

The History of Middle Eastern Literatures Revisited

The project challenges traditional readings of the histories of modern Middle Eastern literatures as ‘national literatures’ by comparing two (or more) of them with each other, and/or with simultaneous developments in European literatures.

About the project

A comparison of literary developments in two (or more) modern Middle Eastern literatures with one another and/or with simultaneous currents in other literatures in the world challenges, and gets past, the concept of ‘national literatures’ as well as the notorious narrative of a ‘lagging behind’. Instead of looking for national or regional specificity (though not denying it), this approach aims at detecting and highlighting the traits which these literatures have in common in a given period. As a result, modern Middle Eastern literatures can be shown to be ‘global’ already since their beginnings in the 19th century (and perhaps also earlier). For studies concerned with the ‘great’ literatures this may mean a painful withdrawal from their position as the defining power. But without the insight into the ‘multilinguism’ of modernism it is not possible to grasp the fact that ‘modernism is at the same time both specific and universal’ (R. Schulze).

The project Exploring Post-Postmodernism can be seen as part of the project.

The ESF Exploratory Workshop West Reads East – Interdependent Hermeneutics of European and Middle Eastern Literatures has been one of the project's major activities.

Related teaching

- MØNA1300 Litteraturhistorie og språkforhold i Midtøsten og Nord-Afrika. For the course's Wiki [click here](#).
- ARA4303 Modern Arabic Fiction and Dramatic Arts