

Call for papers
International conference, Paris
Diversity and interbreeding in
19th and 20th Century History
4th, 5th and 6th of December 2017
IHTP (CERA) IUf
Paris

The mixed race figure and the obsession with interbreeding occupy a central place in racist and anti-Semitic imagery. The terminological profusion for these categories: *half-cast*, *mulatto*, *quadroon*, “*chabin*”... bear witness to their centrality as well as of the universal character of the practices they remind us of. The notions of “mixed race” or “mixed marriage” are social constructions lacking any biological basis. They have, however, played a fundamental role in the creation and the assignation of identities and win the elaboration of “bio-politics”. In Western Europe as in the colonial Empires, interbreeding was often condemned, whether the marriages were between people of different religions, nationalities or “races”, according to the terminology in use. Interbreeding was perceived as creating multiple threats for a social order protected by a variety of borders, and its practice sparked various laws, ranging from assimilation policies for children born from mixed marriages, to relegation in a radical otherness. Within the States which openly accepted racist or anti-Semitic policies, mixed marriages were generally forbidden. Thus, during the Thirties and during World War II, the question of “*mischlinge*”, of “half-Jews” was a Nazi obsession and a true headache for most anti-Semitic States. Even when there was no specific status for the spouses or the children of mixed marriages, they still faced discrimination in most cases, though generally less severe than that which Jewish spouses suffered from.

Within the last decades of the 20th Century, the idea of interbreeding was the object of a semantic requalification focused on positive connotations. Now seen as an unstoppable process, diversity was enhanced in the cultural sector, the notions of interbreeding or transfer were defined as processes constituting Human history, and perceived as beneficial factors rather than vectors of corruption or loss of cultural and artistic heritage. Diversity became invested with political and philosophical hope, notably amongst international organisations such as UNESCO, or theorized, for instance through the associated notion of creolization developed by Edouard Glissant.

Despite (or perhaps due to) the globalisation process and the long term intensification of migration, no resistance has not disappeared. Interbreeding and diversity still give rise to fantasies, fears and rejection. The right and far right perceive them as a factor of the decadence of Western societies when faced with the loss of their identity. On the left, paradoxically, the refusal of diversity is borne by a number of anti-racist movements, whilst in arts, some movements are constantly struggling against phenomena described as “cultural appropriation”.

The purpose of this international conference is, through an essentially, but not exclusively historical approach, is to comprehend the “question of interbreeding” from a perspective connecting ideological, political, social and cultural stakes. Without neglecting elements which can help to enlighten us over the long term, we would like to analyse the challenges and the practices related to the question of interbreeding in the 19th and 20th Centuries, from today’s perspective. Rather than proposing an evolving picture which aims at an complete representation as much as we will be looking into the multiple facets of a

question, considering what tangles (and untangles) round diversity and interbreeding in various space-time contexts.

Hence, four approaches will be favoured:

Representations

Between mixophobia and mixophilia (Taguieff), the various fantasized types associated with the idea of interbreeding between individuals of different origins, cultures or religions will be confronted; whether they are taken from academic articles, literary texts, religious or political speeches, or media productions.

Practices

A second approach will study the question of interbreeding from a social history perspective. This will be done by examining the meaning of diversity or of its refusal, in terms of social advancement strategies, of subversion of the established order or of the assertion of alternative values. It will be necessary to take into account the gender prism, as diversity can lead to certain forms of emancipation as well as to the aggravation of domination relationships.

Politics

A third section will focus on exploring policies linked to diversity, at State level, but also through religious authorities and instances speaking in the name of their communities or of antiracist movements.

Crossbreeding and cultural transfer

The final section will reconsider the cultural implications of crossbreeding, or of hostile movements – denouncing various forms of “cultural appropriation” - through paradigmatic case studies of the different mechanisms.

The suggestions, in French or English (one page maximum) are to be sent in before September 30 th with a CV enclosed at : metissagecfp@gmail.com

Comité scientifique

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