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Call for Papers

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
(23rd-25th November 2022)

***TRANSGRESSIONS OF GENDERS AND GENRES IN CONTEMPORARY (FRANCO-)
MAGRHEBIAN (?) LITERATURE AND FILMS***
Subversions and “inter-dits”

UNIVERSITY OF INNSBRUCK

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The present conference - focusing on (Franco-)Maghrebian literatures and films of the ‘extrême contemporain’ – aims at analyzing what we have called “transgressions of genders”. By ‘extrême contemporain’ – a term coined by the writer Michel Chaillou in 1986 – we understand literary texts and films published or released from 1990 onwards that attempt to capture the human condition of the contemporary age (cf. Böhm/Bung/Grewe 2009, X-XII). The title words of the conference - ‘gender transgressions’, ‘subversions’ and ‘*inter-dits*’ - can be read and interpreted from various angles and open up several lines of thought, which we would like to clarify as follows:

1. Gender and transgressions

In 2017, Leïla Slimani - winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt for *Chanson douce* (2016) - devoted a book, based on interviews, to the sexual life of Moroccan women (*Sexe et mensonges*) who, according to the author, know no other path than submission or transgression. Either they conform submit to social norms and fulfil the gender roles assigned to them (virgin, wife, mother), or they transgress them (through a relationship outside marriage, prostitution, homosexuality) and thus risk their reputation. Their lives will henceforth be lived in secret and dominated by lies. We therefore want to ask how literary texts and films liberate these ‘clandestine’ lives and manage to circumvent or articulate the prohibitions and taboos related to the female body, its desire and sexuality without reproducing feminine stereotypes, such as, for example, the *femme fatale*. How do these texts speak to us of ‘corporealities’ outside the norm? In what places - public, private, imaginary or heterotopic - do they stage them? Which discourse do they choose to translate transgressive acts? And what processes of (self-) censorship can, on the contrary, hinder such writing?

There are many texts and films that question social and religious customs, the heterosexual norm and the duty to reproduce. Think, for example, of the novels by Leïla Marouane (*La jeune fille et la mère*, 2005), Nina Bouraoui (*Garçon manqué*, 2000) or the first novel by Fatima Daas, *La petite dernière* (2020). But also, of Abdellah Taïa, Rachid O. or Mohamed Leftah who question through their texts the idea of a hegemonic masculinity while staging very diverse masculinities, marked not

only by homosexual desire, but also by age, social status or migration (Cf. Gronemann 2013 and 2017; Gafaïti/Crouzières-Igenthron 2005), three factors that not only unleash multiple mechanisms of exclusion and stigmatization, but also invite the invention of more or less subversive strategies to regain agency.

Often, such strategies lead to a questioning of the binary sexual model (male/female; heterosexual/homosexual) as Feriel Assima does in *Rhoulem ou le sexe des anges* (1996). In this context, it would also be interesting to ask how Western theories (e.g. J. Butler, R. W. Connell) have been received, modified, complemented and challenged in the Maghreb.

2. Literary genres and aesthetics of transgression

As the label ‘Franco-Maghrebian writer’, opening up, through the typographic sign of the dash, an interstitial space that resists the binary categories and paradigm of a so-called ‘national’ literature already suggests, the conference, while placing itself in the context indicated above, nevertheless broadens its interest beyond questions of sexual gender to also question the textual genre. Thus, the idea of ‘gender transgression’ can also be understood as transgression of literary genres or generic hybridity (cf. de Toro/Bonn 2009; de Toro 2009/²2011; de Toro/Zekri/Bensmaïa/Gafaïti 2010). Let us think, for example, of Nina Bouraoui’s texts situated between novel and autofiction and using a language deeply inspired by poetry. Or Fatima Daas’ *La petite dernière*, a hybrid text between autobiography, novel and poetry. What functions can be attributed to such hybrids? Is it a simple ‘taste for the playful’ or rather a more provocative and subversive gesture targeting narrative conventions that prohibit ‘writing the intimate’?

But of course, the notion of ‘transgression’ can ultimately refer to other aesthetic strategies of ‘hybridization’ employed by the authors, such as transcultural intertextuality, the use of bi- or multi-lingual writing or the development of a poetics of the extreme. Many contemporary Maghrebian literary texts bear transnational and transcultural traces and bear witness to a cross-border circulation of literary texts. Examples include Sophie Amrouche’s play *Antigone à Alger* (2007), which refers not only to Sophocles (and the whole French tradition of Antigones), but also to Albert Camus and his work *Noces*; or revivals by writers relevant to sexual identity such as Hervé Guibert. In this context, we are particularly interested in the textual relations between the Maghreb and Latin American countries. As Vigo (2010) points out in her comparative study of Severo Sarduy and Abdelkébir Khatibi, the literatures of the two regions have two trends in common. On the one hand, a deconstruction of established categorizations and normative thought patterns incorporating a reflection on the body and somatic topographies, and on the other hand – through concepts such as the purity/impurity of the body, simulation without original and its relation to identity, tattooing, fluidity, the polysemy of gender, the plurality of bodies, the baroque – a new way of thinking about the subversion and transgression of the social codifications of the somatic as well as of the textual body. Does the study of literary relations between the countries of the ‘global South’ even offer a particular potential for understanding transgressions of all kinds?

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