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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Novel and The “Arab Uprisings”: Traumatized Voices

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S: NESMA ELSAKAAN AND NAGLAA WALY

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

1- Introduction

This panel aims to explore the ways in which Arab authors react to the dynamic and complex post-2011 reality. It will point out literary responses to the traumatic experiences of violence, desperation and armed conflicts that emerged in the Middle East during the last decade.

The uprisings known as the “Arab Spring” are a turning point in the Middle East. Narrative writings have been influenced by the revolutions. From the one hand, the dream of freedom and social justice has spurred writers to overcome self-censorship and express themselves through writings, addressing new thoughts and emotions. From the other hand, the dramatic consequences of the protests led authors to portray people’s disillusionment and the impact of trauma on them. Scholars noted that post-2011 novels share a sense of popular anguish, uncertainty and despair (Youssef 2019). Hence, new topics have been recently tackled in bold tones.

2- Panel interests

Scholars have widely underlined literary trends that emerged after Arab revolts (Buontempo 2015, Al Areqi 2020, Waly 2021). They have identified the impact of the revolutions on Arab novelists, especially from political, cultural and sociological points of view (Guth and Pepe eds 2019). Nevertheless, there is a lack of critical psychoanalytic scrutiny in dealing with Arabic novels (Milich 2015), especially post-2011 works.

The pioneering scholarship of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman and Cathy Caruth have shaped the field of trauma studies with innovative frameworks for interpreting responses to dramatic experiences and mass violence. Recently, “trauma” has become a leading concept that attracts an increasing number of scholars interested in literary studies (Kurtz J. R. 2018). We believe that trauma theory offers critical approaches that help understand the turmoil which the uprising caused in the Middle Eastern region.

People who are living in conditions of social and political violence that shatter their safety are suffering from continuous traumatic stress (Stevens, Eagle, Kaminer and Higson-Smith 2013). This encourages scholars to address the traumatic impact of the revolutionary aftermath in Egypt (Matthies-Boon 2017). This panel aims to build on this scholarship in order to map literary responses to traumatic events in Arab countries.

We encourage papers that engage with the following questions:

- Is it possible to address the trauma novel as a genre that emerged in post-11 Arabic societies? What are the main characteristics?
- In which way trauma novel helps deconstruct the apparently chaotic transformations in the region for better understanding?
- How do narrative works re-contextualize the political causes of traumatization and its impact on society?
- Is it possible to compare the trauma novel in the Arab region to the novelistic responses in Western and American literature that emerged after Nazi disasters and the September 11 attacks?

Suggested topics may include, but are not limited to:

- War and political violence trauma
- Interreligious conflicts trauma
- Trauma and private/public memories
- Gender violence and migration trauma
- Fiction and testimony reality

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PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

Naglaa Waly is a scholar, literary translator and editor of the series *Letteratura egiziana contemporanea* of Istituto per l'Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino. She teaches Arabic language at the University of Turin. In 2017, she won the "Lifetime Achievement Award for Translation" from the Italian Ministry of Culture. Her field of research covers these areas: translation studies, comparative literature, modern Arabic literature and the contemporary Egyptian novel. Among her publications are *The Coptic Theme in Egyptian novels: The case of Bayt al-Qibṭiyya by 'Ašraf al-'Ašmāwī* (Kervan-International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies 2021) and *Il Peccato* (IPOCAN 2021), a translation from Arabic into Italian of *al-Ḥarām*, by Yusuf Idris.

Nesma Elsakaan is assistant professor of Arabic language and literature at the University of Palermo and member of Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. Her research covers women's writing, gender studies, comparative literature, intertextuality and children literature in the Arab world. Among her publications are "*Milanin*": *ru'yah taharruriyyah li'l-lawṇ wa'l-ḥasad min khilal al-sard al-nisa'iyy* (Rawafid 2022) and "*Non voglio che tu scirva di me*": *le donne nere si raccontano* (IPOCAN 2022).

INDIRIZZO/I EMAIL/EMAIL ADDRESSES:

nesma.elsakaan@unipa.it

naglaa.gamaleldinsolimanwaly@unito.it