

**The Journal as Form:  
Re-Thinking Approaches to the Study of Arabic Periodicals**

International Workshop

11-13 November 2021, online (CET/Berlin time)

The workshop is convened by Barbara Winckler (University of Münster), Anne-Marie McManus (Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin), and Yvonne Albers (University of Marburg/Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin), in cooperation with EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST - THE MIDDLE EAST IN EUROPE (EUME) at the Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin. It is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, through a Dilthey Fellowship based at the University of Münster.

If you would like to attend the workshop, please contact us via email for the login details: [journal@uni-muenster.de](mailto:journal@uni-muenster.de)

---

## **ABOUT THE WORKSHOP**

Many of the intellectual and cultural debates in the Middle East and North Africa of the 19th and 20th centuries were shaped by journals, from the convoluted generalist magazines of the Nahḍa to the little magazines of cultural avant-gardes. Even as today's print culture practices are under pressure from digital methods of publishing, the journal has proven both resilient and flexible, adapting to online formats in new coexistences with contemporary social media. Yet despite this complex formal and transhistorical life, the journal as a form tends to drop into the background of analysis. On one hand, scholars committed to close textual reading can remove poems, short stories, and essays from their original publishing homes, treating them as autonomous works. On the other hand, scholars committed to reading journals in their role as sociocultural and political institutions, notably in the twentieth century, turn to the archive, sociological and circulatory networks, and the formations and biographies of intellectual generations. Most of these scholarly enterprises that rely extensively on the periodical as sources only rarely engage with its distinctive form. Journals are treated either as incidental holders for literary works, or as mere vessels for, or mirrors of, the political, social, and cultural debates of their times.

An investigation of the journal — in its varied historical and contemporary forms —, in contrast, promises to map new methodological pathways that draw on these approaches while also cutting across their apparent boundaries. The workshop, “The Journal as Form: Re-Thinking Approaches to the Study of Arabic Periodicals”, will track the periodical over time as a form with distinctive rules and conventions. Its focus draws inspiration from recent trends in cultural and periodical studies that look at the journal as an “autonomous object of study” (Latham/Scholes) and a specific medium “with its own distinctive dynamics, its own function and agency” (Philpotts).

Closed, thematic sessions will invite participants to explore reading journals across their textual (and other) contents, wider contexts, and sociopolitical agency (whether historical, produced/performed, or both). Questions of history, politics, and material culture can thereby be studied and understood from within the journal as form, critically transforming our modes of close reading as well as the understood corpus of the journal. As Eric Bulson's work on the global little magazine has shown, this form includes not only familiar genres like poetry, short stories, and essays, but images, maps, subscription information, advertisements, readers' letters, and more. The analysis of these elements, a variety typical of the periodical, as well as the interplay between them facilitates insights into the journal as a specific cultural form.

## PROGRAM

### THURSDAY, 11 November

**16:00-16:30**                    **Welcome & Introduction**

**16:30-17:45**                    **Panel 1: Composition**

A particular characteristic of the journal is its mixed form, with each issue typically comprised of heterogeneous contributions and genres. Journals are often organized into distinct sections that reflect their specific character and contribute to diversity of the journal as form(s). In this panel, we will discuss questions related to the composition of journal issues, such as the logic of organization and the interplay between various sections, different text types, and texts and images. How can we conceptualize this heterogeneous form and its organization? How could concepts originating from other research areas, such as paratextuality or flow, be adapted to the specifics of the journal form? And what is the impact of this fragmented, episodic form on reading practices and knowledge production and dissemination?

**Hala Auji (American University Beirut/ Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin):** Visuality and Visual Literacy in Early Arabic Periodicals (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Arturo Monaco (University of Catania):** The Form of the Arabic Surrealist Magazine: The Case of *al-Ġurfah al-suryāliyyah* (2020) (roundtable/presentation)

**Barbara Winckler (University of Münster):** Paratexts/Peritexts, Interplay, and (A)Hierarchical Relations between Sections, Texts, and Images: Reflections on the Potential of Concepts to Grasp the Journal's Heterogenous Form (pre-circulated video/paper)

Moderated by: **Dounia Badini (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris)**

**17:45-18:00**                    **Break**

**18:00-19:15**                      **Panel 2: Seriality**

Seriality is one of the essential characteristics of periodical publishing. Authors, editors and readers thus face the challenges of discontinuous production and reception processes but also make use of the potentialities of the serial form. Seriality, however, is also characteristic of many other media, such as cinema and radio as well as blogs. This panel will discuss various forms and strategies of seriality across media, as well as methods and ways to approach them, exploring, for example, the tension between discontinuous reading and coherence-forming practices, or between the journal's both 'open' and 'closed' form: What are the specifics of the serial form in a particular medium, how does seriality differ from one medium to another, or how does it 'translate' across media?

**Michael Allan (University of Oregon):** Seriality and Media: Impressions of Global Cinema in *al-Muqtataf* (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Teresa Pepe (University of Oslo):** The Autofictional Blog as a Form in Arabic Literature (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Walter Armbrust (University of Oxford):** The Illustrated Magazine in Egypt as a New Medium (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Anne-Marie McManus (Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin):** Cigarette Packs and Blanket Threads: The Case for Making a Journal in Prison (pre-circulated video/paper)

Moderated by: **Barbara Winckler**

**FRIDAY, 12 November**

**16:00-17:15**                      **Panel 3: Temporality**

This panel is all about time and the journal. If we consider the journal as a form that is both structured by time and a time-structuring form, we become aware of the different parallel and competing temporalities journals both represent and produce. The panel will discuss this form's relation to (literary) history and (literary) history-writing; to timeliness and anachronism; and to local and global times. It will also expand our focus on the periodical form towards questions of serialization, temporality, and mercantilist exchange.

**Robyn Creswell (Yale University):** Magazines and the Poetics of Occasion (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Elizabeth M. Holt (Bard College):** Mercantilism as Form: When Sindbad Met Robinson (roundtable/presentation)

**Yvonne Albers (University of Marburg/Forum Transregionale Studien):** In Sync / Out of Time: Temporalities of an Arab Journal in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century (pre-circulated video/paper)

Moderated by: **Hoda El Shakry**

**17:15-17:30**            **Break**

**17:30-18:45**            **Panel 4: Worldliness**

The contributions to this panel tease out the shifting forms and modes of worldliness enacted by and on the pages of journals. A key methodological gesture is the tracking of print culture networks, which include the production of journals as material objects, correspondences and debates between journal participants, and the canonization (and/or neglect) of journals as local and/or global actors. The worldliness of the journal invites readings of the local, regional, and global as mutually imbricated and historically situated scales, as well as the imagined worlds and readers of journals and those they call into being. The panel will explore how careful attention to the journal as form calls for new theories and accounts of worldliness.

**Zeina Maasri (University of Brighton):** Exorcising Imperialist Ghosts, Wrestling with *Hiwar*'s Visual Form (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Hoda El Shakry (University of Chicago):** Literary Worlds and World Literature: *Al-'Alam al-Adabī* (1930-1936) (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Itzea Goikolea-Amiano (University of London):** Form in the Moroccan Colonial Journals *Al-Motamid* (1947-56) and *Al-Ketama* (1953-59): Literary Knowledge and the Paraliterary Space (pre-circulated video/paper)

Moderated by: **Michael Allan**

## SATURDAY, 13 November

**16:00-17:15**            **Panel 5: Doing Journals**

This panel approaches magazine-making as a core intellectual practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and discusses its legacy in the new millennium. People 'do journals' (e.g., edit or assist in editing journals; write for journals, etc.) for numerous reasons: to distribute new texts; to debut or consolidate one's position in the literary/cultural field; to be part of a social group or network and its capital; to promote political/cultural/aesthetic ideas; to fashion oneself as a public intellectual, etc. The panel explores *why* cultural actors from Morocco, Iraq, Syria and other Arab countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century have been fascinated by the act of 'doing journals' and its promises; how they conceived of the political/social/cultural/historical role of this medium; to what extent this practice plays a role in (retrospective) self-narrations of Arab cultural actors.

**Amir Moosavi (Rutgers University):** Even Now, Another World is Possible: Aesthetics and Politics in *Al-Badil*'s Fight for Liberation in Iraq and Beyond (roundtable/presentation)

**Otared Haidar (University of Oxford):** Arabic Cultural Journalism: New Writing for New Reality (roundtable/presentation)

**Adélie Chevée (European University Institute):** The Politics of Materiality in Syrian Revolutionary Newspapers (roundtable/presentation)

Moderated by: **Yvonne Albers**

**17:15-17:30 Break**

**17:30-18:45 Panel 6: Archives, Methods**

The closing panel of the workshop will invite speakers and all participants to reflect on the methods proper to the study of journals through the question of the archive. Journals present the researcher with an inexhaustibly diverse set of archival questions: what to do with a fragmentary archive, for example, or with an impossibly large one? How do we select an archive from within the myriad materials presented by journals? What are the implications of *making* journal archives today? Speakers will draw on their research experiences to offer insights on these and other methodological questions, including how scholars may draw on other disciplinary methods and debates, with a view to outlining some initial methodologies for the journal as form(s).

**Refqa Abu-Remaileh (Freie Universität Berlin/Forum Transregionale Studien):** Periodicals in the PalREAD Database (roundtable/presentation)

**Nevine Fayek (University of Münster):** Overlooked Egyptian Avant-garde Journals of the 1930s: Reframing a Canonized Historical Narrative of *al-shi'r al-manthur* (roundtable/presentation)

**Till Grallert (Humboldt University Berlin):** How Did They Do It? First Attempts at Tackling the Question of Authorship with Computational Methods (pre-circulated video/paper)

**Hala Halim (New York University):** *Lotus* journal, the Cairo Years: Overview and Methodological Questions (roundtable/presentation)

Moderated by: **Refqa Abu-Remaileh**

**18:45-19:30 Final Discussion**