of the founders of comparative literature in the Arab world. He received his academic training at the Sorbonne under a distinguished group of leading scholars in the field, including V. Tieghem. His book *Comparative Literature* represents a foundational milestone in the theorization of comparative cultural criticism within Arabic literary studies.

The thematic structure of this work reflects French premises in comparative literature, grounded in the notion of European cultural unity, beginning with Greek and Roman civilizations, passing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, extending into modernity, and culminating in the twentieth century.¹¹

Through this approach, Ghunaymi Hilal referred directly to Arab literary heritage while largely overlooking the broader Arab and Eastern contributions to the formation of a shared human literary legacy that is no less significant than its Western counterpart.

Jamal al-Din Ben al-Sheikh is also among the major figures who contributed to the enrichment and advancement of this field. He founded a journal dedicated to comparative literature entitled *Algerian Notebooks in Comparative Literature*, through which he sought to promote comparative cultural criticism within Arabic literary studies in a renewed and innovative spirit.

Several contemporary Arab critics worked to integrate Western culture into Arab intellectual life, drawing upon academic experiences acquired at Western universities. Among these figures are Taha Hussein, Mohamed Mandour, and Ghunaymi Hilal. Their efforts yielded substantial intellectual outcomes that exerted a profound influence on subsequent generations, including Izz al-Din al-Manasra, who produced numerous works in this domain, such as *Pygmalion between Bernard Shaw and Tawfiq al-Hakim*.

Izz al-Din al-Manasra was a Palestinian poet and critic, born in 1946 in the Galilee Mountains. He obtained a Licentiate degree in Arabic Language and Human Sciences from the Faculty of Dar al-Ulum at Cairo University in 1968, earned a specialization certificate in modern Bulgarian literature from Sofia University, and completed his PhD in comparative literature at the same institution in 1981. His life was marked by mobility across several countries, including Palestine, Bulgaria, Algeria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan, and Egypt. His intellectual output includes numerous poetic and critical works, among them:

- *Palestinian Visual Art*, Beirut, 1975.
- *Notes on Israeli Cinema*, Beirut, 1975.
- *Hiziyya*, Amman, 1990.
- (In French) A selection of his poetry entitled *Radhadh al-Lugha* ("Spray of Language"), translated by Mohammed Mouhoub and Saad al-Din al-Yamani, Dar Skambit, France, 1977.
- (In Persian) A selection of his poetry entitled *Sahr Ayyub* ("The Melting of Job"), translated by Musa Bidj, Tehran, 1995.

He contributed to the establishment of the Institute of Folk Cultures for master's students at the University of Tlemcen in Algeria and served there as a professor from 1987 to 1991. Prior to that, he held a professorship at the University of Constantine between 1983 and 1987, during which time he founded the Department of Comparative Literature at that institution.¹²

He later authored a significant book titled *Acculturation and Comparative Criticism* (1988), in which he sought to understand the main theoretical trajectories of comparative literature as they appeared in works translated into Arabic. His aim was to identify forms of intertextuality within Arab intellectual discourse using the same comparative methodology, not only to reveal the remnants of these ideas within subsequent Arab theoretical frameworks, but also to lay the foundation for further developments in comparative criticism.¹³

Among contemporary Arab critics who contributed to the dissemination of comparative cultural criticism in the Arab world is Saïd Allouache. In his book *Components of Comparative Literature*, he examined the substance of the field, its thematic concerns, and the methodologies by which it is approached. Through this work, he made a notable contribution to the evolution and advancement of comparative criticism within modern Arab cultural discourse.

Hussam al-Khatib also played a key role in advancing comparative criticism in the Arab intellectual sphere through his book *Horizons of Comparative Literature*. In this work, he compared Arabic and Western literatures, highlighting points of convergence and exploring the mutual influence they exerted in terms of ideas, methodologies, and conceptual frameworks. Another major figure in this field is the Algerian critic Hafnaoui Baali, who engaged deeply with comparative cultural criticism. He argues that cultural studies has disrupted the traditional centrality of the text, no longer viewing it merely as a self-contained entity, nor assuming that its social impact can be automatically deduced from its content.

Instead, the text is approached in terms of what it actualizes and what it reveals about the cultural systems from which it emerges. In this framework, the text becomes a tool or medium, nothing more than raw material used to examine certain recurring structures, such as narrative systems, ideological frameworks, regimes of representation, and other elements that can be abstracted from the text. The goal of cultural studies, in this view, is not the text itself, but the social systems of meaning that manifest in various positions, including textual ones.

Baali is widely regarded as one of the leading critics and intellectuals to have made substantial contributions to comparative cultural criticism, particularly in the context of Arab and Islamic culture and its interactions with the West. His most notable contributions include the following:

- **Critique of Western centralism:**

Hafnaoui Baali worked to deconstruct Western centralism in critical and literary studies. He advocated for a critical approach that respects the cultural and civilizational specificities of the Arab and Islamic worlds, while maintaining an engaged but discerning dialogue with Western theoretical models, without adopting them uncritically.

- **Focusing on acculturation and identity:**

Baali was deeply engaged with questions of acculturation and identity in the context of globalization. He examined how cultural identity is shaped in the Arab world through interaction with other cultures, while exploring ways to preserve distinctiveness alongside openness.

- **Bridging heritage and modernity:**

He sought to construct a critical framework that integrates the legacy of Arab-Islamic literary criticism, including rhetoric, hermeneutics, and prosody, with modern critical theories. Through comparative readings, he illuminated both points of convergence and divergence between classical and contemporary approaches.

- **Critique of Orientalist discourse:**

In his writings, Baali addressed the critique of Orientalist discourse and the stereotypical portrayals of Arab and Islamic culture. He called for comparative critical readings that uncover the representational mechanisms in Western literary and intellectual traditions concerning the East.

- **Dialogue among civilizations:**

He promoted a critical model grounded in civilizational dialogue rather than confrontation, emphasizing shared concepts and universal human values as platforms for intercultural engagement.

- **Comparative studies in literature:**

Baali conducted comparative analyses of Arabic and foreign literary texts, illustrating how cultural context influences the construction of meaning. He demonstrated that comparative criticism can serve as a bridge toward deeper understanding of creative expression across cultures.

- **Grounding an Arab cultural-critical project:**

He contributed to formulating an Arab cultural-critical project that combines authenticity with contemporaneity. This project places particular emphasis on analyzing Arab cultural discourse within its historical and social context.

4- Conclusion:

Comparative cultural criticism has gained significant attention and traction within Arab universities in general, and Algerian universities in particular. Numerous cultural journals have dedicated special issues to comparative literature, and a variety of clubs focused on this specialization have been established. These platforms have played an important role in promoting awareness and advancing epistemological criticism relevant to the contemporary individual. Among the most important findings reached are the following:

- The term “comparative literature” emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century and immediately generated considerable scholarly debate.
- Comparative literature serves as a foundational discipline for the study of literary relations. It is a field that transcends national borders, enabling comparisons among various national literatures written in different languages.
- Arab critics have engaged with this emerging field to varying degrees, depending on their respective intellectual environments, particularly those shaped by Anglo-Saxon or Francophone traditions.
- Comparative cultural criticism is not solely an academic method; it constitutes a critical orientation and an intellectual project aimed at:
 - breaking down cultural isolation;
 - understanding the world in all its complexity and interconnectedness;
 - fostering genuine and equitable intercultural dialogue;
 - critiquing hegemonic and monolithic discourses.

- Comparative cultural criticism is a dynamic and continuously evolving field, particularly relevant in today's globalized, digital era where cultures intersect, interact, and conflict with unprecedented intensity and speed.

In conclusion, it is essential to devote serious attention to comparative cultural criticism due to its critical role in enhancing understanding among human cultures and

promoting rapprochement through processes of acculturation. This can be achieved by incorporating the field more fully into university curricula across the Arab world, and by organizing national and international conferences and symposia that introduce, explore, and disseminate the principles and practices of comparative cultural criticism.

1. Citations

¹³ See: Izz al-Din Al-Manasra, *Acculturation and Comparative Criticism*, 1st ed., Al-Sa'il for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 2015, p. 13.

¹ Al-Sayyid Al-Iraqi, *Comparative Literature: Method and Application*, 1st ed., Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, Cairo, 1981, p. 18.

² Hafnaoui Baali, *An Introduction to the Theory of Comparative Cultural Criticism*, 1st ed., Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 2007, p. 11.

³ Guyard, Marius-François, *Comparative Literature*, trans. Muhammad Ghallab, Arab Statement Committee, Cairo, 1954.

⁴ Izz al-Din Al-Manasra, *A Manifesto of Comparative Literature: Problematics of Borders*, Proceedings of the First Forum of Arab Comparatists, University Publications Bureau, Algeria, 1982.

⁵ See: Haidar Mahmoud, *Comparative Literature and the Requirements of the Age*, 1st ed., Markaz Abbadi, Sana'a, 2006, p. 60.

⁶ See: Al-Sa'id Alloush, *Schools of Comparative Literature: A Methodological Study*, 1st ed., Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, 1987, p. 57.

⁷ Ghunaymi Hilal, *Comparative Literature*, Dar Nahdat Misr for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, p. 37.

⁸ Purdue University Library, CLCWeb resource: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>

⁹ Al-Tahir Ahmad Makki, *Comparative Literature: Its Origins, Development, and Methodologies*, p. 29.

¹⁰ Ahmad Darwish, *The Theory of Comparative Literature and Its Manifestations in Arabic Literature*, p. 124.

¹¹ Ghunaymi Hilal, *Comparative Literature*, Dar Nahdat Misr for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, p. 37.

¹² Ahmad Sharbit et al., *Dictionary of Arab Criticism Figures in the Twentieth Century*, Comparative and General Literature Laboratory, Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba.