

The Arab World as *Ghurba*

Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Literature and Popular Culture

21 June, 2019 at the University of Warwick

Funded by the Humanities Research Centre and the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies

Call for Papers / Deadline: 30 December 2018

Keynote Speaker: Dr Claire Beaugrand (University of Exeter)

The Arabic word *ghurba*, which literally means estrangement or separation, is typically used to refer to the state of being a foreigner in a land away from home, hence evoking feelings of alienation, loneliness and a strong yearning for loved ones. In our contemporary world, *ghurba* is very often associated with the migration of Arabs from Arab countries to faraway destinations, especially to the developed West. Recent political conflict in the region has intensified the flow of refugees and migrants out of the Arab world and into Europe and other destinations. Perhaps it is significant then that the word *ghurba* has the same root as *gharb*, which means west and refers to both the direction and the Western part of the world. What is absent in this understanding of Arab migration, however, is the fact that the Arab world has always been and continues to be an immigrant destination in itself, receiving flows from both inside the Arab world, what we can call inter-Arab migration, as well as from outside it. It is, in other words, also a site of *ghurba*, which prompts us to ask about how it has been experienced by migrants, about the situation of diasporic communities within it, and about the different ways in which self/other relationships and issues of identity and belonging take shape in this particular context.

This conference is interested in how migration to the Arab world appears in literature as well as culture more generally, and in what this documentation tells us about the Arab world as a migrant destination, or a place of *ghurba*. Conference papers could address but are not limited to the following topics:

- Inter-Arab migration in literature and popular culture
- Articulations of Arab identity and/or national identities in inter-Arab migratory encounters
- Representations of diasporic communities in the Arab world
- Representations of social exclusion and/or belonging
- Contestations of citizenship and national identity in literature and popular culture
- The place of low-class migrant labor in literature and popular culture
- Expatriation in the Arab world

You are invited to submit abstracts of maximum 300 words for 20-minute papers by 30 December 2018. Please send abstracts and short biographies to arabworldasghurba@gmail.com.

Conference webpage: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/hrc/confs/arab/>

Following the conference, there is the possibility of submitting a publication proposal for an edited volume with the Warwick Series in Humanities (with Routledge).