

Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops

Censorship and Submission, 26 October - 9 November 2002, Naples (Italy)

Jointly organised by Transeuropéennes (Paris) and Nuovo Teatro Nuovo (Naples). In co-operation with the: Provincia di Napoli ; Accademia delle Belle Arti, Naples ; Istituto Universitario Suor Orsola Benincasa, Naples ; Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples ; Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, Naples ; Institut Français de Naples. With the support of: Regione Campania (to be confirmed) ; The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with the French Embassy in Rome.

Overview

From 26 October to 10 November, twenty-five young artists and researchers from the countries around the Mediterranean – the artists all with solid experience and the researchers already working at the PhD level – were brought together by Transeuropéennes and the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo in Naples, in the framework of the programme entitled “Taking Action in the Mediterranean: the contemporary translation of cultures.” Of the thirty-one candidates selected on the basis of their dossier and invited by the organisers, six had their visa applications turned down by the Italian consulates – without any valid justification.

The theme of “the contemporary translation of cultures,” that Transeuropéennes has been working at developing since 1999, is founded on the need to focus on contemporary works of the imagination and reflection, as well as on the observation that, over the past several years, free thinking has been curtailed and shunted to the margins. More importantly still, on both sides of the Mediterranean today, we appear to be up against a profound crisis of imagination and thought; an acute crisis of symbolic representations; and to a subduing of those men and women capable of producing a comprehensive *oeuvre*.

To better apprehend this reality, Transeuropéennes decided to undertake a long-term project inquiring into the different forms of “censorship and submission.” Indeed, thought processes and the imagination today find themselves in the grips of a mentality of servitude, and of submission to systems of power, which, however different they may be, all share a common purpose: reducing diversity to unity, to oneness. These mechanisms are never slow to produce complex mechanisms of self-censorship and repression.

The Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops, held in Naples, thus pursued this theme through two twentieth-century literary works, Jean Genet’s *Les Bonnes (The Maids)* and Sonallah Ibrahim’s *Al-Lajna (The Committee)*, the latter playwright actually

taking part in one session of the Workshops. The participants discussed the works and the themes in a framework of top-level lectures and meetings with artistic personalities from Naples, and took up the theme and its variants in workgroups or workshops, the results of which were presented at the session's end at the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo. Highly motivated, both for opening discussion with the guest lecturers and working together on a final artistic project, the participants all emphasised to what extent they felt free to pursue their approach and their underlying intuitions through to their conclusions, and to what extent they emerged strengthened from the process. In a contemporary context where open thinking is being pushed to the wayside, both on the south shore and the north shore of the Mediterranean; where mechanisms of censorship – which have become flagrant on the south shore – are coupled with powerful mechanisms of self-censorship (flagrant on the north shore), whereby the various logics of submission of the individual to a totality take on different forms but tend to converge toward the same reality of voluntary servitude (to use French Renaissance philosopher Etienne de La Boétie's terms); the working theme turned out to be particularly apt. Supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy in Rome, and taking advantage of a collaborative initiative with the Province of Naples, the project is regrettably still awaiting confirmation of the financial contribution of the Regione Campania (Italy), that has been both negotiated and promised on several occasions. This delay has put a severe strain on the abilities for action of the two organising bodies, the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo and Transeuropéennes.

Several prestigious Neapolitan institutions were associated with the project. The Accademia delle Belle Arti hosted the workshops as a whole for the duration of the two-week session; the Istituto Universitario Suro Orsola Benincasa offered participants two on-site lectures which were key to their understanding of Naples' historical and cultural context; the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" hosted and co-organised the public lecture given by Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim; the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici hosted a public conference for the presentation of the results of the work of three researchers who took part in the Marrakech workshops, in 2000, and who, at that time, had initiated a joint theoretical reflection, subsequently meeting up in Naples to carry it to fruition. And finally, the French Institute in Naples offered a public presentation of the last issue of the international journal of critical thought *Transeuropéennes*, on the theme of "translating between cultures." These interdisciplinary and intercultural Workshops remain for most participants a foundation-building experience, opening the way to a network, inasmuch as it is concerned with providing interested men and women the possibility of working together, and of putting them into contact with their peers from previous sessions of the Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops (Toledo 1999, and Marrakech 2000). Were it necessary, they underscored the well founded nature of thorough-going collaboration between the two shores, relying at once on the physical mobility of individuals (without which there can be no intercultural exchange), on the sharing of diverse or even contradictory approaches, on the translation not only of texts but of modes of representation and imagination, on the negotiation of differences – not only between cultures but within each of them – and of translation itself. Differentiating so as not to be subjected to the power of the One, differing so as not to submit to the enslaving constraint of immediate consumption, seeking the slowness through which individual creativity is liberated and

putting oneself at risk in the act of encounter... These, in short, were some of the results of this highly intense Neapolitan moment.

Activities report and assessment

The Censured: six visas refused by Italian consulates

Although 31 candidates were selected for participation in the Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops, only 25 were able to take part in the programme. In spite of the combined efforts of the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo, Transeuropéennes, the Province of Naples and the French Embassy in Rome, despite the intervention of intellectuals favourable to the project in Cairo, Casablanca and Algiers in support of the chosen “candidates” to obtain Italian visas, the applications of two researchers in French literature and a political scientist, a theatre director and an architect in Algiers and a translator and literary critic in Egypt were met with a flat-out refusal. And this in spite of the fact that the candidates provided all the guarantees required for obtaining a visa. The arbitrary nature of such a decision, which runs counter to the exigencies underlying the Barcelona Process (dialogue between cultures, support for human cultural exchanges) and human rights, created an atmosphere of indignation and bitterness in the group and amongst the organisers, which never dwindled. One young academic from Cairo obtained his visa six days late, joining the Workshops mid-way through, after having previously written an open letter to the participants and organisers of the EMCW, proposing that the participants take up the visa refusal as a theatrical writing theme.

The Participants

Thirty-years old on average, the twenty-five participants, all with solid experience behind them, came from almost all the countries of the Mediterranean area.¹ Eleven of them studied literature, four studied theatre, six philosophy and anthropology, two studied cinema, and two studied visual arts. The group was comprised of thirteen women and twelve men. The visa refusals led to an imbalance in the group, disproportionately favourable to the north shore, inasmuch as six participants from the south shore were prevented from attending. Nevertheless, the open-minded spirit and mutual attentiveness which prevailed within the group made it possible to compensate for the effects of this imbalance. Though highly interdisciplinary, the group was admirably homogeneous in terms of maturity, intellectual curiosity and knowledge levels. All of which made for work to begin unhampered both in terms of thematic reflection and in the workshops. However, the group was not homogeneous in its will to work collectively, several members having the tendency to remain somewhat aloof. This reality of aloofness at times put a damper on the negotiation of differences, particularly regarding more directly political issues.

Languages, translation, inter-translation

The working languages during the lectures were Arabic, English, French and Italian (from Italian into the three other languages). Simultaneous interpretation was ensured by a particularly competent team from Morocco, which *Transeuropéennes* had already worked with during the Second Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops in October 2000. The workshops were based on inter-translation practices between participants, as tricky to do properly as they were profoundly necessary for the gestation of the projects. The need to communicate in the workshops in order to produce common intellectual and artistic work necessitated getting beyond the various instances of narcissism, exposing each participant to a variety of other forms of communication (making use of body language) and immersing them in the powerfully creative plurality of “foreign” languages. In the same way, the polyphonic reading of excerpts from *Al-Lajna* and *Les Bonnes* was perceived to be a tangible moment of encounter between the languages, rather than the expression of a heterogeneous reality. As one woman participating pointed out, what countervails everything that is lost in passing from one linguistic system to another is everything that is gained.

The weight of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

More than the dominant discourse about a war of civilisations, with respect to which the participants felt no real need to situate themselves, it was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which generated the most tensions and misunderstandings both between the participants themselves and between them and certain guest speakers. It was particularly the suicide bombings carried out by Palestinians against the civilian populations in Israel that caused the rifts, in a context of general misunderstanding of the facts of the conflict amongst the participants from the north shore. Contrary to the EMCA held in Marrakech in 2000, where the question was dealt with in depth, the Naples EMCA – in spite of virulent disagreements – did not make it possible to move toward a more in-depth discussion, which alone would have made it possible to overcome the malaise which was created by the public lecture by the Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim at the Orientale. The crisis-resolution session was certainly a moment of appeasement, enabling a fresh start on the Workshops’ common objective, but it did not really make it possible to sufficiently clarify the issue. Though the fear of doing irreparable damage paralysed the discussion, one must nevertheless pay tribute to the general refusal to stigmatise the other, which prevailed throughout the duration of the Workshops.

Naples, between chaos and seduction

The city of Naples was of great importance in these third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops, though it had no real impact on the participants’ actual work. Indeed, accommodated outside the city itself, the participants often had to spend a lot of time in transit, made all the more difficult because of the ongoing demonstrations against the Italian government, and which sometimes blocked access to the Academy of Fine Arts, where the sessions were held. Thus each participant went from the calm of the residence overlooking Naples Bay to the exacerbated and noisy movement of the urban centre. Waves from the late October earthquakes in Southern Italy and its aftershocks were clearly felt, adding to the decidedly chaotic perception of the city.

Though fascinated by the vitality and polyphony of the city and its past, which were in close resonance with the Workshops' theme of resistance to submission (1799 Revolution, labour militancy throughout the twentieth century), the participants were thus unable to assign Naples a genuine place in their work, except through the collective publication put together by one of the workgroups, which – its authors maintained – was structured in keeping with a logic of accumulation of historical strata, layers of colour, specific to the city itself. Yet Naples undeniably nourished the imagination and conditioned ways of moving, thinking and working.

The Neapolitan intercessors: the teams at the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo and the Accademia delle Belle Arti

The Nuovo Teatro Nuovo is a centre for experimental theatre in Italy. Established in a working-class neighbourhood, the theatre is in constant contact with Neapolitan social reality and develops theatre training courses for young people in difficulty, while at the same time pursuing a highly demanding artistic programme. Holding the EMCWs in Naples coincided with a cycle of producing three theatrical works by Jean Genet, directed by Antonion Latella: *Querelle*; *Les Nègres*; *Haute surveillance*. This programme influenced the decision to use one of Genet's works for the EMCWs, given the attendant possibilities for interaction. Thus, for many participants, one of the most intense moments was the performance of *Querelle*, followed the next day by a long discussion with Antonio Latella.

While the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo team guided the EMCW participants through the city on a daily basis, they also helped them in a decisive way to stage their productions at the session's end, through their advice, devotion and the interest they showed for the work underway. The last morning, focusing on the results of the workshops, entirely took place at the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo, giving the young artists and researchers access to a theatrical ritualising of their presentations.

L'Accademia delle Belle Arti (Fine Arts Academy) also generously made its classrooms available, both for the lectures and Workshops and the press conference. It constituted a particularly appropriate working framework, as informal as it was inspired.

Windows on Naples: academic partnerships and the French Institute

The project enjoyed the sound support of several large Neapolitan academic and research institutions: Istituto Universitario Suor Orsola Benincasa, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, as well as the French Institute of Naples.

At the *Istituto Universitario Suor Orsola Benincasa*, two noteworthy lectures were delivered to EMCW participants. Stefano Causa's talk dealt with an introduction to Naples from the perspective of art history, on the basis of iconographic documentation. Marino Niola drew attention to the relations between coloniser and colonised that informed the Orientalist readings of Southern Italy by eighteenth and nineteenth century European travellers. Highly original in its approach, his lecture opened up interesting lines of thought regarding the "other" in Europe – a novelty for many in the audience. The two lectures were followed by a guided visit to the Istituto led by Marino Niola.

The *Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"* hosted a large public lecture on the occasion of the EMCWs, in one of its amphitheatres in the historical centre. The idea was that its own students, and more broadly anyone interested from the city at large, could take advantage of the presence in Naples of the great novelist Sonallah Ibrahim. Some sixty people came to listen to the Egyptian writer, in the company of the university's vice-rector. The lecture itself took place in simultaneous translation (Arabic / English / Italian). *Transeuropéennes* and the university expressed the desire to pursue their collaboration.

L'Istituto Italiano per gli Studii Filosofici of Naples also generously hosted a lecture session on "Translating between cultures: a concept at work," with the participation of Raja Ben Slama, of the University of Manouba in Tunis, and Fabio Ciaramelli, of the *Università di Napoli Federico II*, as well as three young researchers who had previously taken part in the Second Euro- Mediterranean Cultural Workshops, in Marrakech in October / November 2000. At the invitation of *Transeuropéennes*, the three spent several days working in residence prior to presenting the results of their collaborative work to the public of the Istituto (regrettably poorly attended). The session at the Istituto Italiano per gli Studii Filosofici finished up with a welcoming dinner, which made it possible to deepen exchanges.

The international journal of critical thought, *Transeuropéennes*, having devoted its spring 2002 issue to the theme "Translating between cultures," the *Institut français de Naples* invited its editorial members (Dragan Klaić and Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes) along with Fabio Ciaramelli and theatre director Anne Torrès to meet the Institute's public and discuss the theme. This conference, though poorly attended on the day before the Toussaint weekend, was nevertheless a warm and amiable occasion, which continued long afterwards around a cocktail.

The crippling shortcomings of a local financial partner

The Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops organisers' lack of equanimity was doubtless due in large part to the defection of the Regione Campania, which, after having initially manifested its interest for the project as early as December 2001 and having promised a significant financial contribution in the framework of a jointfinancing programme with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, still (as of spring 2003) owes both the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo and *Transeuropéennes* subsidies making it possible to cover a substantial portion of the Workshops' production costs. A portion of the two Workshop organisers' energy was thus spent in uncertain negotiations of these financial dossiers, which were supposed to have been already finalised, which competed with the need to track the project itself.

Incidents of this kind are detrimental to the abilities of independent structures like *Transeuropéennes* or Nuovo Teatro Nuovo to create programmes for co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean cultural and political sphere in the intermediate and long term. They highlight, by contrast, the need to develop in earnest the resources of the European Commission in the framework of the Euro- Mediterranean partnership for the performance arts and the humanities in the broadest sense of the term.

Transeuropéennes' role

As in previous Workshops, in Toledo and then in Marrakech, Transeuropéennes managed the programme council, handled participant recruitment and selection, co-ordinated the programme's academic content, the principal discussions and workgroups, particularly in the start-up phase. The partnerships with the university and research institutes in Naples were set up by the Transeuropéennes / Nuovo Teatro Nuovo tandem. Local organisation was dealt with by the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo with the support of Transeuropéennes staff persons. Transeuropéennes carried out participant evaluation and budget synthesis. Follow up and tracking of the network is now being looked after by Transeuropéennes, which hopes to involve Nuovo Teatro Nuovo in the subsequent stages of the project.

A felicitous polyphony

Something specific to this group and to its Neapolitan moment was born of the shared observation of the distances separating the participants: sometimes radically opposed geographical, political, economic, social, urban, cultural contexts; diverse disciplines and fields of experience; very different relationships to the conflict in the Middle East, or different perceptions of September 11, or even the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Through their attitude, which could be defined as a prudent and risk-laden quest for the other, with means to work collectively and to live together, the participants managed to open up between them a field of resonance, without ever seeking to foist any enforced logic of dialogue upon it. When the dialogue emerged, it did so as an appeal to synthesise the echoes, impressions, dreams, fears, fleeting moments. Listening was a determinant factor. The imaginary soundtrack of the EMCWs was marked by the "polyphonic friction of languages," as one woman participant put it – Arabic, French, Neapolitan, Spanish, Italian, Albanian, Turkish, Greek and Serb. The moment of the Naples Workshops was constructed like a slow conquest of its own freedom of speech, a slow loosening of narcissistic attitudes, a progressive movement of bodies and minds toward one another. In fast-paced Naples, the group – shaken up by the vagaries of its daily migrations and its obligation to deliver both artistically and theoretically – was able to slow down its gaze, its speech, and found the time to grope about, to look around – and to look within. No doubt working on contemporary works helped, inasmuch as it obliged everyone to leave behind stereotypical representations of the imagination of the other, and to question the contemporary conditions of creation. This polyphony was also a factor in the readings that were given one bright sunny morning on a Neapolitan terrace: an excerpt from both of the two works was read in all of the available languages, then commented on in several languages, in keeping with a logic of intertranslation. "The poetry of friction between phonemes," as the participant already quoted put it, made a lasting impression on the Workshops. In the course of the Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops, notwithstanding the determination with which they pursued their respective approaches, none of the participants sought to be the spokesperson for one discourse or another. What they shared was the sentiment of an urgency which they had to deal with, and which could only be dealt with through working and being together. In this sense, the ritual-like day of presenting the results of the Workshops stands out as the high point of the work

process, poised on the fine line between the risk of self-exposure and the desire to go beyond oneself.

This extremely deep-going project, which invested the proposed work themes with obstinacy and determination, leaving everyone the freedom to be who they were, could also be seen as a way beyond the various forms of narcissism – and in that respect, intrinsically liberating.

The works on the programme: *Les Bonnes* (1954) and *Al Lajna* (1981)

These two works were chosen both for the relationship that their authors had with direct censorship – and even imprisonment – and for the way in which they dealt with the theme of submission.

Another point the two authors have in common is the extent to which they circulated between different shores. Genet on the basis of the vagabond figure, and without ever seeking to inscribe himself into any form of belonging whatsoever, lived in the Palestinian camps, and spent time in Morocco. Sonallah Ibrahim went to study in East Berlin, before attending the Film Institute in Moscow, thus experiencing at first hand the Soviet world.

In his lecture, Albert Dichy detailed how Jean Genet was confronted with a double process of censorship: the direct censorship of some of his works, and a more indirect form of censorship consisting of choking the work in a process of normalisation. This process began with Jean Genet's very first books, published clandestinely without indication of the publisher's name. Subsequently, Genet's works were presented in a context aimed at diminishing their impact. This sort of "supervision" of the texts was applied for instance to the theatrical work *Les Bonnes* (*The Maids*), first staged by Louis Jouvet. The play was presented in the same programme as a play by Jean Giroudoux of little impact. "Genet's work entered the literary world chaperoned," as A. Dichy put it. It was to be some twenty years before *Les Bonnes* was played alone in the theatre. Later, *Le Balcon* would be staged in scandalous fashion (first by Zadek and then Brook) in such a way as to defuse the text's scandalous violence. Yet everything about Genet the writer – whose work was born in prison – sets him in resistance to the law, to power, to imprisonment. Genet never placed himself as a writer in a relationship of opposition to the law; rather, he coiled himself into a strategist "in the tradition whose law he assimilated and whose inheritance he usurped" (A. Dichy). His resistance evolved around notions of tradition and treason. It unfolded through the corruption of language. It is in this respect that Jean Genet's relationship to vagrancy must be understood. He is a faceless, identity-less vagrant, who accepts misery as the price to be paid for vagrancy; a man who transgressed borders from one territory to another, and in this respect, a "Trans-European" par excellence. This is what gives his activism its full meaning. It is because he never situated himself in a logic of belonging that Genet was so well received by the Black Panthers or in the Palestinian camps, where he stayed for a long while.

The reasons for choosing Genet's play *The Maids* in particular relate to the domestic crime story the work was based upon (the same way that Bernard Marie Koltès' subsequent works would draw their inspiration from news items). Ideal (that is, silent) maids, the Papin sisters murdered their lady of the house with unheard-of savagery in

February 1933. All around them, a sphere of absolute repression had been organised, producing absolute submission (where no sign speaks of submission nor does any sign speak of revolt). Jacques Lacan, in his text on the Papin Affair, analysed the mental disorder of both sisters, showing that in their joint madness they came to be as one. Totalitarian societies produce oneness, and to produce oneness is to produce a sphere of death. To escape the radical drive for control of oneness supposes an energy of devastating destruction.

Sonallah Ibrahim's work also faced directed censorship (for his novel *That Smell There*). But censorship is also the context for his work as a whole; it is that which must always be taken into account. The Arabic world in general is faced with this question, stemming both from the political and the religious powers-that-be. One need only recall the recent censorship of a number of literary works in Cairo.²

In Raja Ben Slama's reading, the novel *Al-Lajna* raises questions of censorship and authority, and of censorship and pleasure. The unnamed narrator is someone who kills and who complies. The book is a tight weave of self-destruction resulting from absolute submission to order and to the law of the committee and the almost erotic pleasure of the repressed. Censorship plays a part in domesticating and yoking. In *Al-Lajna*, it goes hand in hand with the normalisation of the individual – in this case the narrator – who had been given to believe, for a time, that he can eke out a sphere of truth and autonomous speech. Censorship is only indirectly embodied by the committee, whose primary function is to uphold totalitarian logic. In that respect, *Al-Lajna* is also an Eastern-European dissident-style novel, of the sort that came out of the USSR, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and so on in the 1960s and 70s. Because more than a censorship authority, the committee is an authority of submission. To come before the committee is to be in a situation of absolute transparency. There is a unicity between public and private in the totalitarian world of *Al-Lajna*, and the borders between the public and the private have been abolished. The committee's language is thus indelibly tainted with political cant. It literally lead the narrator – that is, the “suspect,” the person who must be assimilated (eaten) by the order – to an attitude of absolute silence. The narrator's attempt to free himself by living outside the law having failed, the only option left open to him it to conform to a logic of submission, which radically excludes him from language. He is condemned to silence. It is more generally the system of “real socialism,” as a historical concept, which is described here as invading the imagination, the individual and collective subconscious, language and the urban space. The system's disruptive elements are those which cannot participate in the pleasure of transparency. Censorship in *Al-Lajna* is thus closely linked to domestication, to being shackled to order. The committee guarantees order's totalitarian character. It speaks the language of barren political cant. It is a laboratory for the creation of a new individual, ready to disavow everything and to blend into the One. But beyond the reference to the historical reality of “real socialism,” it is a more universalising form of totalitarian logic of reduction to Oneness which the novel *Al-Lajna* depicts – a superlatively devastating form inasmuch as it leads to self-destruction.

What the two works on the programme had in common was to show that the question of censorship and submission cannot be reduced to a curtailment of freedom. Death itself is at stake. As long as censorship can be represented, as Fethi Benslama pointed out, it is easy to bear witness to the hindrances it faces. When the Arabic world was colonised,

the agent of submission was identified. In the same way, when someone subjects someone else in a visible way, it is always possible to take action. What is at stake, however, in the type of censorship which cannot be represented, and which is not visible, is death itself. It unfolds in a hidden space – and is, for that reason, terrifying. The two works sought to represent the unrepresentable. And that is why they enable us to get beyond mere horror and fascination. In both cases, selfcensorship is a far more formidable challenge than censorship. Someone, something has managed to worm its way inside us. This sort of interiorisation of censorship and submission is the very mark of *Al-Lajna*.

Submission and the stakes of freedom

Fethi Benslama's two-fold inaugural lecture sought to grasp the theme of "censorship and submission" in both its psychic and political dimensions – both being essential constitutive elements of human beings. In psychic terms, submission can be thought of as an illness, one which is no different from other human illnesses. The difference between normalcy and pathology is not a difference of substance but a quantitative difference. Politics, moreover, must be thought of not as substance but as what takes place between humans, which is instituted, and which can thus be destroyed through submission and servitude.

Submission must be understood as a higher level of subjection. The relationship of power between the master and the slave is a conflicted relationship. Submission aims at the exhaustion of life. But if the master wears out the life of the slave, he no longer has a slave. The master must thus keep the slave alive – in other words, in a form of resistance. The master is thus himself enslaved to his slave. The overthrowing of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic plays itself out around death. He who risks his life is he who will become master. Hence the logic of terror, which is founded upon the overthrow of the master to save his life.

According to Plato, it is through laws that human beings achieve dignity – and freedom. There can be no human order without taboos. The child, for instance, does not understand the law, but understands taboos. "You can look but not touch." If the separation between touching and seeing does not exist, the consequences are terrifying. Laws are assimilated by human beings through taboos, which help words to separate things. Language ("Don't touch!") is the only humanising means of having human law, accepting and allowing social order to exist. What abolishes languages is the control drive, linked to power: "I want to take without deferring." This sort of immediacy abolishes language, which prevents words from having their place. There is only submission (and confusion) where language has been abolished.

According to Fabio Ciarelli, whose lecture dealt with the relationships between consumerism, conformity and servitude today in so-called "developed" societies, this immediacy – presented in the form of "good news" – is a vehicle of submission. Advertising acts as a sort of scripture of the accomplished technology that invades our everyday life. Advertising is a true "Paideia" – and one that is efficient – which ensures the passage from the condition of the *infans* (the one who does not speak, in the strict sense of the term) to the form of social being. What does advertising do to individuals? It socialises them by turning them into consumers, who aspire to the immediate

satisfaction of their needs. To do so, advertising plays upon “his majesty the baby,” who lies within all of us, and who is forever demanding assuaging. It plays on our narcissism. Consumer society dreams of bringing us all back to the dreamlike state of the *infans*, who hallucinates while awaiting satisfaction. It submits the age-old omnipotence of desire to consumerism, to need. In this context, combined with the processes of globalisation, socialisation represents in some respects a threat for the creativity of the individual psyche – for the imagination.

For, as Fethi Benslama showed, the imagination is one of the human being’s great powers for winning independence. Hallucination is a fundamental feature of the human subject as subject. The invention of oneself has to do with the imagination, which enables me to not have to submit totally to the other, to the real, to immediacy. When human subjects are prevented from fantasising, they fall ill. The primary force against submission is the interior force of inventing myself in an imaginary space.

Differentiation and resistance

Differentiating the self from the other, differentiating the real from the imaginary, differentiating need from desire, differentiating the other, differentiating oneself – these are all means of escaping submission. The confusion of authority is one of the conditions of submission. If there exists one sole authority, there is the risk of power being exercised blindly. To escape submission is thus to show that the other is differentiated. When Palestinians appear before the Israeli Supreme Court, the point is to show that the authorities are multiple within the master. The point is to overturn the authorities of the master who oppresses by pitting one group against another. The Palestinians, as Fethi Benslama noted, will not emerge victorious against colonisation if the Israelis do not rise up against the policies of their own government. One must always contend and play with the fact that the other is never total.

Nor however is the self total either. In the modern world, we can all be authors, in the sense of *causa sui*, self-generating. On the contrary, in traditional societies, no one can be considered an author. He who narrates is merely a sub-contractor of the supreme (and self-engendering) authority. One of the ways of presenting God in Arabic is to write “Houa,” (He) in mirror image. When the identical comes into contact, there is no mirror. Narcissism is someone who is no longer separated from his or her image. Absolute submission is submission to oneself, when nothing separates me from my image. There is submission only to narcissism.

However, the being that is accomplished as a totality (whose every desire is accomplished immediately) is unaware of the deferral of time, noted Raja Ben Slama, introducing her lecture on Sonallah Ibrahim through a reference to Lacan’s reading – in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* – of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. To defer is to differentiate. There exists a temporal gap between desire and its accomplishment. To be individualised is to be in this gap. The call for our autonomy (giving oneself one’s own law) is adequate to the nature of a desiring being.

The very concept of the subject is thus itself differentiated. It is, noted Fethi Benslama, the site of the contradiction between carrying (*sub-jectum*) and bearing, undergoing and being active. It differentiates itself from the individual (who is indivisible) and the person (who is the symbolic representation of the individual). To be a subject in society is not

merely to submit but also to be an actor. There is the modern revolution of the citizen (the inventor of laws), whereas the modern world is what pushes as far as possible the antagonism between freedom and subjugation.

Jacqueline Risset's reading of Georges Bataille allowed an approach to the subject via the figure of the writer. It is writer who establishes par excellence the limits of submission. "Literature, like dreams, is the expression of desire, and as such, of the absence of constraint." (G. Bataille) The writer is on the side of squander, of giving (and not involved in an economy of accumulation). Hence the diabolic dimension of literature, bearing in mind the watchword of the demon and of the devil: "*Non serviam*". Literature demands freedom, it requires distancing between what I write and what I am. The fantastical error is to confound fiction and reality... According to Bataille, therefore, the point is to come to understand the nuts and bolts of the fundamental incompatibility between literature and commitment. No one can serve a master without denying sovereignty in themselves. Maintaining the desire for sovereignty (as a horizon) is one of the mainstays of literature. Life has to be affirmed as freedom, even if we are not completely free. For Bataille, it is in communication that man selfactualises. Indeed, sovereignty and communication are almost synonyms in his work. Bataille reproached Genet with confusing sovereignty and degraded sovereignty (royal sovereignty), when Genet wanted to be the prince's equal. From a Bataille-inspired perspective, it was only in *Le Captif Amoureux* (*The captive lover*) that Genet recovered a fundamental freedom, having freed himself from subservience to a cause.

Systems of pleasure and of death

As Fethi Benslama showed, the relations between pleasure and displeasure are economic relations. Enjoyment (*jouissance*), on the other hand, goes beyond pleasure. It has no regulator. It gives itself over without any possible limitation, at the risk of going to its own destruction. And toward the destruction of the other. In the relationship of dependency, one "takes" (that is, takes control of) the body of the other, no longer considering that the other has the autonomy of their body: the other is thus transformed into a permanent sexual object, beyond their will. The law deals with the problem of enjoyment, and not with that of pleasure. Totalitarian systems are systems of enjoying the other. Enjoyment seeks to outflank the laws. In a despotic type system, an incarnate individual (the despot is the "shepherd," who wants to be the One) subjects the collective to his enjoyment. The One incarnate has the power of enchantment, through which we abandon our own will. In the Arabic world, there are only despots. Modern modes of subjugation are of different nature, having greater capacities for destruction. For if modern societies have reduced the enchantment of the despot, they have invented totalitarian societies, where scientific development leads to the creation of a homogeneous society. It is when repression becomes a source of enjoyment for the repressed that repression attains terrifying proportions. "Enjoying what one is subjected to is a mechanism more terrible than fear." (F. Benslama)

Collective reflection on the conditions of producing works of the imagination and of thought

The question as to the status of thinkers and artists, and that of the conditions of creation of works of the imagination and thought were omnipresent in Naples, thanks both to the artists who communicated their own experience in their role as lecturers and to the commitment of all the participants on these questions.

Reflection on the status of intellectuals and artists in society is not something that wears out over the course of generations – quite the contrary. The need to historicise this reflection made itself felt on its own during the debates, most notably in those which pitted the young generation of intellectuals from the Arabic world (one group of the participants) against Sonallah Ibrahim. In his public lecture, the latter blamed the successive waves of colonisation of Egypt since the Ottoman Empire until today with American ultra-liberalism for the bankruptcy of Egyptian intellectuals. This interpretation was contested by certain participants, desirous to raise the question of responsibility in new and different terms, which they considered less comfortable. Nevertheless, in both of his two lectures, S. Ibrahim stressed that in Egypt there is profound respect for authority, which leads to incessantly deferring the question of responsibility. He denounced the attitudes of servility of writers, some of whom have no scruples about joining a government or an authority, wherein they lose their identity. One of the proofs is how many formerly Marxist intellectuals have become Islamic fundamentalists,⁴ or have emigrated to the Gulf or the West or taken up official functions of servitude.

Dragan Klaic began his lecture by making reference to the hostage taking in the autumn of 2002 in a Moscow theatre. Theatres have always been places of murder and riot. The theatre is an integral part of the social imagination. It generally reflects the dimension of dominant power. Today, the dominant function of the theatre is commercial. But sometimes the theatre can be genuinely subversive, staging new forms of social relations. It can become a laboratory, a utopian machine rather than merely a critique of reality. However, the transgression value of theatre remains the exception. The theatre mostly serves to embellish the present order. Very often today, in fact, theatre has interiorised its constraints: dependence on the number of seats sold, subsidies from public money or even corporate patronage. Direct forms of censorship (be it for religious, moral or political reasons) are less prevalent than another, more silent, more gnawing variety of censorship – that of secret pressures and forms of intimidation. It is often in the gap carved out between the actor's words and gestures, in this aesthetic zone, that subversion lies.

One cannot write any history of censorship in the theatre without making reference to all the mechanisms of resistance which have existed – whether it be under far-right nationalist regimes such as Franco's Spain (Franquism forbade the Catalan people from using their language in the theatre, leading the Catalan to develop a theatre of movement) or in the Eastern-Block countries: "small-dimension" theatre, student theatre, amateur theatre, but also private performances. Studying the theatre of the Cold War brings out a permanent attempt to play cat and mouse, to test the limits of the possible. But it also brings out the processes of "self-censorship by anticipation" which dominated creation.

Presenting his work on Jean Genet's trilogy at the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo, Antonio Latella explained how he seeks to extricate himself from the conventional modes of communication in the theatre by meticulous work on space, through overexposure

(almost in the photographic sense of the term) of the actors to their emotions and those of the audience (by means of nudity for instance). Capturing life and vital energy is the very motor of his work, seeking at the same time to be as close as possible to the spirit both of Genet's work and his spirit. This vision is not shared by Anne Torrès, for whom nudity on stage – unless it corresponds to a very real necessity – runs the risk of engendering the submission of the actor's body, and the actor as a human being, to the director's will for control.

For Neapolitan theatre actor and director Enzo Moscato, to produce a work is to consummate betrayal. To translate a text is a work of betrayal. One creates a sort of sarcophagus around the author. For Moscato, the work of translation takes place on the stage, borne by intuition. Translation can engender harmony or disharmony. To play Genet, or the others, is to betray, for the actor is in the present, and they are the past. As Moscato sees it, to resist (the established order, dominant discourses, and so on), is to endeavour to "contaminate things." Born and bred in a neighbourhood that is at once working class and aristocratic (the Spanish Quarter), Moscato says he is the only one amongst seven siblings to have studied. He says he learned Italian as a foreign language. And is not sure of having consummated the betrayal entirely. To those who might dream of attaining eternity through the theatrical work, he responds by the ephemeral: the ephemeral moment on the stage is a fire.

These multiple discourses, conveying what are at times contradictory approaches, have to be thought of as points of crystallisation of thought regarding artistic work or theoretical thought. None of them were presented as the key, but on the contrary, as paths of reflection amongst others to think about the relationship to society, to the world, to forms of logic of domination.

The debates and discussions with the participants never ceased to confront the question of relationships between censorship and the freedom of thought and creation, as well as the question of forms of resistance to contemporary modes of subjugation, whether they be political (the despotic rulers from which many societies suffer in the Arabic world), socio-economic (the individual reduced to the status of consumer) or media-based (the contemporary figure of submission, in Europe, is the media, as one participant robustly argued).

Painful questions were raised with a genuine sense of urgency, bringing to light interesting methodological avenues. A theatre director from the south shore raised the question: "How is one to write against the current crisis?" To which Fethi Benslama replied by partially replacing the reactive question of "how to" with the more basic question regarding "how it is brought about." He proposed to use a psychoanalytic method, moving from the time of observation (the diagnostic) to the time of understanding (the link) and then on to the time of concluding (which makes it possible to mobilise means). The unrepresentable of censorship and submission must be represented. Something must be produced which prevents that logic from reproducing itself – rather than merely crushing it. For haste in concluding only reinforces the building of a space of confusion.

How is the word "resistance" to be reinvested? How can resistance exist without self-destruction? In resistance there is censorship, which can attain enormous proportions (often known as "political correctness"), as one woman participant pointed out. One needs to ask not merely what resists evil, tyranny, aggression, but also what resists

resistance. Resistance against what is good for oneself is the most complicated thing there is.

How is one to resist the atrophy of the symbolic in modern societies, if not by carrying out an individual slowdown with regard to the context in which one finds oneself?

Translation, in the broad sense of the term, leads to the suspension of time. It is a first step toward individual creativity.

Five proposals for imagination and thought: the work submitted

It is no mean feat to carry out this sought-after slowdown in a strictly determined and relatively short period of time: the two-week stay in Naples, and the return home immediately thereafter. Yet in a certain way this is what the participants in the Third Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops managed to do, in carrying out their group projects.

What could be slower than putting together a book – from its conception, its actual writing (whether this be photographic, literary or theoretical) through to actually hand-making it? Slowness once again in bringing into synch the readings of a common theme, on the basis of different languages and discourses, the polyphony elaborated at length in the poetico-theatrical workshop, whose slow unfolding remains a magical moment of the workshop. Slowness once again in the gestation of the two directly theatrical projects: in both cases, a concern for writing, a development of the text on the basis of the thematic elements under discussion, the first richer in irony, the second richer in tragedy. In both cases, this led to a short, dense scene, played in the space of the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo, but bearing the stamp of slowness within. Lastly, the rapidity of the gesture of the visual artists on white paper attached to the theatre's black wall, and the slowness of their preliminary transformation of this gesture toward a polysemy of identities...

According to Anne Torrès, who accompanied and supervised the work of the two theatre groups for ten days, the strength of these five workshops was to have enabled the participants to stage their relationships. Though “a body on stage does not suffice to make theatre,” it is the risk taken by “establishing relationships between bodies that makes theatre.” Each of the proposed events concealed, she argued, something of the searing flash of the theatre. In the first theatrical workshop, she emphasised “blind” trust of the other, which is sought after in the audience and upon which a successful stage performance is based. The agreement generated was the time of the performance itself. In the presentation of the book to the public, there was something rudimentarily theatrical – the secret which is delivered, one group passing the book to another group as if to that other self that the audience needs.

The theatre stage drew inspiration directly from the texts of Genet and Ibrahim, and it was notably the sound (the echo) in which the work reached us that spoke directly about theatre. In the poetry workshop, something dazzling was offered us – a “highly pure atmosphere of theatre, when the protagonists understand why they are together.” Indeed, the visual artists' performance opened the stage to the wings – to a space which the viewer of the paintings has no access.

Slowness even in speaking in the lecture hall because of the ever-present echo as well as the effervescence of speech.

The Workshops' method in general, and more particularly in the workgroups, was praised by the participants. It was the sense of freedom – to be oneself and to create the final project together from scratch – which prevailed in the evaluations. Many participants praised the fact that they were able to take the time (slowness once again) to “grope” their way along, to look without exactly knowing what they were looking for. Though the film and visual-arts dimension was lacking, and though the young artists and researchers had difficulty despite themselves in freeing themselves from their medium or tool of predilection and to practice inter-disciplinarity for themselves, it nonetheless remains true that the work carried out was both generous, open-ended, and pointed toward the future. Numerous participants made constructive proposals for future workshops, both with regard to the choice of works and with respect to method, and showed the desire to continue to work together on what had been started. The minimal means, like the time limitations, were praised as imagination- stimulating constraints. The fact that encounter led to taking action through a collaborative project also stood for many as a victory and source of hope. It is noteworthy to note that never in the course of the two weeks did any fascination with censorship or submission ever arise. A part of the EMCWs' success stems from the fact that they took the form of a poetic and practical attempt at loosening. The workshops enabled some to become aware of the powerful engine of self-censorship and to assert renewed determination to free themselves from it.

Notes

¹ Albania: 1; Algeria: 1; Egypt : 2; Spain: 1; France: 3; Greece: 1; Italy: 3; Lebanon: 1; Palestinian Authority: 2; Montenegro:1 ; Syria: 1; Tunisia: 2; Turkey: 2. Refused visas : Morocco: 3; Algeria: 2; Egypt: 1.

² See the third issue of the CEDEJ in Cairo, distributed by Editions Complexe – a remarkable overview of Egyptian censorship over the past decade.

⁴ Which is not without parallels in terms of the trajectory of numerous former-Yugoslav Marxist intellectuals, who drifted toward ethno-nationalism in the early 1990s.

The Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops: a synopsis of fundamental programme goals

Europe is not a monolith. Nor is the Mediterranean. Yet bilateral perceptions have a tendency to simplify to the extreme the other in its complex reality. The European Union appears to its Mediterranean neighbours like an arrogant fortress, whereas many Europeans see the countries on the South of the Mediterranean as a potential threat in terms of immigration, or a zone of privileged influence...

Today, on an everyday basis, in both mentalities and in state policies, interdependence remains a largely neglected reality, and the mutually enriching value of cultural exchange do not appear to be the order of the day. Instead, what prevails are identitybased discourses, the national or communitarian fragmentation of a common

cultural heritage, partitioning between the disciplines, difficulties in having people and ideas circulate. Assorted forms logic resulting from the watchword of a “war of civilisations” and identities have only amplified this phenomenon.

Artists, researchers in the humanities, writers, translators, editors of journals of critical thought involved in the dynamics of translation between culture, circulation between languages, between imaginations, are nevertheless aware of the power of bridge-building to meet the other, in all his or her difference and resemblance.

Transeuropéennes’ action in the Mediterranean is targeted at them, inviting them to deal with the realities of encounters and collective work, however difficult these may be. The will to create this programme thus obeys a triple necessity:

1. Create conditions of equality for cultural and human exchange between the two shores, through mobility, meeting and the knowledge sharing;
2. Contribute concretely, through the arts and through ideas, to the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean cultural and political space rich in its diversities, promoting a culture of civility in the face of a culture of war;
3. Create an informal space for collaboration and interaction for those people in their societies who are bearers of a new imagination, a new élan of thought and a desire for freedom.

Patiently, over the years, it aims to develop an informal network of actors from the cultural and associative world as well as cultural and associative structures, which, setting themselves apart from the discourse of closed identities, are desirous to set up a lasting partnership and to promote common references.

The contemporary translation of cultures: a common thread

In decoding potential or existent crisis areas, in the analysis of the supposed pre-established antagonisms and the deadlock situations to which they lead, in the gaze cast on the contemporary world and its breaches, translation and reflection on translation are particularly pertinent.

In the expression “translation of cultures,” translation should be understood not in the technical sense of the term, but from the perspective of a bridge enabling a reflection on identity, on reference, on the representations of the other, on the forms of cultural relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The title thus supposes getting beyond strictly literary problematics, and implies a reflection on back-and-forth movement between different forms of art and / or expressions of thought.

To work on the translation of cultures is not only to inquire into why one translates, but what one translates and how. It is also to examine the notion of the untranslatable, on the narratives of the untranslatable in the Mediterranean, and to thereby question the thematics of the irreconcilable, the question of modernity, the questions of origin / originality and of translation / betrayal.

Questions of this kind also necessarily require that one undertake reflection on the relationship between the writer and / or artist both as a person and as a collective imagination (of a people, a society, etc.).

It is thus an issue of civilisation that is raised by the translation of cultures.

The Workshops per se

The object of the Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Workshops is to bring together for a two-week period some thirty graduate-level students, men and women in the realms of comparative literature, philosophy, linguistics, translation, theatre, filmography or photography, from all of the countries of the Mediterranean area, who are recruited independently of any institution, in order for them to work together freely in the framework of workshops and seminars. Inter-disciplinarity is one of the mainstays of this collaborative initiative. All participants accept these rules just as they accept the project's transnational dimension.

Inscribed in the works of the imagination and thought, the work focuses on the sign, the image and the language, on the relationships between tradition and modernity, and on such issues as the representations of women in contemporary societies – a full range of problematics making it possible to stand apart from a museifying approach.

Speakers

Fethi Benslama, Writer, psychoanalyst, professor at the University of Paris VII (Paris) ; *Raja Ben Slama*, Assistant professor of Arabic literature at the Manouba University of Tunis (Tunis) ; *Isabella Camera d'Afflito*, Professor of Arabic literature at the Università de gli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" (Rome/Naples), translator and publisher ; *Stefano Causa*, Professor of art history at the Istituto Universitario Suor Orsola Benincasa ; *Fabio Ciaramelli*, Professor of philosophy at the Università de gli studi di Napoli Federico II (Naples) ; *Igina di Napoli*, Artistic director of the Nuovo Teatro Nuovo (Naples) ; *Albert Dichy*, Writer, literary director at the Institute for the Memory of Contemporary Publishing (Paris/Caen) ; *Sameh Fekry*, Graduate student in comparative literature, translator (Cairo) ; *Augusto Guarino*, Professor of Spanish literature, vice-rector of the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" ; *Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes*, Director of the international journal of critical thought, *Transeuropéennes*, and the NGO of the same name (Paris) ; *Sonallah Ibrahim*, Writer (Cairo) ; *Dragan Klaic*, "Theatrolgist," and president of The European Forum for Arts and Heritage (Amsterdam), member of the editorial board of *Transeuropéennes* ; *Antonio Latella*, Theatre director (Naples) ; *Sélila Mejri*, Senior lecturer at the Tunis Superior Institute for Language Study (Tunis) ; *Ferdinando G. Menga*, Graduate student in philosophy, University of Tübingen (Germany/Naples) ; *Enzo Moscato*, Actor, theatre director (Naples) ; *Marino Niola*, Professor of anthropology at the Istituto Universitario Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli (Naples) ; *Jacqueline Risset*, Writer, translator, professor of literature at the University of Rome (Rome/Paris) ; *Anne Torrès*, Theatre director (Paris). Academic advisor: Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes.

We extend our warm thanks to the whole team of interpreters led by *Mr. Majid Tamer* (Casablanca): Catherine Delaruelle, Pierre Lanotte, Francesca Rodriguez, Antonella Spagnoli, Bachir Tamer, Sabir Taraouat, Nicole Wright.

Partners

Co-organiser in Napoli : Nuovo Teatro Nuovo ; Artistic director: Igina Di Napoli ; Director general: Angela Montella ; Production manager: Giuliana Ciancio ; Administrator: Lucia Simeone ; with the participation of: Marco Ponticello and Bruno Travaglione.

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Notes
