

“The Arabic language in the 20th century: Ruptures and Resistance”

International Colloquium

Location: University of Lorraine – Center of Arts and Sciences

The Center for Literary Studies’ Jean Mourot (texts, genres and mediums) calls for participation to his international colloquium “The Arabic language in the 20th century: Ruptures and Resistance”, which will take place in Nancy, France on September 28th, 2012.

With the turn of the 21st century, the many varieties of the Arabic language have encountered radical transformations. Both its deep and superficial linguistic structures have been, on various levels, affected: its lexical fields like its syntactical constructions, its metaphorical references like its semantic and cognitive workings, and even the literary genres to whom it has given light as well as its terminological innovations. All of these fields, each one at its own rhythm, have deeply evolved in such a way that rigorous and systematic descriptions must be kept up-to-date.

The directions of these mutations are numerous, complex and multifaceted. Countless articles of both the written and the electronic press follow the incontrollable rhythm of this *History*. Whether they support or oppose, political discourses find themselves attempting to shape this *History* while paradoxically chasing after it at the same time. Tending to secularize or to return to the sources of the *šarī’a*, judiciary bodies – comprised of laws, conventions and treaties – touch upon all aspects of the social sphere. Economic terminologies and neologisms are born each and every day to denote the effects of an international capitalism to which no enterprise is blind. Whether it is in the wake of *Tradition* or at the cusp of innovation, literature does not cease to explore new frontiers of form and meaning. Face-to-face with successive historical alienations, this literature touches upon an entirely new language, one whose genres, varieties and narratives relentlessly precipitate a change in the greater Arab understanding of the world. These aspects, in which contemporary Arabic finds its life, are at the same time the sources and the products of these overall transformations.

Numerous and impossible to classify, the factors of these transformations, which are present everywhere from the artistic prose of *Al-Jāhiz* to the scholarly economic bulletins of *Al-Jazīra*, are worthy of special attention. Some touch upon internal linguistic structures and their phonetic, morphological, syntactical and semantic functions. Others, more concrete, underline the *Arabifying* politics lead by postcolonial states, the education of the general population and the omnipresent work of mass media and new technologies.

At the heart of this movement, “linguistic ideologies” continue to galvanize the people, to fascinate official institutions (universities, administrations, states, academies...), and to agitate the components of day-to-day society. They build themselves upon an ideal *role* that the Arabic language should play, but remain incapable of deciding around which version (modern standard, dialectal and/or median) this identity should revolve. Some, without hesitation, support the transcendental use of unaltered modern standard Arabic in which they see a gratifying stability. Others, more militant, demand the replacement of modern standard Arabic by *dārja* or *wustā*, which they find to be better at portraying a *History* that is in a period of constant transformation.

Three main axes:

This Colloquium is dedicated to diachronic and synchronic descriptions of the Arabic language today using the three following tracks:

- Purely linguistic transformations that have affected modern standard Arabic: phonological, lexical, metaphorical and syntactical.
- The orientations of these transformations: media, specialized websites, literature, laws, tales, political discourses...
- “Linguistic ideologies” that defend one variety of the language (modern standard, dialectical and median) and the arguments pushed during debates.

Scientific Consultants:

- **Laurenc Denooz** (Laurence.Denooz@univ-nancy2.fr) - Professor of contemporary Arab literature. University of Lorraine, University of Brussels.
- **Nejmeddine Khalfallah** (Nejmeddine.Khalfallah@univ-nancy2.fr) – Maître de Conférences in Arab linguistics and Cultures, University of Lorraine.

Methods for the submission of proposals:

Deadline for the reception of proposals: May 30th 2012.

Notification of acceptance after a blind review by the scientific comity:
June 30th 2012

Proposal Format:

- 1 page containing the title of the proposal, the author's name, institutional affinity, academic title, and contact information (professional address, personal address, email and phone number).
- 1 other page containing: a 15 to 20-line summary in French or in English (Word, Times 12, 1,5 spaced) presenting the works referenced, the principal ideas, arguments and conclusions. **3 key words** must also be mentioned.

Language of the Colloquium: French, English, Arabic.

Each proposal will be 20 minutes long, followed by 10 minutes of questions.