



REFUGEE LITERATURE WORKSHOP

4 et 6 July 2017

4 July (3.00 pm – 6.00 pm)

Documentary screening and discussion

INHA, Auditorium, 2 rue Vivienne or 6 rue des Petits-Champs, Paris, 2^e

6 July (12:00 am – 3:30 pm)

GIS-MOMM Congress

INALCO, 65 rue des grands moulins, 75013 Paris

Morning Session – Salle B 3.03 9:30 – 12:00 am

Afternoon Session – Salle B 3.03 1:00 – 3:30 pm

Convenor : Claire Gallien, claire.gallien@univ-montp3.fr



The current refugee crisis affecting large parts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean world today has given new prominence to the corpus of refugee literature written by Arab writers in Arabic, English, French, and other European languages. This workshop aims to unpack the category of 'refugee literature' and its ideological underpinnings as it relates to question of nationalism and neo-imperialism, but also as it questions and reshapes national literatures by taking refugees out of quarantined zones and into shared literary, cultural, and social spaces.

The speakers of the workshop aim to interrogate the validity of the category of 'refugee literature' not only because it homogenizes vastly disparate experiences and capitalize on suffering and pity, but also because it is established on the premise of a binary opposition with the equally problematic concept of 'national literature.' What does this sub-category reveal about the position of refugee literature in relation with national canons and the idea of the nation? By using the category, are we not, as scholars and critics, reproducing an asymmetrical power relation that ultimately reproduces the confinement of these writers to a sub- or minor genre?

Related to other forms of trauma literature, the workshop reflects on the translation of refugee experiences. Does one have to be a refugee to write refugee literature? How can the experience be translated, and by whom? Non-written forms of cultural productions, such as oral literature, shall be taken into account, along with the conditions of production, collection, and transmission of refugee experiences in the camps and the role/commitment of translators in the West and beyond.

Finally, the workshop invites comparison between the various recuperations of the term 'refugee' by the authors themselves and the status of refugee literature in various countries of the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, but also in Iran, Pakistan, and India. Why would a writer prefer to resort to the elitist category of 'exile' rather than call her/himself a 'refugee writer'? How does refugee literature reconnect with Shahrazad's paradigmatic interpretation of literature as refuge? Would not the concept of 'displacement' be more fitting to characterize texts which relate an experience of displacement but also fundamentally displace categories (author, translator, editor, inside, outside, fiction, surreal, real...) and readers?

MORNING SESSION – SALLE B 3.03**9:30-10:45****CONTESTING THE TAG**

Chair: LAETITIA ZECCHINI

MARIANGELA PALLADINO

Keele University

'Refugee Literature'? Narrative of Journeys across Africa and the Mediterranean.

This paper engages with new discursive categories which come under the broader label 'Refugee Literature'. I aim to problematize this term and its role in both establishing and 'categorizing' narratives concerned with migration. Does the term refer to published accounts written by refugees? Or could this also include fictional narratives about refugees' experiences?

FRÉDÉRIK DETUE

Université de Poitiers

"This is no Refugee Literature"

In my paper, I study testimonial projects of authors such as Wali Mohammadi, Fabien Didier Yene and Mahmoud Traoré, whose writings offer reflections on their experiences of exile. While undertaking this reconstruction, I will criticize the concept of 'refugee literature', which fails to do justice to the projects in case.

MELISSA CHAPLIN

University of Durham

Exploring the Positioning of Refugee Authors in Contemporary Literature: Negotiating Identities from the Middle East to the UK

This paper explores the extent to which it is legitimate to use the term 'refugee author'. Drawing upon publicly available work by refugee writers Afro-Palestinian poet Isra Al-Thibeh and the Somali-British Muslim writer Warsan Shire, and fieldwork involving Iranian and Iraqi writers in a refugee creative writing group in the UK, it will consider the affordances and shortcomings of grouping authors from diverse backgrounds and cultures this way. This is an interdisciplinary paper, bringing together intersectional feminism, literary criticism, and qualitative research methods.

*Questions to the Speakers***11:00-12:00****NARRATING AND TRANSLATING EXPERIENCE (1)**

Chair: NAJLA NAKHLÉ-CERRUTI

NATHALIE BONTEMPS

traductrice littéraire

Etre chez soi, être en exil, écrire.**Réflexions autour de la traduction d'Aram Karabet, Yassin Al Haj Saleh, Joumana Maarouf, Majd Al Dik et Golan Haji.**

Cette intervention portera sur cinq personnes de nationalité syrienne, actuellement en exil, et interrogera les liens entre leur pratique de l'écriture, leur engagement dans leur pays, et leur actuel statut de « réfugiés ». On tentera ainsi d'explorer la manière dont se combinent ces trois éléments, de manière spécifique et personnelle à chacun d'entre eux.

CATHERINE COQUIO

Université Paris Diderot

Les "portes de l'Europe" et les "portes du néant". Réflexions à partir des oeuvres de Samar Yazbek, Jumana Maarouf, Nisrine al-Zahre, et du film L'Eau argentée.*Questions to the Speakers*

LUNCH BREAK

AFTERNOON SESSION – SALLE B 3.03**1:00 – 2:15 pm****NARRATING AND TRANSLATING EXPERIENCE (2)**

Chair: MARIANGELA PALLADINO

VALERIE ANISHCHENKOVA,

University of Maryland in College Park

The Battle of Truth and Fiction: Documentary Storytelling and Contemporary Refugee Discourse

Documentary cinematic production about refugees are important cultural texts that define cultural terminology and societal perceptions of refugees by the host culture(s). The paper argues that documentaries serve to "organize" this complex discourse for the general audience and offer a typology of refugee prototypes and their stories. The primary case studies include Salam Neighbor (2015), Lost Boys of Sudan (2003), God Grew Tired of Us (2006), A World Not Ours (2012), A Man Returned (2016).

CORINA STAN

Duke University

From *The Village Indian* to *Ohrfeige*: Novels in the Translation Zone

Evoking the experience of incarceration, refuge, and unsettling encounters in Northern Africa and Western Europe, Abbas Khider's novels weave elements of the tradition of storytelling inherited from his ancestors and

modernist narrative strategies. I discuss Khider's discomfort with the label "aktuell" used to characterize his semi-autobiographical fiction, a reluctance that bears on his work's categorization as "refugee literature."

BÉNÉDICTE LETELLIER

Université de la Réunion

La poésie de l'exil dans l'océan Indien : Salah Faik, Adeb Kamal Ad-Deen et Ahmatjan Osman (via Skype)

I will compare poetic works written in Arabic by three poets who have fled their country: Salah Faik, born in Iraq, who lives in the Republic of Philippines, Adeb Kamal ad-Deen, an Iraqi poet, who lives in Australia and Ahmatjan Osman, born in China, who went into exile in Canada. Their poems are not those of an «imagined community» as is the case with the literature of refugees especially with novels. Therefore I propose to show how poetry creates a movement of consciousness necessary for our survival rather than merely a refuge from the chaos of daily life.

*Questions to the Speakers***2:30-3:30****THE ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION**

Chair: CLAIRE SAVINA

OLIVERA JOKIC

John Jay College, CUNY

Yugoslavian Literature of Muslim Displacement and the Reading of Pity

This paper examines U.S. fiction focusing on violence against women during wars of the 1990s. These texts invite outrage and pity as appropriate responses to the spectacle of women's suffering, depoliticizing readers' interest in sexual violence and Islamophobia.

CLAIRE GALLIEN,

Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3/CNRS

'Just Bomb Into It' – Radical Deconstructions in the Art and Poetry of Gerry Judah, Emily Jacir, and Suheir Hammad

I have selected Judah, Jacir, and Hammad to talk about the critical take that contemporary Arab artists and poets, often living in Western countries as exiles or refugees, assume with regards the 'refugee crisis'. Rejecting the language of sympathy towards refugees, their broken art reflect on the origination of violence and replicate inside – that is on the canvas, pages, and words – the violence and damage Western societies safely conduct outside.

Questions to the Speakers

CLOSING WORDS