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## Editorial

### We and Comparative Literature

The Journal of *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Art, and the Humanities* is now five years old. During this time, we have published ten issues and 144 articles. This is a specialized journal of comparative literature, meaning that it has a specific definition for comparative literature and accepts articles only in that field. Our definition is clear: first, comparative literature is not “comparative” as is commonly understood (Anushiravani 2010, 2014). Second, comparative literature is, on the one hand, the study of connections between the literatures of nations from different cultures and languages, and, on the other hand, the study of relationships between literature, art, and sciences (Remak 1968).

With this definition, our mission in the journal is straightforward. We are not looking for obvious, outdated, and repetitive influence and similarity studies, nor for Eurocentric comparative literature. The time for both trends has already expired. We see literature as a global phenomenon that knows no boundaries and seeks to explore literary and cultural connections and to understand and recognize the other. We believe that recognizing the other, without any pre-judgement or prejudice, leads to cultural interaction and respect, and ultimately to peace, friendship, and coexistence (Wellek 1958; Jost 1979).

In today’s complex and interconnected world, all sciences are interconnected in such a way that it is not possible to understand one without the other. Issues such as the environment, migration, economics, agriculture, politics, security, health and hygiene, and literature cannot be properly assessed individually and separately from other sciences. Knowledge management has been based on interdisciplinary studies in the last two centuries. From medical sciences to technical, experimental, and human sciences, all can be analyzed accurately with an interdisciplinary perspective and teamwork (Anushiravani 2013; 2013).



In the field of literary studies, intratextual analyses have been giving way to extratextual analyses for several decades. The analysis of the social, political, discursive, and cultural context of literary texts has taken precedence over the study of the form and literary techniques. Literature is not created in a vacuum. Literature emerges from the dominant discourses of society, either consolidating and reinforcing them or resisting and subverting them (Foucault 1966, 1969, 1980).

Language, which was once simply a means of communication, has itself become a complex issue in interdisciplinary studies. Saussure's theory of signifier and signified (Saussure 1916), Lévi-Strauss' theory of the relationship of language and myth (Lévi-Strauss 1971), Wittgenstein's concept of language-games and picture theory (Wittgenstein 1953), and Lacan's theory of the unconscious and language (Lacan 1970/1) have all sought to explore the hidden layers of language. Language is no longer a means of expressing thought, but rather it is language that gives form and meaning to our thinking and external reality. We are imprisoned in the prison of language (Fredric Jameson 1972, Greenblatt 1982, 2007, 2011; Greenblatt & Callagher 2001). Words have no meaning separate from the context of speech. Meaning; is created in the use of language, so words no longer have fixed meaning Their role depends entirely on social discourses and power relations (Fairclough 1989).

Similarly, literature is defined differently in the contemporary era. Traditional definitions have gradually given way to new definitions and applications, and every written, audio, visual, interactive text, television series and commercial ads are considered part of culture and literature. Digital technology and artificial intelligence have had a tremendous impact on literature, humanities and arts and have revolutionized the production and reading in these fields (Hoggart 1969; Hall 1980; Williams 1958 & 1980; Totosy de Zepetnek 1998 & 2003; During 2004; During & Anderson 2025; Storey 2023 & 2024). Genres, theories and approaches to literary criticism have increased, and interdisciplinary studies have been considered not only in the academia but also at the level of macro-policymaking and governance.

Interdisciplinary study of literature, which has long been associated with the humanities and arts, such as philosophy, sociology, history, and painting, have taken on new dimensions with the emergence of new technologies. Creative film adaptations and video games of literary works have flourished, and new theories have been proposed

for the criticism of such texts (Hutcheon 1980, 1985 & 2006; Stam 2000, 2004; Sanders 2005, 2007; Elliott 2003 & 2020; Leitch 2007 & 2025; Hanssen 2006; Bruhn & Gjelsvik & Hanssen 2013). The analysis of issues such as human rights, minority rights, animal rights, climate change, natural and human disasters such as the effects of war, earthquakes, devastating storms, floods and droughts, hunger, neo-slavery and cultural decolonization, racism, gender studies, ecofeminism, fundamentalism and chauvinism require an interdisciplinary and critical perspective (Meeker 1979; Estok 2001; Bate 1991; Collins 1990, 2004, 2006; Gerhardt 2023; Bruhn & Salmose 2023).

Despite scientific advances, the tensions and conflicts of today's world have added to psychological and spiritual disorder and drastically uprooted the lives of contemporary humans. For example, trauma study is a broad field in the interdisciplinary studies of literature, psychology and sociology (Balaev 2014; Tal 1996; Caruth 1995, 1996, 2013; Migration and diaspora are not just a political or demographic or economic or scientific phenomenon. This problem has deeper and multifaceted dimensions. The psychological or traumatic impact of diaspora, such as cultural homelessness, loss of identity, fundamentalism, displacement and disillusionment, can only be analyzed and recognized with an interdisciplinary approach (Anderson 1991, 1998, 2013; Brubaker 1998, 2012; Gilroy 2004, 2012; Naimou 2015).

Kafka's novel *The Trial* is undoubtedly a good example for an interdisciplinary study of literature and law. Legal texts and what happens in courts, including speeches of the judge, the accused, and the lawyer, literature and censorship laws or copyright in film adaptations, can be analyzed from the perspective of literary criticism and rhetoric. Rhetoric itself is mixed with politics. Legal texts, like literature, are based on interpretation and, like literary texts, have paradoxical meanings and allusions. Literature and Medicine analyses literature and the body, literature and epidemics, narrative in medicine, narratives of pain and death, literature and disability, humanities and medicine, trauma studies, mental illness and medicine in literature, and the effects of therapeutic literature. David Rieff's novel *Swimming in a Sea of Death* (2008) is the memoir of the son of Susan Sontag (1933-2004), an American novelist. In this novel, Rieff narrates the pain, suffering, and death of his mother, who suffered from leukemia, in detail and describing the medical treatments, and with the feelings of a

son witnessing the gradual death of his mother (Elsner and Pietrzak-Franger 2024; Stagno & Blackie 2019; Jones & Wear & Friedman 2014).

The relationship between literature and art has also transcended the traditional boundaries of literature and painting to literature and the visual and abstract arts. A sculpture, a photograph, a mural, a banner, a musical concert, museum objects, a cartoon all contain a world of narrative, albeit in their own language. Transmedia narratives that use digital technology and artificial intelligence are initiating new storytelling (Jenkins 2006; Ryan 1991, 2004, 2006, 2019; Ryan & Thon 2014; Thon 2016).

Unfortunately, interdisciplinary studies of comparative literature are often neglected in Iran. The boundaries between the two disciplines are often blurred. For example, themes of poverty and hunger in a novel cannot be considered literature and human rights or literature and economics, or an account of oppression and authoritarian and patriarchal societies cannot be considered literature and political sciences. Repeated criticisms based on Jung's "individuation" or the myth of Campbell's "hero's journey" are long outdated and clichés. References to postcolonial theories of Said, Baba, and Spivak usually have no erudite depth. The acquisition of national and international index for journals, which is very valuable in itself, has gradually overshadowed the scholarly merits of our academic journals. Mass production of articles has damaged their qualitative value.

Similarly, in the realm of comparative literature in Iran, some mistakenly believe that every literary researcher is inherently comparatist and, therefore, does not need specialized training in this discipline. Most Iranian literary journals, in addition to their specialized scope, also mention comparative literature to attract more articles without having the minimum requirements. When writing an article is for the sole purpose of obtaining a degree or financial advantage, quality is sacrificed, and in the absence of a systemic evaluation, the market for fake publications is flourishing. Currently, the number of specialized and non-specialized comparative literature journals in Iran is greater than the combined number of journals of several reputable foreign universities that award doctoral degrees in this field. "Each department, a journal" is our slogan. Inevitably, in such an environment, inviolable regulations and amendments take precedence over critical thinking and theoretical innovation.

Far from being ignored by policy makers, the field of comparative literature has flourished among young Iranian researchers and graduate students. To achieve this goal, the Journal of *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Art, and the Humanities* is part of a systematic and dynamic network whose components complement each other. Alongside this journal is the Comparative Literature Working Group of the Iranian Persian Language and Literature Promotion Association, which has been dedicated to teaching comparative literature at an advanced level for several years and has filled the gap in this field in Iranian higher education. This working group has been successful in establishing a new trend by taking advantage of new technology regardless of cumbersome administrative formalities. In this journal, we aim to systematically explain the theories and methods of interdisciplinary research in comparative literature for researchers who seek innovation. Therefore, in addition to research articles, we also welcome review and short articles, and book reviews. As the editor, I strongly believe that dedication and determination will pave the way. There is no other choice. Sa'di, the well-known 14<sup>th</sup> century Persian poet says, "I will sit down and be patient / I will continue my work".

### **Editor-in-Chief**

**Alireza Anushirvani**

### **Acknowledgement**

I appreciate Azadeh Bahadori for her assistance for providing the following list For Further Reading.

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