The Words of Desire
The Language of Arabic Erotica and its Translations

An International Conference
Paris-Sorbonne / CERMOM / IISMM / IMA
6-7 May 2016

Description and Call for Papers

On the first level of translation, human desire translates into acts as well as words. Erotic literature grabs these words and links them to a set of acts that are selected in the infinite variety of human practices. Discourse attaches norms to sexuality: what is licit, what is legitimate, transgressive, forbidden or unthinkable. Literature brings words describing the body together, or it disguises them in euphemism, metaphor and metonymy. Written discourse might choose to flaunt them in their ostentatious crudeness. Or it might invent others. All those words, in their turn, translate into desire — or simple titillation — for the reader. On the final level of translation, different cultures seize the erotic products of various regions and transmit them with other words and other images, either by transposing the original meaning or to the contrary by underlining its irreducible foreignness and exoticism. Translated texts and re-encoded languages may stimulate desires other than the ones originally conceived of by authors. The diachronic gap between production and reception also contributes to the reconfiguration of meanings and orientations of desire.

The aim of this conference is to question the language of desire in Arabic and examine the influence of cross-translation. From English and French translations of classical Arabic erotica (Nafzāwī, Tīfāshī, Suyūṭī, etc.) to contemporary use of sexual words in all sorts of cultural productions, from internet pornography to pop songs, including the present invention of Arabic words that can aptly convey the new categories and notions brought to light by gender and sexuality research in post-colonial societies. The papers submitted for this conference should encompass and surpass linguistic, lexicological and translatological
perspectives to question the relationship between language and desire in Arabic societies and cultures, in pre-modern texts as well as contemporary productions. Relevant corpora include all literature or cultural production, whether canonical or marginal, that aims at arousing desire through language, or in which words are a part of the sexual game, as well as militant discourse (feminist, LGBT, queer) that confront Arabic with concepts or acts, which have been described and theorized in other languages. Four main axes of research are suggested:
- The lexicon of pre-modern Arabic eroticism and its evolution: arousing desire through words.
- The cultural legitimacy of Arabic erotica, from *kutub al-bāh* to apophantic denunciation of transgressors, from muğūn to pornography, from political metaphor to contemporary scandalous novels.
- Linguistic contact and the encounter of different universes of desire, from orientalism to the globalization of sexual practices, Arabic’s contact with English, French, Persian, and the transfer of sexual fantasies.
- Visual translations of erotica: cinema, advertising, visual arts, etc.
Les propositions doivent être envoyées à / Submissions should be sent to:
Organisateurs / Organizers
Frédéric Lagrange, PU, Université Paris-Sorbonne, CERMOM
frederic.lagrange@paris-sorbonne.fr
Claire Savina, Doctorante, Université Paris-Sorbonne, CERMOM
claire.savina@gmail.com
en français ou en anglais / in French or in English (20 mn standard format)

avant le / before 30/11/2015

Comité Scientifique / Selection Committee
Pascal Buresi (IISMM)
Abdallah Cheikh-Moussa (Paris-Sorbonne, CERMOM)
Luc-Willy Deheuvels (INALCO, CERMOM)
Adam Talib (American University in Cairo)
Katia Zakharia (Université Lyon 2, CIHAM)

Type de manifestation / Type of event:
Colloque international, sur 2 journées 6-7 mai 2016
International Conference, 2 days, May 6-7, 2016

Lieux / Place
IMA (+ visite exposition jardins)
Paris-Sorbonne

Dates butoir / Deadlines :
propositions / submissions : November, 30
sélection CS / AB’s selection : January, 15
résumés / abstracts : March, 15

Publication :
Publication des actes du colloque / Conference Proceedings

Frais de voyage et de séjour / Travelling and accommodation expenses :
Pour les universitaires dépendant d’un centre de recherche, il est attendu que les frais seront pris en charge par les institutions académiques et centres de recherches auxquels ils appartiennent. En cas d’absence de financement et pour les chercheurs indépendants et doctorants, prévenir les organisateurs. Les demandes de prise en charge de l’hébergement ou de transport seront examinées par le comité.
Frais d’inscription pour les universitaires titulaires : 20€ ; pour les doctorants et indépendants : 10€.

Expenses should be borne by participants’ own institutions. If a participant is unable to secure financial support, or if the participant is a doctoral student or independent researcher, they are asked to please send a request for accommodation or transport, which will be evaluated by the selection committee.

Participation fees for academics: 20€; for independent researchers and PhD students: 10€