



**The Higher Institute of Applied Languages and Computer Science of Beja
(ISLAIB)**

**The Department of Languages
Organizes
AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON**

“ON HINTERLANDS AND HOMELANDS”

3-5 March 2022

Venue: Hammamet

“Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to rock and hill?” Yeats wonders rhetorically. The idea of the homeland is organically enmeshed in notions of territoriality and geography. The hinterland is most often seen as its configuration as well as figuration in literature. It is so because it represents an ideal sense of national identity, unity, and even “purity” in extreme nationalist ideologies. It is considered an ideal space insofar as it is imagined as a utopian place, a *locus amoenus*, where an unsullied form of national character is preserved in its local traditions, dialects, myths and legends. It is a pastoral world that death cannot visit. But Nicolas Poussin deconstructs such a utopian view in his famous painting: *Et in Arcadia ego*. The pastoral landscape is also strewn with crania.

Since Theocritus rurality has been associated with nostalgia for the homeland. Hinterland and homeland are synonymised. The English “country,” indeed, encodes this conflation. In nationalist imagination, the “death” of the homeland is almost always associated with colonisation or modernisation, if not both. Colonisers come as modernisers. And modernisers are either straightforward colonialists or imperialists in disguise. In this ideology, hinterlands are seen as resilient spaces, resistant geographies, and sacred places. The idea of the homeland is steeped in this politics of sanitisation of rural space, of hinterlands that lie beyond the pale. In its squalid architectures, social fragmentations, and economic fragilities, the city is always depicted as a perfect embodiment of modernity and its ills and evils. Colonialism and modernity are lumped together in nationalism. Yet such a conflation does not always do justice to modernity and its ethos.

The city is often portrayed as a fallen space, a wound, a disease corrupting the national body. Language and literature are fraught with allegories of sanitisation and Satanisation of space—rural and urban. Yet the dichotomy between the country and the city, the hinterland and the metropolis, is not always as

Manichean as it looks. The city has its lights and delights, its buzzes and noises, domes and towers, streets and excitements. It is the throbbing heart of civilisation. It is a hub of cultural and aesthetic production. It is as inspiring as nature. Wordsworth, a worshiper of hinterlands, finds himself in subliminal awe one morning in front of a London view: “Dull would he be of soul who could pass by / A sight so touching in its majesty.” Cities are centres of civilisation and civility. The city has its own miracles that the hinterland does not have.

We seek to rethink all these rigid dichotomies. The homeland, for instance, is an imaginary configuration in Salman Rushdie. For Renan, it takes form in the mind. It is a historical construct. A homeland is also a land of internecine strife and wars. It is far from being the rosy picture painted by nationalist literature. Likewise, hinterlands are not always symbolic of autonomy and tranquility. The countryside can be a place of social turmoil, economic crises, and agrarian disasters. Famines, destitution, diseases, and economic crises strike cities and hinterlands alike with similar disastrousness. Economic and ecological disasters more often than not disturb the customary quietude of hinterlands, and throws scores of people on the roads of exodus and migration. Rural and urban spaces are ridden by ambiguities and paradoxes. They defeat facile categorisation. They are, as Raymond Williams argues in *The Country and the City*, “structures of feeling,” telling more about us than them as *loci*, or, better still, more about them as *loci*, as spatial metaphors and allegories that mirror our perceptions, thoughts, negotiations, and configurations of the world around us, as well as of our being in the world (*Dasein*). The external space is nothing other than a reflection of our internal anxieties, and perhaps our felicities as well.

These geographical configurations can be seen as figurations of our psychic realities. If the city represents the superego, then the hinterland is structured like a dream-work, in the Freudian sense. It is not so much the other space as it is *the place* allowing the ego to escape the tensions of repression. In Shakespeare, the woods are loci of love and reconciliation. But they are “dark and deep” in Frost. Romanticism overvalues hinterlands for their symbolic meaning. If civilisation is built on repression, as Freud asserts, then nature is a perfect place for catharsis. Where the city is the place of sublimation, nature is then the locus of the sublime and beautiful. Yet such a categorisation, as we have suggested earlier, is not always workable, insofar as the city can also be a place of powerful sublime and sublimation experiences, unfound in the hinterland.

“On Hinterlands and Homelands” Conference invites multidisciplinary papers on these themes.

Papers should address, but not exclusively, the following issues:

- Nature versus Culture
- The country and the city
- Modernity and modernisation
- Myths of belonging, myths of homecoming
- Metropolis and colonial geographies
- Physical landscapes versus literary landscapes
- Imagined communities, Imaginary homelands
- Utopia versus dystopia
- Identities and social and political realities

- Nationalism and internationalism
- Universalism versus localism
- The *glocal* in global reality
- Allegories of landscapes and cityscapes
- The real and the imaginary
- Poetics and politics of the hinterland
- Industrial decentralisation
- Exile, exodus and migration
- Lands beyond and beyond lands
- Memory and nostalgia
- Homes and homelands
- The homely and the uncanny (*Unheimlich*)
- Eco-critical nature
- Environment and sustainable development
- Urbanisation of the country and ruralisation of the city
- Identity and language learning
- Stigmatization in language use
- The centripetal and the centrifugal in discourse
- Ethnolinguistic vitality

Scientific Committee:

- Pr. Rached Khalifa (University of El Manar)
- Pr. Mohamed Jabeur (University of Carthage)
- Pr. Sadok Bouhlila (University of Manouba)
- Pr. Mohamed Salah Harzallah (University of Sousse)
- Pr. Faiza Derbel (University of Manouba)
- Pr. Chokri Smaoui (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman)
- Pr. Mybe Cham (Howard University, U.S.A)
- Pr. Kola Abimbola (Howard University, U.S.A)
- Pr. Taoufik Djebali (University of Caen, Normandy)
- Pr. Lobna Ben Salem (University of Manouba)
- Pr. Lanouar Ben Hafsa (University of Tunis)
- Pr. Hajer Ben Driss (University of Tunis)

Important Dates:

- **Abstract Submission Deadline:** December 15, 2021
- **Notification of Acceptance:** January 10, 2022
- Please send an abstract (no more than 250 words) to this email:
hinterlandsandhomelands@gmail.com

Please specify: (1) Title of paper (2) Name of author(s) (3) Affiliation of author(s) (4) Key words (5) E-mail address.

- **The submission of full papers for publication will be announced shortly after the conference.**

Subscription Fees

Subscription Fees	2 days	3 days
Without accommodation, but including (Breakfast, coffee breaks, lunch)	95	150
With accommodation, in all inclusive	185	275

Nota Bene

1. Unit price for Tunisians: TD; for foreigners: €
2. Single room supplement: 20 TD/night
3. Hotel taxes (3 TD/night) are to be paid by participants.