Writing the War between Ambivalence and Loss: Arabic and Persian Literatures after the Iran-Iraq War

talk by
Amir Moosavi

This talk treats the use of modernist literary aesthetics in writing about the Iran-Iraq War in the early postwar period in Iran and Iraq (1988-2003). Moosavi contends that writers of prose-fiction from both countries resorted to such aesthetics—in opposition to the wartime, state-sponsored heroic realisms—to simultaneously defang the official war narratives of each country from their entrenched binarism, as well as develop narratives of loss around the war. Their texts create an alternative literary discourse around the Iran-Iraq War that harnesses loss as a productive factor in writing about the war, challenging official narratives that were developed during the 1980s.

Amir Moosavi is a PhD candidate and a 2015-16 Carola Collier Berthelot Trust Fellow in NYU’s Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. His dissertation, “Reimagining a War: Negotiating Ideology and Disenchantment in Literary Narratives of the Iran-Iraq War,” treats representations of the Iran-Iraq War in Arabic and Persian literary texts written between 1980 and 2003, using the period as a starting point for the comparative study of literary and cultural production between Arabic- and Persian-speaking worlds and a way to rethink Middle Eastern cultural production after 1979.

Christopher Stone (Arabic, Hunter and the Graduate Center, CUNY) will be the discussant.