



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research



AGYA International Bilingual Summer School “Emotions that Matter: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Feeling, Affect, and Body in Arabic Literature, Arts, and Culture / المشاعر التي تهتم: مقاربات متعدّدة التخصصات للإحساس والانفعال والجسد في الأدب والفنون والثقافة العربية”, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, November 1-3, 2018.

In 2018, the third summer school of the international summer school program “Arabische Philologien im Blickwechsel - نحو دراسات عربية برؤى متعددة - (www.arabic-philologies.de) was held at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. The summer school was organized by Christian Junge (Philipps-Universität Marburg), Bilal Orfali (American University of Beirut) and Barbara Winckler (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster), in cooperation with Fatiha Taïb (Mohammed V University in Rabat), in the framework of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It brought together fourteen PhD students and postdocs and four senior scholars from Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA. Randa Aboubakr (Cairo University), Lale Behzadi (University of Bamberg), Julia Bray (University of Oxford) and Fatiha Taïb (Mohammed V University in Rabat) acted as mentors to the junior scholars.

The summer school project has a twofold agenda: to facilitate the systematic exchange of perspectives and experiences between scholars based in the West and in the Arab world, and to foster the use of Arabic as an academic language in European academia. Addressing young scholars (PhD students, postdocs) in the field of Arabic literary studies based in Germany and other European countries and the Arab world, it provides them the opportunity to present their own research in an international academic context, to discuss current, innovative approaches to Arabic philology, literature and culture, and to practice the respective foreign language (English or Arabic).

This year’s summer school addressed the emerging interest in emotion, affect, and body in the field of Arabic literature and culture that goes along with an emotional and affective turn in the humanities. In this regard, the transformations and actions related to the so-called “Arab Spring” have often been explained by analyzing affective intensities, emotional dispositions, and structures of feeling, while in studies of classical Arabic literature and culture concepts of emotion have been addressed from a new theoretical and methodological background. The presented research projects of the participants illustrated impressively the versatility and

relevance of this perspective in many fields of research; they dealt, for instance, with emotional communities in the Abbasid court society, affective trance in Algerian Sufi rituals, modern kitchen affects in North Africa and concepts of emotion in classical Sufi philosophy. The junior scholars presented their current research projects in small working groups in order to allow for in-depth discussions. In addition, two plenary sessions were dedicated to the discussion of theoretical texts, one in Arabic and one in English. The first session dealt with concepts of body and soma, based on excerpts from the book-length study “الجسد والصورة والمقدس في الإسلام” (The Body, the Image, and the Sacred in Islam, 1999), written by the Moroccan scholar Farid Zahi, while the second, in English, discussed affects and migration, taking Gretchen Head’s article “‘The Sea Spits Out Corpses’: Peripherality, Genre, and Affect in the Cosmopolitan Mediterranean” (2015) as a starting point.

Finally, the program was complemented by two keynote lectures. On the first evening, the eminent Moroccan scholar and writer Prof. Abdelfattah Kilito gave a lecture titled “شعرية الخطأ / The Poetics of Error” (in Arabic). On the second day, Prof. Abdelhay Moudden (Political Science Department, Mohammed V University in Rabat) presented a lecture based on research conducted together with his colleague Prof. Taieb Belghazi (Cultural Studies Department, Mohammed V University in Rabat) titled “تصوير الماضي الأليم: المصالحة السينمائية” / Visualizing the Painful Past: Reel Conciliation” (in Arabic).

To conclude, emotions and affects do certainly matter for Arabic studies; however, the theories and methods of different fields still need to be brought into a more effective interdisciplinary dialogue. In particular, anthropology and sociology provide a rich set of approaches from which literary and cultural studies could certainly benefit, while the emotions and affects in/of literature and art allow a deep insight in human experience and social collectives and are therefore relevant far beyond literary and cultural studies.

The next summer school is planned to be held in 2019 at the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice (Italy), with a focus on “Cities”.

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