Beyond the Notion of Influence: Notes Toward an Alternative

By ABDUL-NABI ISSTAIF

Writing in 1936,[1] the Syrian/Lebanese Arab critic and author Khalīl al-Hindāwī (1906– 76)—who was the first to introduce the term *comparative literature* (*al-'Adab al-Muqāran*) into the Arabic language—refers to the Arab philosopher 'Abū al-Walīd 'Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroes) as a pioneer comparatist in classical Arab culture. According to him, the Arab engagement with comparative literature, or what the French call "littérature comparée," goes as far back as Averroes (1126–98) and his commentary on the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Yet Arabs' interaction with Aristotle and other Greek philosophers goes back even further than the philosopher of Córdoba. In addition to the earlier translations of Aristotle's *Poetics*, both al-Fārābī (d. 950) or the Second Master (al-Mu'allim al-Thānī), with Aristotle being the First Master, and 'Ibn Sīnā (980–1037), known as Avicenna in the West, are well known in both the East and West for their original use of Greek philosophy. Al-Hindāwī was, of course, more interested in boosting the cultural identity of his nation than in the historical facts regarding the emergence of comparative literature in the Arab world, and glorifying the past by reading as much as he liked into his cultural heritage was his own way of showing his strong belief in the glorious past of the Arabs.

Doubtless, al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Averroes, and, for that matter, Hāzim al-Qartājannī (1211–85) and the like were no comparatists, although their interactions with Aristotle and other Greek philosophers can be studied as extremely important and highly significant examples of East-West cultural relations between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. However, the beginnings of comparative literature, by the consensus of most scholars, were in fact the outcome of modern Arabic culture's encounter with its European counterparts in the nineteenth century.[2] A century-long confrontation with the West (started rather overwhelmingly with the French campaign in Egypt in 1798) has resulted in the spread of a comparative awareness among Arab writers, critics, and intellectuals. Two important applied comparative studies appeared in the first few years of the twentieth century. The first, entitled *The History of the Science of Literature of Both the Franks and the Arabs and Victor Hugo* by Muhammad Rawhī al-Khālidī (1864–1913), was originally published as a series of articles in the Egyptian journal *al-Hilāl* in the years 1902–3 and then as a book attributed to al-Maqdīsī (a native of Jerusalem), because of the author's fear of Ottoman oppression, before a third edition appeared in 1912 under his real name. By all accounts, al-Khālidī was the true pioneer of applied comparative literature in modern Arabic culture, for he practiced the art with just the right qualifications (an excellent knowledge of both Arabic and European literatures), abilities, procedures, and results, particularly regarding the Arabic influence in European poetry and fiction in the European Renaissance, channeled through Spain and Sicily. The publication of three editions in ten years is no doubt an indication of the warm reception accorded to the book, and probably to the field as well.

The second important study is Sulaymān al-Bustānī's (1856–1925) critical and comparative introduction to his translation of Homer's *Iliad*, which took him eight years to write following eight years spent on the translation of the epic itself. Considered to be one of the most important documents in the history of modern Arabic literary criticism, this introduction, which was published with the translation in Egypt in 1904, includes a detailed comparison between the Greek epic and narrative Arabic poetry going back as far as pre-Islamic times. Al-Bustānī, who seems to be more interested in pointing out the similarities as well as the differences between the two, stresses the importance of lyricism in Arabic poetry as giving it an advantage over its Greek counterpart. He furthermore goes beyond this comparison to offer his reader a more general assessment of both Greek and Arabic poetry. What is most interesting in his comparison is the fact that he does not relate the affinities between the Greek and Arabic poetic traditions to any notion of influence. Being a meticulous scholar who seems unable to pass any judgments on who influenced whom, he reduces these affinities to the fact that both Greek and Arabic societies had undergone similar stages of development, which reminds one of the Soviet and East European tradition in comparative literature.

The following two decades saw several isolated attempts at comparison between Arabic and European literatures by both creative writers and critics from various parts of the Arab East. The thirties

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were particularly important for the various indications of an increase of Arab interest in and engagement with the theory and practice of comparative literature. First, there was the publication of several series of articles comparing Arabic and Persian literature (by 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām in 1933); discussing the relationships between Dante and the Arab-Islamic tradition in regard to human journeys to the other world (by Darrīnī Khashabah in 1936), or those between Arabic and English literatures (by Fakhrī 'Abu al-Su'ūd in 1936), all appearing in *al-Risālah* (a weekly published in Cairo between 1933 and 1953 under the editorship of the distinguished writer, translator, and scholar 'Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyāt [1885–1968]). Second came the publication in Aleppo in 1935 of the third part of the pioneering critical work by Qastāqī al-Himsī (1858–1941), *Manhal al-Wurrād fī 'Ilm al-'Intiqād* (the first two parts came out in Cairo in 1906–7), which includes an extended study of the relationship between Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *The Epistle of Forgiveness* by 'Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057). Although scholars differ over its comparative value, this study, which had been in the making for three decades (as we are told by its author), is still an impressive manifestation of the Arab's obsession with this subject and a landmark in the history of Arabic scholarship on Dante's Arabic-Islamic connections. Third, there was the appearance of Khalīl al-Hindāwī's four-part article in *al-Risālah* (Cairo) in 1936 in which the term *comparative literature* was first used in modern Arabic culture. The title of the article, which is most telling, reads as follows: "New Light on an Aspect of Arab Literature: The Arab Engagement with Comparative Literature, or What the Franks Call 'littérature comparée' in the Summary of Aristotle's *Poetics* by the Arab Philosopher 'Abu al-Walīd 'Ibn Rushd."

The 1940s witnessed the introduction of comparative literature into Arab universities (Dār al-'Ulūm in Cairo was the first college to teach the subject, which was offered to third- and fourth-year students of its Arabic B.A. program) as well as the publication of a few theoretical and applied works by Najīb al-'Aqīqī, 'Abd al-Razzāq Hamīdah, and 'Ibrāhīm Salāmah. The fifties were crucial years in the history of comparative literature in the Arab world, with the late Muhammad Ghunaymī Hilāl (the real founder of Arabic comparative literature) returning from France with the highest qualifications and with great enthusiasm and determination to launch his campaign for the cause of the new field of inquiry in modern Arabic culture. His theoretical works, particularly his *Comparative Literature* in Arabic (first published in 1953 and later revised, expanded, and reprinted many times all over the Arab world and adapted as a textbook or a major reference work in almost all Arab universities), still considered to be the best exposition of the so-called French school, as well as his many books in applied comparative literature published over a quarter of a century, have all contributed to the respect and credentials of comparative literature as an academic speciality in Arab universities. His writings on the Arabic influence in Persian literature, particularly his studies of love and madness, have not been superseded.

The sixties and seventies were fruitful years as far as applied comparative studies are concerned, with important works exploring the various aspects of relations between Arabic literature and, for example, Persian, Turkish, Greek, Italian, English, French, and other West European literatures. Here one can refer in particular to the works of Lewis 'Awad, as well as to those of Muhammad Ghunaymī Hilāl, Muhammad Mufīd al-Shūbāshī, Husām al-Khatīb, Muhammad 'Abd al-Salām al-Kaffāfī, Tāhā Nadā, Badī' Muhammad Jum'ah, and Rīmūn Tahhān, who all have given a good name to the field. The end of the seventies witnessed an important development in the history of Arabic comparative literature: namely, the introduction of the American school by Husām al-Khatīb, who presented it to the Arab reader in a three-part extended article entitled "Comparative Literature Between Methodological Fanaticism and Humanistic Openness" (published in *al-Marifah* in Damascus in 1979 and later revised and included in his two-part book *Comparative Literature*, published in 1981–82).

Throughout the eighties and early nineties, comparative literature has continued to consolidate its position in modern Arabic culture. In addition to becoming an important and obligatory course in almost all departments of Arabic and other languages at all Arab universities, comparative literature has received a big boost in the last fifteen years with the publication of major works in both theory and practice; the appearance of special comparative issues of major journals in Syria (*Al-Marifah, Al-Mawqif al-'Adabī*, and *Al-'Ādāb al-'Ajnabiyyah*), Egypt (*Fusūl*), and Kuwait (*'Ālam al-Fikr*); the formation of Arab, Egyptian, and Moroccan societies of comparative literature; the organization of major conferences in 'Innābah, Damascus, and Marrakesh; and finally, the return of specialists in many different languages and traditions from their training in various countries around the world.

Still, despite this century-long engagement with comparative literary studies in the Arab world,[3] despite the many theoretical books written in Arabic (Husām al-Khatīb counts at least thirty-four of them)[4] or translated from other languages (French, English, Russian, Romanian), despite the dozens of books and hundreds of articles, written in Arabic or translated from other languages, on all aspects of comparative literature, and despite the remarkable increase in the number of Arab comparatists trained in the USA, the UK, France, Germany, Spain,

Eastern Europe, and the former USSR who have written theses, books, and articles in both Arabic and foreign languages, one is struck by the lack of interest in formulating an Arab point of view in the theory of comparative literature, although the long, rich, and highly complex experience of Arabic literature and its interaction with so many literatures, both classical and modern, Eastern and Western, is uniquely helpful in suggesting insights and notions that could enrich the tradition of comparative literary studies and most probably in remedying some of its basic shortcomings. It is rather regrettable that even when an attempt to formulate such a point of view is made, it does not go beyond the views of certain comparatists who have no knowledge whatsoever of the Arabic literary tradition. Thus, when the distinguished Arab comparatist Husām al-Khatīb tries to plant the seeds of an Arab point of view on the field, he remains imprisoned by the views of the Americans Henry Remak and René Wellek. According to him, comparative literature has "what can qualify it to be distinguished as a brand of literary study with a clear character that brings it close to scientific and objective approaches, that requires a comprehensive training, and that has its own special area—namely, that area of exchanges and extensions beyond local boundaries, be they (on the one hand) geographic, linguistic, or national, or (on the other hand) formalistic, connected with artistic creation and other systems of knowledge that bear on the literary phenomenon."[5]

One can always blame the wretched state of research facilities at most Arab universities, the university educational system's rather unhealthy overemphasis on teaching rather than on research, the lack of research institutes in the humanities which can oversee the production of highly sophisticated studies in the theory and practice of comparative literature, as well as the failure of Arab society to offer any real incentive to Arab comparatists to carry out such studies. However, one can point to several specific reasons that have been responsible for this lack of interest in theorizing on compartative literature from an Arab standpoint. To begin with, one should note that the usage of the Arabic term *Al-'Adab al-Muqāran* (comparative literature), when first introduced in modern Arabic culture in 1936, was offered as a word-for-word translation of the French term *littérature comparée*, without any reference to the original meaning of the word *littérature* in French, which refers to literary study.[6] This literal translation of the term was further consolidated and confirmed in the fifties and sixties, when Arab literary critics and comparatists became acquainted with the American tradition (Safā' Khulūsi's book entitled [in Arabic] *Studies in Comparative Literature and Literary Schools* was published in 1957), translating the English term literally without any awareness of the earlier and lost meaning of the word *literature* as "the knowledge or study of literature"—which, according to René Wellek, was behind the resistance to the combination "comparative literature" and, consequently, the late acceptance of the English term.[7] So most readers understood comparative literature as a subject which can be studied in the same way one can study French, English, or German literature. Since it involves the study of more than one literature, it is, however, viewed as something higher and more important and sophisticated than the study of a national literature.

Soon many scholars aspired to work on this subject, to teach it, write about it, be associated with it for all the prestige it carries with it, particularly in the eyes of Arab readers or recipients who have been extremely eager to read any book or article that is concerned with the foreign relations of their literature and culture, whether written in Arabic or translated from other languages. Furthermore, with most Arab universities establishing a course in comparative literature, at least on the undergraduate level, there has been a great need for specialists to teach and write textbooks. When there is no faculty member qualified for the job, an adjunct teacher or professor is called upon from a neighboring university, or another faculty member from the same university is sometimes asked to undertake the task. In this case, the university will be quite content to accept someone who has some interest in other literatures or simply knows a foreign language.

Still, students need textbooks, and since most Arab universities are overburdened by the huge number of students and their library facilities can hardly serve adequately, those unqualified faculty members will literally rewrite whatever Arabic books are available in the field and sign them as their own. (Sa'īd 'Allūsh has noted that many Arabic theoretical works in comparative literature have been reproductions of various works written in, or translated into, Arabic. These include books by Paul Van Tieghem, Marius-François Guyard, René Etiemble, René Wellek, Henry Remak, and Muhammad Ghunaymī Hilāl.) In other words, a peculiar form of plagiarism has been evident in the Arabic theoretical writings of the last few decades, and this has been allowed to continue simply because of the unhealthy forces operating in the academic market.

What seemed a widespread interest in comparative literature in the Arab world and the warm reception of this new field of inquiry has turned into a view of comparative literature as something which anybody can do. So, many unqualified persons have taken it up, and there is no reason why anybody cannot do so in the future. It does not even require a knowledge of a foreign language or literature, and nowadays one encounters faculty members from all over the Arab world who teach, write on, and par-

ticipate as specialists in comparative literary activities such as publications, conferences, seminars, and public lectures without the proper qualifications or training (apart from the writing and teaching experience which they have gained as a result of certain unhealthy circumstances in Arab universities).

As a result of this unfortunate state of affairs, an almost unchallenged domination of the French school is an obvious feature of most Arab writings in the theory and practice of comparative literature. In fact, even the criticism which has been leveled against this school has been an echo of Western critics, be they insiders like René Etiemble or outsiders like René Wellek or Henry Remak. Furthermore, when any attempt is made to overcome the limitations of this school, it is inspired by an external stimulus (the American opposition represented by Wellek and Remak, the German theories of reception, or the Soviet and East European objections to comparative literature itself on the basis of their Marxist understanding of the literary art) rather than by certain imperatives resulting from the very nature of Arabic literature and its long-standing tradition of an extremely rewarding and mutually inspiring encounter with other literatures over the last fifteen centuries. Yet these attempts are isolated and do not form any cohesive effort to bring about any real changes in the frame of reference within which Arab comparatists have been operating.

To worsen the situation even further, the ideological factor also plays an important role in the orientation of Arab comparatists and in their theoretical efforts. Thus, each Arab comparatist favors the school which is more compatible with his or her ideology and political inclination. Ideology all too often determines the subjects which are treated by Arab comparatists. While a nationalist or a traditionalist concentrates on studying the Arabic influence on other literatures, be they European or Eastern, classical or modern, a Marxist prefers to discuss Arabic literature's debt to Soviet or other socialist literatures. By the same token, a Western-oriented comparatist would be more interested in showing the impact of West European literatures on Arabic literature and criticism in order to serve his Western-inspired model of development and life in general. In addition, the cultural formation of the comparatist and his or her knowledge of foreign language(s) will affect the choice of subject matter and approach, and, since teaching foreign languages is still viewed within the context of the colonial experience of most Arabic countries, one can imagine the difficulties encountered by Arab educational institutions in their endeavor to make their students acquire proficiency in a foreign language and the impact this has had on training Arab comparatists.

Having presented a rather brief account of the state of the art of comparative literature in the Arab world and the consequent lack of productive effort in the theory of such a field of inquiry, approach, subject of study, discipline, perspective, or what you will, I would like to add a few remarks which might be helpful in formulating an Arab point of view in the comparative study of literature. Drawing on my experience in teaching, research, and writing over the last two decades, I feel that comparative literature is best understood as an endeavor to identify and account for the presence of *the other* in the literary work of art, and consequently I consider it to be a necessary or even inevitable approach dictated by the nature of the literary text under consideration. Confrontation and encounter between the self and the other in the arts afford the two parties a space for contact or interaction, and this inspires a change in both sides on a certain level, a change which can be detected by the literary critic in the literary work of art and can later be pursued and studied in detail so that a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of such a work becomes possible. What is important in this study is not so much to determine who influenced whom, or which of two works is indebted to the other, as to understand the whole of the literary work of art or its totality—in other words, to cover all possible aspects of this work, including the presence of the other in it. Therefore, the notion of *inspiration* might serve as a proper alternative to that of influence, and the task of the comparatist becomes the study of the change(s) inspired by an encounter or confrontation that has taken place between the self and the other in a particular space. The self-centeredness currently prevailing in most schools and trends of comparative studies would make room for the understanding of the other as the first necessary step toward understanding the self as a whole, including the presence of this other in the self or any awareness, articulation, or representation of this very self. Here there will not be any talk about any party that has an upper hand or that is giver, lender, active, affecting, or dominating, et cetera. By the same token, there should be no lower hand, taker, or borrower, no passive, affected, or dominated parties. Viewed in this way, no participants in the relationship between the self and the other would object to being inspired to undergo a change in one aspect or another of its multifaceted, multilevel, and multidimensional state.

Studying the presence of the other in the verbal art of articulating an awareness or representation of the self or in a literary text should take the five following points into consideration. 1) The literary text itself should be the starting point in any comparative study of literature. Therefore, the comparatist should take the lead from this text by looking for internal or textual evidence that points to the presence of the other in such a text, because it is only the presence of this other which dictates the adoption of

a comparative approach to this text rather than any other approach. This presence might take all sorts of forms, and only a close analysis of the text will reveal such a presence. In other words, comparatists must be literary critics in the first place, if they are to perform this specific function of approaching this particular text from a comparative perspective in order to cover this specific aspect of the text—namely, the presence of the other in it.

2) The establishment of the internal evidence or textual evidence should be followed by a keen search for external or extratextual evidence that further supports the presence of the other in the text. In fact, this search will help the comparatist understand better the internal or textual evidence as well as the form and function of the presence of the other in the text. 3) Both the internal or textual evidence and the external or extratextual evidence should be situated in its signifying context, which can reveal the importance of the presence of the other in the text and the function it is performing. The place and time circumscribing the presence of the other will help us understand why this particular aspect of the other has been chosen and hosted, what sort of needs it meets, and what function it is performing in the text. In constructing this context, the comparatist draws on the cultural formation of the writer or producer of the text as well as on the cultural and intellectual history of contact between the nation or collective identity of the self and that of the other.

4) The literary text, as stated earlier, must be the point of departure in any comparative study. It must be, therefore, a part of the verbal art of the nation or the collective identity of the producer of this text. In other words, its literariness or what distinguishes it as literary or as art form is very important, indeed essential. The act of comparative study must be performed on a literary text worthy of such a study on account of its literary merits, notwithstanding the changes of fortune and status that such a text might undergo. Furthermore, we are talking here about a critical act performed by a literary critic and not simply by a cultural historian or a historian of ideas. In short, the act of comparative study must be performed within the framework of a critical system that implies judgment and a sense of value, otherwise it becomes a mere set of procedures or simply a mechanical act whose content, subject matter, and objectives are value-free.

5) Finally, the literary text must be viewed as a whole and should be studied as such. Concentrating solely on the presence of the other in the text gives us only a partial assessment of such a text and might be counterproductive in the sense of overlooking the overall importance and significance of this text. In other words, the literary text must be considered as a coherent signifying system and the presence of the other as merely one sign of this system of signs. Naturally, we should not forget that the presence of the other or the new sign has been, up to its integration in the new system, a sign in another former system that belongs to the other or to his/her collective identity. So when a sign is transferred from one system to another, it undergoes a transformation that results from the conflict between the two sign systems at work within the space of encounter between the self and the other. The fusion of the two signifying systems into one and the simultaneous integration of the one sign that stands for the presence of the other into the new system or the text are the mechanism of the production of the new meaning or signification carried by the new text or the new signifier.

This proposed comparative study of literature, which takes account of the foregoing five points, might be illustrated by a brief discussion of "A Woman and a Statue," a short lyric by the distinguished Arab poet from Syria, the late 'Umar 'Abū Rīshah (1908–90).

A Woman and a Statue

O beautiful one! Behold this statue carved of marble,
Looking down on the world with cynical disdain
And traveling by night across the ages to the sanctuary of immortality.
Naked, intoxicating the imagination with her arrogant nakedness;
Eternally enjoying the gushing spring of youth;
We gaze upon her with the wonder of the questing dreamer,
And the eye moves across her magic, lingering, entranced.
The sculptor's creativity made of her an adornment to the genius beauty,
Then passed away, while the daughter of his vision remained, youthful and unchanged.
O beautiful one! How cruel are the sudden blows of crooked time!
If you change, I fear that my vision may die . . . so turn yourself into stone![8]

The reader of this poem will easily notice that the marble statue, described in detail by 'Abū Rīshah, supersedes not only the natural and human standards of beauty but also the supernatural and superhuman as well, for it is capable of a) intoxicating the imagination, b) making even the dreamer doubtful of what he is seeing, c) beautifying the genius beauty, and d) eternally enjoying the gushing spring of youth. Yet the statue is still the creation of a mere mortal human being, a sculptor who has already passed away, leaving behind the embodiment of his artistic vision, youthful and unchanging. At the same time it is a statue of the goddess Venus, who enjoys the power of creation or at least of injecting life into the statue (Pygmalion).

Discussing the creation of man in this fashion in an Arab society dominated by a monotheistic view of the world is obviously a violation of the psychological and religious sensibilities of that society, and this requires an explanation. Compared to the statue, the beautiful lady, who, according to 'Abū

Rīshah, represents the highest ideal of beauty and who also is seen by him as the embodiment of his artistic vision, is only a human being. She is therefore subject to the human law of inevitable change and eventual death. Faced with this reality, the poet can only make her escape this rather harsh fate by asking her to turn into stone (into art). Consequently, he risks the estrangement of his audience and the violation once more of its artistic sensibility, for no reader would ever expect a poet to ask a human beauty to turn into stone. In fact, it is exactly the opposite which is expected of him, particularly in the context of Arab-Islamic culture.

Upon close examination, this dual violation of the psychological and artistic sensibilities of society by 'Abū Rīshah, who served as a distinguished ambassador for his country on three continents and for many years, is all the more unexpected. This raises the question of why such a poet seeks to estrange his audience in this way and why his sensibility, as exhibited in this text, has undergone such a change. Reading the text over and over, the reader feels that there is something in it which belongs to a different world altogether, and the last word of the poem, "Tahajjarī" (turn into stone), and its introduction, which refers to Venus' statue, point to this world. It is the world of Pygmalion. Having seen his beloved ten years after he knew her as the highest ideal of beauty, the poet, as he writes in his introduction, was disappointed, and when he went home the first thing he saw there was the statue of Venus. This made him enter the world of Pygmalion and contemplate his own experience in terms of this myth in its Latin version (the reference in the introduction is to Venus rather than to Aphrodite). So we have a) specific internal or textual evidence ("turn into stone") which points to the world of the *other* (Pygmalion); b) external or extratextual evidence (the statue of Venus) which also refers to this other; c) the cultural formation of this poet, which confirms his acquaintance with the culture of the other, namely Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which includes the myth of Pygmalion. All this indicates an obvious case of encounter between the self ('Abū Rīshah) and the other (the myth), an encounter which inspires a change in the sensibility of the self in handling the relationship between time and art. However, the encounter has taken place in a specific context, and this, in addition to other factors (namely, 'Abū Rīshah's views on art, women, life, and religion), made the poet turn the myth upside-down and ask the human beauty to turn into art rather than the other way around.

Taking into consideration this specific context, the frame of reference, and the state of mind in which 'Abū Rīshah was operating, there was no way in which he could use the presence of the other except in this fashion. First, the human beauty represents the embodiment of his artistic vision, which he would like to see remain eternally alive. Second, 'Abū Rīshah is a Muslim poet living in, and addressing, a Muslim society, and he could not allow in any way a creation of man—the statue—to supersede human beauty or the creation of God. Therefore he is obliged to secure an immortal life for his beloved. Hence his strange request of her to turn into art. We should remember, however, that his request comes when she is at the peak of absolute beauty, since any step forward means a decline in her beauty, and he can never allow this to happen.

Thus 'Abū Rīshah was in harmony with his views on art, life, God, and society. He was himself, to the utmost extreme, even when he was articulating the presence of the other in this self. In short, turning the myth of Pygmalion upside-down was an original contribution toward understanding the self of a creative poet who was deeply involved in the life of his society, nation, and heritage. It was a superb manifestation of the fruitfulness of encounter between the self and the other, affording the poet this space in which the two signifying systems of the myth and his own world view were capable of producing the new text with its new and original meaning. The poet succeeded in his attempt at fusing the new sign into the new signifying system of his poem and at producing the new meaning of his own Pygmalion.[9]

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[1] See Khalīl al-Hindāwī's four-part article in *al-Risālah* (Cairo), 4:153-56 (June 1936), pp. 8–29, as well as Husām al-Khatīb's discussion of al-Hindāwī's pioneering role in his article (in Arabic) "Arabic Comparative Literature: The First Title and the First Text," *Fusūl* (Cairo), 9:3-4 (February 1991), pp. 265–75.

[2] For more information on the impact of this encounter, see M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*, Oxford (Eng.), Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 1–18.

[3] For the best short history of Arabic comparative literature, see (in Arabic) Husām al-Khatīb, *The Pan-Arab and International Horizons of Comparative Literature*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āsir, 1992, pp.169–239.

[4] See a list of these books in Husām al-Khatīb, pp. 241–44.

[5] Ibid., p. 61.

[6] René Wellek, *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism*, New Haven, Ct., Yale University Press, 1970, p. 9.

[7] Ibid., p. 3.

[8] See the Arabic text in 'Umar 'Abū Rīshah, *Dīwān 'Abū Rīshah*, 1971), pp. 315–17. The citation here is a revised version of M. Khouri and H. Algar's translation in their *Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, pp. 156–59.

[9] I owe the writing of this essay to two friends whose encouragement and interest in the state of comparative literature in the Arab world were crucial in committing these tentative views to paper in English: Djelal Kadir, Editor of *World Literature Today*, and John Burt Foster Jr., Review Editor of *The Comparatist*. The last part of the present text is condensed from a lengthy chapter entitled "The Comparative Approach to Literature," in my forthcoming book (in Arabic) *The Literary Study: Five Approaches* (Damascus, 1995).