

14<sup>th</sup> SeSaMO Conference

**PATHS OF RESISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

University of Turin (Italy)

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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITLE: Post-1967 gender roles and resistance to authoritarianism in contemporary Syrian literature**

**CONVENOR(S):** Alessandro Columbu

**ABSTRACT:**

Although it has certainly gained greater relevance in European academia since the 2011 uprising and consequent conflict, Syria's vibrant literary field remains to this day a relatively understudied subject in European academia. In particular, the patterns of resistance that the connivance between authoritarianism and patriarchy has generated in novelists and short-story writers from Syria represents a largely uncharted alley of investigation. This panel invites contributions that explore how the persistence of patriarchal authoritarianism has reshaped the political dimension of Syrian literature since the late 1970s, particularly with regard to the relationship between politics, gender roles and sexualities, as illustrated for example by Samira Aghacy in her pivotal 2009 study. Aghacy and others indeed pinpoint the 1967 disastrous defeat to Israel as the crucial watershed after which fiction and cultural production in Syria and other countries of the region would never be the same again. Indeed numerous novels, plays and short stories published since the 1970s have brought to the stage a more openly subversive fashion of addressing this interstice and its effects on the individual, sexuality and the body through original roles assigned to male and female protagonists. Motivating this panel is the desire to clarify the changing nature of resistant cultural production in Syria and the political connotations that Syrian literature has assumed in the post-1967 period. The panel welcomes contributions that employ a multidisciplinary approach to challenge/confirm this argument of the *naksa* war of 1967 as the fundamental event that transformed modern Arabic literature irreversibly.

**CONVENOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Dr **Alessandro Columbu** completed his PhD in modern Arabic literature at Edinburgh in 2017, and is currently an Arabic language tutor at the University of Manchester. Originally from Sardinia, his translation of Zakaria Tamer's *Taksir Rukab*, published in 2015, was the first book to have ever been translated from Arabic into Sardinian.