

Haifa Saud Alfaisal

Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature
King Saud University
T +966118051911
hsaud@ksu.edu.sa

1. Education

PhD, Literature Film and Theatre Studies, University of Essex, Colchester, United Kingdom 1997-2005.

- **Religious discourse in postcolonial studies : the case of *Hombres de Maíz* and of *Bandarshah***

MPhil, Literature, Birkbeck College University of London, London, 1995-1997

- Upgraded to a PhD and completed at Essex.

BA, English Literature, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 1990-1995

2. Awards, Distinctions and Fellowships

- *King Saud University Dean's award for excellence in teaching June 2012.*

3. Research Interests / Research Profile

- My initial research concerns focused on exclusions, specifically, of metaphysical and indigenous religious discourse within the field of postcolonial studies. In *Religious Discourse in Postcolonial Studies: Magical Realism in Hombres de Maíz and Bandarshah* (2006), these exclusions were traced back to what Robert Young identified as the “secular bias” of postcolonialism. I took *Hombres de Maíz and Bandarshah* as case studies to illustrate the fact that anti-colonial countermodernity religious discourse in both novels was marginalized, depoliticized and aesthetised and labelled as “magical realism.” This label served as a dichotomizing tool with which the indigenous countermodernity anti-colonial epistemology was divided into the “real”, or the easily appropriated by a western ratio-centric episteme, and the “magical”, or the exoticized indigenous. Labelling narratives, like *Hombres de Maíz* and *Bandarshah*, as magical realism only serves to illustrate postcolonialism's dedication to its secular bias. This point is supported by the fact that in both cases the fictional mobilization of indigenous epistemology against colonial had a corresponding socio-political co-text. In *Hombres de Maíz* the co-text is Guatemala of Juan Jose Arévalo's (1945-50) “spiritual socialism,” and in *Bandarshah* it is Mahmud Muhammad Taha's (1909-85) “Second Message of Islam.”

In later research, “Indigenous Epistemology and the Decolonisation of Postcolonialism” (2011), the interrogation of postcolonialism's ethical purchase *vís á vís* “other ways of knowing” continued with a more theoretical

probing using Walter Mignolo's adaptation and development of Aníbal Quijano's "coloniality/modernity complex. In this case my research has shifted significantly towards a deeper interrogation of the limits of postcolonialism's engagement with indigenous epistemologies that are external to the coloniality/modernity complex. However, at this point I am inclined to revert back to discourses that lie within the ambit of Mignolo's coloniality/modernity complex as I intend to examine Saudi Arabian contemporary fiction by women to highlight the role of religious discourse in these narratives. I am interested in exploring religious discourse in relation to feminism using more of Walter Mignolo's work to construct a theoretical approach that would accurately reflect such discourses in their heterogeneity and with full consideration for and critique of their connection to the modernity/coloniality complex. In so doing I will also be testing the theoretical import of Mignolo's border gnoseology in relation to the narratives I intend to explore.

In "World Reading Strategies: Border Reading *Bandarshah*" (2014) I develop a reading methodology grounded in Mignolo's "border gnosis" as world literature reading strategy. I will be using this reading strategy to explore contemporary fiction by women in Saudi Arabia.

4. Publications, Presentations and Abstracts

- Academic Paper "Sacred Discourse in Al-Tayyib Salih's *Bandarshah*," for "Political Fictions and the Poetics of Faith" conference, University of Leeds — 10-11 July, 2004
- *Religious Discourse in Postcolonial Studies: Magical Realism in Hombres de maíz and Bandarshah* (2006)
<http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=6772&pc=9>
- "Indigenous Epistemology and the Decolonisation of Postcolonialism." *Studies in Social and Political Thought. Centre for Social and Political Thought*. Volume 19, 2011. School of History, Art History and Philosophy. University of Sussex, U.K. <http://ssptjournal.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/sspt19b1.pdf> ISSN 1467-2219 pp.24-40
- "World Reading Strategies: Border Reading *Bandarshah*" *Alif* 34 (2014). AUC Journal of Comparative Poetics <http://www.aucegypt.edu/huss/ecit/alif/recent/Pages/default.aspx> ISSN 1110-8673 pp.199-224
- From *Balagha* to *Naqd*: Coloniality and the Comparative Roots of Modern Arabic Literary Criticism, presented at The Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities 2015, Conference Theme: "Power", Sunday, April 5, 2015

5. Research Experience

"Feminisms and Postcolonialities," Participant, School of Criticism and Theory Seminar Series, Cornell University, Ithaca, 2012

- **Description:** How are feminisms in different parts of the world, and as espoused by different subjects, historically constructed? How have these feminisms intersected with and debated one another? How do the histories of colonialism, postcolonial nationhood, and global capital shape these intersections and debates? In the academy, we often pay lip service to the idea of “differences” among women, and yet forget that, as Heidi Tinsman puts it, “what constitutes useful categories of feminist analysis is a matter of geopolitics rather than epistemological catch-up.” This seminar provides an opportunity to read and think about such debates, categories, histories, and contemporary global relations. We cannot cover all parts of the world, and the syllabus does not include “token” essays to ensure coverage. Rather, it features representative writings that best allow us to explore key intersections of gender and sexuality with the dynamics of colonialism, decolonization, nationhood, and globalization. Materials produced in the US and Britain will be juxtaposed with the work of scholars and activists working in the Global South, or with those writings that tend to be less visible in the Western academy. Our readings will include the work of Maria Mies, Hazel Carby, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Susan Okin, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, Lata Mani, Joan Scott, Ratna Kapur, Nivedita Menon, Afsaneh Najmabadi, Ifi Amadiume, G. Arunima, Urvashi Butalia, Vandana Shiva, Chela Sandoval, Valentine M. Moghadam, and Saba Mahmood. Through these diverse materials we can consider how different types of feminist theory and practice can engage with questions of sexual identity, with racial, religious and ethnic difference, as well as with historical transformations rendered by globalizing capital, migration, and ecological change. Ultimately, our goal will be to grapple with the three key issues that feminisms everywhere must always engage: identity, agency, and social justice.

“World Literature: Theories, Practices, Pedagogies”: A 4-day Vacation School, 15-18 September 2014

- **Description:** Sponsored by the Connecting Cultures GRP and the Institute of Advanced Study. “There has been a recent resurgence of interest in the concept of world literature, the disciplinary boundaries of literary studies, and the politics of pedagogy. This has been amplified by questions about the dominance of English as the language of globalisation; the demands of the digital age; and the fallout from the global financial crisis. Moving away from the conceptual model of ‘the West’ vs. ‘the Rest’, our vacation school draws on recent critical paradigms to account for the production, circulation, and reception of texts within an uneven world-literary system. It chimes with new comparative methodologies that attend to the systemic quality of global capitalism and its structured unevenness./Drawing together leading critics, scholars, and students of world literature as well as editors, publishers and educationalists we will address three key practical concerns:/How do we define world literature?/How

is 'world literature' to be researched and taught?/ What issues surround publishing research in world literature?"¹

6. Workshops/talks

For the English Club for Female students:

"Feminism: The Debates" December 1, 2012

For the Academic improvement committee in the Department of English Language and Literature:

Developments in World Literature Courses: Seminar presented for the Academic Improvement committee, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, KSU, Thursday, Nov 27th 2014

For the College of Arts Research Unit:

World Literature Reading Strategies. استراتيجيات قراءة الأدب العالمي, December 15th, 2014

For the Research Centre for the Humanities at King Saud University:

- From Magical Realism to World Literature Reading Strategies , November 2014. من الواقعية السحرية إلى إستراتيجيات قراءة الأدب العالمي
- Literature Review: Analysis and , Joint workshop with Maimoonah Alkhalil, February 16th, 2015.

7. Teaching Experience

Assistant Professor:

BA courses

1. Criticism I (361 Eng) 2009-

The course traces the philosophical and critical development of Western thought in relation to art. The critical selections cover the Classical conception of art, Renaissance and the Romantic period. Major orientations of art and criticism are also emphasized as they developed from classical periods to the early nineteenth century.

2. Criticism II (461 Eng) 2009-

This course is a continuation for course 361. It is designed to continue introducing students to a variety of literary theories and their practical applications. The theories that we will consider include Deconstruction, Psychoanalytic criticism, Feminism, Marxist criticism, New Historicism, and Postcolonial criticism. Students will apply each theory to one literary or cultural works in order to define compare and contrast these major schools of thought and their impact on cultural analysis.

3. The Rise of the Novel (251 Eng) 2009

This course offers a brief introduction to the genesis and early development as well as the fundamentals of the English novel. It acquaints the student with terms such as plot, characterization, setting, native style and the like. Also some attention is given to the historical, social, and literary backgrounds of 18th century England. The emphasis, however, is on a close study of a minimum of two representative novels.

4. The 19th Century British Novel (351 Eng) 2009-2011

The course focuses on the expansiveness of the 19th Century novel with close analysis of at least two novels. Social, political, and philosophical contexts are subordinated to the

¹ http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/priorities/connectingcultures/projects/translation/world_literature_summer_school/

way the 19th century writer made use of in the novel. Novels are chosen from the output of Austen Dickens, the Brontës, Thackeray, Trollope, Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy.

5. The Modern Novel (451 Eng) 2009-2013

New historical and literary periods are generally established as a reaction to past models, ideals and philosophical foundations. This is true of the modern British novel, based loosely from the 1880s to the second half of the twentieth century. The emergence and development of the modern novel will be studied in light of empire, war, feminism, gender, psychoanalysis, avant-garde movements and theories of the novel. We will also consider the significance of innovative literary techniques such as point of view, impressionism, stream of consciousness, and authorial impersonality.

6. World Literature (381 Eng) 2015

The term “world literature” can be taken to mean “literature of the whole world,” and this course aims to introduce students to outstanding works of fiction, plays, and poems from both the Western, and non-Western parts of the world. In the lectures we will focus on questions of culture, class, and gender. All texts will be read in English translation. The course will work to develop students’ skills in thinking, close reading, and writing. The module offers students the unique opportunity to analyze in detail different ways in which cultural backgrounds can shape literary productions, and how stories, motifs and themes travel across national boundaries. Students will be exposed to significant works of literature and art interpretation and question societies and cultures, illuminating the complexity and diversity of a changing world. They will engage with the texts critically, enlarge their experience, deepen their self-awareness, connect with artists and with history, stimulate their sense of beauty and wonder, and be challenged to think critically.

MA courses

1. The History of Western Thought

This course focuses on the development of Western thought as a context necessary to a better understanding of Anglo-American literature. It particularly sheds light on those aspects of Western thought most relevant to literature and literary criticism.

2. Comparative Literature

The first course in Comparative Literature should start with a systematic introduction to the traditional areas and methods of comparative literary studies and with a discussion of contemporary theories of literature. The students must be aware of the various dimensions of comparative studies: East/West, Classical /Modern and of the different approaches through genre, form, movements and influences. The relations between Arabic and European literature should be included.

3. Modern Schools of Criticism

This course has two essential purposes: firstly to familiarize the students with major developments in 20th century Anglo-American and European literary criticism, and secondly, to develop the students' practical critical skills. The course will focus on cultural, historical, psychological, ideological and formal approaches to literature, touching on more recent development such as structuralism and deconstruction. It will also encourage the students to pay close attention to the methods a particular critic

develops her or his argument, how he/she reaches conclusions about a literary work, either complete or partial.

8. Initiatives:

- **Organizing the annual in-house seminar series on *Literature and Linguistics* for the department of English Language and Literature (2012, 2013, 2015):**

The Seminar series was initiative proposed and implement by both myself and Dr. Manal Ismail. Our aim in hosting the first in-house seminar on *Literature and Linguistics* was to engage faculty and students in an academic environment that will facilitate an exchange of information and pique interest in new areas of research. Our purpose foremost was to provide an informal forum for students to solicit constructive feedback on their research papers. We hoped to spur a supportive environment for academic growth that would empower students to further develop their research skills.

- **Co-founding the Centre of Writing in English, 2011**
- **The first interdisciplinary seminar series in the College of Arts, 2015:**

حلقة القراءة المشتركة في كلية الآداب: النهضة العربية الأولى في القرن التاسع عشر الميلادي

9. Syllabus design

Worked on and developed the following syllabi:

Graduate courses:

- 216 Eng Reading Literature (review)
- 318 Eng Survey of British Literature (review)
- 362 Eng Literary Theory and Criticism (collaboration)
- 374 Eng Survey of American Literature (review)
- 381 Eng World Literature (collaboration)
- 430 Eng The Romantic Period (review)
- 452 Eng Nineteenth Century Novel (collaboration)
- 457 Eng Modernist Fiction (collaboration)
- 466 Eng Major Non-Fictional Texts (collaboration)
- 467 Eng Modern Literary Theory
- 474 Eng American Literature 1: The Beginnings to 1900 (review)
- 475 Eng American Literature 2: 1900 to the Present (review)
- 484 Eng British Literature 1: The Beginnings to 1780 (review)
- 485 Eng British Literature 2: 1832 to the Present (review)

MA courses:

- History of Western Thought (ENGL 553)
- Postcolonial Theory and Criticism (ENGL 556)

10. Skills

Computer proficient: Word processing; Web design; Photoshop; film and sound editing Final Cut Pro.

Documentary filmmaking (metfilm school degree). Currently Supervisor of the Documentary Film Group at KSU English Club for Female Students.

11. Community Involvement / Administrative Activity

Board Member of Saudi Heritage Preservation Society 2014-

Founding member of the Saudi Heritage Preservation Society 2011. <http://www.shps.org.sa/>

Member of the strategic planning committee for the Nahda Philanthropic Organisation for Women <http://www.alnahda-ksa.org/Home.aspx>