

Writing Across Borders

Borders have been one of the defining features of our human existence throughout modernity. Crossing them is an area of interest to humans in all walks of life whether they are ordinary people, politicians, academics, diplomats, historians, psychologists, biographers and autobiographers, literary figures and critics and more. The Fourteenth International Symposium on Comparative Literature held on “Writing Across Borders” in November 2018 at The Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, received many participants who have been eager to examine borders in a multitude of literary forms across the entire modern period. As the Call for Papers and the Programme indicate,

“Writing Across Borders,” is particularly relevant to the current state of affairs. Borders are not merely dividing lines, but rather ambiguous paths where identities are constantly broken and reassembled. Physical, imaginary and psychological borders in language, literature, linguistics and the arts--visual and performing--create a global frontier that deepens cross-disciplinary dialogues. In an era where technology and social media are claimed to help in breaking/dissolving boundaries and creating a unified globe, borders still exist. Admittedly, attempts at crossing existing borders are constantly made, sometimes with great success, other times with utter failure. Yet, it is still a world where barriers and borders of all sorts are constructed, reconstructed, or deconstructed. Intersections of different kinds of borders such as those of ethnicity, class and gender are among the prominent features of our world, and so are different forms of interdisciplinarity and multimodality.

In this issue of *Cairo Studies in English*, only a few of the papers received by the members of the organizing committee have been published in this volume. Many have been published in several Egyptian and International venues, bringing participants’ contributions to a larger audience and allowing *CSE* to accept further contributions from concerned researchers with borders.

At the crossroads of modernity, Mahmoud Khalifa interrogates the positionality of the Moriscos in the early modern Iberian Peninsula within Miguel de Cervantes' prototypical novel and Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī's travel narrative. The fluidity of borders at the dawn of modernity captured by Khalifa completely vanishes in the twentieth-century modern Palestinian experience in the Levant. Four papers detail the plight of the unrealized Palestinian nation state in an array of literary works. Lamis Ragaa Al-Nakkash deals with how Palestinians have been "displaced" and "crossed borders again and again, literally and metaphorically" leading them to identity crises and trauma. Although Zainab Saeed El-Mansi also addresses the 1948 Nakba, she chooses two narratives that blend fiction with nonfiction. In the case of Khaled Mostafa Karam, he discusses texts that deal with Palestinians and Israelis from the point of view of the self and the other. Sahar Saad Elmougy raises an interesting question in the title of her chapter when she asks, "Memories at War or Memories in Continuum?" regarding "the thorny area of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

Female characters who negotiate the internal regimes of oppressions imposed by patriarchy are foregrounded in Silvia Elias' paper entitled "The Interlocking Matrix of Oppression," and Hala Zakariya Ahmad in "Wo[e]man in the Quest for Women's Identity: Myth and Symbolism." Informed by postmodern theories of genre, Amany El-Sawy writes about Marie Jones' *A Night in November* to shed light on how a female playwright uses the carnival, humour and monodrama to reveal the multiple identities of the people of Northern Ireland. When Hala Sami chooses to focus on *Grimm's Last Fairytale* by Haydn Middleton, she is also interested in how writers weave fiction and nonfiction but this time in stories for youngsters. Other scholars in this volume establish a link between borders on the one hand and postcolonialism, immigration and the environment on the other. Lamiaa Hassan Abdulaal's chapter "It is no Longer Possible to Go Back Home" deals with the way borders inform spaces, immigrants, and indigenous populations.

Finally, it is imperative to introduce an addition to *CSE* sections intended to address the needs of Egyptian young researchers, teaching assistants, and graduate students, in the form of "Guides for Research", included under the Emerging Voices section. Hala Kamal authored an article entitled "Writing Literature Reviews for Survey Papers: A Guide for Emerging Scholars." As the title indicates, this chapter is meant to direct young researchers to fulfill a requirement for the postgraduate degrees, namely, to write a publishable literature review about the focus of the thesis. Kamal starts by giving the reader

a contextualization of the recent changes occurring to the MA and PhD requirements because of administrative decisions. In terms of borders, emerging scholars need to be reminded that serious academic work has a place beyond the borders of universities and research groups across the wider local, regional and international academic and public circles.

We hope that this issue of *Cairo Studies in English* proves to be inspiring.

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