

Press release

“Literature today is dealing with religion much more and in more diverse ways than suspected”

Reading series with contemporary authors starts on Tuesday: Felicitas Hoppe, Zafer Şenocak and Patrick Roth read in Münster as part of the Cluster of Excellence’s annual theme “Religious Dynamics” – Research on the dynamics of religion in literature

Münster, 18 April 2023 (exc) According to new research, contemporary authors are dealing with the issue of religion much more and in more diverse ways than suspected. Announcing a reading series starting at the Cluster of Excellence on 25 April, literary scholar Prof. Dr. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf comments: “At first glance, religion does not seem to be a theme in contemporary literature, which is turned towards the issues and crises of the present. But a closer look reveals religious experiences and notions of transcendence in novels, stories, poems and essays that respond precisely to our here and now”. Felicitas Hoppe, Zafer Şenocak and Patrick Roth, who have received many prizes for their work, will read from their books in the Cluster’s annual theme “Religious Dynamics”. Each deals with religious dynamics in a different way.

“Religion shows itself in contemporary works as an existential human experience on the one hand, and as a humorous or critical language game on the other”, explains Wagner-Egelhaaf, who has long studied religion and politics in literature. “Religious traditions from Judaism, Christianity and Islam are taken up in often unexpected ways and made readable again in the medium of literary language. Similar to what was often the case in older literature, literary works now react to their present in visions, counter-images and questioning of the traditional by taking up questions of multicultural society, the relationship between faith and knowledge, and problems of the media society. Religion serves as an archive of images, as a space for thinking, and as a way for people to reassure themselves of their own identity. For example, Zafer Şenocak deals with his father’s lived Islam, Felicitas Hoppe explores the figure of Joan of Arc in the interplay of religion and politics, and Patrick Roth studies religious experience from the perspective of depth psychology.

Readings at the *Studiobühne* – followed by discussion with the audience

According to Wagner-Egelhaaf, ideas of this world and the beyond, of immanence and transcendence, prove not to be opposites in literary reflections on the present. “Rather, they impinge upon one another, and it becomes apparent how literary images in particular track down the potential for transgression in the everyday”.

The readings will take place on 25 April, 23 May and 27 June from 6.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. each day at the University of Münster's *Studiobühne*. Registration is not required. Cluster of Excellence scholars from literary studies, Slavic studies and Romance studies will begin by giving a short introduction to the works. The readings will then be followed by discussions with the audience. "The readings are intended to enable people to experience that religion generates multiple linguistic dynamics on the one hand, and depends on the power of language to create reality on the other", says Wagner-Egelhaaf.

Entitled "Existential, humorous, critical: Religious dynamics in literature", the reading series will begin on 25 April with a reading by Zafer Şenocak, who was born in Ankara in 1961. "The meanings of words are keys to spaces you have never entered", he writes in *The Land Behind the Letters*. His critical essays deal with Turkish-German literature, Islam in Germany, and other social as well as literary issues. He will use the Cluster of Excellence reading series to read from his book *In Your Words: Conjectures about my father's faith* (2016) and from the poetry collection *Break of Light* (2022).

Born in Hameln in 1960, Felicitas Hoppe will read from her work at the Cluster of Excellence on 23 May. The theme of "religion" runs through all her texts, which are highly inventive and enjoy playing with language. "Whether God will one day be more merciful than the media remains to be seen", she writes in her essay collection *Ferryman, overtake! Or how to whistle the Gospel of John* (2021), from which she will read at the Cluster of Excellence. She will also read from *Picnic of the Hairdressers* (1996) and her novel *Johanna* (2006).

The reading series will end on 27 June with a reading by Patrick Roth, who, born in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1953, takes up Biblical themes in his work. In his short story collection *God's Quartet*, he writes that prayer "no longer [had] the power to recall the words in whose web it once hung". Using cinematic modes of representation, he powerfully illuminates religious motifs in his work. In Münster, he will read from his novel *Sunrise: The Book of Joseph* (2012) and the short story collection *God's Quartet: Narratives of an Emigrant* (2020). (fbu/vvm)

Picture: Poster of the reading series with book covers by Zafer Şenocak (*In Your Words*), Felicitas Hoppe (*Ferryman, overtake!*) and Patrick Roth (*God's Quartet*) (Herder/ Babel Verlag Bülent Tulay).

Programme "Existential, humorous, critical: Religious dynamics in literature":

<https://www.uni->

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