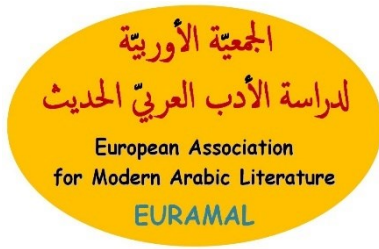


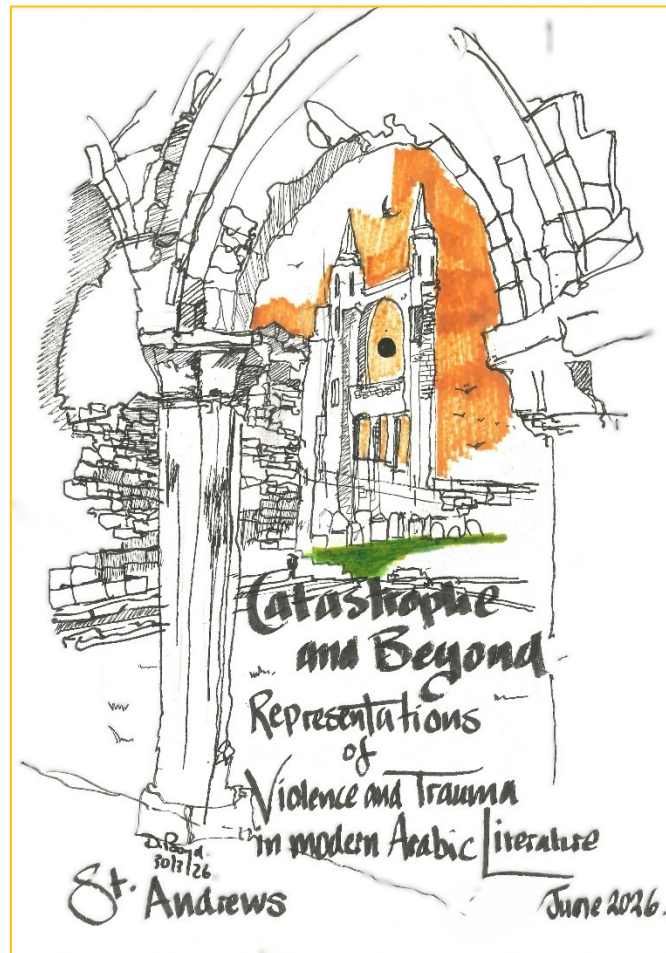
16th EURAMAL CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF
ST ANDREWS,
DEPARTMENT OF ARABIC & PERSIAN



22–26 June 2026, St Andrews,
Scotland, United Kingdom

CATASTROPHE AND BEYOND: REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA IN MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE



PROGRAMME

This conference has been made possible by the generous financial help of:

EURAMAL	The Arabic & Persian Department, University of St Andrews	Prof. Ziad Elmarsafy, University of St Andrews	The Honeyman Foundation
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All artwork by **David Bond**.



'St Andrews (Cockpit View)' (2022)

MONDAY 22 June	
12:00-2:00 pm <u>Parliament Hall</u>	Registration
2:00-2:15 pm <u>School 3</u>	<p style="text-align: center;">Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lovisa Berg, President of EURAMAL, Dalarna University • Kirill Dmitriev, Head of the Department of Arabic & Persian, University of St Andrews • Eleni Kefala, Deputy Head of the School of Modern Languages, University of St Andrews • Catherine O’Leary, AVP Dean of Arts and Divinity, University of St Andrews
2:15-2:45 pm <u>School 3</u>	<p style="text-align: center;">Edward de Moor Memorial Lecture</p> <p>Chair: Lovisa Berg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote Speaker: Sinan Antoon, New York University <p>Epistemic Violence in Iraqi Literary Culture</p>
2:45-4:00 pm <u>School 3</u>	<p style="text-align: center;">Opening Session</p> <p>Chair: Lovisa Berg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabio Caiani, University of St Andrews ‘I Sink My Nails into...’ The Noise of History and the Music of Time in Fawzī Karīm’s Poetry • Teresa Pepe, University of Oslo Homes as “Cages”: Domestic Violence in Fāṭima Qandīl’s novel <i>Aqfās fārigha</i>
5.30-7:00 pm <u>Parliament Hall</u>	<p style="text-align: center;">Special Event- Poetry Reading</p> <p>Chair: Simone Sibilio, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice</p> <p>Nouri al-Jarrah, Syrian Poet</p> <p>Ghayath Almadhoun, Palestinian Poet</p> <p>David Herd, British Poet, University of St Andrews</p> <p>Eleni Kefala, Cypriot Poet, University of St Andrews</p> <p>with Catherine Cobham, University of St Andrews</p>

TUESDAY 23 JUNE

9:00-10:30 am Panel 1 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) GAZA Chair: Lovisa Berg , Dalarna University	9:00-10:30 am Panel 2 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) CITY, GRAPHIC LITERATURE, CIVIL WAR Chair: Dounia Badini , Sciences Po
Simone Sibilio , Ca' Foscari University of Venice The 'Aesthetics of Survival' and the Struggle Against Epistemicide. Poetic Voices from Gaza's Rubble	Giulia Aiello , University of Bologna, University of Macerata & Ines Peta , University of Bologna The Neoliberal Urbicide of Mecca in Two Contemporary Novels
Saga Hamdan , Palestinian Writer from Gaza Writing from the Rubble: Trauma, Memory, and the Act of Bearing Witness in <i>Hadhā al-hajar lī</i> هذا الحجر لي	Amira Farhani , Independent Researcher 'Miroir de Mon Incohérence': Urban Trauma and the Unresolved City in Samir Toumi's <i>Alger, Le Cri</i>
Martina Censi , University of Bergamo Rewriting Space and Time in Gaza through Diaries from the Genocide	Clara Défachel , University of St Andrews Depicting Tunisia's <i>aḥdāth al-khubz</i> in the first Tunisian graphic novel, <i>Shabaḥ 1984</i>
Nahla Khalil , University of Massachusetts, Amherst Gaza Narrates its Own Story: Passage through Trauma	Hind Ashraf Hosny , University of South Carolina The Absurd and the Kafkaesque in Narratives of Civil War

10:35- 10:50 am Tea/Coffee Break  (Psychology Seminar Room 1)

TUESDAY 23 JUNE

10:55 am-12:25 pm Panel 3 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1 & Online) SYRIA 1 & THEATRE Chair: Stephan Guth , University of Oslo	10:55 am-12:25 pm Panel 4 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2 & Online) SUDAN & ERITREA & EGYPT Chair: Annamaria Bianco , Aix-Marseille University
Greta Sala , INALCO, University of Naples 'L'Orientale', IFPO La mise en récit du traumatisme dans le roman syrien de l'après-2011 : configurations poétiques et esthétiques	Marcella Rubino , INALCO "صرخة المواطنين": الكاريكاتور الأدبي كقوة مضادة في أعمال السودانيّين عبد العزيز بركة ساكن وحمور زيادة

<p>Lukáš Koutský, Charles University (Prague)</p> <p>Echoes of 1982: Ḥamā as a Narrative Bridge Between Syria's Past and Present</p>	<p>Laurence Denooz, Lorraine – Nancy University</p> <p><i>Le Messie de Darfour</i>, une esthétique des conséquences traumatiques des violences</p>
<p>Elisabeth Vauthier, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University</p> <p>Violence systémique et traumatisme collectif dans <i>Ceux qui ont peur</i> de Dīmā Wannūs (2017).</p>	<p>Maria Elena Paniconi, University of Macerata</p> <p>Colonial Violence and the Building of a Resistance: The Case of <i>Riḥlat al-shitā'</i>: Ṣāliḥ (Winter's Journey: Ṣāliḥ, 1978) by the Eritrean Leader Muḥammad Sa'īd Nāwid</p>
<p>[Online:] Farah Ali, Lahore University</p> <p>Nine Parts of Desire: The Carnavalesque in Heather Raffo's Play</p>	<p>[Online:] Mohamed Amine Khedhiri, University of Tunis</p> <p>Amputated Alterity: The Disavowed Trauma of the Capitalist Discourse in Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's <i>Utopia</i></p>

12:30-1:30 pm Lunch ✂ (Psychology Seminar Room 1)

YOUNG EURAMAL' GET-TOGETHER (Parliament Hall)


TUESDAY 23 JUNE	
<p>1:35-3:05 pm</p> <p>Panel 5 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1)</p> <p>SYRIA & LEBANON</p> <p>Chair: Lovisa Berg, Dalarna University</p>	<p>1:35-3:05 pm</p> <p>Panel 6 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2 & Online)</p> <p>DYSTOPIA & ECOCIDE</p> <p>Chair: Amira Farhani, Independent Researcher</p>
<p>Baian Rayhanova, Sofia University</p> <p>Representation of Trauma in the Novels of Īmān Ḥumaydān and Shahlā al-'Ujaylī</p>	<p>Tania Al Saadi, Stockholm University</p> <p>Other Food Options in Dystopian Worlds: <i>Ḥārith al-miyāh</i> (1998) by Hudā Barakāt and Other Texts</p>
<p>Jonathan Jonsson, University of Oslo</p> <p>Living with Honour and Dying with Dignity: Violence in the Fiction of Salīm al-Bustānī</p>	<p>Elisa Andrea Viter Márquez, Stockholm University</p> <p>Apocalyptic Images in Speculative Arabic Fiction: The End of Suffering</p>
<p>Alessandro Columbu, University of Westminster</p>	<p>Amany Akel, Effat University (Jeddah)</p>

From Existential Struggle to Post-Defeat Disillusionment: Trauma, Gender, and Violence in Ghāda al-Sammān's Short Fiction	الصدمة وتمثيلات الديدستوبيا و الذاكرة الجندرية في سرديات الحرب في رواية "بوابات أرض العدم"
Mervat Aljomaa , Sohar University	[Online:] Ibtihal Rida Mahmood , Independent Scholar
Liminality, Abjection and Mortality: Syrian War Narratives of Consciousness in the Face of Death	Hiba Abu Nada's <i>Oxygen Is Not for the Dead: Gendered Violence, State Oppression in Times of Political Upheaval</i>

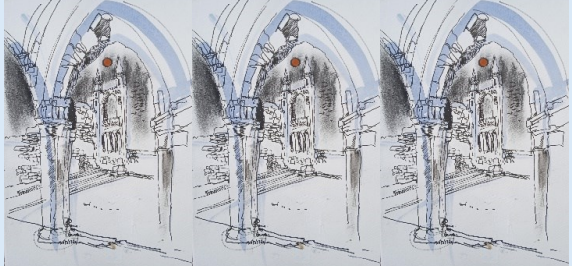
3:10-3:20 pm Tea/Coffee Break  ([Psychology Seminar Room 1](#))

TUESDAY 23 JUNE	
3:25-4:55 pm Panel 7 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) SYRIA 2 Chair: Sobhi Boustani , INALCO	3:25-4:55 pm Panel 8 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) PRISON Chair: Teresa Pepe , University of Oslo
Annamaria Bianco , Aix-Marseille University Writing the Unbearable: Suicide in Syrian Exile Literature	Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla , 'Autónoma' University of Madrid The Kingdom of the Cell: Moroccan Prison Narratives and the Body
Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck , University of Münster Disappeared in Syria: Fawwāz Ḥaddād's Novel <i>Yawm al-ḥisāb</i>	Abdullah Alahmari , University of St Andrews Stripped Masculinities: Torture, Prison, and Power in the Fiction of Yūsuf Idrīs
Stephan Milich , University of Cologne Inter-religious Coexistence under Continuously Traumatic Conditions: The Novel <i>Yawm al-ḥisāb</i> (Day of Judgement, 2021) by Fawwāz Ḥaddād	Adéla Provazníková , Charles University (Prague) Narrating Confinement: Meta-Narrative Strategies and Literary Experiment in Egyptian Prison Writing
Nina Youkhanna , Georgetown University Inherited Violence and Collective Trauma in Salīm Barakāt's <i>Sages of Darkness</i>	Zuzana Gažáková , Comenius University (Bratislava) Prison as Refuge and Freedom as Captivity. Trauma and Endurance in Salwā Bakr's <i>Golden Chariot</i> and <i>The Man from Bashmour</i> .

5:00-5:55 pm (School 3)	Special Event: Ghayath Almadhoun, Lecture, 'Pandora's Box: An Autobiography of a Palestinian Poet in Exile' In collaboration with the Centre for Poetic Innovation, https://poeticinnovation.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk Chair: Fabio Caiani , University of St Andrews
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6:00-7:30 pm (Wardlaw Museum)	Drinks Reception 
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WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE	
9:00-10:50 am Panel 9 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1 & Online) PALESTINIAN FICTION Chair: Simone Sibilio , Ca' Foscari University of Venice	9:00-10:50 am Panel 10 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2 & Online) IRAQ Chair: Fabio Caiani , University of St Andrews
Carolina Toso , Ca' Foscari University of Venice Creating Livability from within a Double <i>Ghurba</i> in <i>Nahr yastahimm fi al-buḥayra</i> by Yaḥyā Yakhlif	Ada Barbaro , 'La Sapienza' University of Rome On the Idea of 'Tasteless Food': Losing <i>Tadhawwuq</i> , Recovering <i>Dhākira</i> . Fragments of Trauma in the Landscape of Contemporary Iraqi Fiction
Pasquale Macaluso , University of Messina Representation of Trauma in Ghassan Kanafani's Fiction	Aldo Nicosia , University of Bari <i>Christmas in Mecca</i> : Challenges of Sectarianism and East/West Relationships in Contemporary Iraq
Samir Haj , Independent Scholar الإيرونيكا الصّادمة في الرواية الفلسطينية. "البحث عن وليد مسعود" (1978) لجبرا إبراهيم جبرا و"حليب التين" (2010) لسامية عيسى أنموذجاً	Ruth Abou Rached , The University of Manchester Writing (as) Edifices of Memory: Or the Act of Reading as Re/Presenting the Absent/ed of 1991 Iraq. With Reference to الحب / <i>Beyond Love</i> (2004/2012) by Hadiya Hussein
[Online:] Nadjat Boukezzoula , University Mhamed Bouguera of Boumerdes المكان بوصفه ذاكرة ومكوّناً للهويّة في رواية "ظلال المفاتيح" لإبراهيم نصر الله	Federico Pozzoli , 'La statale' University of Milan, University of Bologna Re-Figuring the Body during War and Embargo: Traumatic Writing in the Iraqi <i>Adab al-istinsākh</i>

	<p>[Online:] Antonio Pacifico, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University, & University of Naples 'L'Orientale'</p> <p>The Symbolic Violence of Arabic Literary Studies Reconsidered from the Iraqi Field</p>
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10:55-11:10 am Tea/Coffee Break  ([Psychology Seminar Room 1](#))

<h2 style="text-align: center;">WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE</h2>	
<p>11:15 am-12:45 pm Panel 11 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1 & Online) 'ADANIYYA SHIBLĪ & WOMEN WRITERS Chair: Annamaria Bianco, Aix-Marseille University</p>	<p>11:15 am-12:45 pm Panel 12 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) OMAN & IRAQ Chair: Baian Rayhanova, Sofia University</p>
<p>Maya Kesrouany, New York University in Abu Dhabi</p> <p>Reframing Arab Melancholy: Layla Baalbaki, Arwa Salih and Adania Shibly</p>	<p>Wolfgang Trimmel, University of Basel</p> <p>Narrating Iraqi History: Violence and Collective Memory in Contemporary Iraqi Literature</p>
<p>Danuša Čížmíková, Institute of Oriental Studies (Bratislava)</p> <p>Archiving Senses: Body, Memory and Erasure in Palestinian Women's Writings</p>	<p>Astrid Ottosson al-Bitar, Stockholm University</p> <p>Violence in Jokha Alharthi's novel <i>Sayyidāt al-qamar (Celestial bodies)</i>, 2018</p>
<p>[Online:] Fatima Parchekani, Kharazmi University</p> <p>Trauma and Forms of Violence in 'Adania Shibli's <i>Tafṣīl thānawī (Minor Detail)</i></p>	<p>Tetz Rooke, University of Gothenburg</p> <p>Symbolic and Metaphoric Violence in <i>Lā yudhkarūna fī Majāz: A Fantasy Novel</i> by Hudā Ḥamad from Oman</p>
	<p>Mariam Albadi, University of Nizwa</p> <p>Representations of Women in the Omani Postcolonial Male-Authored Novels</p>

12:50-1:50 pm Lunch  ([Psychology Seminar Room 1](#))

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE	
1:55-3:25 pm Panel 13 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) LEBANON & SYRIA Chair: Stephan Guth , University of Oslo	1:55-3:25 pm Panel 14 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & GENDERED ROLES Chair: Lovisa Berg , Dalarna University
Sobhi Boustani, INALCO الأزمات وجمالية التعبير في الأدب العربي الحديث: "بيروتشيمًا" لعبده وازن و"أين اسمي" لديما الشكر	Alice Königstetter, University of Vienna Violence and Trauma in the Domestic Sphere: Rereading Laylā Al-'Uthmān's <i>al-Mar'a wa-l-qitṭa</i> (1985)
Darejan Gardavadze, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University The Novel <i>Voices of the Lost (Barīd al-layl)</i> by Hudā Barakāt as an Example of an Arabic Dystopian Narrative	Safinaz Saad, Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg Psychic Injuries and Maternal Dominion: Rethinking Domestic Violence in Modern Arabic Fiction
Madonna Kalousian, King's College London Contemporary Returnees of the Lebanese Civil War: Najwa Barakat and the Lazarus of Beirut	Anqi Wang, Independent Researcher Haunting and Healing: Reclaiming the Saviour Trope and the Arab Queer Chronotope in <i>Fī ghurfat al-'ankabūt</i>
	Haneen Omari, Leiden University Motherhood and Loss in Contemporary Arabic Literature

3:30-3:45 pm Tea/Coffee Break  ([Psychology Seminar Room 1](#))

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE	
3:50-5:05 pm Panel 15 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1 & Online) PALESTINIAN FICTION & POETRY Chair: Tetz Rooke , University of Gothenburg	3:50-5:05 pm Panel 16 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) MIGRATION & GENDERED VIOLENCE Chair: Dounia Badini , Sciences Po
Brady Ryan, University of Connecticut Palestine's Haunt: Specters of Violence and Loss in <i>Au revoir 'Akkā</i> and <i>Ramād al-sharq</i>	Ziad Elmarsafy, University of St Andrews The RMS (Racism-Migration-Slavery) Triangle in Contemporary Arabic Literature
Hosni Mlitat, Sohar University التطور الدلالي لمظاهر العنف في الرواية الفلسطينية المعاصرة	Miroslava Dirgová, Comenius University (Bratislava) No Place Like Home: Trauma in the Works Depicting Migration Within the Arab World

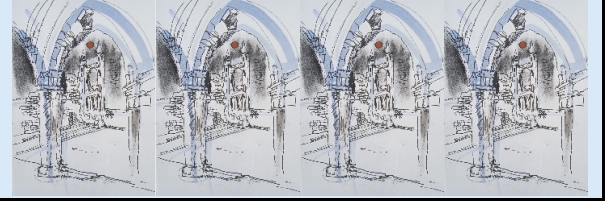
[Online:] Patrizia Zanelli , Ca' Foscari University of Venice	Imane-Sara Zouini , Toulouse Jean Jaurès University
The 2008 Gaza War and Palestinian Resistance Poetry in English: Poems by Rafeef Ziadah and Refaat Alareer	Entre catastrophe intime et violence sociale: repenser la masculinité dans la littérature libyenne contemporaine

5:30-7:00 pm (Parliament Hall)	Special Event: 'Arab Writers in the UK', the Syrian writer Dima Wannous in conversation with Annamaria Bianco (Aix-Marseille University)
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THURSDAY 25 JUNE	
9:00-10:50 am Panel 17 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) EGYPT Chair: Tiran Manucharyan , University of St Andrews	9:00-10:50 am Panel 18 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) ECOCIDE Chair: Teresa Pepe , University of Oslo
Shahed Altal , Independent Scholar Idwār al-Kharrāṭ's New Sensibility: Negotiating Discourses of Violence	Mariangela Masullo , University of Macerata Poetics of Ecocide: Catastrophe, Memory, and Resistance in Contemporary Arabic Poetry
Arianna Tondi , University of Bergamo Grieving for the Tragedy of Human Destinies in the Wake of the <i>Infitāḥ</i> : The Contemporary Epistle <i>Risālat al-baṣā'ir fī al-maṣā'ir</i> by Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī	Mila Fantinelli , Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan) Ecologies of Violence: Animals, Humans, and Trauma in Makhzangi's <i>Animals in Our Days</i>
Mohamed Hassan , Amherst College The Traumatic Relationship between National and Religious Identities in Egyptian fiction	Hilda Mokh , Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University Parallel Traumas: Ecocritical Reading of Violence in Lailā al-Juhanī's <i>al-Firdaws al-yabāb</i>
Katarína Bešková , Institute of Oriental Studies (Bratislava) Dying outside the Revolutionary Frame: Grievability and Recognition in Nā'il al-Ṭūkhī's <i>al-Khurūj min al-Balā'a</i> and Youssef Rakha's <i>The Dissenters</i>	Magdalena Kubarek , University of Warsaw Representations of Violence in 'Abdallāh Khalīfa's novel <i>Dhahaba ma'a al-nifṭ</i>

Jokha Alharthy, Sultan Qaboos University &
Mohamed Zarrouk, University of Kairouan

ثقل الهزائم: عنف الشخصية في رواية "صلاة القلق"
لمحمد سمير ندا



10:55-11:10 am Tea/Coffee Break  (Psychology Seminar Room 1)

THURSDAY 25 JUNE

11:15 am-12:45 pm

Panel 19 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1)

POETRY

Chair: **Simone Sibilio**, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Arturo Monaco, 'La Sapienza' University of Rome

Symbolic Violence against *Turāth*: Abū I-Qāsim al-Shābbī's Critique in *al-Khayāl al-shi'ri 'inda l-'Arab*

Stéphane Baquey, Aix-Marseille University

The Place, the Poem, and the Self: A Shared and Shifting Vulnerability in the Poetry of 'Abbās Beydūn

Abderrahim Chenine, Ecole Normale Supérieure, De OUARGLA – ALGERIE & **Yagoub Mourad**, University of GHARDAIA

تجليات صدمة البوسنة والهرسك وما بعدها في الشعر العربي الحديث: "ديوان البوسنة والهرسك" أنموذجاً



11:15 am-12:45 pm

Panel 20 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2)

MAGHREB 1

Chair: **Amira Farhani**, Independent Researcher

Yusra Hamiham, Université Libre de Bruxelles

Translingual Expressions of Violence in the Contemporary Algerian Novel

Ghazouane Arslane, Tulane University, New Orleans

The History of Violence or the Violence of History? Rewriting the Algerian Revolution and its Postcolonial Aftermath in Tahir Wattar's *al-Lāz*, Rachid Boudjedra's *al-Tafakkuk* and Habib Sayeh's *Colonel Zbarbar*

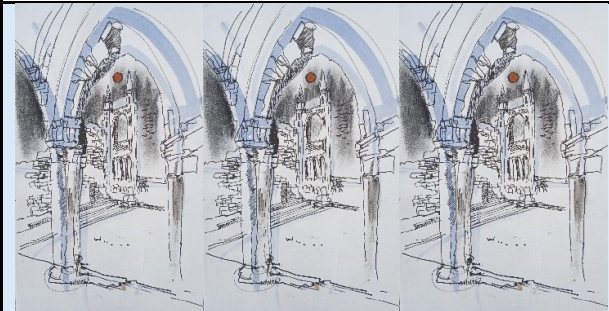
Fernanda Fischione, 'La Sapienza' University of Rome

Haunting Coexistence: Jewish Absence, Collective Trauma, and the Commodification of Memory in Maghrebi Arabic Novels

Ahmed Benali, Abdelmalek Essaadi University (Tetouan)

Reframing Others' War: The Afterlives of the Spanish Civil War in Contemporary Maghrebi Fiction

12:50-1:50 pm Lunch  (Psychology Seminar Room 1)

THURSDAY 25 JUNE	
1:55-3:25 pm Panel 21 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) PALESTINIAN POETRY & FICTION Chair: Fabio Caiani , University of St Andrews	1:55-3:25 pm Panel 22 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2 & Online) MAGHREB 2 Chair: Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla , 'Autónoma' University of Madrid
Jerjes Khoury, Independent Scholar From Homeland to Inner Rupture: Generational Shifts in Palestinian Poetic Nostalgia	Leonardo Palombini , University of Naples 'L'Orientale' Narrative of Resistance: Colonialism and Memory in the Tetralogy <i>al-‘Ābirūn</i> by Bashīr Bin Salāma
Dorit Gottesfeld , Independent Scholar Massacre as Stage: Shaping Memory and Trauma in Akram Musallam's <i>Bint min Shātīlā</i>	Peter Konerding , University of Malta A Bloody <i>Locus Amoenus</i> : Beach Vibes in Tarek Lamouchi's Fictionalization of the 2015 Sousse Attacks
Daniela Potenza , University of Messina Confronting the Self with the Other in <i>Qinā' bi-lawn al-samā'</i> by Bāsim Khandaqjī	Ana González Navarro , 'Autónoma' University of Madrid Violence and Resistance during the 'Years of Lead' in Prison Writings by Women in Morocco
	[Online:] Abdellah Sardaoui , Hassan II University (Casablanca) & Angelika Palmegiani , Mohammed V University (Rabat) and University of Macerata The Memory of Wounds and Post-'Years of Lead' Cinema: Exploring Violence and Trauma in Contemporary Morocco

3:30-3:40 pm Tea/Coffee Break  ([Psychology Seminar Room 1](#))

THURSDAY 25 JUNE	
3:45-5:15 pm Panel 23 (St Mary's College- Lecture 1) THEATRE Chair: Astrid Ottosson al-Bitar , Stockholm University	3:45-5:15 pm Panel 24 (St Mary's College- Lecture 2) EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES Chair: Ziad Elmarsafy , University of St Andrews
Areeg Ibrahim , Helwan University	Hanan Natour , Queen Mary University of London

Transformational Feminine Leadership during Trauma in 20 th and 21 st Centuries Egyptian Women's Plays	Tunisian Literatures: Multilingual Realities, Genealogies, Testimonies
Tiran Manucharyan , University of St Andrews Fathia El-‘Assal: Making Herself Heard on the Egyptian Stage	Lorenzo Casini , University of Messina Violence, Trauma and Literary Criticism
Hadeel Abdelhameed , Monash University, Ludwig Maximilians University Munich The Cognitive Violence of the 1990s: Making the Angry Generation of Iraqi Political Theatre Makers	Giorgia Pometti , ‘La Sapienza’ University of Rome Decolonizing Trauma Studies through Literature: A Pathway from Imīl Ḥabībī’s <i>Ikhtayya</i>
Hind Sabah Bilal , University of Exeter Burden and Voice: Representing Displaced Minority Women’s Identity in Ali al-Abadi's <i>Tfu [Spit]</i> (2020)	Fatima Sai , D'Annunzio University of Chieti–Pescara Atlas of the Afterlife: Arab Literature in the Posthumous Present

THURSDAY 25 JUNE	
7-9 pm (Lower College Hall)	DINNER ✂
9-11:30 pm (Upper College Hall)	CÈILIDH!

FRIDAY 26 JUNE	
9:30 am-1 pm (Buchanan Theatre)	EURAMAL General Meeting
2-5:00 pm TBC	Sightseeing TBC

ABSTRACTS

Hadeel Abdelhameed, Monash University, Ludwig Maximilians University Munich

- **The Cognitive Violence of the 1990s: Making the Angry Generation of Iraqi Political Theatre Makers**

The 1990s decade was more than a critical juncture in Iraq's modern history. The Iraq invasion of Kuwait and the economic sanctions that followed drew the country into a phase of isolation. The collapse of the secular and social state due to the thirteen-year embargo cultivated a hermetically sealed cultural milieu. Confined to the narrative of the self-centred and defeated dictator and under the emerging discourse of austerity and survival- recycling, photocopying, ration cards and exodus, a new turn in political theatre was shaped. Unlike the 'war ideologues' ('Abbūd 2002), organic political dramatists expressed their anger, anxiety and loneliness by turning their critical gaze towards the inward issues, fashioning what I describe as 'the paradigm of isolation' that constructed its own semiosis, grammar, techniques and personae. The popularity of solo performances, female delinquents, eloquent language, - to mention few- served as a model of dramatic internality of the globally forgotten, isolated and embargoed population. Political dramatists redeemed this global 'selective' amnesia through claiming the Iraqi body as the centre of trauma and of performance. I came to this conclusion by mobilising Arabic language resources and interviews with theatre makers and critics who lived through the crisis of the 1990s.

'Abbūd, Salām (2002), *Thaqāfat al-'unf fi al-'Irāq*, Cologne: Manshūrāt al-jamal.

Ruth Abou Rached, The University of Manchester

- **Writing (as) Edifices of Memory: Or the Act of Reading as Re/Presenting the Absent/ed of 1991 Iraq. With Reference to ما بعد الحب / *Beyond Love* (2004/2012) by Hadiya Hussein**

Jean Baudrillard (1991) declared "the Gulf War did not take place" in the minds of many, due to the 'clean' way the (1990-91) war was mediated in global media outlets. For many 'others', this war very much did take place, and it was precisely the 'clean' communications of its violence that had some of the most shocking, traumatic impacts on those living it. As witnesses to such impacts, Iraqi women writers often infuse into their stories of war, a spirit of literary activism contra-punctual to tropes that situate 'watching' violence as spaces for spectatorship. In this paper, I analyse how the novel ما بعد الحب / *Beyond Love* (2004/2012) by Hadiya Hussein situates the acts of writing, listening and reading as restorative acts of active engagement and the book itself as a monument to the absent/ed of 1991 Iraq. As the roles of translators, editors, reviewers and others involved in each work are integral to each version's meaning-making, I draw on 'feminist paratranslation', an analytical framework which blurs and questions definitive boundaries between writing, re-writing and translation, text and paratext, translation and paratranslation (Abou Rached 2021) while still interrogating its own geo-political scope.

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Giulia Aiello, University of Bologna, University of Macerata & Ines Peta, University of Bologna

- **The Neoliberal Urbicide of Mecca in Two Contemporary Novels**

The touristification and gentrification of cities and their socio-economic and environmental implications are increasingly debated not only in Europe but also in Arab countries.

Touristification transforms the city into a space of leisure and consumption, displacing residents or eroding their right to inhabit it. It drives both social and tourist gentrification, deepening impoverishment and social inequality (J. M. González-Pérez et al. 2023: 441). This study explores the representation of these dynamics in the holy city of Mecca in two contemporary novels: *Ṭawq al-ḥamām* (2010) by the Saudi author Rajā' 'Ālim, and *Rawā' Makka* (2019) by the Moroccan writer Ḥasan Awrīd. The analysis draws on the concept of "urbicide" (Coward 2009) to interpret the nexus between political violence and urban space, further developed through the notion of "neoliberal urbicide" (Jiménez-Pacheco 2023: 891), which frames urban restructuring as a form of systemic violence rooted in capitalist logics of commodification and spatial injustice. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the relationship between political violence, urban transformation, and the erosion of the city's spiritual dimension. The novels show how neoliberal modernization operates not only on a socio-economic level but also on a symbolic one, contributing to the debasement and profanation of Mecca. In response, the texts advocate recovering the spiritual dimension rooted in the Arab-Islamic cultural tradition, in contrast to the Wahhabi vision promoted by the Saudi state. This deeper religious perspective offers a framework to reimagine urban belonging, ethical responsibility, and resistance to the progress rhetoric.

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Amany Akel, Effat University (Jeddah)

• **الصدمة وتمثيلات الديستوبيا و الذاكرة الجندرية في سرديات الحرب في رواية "بوابات أرض العدم"**
تقدّم سمر يزبك في "بوابات أرض العدم" شهادة نسوية عن الحرب، لكنها أيضاً تُنشئ عالماً ديستوبياً واقعياً، تمتد فيه الصدمة الفردية لتتشابك مع واقع انهيار المجتمع السوري وتحوله إلى فضاء قمعي متوحش متعدد الأطراف. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى مقارنة خطاب نسوي يجمع بين الشهادة الشخصية والتمثيل الأدبي للحرب السورية في خطاب عادل يشهد على العنف النظام السوري كما يشهد على عنف الجماعات المتطرفة، تقدم يزبك نصاً يدوّن انهيار الوطن وتحوله إلى "أرض عدم"؛ يمتد هذا الفضاء الديستوبي إلى كتابها (تقاطع نيران) الذي تقدّم من خلاله مذكراتها عن الانتفاضة السورية الأولى، تتلاشى فيه الحدود بين الحياة والموت، والذاكرة والمنفى. تركّز الدراسة على ثلاثة محاور أساسية: (1) الشهادة النسوية: تدرس الورقة في هذا المحور نمذجة فعل مقاومة في مواجهة التهجير والمحو، وكيف تُبرز التجربة الأنثوية في قلب الصراع. (2) تمثيل الديستوبيا: يشمل دراسة أساليب تصوير الواقع المنهار من منظور أدبي، وجمالي يعكس قبح سياسات السيطرة على الأجساد ومحو الفردية. (3) أدب الصدمة: تحليل أثر الحرب على الجسد والذاكرة، وكيفية تحويل الألم الفردي إلى سردية جماعية تُوثق وتقاوم في آن واحد. تناقش الورقة أسلوب يزبك في تجاوز المأساة السورية إلى صياغة تجربة تراجمية تُنمذج القبح والموت والحرب بوصفها عناصر سردية ديستوبية-جندرية مما يمنح الأدب السوري الحديث أفقاً نقدياً جديداً في تمثيل الصدمة والكتابة من المنفى.

Abdullah Alahmari, University of St Andrews

• **Stripped Masculinities: Torture, Prison, and Power in the Fiction of Yūsuf Idrīs**

The Egyptian writer Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–1991) explores the representation of prison as a space of power, humiliation, and fractured masculinity. Across several of his prison narratives, including 'Mashūq al-hams' ('Crushed Whispers'; 1969), Idrīs's narrators reflect on how imprisonment erodes masculinity, describing how the experience gradually strips individuals of any reminders of their manhood. His stories go beyond depicting confinement; they critique authoritarianism and the prison system's role in shaping male identity. The author literary works expose how

imprisonment strips individuals of agency, revealing the fragile and often violent constructions of masculinity in oppressive environments. Through psychological and physical torment, both prisoners and jailers become trapped in cycles of domination and submission. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concepts of discipline, surveillance, and power alongside masculinity studies and close textual analysis, this paper examines how Idrīs presents the prison as a reflection of authoritarian rule, where humiliation and violence serve as tools of control and dismantle. The paper contrasts Foucault's Eurocentric view of modern-day prisons as disciplinary institutions with Idrīs's depiction of them as tools of suppression and identity erasure. The paper also highlights a lesser-explored aspect of Idrīs's prison fiction in the Arab world and situates his work alongside other key writers in the genre.

Mariam Albadi, University of Nizwa

- **Representations of Women in the Omani Postcolonial Male-Authored Novels**

This study aims to examine the representations of women in postcolonial Omani novels written by male authors. Six novels will be selected for analysis: *Years of Fire, A Woman from Dhofar*, and *Conditions of the Tribes* by Ahmed Al-Zubaidi; *The Thresholds* by Mohammed Qartas, *The Last Ahqafi* by Mohammed Al-Shahri and *Whispers of the Bridges* by Ali Al-Maamari. These novels reflect the experience of southern Oman under colonial rule and reveal the position of women within the Omani male narrative imagination, particularly in the context of social, cultural, and political struggles. The study is based on the premise that women in these novels are not portrayed as marginal beings; rather, they occupy symbolic positions that reflect the dimensions of social structure, collective consciousness, and identity. In some of these works, women lead revolutionary and resistance movements, despite the violence inflicted upon them, such as mutilation, murder, and other forms of abuse. The study draws on a theoretical framework inspired by the works of Frantz Fanon, especially his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, to understand the dynamics of violence and conflict under colonialism. It also benefits from Gayatri Spivak's contributions in analysing the voice of the "subaltern," as well as Edward Said's *Orientalism* in discussing colonial discourses.

Jokha Alharthy, Sultan Qaboos University & **Mohamed Zarrouk**, University of Kairouan

- **ثقل الهزائم: عنف الشخصية في رواية "صلاة القلق" لمحمد سمير ندا**

نهتمّ في هذه الورقة البحثية بدراسة الشخصية العنيفة في رواية "صلاة القلق"، للكاتب المصري محمد سمير ندا، الفائزة بالجائزة العالمية للرواية العربية عام 2025، وقد صدرت روايته عن دار ميسكيليا في تونس عام 2024. فتدرس الورقة روايته تمثيلاً وتمثلاً لواقع مأزوم، يضع الإنسان العربيّ بين واقع طارد، وسلطة قامعة وهزائم متكررة، ووعي غائب. رواية "صلاة القلق" هي إعادة تشكيل لهزيمة 67، بتصويرٍ حكائيّ يتركز على عنف السلطة وامتلاكها لوسائل تشكيل الواقع الوهمي، وعلى عنف الشخصية في سلوكها وحركتها. الشخصيات في الرواية هي ذواتٌ حاملَةٌ للهزيمة، منكسرة، باحثة عن هروبٍ ممكن، هروبٍ من الذات، من السلطة التي أغلقت على القرية منافذها، وجعلتها تعيش وهم الانتصار، وحال الحصار، وفي المقابل توجد السلطة التي تُمثّلها شخصية رجل المال وشخصية رجل الدين، السلطة التي تُحكّم العنف أداةً لخنق الناس، وليعيشوا في ظلّ أكاذيبها، وفي الآن ذاته تُرّوج الأوهام وتملك المعلومة والغذاء والصلاة والأنفاس، يظهر عنف السلطة في القبضة الشديدة والحصار الدائم ومنع الناس من الحركة، والسيطرة على مصادر المعلومات. نعالج هذا الموضوع وفق محورين: (1) التمثيل الحكائي للعنف السياسي والتاريخي (2) التمثيل الحكائي للعنف الفردي نفسياً واجتماعياً ونعمل من خلال هذين العنصرين على بيان قدرة التخيل الروائي على تمثيل الصدمة التاريخية والنفسية وتصوير حال الشخصية بعد الكارثة.

Farah Ali, Lahore University

- **Nine Parts of Desire: The Carnavalesque in Heather Raffo's Play**

My paper examines Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire*, which I argue draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque to illuminate the fragmented yet resilient identities of Iraqi women living under the burdens of war, patriarchy, and Western misrepresentation. In Bakhtin's terms, the carnivalesque refers to a temporary suspension of social hierarchies, a space where dominant norms are inverted and suppressed voices can surface. I contend that Raffo creates such a space by interweaving monologues from women of diverse ages, social classes, and religious affiliations, forming a chorus of plural perspectives that resist both traditional Iraqi constraints and essentialist Western narratives. This multiplicity becomes a form of subversion: characters express grief, humour, rage, and tenderness, inhabiting a chaotic yet generative space where trauma and humanity coexist. I argue that the carnivalesque in the play functions not only as a structural device, but also as a psychological and political mechanism of survival. Within this fluid, performative world, Iraqi women reclaim agency and articulate their lived realities on their own terms. Ultimately, *Nine Parts of Desire* constructs a powerful counter-narrative that challenges fixed representations of Arab womanhood, asserting complexity, dignity, and emotional depth through a carnivalesque lens that foregrounds resistance, ambiguity, and transformation.

Mervat Aljomaa, Sohar University

- **Liminality, Abjection and Mortality: Syrian War Narratives of Consciousness in the Face of Death**

The paper examines the ways in which the narrative of Syrian war fiction captures the encounter with death in Samar Yazbek's *Where the Wind Calls Home* and Shahla Ujayli's *Summer with the Enemy*. It explores the impact of violence and brutality manifest in the death scene on the mind and psyche of those who witness or experience the disfiguration of the human body. In Yazbek's novel, violence is rendered through the trauma of Ali, an injured soldier whose consciousness wavers between life and death, self and other. Similarly, violence in Ujayli's book seems to be a motif inscribed in the narrator's and other characters' memories. The ghosts of brutality and displacement repeatedly haunt the present consciousness of the narrator who witnessed the loss of her mother to an explosive mine. I argue that the encounter with death necessarily instigates a liminal state of abjection in the Kristevan sense, one that destabilizes the boundaries of selfhood and compels a process of identity negotiation. Abjection, thus, emerges as a paradoxical safeguard that protects the self from total disintegration when confronted with the horrific presence of death.

Ghayath Almadhoun, Palestinian Poet

- **'Pandora's Box: An Autobiography of a Palestinian Poet in Exile'**

Almadhoun is a Palestinian poet, born in Damascus, who lives between Berlin and Stockholm. He was born in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus, the son of a Palestinian father and a Syrian mother. As both Palestinian and Syrian, Almadhoun describes himself as a "double refugee." His work draws on memory and lived experience to write the present and to trace its impact on language and the body. In this sense, he writes our time. Composing in Arabic and reaching readers through translations into more than 30 languages, his poetry moves between the personal and the political, dissolving the distance between them. He has created several poetry films, collaborated widely with artists and scholars, and curated numerous events, readings, and literary anthologies. Critics have described his work as "urgent and necessary," "a sustained detonation," and as "poetry that grabs the reader by the scruff of the neck," highlighting its uncompromising portrayal of violence and its refusal of consolation.

His writing confronts the brutality and contradictions of our time, insisting on a language capable of bearing witness without looking away. He continues to divide his time between Berlin and Stockholm. Almadhoun's poignant poetry explores life in exile and, above all, the terrors of war. How can words make the suffering of war tangible? What does it mean to live at a distance while one's homeland is being destroyed?

Shahed Altal, Independent Scholar

- **Idwār al-Kharrāṭ's New Sensibility: Negotiating Discourses of Violence**

In post-revolutionary Egypt, politics and culture became deeply intertwined, profoundly reshaping the conditions under which Arab writers and intellectuals operated. Early in the Nasserist era, strict censorship, surveillance, and the dismantling of independent cultural institutions created a climate of political repression that weighed heavily on the literary field. Alongside this state violence, religious authorities and Islamist groups imposed additional ideological boundaries, sacralising heritage and restricting public discussion of politics, religion, and sexuality. The 1967 defeat marked a decisive rupture, destabilizing not only political systems but also cultural self-perceptions throughout the Arab world. In response to these pressures, Idwār al-Kharrāṭ elaborated the notion of the 'New Sensibility', a literary aesthetic that resists ideological confinement while seeking new ways to reimagine subjectivity after trauma. In works such as *Rāma wa-l-ṭinnīn* (Rama and the Dragon) and *al-Zaman al-ākhar* (The Other Time), he interweaves autobiography, myth, surrealism, and fragmented memory, transforming literature into both a response to repression and a symbolic struggle between violence and renewal. On this basis, the paper argues that al-Kharrāṭ's 'New Sensibility' exemplifies modern Arabic literature's attempt to turn violence into an aesthetic of questioning, thereby confronting both indigenous and exogenous forms of violence.

Sinan Antoon, New York University

- **Epistemic Violence in Iraqi Literary Culture**

The question of and the quest for the mode through which one can approach and represent Iraq and navigate its history, or how Iraqi subjects are constructed is one of the fundamental questions in Iraq after the US invasion 2003, not only in literary texts, but in Iraqi discursive spaces. The institutionalization of political sectarianism and the sectarianization of Iraq's history and collective memory in the media and in curricular discourses centered and privileged a particular iteration of the Iraqi subject and of Iraq's history. Sectarian imaginaries and histories became mainstream. All of this, I stress, amounts to epistemic violence. My paper will interrogate how Iraqi poets and novelists positioned themselves and their literary output vis-à-vis the epistemic violence Iraq and Iraqis were subjected to in the last three decades. How was this epistemic violence and its tropes internalized, reproduced, and disseminated in the cultural field? How did Iraqi writers, or their characters and personae, assume sectarian subject positions? How did other writers confront and resist this epistemic violence?

Ghazouane Arslane, Tulane University, New Orleans

- **The History of Violence or the Violence of History? Rewriting the Algerian Revolution and its Postcolonial Aftermath in Tahir Wattar's *al-Lāz*, Rachid Boudjedra's *al-Tafakkuk* and Habib Sayeh's *Colonel Zbarbar***

This paper seeks to examine the modes of novelistic writing that interrogate and reimagine the politics of historical memory in postcolonial Algeria. Retrieving that which is buried or rendered

invisible in official historical discourse, the paper will demonstrate how Wattar's *al-Lāz* (1974), Boudjedra's *al-Tafakkuk* (1982) and Sayeh's *Colonel Zbarbar* (2015) deploy particular writing strategies – the diary as framing device, interior monologue, cyclical and impressionistic narration, among others – to narrate the stories of those who actively participated in the national struggle for independence or the Black Decade and were killed, forgotten or marginalized for ideological and political reasons, revealing the complexity of (post)colonial history through its heroics, horrors, erasures, spectres and traumatic effects, and questioning the relationship between history and human agency. The peculiar representation of physical and symbolic violence in these novels – especially colonial but also national – aims to reconfigure the meaning of remembering and inheriting the past, such that writing becomes not just an act of recording or mourning but of reconstructing the past and resisting the violence of history itself. Ultimately, the paper aims to show how the novel as form becomes not only a medium of representing the unrepresentable – unspeakable violence, torture and trauma – but an aesthetic necessity of inscription in history.

Stéphane Baquey, Aix-Marseille University

- **The Place, the Poem, and the Self: A Shared and Shifting Vulnerability in the Poetry of ‘Abbās Beyḍūn**

Since the 1970s, ‘Abbās Beyḍūn’s poetry has continuously reconfigured the relationship between place, poem, and self. This relation is shaped by a shifting vulnerability, inscribed in various historical and anthropological contexts: the tragic evocation of Ṣūr between sea and village, the experience of imprisonment during the Lebanese Civil War, the fragile reconstruction of Beirut, and the pervasive sense of absence within an exhausted urban landscape. Each moment generates a distinct poetics in which *qaṣīdat al-nathr* moves away from its earlier modernist rebellious energy to articulate instead a precarious temporality where resilience becomes less a narrative of healing than an uncertain survival. I will examine how trauma is registered as a process within Beyḍūn’s work without being reducible to an identifiable origin or event. Drawing on literary, cultural and anthropological studies of Beirut and Lebanon (Brônes 2020; Hayek 2015; Khayyat 2022; Mermier & Varin 2010; Naeff 2018; Seigneurie 2011), I will argue that Beyḍūn’s poetry invents a situated and fragile self whose agency and form of critique are grounded in vulnerability.

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Franck Mermier et Jean-Christophe Varin (dir.), *Mémoires de guerres au Liban (1975-1990)*, Arles, Actes Sud-Sindbad, 2010.

Judith Naeff, *Prekarious Imaginaries of Beirut. A City's Suspended Now*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Ken Seigneurie, *Standing by the Ruins. Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2011.

Ada Barbaro, ‘La Sapienza’ University of Rome

- **On the Idea of ‘Tasteless Food’: Losing *Tadhawwuq*, Recovering *Dhākira*. Fragments of Trauma in the Landscape of Contemporary Iraqi Fiction**

In Arabic, the root dh-w-q encompasses a wide range of meanings: the sense of taste (*ḥāssat al-tadhawwuq*) is not merely a reference to sensory perception but appears in expressions that touch upon a much broader sphere. Its loss (*fuqḍān ḥāssat al-tadhawwuq*) may also signify a loss of zest for life (*al-ḥayāh bilā ṭa‘m*), meaning that existence feels dull, meaningless, or

joyless. If we consider the trauma maps that mark the geography of the contemporary Arab world, they are also shaped by dynamics of violence that result not only in the absence of food as sustenance, but also in the loss of the culture and memory attached to it, giving rise to new forms of nostalgia that characterize artistic production. Within this context, contemporary Iraqi prose becomes a particularly fruitful field of exploration. Through selected examples of fiction, this paper aims to clarify the concept of “tasteless food” by examining two distinct dimensions: a) tasteless food as disgusting food — the absence or loss of taste associated with essential food, leading to the resort to “alternative” foods, at times repulsive, yet necessary for survival; b) tasteless food as insipid food — the absence or loss of taste associated with food that, existing only in memory, seems to have lost the richness of its original flavour. It thus becomes a nostalgic refuge which, even from afar, offers a temporary balm for the trauma of one’s homeland.

Ahmed Benali, Abdelmalek Essaadi University (Tetouan)

- **Reframing Others’ War: The Afterlives of the Spanish Civil War in Contemporary Maghrebi Fiction**

This paper explores how contemporary Maghrebi fiction reframes the Spanish Civil War not as a self-contained European struggle but as a colonial catastrophe whose afterlives unfolded across North Africa. These novels recover silenced histories of coercion, captivity, and exile, rewriting a conflict remembered in Spain as “civil” but lived in the Maghreb as “others’ war.” Abdelhamid Al-Houta’s *Ḥarb al-Ākharīn* (2022) gives voice to the Moroccan conscript in Franco’s forces, a coerced body forced into survival yet branded as barbaric in Spanish memory. Abdelwahab Aïssaoui’s *Sierra de Muerte* (2015) situates the war in Algeria’s desert camps, where defeated Republicans were confined by French colonial power, turning the camp into a microcosm of global catastrophe and a fragile stage of solidarity. Mohamed Issa al-Moaddib’s *Ḥidhā’ Isbānī* (2020) follows Republican exiles in Tunisia, where fragments of Spain are carried through objects and crafts, resisting erasure while exposing echoes of authoritarianism in the Arab present. Taken together, these fictions construct a Maghrebi triangulation of the war: Morocco as coerced soldier, Algeria as captive witness, Tunisia as displaced exile. They do not merely append Arab voices to European memory but reconfigure the very coordinates of remembrance, transforming Spain’s tragedy into a shared trans-Mediterranean colonial catastrophe.

Katarína Bešková, Institute of Oriental Studies (Bratislava)

- **Dying outside the Revolutionary Frame: Grievability and Recognition in Nā’il al-Ṭūkhī’s *al-Khurūj min al-Balā’a* and Youssef Rakha’s *The Dissenters***

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution erupted, in part, in response to injustice and the authorities’ disregard for human life, exemplified by the brutal death of Khālid Sa’īd, which became a symbol of resistance against a regime that subjected individuals to severe and violent misrecognition. Although the revolution temporarily changed the visibility and grievability of some lives, imbuing the deaths of many ordinary individuals with meaning, the lives and deaths of others remained largely invisible and unacknowledged, much as they had been before. Contemporary Egyptian fiction draws attention to these “ordinary,” unrecognized deaths, raising unsettling questions about whether, during the revolution, Egyptians moved toward equality or remained divided even in death. This paper analyses two contemporary Egyptian novels- *al-Khurūj min al-balā’a* (2018, *Exit from the Gutter*) by Nā’il al-Ṭūkhī and *The Dissenters* (2025) by Youssef Rakha, which explore whose deaths in revolutionary Egypt are deemed

grievable, and why the spectres of the deceased continue to haunt the minds and spaces of the living characters. The analysis draws on a combination of concepts of grievability (Butler, 2004), literary recognition (Lei-Pihl, 2023) and hauntology (Derrida, 2006; Fisher, 2012).

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Annamaria Bianco, Aix-Marseille University

- **Writing the Unbearable: Suicide in Syrian Exile Literature**

This paper will examine the literary representation of suicide in contemporary Syrian exile novels, situating it within broader frameworks of violence, trauma, and cultural taboo. In Arab and Muslim societies, suicide remains profoundly stigmatized—as both a religious sin and a social disgrace—making its literary portrayal doubly transgressive (al-Shaykh 1997). Empirical evidence highlights the urgency of the issue in displacement contexts: suicide rates range from 4.1 to 25.5 per 100,000 among refugees with asylum status, rising to 51.2 among asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied minors (Cogo et al. 2022). Syrians in exile are no exception, as high levels of PTSD, depression, and anxiety continue to mark their communities, while the fall of Bachar al-Assad in December 2024 further unsettled the precarious balance maintained during more than a decade of displacement. Through close readings of novels published before the fall of the regime (Ḥasan 2022; Isbir 2024), when return still appeared an unattainable illusion, this paper argues that suicide in Syrian exile fiction transcends individual despair to function as a literary device exposing the collapse of social, political, and affective structures under displacement. Drawing both on trauma studies and affect theory, I will show how Syrian authors in diaspora have mobilized the topic of suicide (or attempted suicide) to challenge cultural silences, articulate unbearable suffering, and reclaim narrative agency. In doing so, these literary works transform a deeply forbidden taboo into a potent mode of representation—mapping the fraught terrain between catastrophe, mourning, and the fragile assertion of survival.

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Hind Sabah Bilal, University of Exeter

- **Burden and Voice: Representing Displaced Minority Women’s Identity in Ali al-Abadi’s *Tfu* [Spit] (2020)**

This paper investigates the theatrical representation of the identity dilemmas arising from the loss of home and culture faced by minority Iraqi women subjected to captivity, sexual enslavement and displacement during the ISIS invasion of Northern Iraq. Focusing on the contemporary Iraqi play *Tfu* [Spit], authored by Ali al-Abadi, the analysis employs a feminist critical lens to explore the fluid and contested nature of identity in conflict zones shaped by intersecting factors of oppression based on ethnicity, gender, social standing and political power. In the play, the character of SHE is central to this discourse, embodying the struggle for self-definition and resistance in the wake of trauma. While her symbolic resonance with figures such as Nadia Murad highlights the “burden of representation” placed on minority women, this paper argues that the play does more than bear witness: it constructs a counter-archive of resistance. By staging trauma as performance, *Tfu* challenges ISIS’s attempts at erasure while

simultaneously resisting the reductive humanitarian narratives that commodify survivor testimony for global consumption. By situating this narrative within broader socio-political contexts, the play positions theatre as an active force in shaping cultural memory, transforming testimony into resistance and reclaiming narrative agency. This analysis concludes that Iraqi theatre does much more than just mirror reality; it transcends mere reflection of reality, actively addressing complex social issues, challenging simplistic narratives surrounding women's conflicts and amplifying the voices of those silenced by violence, extremism, stigma and marginalisation.

Nadjat Boukezzoula, University Mhamed Bouguera of Boumerdes

• **المكان بوصفه ذاكرة ومكوّنًا للهوية في رواية "ظلال المفاتيح" لإبراهيم نصر الله**
 في الدراسة الشهيرة لغاستون باشلار "جماليات المكان" حدث تغيير كبير في الرؤية السردية للمكان، بحيث لم يعد ينظر إليه بوصفه أبعاداً هندسية أو مسرحاً تجري فيه أحداث الرواية، بل أصبح يدرس بوصفه "حقلًا دلاليًا ينتج المعنى، ويكشف عن عمق التجربة الإنسانية"؛ أي بوصفه عنصراً فاعلاً في بناء الدلالة، وصياغة الرؤية، وبناء الشخصيات. وفي الرواية الفلسطينية اكتسب المكان حضوراً مضاعفاً، بحيث ارتبط المكان بالذاكرة والهوية، في ظلّ الاحتلال الصهيوني الذي سعى لمحو تجذّر الإنسان الفلسطيني وارتباطه بأرضه بشقّ الوسائل والطرق، وحرمانه من حقّه في العيش بسلام على أرضه، ورواية "ظلال المفاتيح" واحدة من أهمّ الروايات الفلسطينية فهي ملحمة الوطن راهنت على إبراز ارتباط الفلسطيني بأرضه، برغم التهجير القسري و تدمير البيوت والقرى، وقد سعى نصر الله للتعبير عن ذلك التعلّق أو الارتهان لقيمة لا تنزلق مع الزمن، والانتماء إلى أرضه، فالأرض تعرف سكّانها وظلالهم، وقارئ الرواية يستشعر هذا التمثيل لمعنى التجذّر بالحقّ، ومعنى أن يلتصق الإنسان بالمكان بكلّ أبعاده الثقافية والدينية والحضارية، ففي هذه الرواية يصوّر الشخصيات التي تماهت مع وطنها وأبت أن تفارقه برغم الأخطار التي تتهدّدها، وتمسّكها بمفاتيح البيوت أعطى معنى لوجودها، التي أصبحت رمزاً لحلم العودة ورمزاً للهوية أراد المحتلّ تغييرها. وعطفاً على ما سبق نسعى في هذا البحث للإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية: ما هي الصورة التي تمثّل نصر الله بها المكان سردياً؟ وما علاقته بباقي المكوّنات السردية؟ كيف يسهم المكان في تشكيل الهوية وصياغة الذاكرة؟

Sobhi Boustani, INALCO

• **الأزمات وجمالية التعبير في الأدب العربي الحديث: "بيروتشيمّا" لعبده وازن و"أين اسمي" لديما الشكر**
 عدة أعمال أدبية عربية، نُشرت خلال السنوات العشر الأخيرة، استلهمت مادتها من أحداث مأساوية وقعت في العالم العربي وما تزال تشكل مصدراً لصدمة اجتماعية عميقة وعواملَ لأزمات اجتماعية وسياسية متعددة. هدف مداخلة دراسة عملين مختلفين كُتبا في هذا السياق ويشكّلان مرآتين لهذه الأزمات. بيروتشيمّا (Bayrūtshīmā)، وهي قصيدة للشاعر الروائي والصحفي اللبناني عبده وازن، استلهمت من انفجار مرفأ بيروت ونُشرت سنة 2021. وأين اسمي؟ (Ayna Ismī)، وهي رواية للكاتبة السورية ديما الشكر، مستوحاة من الأحداث القديمة – الحديثة التي جرت في سوريا، وقد نُشرت أيضاً سنة 2021. سيقودنا تحليلنا إلى إبراز طريقة التعبير جمالياً، شعراً ورواية، عن هذه الأحداث المأساوية، الصادمة والمؤلمة التي يعاني منها المجتمعان اللبناني والسوري.

Fabio Caiani, University of St Andrews

- **'I Sink My Nails into...' The Noise of History and the Music of Time in Fawzī Karīm's Poetry**

This paper focuses on one of the most original, yet overlooked, poetic voices to emerge from Iraq in the 20th century: that of the late Fawzī Karīm (Baghdad, 1945 – London, 2019). In his only long poem, the remarkable *Qarrāt al-awbi'a* (1995; *Plague Lands*, 2011), Karīm goes back to his childhood and youth to remember and reimagine key events in the troubled history of modern Iraq: the events that made him a poet, and an exile. Using Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the literary chronotope, I refer to the *loci memoriae* of the poem (especially the lost working-class quarter of al-Abbāsiyya by the Tigris in Baghdad) and to its three temporal dimensions: personal time, historical time and mythic Time. I then move to a discussion of how the poem represents violence in a unique way thanks to the paintings it paints, the music it plays. Finally, touching upon Judith Butler and John Burnside and paying homage to Edward Said, I compare

Karīm's work to that of Maḥmūd Darwīsh to try to answer the very topical question of what poetry can do in our time of catastrophe.

Lorenzo Casini, University of Messina

- **Violence, Trauma and Literary Criticism**

The material and epistemic violence exercised on Arab societies in the modern age – and the traumas that ensued – did not impact only on creative writing but affected also literary criticism. This paper discusses the recent effects of 'political trauma' (Caruth 1996, Bell 2006) on Arabic literary studies with particular reference to scholars working in the European academia. It discusses trauma in relationship to the scholars'/critics' widespread sense of defeat in the context of the Arab counterrevolutions (Achcar 2020) and the normalization of violence and genocide at the global level. As political trauma ruptures settled narratives and frames of meaning (Bell 2006, 10), scholars are currently struggling to cope with the rapid succession of traumas and political defeats and prove often unable to elaborate satisfactory epistemologies. Despite this apparent weakness, this paper argues, Arabic literary studies have the potential to occupy centre stage in the struggle against the current hegemony of neocolonial and neoliberal narratives within a perspective of radical political change.

Achcar G. (2020) "Il regime controrivoluzionario di Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi" in (Casini, Melfa, Starkey eds.) *Minnena. L'Egitto, l'Europa e la ricerca dopo l'assassinio di Giulio Regeni*, Messina: Mesogea, pp. 40–52.

Bell D. (2006), "Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World PoliticsMemory", in Bell (ed.) *Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, London: Palgrave, pp. 1–29.

Caruth C. (1996), *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Martina Censi, University of Bergamo

- **Rewriting Space and Time in Gaza through Diaries from the Genocide**

Over the past two years, the genocide in Gaza has further strengthened the link between Palestinian literature and *iltizām*, moving writing away from the realm of fiction and turning it into a tool for representing the ongoing catastrophe. More often, Gazan writers choose collective life writing, like *yawmiyyāt* (diaries) or *shahādāt* (testimonies), to document their daily lives, which have been devastated by genocide. Starting from the collection *Kitāba khalfa al-khūṭ: Yawmiyyāt al-ḥarb 'alā Ghazza* (2024), and possibly comparing it with other collections, I aim to draw attention to life writings as a strategy for rewriting and decolonizing history, transforming individual experiences into collective memory, to preserve the identity and sense of belonging within the Palestinian community. Resorting to trauma and memory studies, I will focus on some recurring elements in the construction of the space-time framework, used by writers to represent the catastrophe in Gaza after the beginning of the genocide, to see if they can be considered part of the expression of a common attempt to record history and create collective memory through a reworking of trauma, pursuing a policy of resistance to erasure.

Abderrahim Chenine, Ecole Normale Supérieure, De OUARGLA – ALGERIE & **Yagoub Mourad**, University of GHARDAIA

- **تجليات صدمة البوسنة والهرسك وما بعدها في الشعر العربي الحديث: "ديوان البوسنة والهرسك" أنموذجاً**
اندلعت تبعاً لانقسام يوغسلافيا إلى عدة دول في عام 1992 أعمال إبادة عرقية دينية تُجاه البوسنة والهرسك قام بها الصرب أولاً ثم تبعهم الكروات فيما بعد، وسط صمت عالمي رهيب كالذي نعايشه الآن في حرب الإبادة بغزة، فانطلقت حناجر الشعراء العرب والمسلمين متضامنة مع إخوانهم في البوسنة والهرسك ليصوروا المأساة ويوقظوا الهمم النائمة، وينقلوا ما يحدث إلى من بيديه الحل والربط، لعل هناك من يوقف شلال الدماء التي تسفك، ونزيف الأعراض التي تنتهك، والإنسانية

التي تذيب. من هنا جاءت هذه الورقة البحثية لتبرز مدى تجلّي هذه الصدمة وما بعد الصدمة في ألفاظ الشعر العربي الحديث ومعجمه، وقد اختير ديوان اليوسنة والهرسك؛ لكونه ضم مجموعة من قصائد لشعراء عرب من مختلف أصقاع العالم العربي والإسلامي ليكون ممثلاً جيداً لمختلف الرؤى والميولات والمشارب، وتحاول هذه الورقة تتبع الحقول الدلالية الأساسية في هذا الديوان الصادر عن رابطة العالم الإسلامي آنذاك، ومحاولة ربطها بالسياقات المختلفة، لتنتقل من سياق الصدمة والرثاء إلى سياق المقاومة والتصدي والتكافل، مستعينة بنظرية الحقول الدلالية وصياغة المعجم الشعري المتصل بهذا الحدث. وبهذا بنيت إشكالية البحث على عدة إشكاليات جزئية: (1) ما الحقول الدلالية الأساسية التي شكّلت تجليات الصدمة في الديوان؟ وكيف يتنازعها الألم والعنف من جهة والمقاومة والرجاء من جهة أخرى؟ (2) كيف بُني المعجم النصي للكارثة: ألفاظ القتل والحصار والتهجير مقابل ألفاظ الشهادة والكرامة والعدل الإلهي؟ (3) ما أثر السياق الثقافي-التاريخي لمحنة اليوسنة في البنية المجازية والإشارات؟ وسيكون المنهج المتبع هو المنهج المعجمي الدلالي المتضمن بناء قائمة بالمدخل، ووضع خرائط للاقتران الدلالي، وتعيين الفجوات والذروات الكثافية عبر المتن، والمعتمد أساساً على أدائي الاستقراء والمُقارَنة فضلاً عن التّخليل والإحصاء بين الفينة وأختها أدوات إجرائيّة.

Danuša Čižmíková, Institute of Oriental Studies (Bratislava)

- **Archiving Senses: Body, Memory and Erasure in Palestinian Women's Writings**

Situated at the intersection of emotion, cognition, and language, the body emerges as a central locus for perception, experience, and meaning-making. Narrated as a site of control, protest, or liberation, the body shapes both the embodied self and the world it inhabits. This paper examines how Palestinian women writers employ sensory narrative strategies to articulate silenced embodied experiences, focusing on 'Adaniyya Shibli's *Tafṣīl thānawī* (*Minor Detail*) and Ḥuzāma Ḥabāyeb's *Mukhmal* (*Velvet*). Through what I call a "sensory archive," these texts weave touch, smell, sight, and sound into their textures, creating new pathways to slow and gentle remembering. By rendering "unarchivable" lived experiences—of individuals and communities fractured by systemic violence and the violence of attempted erasure—both narratable and perceptible, these texts open new avenues for remembrance and reflection. While the narratives appear to foreclose futurity, they also reveal latent openings through which alternative futures might emerge from the present moment.

Alessandro Columbu, University of Westminster

- **From Existential Struggle to Post-Defeat Disillusionment: Trauma, Gender, and Violence in Ghāda al-Sammān's Short Fiction**

This paper offers a comparative study of Ghāda al-Sammān's short fiction before and after the 1967 Arab defeat, showing how her work charts a shift from existentialist explorations of moral choice to politically charged critiques of patriarchy, authoritarianism, and the failures of anti-colonial resistance, all refracted through the lens of trauma. Drawing on her debut collection 'Aynāka qadarī (1962), written during the Algerian War of Independence, the first part of the study examines how al-Sammān's early protagonists wrestle with wartime dislocation, alienation, and the moral ambiguities of conflict. While grounded in Sartrean notions of freedom and responsibility, these stories also register the subtle psychic wounds left by violence, displacement, and the pressures of political engagement, hinting at the long-term emotional costs of revolutionary struggle. The second part turns to *Raḥīl al-marāfi' al-qadīmah* (1973), where the trauma of the 1967 defeat produces a more explicit narrative rupture. Here, al-Sammān's characters navigate a world marked by disillusionment, emasculation, and the erosion of authority, revealing how national catastrophe becomes internalized as personal incapacitation. Through close readings of the short stories of this collection the paper situates these works within the framework of Arab self-criticism interpreting them as artistic responses to the collective psychological collapse following the *Naksa* of June 1967. By juxtaposing pre- and post-1967 narratives, the study traces a movement from existentialist belief in human

agency toward a trauma-conscious critique of entrenched power systems, colonial, patriarchal, and authoritarian. The paper positions al-Sammān's fiction as a vital site for understanding how modern Arabic literature engages with the lasting wounds of violence and betrayal, the fragility of liberation projects, and the ongoing struggle for justice in the Arab world.

Clara Défachel, University of St Andrews

- **Depicting Tunisia's *aḥdāth al-khubz* in the first Tunisian graphic novel, *Shabaḥ 1984***

This paper explores the representation of *aḥdāth al-khubz* – also known as the ‘bread riots’, a series of heavily repressed protests which took place across Tunisia between 28 December 1983 and 6 January 1984 (Dakhli, 2021) – in Tunisia's first graphic novel, *Shabaḥ 1984* by Seif Eddine Nechi and Aymen Mbarek. This book centres the story of ‘Chbayah’ (‘little ghost’ in Tunisian Arabic), an unknown figure who disrupted police operations during *aḥdāth al-khubz*. I first examine the literary and graphic strategies used to commemorate this often-overlooked aspect of the history of Tunisian protest movements, notably through the incorporation of archival material. The graphic novel genre further enables the authors to create news visual means of remembering the victims of government-led repression during *aḥdāth al-khubz*. I then turn to the many material challenges to the publication of this resolutely Tunisian story in Tunisia. By unpacking the graphic novel's complex itinerary to publication across Tunisian Arabic, Standard Arabic and French, I ultimately argue that concerns over representations of violence in Tunisia's recent history cannot be disconnected from the languages in which such stories can be shared with (local) readers today.

Dakhli, Leyla, ‘The Fair Value of Bread: Tunisia, 28 December 1983–6 January 1984’, *International Review of Social History*, 66.S29 (2021), pp. 41–68, doi:10.1017/S0020859021000110.

Laurence Denooz, Lorraine – Nancy University

- ***Le Messie de Darfour, une esthétique des conséquences traumatiques des violences***

Profondément inscrite au cœur de *Le Messie de Darfour*, la violence, sous diverses formes et modalités, individuelle ou collective, et les traumatismes qui en résultent déséquilibrent, voire détruisent et disloquent, le tissu social, qui se reconfigure et se recrée alors, instable et inconstant. Tour à tour irrévérencieuse, humoristique, provocatrice, l'écriture d'Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin s'adapte pour dire l'indicible, dans ses détails les plus sordides, dans la double perspective de dénoncer et de construire un récit mémoriel alternatif à celui du pouvoir en place : le romancier dénonce ainsi la banalité de ces guerres brutales et répétées au Darfour, ses conséquences sociales désastreuses, les souffrances sans fin pour le peuple soudanais, les drames humains et la privation d'avenir pour la jeunesse mobilisée de force. Le traumatisme contribue ainsi à la création d'une nouvelle esthétique, propre à représenter la subjectivité de l'expérience traumatique, la désorganisation du système social, ainsi que la désarticulation et les tentatives de re-construction des identités individuelles et collectives : l'auteur exploite, outre un langage cru et violent, les potentialités de la narration disloquée – en particulier les ruptures temporelles parfois brutales, les alternances de focalisation, à quoi s'ajoutent le disnarré et/ou l'alternarré, et divers modes de périchronismes et enfin certains éléments magiques ou merveilleux du folklore soudanais, qui permettent d'envisager une réalité alternative.

Miroslava Dirgová, Comenius University (Bratislava)

- **No Place Like Home: Trauma in the Works Depicting Migration Within the Arab World**

In light of recent waves of Arab migration into Europe, a hostile sentiment has emerged that Arab migrants ought to stay out of European countries and relocate into other Arab states, where they can presumably integrate better due to assumed cultural homogeneity. However, literary works such as the novel *Zill al-shams (The Shadow of the Sun)* by Ṭālib al-Rifāʿī and the novel *Barārī al-ḥummā (Prairies of Fever)* by Ibrāhīm Naṣr Allāh present the possibility that the experiences of Arab migrants in other Arab countries also involve trauma. Regardless of differences in background, the protagonists of both texts display symptoms of trauma including dissociation and splitting of the psyche, which are generally recognized as results of traumatic experiences (Derin et al. 2021). Both authors use descriptions of the sun, extreme heat and fever as symbolic representations of oppressive forces. Ibrāhīm Naṣr Allāh in particular connects the protagonist's experience of prolonged fever to the shattering of his psyche, portrayed as a physical split into an identical doppelganger of himself. Depicting fever as an organism's hostile reaction to an object it perceives as foreign is a powerful metaphor for the traumatizing effects of alienation experienced by migrants. A similar splitting also occurs to a background character in *Zill al-shams*, the author's alter ego Ṭālib al-Rifāʿī. I argue that this split reflects the internal struggle and second-hand trauma experienced by witnesses of ongoing mistreatment who are powerless to stop it. Both novels depict the death of migrant workers. Judith Butler's work on 'ungrievable' death can be used to analyse both novels, which end with the protagonists' capture by the authorities. Narratives of migration within the Arab world are vital for understanding the traumas of migrants whose experiences might not even be considered traumatic (Milich and Moghnieh 2018).

Derin, Gorkem, et al. "Psychotraumatology and dissociation: A theoretical and clinical approach." *Medicine Science*, vol. 10 no. 1, 2021, pp.246-254, <https://doi.org/10.5455/medscience.2021.02.041>

Milich, Stephan, and Lamia Moghnieh. "Trauma: Social Realities and Cultural Texts." *Middle East – Topics & Arguments*, vol. 11, 2018, pp. 5-15. <https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2018.11.7941>.

Ziad Elmarsafy, University of St Andrews

- **The RMS (Racism-Migration-Slavery) Triangle in Contemporary Arabic Literature**

This intervention sets out to survey the literary incidence of the three catastrophes that continue to mark life in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the twenty-first century; namely, racism, forced migration and displacement, and modern slavery. The slave markets that accompanied the collapse of Libya and Syria, regional genocides in Sinjar Mountain and Sudan, and the realities of trafficking and enslavement that accompany war and extreme labour exploitation from the Gulf to the Atlantic, all raise serious questions about the moral and cultural environment in which Arabophone lives unfold. What, we must ask, allows these conditions to persist decades after the age of independence and postcolonial moment? How is it that improved developmental indicators such as education, literacy, health care, and economic growth can lead to the multiplication and normalisation of such atrocities and the quasi-total forgetting of human rights? Using a theoretical framework that draws on work in sociology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, we will explore these matters through novels by Saud al-Sanousi, Jokha al-Harhi, Hajji Jaber, Najwa bint Shatwan, Samiha Khrais, and Hammour Ziada, inter alia.

Mila Fantinelli, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan)

- **Ecologies of Violence: Animals, Humans, and Trauma in Makhzangi's *Animals in Our Days***

Mohammed Makhzangi's *Animals in Our Days* (2008) reopens a dialogue inaugurated more than a millennium earlier by al-Jāhiz's *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, where animals and humans were

imagined as coexisting within a shared moral and ecological world. Yet in Makhzangi's collection this coexistence is violently ruptured: animals are tortured, exploited, and massacred by soldiers, dictators, and hunters, while humans—women, dissidents, the poor—are subjected to parallel forms of cruelty. Violence thus emerges as systemic, cutting across species and leaving behind trauma that is sometimes visible, sometimes hidden. In one story, a man is confined to a wheelchair after nearly drowning while chasing a fish, his body bearing the trace of trauma; in others, the wounds remain unspoken, haunting both humans and animals alike. By placing animals at the center of traumatic experience, Makhzangi destabilizes human exceptionalism and reframes violence in modern Arabic literature as a multispecies condition. His work demonstrates how the scars of domination—colonial, authoritarian, ecological—extend beyond the human, demanding a posthumanist reading of trauma and survival.

Amira Farhani, Independent Researcher

- **'Miroir de Mon Incohérence': Urban Trauma and the Unresolved City in Samir Toumi's *Alger, Le Cri***

The idea of *home*, as a physical space and symbolic construct, has been profoundly destabilised in contemporary Algerian literature. Shaped by decades of colonial conflict and sociopolitical upheaval, the Algerian city emerges as a contested space: a site of violence and possibility, collapse and renewal. This paper examines *ṣadmat al-madīna* (trauma of the city) in Samir Toumi's *Alger, Le Cri* (2021). Toumi's 'scream' reflects not only the unresolved struggles of colonialism but also the frustrations of the 2019 *Ḥirāk*, where the city's awakening gestures toward renewal yet fails to deliver resolution. The study interrogates how violence is inscribed in the material and symbolic features of Algiers, and how Toumi's narrative both testifies to and resists this enduring urban trauma. It asks how chronic exposure to violence has affected both characters and the urban environment. Drawing on postcolonial urban studies and trauma theory, it argues that Algiers appears simultaneously vibrant and grim, haunted by revolutionary aspiration yet saturated with dystopian dread. Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and Fanon's analysis of colonial violence reveal that Algiers emerges as a place where power, memory, and protest are inscribed into its fabric. The novel positions the city as both repository and producer of memory, where personal and collective traumas converge.

Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, 'Autónoma' University of Madrid

- **The Kingdom of the Cell: Moroccan Prison Narratives and the Body**

After the death of King Hassan II in 1999 debates and institutional initiatives proliferated about the so-called Years of Lead, characterized by harsh repression of all kinds of dissidences. Mainly leftists, but also military personnel and Islamists, were severely punished, in the most traumatic experience of postcolonial Morocco. Nonetheless, many survivors (especially from the Marxist Leninist groups *llā al-amām*, *23 Mārs*, and the military) have been able to express that extreme experience in a huge outpouring of excellent autobiographical writing in both Arabic, French and Spanish. In a struggle to counter the official discourses and restore suppressed memories, prison narratives have become a characteristic subgenre of Moroccan literature. Relying on *Moroccan Other-Archives. History and Citizenship after State Violence*, by Brahim El Guabli, addressing authors writing in Arabic, French and Spanish such as Dris Bouissef-Rekab Luque, *Paquita en tierra de moros* (2024), Ahmed Marzouki, *Tazmamart, cellule 10* (2000) and Abd al-Qadir al-Shawi, *Kāna wa-akhwātu-hā* (1986), I wonder if the prison cell was inhabited-and

later told- differently in the writings of the leftists and those of the military personal, attending concretely at the representation of violence exerted on the bodies.

Fernanda Fischione, 'La Sapienza' University of Rome

- **Haunting Coexistence: Jewish Absence, Collective Trauma, and the Commodification of Memory in Maghrebi Arabic Novels**

This paper examines the recent proliferation of Arabic novels that recover the cultural and historical heritage of the Jewish presence in the Maghreb. This trend reflects broader shifts in Arab societies marked by the decline of pan-Arabism, the rise of neoliberalism, the questioning of Arabization policies, and the confrontation with political Islamism – developments that have generated symbolic and epistemic violence and produced cultural traumas mirrored in literature. The progressive disappearance of Jewish communities from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – occurring in successive waves, particularly after 1948 and 1967 – constituted a traumatic rupture for both those who left and the societies that saw a constitutive part of their collective identity vanish. This absence, never fully mourned or ritually processed, can be read as structural violence that continues to haunt Maghrebi imaginaries. Novels such as al-Ḥabīb al-Ṣāyih's *Anā wa-Ḥāyyim* (Algeria, 2018), Muḥammad 'Isā al-Mu'addab's *Ḥammām al-dhahab* (Tunisia, 2019), Khawla Ḥamdī's *Fī qalbī unthā 'Ibrīyya* (Tunisia, 2012), Mayya al-Kusūrī's *Blās al-Yahūd* (Tunisia, 2012), and a wider Moroccan corpus (Aīt Moh, Ḥarīrī, al-Tāzī, al-Juwayṭī, al-Milyānī, Awrīd, al-Shantūf, Riyād, Hjiouij) exemplify this literary engagement with silenced histories. Yet the literary recovery of Jewish heritage is deeply ambivalent. While it reopens suppressed traumas and challenges nationalist monocultural narratives, it also functions as a strategy of symbolic positioning within neoliberal Arab literary fields, where ideals of tolerance and coexistence circulate transnationally as marketable values. In this sense, Maghrebi Arabic fiction with a "Jewish theme" both testifies to historical violence and participates in the commodification of memory within world literature.

Darejan Gardavadze, Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University

- **The Novel *Voices of the Lost (Barīd al-layl)* by Hudā Barakāt as an Example of an Arabic Dystopian Narrative**

Civil wars, armed conflicts, sociopolitical crises, and waves of emigration in the Arab world have made both individual and collective trauma increasingly visible. These realities are reflected in contemporary Arabic literature. I will discuss *Barīd al-layl* (2018), a novel by the Lebanese writer Hudā Barakāt in the context of dystopian literature, which typically presents: 1) A model of the future or an alternative society; 2) Systemic control, totalitarianism, technological/political nightmare. In Barakāt's novel, space and time are grounded in realistic experience, but chaos comes from the reality already experienced. The problem lies in the ongoing inner destruction of the individual. If in classical dystopia the state controls language, memory, identity, in Barakāt's novel the control comes from within — trauma, guilt, loss, etc. In both cases, 1) Memory is painful and the subject loses himself; 2) Language collapses and the monologue becomes a form of survival. *Barīd al-layl* is structured around a series of deeply personal and confessional letters that never reach their intended recipients. This narrative device underscores a profound crisis of communication and suggests a broader condition of 'social silence' — a metaphor for deep-seated societal dysfunction. In analyzing the novel, I will rely on the minimalist theory of fantastic literature developed by Tzvetan Todorov, as well as on Uwe Durst's theory of fantastic literature. *Barīd al-layl* will be presented as a cautionary novel, where

there is a dystopian experience — a world in which catastrophe has already occurred and life continues merely as an echo.

Zuzana Gažáková, Comenius University (Bratislava)

- **Prison as Refuge and Freedom as Captivity. Trauma and Endurance in Salwā Bakr's *Golden Chariot* and *The Man from Bashmour*.**

Prison literature (*littérature carcérale* or *adab al-sujūn*) constitutes a distinct subgenre of modern and postcolonial Arab writing, emerging in response to political repression across the Arab region. Even beyond literal incarceration, individuals often encounter psychological and social confinement, rendering freedom a relative and unstable concept. Building on detailed Samia Mehrez's analysis of Egyptian literature (*Egypt's Culture Wars*, 2008), in my contribution I examine how imprisonment can function simultaneously as a space of external oppression—through harsh treatment and societal exclusion—and of inner freedom, fostering ethical reflection, refuge, spiritual growth, human solidarity, and self-awareness. Although isolation has long served as an effective means of silencing critical voices, in Egypt many writers—and their protagonists—have emerged from prison or have chosen incarceration as the primary setting of their narratives. I explore these dynamics through the traumatic experience of characters in Salwā Bakr's novels *The Golden Chariot* and *The Man from Bashmour*, while also referencing some of her short stories, such as 'Ancestral Hair'. In this way I aim to shed light on political, criminal, social, domestic and gender-based violence, the search for refuge through connection with others, and the individual's struggle to reclaim a meaningful life.

Ana González Navarro, 'Autónoma' University of Madrid

- **Violence and Resistance during the 'Years of Lead' in Prison Writings by Women in Morocco**

This paper analyzes the writings by Moroccan women about their experience with prison in the 1970s and the 1980s, during the period known as the Years of Lead (c. 1956-1999), characterized by the harsh repression of the opposition. Although a reparation process was initiated with the change in the monarchy by Mohammed VI, it was considered insufficient by critical sectors. In the absence of a real reparation process, victims of repression started to write about their experience during that period, as a way to heal trauma and claim justice. These writings acted therefore as testimonials, and, in the case of women, they expose a story that has been doubly silenced, as their transgression was both political and gendered. To fully grasp the role of women during this period, this paper considers not only testimonials by women who experienced prison from inside (Saïda Menebhi, Fatna el Bouih, Widad Bouab), but also from outside, playing a crucial role in the movement of the families of political prisoners (Thouria Seqqat, Khadija Menebhi, Jocelyne Laabi). From a feminist perspective, the analysis will focus on the particular forms of violence experienced by women, as well as the resistance strategies put in place by them.

Dorit Gottesfeld, Independent Scholar

- **Massacre as Stage: Shaping Memory and Trauma in Akram Musallam's *Bint min Shātīlā***

Akram Musallam (1971–), a Palestinian novelist born in Nablus and currently living in Ramallah, has established himself over the past two decades as one of the most prominent voices in West Bank Palestinian literature through his novels. In his works, Musallam consistently links the individual to the collective, demonstrating that engagement with the Palestinian question need not come at the expense of the artistic dimension of writing. The paper will focus on Musallam's

fourth novel, *Bint min Shātīlā* (*Daughter of Shatila*, 2019), which addresses the Shatila massacre and its intergenerational psychological impact. It will demonstrate how Musallam situates this specific massacre within a broader continuum of both Palestinian and global tragedies, thereby shifting the discussion to a more universal sphere that engages with questions of trauma and memory. The paper will show how the novel's distinctiveness is rooted in its unique use of style. It is constructed as a theatrical space, incorporating dramatic elements that evoke the impression of a staged performance. This theatrical dimension functions as a stage granting voice to victims from different times and places, enabling their stories to become part of a universal collective representation. By blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality, past and present, and diverse geographies, the novel reflects the social and psychological complexity that shapes Palestinian existence and the long-term consequences of national tragedies.

Samir Haj, Independent Scholar

• الإيروتيكا الصّادمة في الرواية الفلسطينية. "البحث عن وليد مسعود" (1978) لجبرا إبراهيم جبرا و"حليب التين" (2010) لسامية عيسى أنموذجاً

توظّف الإيروتيكا في الرواية الفلسطينية وسيلة احتجاج سياسي واجتماعي، وهي تعبير عن الغضب والرفض للواقع الفلسطيني، كما أنّها عملية تقويض للتأبؤ الديني والاجتماعي، الموظف في سياقات سياسية واجتماعية في "البحث عن وليد مسعود" لجبرا إبراهيم جبرا، تقوم الإيروتيكا بتخطيم المقدّس وكشف التناقضات الاجتماعية، وتشكّل ساتيرا لاسعة ولاذعة وبوضعية غرائبية، من خلال قيام وليد بالرقص وممارسة الجنس مع مريم الصقّار، بشكل عنيف وصادم وغرائبي، على موسيقى التراتيل الدينية المسيحية، في بيت عامر عبد الحميد في لبنان، بعد أن انصرف الضيوف من الحفلة، ومريم الصقّار مصابة بمس وهوس جنسي. إنّ هذا المشهد أثار شهوانية مريم الصقّار وحممها الجنسية بشكل عنيف تجاه وليد مسعود، وبعد أن مارس الجنس معها وجعل جسمها ينتفض "وجسمي ينتفض انتفاضات ذبيحة وهو ممسك بي بقوة بين ذراعيه، وأنا أنتفض وأعول في نشوة رابعة" وانها على نهدي، وشفتي، يمتلكني للمرة العاشرة وكأنتها المرة الأولى. وأنا أقبض شعره، وأرفع رأسه لألتهم فمه. وبين الحين والآخر ألمح، وراء كتفه، الصخرة غائرة بثقلها في الفراش" كما أنّ الجنس في رواية "حليب التين" لسامية عيسى، هو دلالة على الفساد والخذلان السياسي والقمع الذكوري للمرأة، في المخيمات الفلسطينية في لبنان، وهو يشكّل بطاقة هروب من الواقع المرير. في "حليب التين"، تجسّد المرأة الفلسطينية "صديقة" الجميلة، أرملة المناضل "أحمد"، مثلاً للقمع الذكوري بسبب تداعيات نكبة العام 1948 والحروب المتعاقبة، والمجازر التي نذرت بحق شعبيها. فقد شرّدت من وطنها، وعاشت حياة الذلّ والفقر، في المخيمات الفلسطينية في لبنان وفي الشتات. وعانت الفساد والتمييز من قبل مؤسسات الدولة التي تعاملت معها كلاجئة. كما عانت من قمع واستغلال قيادة المخيمات الفلسطينية الذكورية، بعد مقتل زوجها، فتعرّضت للاستغلال والابتزاز الجنسي.

Saga Hamdan, Palestinian Writer from Gaza

• Writing from the Rubble: Trauma, Memory, and the Act of Bearing Witness in *Hadhā al-hajar li* هذا الحجر لي

This paper explores the intersection of personal trauma, national catastrophe, and narrative resistance through a reflective analysis of my debut Arabic novel, *Hadhā al-hajar li* (This Stone Is Mine). As a Palestinian writer from Gaza now based in the UK, I reflect on how fiction becomes a form of testimony and survival amid ongoing siege, displacement, and war. Written between 2016 and 2019, the novel follows two journalists navigating both professional and emotional turmoil under occupation, revealing how love, loss, and memory persist in the shadow of violence. The paper analyses the novel's key literary themes — including intimate resistance, exile, and collective grief — alongside its narrative techniques such as symbolism, interior monologue, and the absence of historical timestamps. Drawing on personal memories and lived experience, I argue that Palestinian literature must be understood not only as artistic expression, but as an ethical response to erasure. Writing, in this context, becomes an act of reclaiming what occupation seeks to suppress: voice, presence, and belonging.

Yousra Hamiham, Université Libre de Bruxelles

- **Translingual Expressions of Violence in the Contemporary Algerian Novel**

The Algerian civil war, known as the *black decade*, had a profound impact on a generation of writers and continues to be recounted today as a duty of memory. This traumatic period significantly shaped the Algerian literary landscape and its linguistic choices, with texts written in French, Arabic, and Berber. More recently, the use of Algerian Arabic has emerged for the first time. Translingualism manifests itself as an expression form of violence. While Assia Djebar writes in French and Ahlam Mosteghanemi in Arabic, Berber-speaking authors faced double marginalisation, namely the violence of the conflict and the non-recognition of Tamazight (Berber) until 2016. Today, the memory of the civil war persists in contemporary Algerian literature and is written in the mother tongue. It is central to Rabeh Sebaa, who uses the civil war both as a backdrop and subject in his recent novel *Fahla* (2021), creating multilingual spaces where silenced voices of the victims are revived. Selected excerpts of *Fahla* will be analysed through the lens of translingual events, where shifts between languages become charged with political and societal tensions.

Mohamed Hassan, Amherst College

- **The Traumatic Relationship between National and Religious Identities in Egyptian fiction**

This study discusses how the Egyptian novelist Shady Lewis's two novels *Ṭuruq al-Rabb* (Ways of the Lord, 2018) and *Tārikh mūjaz li-l-khalīqah wa-Sharq al-Qāhīrah* (A Brief History of Creation and East Cairo, 2021) explore the complex relationships between national and religious identities in Egypt, and the representations of the Christian minority in Egyptian public discourse. In *A Brief History of Creation and East Cairo*, the protagonist's fleeing journey with his mother as a child through old Cairo districts continuously signifies historical biblical references while portraying the mother and child as they continually resist, or cope with, different layers of violence. In *Ways of the Lord* (2018), the protagonist narrates the complexities that a middle-class Christian family in Egypt has to go through as they deal with the individuals around them, the Church and the state institutions. The ideas of the embedded Islamic religious and civilizational identity in the Arabic language and how this affects the national and religious identity of the Christian minority in Egypt are examined through concepts from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak and Reisigl, 1999) to analyse notions of collective identity and social actor representation of the Christian minority in modern Egypt. To establish the broader meaning of the analysed texts, the DHA approach connects textual and intertextual contexts to institutional, historical and socio-political contexts. Social actors as a discourse analytical category is employed to analyse four types of discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation and perspectivization, and framing or discourse representation.

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., & Reisigl, M. (1999). The discursive construction of national identities. *Discourse and Society*, 10(2), 149-173.

Hind Ashraf Hosny, University of South Carolina

- **The Absurd and the Kafkaesque in Narratives of Civil War**

The 'absurd' is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as, 'the state or condition in which man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which man's life has no meaning outside his own existence' (Cornwell 3). One can experience this in civil wars among sects or groups within one nation as individuals struggle to make sense of their disintegrating

incomprehensible reality. The Kafkaesque branches from this absurdity and its traces are tangible in the bureaucracy of senseless structures indifferent to individuals' struggles. These irrational realities are experienced by the characters of Hoda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter* (1990) and Khaled Khalifa's *Death Is Hard Work* (2016) who depict an absurd world torn by civil wars. In Barakat's work, Khalil is struggling with his identity and sexuality in an indifferent world that is forcing him to choose sides during the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990). Khalifa's Bolbol finds himself fulfilling his father's absurd request to be buried in his hometown on the other side of Syria during the Syrian Civil War (2011 – 2024). This paper attempts to highlight the absurdity of civil wars, while highlighting the Kafkaesque elements that create a sense of helplessness and loss amidst a torn land.

Cornwell, Neil. *The Absurd in Literature*. Manchester University Press, 2006.

Areeg Ibrahim, Helwan University

- **Transformational Feminine Leadership during Trauma in 20th and 21st Centuries Egyptian Women's Plays**

Egyptian Women playwrights in their decolonizing society during the 20th and 21st centuries grapple with a few issues pertaining to the socio-political as well as the patriarchal. Their traumas and crises do not hinder them from exercising patterns of transformational leadership in order to help heal themselves and their social environments. This research deals with patterns of transformational leadership in the plays of Laila Abdul-Bassit, "Paper... Paper... Paper" (*Waraq... Waraq... Waraq*), and Nadia Al-Banhawy, "Amal's Last Tape" (*Sharīṭ tasjīl Amal al-akhīr*). Drawing on trauma studies, feminism and postcolonial studies, this analysis shows the way in which Egyptian women playwrights deal with public and private traumas. Abdul-Bassit's "Paper... Paper... Paper" (published in 1988 but performed in 1965-6) deals with bureaucracy and presents public employees as complacent whereas the new employee manages to take action and send support to a drowning village. As for Al-Banhawy's "Amal's Last Tape" (2016), it is reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape". The play is a psychological healing therapy for the play's protagonist. In short, transformational feminine leadership as shown in the plays of Laila Abdul-Bassit and Nadia Al-Banhawy emphasizes the therapeutic effect of literature at both the two private and public levels as ways of dealing with personal traumas and crises, as well as reforming and transforming one's society.

Jonathan Jonsson, University of Oslo

- **Living with Honour and Dying with Dignity: Violence in the Fiction of Salīm al-Bustānī**

In this presentation, the morality of violence in the didactic novels of Salīm al-Bustānī (1848–1884) is explored. The focus is on his final novel *Sāmiyya*, published serially in 1882–1884. Al-Bustānī wrote not only to entertain, but also with the express purpose of urging his readers towards refinement of morality and character (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). The author intervenes in the fictional narratives to clarify which actions he deems morally legitimate, including violent acts. Tensions appear when the idealised educated urban Ottoman citizens are placed in situations where custom conflicts with reason, and when their manly valour (*murū'a*) and willingness to face death are tested. In his arguments, Salīm employs concepts developed by his father Buṭrus al-Bustānī in response to the brutal 1860–1 civil war in which interconfessional violence spread from Mount Lebanon to the cities of Ottoman Syria. When Salīm argues for tolerance and condemns fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub*), the memory of recent sectarian violence remains an unspoken shadow overhanging his fictional narratives. *Sāmiyya* is his only novel where

politically motivated violence between economic classes is explored, which adds further complexity to his moral and social views on violence.

Madonna Kalousian, King's College London

- **Contemporary Returnees of the Lebanese Civil War: Najwa Barakat and the Lazarus of Beirut**

Legacies of the Lebanese Civil War are experienced and recalibrated on a daily basis, permeating every aspect of socio-political life in Lebanon today. The Lebanese novel continues to grapple with these legacies, producing lasting reinterpretations of modern-day Lebanon decades after the end of its civil war. This paper employs a Lazarean motif as a prism of analysis in order to examine the role Najwa Barakat's contemporary returnee – a former militiaman called Loqman – plays and the world he uncovers as he straddles across an invisible past where he is buried and a scarred present into which he re-emerges. This paper first builds on an examination of *Oh, Salaam's* memorialization of a particular historical conjuncture which sees the downfall of Loqman. It then identifies a parallel between the way in which *Mister N's* protagonist breaks and re-establishes his relationship with 'the word' and the way in which Barakat does, particularly following her fifteen year-long writing hiatus. This parallel is then used to revisit modern-day Lebanon through Barakat's parable of literary resurrection, to reveal a disturbing proximity of life to the materiality of death in post-war Lebanon, as well as to illuminate some of the darkest aspects of the life of a writer-narrator who has a desire to kill Loqman and kill him again.

Maya Kesrouany, New York University in Abu Dhabi

- **Reframing Arab Melancholy: Laylī Ba'albakkī, Arwā Šāliḥ and 'Adaniyya Shiblī**

In this talk, I read the violence both in and of Arab discourses on melancholy and defeat in three Arab women writers: Laylā Ba'albakkī's (Lebanon, 1936-2023) *Safīnat ḥanān ilā al-qamar* [Spaceship of Tenderness to the Moon] (1963), Arwā Šāliḥ's (Egypt, 1951-1997) *al-Mubtasarūn* [The Stillborn: Notebooks of a Woman from the Student-Movement Generation in Egypt] (1996) and 'Adaniyya Shiblī's (Palestine, b. 1974) *Tafṣīl thānawī* [Minor Detail] (2017). I focus especially on narrative voice, the imagined/addressed readers, and trace expressions of defeat, intimacy and militancy as those become *bodily* sites of contestation that unhinge the narrative voice. I also consider their contentious local and international public reception and retort as integral to reading them as part of a larger story of Arab women's writing and its focus on addressing the reader. I argue that these works propose a gendered critique of the experience and expression of melancholy that reframes not just colonial, patriarchal and state violence but also the violence of dominant Arab self-critical discourses on defeat.

Nahla Khalil, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

- **Gaza Narrates its Own Story: Passage through Trauma**

Against the backdrop of an ongoing genocide in Gaza, literary expression remains the voice of the Palestinian people in the face of pain, loss, displacement and the dehumanizing narratives. This paper analyses how extreme conditions- individual and collective- are expressed in three Palestinian autobiographical diaries, Mahmoud Al-Shaer's *A Year on the Abyss of Genocide* (2025), Plestia Alaqqad's *The Eyes of Gaza: A Diary of Resilience* (2025), and Atef Abu Saif's *Don't Look Left: A Diary of Genocide* (2024). In this paper, I explore the ways in which the writers share with the world the unimaginable trauma they endure and their struggle for survival capturing the human side of their stories beyond the headline news and complicit hegemonic

political discourses. Viet Thanh Nguyen reflects, in *The Refugees*, “...we had no belongings except our stories,” to highlight storytelling as a site of memory and survival. Stories from Gaza that portray the trauma and the widespread destruction of life and land give face and voice to the tragic unspoken human crises through the authors’ first-hand account of the genocidal realities.

Mohamed Amine Khedhiri, University of Tunis

- **Amputated Alterity: The Disavowed Trauma of the Capitalist Discourse in Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's *Utopia***

This presentation unfolds in two parts. First, I sketch the contours of the Capitalist Discourse as theorised by Jacques Lacan. This discourse is structured around three peculiar tenets that reinforce its troubling circularity: the disavowal of castration, lack, and impossibility manufactures an untenable promise to rectify the subject’s *Unbehagen* (discontent) by filling the constitutive ontological void with ontic consumer objects; the rejection of what Lacan calls ‘the matters of love’ dissolves the social bond; and where ‘lack is lacking’, this discourse solicits the violent passage from the subject of desire—dialectically navigating alterity—to the acephalous subject of the (death) drive, eclipsed in its symbolic possibilities. Defencelessly succumbing to the superegoic injunction to enjoy, this subject inhabits a solipsistic, sadomasochistic vortex beyond homeostasis. Second, I propose a symptomatic reading of Tawfik’s novel *Utopia* along these coordinates. The protagonist Alaa epitomises the Capitalist Discourse: a *jouisseur* proper, the rich predator is never satiated despite ‘having everything’. His disavowal of the constitutive lack-in-being authorises a mode of action wherein everything appears possible, including cutting off the arm of a poor person and keeping it as a souvenir. The novel showcases how this discourse renders the last barrier to jouissance inoperative, producing a perverted hedonist circuit of surplus-enjoyment supposed to saturate the lack-in-jouissance. The amputation instantiates the irreversible expulsion of the Other. The severed arm becomes another libidinal object in a series of failed attempts at the capitalist mirage of full jouissance.

Jeries Khoury, Independent Scholar

- **From Homeland to Inner Rupture: Generational Shifts in Palestinian Poetic Nostalgia**

This lecture traced the transformation of nostalgia in Palestinian poetry across three generations, demonstrating how memory gradually shifts its semiotic location rather than disappearing. The first generation treats poetry as an archive that preserves geography through stable signs and sensory reconstruction. The second generation inherits memory and translates it into symbolic structures, where place becomes mediated through cultural imagination rather than directly recalled experience. By the third generation, nostalgia turns inward, and the poetic self becomes the primary site of longing, revealing fragmentation, interruption, and psychological interiority. From a semiotic perspective, the trajectory moves from stable sign–referent relations toward increasingly fluid and floating signifiers, reflecting changing historical realities and modes of memory transmission. Poetry thus appears not as a fixed repository of loss but as an ongoing process of re-signification, continuously negotiating between absence and presence. Ultimately, Palestinian nostalgic poetry does not narrate the disappearance of homeland; rather, it documents the transformation of homeland from geography into language, and from language into consciousness. Nostalgia, therefore, emerges as a dynamic poetic strategy through which place is endlessly rewritten within memory and cultural imagination.

Peter Konerding, University of Malta

- **A Bloody *Locus Amoenus*: Beach Vibes in Tarek Lamouchi's Fictionalization of the 2015 Sousse Attacks**

In 2015, post-revolutionary Tunisia experienced one of the deadliest terrorist attacks since its independence, when a gunman killed 38 people at a luxury tourist resort near Sousse. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for this massacre, one of several attacks that destabilized the young democracy and ultimately paved the way for an authoritarian backlash. However, Tarek Lamouchi's short story, 'Yawm ṣayfī jamīl' ("A Beautiful Summer's Day"), does not focus on the political and societal context of this atrocity or the victims' immense suffering. Instead, it provides a second-by-second account of the attack through the eyes of several witnesses. Throughout the narrative, the beautiful scenery and the idyllic interplay of sand, heat, and water remain omnipresent, creating a striking contrast with the violence. Lamouchi even dares to include a message of hope: "We will all hold on to live" is the text's concluding sentence. Is this naïve kitsch, attempting to process national trauma? Or does 'Yawm ṣayfī jamīl' allow for a more nuanced and interesting interpretation? Through the lens of Moritz Baßler's concept of popular realism, I will argue for the latter.

Alice Königstetter, University of Vienna

- **Violence and Trauma in the Domestic Sphere: Rereading Laylā al-'Uthmān's *al-Mar'a wa-l-qitṭa* (1985)**

This paper examines one of the earliest novels *al-Mar'a wa-l-qitṭa* (1985) by Kuwaiti writer Laylā al-'Uthmān, a work recognized as among the most significant contributions to modern Kuwaiti literature (Kāẓim 2017). Despite its prominence, the text has received little scholarly attention. Through an interdisciplinary lens, this study engages Ghabra and Alshammari's (2020) concept of masculine microaggressions alongside Vickroy's (2014) framework on trauma and its socio-cultural ramifications. The analysis focuses on two interrelated dimensions: first, the relegation of microaggressions against women within the domestic sphere; and second, the portrayal of psychological trauma through the male protagonist. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which restrictive familial and social dynamics culminate in the murder of the protagonist's wife, a narrative moment that crystallizes the nexus of domestic violence, honour-based violence, and gendered trauma. By foregrounding how trauma is inscribed on and through the female body – stigmatized, socially objectified, and subject to collective judgment in Kuwaiti society (al-Khayyat 1990) – this paper argues that al-'Uthmān's novel exposes the interrelation of patriarchal structures, violence, and memory (loss). The novel thus illuminates how violence, the male gaze, and trauma intersect within broader debates on gender and representation in Arab literature.

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Kāẓim, N. A. (2017). *al-Riwāya al-'arabiyya fī al-qurn al-'ishrīn*. Katara.

al-Khayyat, S. (1991). *Honour and shame: Women in modern Iraq*. Saqi Books.

Vickroy, L. (2014). Voices of survivors in contemporary fiction. In M. Balaev (Ed.), *Contemporary approaches in literary trauma theory* (pp. 130–151). Palgrave Macmillan.

Lukáš Koutský, Charles University (Prague)

- **Echoes of 1982: Ḥamā as a Narrative Bridge Between Syria's Past and Present**

This paper explores the fictional representations of Ḥamā in Syrian novels set during and after the Syrian revolution (2011-2024), focusing on how authors used the city's traumatic history, particularly the 1982 massacre, as a narrative device to link past and present acts of authoritarian violence. Ḥamā holds a unique place in Syrian collective memory as a site of suppressed trauma that was systematically erased from official discourse. The 1982 massacre permeated into narrative structures, also serving a temporal hinge between two timelines. Through Proustian modes of involuntary memory, characters' sensory and spatial encounters with Ḥamā, such as returning to its streets, triggered sudden recollections of the past, blending personal and transmitted intergenerational traumatic memories. Focusing on key works, including Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan's *Those who were touched by Magic* (Alladhīna massahum al-siḥr, 2016) and Dīma Wannūs' *The Frightened Ones* (al-Khā'ifūn, 2017), this paper argues that Ḥamā's status as a site of officially suppressed yet widely recognized trauma enabled authors to explore new methods of narrativization that effectively connected the newly emerged social context of post-2011 violence to earlier repression.

Magdalena Kubarek, University of Warsaw

- **Representations of Violence in 'Abdallāh Khalīfa's novel *Dhahaba ma'a al-niḥ***

The subject of this paper is 'Abdallāh Khalīfa's novel *Dhahaba ma'a al-niḥ* (Gone with the Oil), which offers a powerful representation of violence in the context of Bahrain's petro-modernity. Central to this narrative is the figure of the petro-despot, embodied in Shaykh Shāhīn, whose authority relies on surveillance, repression, and symbolic domination. The protagonists, caught in this suffocating political order, experience deep internal fragmentation: they oscillate between conformism and resistance, haunted by the costs of complicity. The intergenerational conflict sharpens this tension: while fathers succumb to political paralysis and cynicism, their sons, alienated yet radicalized, reject paternal compromise. Narrated in a fragmented, dreamlike style, the novel can be examined as a representation of how authoritarian power in a petro-state translates into both physical repression and psychological disintegration. The analysis will focus on the mechanisms through which violence shapes the characters' choices between conformity and resistance, and structures the intergenerational conflict that erodes familial bonds and contributes to emotional disintegration and a growing sense of alienation. In this context, the paper will also address broader questions: Can violence be considered a legitimate response to violence, and to what extent can literature function as a therapeutic space and a framework for cultural reconstruction in the aftermath of trauma?

Pasquale Macaluso, University of Messina

- **Representation of Trauma in Ghassan Kanafani's Fiction**

Scholars have interpreted Ghassan Kanafani's works of fiction within the framework of committed literature and trauma studies. An intellectual proficient in several fields, Kanafani also wrote literary criticism on contemporary Palestinian authors whose books were as affected by the many dimensions of the Nakba as his own. He drew on American and European literary criticism and classical culture to mint concepts that probed Palestinian writers' ability to contribute to the cause of their people through an art that was expected to be close to the suffering of the refugees and able to employ their vocabulary and symbols. In so doing, he also attempted to periodize Palestinian artists' response to the catastrophe. This presentation interprets Kanafani's fiction through these very same lenses to argue that it shows the development of an awareness of the consequences of the Nakba that grows over time. Thus, his short stories and novels will be investigated to tackle the same themes he investigated in

the works of other writers. The Nakba was for Kanafani not only a watershed in reference to which the narrative temporality of his books is defined—as Muhammad Siddiq wrote—, but also an unsolved enigma that still needed to be explained.

Ibtihal Rida Mahmood, Independent Scholar

- **Hiba Abu Nada's *Oxygen Is Not for the Dead*: Gendered Violence, State Oppression in Times of Political Upheaval**

Hiba Abu Nada (24 June 1991 – 20 October 2023) was a Palestinian poet and writer who was martyred thirteen days after the start of the genocide in Gaza. She was killed in an Israeli airstrike while displaced from her home. Drawing on Abu Nada's cinematic novel *Oxygen Is Not for the Dead* (2017), this paper explores the entanglement of gendered violence and state oppression in modern Arabic literature, arguing that the home, and the local community, often serve as a microcosm of political authoritarianism. Through the voice of Adam, the novel's protagonist, readers learn the story of Ghazal, a young woman taken captive by a state official in exchange of police protection. He illuminates how gendered violence, often perceived as cultural/traditional practice, is often sanctioned and perpetuated by state structures through corruption, impunity, and policies that normalize coercion. The novel situates gendered violence within a continuum. Read alongside Yassin al-Haj Saleh's *The Atrocious and Its Representations* (forthcoming in English), which conceptualizes atrocity as the destruction of form (bodies, spaces, and social bonds), the paper aims to highlight how violence "scales" from the systemic to the intimate.

Tiran Manucharyan, University of St Andrews

- **Fathia El-'Assal: Making Herself Heard on the Egyptian Stage**

In her play *Nisā' bi-lā aqni'a* (1975, 'Women without Masks'), Egypt's most prominent woman playwright Fathia El-'Assal (1933-2014) reflects on what would be best described as the near impossibility for women playwrights to speak their truth on stage. In doing so, the playwright echoes Gayatri Spivak's assertion-provocations that 'the subaltern cannot speak' and 'the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read'. Had El-'Assal's case not been exceptional and non-exemplary for a woman playwright, one could argue that her path to Egyptian theatre refutes Spivak's argument. Building on Spivak's theorisation about the impossibility for the subaltern to speak and to be heard, this paper explores the ways in which El-'Assal's career in theatre both challenges and, paradoxically, reaffirms these statements. Given the limited critical engagement with the playwright's work, the central source of my research is El-'Assal's autobiography *Ḥuḍn al-'umr* (2002-2004, 'The Embrace of Life'), in which the playwright speaks about how she has made herself heard. While one might struggle to find El-'Assal's work in Egyptian bookstores today, the 2025 adaptation of her masterpiece, *Sign al-nisā* (1993, 'The Women's Prison'), on the stage of Cairo's El-Salam Theatre reaffirms the paradoxical contradiction at the heart of this paper's argument.

Mariangela Masullo, University of Macerata

- **Poetics of Ecocide: Catastrophe, Memory, and Resistance in Contemporary Arabic Poetry**

In Arabic poetry from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, catastrophe emerges as a central motif that can be reframed in multiple ways: as war, exile, cultural rupture, or ecological collapse. This paper focuses on Iraq and Syria, two regions where environmental devastation and political violence intersect, to explore how poets inscribe ecological

catastrophe as both lived experience and metaphor. In Iraq, the drying of the Tigris and Euphrates or the devastation of the southern marshes surface in the work of Dunyā Mīkhāʾīl (Dunya Mikhail, 1965) and Sinān Anṭūn (Sinan Antoon, 1967), where water becomes both witness to violence and carrier of memory. Fāḍil al-ʿAzzāwī (Fadhil al-Azzawi, 1940), in turn, evokes ruins and eroded landscapes as signs of dispossession and exile. In Syria, Nūrī al-Jarrāḥ (Nouri al-Jarrah, 1956) and Rashā ʿImrān (Rasha Omran, 1964) invoke disfigured rivers, scarred fields, and silence to mirror the fragmentation of communities under civil war. Across these voices, catastrophe is not confined to sudden destruction but unfolds slowly and insidiously, echoing Rob Nixon’s notion of “slow violence.” The paper adopts a framework where ecocriticism and trauma studies intersect, with the former highlighting landscapes and environments as archives and the latter illuminating wounds, mourning, and cultural memory (Iovino & Oppermann 2014; Milich & Moghnieh 2018; Nixon 2011; Rigby 2020). It argues that Iraqi and Syrian poetry may also function as an archive of ecocide, in which natural elements act as agents of testimony, articulating both vulnerability and fragile forms of resistance.

Iovino S., Oppermann S., eds. 2014. *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Milich S., Moghnieh L. 2018. “Trauma: Social Realities and Cultural Texts.” *META: Middle East – Topics & Arguments* 11: 5–15.

Nixon R. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rigby K. 2020. *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stephan Milich, University of Cologne

- **Inter-religious Coexistence under Continuously Traumatic Conditions: The Novel *Yawm al-ḥisāb* (Day of Judgement, 2021) by Fawwāz Ḥaddād**

After the fall of the regime in December 2024, the question of ethnic-religious coexistence in a new Syria is even more urgent than it was in Asad’s time. One novel that sheds light on the hidden structures of relations between state and society by focusing on the special relationship between the regime and the Christian community is Fawwāz Ḥaddād’s novel *Yawm al-ḥisāb* (Day of Judgment), which was published in 2021. As in some of Haddad’s earlier novels, such as *al-Sūrīyūn al-aʿdāʾ* (Enemy Syrians, 2014), *Day of Judgment* raises essential questions about the (im)possibility of finding the truth, historical (in)justice, the will to continue living despite deep disillusionment and, last but not least, the prospects of living together in a country that has been severely scarred by violent conflicts between different groups and communities. The novel tells the story of a French professor who decides to return to her country of origin Syria to search for George, a Christian student of hers, who decided to join the uprising against the regime. Through mutual acquaintances, she meets the narrator, a disillusioned former oppositional intellectual who being in a loose love relationship with a female political activist has not yet found the strength of will to leave the country. Having disappeared without leaving a trace, the search for George turns out to be extremely difficult and dangerous, if not impossible. While the female professor and her circle of Syrian supporters remain largely unsuccessful in finding George, the Christian student’s mother succeeds in convincing the local priest to use all means available to the church to inquire about George’s whereabouts. The polyphonic novel highlights the ways and strategies the characters choose to cope with persistently stressful and life-threatening living conditions. Based on the question of the characters’ implicatedness in the fate of the country and drawing from a political understanding of continuous trauma, I will try to work out the author’s positioning towards Syria’s recent past as well as the enormous challenges the country faces in the present and future.

Hosni Mlitat, Sohar University

• التطور الدلالي لمظاهر العنف في الرواية الفلسطينية المعاصرة

تهتم هذه الدراسة بتحليل سردية العنف في الرواية الفلسطينية المعاصرة، التي لم تقتصر وصفها السردية على العنف الاستعماري فقط، وإنما تجاوزته للحديث عن العنف الطبقي والأيدولوجي والثقافي، وصولاً إلى سرد الإبادة، ومآلاتها، وأبعادها على الإنسان. وسيدرس الباحث هذه المفاهيم من خلال ثلاث روايات للكاتب والأكاديمي الفلسطيني وليد الشرفا، وهي: "وارث الشواهد"، و"أرجوحة من عظام"، و"ليتني كنتُ أعمى"، وهي روايات تحاكي صورة المجتمع الفلسطيني، وتصوّر معاناته وآلامه، وتمثّل مصائبه، من خلال سردية تلخيصية، جمالية، لمظاهر العنف المختلفة. واللافت أن روايات الشرفا، وظّفت العنف التصويري لحال الجسد الفلسطيني، والمكان الفلسطيني، والأرض الفلسطينية، والتاريخ الفلسطيني، بأسلوب سردي يستحق إعادة القراءة، والتأويل، لتفسير تلك المظاهر، ودلالاتها في السياقات التاريخية التي مرّت بها. وتكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة، باعتبارها أولى الدراسات التي تفسر دال العنف ومدلوله، ليس من منظور سردي مباشر فحسب، وإنما من منظور فلسفي ونفسي واجتماعي في الرواية الفلسطينية المعاصرة، وسيعتمد الباحث، في ذلك، على المنهج "المابعد بنوي"، ويستفيد من رؤية السيميائيين، والفلاسفة في تفسير مفهوم العنف، وتطبيقها على أحداث الروايات المختارة، كما تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة، في تحليلها لأعمال لم تُدرس أبداً من قبل في دراسة علمية، كتلك التي سنقدمها في هذا المؤتمر.

Hilda Mokh, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University

• Parallel Traumas: Ecocritical Reading of Violence in Lailā al-Juhanī's *al-Firdaws al-yabāb*

Lailā al-Juhanī's novel *al-Firdaws al-yabāb* (The Barren Paradise, 1999) offers a pioneering Gulf narrative that interweaves personal trauma with ecological devastation. Through the protagonist Saba's psychological collapse—following betrayal, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and eventual suicide—the novel establishes a sustained parallel between the wounded female body and the traumatized urban body of Jeddah. This paper proposes an ecocritical reading that reveals how al-Juhanī maps human suffering onto environmental violence, creating what Rob Nixon terms "slow violence" that affects both human and non-human worlds. The novel's central symbol, the Sea, functions as both witness and victim. Described as "scorched on Jeddah's shores, imprisoned like my heart, captive like my tears," the sea embodies the dual trauma of personal and ecological catastrophe. Al-Juhanī depicts Jeddah's violent modernization—the sea "perpetually retreating backwards, buried under tons of sand so that the land becomes larger than the sea"—as a process that mirrors Saba's bodily and psychic disintegration. The city that "closes like giant palms upon dreams, assassinating them" becomes complicit in both patriarchal oppression and environmental destruction. Through poetic, fragmented prose, al-Juhanī creates what this paper terms "ecological testimony," where Saba's first-person narrative bears witness not only to gendered violence but to the obliteration of natural spaces under rapid urbanization. The novel's title—invoking both Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Eliot's *The Waste Land*—signals a double exile: from human dignity and from environmental wholeness. The "barren paradise" becomes a space where human and non-human suffering converge, exposing the interconnected violence of patriarchal and capitalist systems. This ecocritical approach illuminates how contemporary Gulf literature articulates trauma beyond the human, positioning environmental degradation as both context and consequence of social catastrophe.

Arturo Monaco, 'La Sapienza' University of Rome

• Symbolic Violence against *Turāth*: Abū I-Qāsim al-Shābbī's Critique in *al-Khayāl al-shi'ri 'inda I-'Arab*

This paper explores the application of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to the Eurocentric dynamics embedded in Abū I-Qāsim al-Shābbī's critical essay *al-Khayāl al-shi'ri 'inda I-'Arab* (The Poetic Imagination Among the Arabs, 1929). al-Shābbī's text interrogates the

limitations of classical Arabic poetry, emphasizing its alleged lack of depth, imagination, and philosophical introspection. This critique, while aimed at cultural renewal, implicitly adopts aesthetic and epistemological frameworks rooted in European Romanticism and modernism. Consequently, the work reveals an internalization of Eurocentric cultural hierarchies that subtly marginalize the indigenous poetic tradition by measuring it against Western literary standards. Such an imposition constitutes a form of symbolic violence whereby the colonized intellectual unconsciously perpetuates colonial epistemic domination by naturalizing Western aesthetics as universal benchmarks. This analysis situates al-Shābbī's intervention within the broader discourse on the reception of European themes and categories in the Arabic literary production and criticism.

Hanan Natour, Queen Mary University of London

- **Tunisian Literatures: Multilingual Realities, Genealogies, Testimonies**

This presentation calls for a decolonial approach to the study of modern Arabic literature. In conversation with several of the conference's proposed themes— epistemic violence from colonialism to neo-colonialism, violence acted upon minorities and marginalised groups and literature as a form of resilience—it proposes to counter violent forms of silencing which Arab studies in European institutions in part still impose on the studied literatures. As an example of how these foundational changes in studying Arabic literature may be achieved, the presentation will specifically introduce an interdisciplinary project which, conducted between Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Oxford and the University of Tunis, has led to the publication of the first English-language volume focusing on the varieties of modern Tunisian literatures. The project takes a radical multilingual and inclusive approach and proposes new literary concepts that emphasise intersections instead of continuing colonial divisions. Its collected essays put in dialogue concepts and ideas taken from local culture and developed by local critics in intersection with global debates on literature in multilingual contexts, and the dialectic between the global and the local in literature. This approach allows for a generative dialogue with decolonial readings of literary history and tests our understandings of national literature and world literature more broadly.

Aldo Nicosia, University of Bari

- ***Christmas in Mecca: Challenges of Sectarianism and East/West Relationships in Contemporary Iraq***

Violent clashes between the Shia and Sunni communities have been striking Iraq since 2003. Against this background, *Christmas in Mecca* ("Kriṣmās fī Makka", 2019), by Aḥmad Khayrī al-'Umarī (1970) builds a convincing fictional world. In 2019 the protagonist Maryam, an Iraqi expat student, lives in the UK with her Shiite mother, Mayyada, after her Sunni father, Omar, was killed in a sectarian clash, when she was child. A trip to Mecca to study the most important monuments in Islamic history during Christmas allows Maryam to meet her father's relatives (grandfather and uncle). The second narrative thread, which runs parallel to the first, concerns the tragedy of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustansir Bi'llah, whose hopes of restoring Baghdad to its former glory fade in 1258. The main characters talk in a sort of concentric blocks: Maryam, her mom Mayyada, her abovementioned relatives from his father's side and her maternal uncle, plus the Abbasid Caliph. Living in the UK also brings forth conflicts between East and West, and identity troubles among Iraqi expats, that are ironically fictionalized. The evolution of Iraqi sectarian identities and the influence of a European model of citizenships are at stake, maybe to evoke the need of a serious reconciliation plan in Iraq.

Haneen Omari, Leiden University

- **Motherhood and Loss in Contemporary Arabic Literature**

Motherhood constitutes a central topic in Arabic literature. The representation of motherhood has often been confined to expected symbolisms, such as national strength, the protection of social values, and the upholder of archetypal characteristics of unconditional devotion, sacrifice, and love. This paper examines two contemporary novels— *Mīthāq al-nisā'* (2023) by the Lebanese author Haneen al-Sayegh and *Mudun al-ḥalīb wa-l-thalj* (2025) by the Bahraini author Jalila al-Sayyid, to explore how motherhood is conceived in the midst of trauma and political and social violence. *Mīthāq* follows the life of a Druze woman in Lebanon and her attempt to find her sense of self— including the meaning of motherhood— in relation to her society. In *Mudun*, the mother confronts bureaucratic and patriarchal systems in Syria, Bahrain, and eventually Sweden, where she fights to reclaim her children who have been taken from her. While the two texts are set in distinct geographic, social, and political contexts, they present strong examples of motherhood that defy forced separation, war, and expected social norms. This paper argues that both texts not only delve into the intimate and personal outpourings of the experience of motherhood— particularly in relation to the violent experience of loss (*al-faqd*) — but also complicate its representation and expand the literary canon to include a wider range of themes and layers within the maternal experience.

Astrid Ottosson al-Bitar, Stockholm University

- **Violence in Jokha Alharthi's novel *Sayyidāt al-qamar (Celestial bodies)*, 2018**

The novel *Sayyidāt al-qamar*, [2018], by Jokha Alharthi relates the stories of a number of members of an upper-class Omani family. The characters in the novel come from different generations and their different narratives reflect the development of Oman from a traditional society into modernity. At the center of the novel is 'Abd Allah, the husband of Mayya, one of the sisters in the family, and his traumatic memories from childhood. These memories are connected to his violent father whose presence is felt by 'Abd Allah even after the father's death. The father belongs to a period in the history of Oman when slavery was allowed and the legacy of this also makes itself felt in modern time. Thus, this paper will look into the function and role of violence and slavery in the novel on the level of the individual characters as well as on the level of society.

Antonio Pacifico, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University, & University of Naples 'L'Orientale'

- **The Symbolic Violence of Arabic Literary Studies Reconsidered from the Iraqi Field**

In my paper, I aim to reconsider the impact of different practices rooted in Arabic literary studies on contemporary Arab societies. To do this, I will move beyond naive and simplistic dichotomies, such as the one between 'indigenous' and 'exogenous' powers commonly mentioned in daily discourse across Europe and the Arab countries, or even the binary division between the 'global North' and the 'global South' proposed by earlier post- and decolonial analyses. Meanwhile, I will focus on the specific case of Iraqi literature, drawing on both my personal knowledge of the 'field' (Bourdieu 1996) and my ground-level experience gained during fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2024. Taking into account my 'position' in this 'field', I will show that scholars' 'aggressive' practices involve not only epistemic violence but also other forms of symbolic domination, which are not without material effects on the literary actors we engage with. Furthermore, by highlighting these practices, I aim to foster and encourage academic debate on this critical issue at the European level.

Leonardo Palombini, University of Naples 'L'Orientale'

- **Narrative of Resistance: Colonialism and Memory in the Tetralogy *al-‘Ābirūn* by Bashīr Bin Salāma**

This presentation explores the relationship between history and literature through the tetralogy *al-‘Ābirūn* (*The Passersby*) by Bashīr Bin Salāma, which offers a sweeping portrait of Tunisia from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. It examines how literary fiction questions collective memory and reinterprets historical events, from Ottoman rule to French colonialism and the struggle for independence. In these novels, literature does not merely depict history: it fragments and critically reexamines it. The protagonists process the trauma and violence of colonization, the crisis of cultural identity, and the failure of Tunisia's elite. The narratives function on two levels: the grand political history of revolts, wars, and exile, and the micro-histories of families, where personal genealogies become metaphors for national crisis. Language, shifting between Arabic, French, and dialect, emerges as a symbolic battleground and a site of epistemic and cultural violence. I argue that *‘Āisha*, *‘Ādil*, *‘Alī*, and *al-Nāṣir* are novels in which narrative space becomes a site of resistance and reworking of the past. The analysis of colonial trauma is inseparable from Bin Salāma's cultural role and support for Arabization as a means of reclaiming identity. Literature becomes a fragile but necessary bridge between personal and collective historical consciousness.

Maria Elena Paniconi, University of Macerata

- **Colonial Violence and the Building of a Resistance: The Case of *Rihlat al-shitā’*: *Ṣāliḥ* (Winter's Journey: *Ṣāliḥ*, 1978) by the Eritrean Leader Muḥammad Sa‘īd Nāwid**

Winter's Journey: Saleh, the autobiographical novel by prominent activist Muḥammad Sa‘īd Nāwid, holds the distinction of being the first Eritrean novel written in Arabic. Published in 1978, it marked the inception of a national literary tradition that continues to develop today through compelling diasporic voices. An autobiographical narrative with a linear structure and accessible language, the novel intertwines the coming-of-age story of Ṣāliḥ - from his childhood in a semi-nomadic Eritrean family to his youth as a student in Sudan - with the broader historical events that shaped Eritrea and Sudan during the 1930s and 1940s. As a political *Bildungsroman*, the novel is notable for its rich documentary and autoethnographic qualities, offering detailed descriptions of the customs and traditions of rural Eritrean communities. At the same time, it situates itself within the broader framework of Global South literature and chronicles the cultural and literary networks that emerged from the Bandung-era Afro-Asian solidarity. In my analysis, I focus on the various ways in which the violence of Italian colonialism in Eritrea and British colonialism in Sudan is both narrated and experienced within the novel. Particular attention is given to the strategies through which the protagonist channels his anger into political consciousness and, eventually, into a form of political agency.

Fatima Parchekani, Kharazmi University

- **Trauma and Forms of Violence in ‘Adaniyya Shibli’s *Tafṣīl thānawī* (*Minor Detail*)**

Violence often extends beyond its common understanding as a direct act, encompassing symbolic patterns that operate silently within the social, political, and cultural frameworks. In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Slavoj Žižek proposes a threefold analytical framework that distinguishes between direct subjective violence, symbolic violence embedded in language and

discourse, and objective violence entrenched in social and political structures. ‘Adaniyya Shibli’s novel *Tafṣīl thānawī* (Minor Detail) engages with Palestinian memory, colonial violence, and the catastrophe of the *Nakba*. This study aims to analyse the novel from a perspective based on Slavoj Žižek’s classification of violence and the trauma it produces. The analysis reveals an interwoven presence of the three forms of violence within the text: Objective violence surfaces in colonial structures and the Israeli military presence; symbolic violence is evident in the military discourse that dehumanizes the other; and subjective violence emerges in direct scenes of physical and psychological humiliation. Trauma here arises not only from direct subjective violence but also from the structural violence that transforms everyday life into a state of constant tension, where violence permeates every detail.

Teresa Pepe, University of Oslo

- **Homes as “Cages”: Domestic Violence in Fāṭima Qandīl’s novel *Aqfāṣ fāriḡha***

In 2021 the publication of Fāṭima Qandīl’s novel *Aqfāṣ fāriḡha* (Empty Cages; transl. by Adam Talib, 2024) drew wide attention in Egypt. The poet and academic’s autofictional narrative opens with the death of the narrator’s mother and excavates memories of childhood, adolescence, marriage, and divorce. The story moves through the various homes occupied by the protagonist and her family—the “empty cages” of the title—where she endures verbal, physical, and psychological violence from male relatives, including abuse, micro-aggressions, shaming, alcohol-fuelled outbursts and rape. Although bodily scars are often left unspoken, the novel exposes the symbolic, gendered violence that persists behind the doors of seemingly respectable Egyptian households. This paper examines representations of domestic violence in *Aqfāṣ fāriḡha* from literary and sociological perspectives. I argue that the novel seeks to demystify the middle-class nuclear family ideal that emerged under Nasser’s socialist project in the 1950s—a model whose hopes were undermined by Sadat’s open-door (*infitāḥ*) economic policies (Di Capua 2012). From a literary standpoint, Qandīl’s novel continues a trajectory of Arab feminist writing that asserts women’s voices and “resists erasure” (al-Samman 2015). More specifically, I read the turn from poetry to autofiction as a narrative strategy that facilitates the recovery and healing of traumatic memories while framing the author’s testimony as an ethical act of care toward future generations.

Al-Samman, Hanadi. *Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma, Authorship, and the Diaspora in Arab Women’s Writings*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015.

Di-Capua, Yoav. “The Traumatic Subjectivity of Ṣun‘ Allāh Ibrāhīm’s *Dhāt*.” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 2012, pp. 80–101.

Giorgia Pometti, ‘La Sapienza’ University of Rome

- **Decolonizing Trauma Studies through Literature: A Pathway from Imīl Ḥabībī’s *Ikhṭayya***

Recent developments in postcolonial trauma studies have highlighted the inadequacy of classical trauma categories in interpreting non-Western literatures. Rooted in Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks, these paradigms often obscure forms of individual and collective suffering generated by colonial and postcolonial violence, and Palestinian literature can be understood as revealing the limitations embedded in prevailing trauma theories. In this regard, the oeuvre of Imīl Ḥabībī, yet rarely examined through the lens of postcolonial trauma studies, provides an illuminating point of analysis as it foregrounds the contradictions of Palestinian life in Israel, shaped by overlapping forms of political and social violence. In his novel *Ikhṭayya* (1985)-a minor work to which scholars have devoted only a few pages- Ḥabībī explores the perception and psychological processes engendered by such violence, ranging from Israeli colonial domination to internal Palestinian divisions and marginalization. This paper examines

Ikhṭayya as a case study to explore the potential of a decolonized approach to trauma studies, focusing on the alternative conceptions of trauma it articulates, the textual and aesthetic strategies—such as irony, satire, and intertextuality—deployed to express them, and the broader function of literature as a medium for representing, elaborating and resisting trauma in violent contexts.

Daniela Potenza, University of Messina

- **Confronting the Self with the Other in *Qinā‘ bi-lawn al-samā‘* by Bāsim Khandaqjī**

A Mask, the Colour of the Sky (Qinā‘ bi-lawn al-samā‘, 2023), by the imprisoned Palestinian writer Basim Khandaqji, winner of the 2024 IPAF, unfolds through the first-person voice of Nūr, an archaeologist living in a refugee camp in Ramallah, who one day finds a blue Israeli identity card in the pocket of an old coat. This card prompts him to deal with an alternate self, “Ūr.” As Nūr confronts Ūr, Khandaqjī offers his multiple readership reflections on the categories of “us” and “them.” Rather than reducing these to a binary opposition, the narrative exposes the complexities underlying such distinctions, which Nūr shares in letters to his imprisoned friend Murad. Alongside this, he takes vocal notes on the project of a novel about Mary Magdalene. My close reading of the text studies Khandaqjī’s experimental forms of fictional autobiography apt to create “doubles”: between pairs of characters, between places, temporalities, languages, words, and between fiction and reality. By doing so, the novel unsettles the notion of clear divisions and highlights the details that blur them. Its narrative strategies open up ways to tell of trauma—dehumanisation, oppression, segregation—while also allowing space for love and friendship.

Federico Pozzoli, ‘La statale’ University of Milan, University of Bologna

- **Re-Figuring the Body during War and Embargo: Traumatic Writing in the Iraqi *Adab al-istinsākh***

The paper will look at the Iraqi *adab al-istinsākh*, i.e., the informal literature circulating as photocopies during the 1990s. This period of Iraqi literary history is generally less explored by scholarship on trauma, which has rather focused on the war with Iran of the 1980s and, more extensively, the aftermath of the 2003 occupation (see Masmoudi 2015). However, fiction from the 1990s anticipates many of the concerns of the post-2003 era. In the preface to an edited collection of the ‘photocopy’ short stories by the group al-Baṣra Awākhir al-Qarn al-‘Ishrīn (2018), Quṣay Khafājī states the importance of subverting the poetics of state-sponsored propaganda literature to narrate war. At the same time, the experience of the embargo, with its indirect yet devastating violence, compelled fiction to deal with processes of bodily and social debilitation and fragmentation. The paper will select key short stories from Khafājī’s collection to investigate how these concerns relating to the depiction of trauma translate into its densely allegorical, often anti-mimetic poetics. Particular attention will be devoted to the image of suffering bodies and of a nightmarish, ambiguous healthcare – which are both recurring themes in the collection.

Masmoudi, Ikram (2015), *War and Occupation in Iraqi Fiction*, Edinburgh University Press.

Adéla Provazníková, Charles University (Prague)

- **Narrating Confinement: Meta-Narrative Strategies and Literary Experiment in Egyptian Prison Writing**

An established genre of modern and contemporary Arabic literature, prison writing (*adab al-sujūn*) remains a vital form of testimony to the unjust and violent conditions of life in many Arab

countries. In Egypt, human rights groups annually report thousands of cases of unlawful incarceration. While only a fraction of those imprisoned go on to publish literary work, the corpus of prison writing continues to grow. This paper examines how Egyptian prison literature reflects on the act of writing itself, persistently engaging with the conditions of its production, its necessity and its limits. Drawing on the scholarship about silencing and witnessing, I argue that while prison represents a formal condition, literary writing about incarceration becomes not a mere vehicle of testimony but an essentially self-questioning creative act. Recently, R. Shareah Taleghani has demonstrated the “unique intersection of literary experimentalism and hybridity” in Arabic prison literature, framing the genre as one that intentionally challenges narrative norms. Her insights, built primarily on Syrian writings, prove equally illuminating in the Egyptian context. Experimental meta-narrative tendencies are evident in the works of Egyptian novelists and poets Ahmed Nagi, Mohsen Mohamed and Galal El-Behairy, who go beyond the 20th-century experiments of Sonallah Ibrahim, Latifa al-Zayyat or Ahmed Fouad Negm. I suggest that these contemporary texts question their own right to exist by explicitly and implicitly reflecting on form, audience, and the process of production. As the authors negotiate their dual role of witness and artist, they gravitate towards metafiction, fragmentation, and hybrid genres, asserting their literary legitimacy under the violence of confinement.

Baian Rayhanova, Sofia University

- **Representation of Trauma in the Novels of Īmān Ḥumaydān and Shahlā al-‘Ujaylī**

Trauma fiction written by Arab women in recent decades is of particular interest because its representation of individual traumatic experiences is often linked to collective trauma associated with war, violence, persecution, discrimination, forced displacement and other painful events that impact the lives of many people. This paper aims to explore the ways in which traumatic experiences are reflected in two novels longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) in 2025 and 2019, respectively: *Ughniyyāt li-l-‘atma* (Songs in the Darkness, 2023) by Lebanese writer Īmān Ḥumaydān (b. 1956) and *Ṣayf ma‘a al-‘adūw* (Summer with Enemy, 2018) by Syrian-Jordanian author Shahlā al-‘Ujaylī (b. 1976). Their protagonists are perceived as heirs to the past, preserved in various forms of memory – personal recollections, oral stories and family archives. Moreover, they have different life experiences of interaction with war-related traumatic events and their participants, which are determined not only by their generational affiliation, but also by the history of their families. However, the search for strategies to overcome individual and collective trauma, as well as intergenerational connections in the process of storing, transmitting and transforming historical, cultural and family memory, unite these two novels, although each of them has its own artistic paradigm.

Tetz Rooke, University of Gothenburg

- **Symbolic and Metaphoric Violence in *Lā yudhkarūna fī Majāz*: A Fantasy Novel by Hudā Ḥamad from Oman**

Lā yudhkarūna fī Majāz (Dār al-Ādāb, 2022) is a contemporary fantasy novel that builds on the cultural heritage of oral storytelling in Oman. The narrative consists of a frame tale set in the present, where a woman writer struggles to find ideas for a new book. After a car accident she falls into a coma and is taken care of by her grandmother. During the coma she enters a supernatural dreamworld, which forms a second layer in the narrative. In this world, she learns to read a secret book written in a forgotten language containing tales about the closed society

of Majaz. Together with the protagonist the reader then enters this magical book. The tales are violent and cruel, full of horror and evil, wizards and witches, injustices and repression, but also adventurous and heroic; female heroes typically play a key role in the resistance against tyranny. Obviously, the brutal violence in Majaz is symbolic and metaphoric. It is used to deliver social and moral critique and to discuss political issues in an allegorical form. In my paper I would like to discuss these aspects of the novel, while at the same time looking at it from the angle of so called 'contemporary fantasy'.

Marcella Rubino, INALCO

• **«صرخة المواطنين»: الكاريكاتور الأدبي كقوة مضادة في أعمال السودانيين عبد العزيز بركة ساكن وحمور زيادة**
 من خلال الكاريكاتور الأدبي، يروي الروائيان السودانيان عبد العزيز بركة ساكن وحمور زيادة العنف الذي يشهده السودان المعاصر منذ وصول عمر البشير إلى السلطة. في روايتهما الأخيرتين، "الأشوس الذي حلقت أحلامه مثل طائرة مسيرة" (2024) و"حادثة عيش السرايا وما يتعلق بها من وقائع مسلية" (2025)، يعهد المؤلفان بالسرد، على التوالي، إلى الجني الشخصي لزعيم الميليشيات التي ارتكبت الإبادة الجماعية في دارفور، وإلى زعيم الحركة الإسلامية في الخرطوم. وبذلك، يكشف بركة ساكن وزيادة من الداخل، عبر روايات تجمع بين السخرية والتهكم، عن "تفاهة الشر" السائدة في السودان. تستكشف مداخلة هذين العاملين، مع ربطهما بالقضايا التي تشغل الأدب السوداني بشكل عام وهذين المؤلفين بشكل خاص، ولا سيما مسألة الانقسامات العرقية والاجتماعية التي أغرقت البلاد في حروب متتالية منذ حصولها على الاستقلال في عام 1956. بعيداً عن الرغبة في التخفيف من حدة أعمال العنف التي تظهر على مرأى ومسمع الجميع في شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي، يلجأ الروائيان السودانيان، من خلال الكاريكاتور الأدبي، إلى السخرية كقوة مضادة. وتصبح أصواتهم بمنزلة «صرخة مواطنين» على غرار شعارات الشباب الثوار وجدارياتهم.

Brady Ryan, University of Connecticut

• **Palestine's Haunt: Specters of Violence and Loss in *Au revoir 'Akkā and Ramād al-sharq***
 This paper frames the 20th-century losses of Palestine and Palestinian futures past as a palimpsest for the broader losses and frustrated aspirations of Arab modernity. By drawing upon Derrida's theory of hauntology, it argues that the specters of Palestinian loss emanating from the 1948 Nakba and what critic Fayṣal Darrāj calls "the regenerating defeat [al-hazīma al-mutawālida]" haunt modern Arab history and the history of Arab modernity. Recent historical novels show that these specters of Palestinian loss haunt forwards to confront the horizon of the future and backwards to reframe history. The specter of losing Palestine to Zionist settler colonialism animates 'Alā' Ḥulayḥil's portrayals of state and colonial violence, visions of modernity, and notions of national belonging amidst Napoleon's 1799 siege of Acre in *Au revoir 'Akkā* (2014). Wāsinī al-A'raj's *Ramād al-sharq* (2013) connects the violence and losses of the Nakba to earlier defeated projects of Arab political and cultural modernity. Both authors make Palestinian losses legible within a broader lineage of Arab losses in modernity so that defeated political and cultural projects might be mourned and recuperated by future generations.

Fayṣal Darrāj, "Ḥarb ḥuzayrān/yūniyū wa-ta'sīs al-hazīma al-mutawālida," *al-Dirāsāt al-filastīniyya* 111 (Ṣayf 2017): 47-50.

Safinaz Saad, Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg

• **Psychic Injuries and Maternal Dominion: Rethinking Domestic Violence in Modern Arabic Fiction**

The act of excessively authoritarian parents actively silencing and delegitimizing the needs and grievances of their children is rarely discussed in Arabic literary criticism as a form of epistemic domestic violence. This paper examines Radwa Ashour's *Khadeega and Sawsan* (1986), a novel narrated in the first person by both the mother, Khadeega, and her daughter, Sawsan, to reveal the layered dynamics of power and control within the family. At the center of the narrative, Khadeega emerges as a matriarch whose relentless authority shapes the destinies of her

children. Through Saad, the son whose creative aspirations are suppressed and forced into his father's medical career, and Sawsan, coerced into obedience and constrained femininity, the novel portrays the devastating effects of psychological coercion, culminating in Saad's suicide and Sawsan's alienation. This paper argues that Khadeega's dominion both reproduces and subverts Spivak's notion of the subaltern. In this narrative, the woman who is historically silenced within patriarchal frameworks becomes the silencer, enforcing disciplinary norms that perpetuate systemic violence within the intimate sphere. By exposing these hidden structures of violence, the novel positions literature as a medium that invites an ethical reimagining of domestic dynamics and contributes to broader debates on gendered, symbolic, and psychological violence in modern Arabic literature.

Tania Al Saadi, Stockholm University

- **Other Food Options in Dystopian Worlds: *Ḥārith al-miyāh* (1998) by Hudā Barakāt and Other Texts**

Many dystopian and speculative novels depict chaotic spaces in which everyday life is subject to severe rules and individuals suffer various forms of physical or mental violence. In this context, food and eating may express cruel instincts and bodily abuses. What food is—or is not—eaten, why it is eaten, and how it is eaten are elements that reveal the new world order emerging in these narratives. In *Ḥārith al-miyāh* (1998) by Hudā Barakāt, the experience of the Lebanese civil war is represented as a dystopia in which the city takes the shape of an imagined, nightmarish landscape. Food and eating are prominently featured: they are means of survival in wild settings and signs of decadence in wartime. But food also connects to memory and represents nostalgia and longing for bygone times. This dual function overlaps with the role of food in post-apocalyptic English-language novels, yet it differs from Western examples in other aspects. In my paper, I will focus on Barakāt's novel and briefly refer to dystopian and speculative Arabic writings that depict violent contexts and include other forms of food and eating—such as cannibalism, anthropophagy, and artificial food, among others.

Fatima Sai, D'Annunzio University of Chieti–Pescara

- **Atlas of the Afterlife: Arab Literature in the Posthumous Present**

Following Rāmī Abū Shihāb's call in *Kitāb al-dahīyya* (2020) to decolonize trauma studies, long dominated by Holocaust paradigms, this paper maps contemporary Arab cultural production, attempting to develop a trauma theory grounded in Arab experience and its literary articulations; for, as Nouri Gana has argued, literature has become "the most hospitable space where the performance of memory and mourning takes place" (2011). Drawing on works from Iraq and Syria, I outline several necropoetic modalities through which trauma and death are rendered. These include *asimbolia* and *autopticism*, where trauma resists symbolic displacement and appears unmediated (Anṭūn, Baraka); *catabasis*, the performative descent into the realm of death (Khanjar, Bilāl); *dismemberment and reassemblage*, where fractured bodies and identities are recomposed into new coherences (Sa'dāwī, Jubaylī); *posthuman creation*, extending survival into spectral, animal, or monstrous forms (Blāsim, Sa'dāwī); and *liminal voice*, where narrators speak from the threshold of disappearance (Kamāl al-Dīn). Together, these modalities chart the contours of an *afterlife*, not as metaphysical beyond, but as lived, political, and aesthetic condition of afterity. Building on the theoretical works of Mbembe (2003), Fisher (2014), Gordon (1997), I suggest that the Arab contemporary condition emerges as a posthumous present: a fractured temporality (post-traumatic, postcolonial,

postmodern), permanently inflected by catastrophe, where the trauma is never past and the dead persist alongside the living, haunting their reality.

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Greta Sala, INALCO, University of Naples 'L'Orientale', IFPO

- **La mise en récit du traumatisme dans le roman syrien de -2011 : configurations poétiques et esthétiques**

Dans le contexte de l'après-2011, le traumatisme s'est affirmé comme un thème central de la production romanesque syrienne. Cette étude adopte une approche comparative afin de dégager des configurations poétiques et esthétiques communes dans la mise en récit du traumatisme au sein de trois œuvres : *al-Dhi'āb lā tansā* (2016) de Līnā Hawyān al-Ḥasan, *Mitrū Ḥalab* (2016) de Mahā Ḥasan et *al-Khā'ifūn* (2017) de Dīma Wannūs. Tout en s'inscrivant dans le cadre épistémologique façonné par le tournant postcolonial des *Trauma Studies* (Craps 2013 ; Forter 2014 ; Milich et Moghnieh 2018 ; Visser 2014) et en se montrant ainsi attentive aux manifestations quotidiennes du trauma et à son contexte sociopolitique, l'analyse souligne la pertinence persistante de certaines conceptualisations classiques de l'esthétique du traumatisme, en mettant en avant la fragmentation psychique et discursive comme trait central de sa figuration littéraire. En faisant ressortir les convergences formelles et thématiques des trois romans, cette étude s'intéresse également à leur portée potentiellement politique, notamment au regard des enjeux de reconstruction du tissu social dans la Syrie de l'après-décembre 2024. En dépit de la diversité de leurs parcours, de leurs perspectives et de leurs expériences de la révolution de 2011 et de la guerre qui s'ensuivit, les trois autrices expriment un même sentiment de détresse et de désorientation existentielle, susceptible de susciter une résonance empathique au sein d'un paysage social profondément morcelé.

S. Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

G. Forter, « Colonial Trauma, Utopian Carnality, Modernist Form: Toni Morrison's Beloved and Arundhati Roy's The God of the Small Things » dans M. Balaev (éd.), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, Londres, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 70-105.

S. Milich, L. Moghnieh, « Trauma: Social Realities and Cultural Texts », *Middle East - Topics and Arguments*, vol. 11, 2018, p. 5-15.

I. Visser, « Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies » dans M. Balaev (éd.), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, op. cit., p. 106-129.

Abdellah Sardaoui, Hassan II University (Casablanca) & **Angelika Palmegiani**, Mohammed V University (Rabat) and University of Macerata

- **The Memory of Wounds and Post-'Years of Lead' Cinema: Exploring Violence and Trauma in Contemporary Morocco**

This paper explores how Moroccan cinema intersects with literature in representing violence, trauma, and the silences that followed the *Years of Lead*—a period extending from the 1960s to the late 1990s. It examines how cinematic narratives, like literary ones—especially prison writings depicting the experiences of those who endured secret detention under King Hassan II—function as acts of remembrance and resistance, reconstructing fragmented memories of

state violence and collective suffering. The paper is structured in two interconnected parts. The first offers a historical overview of the *Years of Lead* and their consequences for Moroccan society, politics, and collective memory. This framework is essential for understanding the mechanisms of repression and censorship that shaped public life and cultural expression. Building on this, the second part investigates how Moroccan filmmakers extend the literary project of witnessing and testimony through visual storytelling. Focusing on *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (2012), *C'est eux les chiens* (2013), *Salvation Army* (2013), and *The Mother of All Lies* (2023), the paper analyses how these works engage with themes of political repression, imprisonment, terrorism, gender, and social inequality. Attention is paid both to thematic concerns and to the aesthetic strategies that distinguish each film. By translating individual and collective traumas into cinematic language, these films echo and expand the role of literature in articulating catastrophe and its aftermath. Ultimately, the study argues that Moroccan cinema, like literature, becomes a space for reimagining memory and confronting silence—a space that challenges dominant narratives and envisions a society less burdened by repression and oblivion.

Simone Sibilio, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

- **The 'Aesthetics of Survival' and the Struggle Against Epistemicide. Poetic Voices from Gaza's Rubble**

While the world's first live-streamed genocide in Gaza 'defies comprehension' (Schotten 2024), Gazan poets' voices rise from the rubble of their devastated land. Their works offer an artistic response to war and ruination and resonate with the viral message of Refaat Alareer's famous poem, which widely circulated after he was murdered by IDF air strike on 6 December 2023: 'If I must die / Let it bring hope / Let it be a tale'. In a similar vein, faced with the looming threat of death, the poets trapped in Gaza rely on the potential of the poetic word not only as a form of survival but also a tool of resistance against the Palestinian *epistemicide*, or better, the 'murder of language' of the people under military siege. This is expressed in various forms, from the censorship of Palestinian voices to the murder of journalists in Gaza and silencing of the voice of law, by trampling upon the basic principles of humanitarian law. Under this lens, the paper examines selected texts of three poets from different generations and tendencies – Dunyā al-Amal Ismā'īl, Ni'ma Ḥassan, and Ḥaydar al-Ghazzālī. Their poetry, mostly disseminated in social media, not only constitutes a testimony to the horrors Gaza's people have been facing for over a year, but also adds aesthetic and moral value to their daily struggle for life (Ḥawāmdeh 2024). The paper foregrounds the formulation of an 'aesthetics of survival' whereby the poetic word, like a prayer, serves as a catalyst for strengthening one's spiritual and psychological capacity to endure brutality as well as a tool for reimagining a future beyond death. Moreover, their poetry is regarded as a powerful response to dynamics of language weaponisation at play in Western societies and the abdication of the 'principles proclaimed by Western elites to be foundational' (Fassin 2024).

Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck, University of Münster

- **Disappeared in Syria: Fawwāz Ḥaddād's Novel *Yawm al-ḥisāb***

The novel *Yawm al-ḥisāb* (2021) of the Syrian author Fawwāz Ḥaddād (born 1950) deals with the phenomenon of 'forced disappearance', which far more than 100.000 persons fell victim to during the Syrian War 2011-2024- a 'crime against humanity' according to the *Syrian Network for Human Rights*. To be left without any information about the fate of a beloved person is a traumatic experience for families and friends, while the person him/herself faces kidnapping,

detention, torture and/or death. The novel tackles this topic by presenting a French professor of Syrian origin from Paris, who travels to Damascus to search for one of her students who is missed since more than six years. His Christian family in Damascus does not even know that he secretly returned and participated in the protests against the regime of Bashar al-Asad. The novel sensitively portrays the later phase of the ‘Syrian Revolution’, when not much hope is left, many members of the opposition have left Syria and those still present live under fear, sorrow, camouflage, and distrust. In my paper I shall analyze the representation of different fractions and confessions, with a special focus on the role of Christians and Christian clergy in the Syrian context, the use of religious symbolism and the symbolic conciliatory end of the novel.

Arianna Tondi, University of Bergamo

- **Grieving for the Tragedy of Human Destinies in the Wake of the *Infitāḥ*: The Contemporary Epistle *Risālat al-baṣāʾir fī al-maṣāʾir* by Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī**

The Open-Door policy introduced by Anwar al-Sādāt in the seventies has left an indelible mark on the Egyptian mind. The traumatic experience of capitalism, widespread Westernisation, social disintegration, and political alignment with Western powers has been registered – among many others – by Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī in his novel *Risālat al-baṣāʾir fī al-maṣāʾir* (1989). In my paper, I will look at how the Egyptian writer engages intertextually with *adab al-tarassul* to try to process his grief and pain for the woeful fate decreed to the Egyptians in the dark decade. Combining the narratological analysis with trauma studies in literature, I will examine the ways in which the writer evokes the macrostructure and specific narrative techniques, such as authorial interventions as a form of metanarration, of the premodern form of writing. The very choice of dealing with *turāth* aims at finding solace in tradition. However, I will argue that the intertextual operation of (re)creation also allows the author to amplify the emotional impact induced by observing human destinies annihilated by cynicism, opportunism, materialism, moral decay, and sexual abuses, in the homeland as well as abroad. The novelised epistle will emerge as a means of mourning an era and, at the same time, expressing the complete paralysis of the traumatised subjectivity of the author, who cannot but be witness to stories of inescapable failures.

Carolina Toso, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

- **Creating Livability from within a Double *Ghurba* in *Nahr yastaḥimm fī al-buḥayra* by Yaḥyā Yakhliḥ**

A relatively large body of literary works remains underexplored in studies on Palestinian literature: the so-called *adab ʿāʾidīn*, by Palestinian intellectuals who returned after the Oslo Accords. Among more than 50,000 returnees, mostly PLO cadres, these writers were confronted with a ‘double *ghurba*’: having been forcibly estranged in exile, they felt re-estranged in a fragmented and occupied homeland. There, they encountered interlocking forms of violence — material, psychological, epistemic — unfamiliar to them, unlike Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Israel who had developed practices of ‘getting by’ (Allen 2008). Attending to the novel *Nahr yastaḥimm fī al-buḥayra* (*A River Bathing in the Sea*) by Yaḥyā Yakhliḥ (1944), inspired by his return experience, I argue that literature carves out spaces of livability (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014) where Palestinians continue to will life in contexts designed to deny it. This concept offers a productive departure from trauma-centred readings, as it avoids framing Palestinians as victimised or delusional and shifts the focus from survival to emancipation. I examine how livability is created through three strategies: characterisation, with its emphasis on emotional self-awareness, risk-taking, and longing; the

absurdist register, which disrupts narrative expectations and the logic of occupation; and meta-literary reflections gesturing towards imaginative elsewhere(s).

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Wolfgang Trimmel, University of Basel

- **Narrating Iraqi History: Violence and Collective Memory in Contemporary Iraqi Literature**

Since the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime in 2003, numerous Iraqi authors have revisited the country's recent history and explored the consequences violence continues to have on contemporary Iraqi society (cf. Bahooora 2017). To date, most scholars dealing with this new strand of contemporary Iraqi literature have focussed on the level of representation, as well as aesthetical and narratological aspects (cf. Al-Hajaj 2020; Alhashmi 2020; Bahooora 2015; Elimelekh 2017; Masmoudi 2015 etc.). While these publications make a valuable contribution to understanding how Iraqi literature engages with the lived realities of the Iraqi people, they do not address how literary texts contribute to shaping and preserving collective memory of recent Iraqi history and culture. In my talk, I use Astrid Erll's concept of the narratology of historical memory (cf. Erll 2017) to examine how Iraqi fiction creates memory narratives of violent events in modern Iraqi history. My comparative analysis will focus on the following three novels: *Ḥāris at-tabgh* (The Tobacco Keeper, 2008) by 'Alī Badr, *Waḥdahā shajarat ar-rummān* (The Pomegranate Tree Alone, 2010) by Sinān Anṭūn and *Ṭashshārī* (The Dispersal, 2013) by In'ām Kajahjī. I will pay particular attention to how literary qualities such as polyphony and ambiguity facilitate the construction of nuanced and differentiated versions of the past. Finally, based on reviews by professional and lay critics (published in literary magazines, on Goodreads etc.), I will also discuss the reception of the texts under my purview and the potential of literature in shaping Iraqi memory culture (cf. Caiani and Cobham 2023).

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Elisabeth Vauthier, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University

- **Violence systémique et traumatisme collectif dans *Ceux qui ont peur de Dīmā Wannūs* (2017).**

Dans Ceux qui ont peur, Dima Wannus aborde le thème de la violence politique sous l'angle de la peur qui « est le seul sentiment qui lie tous les Syriens entre eux » (Wannūs). En m'appuyant sur les travaux d'A. Bianco, S. Milich et, dans une moindre mesure, de Y. al-Hajj Saleh, qui posent les bases d'une réflexion sur le traumatisme et la violence dans la littérature contemporaine, je propose d'étudier les mécanismes narratifs à l'œuvre dans le roman de Dīmā Wannūs, pour mettre en lumière la façon dont l'œuvre renouvelle la thématique de la violence politique, en la soumettant à des choix narratifs et esthétiques particuliers, en particulier : - l'esthétique de la fragmentation et de la polyphonie qui mobilise deux récits entrecroisés à la première personne du singulier. Procédant par une poétique de la diffraction, chacun des récits se construit sur des relations de similarité et dissimilarité qui attestent du caractère à la fois individuel et collectif du traumatisme, et de la saturation du texte par ce sentiment. - la centralité du cabinet du psychiatre Camille, une image en réduction de l'ensemble de la population syrienne, refuge des victimes de la peur où ils peuvent exprimer et affronter leur traumatisme. - le traitement particulier de la fiction où réel fictionnel et imaginaire se croisent et s'interpénètrent dans un jeu de dissociation, de distanciation et de superposition. - le jeu entre « Je » et « Nous ». Les personnages expriment un « Je », individuel et multiple qui se décline parfois sous sa forme plurielle. Le « Nous » constitue une autre clef de lecture du roman et enrichit la compréhension des mécanismes de la peur, à la fois invalidante et destructive, mais peut aussi être lue comme liant social et identitaire ainsi que comme une force de vie comme semble le suggérer la fin du roman.

BIANCO Annamaria, « Digging into the syrian unconscious: The "pertinacious nature" of fear in Dīmāh Wannūs's novel *al-Ḥā'ifūn* », *La rivista di Arablit*, XIII, 26, 2023, p. 31-54.

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Elisa Andrea Viter Márquez, Stockholm University

- **Apocalyptic Images in Speculative Arabic Fiction: The End of Suffering**

Apocalyptic images in speculative Arabic fiction: the end of suffering. Speculative fiction, in Arabic and in other languages, often uses religious inspired ideas of the apocalypse as the main speculative elements of the narratives. For the case of English produced Science Fiction, it has been argued that our time's repeated reproduction of scenes of the destruction of the world is the sign of a traumatized culture (Heffernan, 2015). Despite the multiple cases where apocalyptic elements are displayed in speculative fiction in Arabic, this subject has attracted little in-depth analysis. This paper proposes to analyse the apocalyptic elements of a number of speculative fiction novels, namely *al-Ṭufān al-azraq* (al-Baqqālī, 1986) and *Istikhdām al-ḥayāt* (Nājī & al-Zurqānī, 2016). Due to the gap on how trauma is experienced and conceptualized in Arabic speaking societies (Hosny et al., 2024), this article will explore the representation of apocalyptic moments that bring a violent rupture with the world we live, a world of suffering and violence in most cases. Through an econarratological analysis, narratological time and space will be analysed, shedding light into how apocalyptic elements engage with the environment and the consequences of slow violence (Nixon, 2011) and other instances of fear and anxiety for the future.

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Anqi Wang, Independent Researcher

- **Haunting and Healing: Reclaiming the Saviour Trope and the Arab Queer Chronotope in *Fī ghurfat al-‘ankabūt***

This article critiques the persistent othering and sexualisation of Egyptian—and, by extension, Arab—queer subjects within global LGBTQ+ discourse, where they are often positioned as figures in need of rescue. While such narratives can shed light on structural challenges, they frequently reproduce a saviour logic grounded in Western exceptionalism. This article reclaims the notion of saving as a utopian impulse: a relational and affective need shared across genders and sexualities. Through close readings of *Fī ghurfat al-‘ankabūt* (2017; *In the Spider’s Room*, trans. Jonathan Wright, 2018) by Egyptian writer Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Nabī, it examines the haunting, trauma, and healing of queer subjects in contemporary Egypt, exploring how they navigate state-sanctioned and normative violence. The article traces how the novel constructs alternative imaginaries of rescue and transformation that move beyond the white saviour complex and westernised escape narratives. Ultimately, it argues that Arabic queer fiction articulates heterotopic sites of resistance and transformation that affirm bodily multiplicity and the material realities of queer life under oppression, gesturing toward an emergent Arab queer futurity.

Nina Youkhanna, Georgetown University

- **Inherited Violence and Collective Trauma in Salīm Barakāt’s *Sages of Darkness***

The early works of prolific Syrian novelist Salīm Barakāt (b. 1951) are often linked to magical realism, a literary mode that blends realist narratives with fantastical elements. His first novel, *Fuqahā’ al-ḡalām* (*Sages of Darkness*, 1985), tells the intertwining stories of a small Kurdish community on the Syrian-Turkish border and the supernatural events triggered when the Mulla’s newborn son ages at an unnatural speed. Set in a mythical time and place, the novel depicts layered forms of violence: a young girl with a cognitive disability is assaulted; blood vengeance culminates in massacre; a communist teacher’s severed fingers sprout in a garden; land between villages shrinks and turns barren; and an unseen war rages between spectral forces. Barakat deepens this violence through a complex spatiotemporal vision: the past resurfaces in magical symbols that perpetuate cycles of cruelty, while the present vanishes along with the village’s crops and the community as they turn into ghosts. This paper examines how Barakat draws on folklore and magical realism to recount, reframe, and reclaim the bloody history of marginalized Kurdish Syrians, arguing that in *Fuqahā’ al-ḡalām*, Barakat reimagines local historiographies to invents a new literary language for confronting inherited violence and envisioning collective healing.

Patrizia Zanelli, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

- **The 2008 Gaza War and Palestinian Resistance Poetry in English: Poems by Rafeef Ziadah and Refaat Alareer**

In this article, I argue that Israel’s 2008–2009 military campaign in the Gaza Strip marked a turning point in the development of Palestinian poetry. I will examine three spoken word resistance poems written in the aftermath of the war by Palestinian diasporic poet Rafeef

Ziadah, who was then living in Toronto (Canada) and regularly writes in English. The author was born in Beirut, where as a child she experienced the trauma of the 1982 Israeli bombing of the Lebanese capital. While experiencing the horrors of the 2008 Gaza war itself, Palestinian academic and writer Refaat Alareer began writing texts in English to inform international audiences on the truth of Palestine. In 2011, he published his poem *If I Must Die*, which became internationally famous only after he was killed in an Israeli attack in December 2023. The purpose of my study is to show the relation between Israel's incremental genocide in Gaza, racism in the West, especially in Northern America, trauma, and early 21st century Palestinian resistance poetry. I will in fact also explain the influence of African American culture on the works produced by Ziadah and Alareer.

Imane-Sara Zouini, Toulouse Jean Jaurès University

- **Entre catastrophe intime et violence sociale: repenser la masculinité dans la littérature libyenne contemporaine**

Dans son roman *Khubz 'alā ṭāwilat al-khāl Mīlād*, qui a remporté le prix international de la fiction arabe en 2022, l'écrivain libyen Muḥammad al-Na'āss explore les formes invisibles de violence qui traversent la société libyenne patriarcale. Mīlād, homme choisissant de rester au foyer, subit une violence symbolique persistante, relayée dans le récit par les proverbes populaires qui codifient la subordination féminine et naturalisent la domination masculine. La problématique à laquelle nous nous intéressons : est en quoi le parcours de Mīlād révèle-t-il la « catastrophe intime » de la « masculinité hégémonique » imposée (Connell), et comment cette expérience rejoint-elle une mémoire collective du trauma social et politique en Libye ? Le couple Mīlād–Zaynab incarne un « anti-modèle » qui inverse les rôles de genre et remet en question l'ordre sexué collectif. Cette dissonance devient plus nette face aux autres figures masculines du récit, représentantes d'une masculinité agressive et compétitive qui cherchent à « corriger » la « déviance » de Mīlād. La fin tragique du roman, marquée par la réaffirmation brutale de la domination masculine (Bourdieu), inscrit cette catastrophe intime dans une mémoire plus large de la violence sociale et politique. Ainsi, le roman déplace la représentation de la catastrophe : au-delà des conflits armés, il révèle les traumatismes intimes liés aux normes de genre et à leur poids sur les identités.

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