

New Trends in Literary Studies Symposium

8 April 2025

Tuesday, 10:00-16:00

Ibn Haldun University
Library Seminar Room (Ground Floor)



IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
THE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
DEPARTMENT

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

09:30
10:00-10:50

Reception

Keynote Speech:

Canons and the Future of Comparative Literature:
The Multilingual Ottoman Ocean as a Case Study

C. Ceyhun Arslan

*Assoc. Prof. of Comparative Literature
Koç University*

11:00-12:00

Posthumanism: Networking Nature, Body, and the Divine

Moderator: Emine Hoşoğlu Doğan,

Assist. Prof., Comparative Literature, Ibn Haldun University

From Divine to Digital: Tracing the Evolution of Humanity and AI in
Selected Science Fiction Films

Rajeev Kumar

PhD Candidate in Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Ibn Haldun University

In the Shadow of the Steppe: Human, Nature, and Divine Bonds

İrem Ak

BA Candidate in Psychology, Ibn Haldun University

The Fate of the Body: The Cultural and Literary Construction of the Body in
Dokuzuncu Hariciye Koşuşu and Of Human Bondage

Büşra Şengül

PhD Student in Turkish Language and Literature, Boğaziçi University

12:00-13:25

Lunch & Coffee Break

13:30-14:30

Reimagining Literary Futures with Artificial Intelligence

Moderator: Merve Aktar,

Assist. Prof., Comparative Literature, Ibn Haldun University

Readability in ChatGPT and World Literature

Nagihan Haliloğlu

Assoc. Prof. of English Language and Literature, Boğaziçi University

Possibility of a Utopian Future in the Posthuman Era:

AI Governance in Iain M. Banks' Culture Series

Hatice Kübra Yeğin

Lecturer, Ibn Haldun University

Gothic in the Digital Age:

Technological Hauntings in Jeanette Winterson's "App-arition"

Rumeysa Oğuz

Res. Assist., Ibn Haldun University

PhD Student in English Language and Literature, İstanbul University

14:40– 15:40
on

Digitalization in Literary Studies: Reconstruction, Analysis, and Visualizati-

Moderator: Mehmet Akın Bulut,

Assist. Prof., Educational Sciences, Ibn Haldun University

Digital Reconstruction of Ancient Mesopotamian Literature:

A Case Study of the Electronic Babylonian Library (eBL)

Zehra Yedidal

BA Candidate in Comparative Literature,

Ibn Haldun University

Studying Travelogues of the Past with Today's Digital Humanities Tools

Frederic Spagnoli

Prof. Dr. of Rare Book and Digital Humanities,

University of Franche-Comté

Synching Close Reading with Data-Driven Distant Reading

Merve Aktar

Assist. Prof. of Comparative Literature,

Ibn Haldun University

NEW TRENDS IN LITERARY STUDIES BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Keynote Speech:

Canons and the Future of Comparative Literature: The Multilingual
Ottoman Ocean as a Case Study

C. Ceyhan Arslan

(Assoc. Prof. of Comparative Literature, Koç University)

This paper examines Ziya Pasha's famous anthology of Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry, *Harabat* (1291 AH–1292 AH [1874/1875–1875/1876]) and the anthology's introduction that provides a comparative history of these traditions. I pay attention to two metaphors – ocean and water spring – that stand for different kinds of canon formation circumscribing the texts that literary communities choose to preserve and remember. *Harabat* asserts that Arabic, Persian and Turkish traditions mix so perfectly that they form, Ziya Pasha's words, an "ocean." I use the term "reservoir" to designate what Ziya Pasha calls an ocean because this ocean encompasses works from various "streams," that is, languages, while it also has strict boundaries as it excludes works such as folk poems or Greek texts that also circulated in the Ottoman Empire. Later, the paper demonstrates that many literary histories that were written after *Harabat* claim that Ottoman

literature could not surpass and merely imitate Arabic and Persian literatures that set the standard for eloquence and poetics. They also describe Arabic and Persian literatures as springs (*menba*) that ultimately nourish Ottoman literature. Despite key differences between *Harabat* and later literary histories, my paper also undermines the typical scholarly view that *Harabat* is one of the last examples of the classical Ottoman tradition. Although Ziya Pasha's praise for the classical Ottoman poetry may be interpreted as a reaction against modernity, *Harabat* provides new perspectives on the relationship among linguistic traditions that constitute the Ottoman literary reservoir. To demonstrate how *Harabat* refashions the poetic heritage, the paper gives a close reading of Arabic poems that *Harabat* quotes and an excerpt from its introduction that provides a history of Arabic literature.

PANEL 1:

**POSTHUMANISM:
NETWORKING NATURE,
BODY, AND THE DIVINE**

FROM DIVINE TO DIGITAL: TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY AND AI IN SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

Rajeev Kumar

PhD Candidate in Alliance of Civilization, Ibn Haldun University

This paper argues that the evolution of humanity from its divine origins to the digital age is a continuum shaped by a metaphysical and technological quest for transcendence and unity. The progression from divine essence to artificial intelligence (AI) reflects not only technological innovation but also humanity's existential longing to extend its consciousness beyond biological limitations. By drawing on AI-centric science fiction films such as *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Matrix*, and *The Machine*, alongside literary works like Goethe's *Faust* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the

paper explores how these narratives conceptualize AI as a modern extension of human creativity and consciousness. The paper situates AI within a broader historical trajectory of human development, as illustrated in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, where tool-making signifies a cognitive leap that reshaped human evolution. This perspective is further enriched by examining early milestones such as cave paintings and religious advancements, which fostered complex thought processes, social structures, and cultural progress. These historical and cultural developments underscore how tools, from primitive

instruments to AI, have continually extended human capabilities and shaped societal evolution. The theoretical framework integrates Sankhya philosophy, which explores the tension between material and spiritual evolution, with Marshall McLuhan's media theory, which positions tools and media as extensions of human faculties that transform perception and culture. Through this lens, the paper investigates how AI, as the ultimate medium, represents humanity's drive for transcendence and unity, bridging the physical and digital realms. The methodology combines

textual and cinematic analysis with philosophical inquiry, demonstrating that AI transcends its instrumental origins to emerge as an extension of human consciousness. This evolution positions AI as a pivotal force in unifying fragmented societies and fostering new forms of collective consciousness. Ultimately, this study argues that the journey from divine to digital is not a rupture but an extension, with AI embodying humanity's creative impulse and its ongoing quest for transcendence, social cohesion, and self-understanding.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE STEPPE: HUMAN, NATURE AND DIVINE BONDS

İrem Ak

BA in Psychology, Ibn Haldun University

In an age of environmental crises and the dissolution of traditional human-nature boundaries, Cengiz Aitmatov's narratives offer a valuable perspective on the invisible interconnectedness of all living things in the universe. His depiction of humans as part of a larger and living ecosystem shows that the transition from an anthropocentric understanding to a living and nature-centred ecological understanding is not only a matter of

choice but a necessity. In Aitmatov's narratives, the fates of human beings are intertwined with the rhythms of nature and point to a larger existence that interacts with each other. In this context, the idea of Wahdat-I Vücud, which suggests that all beings are a reflection of the ilahi and that they exist in unity, and Cengiz Aitmatov's themes and his stance on the issues he deals with were found to be compatible. In this article, the hermeneutic

method is adopted to examine how ecological and spiritual themes, as well as Wahdat al-Wujud and the unity between humans and nature, are reflected in Cengiz Aytmatov's novel "The Place of the Skull." Through Aitmatov's narratives and the philosophy of Wahdat-i Vücud, we can envisage a future in which the spiritual and environmental aspects of posthuman existence are not separate from each other, but rather deeply intertwined. With

a sense of inner unity, people will discover a potential space where they can interact with nature not only through physical participation, but also spiritually and cognitively. The analyses on the subject point to different and deeper layers of human-nature interaction instead of an approach that isolates human beings from nature and living beings and reduces their existence to only certain and limited relationalities.

THE FATE OF THE BODY: THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY CONSTRUCTION OF THE BODY IN DOKUZUNCU HARİCİYE KOĞUŞU AND OF HUMAN BONDAGE

Büşra Şengül

PhD Student in Turkish Language and Literature, Boğaziçi University

This paper explores how bodily experiences during the First World War era are shaped by similar dynamics in Peyami Safa's *Dokuzuncu Hariciye Koğuşu* and W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Despite differing cultural backgrounds, both novels depict the body as central to identity formation, social belonging, and modernization. Safa's protagonist struggles physically and emotionally within Ottoman-Turkish modernization, while Maugham's Philip, born with a disability, searches for identity in Victorian England.

In both cases, bodily constraints intersect with social limitations, shaping their paths to individual freedom. While examining novels, I would like to apply some theories which generally highlight disability and body. For example, Judith Butler's theory of "the cultural construction of bodily existence" highlights how the body functions as an active narrative element rather than a passive object. Both protagonists negotiate their identities through their physicality, making the body a metaphor for societal transformation. Furthermore, Michel Fouca-

ult's concept of "body and power" further underscores how the body embodies societal norms and disciplinary mechanisms. Physical disabilities in these novels are not just biological conditions but also social constructs that enforce conformity and influence identity formation. The idea that the body has a structure that "writes itself" transforms the body into a narrative space as the memory of both the individual and society. In terms of love, war and socio-cultural positioning, the protagonists of both novels are forced to negotiate their

social identities through their physical existence. The body becomes a metaphor that reflects the pains of modernization not only of the individual but also of the society in which he or she lives. Ultimately, Dokuzuncu Hariciye Koğuşu and Of Human Bondage present the body as both an individual experience and a shared element of global modernization. Examining how war, love, and modernization shape bodily experiences underscores the body's central role in literature.

PANEL 2:

**REIMAGINING LITERARY
FUTURES WITH
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

READABILITY IN CHATGPT AND WORLD LITERATURE

Nagihan Haliloğlu

Assoc. Prof. of English Language and Literature, Boğaziçi University

This paper aims to bring discussions of readability in World Literature to the assessment of use of ChatGPT, both in publication and the classroom. Since the launch of ChatGPT I have been trying to assess its impact on students' writing, and the most prominent ChatGPT generated feature so far is the 'easily readable' text, devoid of any bumps and mistakes that normally appear in students' texts. These mistakes depend on students' cultural and educational background, mistakes that mark them as indivi-

duals. Among other things, AI readability stems from 'itemization' of the text, where each point is dealt with separately, and the connections from one paragraph to another, the 'narrative thread', is often neglected. All 'untidiness' that may be caused by a human brain is smoothed out; everything is put in its 'perfect' place. In my paper I will use some ChatGPT answers to demonstrate the elements of 'readability' and 'itemization', and relate it to the rise of World Literature in the last two decades, whe-

re novels from the global south, including Turkey, have enjoyed a wide readership because they are 'easily readable' in English. My argument here is that the style and discourse used by ChatGPT has already been in circulation for some time in the publishing world. Just like ChatGPT works on itemizing definitions and arguments, contemporary products of World Literature seem to divide the plot into distinct blocks, in some senses this is a 'digitization of narrati-

ve'. Karim Mattar suggests this for translations of Pamuk, and quoting him I argue that World Literature at large, 'has been dominated by domesticating readings that minimize or neglect engagement with local history in favour of stock categorizations'. This 'domesticating' is precisely the mode that ChatGPT works in, and 'a foreignizing reading strategy' is needed, in both appreciating World Literature and assessing students' work.

POSSIBILITY OF A UTOPIAN FUTURE IN THE POSTHUMAN ERA: AI GOVERNANCE IN IAIN M. BANKS' CULTURE SERIES

Hatice Kübra Yeğın

Lecturer in Ibn Haldun University

Iain M. Banks' Culture series envisions a future in which artificial intelligence governs a post-scarcity, anarchist society, challenging traditional conceptions of utopia, autonomy, and human identity. In the Culture, advanced AI Minds—not humans—manage political, economic, and social structures, ensuring equity, freedom, and stability without coercion. This presentation

examines how Banks' work redefines the role of AI in governance, exploring whether posthuman societies can achieve sustainable utopianism through machine intelligence. This discussion will use a posthumanist framework to analyze how Culture's AI-led structure disrupts anthropocentric governance models. It will question whether human agency remains

relevant in a world where decision-making is outsourced to superior non-human intelligences. By examining key texts such as *The Player of Games*, *Excession*, and *Look to Windward*, the presentation will explore AI's ethical dilemmas, interventionist policies, and implications for future human-AI relationships. Ultimately, Banks'

work invites reflection on whether AI governance could transcend human flaws, or if utopia remains an unattainable ideal. As AI technologies advance in our own world, the *Culture* series serves as a provocative lens through which to reconsider the possibilities and limitations of a posthuman future.

GOTHIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE: TECHNOLOGICAL HAUNTINGS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S "APP-ARITION"

Rumeysa Oğuz

Res. Assist. in Comparative Literature, Ibn Haldun University
PhD Student in English Language and Literature, Istanbul University

This study aims to examine Jeanette Winterson's "App-arition," from her 2023 collection *Night Side of the River*, as a contemporary Digital Gothic text, exploring how technological anxieties infiltrate personal and psychological spaces. As technological advancements reshape both our expectations and anxieties, new modes of Gothic fiction have emerged, integrating digital landscapes into their narratives. In the digital age, Gothic literature reinterprets traditional supernatural elements – ghosts, hauntings, and the uncanny – through the lens of technology, re-

vealing how suppressed fears, desires, and traumas resurface in new and unsettling ways. One of the most striking manifestations of this is the concept of digital afterlives, the persistence of one's presence beyond death through artificial intelligence and data preservation, which raises ethical, psychological, and existential concerns. Drawing on Isabella van Elferen's "techno-Gothic," Mark Thomas DiMauro's "Digital Gothic," and Davide Sisto's work on "digital afterlives," this study situates "App-arition" within the evolving discourse of twenty-first-century

Gothic fiction. The story follows Bella, a grieving woman whose abusive late husband is resurrected through an AI-based application, “JohnApp.” Rather than offering closure, the digital ghost of John triggers Bella’s traumas and threatens her sense of reality, unsettling the boundary between past and present, human and artificial, memory and manipulation. Additionally, “App-arition” exemplifies “cloud Gothic” by demonstrating how the integration of digital and physical realities erodes Bella’s perception of control, reinforcing the uncanny nature of technological intrusion.

The story further aligns with Gothic traditions by transforming the domestic sphere into a site of uncanny and psychological distress. By analyzing “App-arition” within the framework of Digital Gothic, this study argues that Winterson’s narrative does not merely reflect fears of artificial intelligence; it critiques the human impulse to exploit technology for control and manipulation, ultimately revealing the unsettling realization that digital immortality becomes an uncanny and inescapable aspect in human experience.

PANEL 3:

**DIGITALIZATION IN
LITERARY STUDIES:
RECONSTRUCTION, ANALYSIS,
AND VISUALIZATION**

DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY OF THE ELECTRONIC BABYLONIAN LIBRARY (EBL) PROJECT

Zehra Yedidal

BA in Comparative Literature, Ibn Haldun University

The study of ancient Mesopotamian literature has faced significant challenges due to the fragmentary nature of its primary sources: cuneiform tablets. However, with the development of important initiatives like the Electronic Babylonian Library (eBL) Project, which employs digital tools and artificial intelligence, these challenges have been addressed. This has enabled scholars to analyze texts made accessible through the eBL proje-

ct and other key initiatives, such as the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) and the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (ORACC), facilitating the detailed reconstruction of Babylonian literary texts. This presentation will explore how the eBL project, based at the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (BAAdW) and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), addresses two major challenges in the field: frag-

mentary cuneiform tablets, and the limited availability of a comprehensive digital corpus. At the core of the project lies Fragmentarium, a vast database of transliterated cuneiform fragments. Additionally, the project utilizes cuneiBLAST, an innovative algorithm for sequence alignment that detects overlaps among text fragments. I will highlight the technical innovations behind this project, including n-gram

matching algorithms that analyze pixel patterns and character sequences within fragments and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for cuneiform texts. Developed in collaboration with data scientists, these tools have enabled researchers to systematically detect and reassemble scattered fragments, significantly advancing the reconstruction and understanding of ancient Mesopotamian literature.

STUDYING TRAVELOGUES OF THE PAST WITH TODAY'S DIGITAL HUMANITIES TOOLS

Frederic Spagnoli

Prof. of Rare Book and Digital Humanities, University of Franche-Comté

The objective of this communication is to think at the use of Digital Humanities tools for the study of travelogues based on the experiences linked to the master Rare Book and Digital Humanities that we are running in Besançon since 2019. In our Master, students are indeed asked to write a thesis on one or several travelogues dated

between the 16th and the 19th centuries and to use DH tools to present the results of their research. I will first present the specificities of travelogues and the interest of studying such documents that are dealing with different geographical areas and that are coming from different cultural backgrounds. I will then focus on how Digital

Humanities tools can be used to help working on them and that can be used to present to the results of the research conducted. I will show various examples of workflows that can be created for the study of travelogues. The examples will combine creation of corpus and analysis of data as well as visualization of the results thus combining va-

rious DH tools. I will also expose some results of a summer school that we will be organizing in Peru in February 2025 about travels to and within the Amazonia region. I will conclude my talk with a reflection on the use of DH tools and the possibilities of further research as well as new projects on travelogues.

SYNCHING CLOSE READING WITH DATA-DRIVEN DISTANT READING

Merve Aktar

Assist. Prof. of Comparative Literature, Ibn Haldun University

In literary studies, research and learning environments, the methodological tool of close reading has long held an integral place for its attention to the multiple layers of a given text, facilitating an analysis that accounts for both structural and conceptual components—the what, why, and how of data. However, the method has met with skepticism in the recent past, notably by literary historian Franco Moretti, who critiqued the method on the grounds of it serving the narrow and isolationist purpose of text

or canon-specific analysis at the expense of a broader conceptual synthesis of common terms and issues across a corpus of world literature (2013). This paper first introduces Moretti's new method, "distant reading" (2013), geared towards integrating the emerging digital technologies of text mining, visualization, and corpora. What makes distant reading especially relevant today is that contemporary humanities and literary scholars have adopted/adapted it specifically to digital and AI technologies.

The method is now known for facilitating the visual, interactive representations of networks of intellectual – social connections, or webs of terms and concepts across time and (worldwide) texts (Chen et al 2025, Pohl 2025, Salmi 2024, Reid 2020). This paper primarily aims to display the ongoing works in digital humanities that offer new ways of meaningful analytical engagement through the method of distant reading. The Digital Mitford project will serve as the main example. This discussion will be framed by

the central issues of (the threat of) declining verbal literacy (Hersmink 2024, Greenblatt 2015), which is what close reading prioritizes, as well as the problem of a “disjunctive” reading experience that comes with the screen (Pohl 2025). The proposition as well as question of this paper is how close reading may be synched up with distant reading so as to balance the acquisition and exercise of both verbal and visual literacies that are not at hierarchical or experiential odds to each other.



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Intellectual Independence

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