



Anthropology of the Middle East

Call for Papers

Poetized Love: Affects, Gender and Society
Issue 16.1 (Spring 2021)

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Guest Editor: Corinne Fortier

Journal Overview

Recent political events have shown an alarming lack of awareness in western countries of life in the Middle East. Anthropologists, trained in analysing local discourses and social actions and their socio-political and historical contexts, play an important role in making social and cultural developments in the Middle East more comprehensible to a wider world.

This peer-reviewed journal provides a forum for scholarly exchange between anthropologists and other social scientists working in and on the Middle East. The journal's aim is to disseminate, on the basis of informed analysis and insight, a better understanding of Middle Eastern cultures and thereby to achieve a greater appreciation of Middle Eastern contributions to our culturally diverse world.

Anthropology of the Middle East (AME) is published twice a year, in the spring and autumn. Issues are often themed and on occasion guest edited. Each issue contains articles on specific research projects and outcomes on Middle Eastern topics. A section titled "Notes from the Field" features research in progress. Book reviews and shorter reports on books, films and conferences are also included.

Upcoming Issue

Love has often been neglected when studying gender dynamics in Arab-Muslim countries. While much research has been conducted on male domination, female agency and their relation to religious and social norms, the complex role of love has been largely neglected despite its importance in these societies and in its literature. This absence is especially striking given that, both in present and past times, love has been a major preoccupation in the lives of Arabic and Persian people, which is well documented in their poetry.

This special issue concerns the poetic expression of love in North Africa, the Sahara and the Sahel, the Middle East, the Ottoman and Persian world, and Central Asia. Love has often been described as a feeling born in the West and is rarely associated with the Arab world, while the Persian and Arabic pre-Islamic poetry of the sixth century, the *nasīb* and the *ghazal*, testify the existence of love poetry in the ancient Middle East.

This issue seeks to analyse love poetry not from a literary or linguistic point of view but from an anthropological point of view.

Romance, considered a specific mode of intimacy, is characterized by a phantasmatic, subjective and ludic dimension. What kind of gender relations are involved in seductive and romantic encounters when women and men do not have the same options to express their affection? Corinne Fortier ("*Ô langoureuses douleurs de l'amour*": Poétique du désir en Mauritanie') showed in 2004 that courtship has commonly been a male prerogative, while women are often not supposed to manifest their desires, and that in Moorish society of Mauritania, the courtesy context which seems to glorify the woman in poetry in fact underlines essentially rivalry between men.

What does love poetry reveal about gender relationships and emotional sensibility of a society? What are the metaphors used in this area to express passionate love, and how do they rely on poetry? What is the purpose of this poetry: is it to catch the heart of the beloved? Are there any poetic jousts on certain occasions? Are marital and romantic love always antithetical, or can they go together? Are they related to specific phases of one's life, because 'youth' (cf. Bourdieu, *Réponses: Pour une anthropologie réflexive* [1992], 143–154) often appears as the age of desires before having to achieve one's marital and procreative duty?

Can the positive affects related to love give way to the expression of negative affects in the absence of the beloved? Is the feeling of nostalgia important in these various types of poems? Are they sometimes related to contemporary political preoccupations in the region: displacement, migration, exile, war? From a comparative point of view, is it possible to compare some Arabic, Persian or Ottoman poetry to European poetry in relation to their metaphors and context of enunciation?

We shall also be interested in the gender identity of the poet. Although love poems are most often masculine, they can also be composed in certain societies by women (cf. Abu Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds* [1993]), according to particular modalities (e.g. among women, related to divination) which will be specified and articulated with masculine poetry. Love poetry can also be homoerotic in certain cultural and social contexts that will be examined here.

We invite English or French articles, reports from the field and reviews (books, films, conferences and exhibitions) that deal with the above, and more.

Submission

Please send the title and possibly a short abstract of your paper as soon as possible.

Deadline for submitting articles: July 2020

Please send your text to one the following editors:

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More information, including the style guide, can be found at www.berghahnjournals.com/ame

French Translation

La poésie amoureuse a souvent été négligée dans les études sur le monde arabo-musulman en dépit de son importance dans ces sociétés.

L'amour a généralement été décrit comme un sentiment né en Occident, aussi est-il rarement associé au monde arabo-musulman alors que la poésie pré-islamique du VI^e siècle, le *nasīb* et le *ghazal*, prouve l'existence de la poésie amoureuse dans l'ancien monde arabe et persan. Parfois inspirée de cette poésie ancienne, la poésie amoureuse se retrouve aujourd'hui au grand Maghreb, au Sahara, au Sahel, au Moyen-Orient, dans le monde ottoman, persan et en Asie Centrale, autant de régions du monde que ce numéro tentera de couvrir.

L'expression poétique de l'amour sera ici traitée non pas d'un point de vue littéraire ou linguistique mais sociologique et anthropologique. Il s'agira de réfléchir sur ce que révèle la poésie amoureuse sur les rapports de genre d'une société. Hommes et femmes sont-ils égaux devant la possible expression de leurs sentiments amoureux ? Ainsi, Corinne Fortier (« "Ô langoureuses douleurs de l'amour". Poétique du désir en Mauritanie », in M. Demeuldre (éd.), *Sentiments doux-amers dans les musiques du monde*, 2004: 15-25) a montré que dans de nombreuses sociétés faire la cour a souvent été un privilège masculin, les femmes n'étant pas supposées exprimer leur désir, et que dans le contexte particulier de la société maure de Mauritanie, la poésie courtoise qui glorifie la femme est sous-tendue par une rivalité toute masculine.

Quelles sont les métaphores utilisées pour exprimer la passion amoureuse ? Quel est le but de cette poésie : a-t-elle pour objectif de faire chavirer le cœur de l'aimé(e) ? Est-elle associée à une joute poétique ? Correspond-elle à une phase particulière de la vie dans la mesure où la jeunesse (cf. Bourdieu in *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, 143-154) est socialement considérée comme l'âge des désirs avant de s'unir matrimonialement. Passion et amour conjugal sont-ils toujours antithétiques ou peuvent-ils coexister ?

Les affects positifs liés à l'amour peuvent-ils laisser place à l'expression d'affects négatifs en l'absence de l'aimé(e) ? Le sentiment de nostalgie est-il prégnant dans ce type de poème ? Ce sentiment est-il parfois relié à des préoccupations politiques contemporaines : déplacement, migration, exil, guerre ? Est-il possible de comparer cette poésie "orientale" à la poésie "occidentale" dans ses métaphores, ses buts et ses contextes d'énonciation.

On s'intéressera également au genre même de cette poésie, bien que la poésie amoureuse soit le plus souvent masculine, elle peut aussi être composée dans certaines sociétés par des femmes (cf. Abu Lughod in *Writings Women's Worlds*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), selon des modalités particulières qui seront ici développées, et articulées à la poésie masculine. La poésie amoureuse peut également être homoérotique, et ce dans des contextes sociaux et culturels singuliers, qui seront dès lors précisés.