



Research Network
Gender in Antisemitism, Orientalism and Occidentalism.

**ReNGOO Workshop 2:
The homophobic argument.
National politics and sexuality in transregional perspective**

Date: 18 – 20 June 2014

Location: Humboldt University of Berlin, Festsaal der Humboldt-Graduate School, Luisenstraße 56, 10117 Berlin, 2nd floor

Convenors: Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Berlin Institute of Technology), Christina von Braun, Claudia Bruns (Humboldt University of Berlin), Achim Rohde (Philipps-University Marburg)

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Context

The research network ReNGOO (<http://rengoo.net/index.html>) works towards the development of a transregional comparative scholarship concerning various ideologies of inequality in the context of identity politics in modern societies. It addresses these issues from a gendered perspective and is thus equally located in the context of comparative transregional gender studies. This agenda is played out in its current research focus on an entangled history of Europe and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA region):

Gender and Sexuality in (Neo-)Orientalism and Occidentalism: Towards an Entangled History of European and Middle Eastern Identity Discourses

In the years following the events of 9/11 and subsequent developments in the context of the 'war against terrorism', many voices have noted the increasing significance of anti-Muslim discourses in Western societies. This prompted the rise of new research questions concerning patterns of exclusion and identity politics within Europe as well as concerning the resurgence of dichotomous spatial representations of 'the West' and its Orientalized 'Other', in this case Muslim majority countries in the MENA region and elsewhere. Many critics have highlighted the notably gendered dimension of such discourses. In a kind of new "sexual nationalism" gay liberation is now used to frame Europe as a secular symbol of freedom and modernity. Western "sexual nationalism" defines itself in opposition to the stereotype of the Muslim male within Western societies or of Muslim majority societies in general, who are being presented as pre-modern, oriental, patriarchal, and homophobic. Conversely, in a kind

of occidentalist (Woltering) mirror image to these discourses, many Islamist intellectuals position an Islamic ethos against what they perceive as the West's degenerate sexual licentiousness, whose intrusive and corrupting influence threatens the supposedly authentic cultural values of Muslim majority societies. Israel is often demonized in this context as a corrupting and destructive representative of Western imperialism in the heart of the MENA region in a way that is at times reminiscent of 19th century European anti-Semitism. Thus far, neo-Orientalist and Occidental discourses have been studied by social sciences as purely recent phenomena. Taking its cue from the humanities, this project aims to reconstruct their multilayered historical genealogies.

The aim of the project is to reconstruct a *histoire croisee* of Orientalism and Occidentalism. To this end, we will rethink the role of the long term intertwining of internal and external figures of the 'Other' in Europe's "many Orientalisms" (Lowe). On the one hand, our interdisciplinary research will explore the long term history of Muslims as targets of Orientalisation and as agents of self-Orientalisation. On the other hand, following Kalmar and Penslar's "Orientalism and the Jews"- approach, we will focus on the long neglected history of representations of Jews as "oriental people" (Kalmar/Penslar), Europe's "southern race" (Michaelis), its "internal Orient" (Aschheim), or "inner Orient" (Rohde). Thus, by including the longue duree of the Christian politico-theological tradition we will go beyond Edward Said's claim that Orientalism is a "strange secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism" (1978).

Modern identity politics, as well as colonial and orientalist discourse have always been gendered and sexualized. Our project assumes a genealogy also of the gendered quality of 'old' and 'new' nationalisms. As Mosse claimed, 19th century nationalism was connected to virile hetero-normative masculinity whereas the male Jew was stigmatized as 'effeminate', 'hysteric', 'oriental' and 'perverse'. Hence, as a response, Zionist discourse used orientalist and gendered tropes to reclaim a 'masculine' Jewish nation in Palestine. In general, the (Western-European post-emancipation) Jewish response and creative transgression to and of the anti-Jewish orientalism was threefold: rejecting it wholesome, romanticising the (biblical) Orient to negotiate their cultural position, and thirdly, depicting orthodox and traditional, particularly "Eastern Jews" as 'Orientals' in a pejorative sense. It was in the *fin de siecle* that the tension between the idealization and the colonial degradation of the Orientalized Other became a central vehicle of artistic self-fashioning especially for women and Jews.

Several scholars have noted similarities between 19th century discourses regarding the Jews and contemporary anti-Muslim discourses. The project will test the validity of such claims. Moreover, it remains to be seen if and to what degree gendered identity discourses promoted by Islamist anti-imperialist thinkers and activists today might unconsciously rely on an inverted mirror image of European colonial discourses, similar to Zionism's construction of the 'authentic' Jew.

Focussing on the central role of sexual tropes in Orientalist, Antisemitic and nationalist discourse during the 19th century as well as in contemporary anti-Muslim and Occidental discourses, our network will go beyond dominant discursive dichotomies, in opening up third or liminal spaces within the "Orientalist web" (Aschheim) in the arts, literature and performance. The network brings together leading interdisciplinary research centres in Jewish Cultural Studies and Studies of Antisemitism, and scholars from the fields of MENA-region-studies, postcolonial, religious, gender, and sexuality studies, as well as literature, politics, theatre and history from Europe, the US and Israel.

ReNGOO Workshop II (2014): “The homophobic argument. National politics and sexuality in transregional perspective“

After a first workshop of the network, held at the University of Maastricht in June 2013 with a focus on „Gender, Sexual Nationalism, Antisemitism and Orientalism in European Identity Discourses“, its second workshop will focus on the aspect of homophobic and homophile discourses and political practices in an expressly transregional comparative framework. The workshop will be held at Berlin’s Humboldt University from 18-20 June 2014. It is convened by Prof. Dr. Christina von Braun, Prof. Dr. Claudia Bruns (Humboldt University Berlin), Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin), and Dr. Achim Rohde (Centre for Near and Middle East Studies, Philipps University Marburg).

Modern identity politics in any part of the world are gendered and sexualized in multiple ways. Constructions of the imagined collective Self often contain references to a heteronormative order, whereas relevant internal or external Others are often considered as deviating from this order through their gendered or sexual practices. At the same time, some Western countries have witnessed the evolution of LGBTIQ-friendly discourses by certain political actors in recent years, mostly in the context of post-9/11 culture wars. Yet, discourses on sexuality and gendered performances in everyday life often undermine the stability of such binary constructions, as they point to the multiplicity, ambivalence and the indeterminate character of individual and collective identities under conditions of modernity. Addressing contemporary identity politics and in a wider historical context and within a transregional comparative framework helps to discern differences and similarities between different world regions and serves to dislocate essentialised notions of cultural differences based on gender and sex.

This workshop focuses on perceptions of Self and Other in Western and Eastern Europe, North America and the MENA-region (Middle East and North Africa) from a gendered perspective, including the historical and contemporary intersections between anti-Semitic and homophobic / philo-Semitic and LGBTIQ-friendly discourses. We call for submissions of papers that deal with anti-LGBTIQ as well as LGBTIQ-friendly aspects of modern politics in countries of the regions mentioned, focussing on the functions such discursive markers play in nationalist and racist imageries, in discourses legitimizing class differences all along the 19th century until today, including globalized discourses in the context of 9/11 and its aftermath as well as the Arab Spring and similar developments in other MENA countries.

The conference contributes to the emerging field of transregional comparative sexuality studies in a way that demonstrates the “interarticulation and coimplication of Eastern and Western bodies, desires, aesthetic paradigms and analytical paradigms”, thus eventually “confounding the very terms by which our understandings of East and West are derived”.¹ This overarching agenda will be realised by presenting new data and specialised empirical case studies on LGBTIQ-related political practices and discourses in various countries in the regions mentioned.

¹ Valerie Traub, “The Past is a Foreign Country? The Times and Spaces of Islamicate Sexuality Studies”, in *Islamicate Sexualities. Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire*, eds. Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi (Harvard UP, 2008), p 12.

Program**18 June 2014**

- 15:30h Registration
- 16:00h Welcome (Christina v. Braun, Humboldt University, Berlin)
- 16:30h Keynote lectures (Chair: Claudia Bruns, Humboldt University, Berlin)
- Keynote 1:
Ulrike Brunotte (University of Maastricht): National Masculinities between Homophobia and Homophilia. European identity politics and the role of religion
- 17:15h Keynote 2:
Bettina Dennerlein (University of Zürich): Researching sexuality in Islamic and Middle East Studies
- Dinner

19 June 2014

- 09:00h – 11:00h Panel 1: Western Europe (Chair: Felix Axster, Center for Research on Antisemitism, Berlin)
- Paul Mepschen (University of Amsterdam): The left hand of homonationalism? The moralization of Dutch 'progressive' politics
 - Deniz Akin (Trondheim University) & Stine Helena Bang Svendsen (University of Oslo): Becoming legible: Orientalism, homonormativity and queer asylum in Norway
 - Claudia Bruns (Humboldt University, Berlin): "How gay is Germany?" Homosexuality, politics and racism in historical perspective
 - Discussant: Andreas Hieronymus (IMIR, Hamburg)
- 11:00 – 11:15h Coffee break
- 11:15h – 13:15h Panel 2: Western Europe/North America (Chair: Ofer Nur, Tel Aviv University)
- Susann Heenen-Wolff (University of Louvain-La-Neuve and Université Libre de Bruxelles): "In the name of the father.....": Normativity based on some psychoanalytical concepts - the example of France
 - Roel van den Oever (University of Amsterdam): We are all Others? Untangling the mesh of identity discourses in Philip Roth's Portnoy's Complaint (1969)

- Ofri Ilani (Humboldt University, Berlin): An Oriental Vice: Representations of Sodomy in Early Zionist Discourse
- Discussant: Axel Stähler (University of Kent)

13:15h – 14:45h Lunch

14:45h – 17:30h Panel 3: Eastern Europe (Chair: Christina von Braun, Humboldt University, Berlin)

- Hanna Copic (Center for Research on Antisemitism, Berlin): Homophobia as social impotence and tool of political manipulation in former Yugoslavia
- Pawel Lezskovizc (Warsaw, Sussex): The Visual Art of Representing and Transforming Homophobia. Selected Central-Eastern European Cases

Coffee break 15 minutes

- Thomas Kittlinski (Paris): Poland vs LGBTQ, Jews, Women and Other 'Strangers': Homophobia at the Heart of Prejudices against the Other
- Alexei Levinson (Levada-Center, Moscow): The perverted attitude to 'perversions' in Russia
- Discussant: Christina Spaeti (University of Freiburg)

Dinner

20 June 2014

09:00 – 11:00h Panel 4: MENA (Chair: Claudia Derichs, Philipps-University Marburg)

- Pinar Ilkcaracan (Bosporus University, Istanbul): The Struggle of LGBT People for Recognition in Turkey: an Analysis of Legal Discourses
- Sima Shakhsari (Wellesley College, San Francisco): Time of Death: Temporality and Refugee Rights
- Achim Rohde (Philipps-University Marburg): Restoring the honor of the nation: Gendered violence and the state in Iraq before and after 2003
- Discussant: Andrea Fischer-Tahir (Philipps-University Marburg)

11:00 – 11:15h Coffee Break

11:15 – 13:15h Panel 5: MENA (Chair: Achim Rohde, Phillips-University Marburg)

- Jolanda Guardi (University of Milan): Female Homosexuality in Contemporary Arabic Novels
- Rakefet Zalashik (Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg): The Bar Noar Shooting of 2009 and its Aftermath: LGBT and contemporary Israeli society
- Max Kramer (University of Saskatchewan): The Muslim Closet: Same-Sex Sexuality in Maghrebi Literature

- Discussant: Refqa Abu Remaileh (Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin)

13:15h – 14:45h

Lunch

14:45 – 16:30h

Roundtable discussion: Prospects of transregional comparative sexuality studies (Chair: Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, Berlin Institute of Technology)

17:00h

End