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PERCORSI DI RESISTENZA IN MEDIO ORIENTE E NORD AFRICA

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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO: Language(s) of resistance in the Arab world

PROPONENTE/I: - Cristina La Rosa (University of Catania)
- Alba Rosa Suriano (University of Catania)

ABSTRACT:

The Arabic language has always battled to survive in multilingual contexts - suffice it to think about peripheral Arabic dialects (Versteegh 2014) - or during military and linguistic colonizations (Grandguillaume 1983, Tigrizi 2004, Shaaban 2008). In this latter context, because of its importance in asserting identity, *fuṣḥā*, was used as a means of resistance to occupation (Morsly 1997, Hamdy 2017) and as a symbol of supranational unity; thus, dialectal variation was perceived as a threat (Miller 2003). As seen for different contexts, the effort for decolonization dwells in a linguistic, discursive space in which language becomes a political grammar of social oppression and resistance (Graves 1998).

More recently, especially since the Arab Spring, Neo-Arabic vernaculars have begun to represent the new symbol of resistance, power and identity (Bassiouney 2012, Mazraani 2009, Suleiman 2003) and the expression of various forms of resistance (Bayat 2010): independent press, cinema, theatre, information websites, cartoons, street art, music and novels are adopting *lahǧa* as a universal language, the carrier of a nation's cultural heritage (Boucherit 1997) and nationalist feelings and the emblem of social struggle (Mazraani 2008). In this respect, we can also analyse different artistic and literary languages used by intellectuals to express the feelings of *al-muqāwama* and to represent a different vision of the social and political reality.

Papers analysing linguistic issues, linked to the trajectories of resistance and the usage of ancient and contemporary Arab vernaculars as a means of resistance, as well as papers, analysing the use of different literary and artistic languages of resistance, are welcome.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I:

Cristina La Rosa is Assistant Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Catania. Her research focuses on the History of Arabic language (Sicilian Arabic in a comparative approach with Andalusian and Maltese Arabic), Arabic Grammatical Tradition, Maghribi dialectology (Tunisian dialect) and Political Discourse Analysis.

Alba Rosa Suriano is Tenure Track Assistant Professor in Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Catania. Her field of research is the contemporary and modern Arabic theatre, with particular concern to Egyptian theatre during the 19th and 20th centuries and its relation with governmental politics.

PAPERS:

FIRST SESSION:

1. : RESISTING THROUGH LANGUAGE(S): COMICS AND DĀRJA IN CONTEMPORARY TUNISIA

Cristina La Rosa

ABSTRACT:

The genesis of graphic literature in the Arab world has its roots in 20th-century Egypt and Lebanon, which are the main focus of recent academic studies on comics (Guyer 2017). However, also Mağrib, and particularly Tunisia, boast some relevant independent artists and collectives such as Lab619. Although political drawing has been a very appreciated means of social critique for more than a century, it had its golden age only after the Arab Springs. As a response to the artists' need for freedom of expression, through new art forms and languages, comics have become widespread thanks to the freedom of circulation guaranteed by the internet and to the use of Arabic dialects, which also contributed to reaching a broader public (Mercier 2018; Bouabdallah, Kaschl Mohni 2017). In Tunisia, caricature has played a fundamental role as a means of awakening people's social and political awareness during and after the Jasmine Revolution (Fakhfah, Tlili 2013).

This paper aims at analysing the function of the two languages intertwined in the comic book by Mohamed Doggui (2017), *Khalti Khadhra*, i.e. the linguistic code (Tunisian *dārġa*) and the artistic code (comics), as means of social and political resistance. In fact, the book contains some engaged verses, prose compositions and popular proverbs in Tunsian Arabic, accompanied by caricature drawings, which give birth to some satirical characters struggling with the post-revolutionary consequences of *al-tawra*, such as the economic crisis together with social inequality and corruption, problems which were a disappointment to the Tunisian people's expectations.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Cristina La Rosa is Assistant Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Catania. Her research focuses on the History of the Arabic language (Sicilian Arabic in a comparative approach with Andalusian and Maltese Arabic), Arabic Grammatical Tradition, Maghribi dialectology (Tunisian dialect) and Political Discourse Analysis.

2. *A Lebanese recipe for resistance: verbal and figurative language in the comics art of Lena Merhej*

Ilenia Licitra

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to explore the function of comics as cultural resistance to authoritarianism throughout the case study of "What Happened" (Lena Merhej, 2015), from *Geographia*, the latest anthology of *Samandal* comics. This metatextual work is the author's response to the censorship over *Samandal*, a virtuous artistic collective aimed at fostering the creation and the diffusion of the art of comics as a form of free expression: «*Samandal* was created precisely to provide an alternative space for different kind of dialogue, one much richer in language and nuanced in its discussions of the subtleties of the world around us» (*Samandal's* statement on the censorship case, 30/10/2015).

In 2010 three of the four *Samandal* editors were charged with inciting sectarian strife and denigrating religion, forcing to pay 30 million Lebanese liras in damages, and they were never allowed to testify at the Cassation Court. Therefore one of them, Lena Merhej, chose to give her testimony through this comic strips, in order to explain the meaning of the colloquial expressions that her accusers had intentionally misunderstood.

The result is an interesting work, both from a political and communicative point of view, that uses different linguistic codes (verbal, iconic and graphics) to represent the gap between literal and figurative sense. Moreover, it constitutes an interesting example of the practice of code switching, alternating *fushà* and *lahǧa* as an instrument to claim a unique and plural Lebanese identity, able to overcome a superimposed sectarian vision centered on a perpetual interreligious conflict.

3. A semiotics of satire. The use of *lahǧa* in Andeel's cartoons

Daniela Potenza

ABSTRACT

By its very nature, cartoon's political critique is never direct. In a country like Egypt, where censorship is implemented by law, the indirect messages conveyed by a cartoon have been traditionally used a strategy to bypass censorship's reaction. Amongst daring cartoonists who garnered international acclaim for their political commentary, Muḥammad Qandīl, better known as Andeel, stands out. Today Andeel works as a cartoonist for *Mada Masr*, an independent Egyptian online newspaper publishing both in Arabic and English. For *Mada Masr*, Andeel also writes and enacts short satirical sketches entitled "Aḥ kabīr" (Big Brother). His Facebook page, counting more than 100.000 followers, is another important tool helping him to spread his works. Travelling fast and far through the net, Andeel's sharp satire can reach Egyptians as much as foreigners living in Egypt or abroad. Despite the potentially boundless space of his cartoons, the language Andeel uses the most is *lahǧa*. Certainly, the linguistic choice cannot be simply related to an interest into an exclusively Egyptian public.

Aiming at analysing the role of the *lahǧa* in Andeel's cartoons for *Mada Masr*, I will focus on the semiotics of their images and texts. I will study the meaning-making dimension of the *lahǧa* both alone and in comparison with the limited use of the *fushà*. Andeel's free translation of his cartoons into English will also be considered as a tool to better understand the role of the *lahǧa* use in the delivery of satirical messages of resistance.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA PROPONENTE:

Daniela Potenza is a PhD in Arabic Literature from INALCO and L'Orientale. She teaches Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Catania. Her main field of research is Modern Arabic Literature with a focus on the Egyptian theatre, especially on the playwright Alfred Faraǧ, intertextuality and popular literature.

SECOND SESSION:

4. Il linguaggio del corpo in un cortometraggio del regista palestinese Hamdi al-Hroub

Mirella Cassarino

ABSTRACT

In un cortometraggio della durata di 12 minuti e 58 secondi, dal titolo in lingua originale فضاء الأزقة *Faḍā'al-aziqa*, tradotto in inglese con “Mate Superb” (Compagno fantastico), il regista Hamdi al-Hroub (Nazareth 1990) punta la telecamera su un gruppo di giovani palestinesi di Gerusalemme che si allenano in uno sport, praticato da milioni di persone nel mondo, ma vietato in Israele, che li appassiona particolarmente: il parkour. Si tratta di uno sport metropolitano, nato in Francia negli anni novanta, inizialmente definito “parcours” con la “c” a designare l’ “art du déplacement”, che si caratterizza per una serie di movimenti acrobatici: salti, capovolte, corsa. Effettuati alla massima velocità nell’ambito di spazi urbani allo scopo di riappropriarsene, le dette acrobazie consentono di superare, da un canto, i limiti delle proprie performances fisiche e, dall’altro, qualsiasi tipo di ostacolo.

Scopo del mio intervento è quello di esaminare il modo in cui le dimensioni cronotopiche (Bakhtin 1937-38, Segre 1969, Pioletti 2014) vengono magistralmente utilizzate dal regista nella narrazione, ambientata nella città dei limiti e delle frontiere per eccellenza. Hamdi al-Hroub ci offre, attraverso un linguaggio giovanile tanto incisivo quanto innovativo, la propria testimonianza sulla odierna realtà di Gerusalemme che, come tutte le altre, è una città costituita da vicoli, strade, palazzi, piazze, quartieri, ma è anche un luogo dal particolare valore simbolico (Camera d’Afflitto 2007; Scarcia 2012; Benigni 2012; Nicosia 2014): qui, più che altrove, praticare il parkour può essere un gesto pacifico di resistenza, un’esperienza estetica in grado di condurre a un atto trasformativo.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Mirella Cassarino è professore ordinario di Lingua e Letteratura araba presso l’Università di Catania. I principali ambiti di ricerca sono: il rapporto fra tradizione e innovazione in alcune autrici e autori arabi contemporanei, la teoria della traduzione presso gli Arabi fra VIII e XI secolo, le peculiarità dei processi di formazione dei canoni letterari arabi in relazione a quelli occidentali, gli aspetti tematici e formali del sistema letterario e culturale dell’adab, le nuove fonti e i nuovi approcci per lo studio della lingua e della letteratura araba di Sicilia.

5. SPEAKING HARSHLY TO POWER. A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS OF ANOTHER MOROCCAN DEFIANT RAPPER

Jairo Guerrero

ABSTRACT

In the Arab World today rap has not only become a means of channelling the increasing level of social unease (Gana 2012; Dallaji 2013) but, in some countries such as Morocco, also a space for freedom of expression where artists may get their messages across more “safely” under the umbrella of artistic creation. In this context, there are many rap singers who are not content with denouncing injustices and dare to step forward pointing the finger at rulers. One of these rappers is Lotfi El Président, a young Moroccan who openly criticizes the head of his country’s regime.

The present paper aims at analysing the songs of Lotfi El Président in order to investigate the stylistic devices used in his lyrics to talk about the disastrous social and political situation in Morocco. A special focus will be laid on the important role played by religion in Lotfi's artistic production.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Jairo Guerrero is a lecturer in Arabic language and culture at Aix-Marseille University. He has conducted research on western varieties of Maghrebi Arabic with a special focus on diachronic and cross-dialectal variation. Furthermore, he has written several papers on the role played by rap music in the protests and revolts of the Arab Spring.

6. THE LANGUAGE OF RAP SONGS AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE

Emanuela De Blasio

ABSTRACT

The language, through various artistic forms including cartoons, street art, theater and novels, has been used as a form of protest and as a tool of political criticism during the so-called "Arab Springs". Even music, and in particular rap, has played an important political and cultural role during the revolutions in the Arab world. The rap is an artistic expression typical of hip hop culture; rap was born in the ghettos of New York, but then is adopted abroad and adapted to local contexts and needs.

In the Arab countries, hip-hop culture has found fertile ground, in fact the tradition of expressing protest and dissatisfaction with the current situation has a long history in literature; an example is the genre of *malhūn* which, through a variety of dialectal poetry often accompanied by music, reflects the voice of the people (Durand, 2009). In their verses poets deal with political issues and social injustices, also using satire as a literary technique.

The rap is a genre based on the profusion of the word, on improvisation and on a colloquial language used in the daily life, especially by young people.

The present work focuses on the analysis of the language of rap songs used as an instrument of resistance during the Arab Spring; for this purpose, a corpus of texts by different rappers from the Mashreq area are taken into consideration.

References

Durand, O. 2009, *Dialettologia araba*, Carocci Editore, Roma.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Emanuela De Blasio is adjunct professor. She teaches "Translation from Arabic Language to Italian Language" at the **Università degli Studi Internazionali of Rome (UNINT)** and "Arabic Language and Literature" at the Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo.

Her Ph.D. thesis is about rap music in the Arab world inside the dialectic of innovation and tradition, analyzing a corpus of rap lyrics from Mashreq.

7. Linguistic Symbols of War in the Palestinian Children's Literature after 1967 War

Hanan Mousa

ABSTRACT

This research paper deals with the employment of the indications and symbols of war in the Palestinian children's literature after 1967 War. The Palestinian literature in general and the children's literature in particular were influenced by the political reality in that period. Thus, the Palestinian children's literature was born as an ideological literature, especially after 1967 War. As a result of the political occupational suppression, the Palestinian child formulated absolute concepts about justice and injustice and fear of his reality. Therefore, he attempted to absorb what was happening around him, and inquire about the causes of the events that were taking place in the political scene and the events around him. This reality gave a lot of the Palestinian writers legitimacy to write stories that carry symbolical words that reflect the Palestinian reality. Thus, they focused on the theme of conflict with the Israeli in a direct way in a context that is characterized by violence. The writers poured their political thoughts and attitudes in their stories, which included lots of words that are related to the Intifada such as: martyr (shahid), occupation, arrest, detention, resistance and homeland. The stories also focused on the image of the violent Israeli, which is reflected in words like: an aggressive soldier, a man of war, a jailor or a settler who takes the land of the Palestinian by force and destroys his home. The Palestinian, however, is described as a victim, a hero and a resistant, whose image is introduced in a positive way. The paper will also give answers to several questions such as: How did the Palestinian writer employ these words? What was his purpose? How did he convey his idea through the use of his symbolical words?

CONVENOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

(2017) Ph.D. degree at Tel Aviv University.

Subject of Dissertation" :Representations of the popular culture in Palestinian children's literature since 1967"

(2009): M.A. degree with distinction (cum laude). Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Tel Aviv University.

Lecturer at the Academic College for Arab Teacher Training in Sakhnin.

THIRD SESSION:

8. *Expressions of resistance in Moroccan online press: Arabic stylistic variation*

Rosa Pennisi

ABSTRACT

The debate on the linguistic situation in Morocco, where many languages and linguistic varieties co-exist and resist, is still lively today. The last controversy appeared on news media in September 2018, about the inclusion of some *darija* terms in textbooks, shows that the linguistic issues are still today a sensitive subject, especially regarding the opposition between *guardians* of Modern Standard Arabic and *promoters* of *darija*. Those latter, set into a

heterogeneous category - intellectuals, artists, businessmen, people involved in civil society, activists— have been resisting in a domain that has always been monopolized by standard Arabic: written production. Different editorial experiences have more or less timidly used *darīja* in creative forms of different nature. This study aims to investigate the linguistic practices of collaborators and journalists of opinion working in *Goud*, a Moroccan electronic journal. This online journal is ideologically oriented towards the promotion of *darīja*, - *Goud* means "Straight" in Moroccan Arabic. However, the individual linguistic practices of his collaborators reflect an interesting stylistic variation with respect to the linguistic varieties used in their publications. This study aims to observe to what extent this digital space gives voice to the possible and different forms of resistance expressions through the analysis of a corpus of articles published in the opinions' column about *20th February Movement*, *Hirak* and boycott campaigns. They are some of the events that have marked the social and political Moroccan reality, from 2011 until today, and they have been declined on *Goud* through plural forms and languages.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA PROPONENTE:

PhD candidate at Ca' Foscari University and co-tutorship at IREMAM, Aix-Marseille University. Her research subject is about "Media Arabic 2.0: Syntactic and Stylistic Variation of Contemporary Written Arabic Language in Moroccan On-line Journals (Jan-Dec 2016)".

9. La poésie de la résistance en dialecte ḥassāniyya

Ahmed-Salem Ould Mohamed-Baba

ABSTRACT

La poésie populaire hassani, appelée *la-ḡna*, est un genre littéraire très utilisé en Mauritanie car ses poèmes sont composés en dialecte ḥassāniyya qui est la langue du peuple et qui est, par conséquent, à la portée de tous, contrairement à la langue *fushḥā* dont les usagers sont la classe des lettrés. Dans ce sens, certes, avait raison le journaliste mauritanien Habib Ould Mahfoudh en écrivant dans le journal "Le Calame" du 24 avril 1995 "la poésie populaire est plus populaire que la poésie qui n'est pas populaire".

La Mauritanie est connue comme "le pays d'un million de poètes", mais indépendamment de leur nombre exact, il est évident que la plupart des poètes de ce pays composent leurs poèmes en arabe dialectal.

Durant la période coloniale, ces poètes avaient écrit des poèmes qui peuvent être classés comme étant une partie de la littérature de la résistance contre la colonisation et contre l'acculturation initiée avec l'arrivée des français en Mauritanie au début de XX^e siècle.

Cette communication traitera les principaux traits de la poésie populaire hassani, *la-ḡna*, et son rôle divulgateur des valeurs sociales et culturelles traditionnelles de la société des Bidhan. Le deuxième volet sera axé sur la poésie de la résistance écrite en hassaniyya ; le contexte historique et l'analyse d'un échantillon de cette poésie.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Docteur en Philologie Sémitique (Arabe et Islam). Université Complutense de Madrid.
Professeur des universités. Titulaire de la Chaire de Dialectologie Arabe : Arabe Maghrébin et Andalou. Faculté de Philologie - Université Complutense de Madrid.
Auteur/coauteur, entre autres, des livres *Diccionario avanzado Árabe Tomo II español-árabe*. Barcelona. Herder. (2008); *Refranero y fraseología hassaní: Recopilación, explicación, estudio gramatical y glosario*. Zaragoza (2008) ; *Estudio dialectológico y lexicológico del refranero andalusí de Abu Yahya Azzajjali*. Zaragoza. (1999). Il a publié de nombreux articles dans les revues scientifiques et a participé à de nombreux colloques et conférences.

10. Moroccan Arabic in Ceuta: A mean of resistance against linguistic dominance of Spanish language

Ángeles Vicente

ABSTRACT

Moroccan Arabic is largely spoken in the Spanish city of Ceuta (northwest of Africa) where a Muslim community is living from the middle of the 19th century. The Spanish Constitution does not allow to classify the inhabitants of a region because of their religion, but some indications have allowed to affirm that the number of Muslim culture inhabitants living in Ceuta is very similar to the Christian culture inhabitants. Nevertheless, the official data consider that Muslim population is one of the minority groups of the city.

There is no doubt that Spanish is the dominant language in this bilingual city: it is used for teaching, in the media, in the labor market, and so on. However, some neighbourhoods of Ceuta are inhabited by a majority of Arabic-speaking people.

This paper will analyse the representation of Moroccan Arabic in Ceuta society through the media discourse, and its construction as a minority language due to political interests. As a reaction to it, the resources of the Arabic-speaking community to build their cultural identity through the use of Arabic as a vehicular language and the linguistic landscape will be considered.

ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Ángeles Vicente is Professor in Arabic Studies at University of Zaragoza. She has participated as a member of several international research projects, and she has been the head of two Spanish research projects, funded by the Spanish Economy and Competitiveness Ministry. Her areas of expertise are Arabic dialectology, Arabic Sociolinguistics.

11. Glottopolitics in Morocco. The Ḥassāniyya as a means of resistance for Sahrawi in Guelmime-Oued Noun region

Luca Paciotti

ABSTRACT

In plurilingualism, we observe “language wars” (Calvet 2005), in which languages compete for functions and roles. Consequently, language policies intervene in order to rule these conflicts. Fishman (1973) identifies two models of language policies: *from the top-down* and *from the bottom-up*. Guespin and Marcellesi (1986) have included these policies in the notion of *glottopolitics*.

Morocco is a plurilingual context in which we observe several *linguistic strata* (Boukous 2012): Amazighophony, Arabophony, Francophony and Anglophony. A wide spectrum of language policies has been implementing since the Independence: arabisation of school system, recognition of Amazigh as a national language and, more recently, the inclusion of Ḥassāniyya in the Constitution, as a part of the Moroccan identity. Nevertheless, Ḥassāniyya represents at the same time the language of Saharawi and the symbol of their struggle against Moroccan domination in Western Sahara. Indeed, Ḥassāniyya was the dominant language also in the region of Guelmime-Oued Noun, between Morocco and Sahara, twenty years ago (Taine-Cheikh, 1997).

As a Bedouin dialect, Ḥassāniyya has been marginalising during the past years, due to the influence of sedentary varieties of Moroccan and the gradual Moroccanisation of staff in schools in the south regions.

The purpose of this paper is to show how speakers' language attitudes have been changing in Guelmime-Oued Noun since 1997, how Moroccan policies have influenced these attitudes and how the persistence of some Ḥassānī tracts in speakers is related to the Saharawi cultural and political resistance.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA PROPONENTE:

Holder of a BA in Arabic Studies, obtained at INALCO (Paris), and of a MA in Mediterranean Studies at the University "L'Orientale" (Naples), I have spent my second year of Master in Morocco, where I have conducted my research for my dissertation on glottopolitics in Morocco (Grade 100/100 cum laude).