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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: "Arab Uprisings". Rebellion, Chaos and Trauma

PROPONENTE/ NESMA ELSAKAAN AND NAGLAA WALY

Chair: TERESA PEPE

1- Introduction

This panel aims to explore the ways in which Arab authors react to the dynamic and complex post-11 reality. It will point out literary responses to the traumatic experiences of violence, desperation and armed conflicts 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 fiction has 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. This gave rise to new genres, such as magic realism and dystopian fiction (Younas 2018).

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 2017), especially post-2011 works. The pioneering scholarship of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub (1992), Geoffrey Hartman (1995) and Cathy Caruth (1996) 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

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 'Aṣraf al-'Aṣmāwī* (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, coordinator of Abdulaziz Saud al-Babtain Chair for Arabic language and Culture 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-lawn wa'l-jasad min khilal al-sard al-nisa'iyy* (Rawafid 2022) and *"Non voglio che tu scirva di me": le donne nere si raccontano* (IPOCAN 2022).

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Papers:

1. **ثورة المفكر العربي بين "الصرخة" والصدمة: رضوى عاشور أنموذجاً**
Muhammad A. Abdelkader Kenawi

تنطلق هذه الورقة البحثية من رسالتي للدكتوراة (2020) والتي كانت عن تطور الجنس السيرداتي في مصر (1798-1919) في محاولة لتعقب هذا الجنس الأدبي الذي يتراوح بين الأدب والتاريخ مع التركيز على الخصوصية المصرية. دائماً ما لعبت الذاتية دوراً كبيراً في ترك "شهادة عن العصر" أو "وصية" يعبر بها الأديب/المفكر عن رؤيته للحياة. في هذا الصدد تركت لنا رضوى عاشور (1946-2014) نصين من نصوص السيرة الذاتية المباشرة وهما "أثقل من رضوى" (2013) و"الصرخة" (2015)، بعد مسيرة حافلة بالأعمال الروائية والنقدية تعلق بعضها بهذا الجنس الأدبي الشائق والشائك. تأمل هذه القراءة في اكتشاف الروابط بين الثورة والصدمة، بين الانكسار والمقاومة، بين الهم الذاتي والعام، بين الالتزام الفكري والحركي الذي ميز "عاشور" وصلته بالثورة المصرية 2011 وما آلت إليه من اخفاقات كما يتضح ذلك ليس فقط من نصوصها ولكن كذلك من مُداخلتها الصحفية ومقابلاتها، لتقدم لنا نموذجاً مغايراً لغيرها من الأدباء والمفكرين، دون إغفال الخصوصية النسوية لتجربتها. وهو ما يمكن إعادة النظر له مع الالتفات من جهة (1) إلى النصوص السيرداتية لغيرها من الأدباء والمفكرين الذين مروا بنفس التجربة وأغفلوها في نصوصهم مثل جلال أمين خاصة في كتابته السيرداتي الثالث "مكتوب على الجبين: حكايات على هامش السيرة الذاتية" (2015)، ومن جهة أخرى (2) إلى النصوص السيرداتية النسائية التي سبقتها وتعرضت بشكل أو بآخر لنفس الهم الثوري مثل نصوص نوال السعداوي وأروى صالح ولطيفة الزيات على سبيل المثال لا الحصر.

2. **Dire l'indicibile: il trauma e la dis-integrazione psichica e narrativa nel romanzo *al-Maššā'a* di Samar Yazbik**
Greta Sala

La crisi siriana (2011-) è all'origine di un trauma profondo, il cui impatto si ripercuote anche sulla produzione letteraria del Paese. Il presente studio si interessa all'emergere di una narrativa siriana del trauma, attraverso il caso del romanzo *al-Maššā'a* di Samar Yazbik ("La camminatrice", 2017).

L'opera ripercorre la storia di Rima, la cui vita viene stravolta dalla guerra. Il trauma che ne consegue si presenta come una frattura che compromette il funzionamento della coscienza e del discorso: la dissociazione psichica della protagonista-narratrice si riflette in uno stile narrativo tortuoso, caratterizzato da continue ripetizioni, analessi e prolessi. La dis-integrazione del sé provoca ugualmente dei fenomeni di derealizzazione.

Ricorrendo al paradigma teorico dei *Trauma studies*, lo studio mira ad analizzare le strategie adottate da Yazbik per raccontare il trauma e superare così il principio, a lungo indiscusso, della sua irrepresentabilità. La frammentarietà narrativa sarà esaminata attraverso le nozioni di "secondary thinking" (Green, 2002; Rapaport, 2014), "infinity of minor paths" (Lacan, 1993) e "insistent return" (Caruth, 1995). Tale analisi ci permetterà di sottolineare alcune delle evoluzioni conosciute dal romanzo siriano contemporaneo, così come il contributo apportato da opere come *al-Maššā'a* ai recenti sviluppi della *Trauma theory*.

3. **الحكي والثورة من الرواية إلى الفيلم تجليات الصدمة وما بعدها، أفلام مغربية نموذجاً**
ABDELLAH SARDAOUI

في خضم الوضع الطفروي الذي عاشه العالم العربي/المغربي جراء الحراك والربيع العربي، انشغلت السينما المغربية بهذه السعة التعبيرية الطارئة، وتم اقتباس العديد من الروايات التي اهتمت بالموضوع بكل تجلياته المختلفة، ما منح المشاهد شعوراً ثابتاً بنوع من الصدمة المغايرة التي بصمت على تجربة حسية وعاطفية مشحونة، تركت أثرها على كيفية تمثيل وتلقي موضوع الثورة عبر الحكي الروائي/الفيلمي، فكان انتقال الكلمات إلى صور وسيطا تعبيرياً فاعلاً،

عكس بشكل تعبيرى في ثقل الصدمة في نفوس الناس والشباب، وحافزا لانخراط المخرجين السينمائيين المغاربة في صلب عملية إبداعية تشاركية، قامت على تعالق تصور ورؤية مبدعين كان مهمهم توثيق شعور الشارع بالصدمة ونقل أحداث ومخلفات الثورة، هاته العلاقة أفرزت اقتباسات سينمائية مغربية بأفق اتكأ على الحكاية وإمكانية إعادة كتابة الفضاءات والأحداث والعوالم والأشياء، امتحت من جماليات الصور والتشكيل والرمز والإيحاء والاستعارة، وإن اختص كل نوع منها (الرواية/الفيلم) بأسرار الصنعة والتمثل وأدوات التعبير، الشيء الذي خلف لنا فيلموغرافيا شكلت فضاء عبور نحو مرحلة مهمة براهنية متجددة شكلا وموضوعا (الثورة وتجليات الصدمة).

4. Chaos and traumatised voices in *Kitāb al-naḥḥāt*, *Dafātir al-warrāq* and *Ismī Zayzafūn*

NAGLAA WALY AND NESMA ELSAKAAN

After the Arab Uprisings and the dramatic consequences of the protests, Arab novelists produced an abundant number of literary works that deal with the dynamic and complex post-2011 reality. Most of these works chronicle complex back stories which reflect national and individuals' crises in the Arab societies of the last decades. This paper reads three novels from Egypt, Aḥmad 'Abd al-Laṭīf's *Kitāb al-naḥḥāt* 2013 (The Book of the Sculpture), Jordan, Jalal Barjas' *Dafātir al-warrāq*, 2021 (Notebooks of the Bookseller), and Syria, Sawsan Ḡamīl Ḥasan's *Ismī Zayzafūn*, 2022 (My name is Zayzafun). Although the three novels belong to different literary strands, they stand for the aftermath of violence and forms of psychic anguish of the nostalgia of a lost family, home, and country. The analysis emphasizes both the realistic and fantastic elements in order to underline the registered traumatic memories of the protagonists.

The article points out three traumatic tropes: absence, indirection, and repetition. The analysis of the literary devices such as fragmentations, alienations, flashbacks, and nightmares will highlight the persistent aching pain and the insidious trauma of the protagonists. The paper draws on the first wave of literary trauma theory and what Greg Forster calls "structural trauma" which is related to enduring societal pressure.

5. Satirizing Egypt's Post-2011 Traumatic Events

MARY YOUSSEF

After Egypt's 2011 Revolution and the trials and tribulations that led to the re-ascendancy of the old regime to state control, policies of repression have intensified to silence dissidents and limit the freedom of cultural expression. The inventiveness of Egyptian novels, however, has not only withstood that authoritarian political temperament, but also managed to perforate its enforced wall of silence, carrying on protest in the cacophonous outcries for change in their artistic expression. This article reads two satiric novels produced in the post-2011 Egyptian context, Basma Abdel Aziz's *al-Tabur*, 2015 (*The Queue*, 2016) and Ibrahim Abdel Meguid's *Qitat al-'am al-fa'it*, 2017 (Cats of the Lost Year), as examples of the current novelistic undertakings aiming to polemically subvert and destabilize the *status quo*. The article explores their inventive aesthetics and peculiar combination of seemingly paradoxical literary attitudes, such as realism and fantasy, tragedy and comedy, bluntness and cynicism, as well as the fusion of human heroism and indignation by drawing from Mikahil Bakhtin's conceptions of the carnivalesque and heteroglossia.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEI PARTECIPANTI:

Muhammad Abdel Kader Kenawi è interprete professionista, italianista ed arabista con due dottorati da Tor Vergata (2013) e La Sapienza (2020). Professore a contratto all'università di UNINT di Lingua Araba, Traduzione ed Interpretazione. Ha già avuto dei corsi in vari atenei in Egitto e in Italia tra cui Helwan, Tor Vergata, Parma, IULM e Tuscia. Recentemente ha pubblicato due monografie estratte dalle sue tesi di dottorato: "L'Italiano in Egitto e italiani d'Egitto" e "Per una storia dell'Autobiografia Araba" (Ledizioni 2022).

Teresa Pepe is Associate Professor in Arabic Studies at the University of Oslo. Her research interests span across Arabic literature, media studies, popular culture, sociolinguistics. She is the author of the book *Blogging From Egypt: Digital Literature, 2005-2016* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2019) and the co-editor of the volume *Arabic Literature in the Posthuman Age* (with S. Guth, Harassowitz Verlag 2019). She has published several articles in the *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, *Oriente Moderno*, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, and *LEA- Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*.

Greta Sala si è laureata in Lingue e Culture dell'Asia e dell'Africa presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" con un elaborato finale dal titolo "La rappresentazione del trauma nella letteratura siriana del post-2015". Attualmente svolge un dottorato di ricerca in Letteratura araba moderna e contemporanea presso l'Inalco di Parigi, in cotutela con

L'Orientale di Napoli. I suoi interessi di ricerca si concentrano sul romanzo siriano del post-2000 e sul ruolo rivestito dalla letteratura nel processo di decostruzione delle narrazioni dominanti e nella costruzione (e rappresentazione) dell'identità nelle sue molteplici forme: identità minoritarie, traumatizzate, nomadi, queer.

ABDELLAH SARDAOUI

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Mary Youssef is an Associate Professor of Arabic at Binghamton University, the State University of New York. Her research focuses on questions of belonging and marginalization in modern Arabic literature and Arab literary production in the diaspora. Her work is published in journals like *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* and the *Journal of African Literature Association*. Her book, *Minorities in the Contemporary Egyptian Novel*, published by Edinburgh University Press, studies the recent rise of "new-consciousness" novels in Egypt and their foregrounding of the experiences of its racial, gender, and ethno-religious minorities.