



# **German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000-1989 (Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany)**

*Nina Berman*

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*German Literature on the Middle East* explores the dynamic between German-speaking and Middle Eastern states and empires from the time of the Crusades to the end of the Cold War. This insightful study illuminates the complex relationships among literary and other writings on the one hand, and economic, social, and political processes and material dimensions on the other. Focusing on German-language literary and nonfiction writings about the Middle East (including historical documents, religious literature, travel writing, essays, and scholarship), Nina Berman evaluates the multiple layers of meaning contained in these works by emphasizing the importance of culture contact; a wide web of political, economic, and social practices; and material dimensions as indispensable factors for the interpretive process.

This analysis of literary and related writing reveals that German views about the Middle East evolved over the centuries and that various forms of action toward the Middle East differed substantially as well. Ideas about religion, culture, race, humanism, nation, and modernity, which emerged successively but remain operative to this day, have fashioned Germany's changed attitudes toward the Middle East. Exploring the interplay between textual discourses and social, political, and economic practices and materiality, *German Literature on the Middle East* offers insights that challenge accepted approaches to the study of literature, particularly approaches that insist on the centrality of the linguistic construction of the world. In addition, Berman presents evidence that the German encounter with the Middle East is at once distinct and yet at the same time characterized by patterns shared with other European countries. By addressing the individual nature of the German encounter in the larger European context, this study fills a considerable gap in current scholarship.

The interdisciplinary approach of *German Literature on the Middle East* will be of interest to the humanities in general, and specifically to scholars of German studies, comparative literature, Middle Eastern studies, and history.

Nina Berman is Professor of Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University.

Jacket image: Map of Europe by Giovanni Magini, from his "Geography." Venice, [1598]. From the University of Michigan Map Library.

Political Map of the World, April 2008. From the University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library, Map Collection.

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