

## **The Means of Love in the Arab World: Pragmatics Beyond Norms and Transgressions**

Rabat, Morocco 11-13 December 2015

In the Arab world, romantic attachment has a long history recorded in poetry and popular culture, but globalisation has given it a new shape, and also new urgency. Love in the Arab world today has an impact on demographic, cultural, social, and hence also the political level. Anthropologists working in the region have consequently given increasing attention on the dynamics of intimate relationships, love and marriage. These dynamics are crucial for social and political dynamics and have the capacity to shape expectations in the intimate and the political realm alike.

This workshop intends to push light on the cultural, material and mediated means of love, relying on ethnographic case studies from North Africa and the Middle East. The means for the communication and practice of love can be linguistic, embodied, or mediated by objects like letters, pictures, exchanged gifts, or the dowry and furniture needed for marriage. Without these elements love would not be possible. The workshop seeks to analyse their symbolic, interactional, and material efficiency, intending to find ways to build a pragmatic approach for the study of love in a social setting where it is at once omnipresent and precarious.

Anthropological research about love in the Arab World has so far been especially perceptive of the moral and ethical dimension of love in regard to family ideals, ideals of personhood, gendered piety, and the production of modern subjectivities. However, such approach oriented on norms, ethics and governmentality risks to promote a conception of love that falls short of understanding its material and pragmatic subtleties and dynamics. In order to avoid focusing on discourse alone, contributions should emphasise observable situations where the means of love are at stake – one of the first tasks being to explore what interactional frames can be linked to love by individuals. These case studies are the material on which we hope to elaborate, beyond norms and transgressions, the tools for an understanding of love in action.

The workshop will be hosted by the Centre Jacques Berque in Rabat on 11-12 December 2015. On 13 December, results of the discussions and possibilities for publication will be developed in the more informal setting of a brunch meeting.

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