

CLASSICAL TRANSLATION
CONTEMPORARIES
LITERARY CULTURES
AND DIGITAL HUMANISMS



جائزة الشيخ زايد للكتاب
Sheikh Zayed Book Award
establiħ 2017 - 20th Anniversary



UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia



tesmi
Centro Studi sui
Mondi Islamici

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award at the Department of Culture and Tourism of Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre, in collaboration with Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, and Università di Napoli L'Orientale, presents:


THE SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD ITALIAN TOUR
IN CELEBRATION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Authenticity, Authority, and Mediation: From Classical Translation to Contemporary Literary Cultures and Digital Humanisms

Bologna–Venice–Naples
11–15 May 2026



Conference website



Monday 11 May

Alma Mater Studiorum
Università di Bologna

**AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITY,
AND THE LIFE OF TEXTS**

Aula Poeti and Sala Boschereccia
at Palazzo Hercolani

9.00–9.30 INSTITUTIONAL WELCOME

Simona Tondelli, Deputy Rector, Alma
Mater Studiorum–Università di Bologna

Paola Scrolavezza, Head of the
Department of Modern Languages,
Literatures and Cultures

9.30–10.00 OPENING ADDRESS

CELEBRATING THE SZBA

H. E. Ali Bin Tamim, Chairman of the Abu
Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and Secretary-
General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

*Two Decades of Excellence: Celebrating
the 20th Anniversary of the Sheikh Zayed
Book Award*

10.00–11.00 KEYNOTE LECTURE

Muhsin J. al-Musawi, Columbia University
and SZBA laureate

*Poetic Desire and Literary Thievery:
Dynamics of Epistemic Transformation
in Arabic Literary Theory*

Discussant: **Chiara Fontana**, Alma Mater
Studiorum – Università di Bologna

11.00–11.15 COFFEE AND TEA BREAK

- 11.15–12.30 PANEL: WHO SPEAKS FOR TRADITION? LANGUAGE, AUTHORITY, AND THE POWER TO CANONISE
- 11.15–11.35 **Caterina Mauri**, Alma Mater Studiorum–Università di Bologna
Tradition and Common Ground: A Pragmatic Perspective
- 11.35–11.55 **Reem Bassiouny**, American University in Cairo, SZBA laureate
Arabic and Identity in a Colonial and Postcolonial Context
- 11.55–12.15 **Chokri al-Saadi**, University of Tunis, SZBA laureate
Translation as Domestication
- Moderator: **Ines Peta**, Alma Mater Studiorum–Università di Bologna
- 12.30–13.30 LUNCH
- 13.30–14.30 Book Presentation
Marco Di Branco, Sapienza Università di Roma, SZBA laureate
Orosius Arabicus: An Islamo-Christian work
- Discussant: **Gabriele Ferrario**, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
- 14.30–15.30 KEYNOTE LECTURE
Bilal Orfali, American University in Beirut, SZBA chair
The Art of Enumeration in Pre-modern Arabic Literature
- Discussant: **Davide Bertagnolli**, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
- 15.30–17.30 GUIDED VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF PALAZZO POGGI AND BOLOGNA'S HISTORIC CENTRE

Tuesday 12 May

Alma Mater Studiorum
Università di Bologna

Palazzo Poggi

9.30–10.15 INSTITUTIONAL MEETINGS

With **Simona Tondelli**, Deputy Rector and **Paola Scrolavezza**, Head of the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna (BUB)

10.15–11.00 VISIT TO THE BIBLIOTECA

UNIVERSITARIA DI BOLOGNA (BUB): LOOKING FOR MANUSCRIPTS AND ANCIENT TREASURES

With **Maria Pia Torricelli**, Managing Coordinator of BUB, **Giovanna Flamma**, Codicologist at BUB, **Marco Demichelis**, Ambassador of the *Parkour!* project, and **Giuliana Benvenuti**, Rector's Delegate for Cultural Heritage

11.00–11.15 COFFEE AND TEA BREAK

Sala Rossa at Centro internazionale di Studi umanistici "Umberto Eco"

11.30–12.30 ROUNDTABLE: THE LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION: ECO, TRANSLATION, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIATION

With **H.E. Ali Bin Tamim**, **Muhsin al-Musawi**, **Bilal Orfali**, **Reem Bassiouny**, **Marco Di Branco**, **Chokri al-Saadi**, and **Caterina Mauri**

Moderator: **Cristina Demaria**, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna

Cortile d'Ercole at Palazzo Poggi

12.45 LUNCH

Wednesday 13 May

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

MEDIATION, INSTITUTIONS, AND LITERARY CIRCULATION

Aula Baratto

9.00–9.15 INSTITUTIONAL WELCOME

With the University Rector **Tiziana Lippiello**

9.15–10.30 PANEL: LITERATURE AND MEDIATION.
THE AWARD AS A CULTURAL ACTOR

9.15–9.35 **H. E. Ali Bin Tamim**, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and Secretary-General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Two Decades of Excellence: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

9.35–9.55 **Bilal Orfali**, American University in Beirut, SZBA chair
Translation and Literary Value: Prizes, Canon, and Authority

9.55–10.15 **Muhsin J. al-Musawi**, Columbia University, SZBA laureate
Literary Mediation and the Global Reception of Arabic Literature

Moderator: **Antonella Ghersetti**, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

10.30–10.45 COFFEE AND TEA BREAK

10.45–12.30 ROUNDTABLE:

TRANSLATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

With **Reem Bassiouney** (American University in Cairo, SZBA laureate), **Chokri al-Saadi** (University of Tunis, SZBA laureate), **Marco Di Branco** (Sapienza Università di Roma, SZBA laureate)

Moderator: **Simone Sibilio**, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

13.00–14.00 LUNCH

AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITY,
AND MEDIATION: FROM
CLASSICAL TRANSLATION
TO CONTEMPORARY
LITERARY CULTURES
AND DIGITAL
HUMANISMS

Thursday 14 May

Università di Napoli L'Orientale

CULTURAL MEMORY, TRANSLATION, AND THE ETHICS OF TRANSMISSION

Palazzo Du Mesnil

10.00 – 10.30 INSTITUTIONAL WELCOME

Roberto Tottoli, Rector, Università di Napoli L'Orientale

Roberta Giunta, Head of Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies

Alfredo Guardiano, Fondazione Premio Napoli

10.30–13.00 PANEL: Translation, Circulation, and the Ethics of Literary Value

10.30–11.15 **H. E. Ali Bin Tamim**, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and Secretary-General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Two Decades of Excellence: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

11.15–11.45 COFFEE AND TEA BREAK

11.45–12.15 **Muhsin J. al-Musawi**, Columbia University, SZBA laureate

The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters

12.15–12.45 **Bilal Orfali**, American University in Beirut, SZBA chair

Mediating Arabic Texts: Anthologists, Philologists, and Editors

Moderators: **Monica Ruocco** and **Oriana Capezio**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale

13.00–14.00 LUNCH

14.00–14.45 KEYNOTE LECTURE

Chokri al-Saadi, University of Tunis, SZBA laureate

Translation as Domestication

Discussant: **Maria Avino**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale

15.00–15.45 KEYNOTE LECTURE

Marco Di Branco, Sapienza Università di Roma, SZBA laureate

Greek and Roman History in the Arabic Historical Sources

Discussant: **Roberta Denaro**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale

16.00–16.45 BOOK PRESENTATION

Reem Bassiouney, American University in Cairo, SZBA laureate

Al-Halwani: The Fatimid Trilogy. Drawing on History, Culture, and Food to Forge a Historical Identity

Moderator: **Monica Ruocco**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale

17.00–18.00 Musical Performance by **Marzouk Mejri** (Oud and Vocals)

Featuring

H.E. Ali Bin Tamim

Secretary-General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Muhsin al-Musawi

Columbia University

Bilal Orfali

American University in Beirut

Reem Bassiouney

American University in Cairo

Chokri al-Saadi

University of Tunis

Marco Di Branco

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Scientific and Organising Committee

Chiara Fontana

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Monica Ruocco

Università di Napoli L'Orientale

Oriana Capezio

Università di Napoli L'Orientale

Simone Sibilio

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia



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WIDENING THE MIDDLE EASTERN LITERARY CANON: FROM AUTHORITY TO COUNTER-AUTHORITY