

Completion Report

Affiliation: Universiti Sains Malaysia

Name: Moussa Pourya Asl

This research project delved into the intricate relationships between space, gender, and identity within contemporary Japanese and Iranian literature, with a focus on the cultural and political resistance and women's agency in reshaping spatial arrangements. Utilizing the concept of heterotopia, the study critically analyzed selected literary works in English from both countries to explore heterotopic aesthetics. The project findings illuminate how the narratives employ magical and allegorical elements to challenge dominant discourses on space, gender, and identity, thereby enabling female protagonists to reimagine individual and collective identities within liminal settings. In this regard, three main objectives are successfully achieved. First, the study conducted a detailed analysis of selected primary texts and uncovered the dynamics of heterotopia in the context of gender and spatial relations. Second, it expanded the application of the notion of heterotopia in literary studies, particularly in the exploration of gender identities and spatial dynamics. Finally, it highlighted the role of cultural and political resistance in the formation and transformation of women's identities within and against spatial arrangements in the context of Iran and Japan. The major findings of the study show that narratives by women writers from both Iran and Japan similarly contest and reflect upon the dominant discourses of space, gender, and identity through the creation of heterotopic spaces and identities. The selected narratives provide a space for female protagonists to navigate between dystopian realities, gothic settings, utopian worlds, and magic realism. In this relation, the study reaffirmed heterotopia's potential as a powerful analytical tool for understanding the complexities of space and identity in literary texts from Japan and Iran, particularly in highlighting women's resistance and agency. The project's findings have significant implications for the fields of Japanese Iranian comparative studies, feminist geography, cultural studies, and literary analysis. By exploring the heterotopic aesthetics in contemporary Japanese and Iranian fiction, this research underscored the importance of spatial dynamics in understanding gender relations and identities. It contributes to a broader comprehension of how cultural narratives can both reflect and resist dominant societal structures and offers new avenues for feminist discourse and the empowerment of women's agency in literature and beyond. Concerning the dissemination, the findings were published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at an international conference, which fostered interdisciplinary discussions among scholars in literary studies, feminist geography, and cultural studies. Building on the insights gained, future research will explore heterotopic aesthetics in a broader range of literary works and cultural contexts. Further studies will examine the intersections of race, class, and gender within spatial narratives to deepen our understanding of identity formation and resistance strategies in Japanese and Iranian literature. Finally, I express my gratitude to The Sumitomo Foundation for their support.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

19-20 September, 2022; Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia; *International Conference on Malay, Arabic and English Literature (ICMAEL 2022)*; "Gender, Space, and Fantasy: Women's Heterotopic Identities in Contemporary Japanese and Iranian Fiction"; Moussa Pourya Asl

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

- 1) Asl, Moussa Pourya. (2022). "Gender, space and counter-conduct: Iranian women's heterotopic imaginations in Rumi's City of Lies: Love, Sex, Death, and the Search for Truth in Tehran". *Gender, Place & Culture*, 29:9, 1296-1316, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2021.1975100
- 2) Asl, Moussa Pourya. (2022). Gender, Space, and Fantasy: Women's Heterotopic Identities in Contemporary Japanese and Iranian Fiction. In Norhayati Che Hat et al. (eds.), *Malay, Arabic and English Literature (ICMAEL 2022)*. USZA Press.
- 3) Asl, Moussa Pourya. (2022). "Politics of heterotopic spaces and identities in contemporary Japanese and Iranian Fiction". *Wasafiri*. (under review).

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)