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Digital Scholarship Conversations

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2016–2017

Elias Muhanna

Brown University

"The Register of the Arabs: Classical Arabic Poetry and Distant Reading"

As a highly patterned literary form, classical Arabic poetry represents a discourse ripe for quantitative modes of analysis. The conventions of rhyme, meter, and genre conspire, together with a Semitic root-based morphology, to natively configure a literary archive in ways that invite distant reading. This talk will discuss different approaches to the digital study of classical Arabic poetry, including stylometry, text reuse analysis, and other types of natural language processing. These methods hold out interesting avenues to revisit some old questions about nature and artifice, originality and intertextuality, unity and molecularity in Arabic poetic production.

April 5, 2017, 12:30 pm*

Dilworth Room (Rear), Simons Hall, IAS

Elias Muhanna is a scholar of classical Arabic literature and Islamic intellectual history. His research focuses primarily on encyclopedic texts in the Islamic world and Europe, the cultural production of the Mamluk Empire, and the problem of the vernacular in different literary traditions. He has published two books: *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* (Penguin, 2016), and an edited volume, *The Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies* (De Gruyter, 2016). Muhanna's monograph on the history of classical and early modern encyclopedic literature in the Islamic world is forthcoming from Princeton University Press in 2017. He is the creator of the Digital Islamic Humanities Project at Brown, a multi-year initiative that convenes an annual conference and hosts a variety of research activities. In addition to his scholarship, Muhanna writes frequently for the mainstream press. His essays and criticism have appeared regularly in *The New Yorker*'s online edition, as well as in *The New York Times, The Nation*, and other periodicals.

*You may bring your own lunch or purchase lunch at the Institute's Dinning Hall from 12:00 noon.
Please RSVP by email to mtuya@ias.edu.