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لدراسة الأدب العربي الحديث  
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## ABSTRACTS

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## XV<sup>TH</sup> EURAMAL CONFERENCE

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*Ecocritical Approaches  
and Environmental Is-  
sues in Modern Arabic  
Literature*

### Special panel

*The reception  
of Kafka in Modern  
Arabic Literature*



Akademie věd  
České republiky  
Czech Academy  
of Sciences



**HADEEL ABDELHAMEED**

Monash University

✿ **Literary strategies for mediating the environment: Iraqi Women's Morale Codes and Environmental Crisis in 'Alī 'Abd al-Nabī al-Zaydī's play *Garbage***

'Alī 'Abd al-Nabī al-Zaydī's play *Qumāma* (Garbage, 1995) was written in 1995 during the economic sanctions against Iraq (1990–2003). The sanctions brought Iraq to a pre-industrial time as the country witnessed a destruction of social services. The play depicted a man-made environmental destruction exemplified through the ubiquitous piles of garbage in one of the southern provinces of Iraq; Thi Qar. The play portrayed a women-based family who lived in a house that turned into a brothel. They provide 'services' to veterans or prisoners of war who were referred to as 'residues' of humans that cannot be 'recycled'. Customers are deformed humans, some of them are without legs, some lost one eye, others are in wheelchairs. They were brushed by a broom and put in 'black plastic bags' if they do not meet the criteria of being less humans. This apocalyptic environment euphemised the political and social decay of the sanction's era. Based on interviews with the al-Zaydī, and translated Arabic scholarship, this article argues that the Iraqi environmental crisis is theatrically invested to refer to socio-political criticism. Referencing ecological criticism allowed al-Zaydī to circumvent the censorship.

**ALMA ABOU FAKHER**

INALCO/CERMOM

✿ **Échos kafkaïens dans le roman du Proche-Orient contemporain**

Qualifié par la presse du Moyen-Orient de « Kafka arabe plein d'humour » (Sīrīs, 2004 : page de garde), l'écrivain syrien Nihād Sīrīs insiste, dans son roman *al-Ṣamt wa-l-ṣaḥāb* (Silence et Tumulte, 2004) sur le registre satirique dans la mise en scène du conflit entre corps et pouvoir politique dans un pays anonyme du Moyen-Orient, qui pourrait être la Syrie, le pays natal de l'auteur, où la censure politique est omniprésente et la liberté d'expression demeure encore problématique. Le Leader demeure, comme la nation décrite dans le récit, anonyme. L'identité du protagoniste est réduite, dans la narration, à la marque «la plus économique» (Hamon, 1976 : 144), qui représente le personnage romanesque, il s'agit de la simple lettre «š. (šīn)». Au cœur de l'écriture de Sīrīs se niche donc l'approche singulière adoptée par Kafka dans la réduction de ses personnages à de

simples lettres leur ôtant ainsi toute individualité. Les échos kafkaïens résonnent, d'autre part, au cœur même de l'univers diégétique du récit : Sīrīs met en scène une journée où la chaleur est étouffante et le pays tout entier célèbre les vingt ans du pouvoir du despote. L'action, s'étendant sur vingt-quatre heures, est marquée par le bruit des chants, des milliers de personnes qui défilent en hurlant des slogans, des haut-parleurs répétant sans cesse le discours du Leader, des corps piétinés dans les rues, de la brutalité et de l'intimidation des fidèles du Parti ainsi que des miliciens qui s'acharnent sur la foule pour arrêter tous ceux qui ne participent pas aux défilés à la gloire du dictateur. Les sujets n'existent dans ce pays qu'en tant que corps indifférenciés, représentés comme une marée humaine, manipulée par le pouvoir omnipotent.

## GIULIA AIELLO

University of Bologna

### ✿ **Urban Decay in Comics from Lebanon: *Beyrouth Bye Bye* and *Beyrouth Rewind* by Barrack Rima as Case Studies**

The aim of this paper is to investigate the representation of urban decay in the emerging genre of adult comics in Lebanon. I will focus on the dystopian graphic novel *Beyrouth Bye Bye...* (2015) and its sequel *Beyrouth Rewind* (2017) by Barrack Rima, both part of a trilogy entitled *Beyrouth: La trilogie* (2017). *Beyrouth Bye Bye...* is about a nightmarish Beirut controlled by opposing factions of crocodiles and ninja turtles. Due to the neoliberal reconstruction, the city is closed to its inhabitants, who are forced to live in garbage-invaded suburbs (Calargé & Gueydan-Turek 2017). *Beyrouth Rewind* is about the revolutions Lebanon has witnessed in its history, in particular the garbage crisis protests in 2015. Focusing on both the narrative and the visual language (Kukkonen 2013), my eco-critical investigation intends to shed light on the fact that urban decay is not only presented as the result of years of conflicts, mismanagement, and foreign investments in the country, but it is also the main push factor for demanding for socio-environmental justice (Agofure 2019). The works, in fact, emphasize the connection between sociopolitical issues, such as migration, memory, cultural heritage, active citizenship and social inequalities, and the environmental issue in Lebanon.

J. O. Agofure, "Art as Eco-Protest and Communication in Tanure Ojaide's Selected Poetry," in *Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*. Routledge 2019.

C. Calargé, and A. Gueydan-Turek, "De la fabrique du réel (apocalyptique) dans la bande dessinée *Beyrouth Bye Bye...* de Barrack Rima." *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 20.1 (2017), 57–72.

K. Kukkonen.. 2013. *Studying comics and graphic novels*. Chichester 2013.

**AMANY AKEL**

Ibn Rushd College

**❁ الوعي البيئي وتشكيل الهوية في رواية "الذئاب لا تنسى"**

اختارت هذه الورقة رواية (الذئاب لا تنسى) للروائية لينا هويان الحسن ، نموذجاً لتجليات الوعي بجغرافيا المكان ، وبسبب غنى هذه الرواية بعناصر البيئة الصحراوية السورية ، والاتكاء عليها في بناء السرد والتخييل. يتميز الخطاب السردي في هذه الرواية بغزارة الموصوفات الحيوانية من (صقور وظباء وذئاب وأفاعٍ وعقارب) بالإضافة إلى اتكاء العنوان على عنصر الحيوان ، بالإضافة إلى نمذجة تدهور المكونات الطبيعية في المكان بسبب الحرب وهروب الفلاحين. تشكل البيئة الطبيعية في هذا النص هوية ثقافية تستمد خصوبتها من الوعي الجمعي ، ويعدّ خطاب هذه الرواية جزءاً من وعي الثقافة الجمعية التي شكّلتها الحيوانات ، وحرارة الصحراء وأساليب التكيف معها ، وقد نمذجت الرواية اختلاف جوانب الحياة بسبب الحرب لاحقاً ، وعززت فكرة ارتباط هوية الشخصيات بالطبيعة والكائنات الحيّة. وبناءً عليه تحوّل البيئي إلى عنصر ثقافي فاعل في الكتابة ، وشكّل هوية وذاكرة تلجأ إليها البطلة للاختباء من قسوة الواقع الجديد. تخلص الدراسة إلى دور البيئة في تشكيل هوية النص ، لكنّ مصطلحات مثل النقد البيئي جديدة على الدراسات العربية النقدية ، فقد نشط هذا الحقل في الدراسات النقدية الغربية بسبب طبيعة الأدب التي تسعى لمتابعة الإشكاليات المعرفية والثقافية والاجتماعية التي تحيط بالإنسان. إلا أنّ هذا لا يعني عدم اهتمام الروائي العربي بعناصر الطبيعة ، فالطبيعة مكوّن أساسي في الأدب العربي منذ العصر الجاهلي ، لكنّ كلّ نص يتكلم بحسب موقعه التاريخي والثقافي وبحسب سياسات دعم البيئة التي تقدمها الحكومات والمنظمات التي يعيش في ظلها.

**ABDULLAH ALAHMARI**

University of St Andrews

**❁ The Eco-Symbiosis of Child and Nature: The Protective Role of the Mother-Tree in Yūsuf Idrīs's Short Story *His Mother***

Yūsuf Idrīs's short story *Ummuhū* (His Mother, 1987), published shortly before his unexpected passing in 1991, presents a profound narrative interweaving the protective embrace of nature and the resilience of a displaced child. Set against the backdrop of a young boy's expulsion from his home, the tale underscores the intricate connections between human survival and the nurturing realm of the natural world. Questions arise concerning the inherent reciprocity between human and nature, evoking poignant inquiries into the essence of sustenance, resilience, and protection. By analysing the narrative through an ecocritical framework, this study unveils the nuanced layers of meaning embedded in the boy's interaction with the "Mother-Tree." The narrative symbiosis reveals how nature, embodied in the tree, serves as a steadfast guardian, shielding the protagonist from the tumultuous currents of human discord. As he deals with familial turmoil, the natural realm extends solace and sanctuary, inviting con-

templation on the harmonious coexistence of human beings and the natural world. This paper aims to unravel the layers of the intricate eco-symbiosis, highlighting the significance of nature's protective embrace in shaping the narrative's thematic depth.

### **FARAH ARIDI**

Doha Institute for Graduate Studies

#### ✿ **Beirut and the Sea: Socio-Spatial (In)Justice — Explorations in Graphic Literary Productions**

This paper is interested in issues of socio-spatial justice that have been asserting themselves in conversations surrounding the city of Beirut. More specifically, this paper is interested in the need for new textualities to express and resist the systemised, institutionalised, and privatized efforts at urbicide. I am interested in investigating the dwindling spatialities of the Beiruti shore and the restrictions surrounding beach and sea access amidst an ongoing economic and political crisis in Lebanon. I intend to enter the conversation through the exploration of city narratives as expressed in the graphic novel in specific, namely Rāwand Ṭsà's *Fī baṭn al-ḥūt* (2021). My approach to city narratives, though interdisciplinary and transgeneric, focuses on the textuality created through the graphic novel. The premise for this point of departure is inspired by the French theorist Henri Lefebvre who once claimed that in the absence of (or the case of oppressive and restrictive) spatialities and spaces, the production of an alternative spatiality becomes inevitable. My claim is that the emergence (out of necessity) of the graphic novel in Lebanon coincided with the political atmosphere that surrounds the city's narrative of violence — a narrative that has not really sealed its chapters yet since the “termination” of the Lebanese civil war in 1990.

### **DOUNIA BADINI**

The Paris Institute of Political Studies

#### ✿ **Les représentations de l'eau dans *Taghrībat al-Qāfir* de Zahrān al-Qāsimī**

Genre relativement jeune, le roman arabe a bien su refléter les sociétés arabes et notamment leurs transformations et évolutions depuis les luttes pour l'affranchissement de l'empire ottoman puis du colonisateur anglais ou français, et jusqu'aux très récents printemps arabes. Peu de romans cependant ont traité de manière directe la question actuelle du changement climatique et de son impact sur les sociétés arabes. Le roman de Zahrān al-Qāsimī, *Taghrībat al-Qāfir*, explore de manière novatrice l'élément de l'eau et comment sa disponibilité ou sa rareté façonne la vie des gens ordinaires dans un monde

rural jusque-là peu connu du lecteur. Au fil des histoires des personnages, ce dernier découvre le lien très particulier entre l'homme et l'eau, entre les Omanais et leurs "aflāj". Du premier au dernier chapitre de ce roman où « l'âme de l'homme est semblable à l'eau » (Jung), le lecteur peut suivre les différentes représentations de l'eau, à la fois matrice et meurtrière. Mêlant l'arabe littéral et le dialecte omanais, la langue d'al-Qāsimī trouve le ton juste pour lancer l'alerte et sensibiliser aux problématiques environnementales, non pas avec des idées abstraites et des chiffres alarmants mais à travers le récit palpitant d'histoires humaines.

### STÉPHANE BAQUEY

Aix-Marseille University (CIELAM)

#### ❖ **Oecumenal vs Liminal Perspectives in Late Egyptian *qaṣīdat al-naṭr* (Īmān Mirsāl, Aḥmad al-Yamānī and Yāsir 'Abd al-Laṭīf): What Happened to the Sense of Place**

The late modern prose poetry that has been composed by Egyptian writers since the 1990s has contributed to integrate literal Arabic poetry into everyday life, at the margins either of ideological instrumentalizations or of modernist high culture achievements. Perhaps it was at the price of a weakening of poetry itself as a literary genre. This nonfictional realism should not only be read as a confessional poetry turned towards a self which expresses itself in a naked way. It simultaneously tells of the interdependence of the individual with places which lose their oecumenal identity and become liminal in a global environment, from the Egyptian village and provincial town, Cairo and its suburbs, until distant countries of emigration. The geographic and anthropologic notions of "oecumene" (A. Berque) and "liminality" (V. Turner after A. van Gennep) can be used with profit as concepts for ecocriticism in order to describe the way these poems and proses grapple with the metamorphoses of inhabited places. The scope goes thus beyond the frame of cultural studies and calls for a hermeneutics engaged in the Terrestrial turn looking for a responsive representation of ordinary places considered as a hybrid of nature and culture. In this perspective, local places are connected to a global network where inhabitation is a "place-based transience" or a "diasporic residency" (U. Heise quoting M. Thomashow). As it has already been analysed about Iman Mersal (É. de Dampierre-Noiray), all the identifications to a place as an oecumenal environment become transitory, be it at home or after migration. The liminality of the thresholds pervades space bringing forth a paradoxical stance in life. If the poem itself keeps some memory of the genericity of Ancient and Modern Arabic poetry and of the way it told of the place for a territorialized community, its textual properties move towards short story and nonfiction. This prose poetry can be read as an example of "unnatural ecopoetics" (S. Nolan) where the lyric continuity of an oecumenal bound to nature becomes erratic. Remoteness



and attachment to place are especially experienced through stages of life of the social and biological body (coming of age, parenthood, death of the parents), as well as events experienced at a distance such as the 2011 Egyptian revolution and its aftermaths.

### ADA BARBARO

Sapienza University of Rome

#### ✿ **The non-future from a semi-unfamiliar space (*makān shibh alif*): fragments of non-life in *a maqaṣṣah* by Muḥammad Khuḍayyir**

“Their letters remained in the mailbox for thirty years, during which the city changed, and its people lived underground, after the temperatures rose and its lights exceeded the capacity of human endurance, and surface water became scarce.” Iraqi writer Muḥammad Khuḍayyir thus opens his *Ġrāfiṭī 2042* (Graffiti 2042, ID., *al-‘Uqūd*, 2021): it is a *maqaṣṣah* based on scientific prediction of the future (*al-tanabbu’ al-‘ilmī bi-l-mustaqbal*), where ecophilia and apocalyptic fiction intertwine to describe the dangerous climate change taking place in the Basra region (Kh. Sulaymān, *Ḥurrās al-miyāh: al-ġafāf wa-l-taghyīr al-munākhi fī l-‘Irāq*, 2020). The heat-affected city forces its citizens to live underground: the picture that emerges is the change of space from an intimate place (*al-makān al-alif*) to a hostile place (*al-makān al-mu‘ādī*) (Bachelard, *La Poétique de l’espace*, translated as *Jamāliyyāt al-makān*, Bayrūt 1984, by Ghālib Halasā). Khuḍayyir abandons his usual realism (Caiani & Cobham, 2018) to interrogate the future, and constructs two artistic paths, with prose meeting art – the graffiti of the title – to describe the non-future to which planet Earth is supposedly destined.

### LOVISA BERG

Dalarna University

#### ✿ **An Eco-Critical Reading of Syrian Novels on the Great Dams**

Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Meyer (2006) state that ecocriticism is a methodology which investigates different ways to contextualise nature and its function ideologically, aesthetically and ethically in literary texts. Through a close reading of three novels by the Syrian authors Fāris Zarzūr, ‘Abd al-Salām al-‘Ujaylī and Jān Aliksān this paper will investigate how they, in their literary texts, engage with one of the biggest human interventions in the natural life of Syria, namely the dams built along the Euphrates. By an examination of the characters’ relationship with the river – and later the dams and their drowned villages, the paper will show that the novelists make use of nature and its destruction to discuss ideological stands as well as ethical dilemmas. Although the three

novelists reach different conclusions, they all aesthetically utilise water and its innate force which is forcibly tamed, to examine interaction between humans and nature, tradition and modernity, and individuals and the state apparatus.

C. Gersdorf and S. Meyer (eds.), *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, Amsterdam 2006

## ANNAMARIA BIANCO

IREMAM/ University of Toulouse 2 – Jean Jaurès

### ✿ **Nature as ‘Ultimate Refuge’: Samar Yazbek and the Denunciation against the War in Syria in *Maqām al-Rīḥ***

In the context of Syrian production following the 2011 revolution, the protracted conflict has stimulated writers to reflect on the explosion of fratricidal violence in the country. Prominent among these names is undoubtedly that of Samar Yazbek, whose anti-regime positioning has plunged her into deep identity conflict, as a member of the same ethno-sectarian group as the Assads: the Alawite. Forced to choose the path of exile after the threats she received from her own community, she illegally re-entered the country between 2013 and 2014. During this period, the author devotes herself exclusively to publishing short stories and autobiographical accounts of the conflict, before returning to the Romanesque genre with *al-Mashā’a* (Planet of Clay, 2017) and *Maqām al-Rīḥ* (The Wind’s Abode, 2021), two novels in which the bond between man and nature grows closer and closer. In this talk, I will focus particularly on the second novel, whose protagonist, now dying after being hit by a bomb mistakenly dropped by the regime on its own soldiers, traces his short life within the Alawite community in the mountains and the time of his forced conscription. Drawing on theories of Anthropocene (Haraway 2015), my purpose will be to show how the tree at the foot of which young ‘Alī agonizes and with which his body eventually fuses, will end up symbolizing the salvific role played by nature before the senselessness of war, embodying humanity’s last refuge from the brutality of its own making.

D. Haraway, «Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin», *Environmental Humanities*, 6 (2015): 159-165.

## VIKTOR BIELICKÝ

Charles University in Prague

### ✿ **Ecocritical Reading of Arabic Science Fiction Literature: The Case of ‘Abd al-Nāṣir Mujallī’s Novel *Geography of Water***

This paper will focus on environmental themes in the science fiction novel “Geography of Water” (*Juġrāfiyyat al-mā’*, 2009) by Yemeni-American writer ‘Abd al-Nāṣir Mujallī. The



plot of this polyphonic novel is built around a tragic moment for every living thing on Earth, which is the disappearance of surface water on the planet. This fact has far-reaching consequences: changing climatic conditions and the struggle for the remaining water resources are leading to the disruption of human society and the gradual extinction of mankind and other animal species. The protagonist of the novel, Muḥammad, a hydrobiologist of Arab descent and of Muslim faith living in the US, discovers that the cause of the disappearance of water is the action of an advanced alien civilization that needs water to secure its own survival on a distant planet. The story is narrated from the perspective of several characters, some of them are of extraterrestrial origin, which opens up space for the author to relativise the anthropocentric world view. The novel thus touches upon some fundamental philosophical and ethical issues, such as the claim of survival of one species at the expense of another, or the question of the individual's responsibility for the survival of his own species.

### **NAJA BJØRNSSON**

Lund University

#### **✿ Flora, Fauna, and the Destruction of Place in Syrian Poetry after 2011**

In Syrian poetry written after 2011, the landscapes of torn-off body parts, corpses, ruins, and checkpoints mirror the mental and bodily fragmentation of the subjects and make the environmental catastrophe brought about by war painfully visible. The destruction of cities has been studied sociologically as a destruction of civilian life under the terms urbicide and spatiocide, also in the context of post-2011 Syria. Literature is a valuable, but understudied, source of subjective voices expressing this collective environmental tragedy. This paper examines connections between violated space and the formation of individual subjectivities in Syrian poetry; how do subjects understand themselves *through* these immense changes of their environment? When the subject describes itself as “pale like grenade smoke”, a bunch of limbs, or a corpse, we understand that borders are in a state of decomposition: destruction of the landscape and fellow bodies equals the destruction of the subject. As some borders erode, others are put up. The paper will additionally discuss the checkpoint as a recurrent poetic trope, a specific space of control, and a rich symbol of alienation and lack of freedom. The study presents close readings of poetry collections by Rashā ‘Umrān (2014), ‘Ārif Ḥamza (2014), and Hanādī Zarka (2016).

**SOBHI BOUSTANI**

INALCO, Paris

## ✿ الانسان والطبيعة ، حبّ من طرف واحد : "النخلة تصلي لأجل قاتلها" لإبراهيم الكوني

غني عن القول إن إبراهيم الكوني حرص في مؤلفاته الكثيرة على الحفاظ على الطبيعة ، الصحراوية بشكل خاص ، وعلى قوانينها الطبيعية والاجتماعية وأسرارها الراسخة وقيمها الإنسانية ومعتقداتها وأساطيرها ، وعمل في كتاباته على تأمين انتقالها من جيل إلى جيل. وكان للنخلة التي ترتبط ارتباطا وثيقا بالصحراء التفتاة خاصة من إبراهيم الكوني. لذلك نتوقف في دراستنا عند القصة القصيرة: "النخلة تصلي لأجل قاتلها" ، المنشورة ضمن مجموعة قصصية عنوانها "ديوان النثر البرّي" ، والصادرة سنة 1991. في مقاربتنا لهذه القصة القصيرة نعتمد بشكل خاص على المنهجية السيميائية – الاسلوبية لنظهر ، من جهة أولى ، الرؤية البيئية – الايكولوجية للكاتب ، ونبين ، من جهة ثانية ، كيف يتضامن الجهل مع التكنولوجيا لقتل الحياة في الطبيعة وكيف يتواطأ على إزالة مكوناتها الموروثة منذ الأزل. والنخلة ، رمز الطبيعة ، لا تملك سوى إبانها وطبيعتها وطهارتها لتجابه تعسف الانسان. لا يمكن لدارس هذه القصة القصيرة أن يتغاضى عن النزعة الشعرية والجمالية التي تواكب سردها ، وهذا ما يبرر المنهجية التي نعتمدها لإبراز قيمتها الفنية والإنسانية.

**FABIO CAIANI**

University of St Andrews

## ✿ Echoes of Eco-fiction in Muḥammad Khuḍayyir's Fiction

In *al-‘Ashshār: asātīr al-mīl al-wāḥid* (al-‘Ashshār: Myths of One Mile, 2021), a collection of short pieces (both fictional and essayistic), Muḥammad Khuḍayyir focuses on a quarter of Basra, al-‘Ashshār, that takes the name from the eponymous canal.

In ‘Funduq al-arāmīl’ (The Widows’ Hotel), one of the numerous fictional sketches that make up the book, Khuḍayyir explores in his characteristically oblique style the physical deterioration of the quarter in which he lives. In this and other pieces, Khuḍayyir, one of the most esteemed Iraqi writers, indirectly traces the environmental deterioration of his native Basra (and of the whole of Iraq), once known for its beautiful canals and lavish palm trees, now a city so besieged by crises that can be seen as a symbol of Iraq’s decline, and the environmental challenges of our time.

In this paper, I will analyse the aesthetics Khuḍayyir employs in his stories as echoes of an implicit ecocritical discourse. I argue that his work can only be understood fully if it is read as a crucible of old and new literary sensibilities, a hybrid work that, in spite of its idiosyncrasies and difficulty, does engage with the urgent problems of our world in a powerful fashion.

## MARTINA CENSI

University of Bergamo

### ✿ **Ṭālib al-Rifāʿī's Novel *al-Najdī* as Hydrofiction: Water and Identity in Kuwait before and after Oil**

In a recent study, Hannah Boast introduced the category of “hydrofiction” (2020) with the aim of analyzing what contemporary literary texts tell us about “hydrosocial relations”, that is how water “is produced through social and political processes, and how water shapes social structures, relations and identities, and with what effects across space and time” (Budds, Linton, McDonnell 2014, 168). Considering critical categories of “hydrofiction” and “petrofiction”, we aim to analyze the biographical novel *al-Najdī* (2017), in which Kuwaiti writer Ṭālib al-Rifāʿī depicts the strong relationship between Kuwaiti people and the sea, through the life of ‘Alī al-Najdī, a legendary sailor whose fishing boat sinks in the Gulf in 1979. Memories of al-Najdī as a child and of the work of the fishermen during the pearl oyster season are interwoven with the nostalgic gaze of the now elderly sailor who records the changes that occurred in Kuwaiti society and landscape since the arrival of petrodollars in the 1950s. The sea is not merely the inert spatial frame of events but becomes a real character interacting with Kuwait’s fishermen and people. The paper aims to analyze how, in the novel, the sea shapes and is shaped by Kuwaiti national identity, before and after the arrival of petrodollars. Attention will be also paid to the symbolic role of the fishermen’s boat as a place with limited space and resources that can suggest new cooperative ways of interacting with the environment.

H. Boast, *Hydrofictions: Water, Power and Politics in Israeli and Palestinian Literature*, Edinburgh: EUP, 2020

J. Budds, J. Linton, R. McDonnell, “The Hydrosocial Cycle”, *Geoforum* 57 (2014): 167-169.

## ALESSANDRO COLUMBU

The University of Westminster

### ✿ **Natural disasters and the road to atonement in Khalīfa’s *No one prayed over their graves***

This paper explores the ways in which Khālid Khalīfa’s latest novel, *Lam yuṣalli ‘alayhim aḥad* (No one prayed over their graves, 2023) employs nature, land and place to shed light on human ambition vs. helplessness in the face of natural disasters. Set in the early 1900s, during a critical juncture in the history of Bilād al-Shām and the Ottoman Empire, the novel has as the main catalyzer of events a flood of extraordinary proportions which wipes out Ḥūsh Ḥannā, a farmers’ village by the Euphrates River near the Syrian city of Aleppo. The two main protagonists, Zakariyyā al-Bāyazīdī and Ḥannā Gregors, once wealthy landowners known for their libertine and transgressive lifestyles, survive the disaster but their lives are irremediably altered by their loss of families and friends. Drawing on Glotfelty

and Fromm's seminal work on ecocriticism (*The Ecocriticism Reader*, 1996), Laurent Berlant's theory of optimism (*Cruel Optimism*, 2011) and Tarik El-Ariss's argument (in *Trials of Arab Modernity*, 2013) about Arab modernity as taking shape through *aḥdāth* (accidents and events), the paper looks at the ways in which nature and the catastrophe of the flood shatter the certainties and self-image of the protagonists who find themselves confronted with defeat, dispossession and widowhood to embark on a journey of questioning and mindfulness.

Ch. Glotfelty and H. Fromm (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Athens 1996.

L. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Duke UP 2011.

T. El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity*, New York 2013

## HARTMUT FÄHNDRICH

ETH Zürich

### ✿ **Trees Chopped – for Better or for Worse: Some Examples from Contemporary Arabic Literature**

Trees are plants, useful plants: they provide fruit and shadow, wood and tranquility; they may also protect against erosion or enemies. So, trees have practical value. But trees have also symbolical value. They may symbolize nothing less than life itself, the “tree of life” connecting in several religions heaven and earth. More specifically, there are holy trees venerated or at least respected, symbolizing fertility and continuity. In the Islamic tradition there is the “Tree of Happiness” (*tūbā*) in Paradise – with roots that reach as high as heaven (sic!), and there is the “Tree of Hell” (*zaqqūm*) offering satanic fruits. For chopping trees there may be (given) different reasons. The ones usually offered refer to “practical purposes”: the wood being needed for cooking or constructing, the space being needed for new houses, new roads, new factories etc. Yet, what does the disappearance of a tree or of trees do to the people who used to live “in their shadow”? What does it do to the environment, be it social, political, or climatic? Evidence for all this can be found in many narrative works between the Gulf and the Atlantic.

## DAREJAN GARDAVADZE

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

### ✿ **God's Chosen One is Still a Wandering Shepherd: The Biblical Myth of Cain and Abel in *The Bleeding of the Stone* by Ibrahim al-Koni**

In his novels, Al-Koni often emphasizes the idea that a settled life destroys spirituality, that prophecy was born in the desert and nurtured humanity with its wisdom for thousands of years. Migration within the desert created ancient civilizations, giving rise to the world's first cultures. The characteristic of a fixed and settled life is death, and movement is the

caring of the soul. Only the desert can purify the soul. The desert is divine and mystical. It is in this context that the writer turns to biblical allusions in the novel “The Bleeding of the Stone”. Here the biblical myth of Cain and Abel unfolds in the Libyan desert. The main reason for the first biblical murder is that the Lord graciously accepted Abel’s gift and did not treat Cain and his gift similarly. That is, it is maintained that in the tragic story of Abel and Cain, two incompatible cultures – shepherding and settled life-clashed against each other. The Lord rejected the farmer, the inhabitant of the land, and chose the wandering shepherd. Thus, nomadic shepherding with eschatological content is blessed by God. The danger of being tempted by worldly esteem and power is closely related to settled life. Constant fear and restlessness for the hard-earned power not to slip out of a person’s hand also accompany wealth and power. That is why the Lord prefers men to be nomadic and sees a free spirit in a tent.

A desert is a place of seclusion, self-discovery, and at the same time, a place to worship God. As an eternal path, the desert is imprinted with spirituality and contrasts with carnal, settled life as a symbol of the fallen world. The protagonist of the novel, Asuf, is a god-fearing goat shepherd living a primitive lifestyle far from human society. His antagonist Cain, son of Adam, who was orphaned in his infancy and was raised with the blood of gazelle, is an eater of raw meat and drinker of blood, a killer of the herd of gazelles in the Red Hamada Desert, a villain and a murderer. In fact, he is a devil referred to as the man, the most ruthless enemy of the desert. The author has built this novel mainly on the contrasts of black and white, opposing pairs – there are two mutually opposite beginnings, two fundamentally different substances: good and evil, light and dark, truth and false doctrine. The cosmic drama is manifested in the never-ending struggle of these two hostile beginnings. Both the executioner and the victim of this biblical drama set in the Libyan desert, obey the predestination of fate. Thousands of years later, God’s chosen one is still a wandering shepherd whose blood miraculously washes away sins and cleanses the land.

## ZUZANA GAŽÁKOVÁ

Comenius University

### ✿ The Operation “Oil Platform”

The Israeli defeat in 1967 left massive traits on the Egyptian economic and cultural life. As a consequence, the entirety of Egyptian Sinai Peninsula up to the eastern bank of the Suez Canal went under Israeli control. Israel immediately decided to exploit the natural resources and petrol of Sinai in front of the eyes of Egyptians and for that reason they rented a special gigantic oil drilling platform from Canada. The main reason behind the immediate exploitation of petrol was not the economic one, but to demonstrate in front

of the whole world that Egypt is unable to protect its own land with natural resources. Egyptian secret services under the leadership of Amīn Huwaydī managed to destroy the platform by explosives in the harbour of Abijan (Ivory Coast) in 1970. The whole operation was masterfully described by Šālih Mursī (1929–1996) in his little-known espionage novel *al-Ḥaffār* (The Oil Platform, 1985). In my contribution I am going to concentrate on the role that natural resources play in war conflicts and to analyze how the author rendered this exemplary event in the history of Egyptian secret services into a captivating novel.

## DORIT GOTTESFELD

Bar Ilan University

### ✿ **When Day Turns into Night: An Ecocritical Reading of the Novel ‘*Ayn Khafsha*’ by Rajā’ Bakriyya**

The lecture will discuss the novel *‘Ayn Khafsha* (2017) by the Palestinian writer Rajā’ Bakriyya, who is considered one of the most prominent new generation Palestinian writers in Israel. The novel recounts the events of the Nakba by narrating the tale of a fictional Palestinian village named “Ayn Khafsha”, which unfolds through the childhood memories of Labība, the novel’s protagonist. These memories are rooted in Labība’s personal experiences and observations as a child, as well as the narratives shared by her family and fellow villagers. The small village in the novel serves as a microcosm, encapsulating the collective memory of the Palestinians and representing the Palestinian fate. The novel’s uniqueness lies in Bakriyya’s placing animals and plants, and their interactions with the villagers, at the center of the narrative. The animals and plants in the novel are not merely background elements, but are integral to the characters’ actions and destinies, actively shaping the narrative of the place, continually engaging the villagers and serving as a driving force behind the characters’ actions. The novel portrays how the Nakba disrupted and distorted the harmonious human-nature interaction. It depicts menacing and vengeful raptor birds mysteriously descending upon the village, disrupting the regularity of life. Moreover, it describes the pollution of the environment, destruction of green spaces, and the transformation of once open and natural areas into restricted military zones. Using ecocriticism as a framework, the lecture will analyze the novel’s textual elements, by exploring the human-nature interactions and emphasizing their significant and central role within the narrative. The lecture will explore how Bakriyya strategically employs the interrelationship between the human and the non-human as a powerful tool to illuminate the Palestinian human condition during and after the Nakba. Within this context, the non-human is depicted as victim of the Nakba’s impact, just as much as the human.

## JOLANDA GUARDI

University of Turin

### ✿ **The Embodiment of Trauma: Kafka in Tangier by Muḥammad Saʿīd Ḥjīwj**

In the last decades Arab authors have explored traumatic events and the consequences collective trauma has on people, underscoring how it provokes imperceptible or ignored disturbances and changes in behaviour and attitudes and analysing how repressive political systems concur in undermining identity. A special side of this mechanism is the effects trauma has on bodies, especially because it is the only concrete thing people really possess. Alienation and transformation of the body therefore, has become always more present in literature as symbol of these collective disturb and in the meantime the act of writing functions as a healing. It's not strange, therefore, that Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1915) has attracted Arab writers interest, as it represents how the body responds in a society where it doesn't find its place. In my paper I will discuss from this perspective the novel *Kāfkā fī Ṭanja* (2019) by Moroccan writer Muḥammad Saʿīd Ḥjīwj exploring how themes of transformation, alienation and power have travelled from the original *Metamorphosis* to a contemporary Arab one and situating it in the production of the literary field as the contemporary expression of representation of trauma which began long ago in Moroccan literature.

## STEPHAN GUTH

University of Oslo

### ✿ **An early precursor of ecocritical fiction: Ṣabrī Mūsà's *Fasād al-ʿamkina* (1973)**

Set in the late 1920s, early 1930s, Ṣabrī Mūsà's *Fasād al-ʿamkina* (1973; *Seeds of Corruption*, tr. M. Mikhail) tells the story of Nicola, leader of an exploratory-exploitative mission to the Darhīb mountains east of Assuan. It is the story, told by the engineer himself in retrospective, of a gigantic intrusion of man into nature, a conquest that the author often likens to a brutal rape. Nicola remembers that, for a long time, the mission seemed to be successful – old sebum mines were restored, braced, and expanded, the mined product brought good money, local economy grew, workers from abroad settled in a small village, a little port was built on the Red Sea coast for shipping, etc. But triumph over nature, economic success, and the advent of “civilisation” in the mountaneous desert also demanded a high price: Nicola lost his beloved daughter when she was buried inside the mountain after the collapse of some shaft – a victim of human hubris.

In a general atmosphere where modernisation along the Western model had already increasingly become questionable, Ṣabrī Mūsà comes with a far-sighted prophesy about



the negative consequences of mankind's inconsiderate belief in technological progress. In a powerful, imploring language he warns his contemporaries from the lack of respect for nature and the meaningful organisation of creation. A holistic vision of the world and the necessity of man's humble submission to its order clearly has Sufi undertones. After briefly sketching the various aspects of this vision, this paper examines in more detail the novel's narrative structure, as an analysis of this structure will grant deeper insight into the author's diagnosis of a "psychologically internalised civilisational conflict" (R. Karachouli).

### BUSHRA HASHEM

University of Oslo

#### ✿ "Ḥikāya lil-nisyān" : Nubia's Forgotten Landscape and Environmental Change

The Nubian people, an indigenous ethnic group that inhabited the south of Egypt and north of Sudan, have had deep concerns about environmental changes since the twentieth century. These people have inhabited this region since antiquity, and their survival has been closely tied to the Nile River and the ecosystem it provided. After the High Dam was built in 1964, all their villages were flooded, and Nubians were relocated to new houses, built kilometers into the desert west of Aswan, far away from their beloved Nile and its water that had shaped their existence for centuries. In this paper, I will look at the short story, *Ḥikāya lil-nisyān* (A Tale to be Forgotten) by the Nubian writer Ḥasan Nūr, in which he closely describes the experience of displacement and the changing landscape of Old Nubia right before the flooding. He showcases the animals, farms, and palm trees his people were forced to leave behind, and contemplates how the new villages, void of all these environmental elements, will affect Nubians. I attempt to analyze the story from an ecocritical perspective to explore how sharp environmental changes are depicted in literature.

### BOHDAN HORVAT

Independent researcher

#### ✿ The Chernobyl Catastrophe in Muḥammad al-Makhzangī's Writings: from Environmental Awareness to Experience-based Ecological Competence

In their Introduction to the now classic *Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), Ch. Glotfelty and H. Fromm noted that the field of literary environmental studies in the US was planted in the

mid-eighties and grew in the early nineties of the XX century. The nuclear accident at the Chornobyl\* powerplant was perhaps the most significant catalyst to the development of ecological mainstreaming in all realms of the Humanities worldwide, including literary studies and literature itself. Interestingly, the first work of Chornobyl literature written in Arabic was Muḥammad al-Makhzangi's *Laḥazāt gharaq Jazīrat al-Ḥūt* (Episodes of the Whale Island Going Under Water, 1996). The book was innovative not only thematically, but also in terms of genre, as its author is allegedly one of the first Egyptian writers to utilize fact-fiction as a literary form in contemporary Arabic prose. The book exploits the metaphor of the Whale Island borrowed from Sindbad the Sailor to dwell upon the author's journey in search of answers of his own and to communicate his understanding of causes and consequences of the largest man-made disaster of the XXth century (irresponsible policy – nuclear accident – environmental disaster – all-dimension catastrophe). It may seem paradoxical that the book remained practically unrecognized until its second edition, published by Dār al-Shourouk in 2022, after the outburst of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The proposed paper will research the development of the author's experience-based ecocritical narrative in the mentioned work as well as apply a comparative lens as the analyses will focus on both editions and the shift in its author's attitude as reflected in the second supplemented edition.

\* "Chornobyl" (not "Chernobyl") is the official Ukrainian spelling, preferred also by the National Geodetic Society and used internationally

## VICTORIA KHRAICHE RUIZ-ZORRILLA

The Complutense University of Madrid



### **Creatures and Space in *Barārī l-Ḥummà* by Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh**

This paper proposes an ecocritical reading of the novel *Barārī l-Ḥummà* ("Prairies of Fever" in its English translation), written by the Jordanian-Palestinian poet and writer, Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh. The novel was published in 1985 and has since been translated into English, Italian, Danish, and recently into Spanish. The paper aims to analyze the dialogue that the various voices in this complex narrative text with a profound poetic essence have with the specific setting where the plot unfolds: the surroundings of the city of al-Qunfuda. This hostile space becomes a major protagonist of the work, along with the Palestinian refugees who, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, migrated to Saudi Arabia to work as teachers. Simultaneously, it examines the relationship between the characters and the local fauna, as both animal similes and references to the characters' attitudes towards the different creatures surrounding them are recurrently employed to delve into character descriptions and drive the pulse of the plot.

**LUKÁŠ KOUTSKÝ**

Charles University in Prague

✿ **Exploring Nature's Refuge: Marine and Forest Ecosystems in Ḥannā Mīna's *al-Yāṭir***

Ḥannā Mīna, sometimes called “the author of water” or “voice of the marginalized,” had a profound impact on the development of the Syrian literary field. The struggles and hardships of his early life inspired some of his autobiographical novels. Poverty, poor living conditions, and social injustice are all recurring themes in his works. Although Ḥannā Mīna's works are traditionally closely interwoven with political and social issues and typically present an observable authorial stance, especially his earlier works are also connected to nature and his personal experience with seafaring, ports, coastlines, and his birthplace, the city of Lattakia. The present study will focus on Mīna's representation of nature, particularly of marine and forest ecosystems in his 1971 novel *al-Yāṭir* and their role as places of possible refuge from personal responsibilities and the civilized world. The binary nature of civilized/ uncivilized will be explored along with general issues of human agency coming into interaction with nature within the selected literary text.

**MAGDALENA KUBAREK**

University of Warsaw

✿ **Women and Nature in *The Second War of the Dog* by Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh: An Ecofeminist Perspective**

Ecocriticism, as a way of reading emphasizing the relationship between human beings and their environment, is an internally diverse discourse. One of the concepts that stands out here is ecofeminism which suggests that both women and nature are victims of the oppression they experience from a profit-driven patriarchal culture (F. d'Eaubonne, *Le féminisme ou la mort*, 1975). Since the 1990s, along with the popularization of environmental reflection in the modern humanities, a view has been emerging that every text refers in some way to the relationship between man and nature and thus bears the mark of ecological engagement. However, it is impossible to overlook the fact that speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy, alternative history) remains an important object of study in ecocriticism. A novel “The Second War of the Dog” (*Ḥarb al-kalb al-thāniya*, 2016) by a Jordanian-Palestinian writer, Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh fits perfectly into the genre of speculative fiction. The novel portrays a dystopian vision of the future, being at the same time a critique of the author's contemporary socio-historical reality. It is often analyzed in the context of criticism of totalitari-

an systems with their advanced citizen surveillance methods as well as read in reference to ecological involvement (environmental destruction, global warming, etc.). Undoubtedly, epistemological and political issues related to modern technology and pushing the boundaries of the animal and machine dualism are also an important issue raised in the novel. In my paper, I would like to propose to read it within the ecofeminist reflection and analyze the relationship between violence against nature and male domination.

## LINYAO MA

Sorbonne University

### ❖ Environmental Anomaly and Warlike Narrative in Arabic Dystopia

The study focuses on illustrations of environmental disruptions at the time of war and conflict in Arabic-language dystopian novels by taking two examples. One is *Fi'rān Ummī Ḥiṣṣa* (2015) by Sa'ūd al-San'ūsī, and the other *Uṭārid* (2014) by Muḥammad Rabī'. Among the novels' ecological settings, the manifestation of an environmental anomaly stands out as the kernel of the ecological aspect of these two dystopias. In al-Sanūsī's novel, a formerly inexistent river starts coming into form after a massive leakage of polluted water from a local factory, in a fictional future's Kuwait City. While sectarian conflicts escalate and the number of victims of the civil war accumulates, the Bayn river transforms into a grave where bodies are drowned and blood infuses into the water. As to Rabī's novel depicting Cairo's invasion and occupation by a foreign army, what outlines the environmental setting is massive vegetation in the Gezira island, in spite of severe air pollution in an imagined 2025. As human activities cease to affect Gezira's ecosystem, plants flourish without watering and find harmony with artillery. This study aims to examine the functions of environment in a dystopian narrative in regard to civil war in the case of *Fi'rān Ummī Ḥiṣṣa* and to international conflicts in *Uṭārid*.

## SAMUEL MARTIN

University of Cambridge

### ❖ Stealing Waves: Environmental Devastation in the Contemporary Saudi Arabian Novel

Three Saudi Arabian novels have won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), and seven others have been short- or longlisted for it. These texts are not explicitly environmental, instead treating social issues caused by an oppressive political climate, the uneven distribution of oil wealth, and unregulated urbanization. Yet by articulating these concerns,

the novels also raise pressing environmental questions, from rapidly encroaching waste in Rajā' 'Ālim's *Tawq al-ḥamām* (2010) to the devastating transformation of the coastline in 'Abduh Khāl's *Tarmi bi-sharar* (2009). This paper explores representations of the different kinds of environmental violence, such as slow toxicity and land clearing, involved in the Saudi state-building project and situates them within global networks of hydrocarbon capitalism. It focuses on Khāl's and 'Ālim's IPAF-winning novels, as well as 'Azīz Muḥammad's *al-Ḥāla al-ḥarija li-l-mad'ūw Kāf* (2017). These texts unsettle the dominant narrative of progress by shedding light on the ideological and material violence of the modern petrostate, building on the foundations laid by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's *Mudun al-milḥ* (1984–89), the *Urtext* of Saudi Arabian petrofiction, as well as on wider themes in literature from so-called commodity frontiers. This paper's theoretical framework is taken from the energy humanities, ecocriticism, and posthumanism.

## MARIANGELA MASULLO

University of Macerata

### ✿ **Nature as a Form of Resistance: Ecocritical Re-readings of Postcolonial Arabic Poetry**

Arabic poetry has always been connected to the description of nature as a constitutive element of individual and collective identity. In contemporary poetry, the relationship between humans and the environment is reshaped considering political and social concerns, inseparably linked to the postcolonial discourse. Following Ruekert's approach to ecocriticism (1978), where ecological principles serve as a model for (re)thinking literary functions, it is possible to examine some experiments in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Arabic poetry from an ecocritical perspective. In Iraqi poetry between the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, natural elements can serve as a reflection, either by similarity or contrast, to the expression of the poet's lyrical self, or they can become the protagonists of the verses. In authors like Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Amal al-Jubrī, and Dunyā Mīkhā'īl, the juxtaposition between traditional Iraq, called *Arḍ al-sawād*, and the political decay of the contemporary country can be interpreted according to the principles of ecocentrism, interconnectedness, and ecological resistance (El Azma 2014). The intent is to trace a possible path for formulating some ecopoetic principles within the framework of contemporary Iraqi poetry.

## STEPHAN MILICH

University of Cologne

### ✿ **Environmental Critique in *al-Nihāyāt* (Endings) by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf**

This paper explores the theme of environmental destruction and its consequences for humans in the novel *al-Nihāyāt* (Endings, 1978) by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf. The novel does not only stand out as one “of the most advanced fictions in contemporary Arab literature” (Hafez 2006) by way of its narrative technique and literary form, but can also be considered as one of the earliest examples of modern Arabic climate fiction. In my reading of the novel, I will focus on the relationship between humans and nature. How are “human culture” and “nature” thought by Munīf? Is nature rather a resource to be exploited or a realm for rehabilitation and healing, and for whom? What are the causes of destruction? And what role does modernization and certain human *ways-of-being-in-the-world* play in this regard? In the second part of my paper, I will bring Munīf’s novel into dialogue with a few texts of ecocritical Arabic literature (namely poems by Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Sa’dī Yūsuf), reflecting on the relationship between the “indigenous”, the “modern”, and the “nomadic”. These texts develop and highlight alternative forms of “reason” (beyond the “European-modern”). These understandings of reason indicate, so I would like to argue, that these texts by Arabic authors have always been of global, universal-human significance, much more maybe than large parts of fiction written in the Global North in which reality was rather concealed than exposed, as Amitav Gosh diagnosed in his eco-critical essay *The Great Derangement* (2016) in regard to modern fiction.

## HILDA MOKH

Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University

### ✿ ***Taghrībat al-Qāfir*: Water as a Source of Life and Death: A Study in Ecocriticism**

In the novel *Taghrībat al-Qāfir*, the Omani writer Zahrān al-Qāsimī delves deep into the significance of water, an element that holds immense importance and demands increasing interest, especially amidst the ecological crisis our world is currently confronting. The present study aims to examine the pivotal role of water as a vital environmental element in *al-Qāfir*, showcasing its dual nature as both a life-giving resource and a potential threat to the environment and society. I will explore the literary and cultural elements that enrich our understanding of these contrasting aspects. It will be demonstrated that the poetic techniques employed by al-Qāsimī serve as vital tools in effectively conveying this topic. The fluidity of the writing mirrors the very essence of water itself, while the simplicity of the language and its profound exposition expertly illustrate water’s seemingly uncomplicated nature. More generally, this study will highlight the significant contribution of the

novel in fostering awareness about ecological issues not only in Oman but also within the broader Arab world. By exploring the portrayal of water in *al-Qāfir*, we gain insight into how literature can serve as a powerful medium for addressing ecological concerns and promoting environmental consciousness.

## ALDO NICOSIA

University of Bari

### ✿ **On Animals, Humans and *Fūl*: Vegetarianism in Contemporary Arabic Fiction and Cinema**

I try to analyze the representation of vegetarianism in the Arabic literature in the twentieth century (and partly in Egyptian cinema) by highlighting two polarized phenomena: on one side, vegetarianism as an obliged condition, on the other side as result of a philosophical reflection. Given the multimodal nature of data, I will use a textual and visual analysis and an approach focused on anthropology and cultural studies. Starting from Maḥfūẓ's *Bidāya wa-nihāya* (Beginning and End, 1948), passing through short stories (namely Ḥasan Kamāl's "Kosharī Maṣr", 2008), the discourse of obliged vegetarianism often represents class distinctions and is sometimes used as a humour element in Arabic cinema (see *Ṭabbākh al-rayyis*, script by Yūsuf al-Ma'āṭī). On the opposite side, the theme of abstention from meat as a conscious decision is at the core of one of the most successful novels by the Libyan writer Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī, *Nazīf al-ḥajar* (The Bleeding of the Stone, 1990). The novel, apparently influenced by Sufism and animist beliefs, expresses the urge of keeping harmony between humans and animals in the Libyan desert. I argue that while in the Egyptian fictional corpus dietary habits help stress hierarchies of classes, in the Libyan novel, along with the discussion of individual virility linked to meat consumption ("Real men eat meat"), the writer's concern embraces universal themes, even touching the clash of civilizations between Europe and the Arab world.

## FRANTIŠEK ONDRÁŠ

Charles University in Prague

### ✿ **The concept of earth in modern Egyptian fiction: Yūsuf al-Qa'īd's and Sa'īd al-Kafrāwī's narratives**

The aim of this paper is to explore the narrative concept of earth, which has an undeniable value in the Egyptian historical and cultural context, occupies the role of an archetypal theme in the authors' fiction, and encompasses several levels in which the authors build



on their predecessors while at the same time treating this sovereign Egyptian theme with modern narrative techniques. While in al-Qaṣīd's *al-Ḥarb fī barr Miṣr* the author focuses on the relationship of the peasant to the land, which is determined by agrarian reform and the natural needs of people living in the countryside, and on the historical and economic relationship to the land, which is determined by the consciousness and mentality of the peasants, *al-Bayāt al-shatawī* deals with the ecological and economic aspects resulting from the activities of oil producers. Al-Kafrāwī's texts reveal the captivating beauty of the Egyptian landscape, whose fundamental strength lies in the earth. The author has a deep and sincere relationship with the rural environment, in which he discovers the moral values of its inhabitants. The daily reality of the peasants is linked to their tireless work in the fields and the care of their animals. The author discovers spiritual elements in rural life that have disappeared from urban life. The heroes of the stories are linked to the land where they live, to which they regularly return from the city, to which they are tied by personal relationships or professional obligations. Heroes of both writers are aware of the importance and value of the land as a source of livelihood, but at the same time they have to cope with the changes taking place in their homeland. The concept of environmental awareness supports the personal, political and social development of the literary characters. The peasants, for example, realise that the loss of farmland is a cruel end to their own history. Land represents culture, identity and a way of life. The authors describe the peasants' sense of belonging to their environment from a new perspective that influenced many of his contemporaries.

### ASTRID OTTOSSON AL-BITAR

Stockholm University

#### ✿ **Growing Up in Symbiosis with Nature: An Ecocritical Reading of Two Novels by Anas Abū Raḥma and Aḥlām Bishārāt**

The two young adult novels *Nazl al-dhurra al-ṣafrā'* (The Yellow Corn Inn, 2015) and *Shajarat al-būnsiyānā: Mudhakkārāt fatāt min akhfaḍ buq'a fī l-ālam* (The Flamboyant Tree: a Girl's Memories from the Lowest Spot on Earth, 2014) by the Palestinian writers Anas Abū Raḥma and Aḥlām Bishārāt describe a number of children growing up in the countryside. In *Shajarat al-būnsiyānā* the setting is Palestine while in *Nazl al-dhurra al-ṣafrā'* the geographical place is only referred to as "the yellow corn inn" that is situated near a city that has no name. In both novels, the life of the children is intertwined with the life of the nature around them. Plants, trees, animals as well as inanimate elements of nature like the mountains and the water, all have their own lives that interact with the lives of the children, in a way that reminds us of the Romantic idea connecting the innocent child to the

natural world. The borderline between the world of the children and that of nature is blurred. In this paper I will look at the function of the descriptions of this interaction between the human protagonists in the novels and the different elements of nature around them, eventually resulting in a magical entity. I argue that in these descriptions there is a reversal of the traditional human-non-human and adult-child hierarchies.

### ANTONIO PACIFICO

Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University/ University of Naples "L'Orientale"

#### ❖ **"An Iraqi Kafka with a touch of Edgar Allan Poe thrown in": Ḥasan Balāsīm and his Relation and the World's Most Consecrated Writers**

Since the beginning of his literary trajectory, Ḥasan Balāsīm has often been compared by reviewers and critics to some of the most consecrated European and North American authors worldwide. Thus, in a review of his *Allāh* 99 published on *The Guardian's* website in November 2020, Lucy Popescu did not hesitate to see him as "Iraq's Irvine Welsh." Meanwhile, in a tweet posted on February 2018, Brussel's Center for Fine Arts, best known as BOZAR, promoted his short stories' reading by referring to him as "an Iraqi Kafka with a touch of Edgar Allan Poe thrown in." This phenomenon, of course, is not new for any writer from a "peripheral" field like him (Casanova 1999). However, in our paper, we will try to identify the reasons for such a phenomenon in Balāsīm's case, looking simultaneously at his trajectory, the material and symbolic strategies he implemented inside and outside the literary texts, and the specific history of his field. Moreover, in contrast to previous studies that investigated the reception of renowned Western authors in Arabic literature only from an "internal" or textual perspective, we will explore Balāsīm's case focusing on the concrete effects that these comparisons or, better, the categorical assumptions related to them had and still have on his trajectory.

### MARIA ELENA PANICONI

University of Macerata

#### ❖ **Forced Migration Narratives and/as Environmental Narratives**

In the last decades, new patterns of migration, displacement, and exile within Arab countries and towards non-Arab countries were developed. From the nineties until today, as pointed out by Sellman (2022), forced or precarious migration narratives have emerged in Arabic literature written from the perspective of marginalized citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants. Novels depicting forced migration, such as *Mudun bi-lā nakhīl* (Cities without Palms) by the Sudanese author Ṭāriq al-Ṭayyib (Tarek Eltayeb)

and *Taytānikāt Ifrīqiyya* (African Titanics) by Abū Bakr Ḥāmid Kahhāl, often portray migration as a natural phenomenon that assails humanity, destabilizing and uprooting it from its geographical origins. This paper aims to analyze the interconnections between migration narratives and environmental narratives in the Arabic context. It seeks to explore the intricate relationship between forced migration and environmental disasters depicted in these new narratives. Additionally, the paper will examine the recurring themes and tendencies in this intersectional trend and contextualize this connection within the broader transformation of migration narratives.

### FATIMA PARCHEKANI

Kharazmi University

#### ✿ أثر البيئة الطبيعيّة في حياة ميخائيل نعيمة وأدبه

يمكن اعتبار ميخائيل نعيمة من أكثر الأدباء صلة بالطبيعة أي ، بـ"كلّ ما ليس للإنسان يد في خلقه" على حدّ قوله . تأثر نعيمة بالطبيعة ، خاصّة بيئة طبيعة قريته "بسكنتا" التي وُلد ونشأ فيها ، ومزرعة "الشخروب" ، وما حولهما من المظاهر الطبيعيّة كالجبال والأودية والكهوف ، والتي عاد إليها بعد سنين طويلة من العيش في المهجر ، بخاصّة في المدينتيّة النيويوركية ، فقرّر أن يختلي بنفسه في طبيعة لبنان ، ويتفرّغ للكتابة في كهوف الشخروب ، فألّف فيها أروع أعماله الأدبية . لكن تأثير البيئة في أدبه لا ينحصر ببيئة لبنان ، بل يتعدى ذلك ليشمل بيئة بلدان أخرى سافر إليها ، من فلسطين وروسيا والولايات المتّحدة . ترمي دراستنا هذه إلى محاولة الإجابة عن أسئلة مهمّة ، منها : ما هي المعتقدات والأفكار المستوحاة من الطبيعة التي ظهرت في أدب نعيمة ؟ وما الزاوية التي ينبغي أن يُنظر منها إلى الطبيعة في أدب نعيمة ؟ ثم أننا نرى أنّ الطبيعة أثّرت كثيرًا في تكوين شخصيّة نعيمة ونظرتّه إلى الحياة وبالتالي في صياغة أدبه . مفهوم الطبيعة يختلف في مراحل حياته ، إذ إنّه تطوّر بموازاة تطوّر إدراك نعيمة . والطبيعة التي كانت مجرّد صورة خارجيّة بالنسبة إلى نعيمة الصبيّ ، أخذت تتحوّل مع نموّه وهجرته ، إلى موضوع داخليّ يرتبط بما وراء الطبيعة ويتجاوز حدود المحسوسات ، حيث يمكن الحديث عن معالم الطبيعة ورموزها الفكرية الفلسفية وخصائصها عند الأديب .

**TERESA PEPE**

University of Oslo

✿ **Returning to ‘Nature’: Jurjī Zaydān and Ṣabrī Mūsà’s Imagination of Future Egypt**

This paper explores the link between futurism and environment in modern Arabic literature by analyzing two speculative texts written in Egypt during the 20th century, namely a journal article entitled “Ba’d mi’at sanah” (After One Hundred Years) written by Jurjī Zaydān in 1900 and published in *al-Hilal* magazine in 1922; the novel *al-Sayyid min Ḥaq al-Sabānikh* (The Man from the Spinach Field), written by Ṣabrī Mūsà in 1987. Although written more than 80 years apart, both texts speculate what Egypt and global society, politics and the environment will look like in the future, and both anticipate a “return to nature” (*al-rujūʿ ilà l-ṭabīʿah*). Borrowing insights from Middle Eastern environmental history and utopian/dystopian literary studies, the study places the texts within a larger speculative literary trend, in the Arab region and elsewhere, that interlaces with changing notions of environmental futures. Besides, it interprets the futuristic imagination of the two authors in light of the environmental and urban transformations taking place in Egypt during the 20th century, such as the building of the Heliopolis Oasis in 1905, the Aswan Dam, and the 1950s land reclamation project. The comparative analysis of the two texts shows that while Zaydān anticipated a utopian future world in which humans could rule and exploit ‘nature’ to progress towards a better future, thus reproducing to a large extent a colonial environmental imaginary (Davis 2011), Mūsà’s dystopian vision is based on a conception of the human that does more harm than good to ‘nature’ and the expectation that ‘nature’ would eventually take its revenge.

**FEDERICO POZZOLI**

University of Milan / University of St Andrews

✿ **Al-Naft ʿindamā yanfajiru taḥduthu al-ʿawājīb: Making and Unmaking the Desert in Murtaḍà Gzār’s Novels**

The burning oilfields of southern Iraq play a central role in the global imaginary about the First Gulf War – an image that has one of its most accomplished artistic elaborations in Werner Herzog’s film *Lektionen in Finsternis* (1992). Contemporary Iraqi fiction looking at the war of 1990 has generally challenged the mediatisation of war in the West, yet it has seldom reinterpreted the *natural* metaphor of the burning oilfields in the desert. An interesting exception in this respect is the work of the Basra-based Murtaḍà Gzār. In *al-Sayyid Aṣghar Akbar* (2012), on the other hand, the war of 1990 is narrated through the historical analogy with the British colonial occupation. The novel creates a parallel

between the burning oilfields of the 90s and the fate of the lake called Baḥr al-Najaf, which eventually dries. The later novel *al-ʿIlmawī* (2019) contains a long section devoted to the wanderings of two young kids in the Iraqi southern desert during the US bombings of 1990. This journey is constellated by the sight of burning oilfields, in which the kids encounter mutant creatures that oscillate between the human, the animal, and the mythological. By looking at the narrative construction of the (burning) desert in these two novels, the paper will ask questions about the aestheticization of natural crises: while clearly satirising the Western and ‘aerial’ gaze over the destruction of the Iraqi environment, Gzār does salvage *ʿajab* as a privileged means to access nature.

### ADÉLA PROVAZNÍKOVÁ

Charles University in Prague

#### ✿ **Remembering the Beach: the Nostalgia for the Seaside in Egyptian Women’s Writing**

Holidays by the sea are a traditional part of the middle and upper-class Egyptian lifestyle. In both lived experience and cultural production, the North coast, including the cities of Alexandria, Damietta and the resorts such as Ra’s al-Barr, has stood for a particular image of vacation. The romantic summer idyll offered a larger degree of freedom to both men and women as witnessed in memoirs, fiction writing and films. This paper seeks to shed light on how the portrayal of natural and urban settings in female-authored modern Arabic fiction enhances the nostalgia for this vaguely defined image. Have the changing landscapes around the Mediterranean, problems of overtourism and privatization, all of which have altered the nature of Egyptian domestic tourism, impacted literature? Inspired by ecofeminist critique, reading the sentiments associated with the seaside in novels such as Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) or Iman Mersal’s *Traces of Enayat* (2019) and others which bind and contrast the past and present, will reveal the interconnectedness of class and gender categories with nature in the nostalgic longing for a bygone era.

### TETZ ROOKE

University of Gothenburg

#### ✿ **The Hedgehog and the Forest: Environmental Resistance in a Novel by Muḥammad al-Ashʿarī**

The hero of the novel *Min khashab wa-ḥīn* (“From wood and mud”, 2021) by the renowned Moroccan writer Muḥammad al-Ashʿarī (b. 1951) is an “environmental fugitive”, a middle-aged man who has fled to the forest from the city to start a new life. He has left his job as

a top bank executive to become an obscure beekeeper as a personal response to the threats of extinction to the pollinators. He has renounced the comfort of modern Rabat to embrace a simple life in a house of wood and mud in the Ma<sup>c</sup>mūra forest. The fate of this once large cork oak forest now reduced to patches is a major concern for him and his friends, both humans and animals. One of the main characters of the novel is the hedgehog Yansī who is driven to migrate in the other direction, from the forest to the city, which eventually becomes invaded by a legion of homeless hedgehogs. The human protagonists on their side protest deforestation, overexploitation of water resources, and waste dumping through Facebook campaigning and political agitation. In my paper I aim to describe the different themes of environmental resistance in this rich narrative where both humans and animals talk and think, and nature has a voice. In the story the environmental problems often intersect with issues of ethnicity and class. The hero and his best friend both come from a poor rural background and indulge in detailed research in local tribal history as part of their personal need for a better understanding of society. I will attempt to address this social dimension of the novel with the help of the concept of environmental justice and explore its usefulness as a tool for interpretation.

## MONICA RUOCCO

University of Naples “L’Orientale”

### ✿ “We are vain beings, and only the humility will save us”: Muḥammad al-Makhzanjī’s Project for an Environmental Literature

Physician, psychotherapist, journalist, and writer, Muḥammad al-Makhzanjī was ahead of his time and anticipated topics that have only recently become so widespread. Born in 1950, he developed a passion for medicine which he considers a gateway to men’s lives. After an initial period in which he practiced as a doctor, he went to Moscow and then to Kiev, where he carried out a PhD in psychiatry. In Ukraine he experienced the tragedy of Chernobyl, which he described in *Laḥazāt gharaq Jazīrat al-Ḥūt* (1998). After this event, he became a strong activist against the use of nuclear energy in all its forms, and a strong advocate for environmental issues and wildlife conservation. As for his narrative creations, al-Makhzanjī developed a real literary ecosystem. He has to his credit numerous volumes of novellas, short stories, travel and children’s literature. In each of these works, al-Makhzanjī offered a new interpretation of the modern world and a reflection on themes related to zoology, ecology and biopolitics. For instance, in the collection of short stories *al-Bustān* (1992), he articulates the life of human beings in three complementary states: the tangible, the psycho-logical, and the hidden or supernatural, expressing the message of a deep living experience that embraces humans, nature and the whole universe.

## SAFINAZ SAAD

Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg

### ✿ **Éloignement as the Dystopia of the Modern World: Raḍwà ‘Āshūr on the Metamorphosis of Places**

The Egyptian novel, *Farag* (2008), by Raḍwà ‘Āshūr offers an impressive example of texts engaging with change in the living environment. This paper focuses on the character Madeleine, a French expatriate living in Egypt, struggling with a profound sense of alienation. Upon her return to France, Madeleine is confronted with drastic alterations to her village and family house due to the demands of the new environment. However, her sensation of estrangement had started long before that moment. First, she departed from Paris, disenchanted with the city’s spatial dynamics, and later from Cairo, where her foreignness left her marginalized. In *Farag*, unyielding alienation emerges as the dystopian essence of our contemporary era. Using Stuart Hall’s discourse on cultural identity, this paper argues that Madeleine’s failure to (re)create a sustainable model for interacting with the changing “non-human” environment led to a continuous state of not-belonging, or éloignement. Furthermore, this analysis aims to unravel the interplay of this human and non-human encounter using Susan Friedman’s emphasis on location as a pivotal element in an intersectional analysis of the expression of Madeleine’s subjectivity. Thus, this paper investigates how Madeleine’s tale weaves into the larger fabric of growing consciousness of an altering ecological world.

## TANIA AL SAADI

Stockholm University

### ✿ **Urban Spaces in Decay: An ecocritical reading of *Mister N* (2019) by Najwà Barakāt**

Najwà Barakāt dedicates several passages of her novel *Mr Nūn* (2019) to the description of the urban environment in the present time Beirut. Uncontrolled constructions and noises distinguish the city center. Poverty, dirtiness, insalubrity and absence of infrastructures make many suburbs representative examples of urban deterioration, and hence places of crime and violence.

The description of poor neighborhoods that reminds of similar texts in older works, illustrates a chaos where the living are mixed with inanimate objects. Images of decomposition characterize this space. The decay is not only material, but also human, moral, and it even reaches the language that is heard. As a reaction to this repulsive environment, the protagonist (Mr Nūn) suffers of a chronic disgust, the nature is present in his imagination as a devastating force that destroys the city.



On the other hand, the protagonist who used to be a writer and a scholar is now physically and psychologically deteriorating. He is no longer the person he used to be. Mr Nūn, shares many features with his city. My ecocritical reading of the novel will focus on the characteristics of the degraded urban environment in question, and its similarity with the protagonist.

### FATIMA SAI

D'Annunzio University of Chieti–Pescara

#### ✿ **The New Syrian Landscape: the Impact of War on the Literary Ecosystem**

Since its onset in 2011, the Syrian civil war has profoundly influenced the contemporary physical landscape of the region, as well as the literary and artistic expressions within it. The conflict and its far-reaching consequences have not only shaped the thematic content of literature and art, but have also significantly influenced the conditions under which creative works are produced. The displacement and exile of authors, facilitated by new forms of communication and representation, have resulted in a proliferation of blogs, dedicated websites, and magazines, thereby altering the landscape of publishing, readership, and authorship. Twelve years after the outbreak of the war, this paper proposal intends to approach Syrian literature as a dynamic map, expanding the methodological framework with an interdisciplinary approach. Drawing inspiration from Actor-Network Theory, as pioneered by Bruno Latour, we will examine the literary landscape as a network where the emphasis on non-human agency offers a unique lens to explore how elements such as spaces, technologies, and publishing platforms actively participate in shaping the literary ecosystem. To complement this, we will integrate the "distant reading" method proposed by Franco Moretti, adopting its network-like visualizations. By transcending individual texts and authors, this method provides a holistic perspective on the interplay of diverse elements in the production, dissemination, and reception of literature. Analyzing the evolving dynamics of literary spaces, encompassing both human and non-human forces, in the midst of enduring socio-political challenges, we aim to trace the transformations of contemporary Syrian literature within and beyond the page.

### JOHANNA SELLMAN

Ohio State University

#### ✿ **Ecopolitical Narratives in Contemporary Palestinian Literature and Film**

In the *Refugee Hosts* project, Elena Fiddian-Qasmieh offers the ethical provocation to focus on “places and spaces, not faces” to better capture interrelated histories shaping

forced migration. This injunction aligns with approaches in contemporary Palestinian literary texts and film that render histories of forced displacement and ongoing dispossession through natural landscapes and human-environment interactions. In this paper, I analyze ‘Adaniyya Shiblī’s novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* and Jumāna Mannā’s film *al-Yad al-Khaḍrā’*. Shiblī’s novel, which explores how language and official archives are complicit in erasing the legacy of the Nakba, probes traces of erasure, continuity, and resistance in natural environments and non-human life within the fractured space of post-Oslo Palestine. Mannā’s film combines fictional and archival footage to portray both the resilience nurtured in Palestinian communities’ foraging of wild plants such as za’atar as well as the criminalization of foraging. Engaging with a long history of representing land in Palestinian literature and film, both expand upon recent literary and cinematic formulations of *ṣumūd*, which, as Hoda El Shakry notes, are increasingly located in representations of “minor acts” and quotidian life. In their ecopolitical approach, they expand an archive of memory that resists erasures even while calling attention to vulnerability and provisionality.

### SIMONE SIBILIO

Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

#### ✿ **The Struggle for Landscape in Post-Oslo Palestinian poetry**

Poetry is one of the most powerful tools Palestinian writers have used to reclaim and celebrate their land and people, their natural and human landscape since the Nakba (1947-48). Natural elements and signposts have been abundantly employed in the resistance poetry (*shi‘r al-muqāwama*) as symbols of steadfastness, belonging to territory, and identity markers against colonial power and the policies of uprooting and displacement of native population as well as land confiscation carried out by Israeli occupation over the years. The topic of the transformation or the erasure of Palestinian landscape is still at the heart of several poetic works published by Palestinian poets after the Oslo Accords (1993). This paper aims to examine a selection of poems focusing on landscape that have been published in the last three decades by poets living within Palestine. Two major trends will be considered and comparatively discussed:

1) The first encompasses those texts aimed at the imaginative reconstruction of the Palestinian natural landscape before 1948 in an ideal attempt to reconnect the dispossessed communities to their lost places. These poems resort to memory or post-memory as a stylistic device and a powerful medium for the preservation of Palestinian presence and continuity in time and space.

2) The second group of poems explores the Palestinian landscape in its complex current configuration and under constant threat of transformation or erasure. These poems

are fraught with a sense of alienation and unpredictability due to rapid changes that have been occurring in the territory under the current Israel planning and spatial transformation policies.

These two complementary trends offer insightful inputs for an ecocritical reading that illuminates the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, by exploring the intersection between landscape poetics, environmental issues and the geopolitical implications of current Israeli policies on the ground.

## MONIKA ŠRAMOVÁ

Charles University in Prague

### ✿ **The Significance of the Olive Tree in the Poetry of Fadwà Ṭūqān**

Olive trees perform a pivotal role in Palestinian literature given its economic, cultural, historical and emotional significance within this particular region. It is not only the economic benefits of the olive industry, but also the symbolic meaning of the olive resulting from its certain physical features – especially its steadfastness, durability, and extraordinary longevity, making the olive the embodiment of the Palestinians' rootedness in their land (N. Abufarha 2008). However, in the light of tragic events following the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the olive has acquired a new connotation, resulting from its brutal targeting by the State of Israel through their acts of eradicating and sabotaging. Strong ties between olives and Palestinians are repeatedly reflected in Palestinian literature through authentic descriptions of physical olive trees, acts of olive cultivation and olive uprooting, but also through descriptions of abstract olive trees which are solely a part of the character's imagination. This paper aims at representation of the olive tree within Ṭūqān's poems and is focused on the two intertwined issues – firstly, a close relationship between Palestinians and their land, and secondly, environment disruption and destruction of Palestinian landscape by the act of olive uprooting carried out by the Israeli army as reflected in the poetry of Fadwà Ṭūqān.

N. Abufarha, "Land of symbols: Cactus, poppies, orange and olive trees in Palestine," *Identities*, 15.3 (2008), 343-368

## PAUL STARKEY

Durham University

### ✿ **The Nile in works by al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ and Ḥammūr Ziyāda: Giver of life or watery grave?**

In much of the writing of Sudan's best-known novelist, al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ (Tayeb Salih, 1929–2009), the river Nile plays a central role. Not only does the river enable local communities –

such as those that provide for setting for ‘*Urs al-Zayn* (‘The Wedding of Zein’) and other works – to survive and flourish, it also provides the setting for the enigmatic ending of the author’s *Mawsim al-hijra ilà l-shimāl* (‘Season of Migration to the North’), generally considered to be one of the seminal works of modern Arabic literature. The tribulations of village life beside the Nile have more recently been explored by a younger writer Hammūr Ziyāda (Hammour Ziada, 1979–), whose novel *al-Gharaq* (‘The Drowning’) has been described as a portrayal of the Nile ‘as both lifeblood and ever-present threat’. This paper will compare and contrast Tayeb Salih’s and Hammour Ziada’s portrayals of Sudanese village life beside the Nile, with a special emphasis on the function of the river in their respective narratives.

## FATIHA TAIB

Mohamed V University

### ✿ الكافكاوية في الخطاب الروائي المغربي – رمزية التحول إلى قِرْد في رواية كافكا في طنجة

تفاعل الروائيون العرب من شتى الأقطار العربية بشكل صريح أو ضمني مع الكافكاوية بوصفها اتجاها فكريا وجماليا ابتداء من خمسينيات القرن العشرين. وقد وصل الاحتفاء بفرانز كافكا في المغرب – الذي شكل فيه أسلوب المسخ جزءا لا يتجزأ من تجديد الخطاب الروائي في سبعينيات القرن العشرين (محمد زفزاف كمثال)– إلى الحد الذي أصبح فيه الإعلان عن تبني أسلوبه الجمالي في العناوين الروائية يمثل ظاهرة لافتة للانتباه : احلام بقرة لمحمد الهادي ، سيرة حمار لحسن أوريد و الجرذان ليحيى بزغود كمثال . ويظل محمد سعيد احجويج بروايته **كافكا في طنجة** ، من أكثر الكتاب المغاربة المعاصرين تصريحا بتأثرهم بالكاتب التشيكي من خلال النص على اسمه العائلي في عنوان الرواية. لهذا السبب ونظرا أيضا لعبور شهرة هذه الرواية الحدود المغربية والعربية بفضل الإقبال على ترجمتها إلى بعض اللغات الغربية والشرقية ، ارتأيت اعتمادها منطلقا لدراسة طبيعة استقبال المبدعين المغاربة لكافكا بالتركيز على رمزية الحيوان المستحضر في عملية تحول وانمساخ البطل الروائي. ففي حين اختص كافكا بتوظيف حشرة كبيرة الحجم في رواية “التحول” ، وظف المبدعون المغاربة حيوانات متعددة ومتباينة نذكر منها البقرة والحمار والجرذ والزرافة والقِرْد. مع العلم أن تحول البطل إلى قِرْد في رواية **كافكا في طنجة** يمنحني الفرصة لربط راهن تلقي كافكا في النسق الثقافي المغربي بماضيه القريب في سبعينيات القرن العشرين (**المرأة والوردة**).

**ARIANNA TONDI**

University of Bergamo

✿ ***Tarānīm fī zill Tamāra: Reviving the Classical View of Garden as *locus Amoenus* in 1980's Cairo***

Sat under a tamarind in his Cairene garden, an old man with cancer gracefully contemplates the beauty of nature and reflects on the meanings of life. In his last novel *Tarānīm fī zill Tamāra* (Little Songs in the Shade of Tamāra, 1984), the Egyptian satirist Muḥammad ‘Afifī revives and partially deconstructs the representation of garden as an idealized place found in classical Arabic poetry. In this paper, we will analyse the aesthetics strategies employed by ‘Afifī to give voice to nature. We will investigate the implications of the aesthetic admiration of this human-influenced environment, in order to underscore how invoking natural beauty can raise ecocritical concerns. The humanization of the components of the green microcosm and the multisensory experience of its owner with nature aim at conceptualising the garden as a vibrant and idyllic place. The author shows how the troubles of contemporary Egypt, such as war and emigration, have penetrated even in his earthly, apparently un-touchable, paradise whose vegetated fence is a living barrier against relentless urbanization. By contemplating delights around him with the eye of a naturalist, a poet, a philosopher, and a sceptic, ‘Afifī provides a vision of nature as a source of communion and inspiration.

**NINA YOUKHANNA**

Georgetown University

✿ **Interspecies Intricacies in ‘Adaniyya Shiblī’s *Minor Detail***

This paper examines interspecies relationships in *Tafṣīl thānawī* (Minor Detail, 2016) by Palestinian author ‘Adaniyya Shiblī. The novel recounts the rape and murder of a Palestinian girl by Israeli soldiers in 1949, and a young woman’s pursuit of truth in present-day Ramallah. In the heat of the Negev desert, the 1949 narrative is replete with animals that share the environment with their human counterparts and interact with them in ways that mirror the human-on-human violence. Linguistically equating the extermination of insects and of Palestinians, the novel connects the non-human vermin and the colonized human in a manner that goes beyond metaphor; it works symbiotically to spotlight the annihilation of both species while exhibiting the consequences of colonization on non-human populations and ecosystems. While postcolonial theories have highlighted how the semiotics of animalization serve to de-humanize the colonized other, the undomesticated animals in Shiblī’s novel are not mere symbols. They are colonized “others” in their own right, subject to violence at the hands of the colonizer. Yet they also exhibit agency, enacting their own brand of cruelty against their oppressors. This presentation on the

non-human animal endeavours to rethink interspecies power dynamics while questioning the set identities of colonizer and colonized.

### PATRIZIA ZANELLI

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

#### ✿ **The Wisdom of a Hen Versus Human Stupidity: A Palestinian Fable Written in Jerusalem by Ishāq Mūsà al-Ḥusaynī during World War II**

In this article, I focus on the representation of nature in Ishāq al-Ḥusaynī's *Mudhakkirāt Dajāja* (1943), where a wise hen acts as the narrator and writer of her own story. Having suddenly had to move from the countryside to a town, she keeps a diary to record the events of her new urban life and her ideas on the pursuit of happiness. Some academics, starting from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, associate this modern Palestinian fable to Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Kalīla wa-Dimna*; Elias Sanbar compares it to Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945); as other scholars, he sees it as an allegory of Zionist colonialization of Palestine; al-Ḥusaynī himself rejected this interpretation of his text. George Kanazi places it in the utopian writing genre, connecting it to works by a long list of important figures, such as Aristo, Plato, al-Fārābī, Ibn Ṭufayl, Blake and Jubrān. Upon explaining how al-Ḥusaynī represents nature, in *Mudhakkirāt Dajāja*, which he wrote in Jerusalem during World War II, I suggest that in the novella he juxtaposes a utopia to a global dystopian present and the wisdom of a hen to the stupidity of human beings to show that, since their injustice generates conflicts, they destroy Planet Earth and themselves.

### ANNA ZIAJKA STANTON

Pennsylvania State University

#### ✿ **Trees Not War: Arboreal Ethics in Ismā'īl Fahd Ismā'īl's *al-Subayliyyāt***

This paper explores the ethics of human-tree relations in the IPAF-shortlisted novel *al-Subayliyyāt* by Ismā'īl Fahd Ismā'īl (1940–2018). Evacuated from her southern Iraqi village when the Iraq–Iran War starts, Umm Qāsim returns in secret to bury her husband's corpse under a date palm behind their house. If this tree is charged with protecting Umm Qāsim's most precious possession, then other trees in the village receive her protection in return, as she waters the trees in her neighbors' gardens and reirrigates the fruit orchards by sabotaging the military's dams that block the nearby rivers. This paper interprets the regimes of care unfolding in Ismā'īl's novel between the human woman and the trees as enacting an arboreal ethics that provides an antidote to the breakdown of interhuman relationships in a time of war. Trees offer substitute sites of community-making and

ffective attachment for Umm Qāsim in the absence of her human friends and family, while by tending to them she demonstrates a model of self/other engagement that seeks the other's survival rather than its annihilation.

## MOHAMMED ZARROUK

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### ✿ أثر الفضاء في الشخصية الروائية : الرواية العمانية نموذجا

يقوم هذا العمل على دراسة تفاعل الروائي مع محيطه الطبيعي وانتقائه عناصر فاعلة ومؤثرة في الإنسان ومحددة لسلوكه وطبعه وأفعاله وعلاقاته وترشيحها للرواية وأن تكون موضوعا للحكاية. فمن العسير أن نجد رواية عُمانية تُهمل ثيمات حاضرة في واقع الحياة وفي واقع الطبيعة الخاصة ، وهي مكوّنات بيئية وطبيعية ومناخية وجيولوجية لها عميق الأثر في تكوين الإنسان العماني وفي تفاعله مع الكون من حوله ، وقد قامت رواية "بن سولع" لعلي المعمرى على اختيار حيوان هو المها العربي صورةً لتمثيل الشخصية أولاً غير أنّ تداعيات هذا العون السردى على فضاء الرواية كانت فاعلة وصانعة لممكن سردى وسيع ، وكذا الأمر في رواية زهران القاسمي "القافر" أو متقصي الماء في بيئة قليلة الماء كثيرة الشمس وافرة الجفاف ، فتقوم الحكاية في كلّ مكوّناتها على هذه الثيمة التي توفر عناصر سردية يتوسّع فيها الراوي وتنتفتح على توليد أحداث وشخصيات موصولة بهذه الثيمة. أمّا رواية "سيدات القمر" لجوخة الحارثي ، فهي رواية متصلة في بيئتها ، في قرينتها الصغيرة ، تتفاعل فيها الشخصيات مع بيئتها صحراء وشمسا وجنسا. وعلى ذلك فإنّ المشروع البحثي الذي أعرضه قائم على بيان أثر هذه العناصر البيئية الخاصة في تشكيل معالم الرواية وفي صناعة عوالم سردية بعضها يوافق المعقول وبعضها خارج عن الإدراك العقلي المنطقي داخل في عالم من التخيل هو مهرب الإنسان في الواقع ، وهو مهرب الروائي في الحكاية. ففي هذا العالم الذي يشح فيه الماء وتكثر فيه الشمس وتشدّ تتأسس قصص وخيالات في الكهوف الغابرة وفي الصحاري الممتدة ، ويمكن أن نلاحظ ذلك في صورة نجية القمر في رواية "سيدات القمر" ، أو في صورة ميثاء العمانية في رواية "بن سولع".