Abbasid Belles Lettres The Cambridge History Of Arabic Literature

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Walter Cohen argues that the history of European literature and each of its standard periods can be illuminated by comparative consideration of the different literary languages within Europe and by the ties of European literature to world literature. World literature is marked by recurrent, systematic features, outcomes of the way that language and literature are at once the products of major change and its agents. Cohen tracks these features from ancient times to the present, distinguishing five main overlapping stages. Within that framework, he shows that European literatures ongoing internal and external relationships are most visible at the level of form rather than of thematic statement or mimetic representation. European literature emerges from world literature before the birth of Europe — during antiquity, whose Classical languages are the heirs to the complex heritage of Afro-Eurasia. This legacy is later transmitted by Latin to the various vernaculars. The uniqueness of the process lies in the gradual displacement of the learned language by the vernacular, long dominated by Romance literatures. That development subsequently informs the second crucial differentiating dimension of European literature: the multicontinental expansion of its languages and characteristic genres, especially the novel, beginning in the Renaissance. This expansion ultimately results in the reintegration of European literature into world literature and thus in the creation of todays global literary system. The distinctiveness of European literature is to be found in these interrelated trajectories.

At the heart of this book is a spectral theory of world literature that draws on Edward Said, Aamir Mufti, Jacques Derrida and world-systems theory to assess how the field produces local literature as an “eother” that haunts its universalising, assimilative imperative with the force of the uncanny. It takes the Middle Eastern novel as both metonym and metaphor of a spectral world literature. It explores the worlding of novels from the Middle East in recent years, and, focusing on the pivotal sites of Middle Eastern modernity (Egypt, Turkey, Iran), argues that lost to their global production, circulation and reception is their constitution in the logic of spectrality. With the intention of redressing this imbalance, it critically restores their engagements with the others of Middle Eastern modernity and shows, through a new reading of the Middle Eastern novel, that world literature is always-already haunted by its others, the ghosts of modernity.

This book offers a comprehensive reinterpretation of Sh?fi’s “Ris?la” and shows how Sh?fi sought to formulate an all-embracing hemeneutic that portrays the law as a tightly interlocking structure organized around defined interactions of the Qur n and the Sunna.

This book explores the long history of the evolution of Arab political identity, which predates the time of the Prophet Muhammad and is characterized by tolerance, compassion, generosity, hospitality, self-control, correct behaviour, equality and consensus. The author argues that present-day struggles in many Arab countries to redefine politics and politics are related to the fact that the underlying political culture of the Abbasids has been overridden for centuries by successive political regimes which have deviated from the original political culture that the Prophet adhered to. The book outlines the political culture that existed before Islam, examines how the Conquests and the rule of the early dynasties (Umayyad and Abbasid) of the Islamic world found it necessary to override it, and analyses the effect of rule by non-Arabs – successively Mamluks, Ottoman Turks and Western colonial powers. It discusses the impact of these distortions on present day politics in the Arab world, and concludes by appealing for a reawakening of, and respect for, the cultural elements underlying the origins of Arab political identity.

This book – the third and concluding volume of the series on “Submerged Literature” in ancient Greek culture – expands the approach presented in the previous volumes to a comparative perspective. The case studies range from Qur’anic texts to Arabic-Islamic literature, from ancient Rome to gnostic texts, with a particular emphasis on anthropological themes and methods, aiming to offer new insights for both classical and comparative studies.


A compelling look at the Fatimid caliphate's robust culture of documentation The lost archive of the Fatimid caliphate (909–1171) survived in an unexpected place: the storage room, or geniza, of a synagogue in Cairo, recycled as scrap paper and deposited there by medieval Jews. Marina Rustow tells the story of this extraordinary find, inviting us to reconsider the longstanding but mistaken consensus that before 1500 the dynasties of the Islamic Middle East produced few documents, and preserved even fewer. Beginning with government documents before the Fatimids and paper's westward spread across Asia, Rustow reveals a medieval tradition of state record keeping whose very continuities suggest the strength of Middle Eastern institutions, not their weakness. Tracing the complex routes by which Arabic documents made their way from Fatimid palace officials to Jewish scribes, the book provides a rare window onto a robust culture of documentation and archiving not only comparable to that of medieval Europe, but, in many cases, surpassing it. Above all, Rustow argues that the problem of archives in the medieval Middle East lies not with the region's administrative culture, but with our failure to understand preindustrial documentary ecology. Illustrated with stunning examples from the Cairo Geniza, this compelling book advances our understanding of documents as physical artifacts, showing how the records of the Fatimid caliphate, once recovered, deciphered, and studied, can help change our thinking about the medieval Islamicate world and about premodern politics more broadly.

This is the first English translation of the Tarikh al-Mustabsir, written in the early quarter of the thirteenth century by Ibn al-Mujawir. The text is a fascinating account of the western and southern areas of the Arabic Peninsula by a man from the east of the Islamic world, probably from Khurasan in Iran. Ibn al-Mujawir was a man who in all probability followed the age-old Islamic practice of making the pilgrimage to Mecca and thereafter travelling in the area to further his business interests. His route began in Mecca and essentially ran south through the Red Sea coastal plain, Tihama, down into the Yemen and along the southern coast of the peninsula. He paused long in Aden, where he observed closely the activities of the port to report at some length on its administration, its taxes, its markets, its currency, its weights and measures, and the like. His route then continued along the southern coast of Arabia into the Gulf, and he presumably returned home to the east via Iraq. The author is a wonderful observer of people: their buildings, their dress, their customs, their agriculture, their food and their history. This book is a unique source for the social, economic history of thirteenth-century south Arabia, written with a humour and wit otherwise unknown in the writings of medieval Islam. The text is of major linguistic importance too, written as it is in a far from classical Arabic. This translation is fully annotated with an introduction, appendices, glossary and full index, and contains maps and illustrations.

Studies in Islamic Civilization draws upon the works of Western scholars to make the case that without the tremendous contribution of the Muslim world there would have been no Renaissance in Europe. For almost a thousand years Islam was arguably one of the leading civilizations of the world spanning a geographic area greater than any other. It eliminated social distinctions between classes and races, made clear that people should enjoy the bounties of the earth provided they did not ignore morals and ethics, and rescued knowledge that would have been lost, if not forever, then at least for centuries. The genius of its scholars triggered the intellectual tradition of Europe and for over seven hundred years its language, Arabic, was the international language of science. Strange then that its legacy lies largely ignored and buried in time. In the words of Aldous Huxley, “Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have by the most eloquent denunciations.” Studies in Islamic Civilization is a compelling attempt to redress this wrong and restore the historical truths of a “golden age” that ushered in the Islamic renaissance, and as a by-product of the West. In doing so it gives a bird's eye view of the achievements of a culture that at its height was considered the model of human progress and development. (2010).
This collected volume publishes the contributions of numerous scholars to the International Symposium Humor in Arabic Culture, by the editor in July 2007 at the Free University of Berlin. First of all, a critical view is taken of early Muslim religious writings — and against the background of relevant Jewish and Christian pronouncements — to determine more closely the Islamic discourse on the value and non-value of humor; here too the question is examined of the extent to which normative forces were thus released which were able to set boundaries for Arabic humor. Then the wide spectrum of the humorous in classical Arabic literature is reviewed and the common elements connecting the multifarious forms of its expression are revealed as a traditional Arabic understanding of humor. Finally, the papers discuss the way Arabic humor has changed with the onset of the modern age and globalization and examine the role of humor as a vehicle of social and political criticism in Arabic societies.

The Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion provides scholarly coverage of the religion, culture and history of the Islamic world, at a time when that world is undergoing considerable change and is a focus of international study and debate. The non-Muslim world's perceptions of Islam have often tended to be dominated by unrepresentative and radical extremist movements and media interpretations of events involving such movements, to the extent that many people are unaware of the depth and variety of Islamic thought. At the same time, many who have had a formal training in Islamic studies have tended to concentrate on the traditional, to the exclusion of the contemporary. The Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion covers the full range of Islamic thought, in historical depth, but it also provides substantial coverage of contemporary trends across the Muslim world. With well over a thousand entries on Islamic theology, history, arts, science, law and institutions, and coverage of Islam in individual countries and cities around the world, the Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion provides an extremely rich resource for students and researchers in religious studies and Middle Eastern studies. Entries are cross-referenced and bibliographies are provided. There is a full index. Routledge published The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia in 2005, an excellent companion to the Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion.

The first volume in a three-volume set, this is a study of the rise of Persian Sufi spirituality and literature in Islam during the first six Muslim centuries. This collection of 24 essays covers the key achievements of the Muslim intellectual and cultural tradition in history, mysticism, philosophy and poetry. It demonstrates the positive role played by Sufi thinkers during this period. The subjects covered include: Sufi masters and schools; literature and poetry; spiritual chivalry; divine love; Persian Sufi literature - Rumi and 'Attar.

MIRRORS FOR PRINCES


Translation-related activities from and into Arabic have significantly increased in the last few years, in both scope and scale. The launch of a number of national translation projects, policies and awards in a number of Arab countries, together with the increasing translation from Arabic in a wide range of subject areas outside the Arab World — especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring — have complicated and diversified the dynamics of the translation industry involving Arabic. The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Translation seeks to explicate Arabic translation practice, pedagogy and scholarship, with the aim of producing a state-of-the-art reference book that maps out these areas and meets the pedagogical and research needs of advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as active researchers.

"The Arabian Nights" has become a synonym for the fabulous and the exotic. Every child is familiar with the stories of Aladdin, Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba. Yet very few people, even specialists in oriental literature, have a clear idea of when the book was written or what exactly it is. Far from being a batch of stories for children, "The Arabian Nights" contains hundreds of narratives of all kinds - fables, epics, erotica, debates, fairy tales, political allegories, mystical anecdotes and comedies. It is a labyrinth of stories within stories. Widely held in contempt in the Middle East for its frivolity and occasional obscenity, the work has nevertheless had a major influence on European and American culture, to the extent that the story collection must be...
considered as a key work in Western literature. A full understanding of the writings of Voltaire, Dickens, Melville, Proust and Borges, or indeed of the origins of science fiction, is impossible without some familiarity with the stories of the "Nights". This companion aims to guide the reader into this labyrinth of storytelling. It traces the development of the stories from prehistoric India and Pharaonic Egypt to modern times, and explores the history of translation and imitation. Above all, it uses the stories as a guide to the social history and counter-culture of the medieval Near East and the world of the storyteller, the snake charmer, the burglar, the sorcerer, the drug-addict, the treasure hunter and the adulterer.

A major achievement in the field of translation, this anthology presents a rich assortment of classical Arabic poems and literary prose, from pre-Islamic times until the 18th century, with short introductions to guide non-specialist students and informative endnotes and bibliography for advanced scholars. Like many pre-modern Arabic anthologies it aims at being both entertaining and informative. It ranges from the early Bedouin poems with their evocation of desert life to refined urban lyrical verse, from tender love poetry to sonorous eulogy or vicious lampoons, and from the heights of mystical rapture to the frivolity of comic verse. The prose contains anecdotes, entertaining or edifying tales and parables, a fairy-tale, a bawdy story, samples of literary criticism, and much more. With this anthology, distinguished Arabist Geert J an van Gelder brings together well-known texts as well as less familiar pieces that will be new even to scholars in the field. Many recent studies and anthologies of Middle Eastern literatures are primarily interested in Islam and religious matters—an emphasis that leads to the common misconception that almost everything in the region was and is dominated by religion. Classical Arabic Literature instead brings to life the rich variety of pre-modern Arabic social and cultural life, where secular texts happily coexisted with religious ones. This masterful anthology, in English only, will introduce this vibrant literary heritage to a wide spectrum of new readers.

This reference work covers the classical, transitional and modern periods. Editors and contributors cover an international scope of Arabic literature in many countries.

In this groundbreaking book, Selina O'Grady examines how and why the post-Christian and the Islamic worlds came to be as tolerant or intolerant as they are. She asks whether tolerance can be expected to heal today's festering wound between these two worlds, or whether something deeper than tolerance is needed. Told through contemporary chronicles, stories and poems, Selina O'Grady takes the reader through the intertwined histories of the Muslim, Christian and Jewish persecutors and persecuted. From Umar, the seventh century Islamic caliph who laid down the rules for the treatment of religious minorities in what was becoming the greatest empire the world has ever known, to Magna Carta John who seriously considered converting to Islam; and from al-Wahhab, whose own brother thought he was illiterate and fanatical, but who created the religious-military alliance with the house of Saud that still survives today, to Europe's bloody Thirty Years war that wearied Europe of murderous inter-Christian violence but probably killed God in the process. This book is an essential guide to understanding Islam and the West today and the role of religion in the modern world.

How Do You Say "Epigram" in Arabic? is the first study of one of the most popular and enduring genres in the history of Arabic poetry, the maqṣūra, and a contribution toward a decolonized comparative literature.

When the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads in 750 CE and ushered in Islam's Golden Age, ideas about gender and sexuality were central to the process by which the caliphate achieved self-definition and articulated its systems of power and thought. Nadia Maria El Cheikh's study reveals the importance of women to the writing of early Islamic history.


During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Andalusian Jewish poets introduced philosophical theories into their devotional verse. This study explores the impact of their rich intellectual and cultural life on their Hebrew poems devoted to the soul.

This companion offers a wide-ranging introduction to the rapidly expanding field of translation studies, bringing together some of the best recent scholarship to present its most important current themes. Features new work from well-known scholars. Includes a broad range of geo-linguistic and theoretical perspectives. Offers an up-to-date overview of an expanding field.
This volume covers artistic prose and poetry produced in the `Abbasid empire from the mid-eighth to the thirteenth centuries AD.

Wissensvermittlung im Gespräch ist die erste Monographie über die Verwendung der Dialogform in der arabischen Literatur. Regula Forster untersucht dazu ein umfangreiches Corpus klassisch-arabischer Dialoge ganz unterschiedlichen Inhalts (Religion, Jusprudenz, Alchemie, Geschichte etc.). This is the first book-length study about the usage of the literary dialogue in Arabic literature. Regula Forster studies an extensive corpus of Classical Arabic dialogues on very different subjects (religion, jurisprudence, alchemy, history, etc.).

The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society received an honourable mention from the British-Kuwait Friendship Society at BRISMES 2009. Writing letters was an important component of intellectual life in the Middle Islamic period, telling us much about the cultural history of pre-modern Islamic society. This book offers a unique analysis of letter-writing, focusing on the notion of the power of the pen. The author looks at the wider context of epistolography, relating it to the power structures of Islamic society in that period. He also attempts to identify some of the similarities and differences between Muslim modes of letter-writing and those of western cultures. One of the strengths of this book is that it is based on a wide range of primary Arabic sources, thus reflecting the broader epistemological importance of letter-writing in Islamic society.

Offering a new reading of Islamic ethical and political thought in the Būyid period (334–440/946–1048), this book focuses particularly on the philosopher Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, who lived in Baghdad and what is now western Iran. Ethics in Islam provides the first major treatment of al-Tawhīdī’s ethics, political thought, and social idealism, investigating the complex influences that shaped this thought and especially his concept of friendship, which is analysed in the unique context of Būyid society. Al-Tawhīdī revives the value of friendship in politics. He introduces it as the best way to reform social and political order and as a means to the good life, to restrain passion and self-interest, to bring about cooperation and promote reason, and for action in opposition to religious zeal. Instead of seeing him as alienated from society, supposedly rejecting traditional Muslim beliefs, this book places him in his historical and intellectual contexts, and shows that while he was original in many ways, his outlook was firmly rooted in the Islamic culture in which he was educated. Contributing to modern discussions of Islam and political ethics, this book is of interest to scholars and researchers of political philosophy, comparative ethical thought and Islamic studies.

This volume deals with the medieval shu'biyyah movement (in which non-Arab Muslims sought equality of power and status with Arabs) in al-Andalus, Muslim Spain. By analysing a letter composed by Ibn Garcia during the 11th century, the tensions between Arab and non-Arab Muslims are discussed in detail. Symbols, stories and legends used in the shu'biyyah corpus of writings are analysed in the light of the political and theological development in al-Andalus and the Muslim world. Authority, legitimacy and power are central both to the discussion of Ibn Garcia’s letter and the history of the shu’biyyah movement. The first part gives the historical background to the history of al-Andalus. Ethnic conflicts and tensions related to authority and power are of special interest. The second part, gives a detailed analysis of Ibn Garcia’s shu’biyyah letter in relation to the historical and contemporary situation in al-Andalus.

‘Outstanding, illuminating, compelling a riveting read’ Peter Frankopan, Sunday Times Islamic civilization was once the envy of the world. From a succession of glittering, cosmopolitan capitals, Islamic empires lorded it over the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and swathes of the Indian subcontinent. For centuries the caliphate was both ascendant on the battlefield and triumphant in the battle of ideas, its cities unrivalled powerhouses of artistic grandeur, commercial power, spiritual sanctity and forward-looking thinking. Islamic Empires is a history of this rich and diverse civilization told through its greatest cities over fifteen centuries, from the beginnings of Islam in Mecca in the seventh century to the astonishing rise of Doha in the twenty-first. It dwells on the most remarkable dynasties ever to lead the Muslim world - the Abbasids of Baghdad, the Umayyads of Damascus and Cordoba, the Merinids of Fez, the Ottomans of Istanbul, the Mughals of India and the Safavids of Isfahan - and some of the most charismatic leaders in Muslim history, from Saladin in Cairo and mighty Tamerlane of Samarkand to the poet-prince Babur in his mountain kingdom of Kabul and the irresistible Maktoum dynasty of Dubai. It focuses on these fifteen cities at some of the defining moments in Islamic history: from the Prophet Mohammed receiving his divine revelations in Mecca and the First Crusade of 1099 to the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the phenomenal creation of the merchant republic of Beirut in the nineteenth century.

Insights into power, spectacle, and performance in the courts of Middle Eastern rulers. In recent decades, scholars have produced much new research on courtly life in medieval Europe, but studies on imperial and royal courts across the Middle East have received much less attention, particularly for courts before 1500AD. In the Presence of Power, however, sheds new light on courtly life across the region. This insightful, exploratory collection of essays uncovers surprising commonalities across a broad swath of cultures. The pre-modern period in this volume includes roughly seven centuries, opening with the first dynasty of Islam, the Umayyads, whose reign marked an important watershed for Late Antique culture, and closing with the rule of the so-called "gunpowder" empires of the Ottomans and Safavids over much of the Near East in the sixteenth century. In between, this volume locates similarities across the Western Medieval, Byzantine and Islamicate courtly cultures, spanning a vast history and geography to demonstrate the important cross-pollinations that occurred between their literary and cultural legacies. This study does not presume the presence of one shared courtly institution across time and space, but rather seeks to understand the different ways in which contemporaries experienced and spoke about these places of power and performance. Adopting a very broad view of performances, In the Presence of Power includes exuberant expressions of love in Arabic stories, shadow plays in Mamluk Cairo, Byzantine storytelling, religious food traditions in Christian Cyprus, advice, and political and ethnographic performances of power.

A vital analysis of world literature through history. What constitutes a nation's literature? How do literatures of different countries interact with one another? In this groundbreaking study, Alexander Beecroft develops a new way of thinking about world literature. Drawing on a series of examples and case studies, the book ranges from ancient epic to the contemporary fiction of Roberto Bolaño and Amitav Ghosh. Moving across literary ecologies of varying sizes, from small societies to the planet as a whole, the environments in which literary texts are produced and circulated, An Ecology of World Literature places in dialogue scholarly perspectives on ancient and modern, western and non-western texts, navigating literary study into new and uncharted territory.

Arabs and Iranians in the Islamic Conquest Narrative analyzes how early Muslim historians merged the pre-Islamic histories of the Arab and Iranian peoples into a didactic narrative culminating with the Arab conquest of Iran. This book provides an in-depth examination of Islamic historical accounts of the encounters between representatives of these two peoples that took place in the centuries prior to the coming of Islam. By doing this, it uncovers anachronistic projections of dynamic identity and political discourses within the contemporaneous Islamic world. It shows how the formulaic placement of such embellishment within the context of the narrative served to justify the Arabs' rise to power, whilst also explaining the fall of the Iranian Sassanian empire. The objective of this book is not simply to mine Islamic historical chronicles for the factual data they contain about the pre-Islamic period, but rather to understand how the authors of these works thought about this era. By investigating the intersection between early Islamic memory, identity construction, and power discourses, this book will benefit researchers and students of Islamic history and literature and Middle Eastern Studies.

Abundance from the Desert provides a comprehensive introduction to classical Arabic poetry, one of the richest of poetic traditions. Covering the period roughly of 500–1250 C.E., it features original translations and illuminating discussions of a number of major classical Arabic poems from a variety of genres. The poems are presented chronologically, each situated within a specific historical and literary context. Together, the selected poems suggest the range and depth of classical Arabic poetic expression; read in sequence, they suggest the gradual evolution of a tradition. Moving beyond a mere chronicle, Farrin outlines a new approach to appreciating classical Arabic poetry based on an awareness of concentric symmetry, in which the poem's unity is viewed not as a linear progression but as an elaborate symmetrical plot. In doing so, the author presents these works in a broader, comparative light, revealing connections with other literatures. The reader is invited to examine these classical Arabic works not as isolated phenomena—notwithstanding their uniqueness and their association with a discrete tradition—but rather as part of a great multicultural heritage. This pioneering book marks an important step forward in the study of Arabic poetry. At the same time, it opens the door to this rich tradition for the general reader.

In Licit Magic: The Life and Letters of al-Ḥabbāb b. Ḥabbāb (d. 385/995) Maurice A. Pomerantz explores the biography and literary output of a major tenth-century Muslim statesman, literary patron, and intellectual.

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