

## Commitment and Dissent in Arabic Literature since the 1950s

CONFERENCE, 27-29 JUNE 2013, Marburg

As the ongoing popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa challenge traditional paradigms for understanding the region's politics and culture this conference strives to return to the conceptual beginnings of literary commitment in the Arab world.

In the highly politicized period of the 1950s Jean Paul Sartre's concept "littérature engagée" was appropriated by Arab intellectuals through its translation as iltizām (engagement/commitment) which served as the benchmark for literary production in the subsequent period.

Looking at commitment and dissent in literature from a conceptual perspective as well as historically and by way of case studies, the conference traces notions of political agency, dissent, and opposition in Arabic literature at the heyday of political ideologies and literary engagement during the 1950s and early 1960s, in postmodern approaches and in recent revolutionary contexts. It questions popular notions about the changing role of literature and the intellectual in society since the 1950s.

The conference will provide theoretical lectures and empirical case studies hoping to engage a discussion both on established terminologies and historizations / periodizations of Arab literary engagement. In a roundtable discussion, the overarching focus of commitment and dissent in literature will be expanded by looking at contemporary art to gain a comparative interdisciplinary perspective.

The conference is a follow-up of the workshop The Middle East from Below – Dynamics of Subversion hosted at Marburg University in December 2011 and the Summer Academy Aesthetics and Politics held in cooperation with EUME and the AUC in September 2012 in Cairo, and is part of an ongoing project of our interdisciplinary research group over the coming years.

Convened by

**EUME**



Philipps



Universität  
Marburg

Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies

Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe  
is a research program at the

Forum  
Transregionale  
Studien

The convenors would like to thank



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International Conference  
June 27-29, 2013

THURSDAY, JUNE 27

Keynote, 6:15 pm

**Samia Mehrez** (Cairo)  
*The Making of a Revolutionary Culture*

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

Opening, 9:30 am

**Friederike Pannewick** (Marburg)

10:00-12:30 pm

Conceptual History of Literary Engagement

Chair: **Georges Khalil** (EUME, Berlin)

10:00-11:00  
**Elias Khoury** (Beirut/New York)  
*Beyond Commitment*

Coffee break

11:30-12:30  
**Yoav Di-Capua** (Austin, TX)  
*Between Existentialism and Socialist-Realism: The Intellectual Revolt of the 1950s*

Lunch

2:00-5:30 pm

Manifestations of Commitment

Chair: **Friederike Pannewick** (Marburg)

2:00-3:00  
**Sonja Mejcher-Atassi** (Beirut)  
*Political Commitment in Munif and Jabra: From Political Activism to Leaving Traces, Recollecting Presence, and Aesthetic Contemplation*

3:00-4:00  
**Zeina G. Halabi** (Chapel Hill, NC/EUME, Berlin)  
*The End of Exile: Refiguring the Displaced Intellectual in Contemporary Arabic Literature and Film*

Coffee break

4:30-5:30  
**Refqa Abu-Remaileh** (Oxford/EUME, Berlin)  
*Post-Commitment Resistance: A Look at Ghassan Kanafani and Emile Habibi*

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

9:30-1:00 pm

Postmodernity and Beyond

Chair: **Charlotte Pardey** (Marburg)

9:30-10:30  
**Tarek El-Ariss** (Austin, TX/EUME, Berlin)  
*Ghazali, Shidyaaq, Said: Towards a New Genealogy of Dissent*

10:30-11:30  
**Stephan Guth** (Oslo)  
*Avatar and 'Azazil – Western and Middle Eastern Patterns of Individual Revolt. An Essay in the Simultaneity of Ruptures*

Coffee break

12:00-1:00  
**Christian Junge** (Berlin)  
*Emotion and Criticism – The Kifaya-Rhetoric in Pre-revolutionary Egyptian Literature*

Lunch

2:30-4:30 pm

Locating the Political in Art and Literature  
Interdisciplinary Round Table

Moderation:  
**Yvonne Albers** (Marburg)  
**Hanan Toukan** (London/EUME, Berlin)

Discussants:  
**Randa Aboubakr** (Cairo/Marburg)  
**Yazid Anani** (Ramallah/EUME, Berlin)  
**Sonja Mejcher-Atassi** (Beirut)  
**Iman Mersal** (Edmonton/EUME, Marburg)  
**Dina Ramadan** (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY/EUME, Berlin)

Coffee break