



XVII Biennial International Conference

organised by

Comparative Literature Association of India

and

University of Delhi

10th-12th September, 2024

Comparative Literature as Alternative Humanities Ethics, Affect and the Everyday Social

In the last few decades, scholars in the Humanities have found it necessary to examine the fundamental underpinnings upon which their disciplines are built. One of the primary questions that animated this re-examination has been regarding the very terms of our engagement with countries and communities that inhabit radically different social and moral life-worlds, living as they do outside the orbit of European Enlightenment values that still regulate both organisation and practice within and outside the academy, across the world. Instead of accepting difference as a defining feature of the human condition, the grand narratives of the Enlightenment were used as colonial and imperial tools to homogenize the diversity of experience, emotion and expression as the high tide of colonial modernity swept the world. The consequent otherness and alienation that characterised human society have deeply impacted literary and cultural production. We witness a disjunction between the objective, scientific discourse with its claim to truth and the everyday social experience of the human subject which Humanities seek to understand. These asymmetries compel us to rethink the Humanities from alternative positions and perspectives to embody and address the plural orders of reality and the differences between them. How can the collection of disciplines we call the Humanities recover the capacity of self-reflection and self-criticism? Much has been written about how stereotypes invade our imagination to contaminate our experience and knowledge.

Comparative Literature's commitment to alterity and plurality gives it a foundational interest in the non-stereotypical, non-canonized, un-heard narratives of "others" that constitute a radical sense of the literary. Such articulations can only emerge from the confluence of different locations, experiences and identities, demonstrating how our vision of "others" projects our own versions of ourselves onto the outside world.

An alternative view of the Humanities will have to come to terms with the ideas of relationality, plurality and cultural mobility as the defining features of all epochs including that of the pre-modern. Texts, ideas, images, metaphors, themes, modes, genres, tales are all human endeavours and like humans themselves these have the capacity to travel across constructed, eternally given or pre-fixed borders, thereby defying the exclusivist, essentialist ideas of culture and literature. The prevailing inclination towards connected sociologies and connected histories, while a step in the right direction, often reflects the dominant discourses which impose homogeneity and hierarchy, evincing a lack of empathy for the precarious endeavour of encountering alterity and a lack of understanding of the transient and the contingent.

Thus, we propose plurality as a conceptual framework to address this eco-system of interconnectedness and relationality in terms of their manifestations in the languages and literatures of all nations, regions and communities, regardless of their location in the hierarchy of political and economic regimes, or of their internal stratifications. We would like to recover the mutuality of interconnections and interdependence between literatures and cultures across the world. The assertion that we live in a post-human world prompts us, as humans to consider our experience in terms of relationality and plurality. These emerge as conceptual tools for recasting our relations with the other - be it humans, animals or the non-living.

Texts are actualised through their immersion in the shared ideological and affective worlds that constitute the everyday world. From orality to print to the visual media, modes of intersubjective engagement are implicated in structures of power relations within society and our response to them. The very practice of Comparative Literature is an acknowledgement of plurality and a willingness to engage with difference. The discipline emphasises upon relationality, heterogeneity, multivocal perspectives, and direct engagement with alterity that translation offers as a process and a product. Built into the discipline is the interaction between literatures in multiple languages both within the nation and in other countries of the world. Furthermore, it takes orality and performance in its ambit. It reaches out to all other disciplines by asking the existential question : **can we open ourselves to the location of the other and view the world from the vantage point of difference that we encounter outside ourselves? Can we frame a dialogic mode of interaction that reading teaches us to our relations with the world, to expand our view of the world outside our own limited subjectivity ? Hence, we propose Comparative Literature as an alternate paradigm - and invite reflections upon the possibilities inherent in the conceptual frame structured by the reciprocal, the relational and the plural.** It is our hope that it will help to grasp and address the nature of the crisis that afflicts the Humanities today both in intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary framework.

Sub-themes

Some of the sub-themes in the context of the main theme that can be taken up for discussion are as follows:

- Interrogating categorial binaries (tradition/modernity, nature/culture, regional/national, east/west etc.)/ Literature after theory/ Shifting paradigms between Literary Studies and Social Sciences/ The Post-human as a paradigm in literary studies.
- Worlding literature / Historicising canons/ Global and local as contexts of reading.
- The idea of the classic in modernity: circulation or creativity ?
- Translation and the encounter with difference.
- Translating “dialects”/ The oral texts/ Archaic texts.
- The plural nation: stratification and resistance/ Literary historiography and geopolitics/ Intertextuality and chronotopes.
- Polyphony/ Polysemy in literature/ Poetry and cosmopolitanism.
- Interrogating “Minor” literature as category/ Identity theories as critiques of the Humanities / Life-writing from the margins.
- The performativity of literature/ Screenplay as literature/ Intermediality in literature.
- South Asian literatures and cultures: relations, reciprocity and ruptures/ Population movements and literature.

Papers are invited from scholars of **Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, Theatre Studies, Gender Studies, Black Studies, Dalit Studies** etc. or on any aspect of literature and culture that will help us understand and practice the Humanities in accordance with the ethical perspectives outlined above.

Abstracts of about **250 words** along with a **short bio-note** of about 100 words may be submitted to clai2024@admin.du.ac.in

Upon acceptance, participants will be provided with registration details through email. The Registration Fee will include workshop kit, certificate, lunch, and refreshments during the three days of the conference. **Participants would need to become members of CLAI on receiving their acceptance letters in order to present papers, if they are not already members of CLAI.**

For further information please visit: <https://www.clai.in/upcoming-event/>

Organising Committee,
XVII Biennial International Conference.
clai2024@admin.du.ac.in

Important Dates:

Last date of abstract submission: **30th April, 2024**

Selected participants will be notified by: **30th May, 2024**

Last date of registration: **15th July, 2024**



Registration Fee:

Faculty members: Rs.3500/-

Research scholars/students: Rs.2000/-

International participants: US\$ 200



XVII Biennial International Conference
organised by
Comparative Literature Association of India
and
University of Delhi

clai2024@admin.du.ac.in