

Call for papers

Symposium. The Arab detective narrative

Thursday the 28th and Friday the 29th of March 2019

Location: Paris. INALCO.

If the crime / punishment narrative is as old as the world, awareness of the detective dimension itself is recent. The detective account is related to judicial proceedings; it is structured around the characters of the murderer, the victim and the investigator, and an action that encompasses crime, investigation (interrogation, evidence) and denouement.

The crime novel is relatively modern. It refers to a literary form (the novel) and to a thematic content which is more or less precise (crime novel). It can be linked to the advent of industrial civilization and the emergence of positive science (Évrard, 1996) with, as a possible model, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841). Arabic literature does not seem very rich in works of this kind, having appeared rather late (Buontempo, Crime Fiction in and around the Eastern Mediterranean, 2016).

This does not preclude the presence of fragments or components that announce, a posteriori, what could specifically be determined to be crime novels. Under the Abbasid Caliphate, the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* (the chief of police of Baghdad) was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the capital. Many literary works demonstrate an interest in thieves and criminals (Zakharia, 2008). For example, some akhbārs in *Kitāb al-aghānī* of al-Iṣfahānī, or *Kitāb al-adhkiyā'* of Ibn al-Jawzī, or *al-Faraj ba'da al-shidda* of al-Tannūkhī (Malti-Douglas, 1988) etc. Not to mention some tales of *1001 nights* that depict a crime, an inquest, albeit rudimentary, and a punishment (Pinault, 1992). These stories do not seem to have developed into a specific genre.

In modern Arabic literature, there are many works dealing with criminal cases, questioning the motives of crime or leading to the prosecution of the culprit. However, the logico-deductive inquiry as well as the judicial inquiry are almost absent. This is attested to by *al-Liṣṣ wal-kilāb* (Najīb Maḥfūz, 1961), or "Man qatala laylā al-Ḥayik" (Ghassān Kanafānī, 1966) or *al-Bayt al-azraq* ('Abdū Wāzin, 2017).

In the 1970s and 1980s, espionage literature emerged, but was considered popular and was discredited by critics. The novels of Ṣāliḥ Mursī are among the best known, including *Ra'fat al-Hajjān* (1987) which was adapted to Egyptian television and was very successful.

The contemporary Gothic novel (or thriller) seems to have emerged late. It was at the beginning of the years 2000 that some thrillers, though rare, appeared, especially in Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. See, for example, the novels of Aḥmad Murād (Egypt), and Mīlūdī and 'Abdulillāh Ḥamdūshī in Morocco (Smolin, 2013).

A detective literature in the Arab world therefore raises several questions, starting with an interrogation concerning its difficult emergence and its specificities. This symposium aims to stimulate reflection on the subject, and bring together researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds (history-literature-political studies, visual and cinematographic arts ...) around

issues related to crime, investigation, police and judicial institutions, actors of crime, procedures, and the imagination and discourse that can identify the detective/police universe in the Arab world.

Several lines of thought are proposed (which are not exhaustive)

1- Emergence of an Arab detective literature, its exoticism and its historical roots, its textual and contextual background, its difficulties and its links with Arab literature in general, its legitimacy or marginality, etc.

2 - Analyses of detective literary works (classical, modern and contemporary) in the Arabic language or in close relationship with the Arab world (as, for example, the works of Yasmina Khadra and Driss Chraïbi in French, or Jamal Mahjoub in English). The main purpose is to identify the actors, and the practices and the modalities of the investigation as well as the discourses and representations that surround the criminal universe.

3 - The question of the translation and reception of foreign detective literature into Arabic (Arsène Lupine, Agatha Christie and others ...).

4 - Audio-visual: Analyses of Arabic police/detective television series or cinematographic films as well as adaptations of police/detective literary works to the cinema.

The second part of the symposium, which will constitute a continuation of the first, will take place at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 2020. The participants will be informed about the date and themes as soon as possible.

Indicative bibliography:

-*Crime Fiction in and around the Mediterranean*, Börte Sagaster, Martin Strohmeier, Stephan Guth (eds.), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, Mizan, 2016.

-Jonathan Smolin, *Moroccan Noir: Police, Crime, and Politics in Popular Culture*, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2013.

-Muḥammad al-Dūhū, *Ḥiwār al-nuṣūṣ: bayna al-riwāya al-‘arabiyya wal-riwāya al-‘ālamīyya*, Manshūrāt ittihād kuttāb al-maghrib, 2012.

-*Majallat Fuṣūl*, N°76, Le Caire, 2009.

- David Pinault, *Story-telling techniques in the Arabic Literature*, xi, Leiden, New York and Koln, Brill, 1992.

- Fedwa Malti-Douglas, “The Classical Arabic Detective”, *Arabica* 35, 1988, p.59-91.

- Samah Selim, « Fiction and Colonial Identities: Arsène Lupin in Arabic », *Middle Eastern Literatures*, Vol.13, No.2, Août 2010.

- Katia Zakharia, *Nouvelles policières du monde abbasside*, Paris, Pocket, 2008

Proposals for papers must be received before June 10, 2018, with a maximum of 400 words, including the author's name, position, institution of attachment, electronic address and a brief biography. The communication proposal should be sent to Katia Ghosn: katia.ghosnbaddoura@univ-paris8.fr / katiaghosn@gmail.com

30 June 2018: The opinion of the Scientific Committee will be sent to the authors for acceptance of the communication proposal.

Transportation and hotels are the responsibility of participants, who are invited to solicit their research centers to cover their expenses. Languages of communication: French-English-Arabic.

Scientific Committee: Heidi Toelle (Paris III- Sorbonne Nouvelle), Aboubakr Chraïbi (INALCO), Sobhi Boustani (INALCO), Bilal Orfali (American University of Beirut.AUB) Clément Onimus (Paris 8), Katia Ghosn (Paris 8).