"Barbarian" Women: North African Literary Perspectives on Emancipation

Transcript

Michael Willis

Welcome everyone and welcome to this term's gender and sexuality seminar. Now this is not just the final event of this term. It means it's the Middle East and it's the final event of a whole academic year and appropriately we have a very something very special for you here this evening. Our speaker tonight is Dr. Farah Benjamar. And Dr. Benjamin is a professor aggregate of French literature at the University of Tunis. And she is also the current Hassan Ben-Gassim visiting fellow here at the Middle East Centre at St. Antony's. The fellowship, the Hassan Ben-Gassim visiting fellowship is one that brings Tunisia's top and most interesting academics to opposite for a term. And so we've been delighted to welcome Farah here for this particular term. Now, Dr. Benjamin's research focuses on space and representations of the self in modern and contemporary literature. She completed a PhD in French literature at the University of Manuba in Tunis with a dissertation on spatiality in the work of Valerie Labour. She has published on authors including Georges Perec, Renee Shah and Valerie Labour, as well as on contemporary cultural productions and artistic practices. Her recent work explores alternative cartographies and the intersections of literature, politics, and feminist critique. Her talk this evening is entitled Barbarian in very, very large quotes. I think it has to be emphasized as I said, Barbarian Women, North African Literary Perspectives on Emancipation. Farah.

Farah Ben Jemaa

Thank you, Michael. Thank you for the introduction and for agreeing to chair this talk. I'd like to begin by thanking everyone at the Middle East Center for the great welcome I've had throughout this term. Thank you to Jenny who just left but organized everything and beyond this talk. And thank you to Mariam for inviting me to, for giving me this opportunity to participate in the gender and sexuality seminar. Thank you as well to all of you for being here because I know it's a very busy time of term so it's really appreciated. As you mentioned, I am here as part of the project of a project that I'm realizing with the support of the Oxford Exchange Program. So it's very much a work in progress. I'm still in the early process of doing it and I hope to develop it in the coming months. So I'll be presenting today what I have so far and I'm very much looking forward to your feedback and your thoughts on it. The working title of the project is Barbarian Women, North African Literary Perspectives on Emancipation. And I will be looking at the works of Blanche Bendahan and Luisa Yusfi and the ways in which place, affects, and collective experience shape their forms of female subjectivity, of female

subjectivity. So just to give you some context, I would like to start with this photograph. It's a press photograph that was taken in 1958. during one of many so-called unveiling ceremonies organized by the French Army, and specifically the 5th Bureau of the French Army, which is specialized in psychological warfare. So you can see that there are soldiers in the background, looming over everyone in the background. The idea, at the time there was a history and there was a common practice of unveiling women across Algeria at the hands of the army. Most of them were very violent, much more violent than this. And for reference, you can look at the works of Franc Fanon at the time wrote about it. He called it La Bataille du Voile. And more recently in the UK, Neil McMaster, who did an extensive, very comprehensive history of the phenomenon and the aftermath on women after these forced unveilings. And my personal favorite, Maria Lazar, who is an Algerian-American sociologist who, among other things in this book, The Eloquence of Silence, she discusses the ways that women resisted that humiliation of unveiling during the colonial times and after. I chose this picture because it's an appearance less violent form of unveiling of these Algerian women, but also because it wasn't just the work of the Fifth Bureau. For this, it was a whole operation for which they recruited one of their civil branches, the movement of the women's solidarity movement. which is a feminist movement co-founded in 1958 by Suzanne Massieu, who is the wife of General Massieu. So it's not a great premise, to say the least, because he's associated with torture and with breaking down the FLN in our Jews and not a great character all over. The goal of the movement, the stated goal of the movement, was the emancipation of Muslim women. So they did so with food distributions, with clothes distribution, with circles for literacy, for sewing, for learning European cooking, and they also organized several such ceremonies to allow women to become what they called evolve, evolved at the time by unveiling. And, of course, the situation is very representative of what decolonial studies call civilizational feminism, with Lila Aboulorod, with Francis Verges. all of these scholars have discussed this posture that posits that non-Western women have not yet reached a sufficient stage of maturity and progress and that they must be saved by European women from themselves really and from their environment. And the main way to do that is to to follow the example of Western secularity. We see the same phenomenon during colonial times with urban elites. We see it after the independence with, for example, the state feminism, who himself was unveiling people left and right at the time. And even after that, in the context of the 19th and 2000s in France where the diaspora took part in, for example, movements such as in the Maghreb community. Now, that being said, we also know that it wasn't the only strand of feminism in North Africa or even in the Arab world at the time. We know that from the second-half of the 19th century and to this day, there is an important Islamic or Muslim feminist movement There are the classic texts here with to a certain extent in Morocco or even more recent examples with Zahra Ali or in Morocco. The obviously the purpose is the goal is the same is to improve women's conditions through meaning interpretation of texts. But on top of that, in the colonial context, it

was also very much attached to a claim to identity and to national sovereignty, which means that resisting European-style emancipation was equivalent to defending a national identity, which was threatened at the time by colonization. Just to give you an example, in Algeria, when the first Algerian Muslim Congress had its convention in 1936, The first, first Algerian Muslim.

Michael Willis

Actually, it's the it's the it's the anniversary of the centenary this week.

Farah Ben Jemaa

Really? Yes.

Michael Willis

Sorry, I didn't interrupt the centenary this week.

Farah Ben Jemaa

No, but the anecdote is funny because, of course, the women question came up and across the political spectrum, spectrum, sorry, from the so the religious people to the left, to the communist party, everyone agreed on the importance for women of a Muslim personal status code because again of that context of colonization. So the fact is for a long time feminist discourse has been at the crossroads of two movements, 2 tensions, secular feminism on the one hand and Islamic or decolonial feminism. Now, and this is my starting point, I am trying to look at feminisms which have transcended this binary. In other words, are there or how do writers create a situated feminism without falling into a rejection of cultural or religious heritage and at the same time without idealizing the European mother? And then the key word here is situated feminism, because it's really attached to the location. To answer this question, I am currently compiling a corpus of such writings, among which these two authors that I will be discussing today, Blanche Bendahan and Louisa Hughes. I hope it's visible enough.

Michael Willis

See the back? OK.

Farah Ben Jemaa

As you can see, the first one is a picture of her book because we don't have actual pictures of her. She's very elusive as an author. These 2 authors, as different as they are and seem, they point to 1/3 way. So what does this third way mean? It means, and this is really the heart of my argument, that they anchor their identity as women, not in one model or the other, but in the place they come from, or they live, or they describe, or set their works. The place, its affects, including collective ones, their experiences in it, the lived communities they harbor. So whether it's in Morocco or Algeria, Blanche

Bendahan and Luisa Yuschi as I put it here, they define their identities as rooted in their land, in a very concrete and material sense, and in the sensory and social experiences that they have there. To explore this further, I will be drawing on Raymond Williams' structure of feeling theory. And this is really one of the aspects that I would welcome your thoughts on because I'm currently not really sure about how precisely how relevant it is with these texts. So that's for the context and the scope of this research. Now for this presentation I will develop my argument in two parts. The first one In the first one I call it affect and lived experience. I will present the authors and use their text as a starting point to demonstrate their relationship with place, intangible culture and female identity. Affect and lived experience. Then I will introduce the second layer of my project, which I haven't mentioned so far, which is a mapping exercise. because my ultimate goal is to, and I will expand on this later, is to map these texts, to put them literally on the map. So basically the texts first and then the methodology. And it might seem that I'm moving quite abruptly from one to the other, but then at the end I will tie it back together and explain the relevance. So just bear with me. Let's start with Blanche Vendahan. Honestly, that's the great discovery of this academic visit because I discovered her here at the Bodlin. She was born in Oran in 1893. Her mother was Spanish from Malaga, and her father was an Algerian Jew from Tetuan, but he was living since generations in Oran in Algeria, which was fairly common at the time because of the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1859 and the fact that a lot of Tetuani Jews moved from there to Oran, but they kept this connection to the Tetuan and they called it their sentimental Mecca. So anyway, we can see that she has connections to Jewish Spain and we see it in all the Judaist Spanish writings in her texts. She has connections to France because after the independence she moved there as a French citizen. She also wrote essays, novels, poetry between 1926 and 1970. And what I really find striking is that during that time she was quite famous. She had a lot of recognition. She had a flourishing literary career in France and then she disappeared after her death. Today you can barely find her books in a couple of Parisian libraries and I am still in the process of collecting her works. I'm very curious about one specific book which is a dystopian novel that she wrote in 1961 She imagines 10 years in 2005 in this novel. And there are tales of male ordered husbands and gender fluidity. And it's about gender fluidity and it's about ending racism by blowing up society. And the best part is it's called Gentlemen, You Are Impotent. Always written in the 60s by someone who was born in the 19th century. So you understand my curiosity. And also she was a pacifist and a feminist political activist at the time. Now I mentioned Tetoin earlier in her biography and on the back because that's also where she sets her most famous novel, Mazatov, that I will be discussing today. It was written in 1930 and recently translated to English in 2024, which actually has, I think, given it a little more visibility in academia and could help with recognizing her better. So, what is Mazatub about? It's about a... Mazel Tov, actually, a young girl from the Juderia, which is the Jewish quarter of Teton. She's very beautiful, she's very intelligent, educated, because she attended the Alliance

Israeli to Universe, which is the main school for girls at the time. She's a very womanesque character because she's melancholic young girl who was misunderstood by her family and neighbors. She's perceived as strange. And at the same time, she's very sarcastic and she's a keen observer of the colorful characters of the Juderia. And speaking of characters, one of the main ones is precisely the neighborhood, the Juderia of Tetuan, because The novel describes it in great detail and describes the lives and traditions and practices of the Jewish Moroccans at the time, to such point that the critics consider it a very reliable document of the time and place which has basically disappeared. And at the same time, Mazel Tob is very critical of many aspects of that life, especially women's living conditions. And I will come back to this, of course. So it's not really a blind allegiance to the place or to Tetoin, because she's really highly critical of these structures of diminution. Now, the heart of the plot of the novel is that at 16 years old, Mazel Tob is married to an older man, Jose, whom she doesn't love. but he's rich and he's made his fortune in Buenos Aires, which is also something historically accurate. And of course, she's in love with someone else. She's in love with Jean, who is her French, Moroccan, so Catholic and Jewish childhood friend. So there's a lot of pining and a lot of missed opportunities and a lot of longing and frustrated desires. And now as I'm saying this, I'm realizing that the story really looks like the trope, the really orientalist trope of the woman torn between two men or torn between West and East or modernity and tradition between Jose and Jean. But I really think that the novel, it's not the case because the novel is saved by the ending, the ending of the events. What happens at the end of the novel is that her husband has been so unfaithful that she doesn't feel connected to him anymore. She doesn't feel obligated to remain in this marriage or to remain faithful to him. And she decides to flee with Jean, her lover. So she packs, she leaves the walls in the dead of night and they're decided on going to France to live freely. And at the last moment, she renounces it. She decides not to go. And the only explanation she gives is that she's a woman of there's no other explanation to her defection. And I'm insisting on this because that expression is really at the heart of my argument. She repeats it a lot throughout the novel, and she uses it both as a motivation for her actions and as an explanation of who she is. So what is a woman of Tetoin? I'll try to summarize it in three characteristics. First of all, a woman of Tetoin is the example of her mother. Her mother is the perfect example of that. We have a scene where she's standing at her mother's tomb and she's remembering her life. I'll give you some excerpts. Between the ages of 15 and 38, she baked more than 10,000 kilos of bread. She prepared more than 8,000 lunches and dinners. She spent more than 17,000 hours making jams. She devoted more than 17,000 hours to cleaning the house. She devoted 17,000 hours more to sewing the linens and clothes for the family. She devoted 17,000 more to washing and bathing the numerous children home, among other tasks, she gave to Israel. She darned more than 3000 pairs of socks, rising early, going to bed late, disdaining all distractions, even a simple walk. She sacrificed her youth and her beauty to this minotaur, her home, and night and day, unceasingly, she suffered. It's

very bitter because it's really the last thing that remains of her mother, the only thing that she remembers of her life. So, a woman of is, first of all, a slave to domestic obligations. shows it really often. She frames women's issues in relation to the concrete material conditions of women's lives. A woman from is a woman who does not have the financial means for emancipation, first of all. And it's important because it's precisely those economic and material conditions that make her sort of wary of the European mirage of emancipation. Her potential, her fascination with France that she had growing up is tempered somehow by her class consciousness. And we have another example, a funnier example of that in this excerpt. Mazatap lives through a French almanac. These beautiful Parisian ladies are so funny with their slender dolls waists. sleeves and funnel skirts. Mazeta believes through the almanac. Here is the stage of a theater with magical dancers. Here, an elegant Amazon rides a galloping horse. And there, a crowd applauds a singer with swooning eyes. But, because there's a but, who needs their daily bread? Who makes the almond cakes? Who distills the anisette? Who prepares the orange blossom jam? Who makes the palm tree brooms? Who runs the household of these pretty ladies who seem to exist only to be admired and who astonishingly go out without their husbands? The strange life of the going from the big city is quite intriguing to Mazatov. So in other words, it's well and good to be beautiful, free and emancipated, but one still has to have the material means to do so. The idealized, this idealized image that she sees in the almanac is only accessible to to the wealthy classes in the end. Now secondly, a woman of Tetoin is also a superstitious woman. She's attached to a form of ancestral wisdom. She believes in a form of, yeah, an older wisdom coming from women generally. There's, we see it in the example of Mazatab's sister, who cannot wait to be married. And in the meantime, she's developing some psychosomatic conditions regularly and some diverse ailments in waiting to be married. So unfortunately, our Presiada, her sister, has a face as long as the Yom Kippur fast. Her eyes like shrunken buttonholes and hair that would likely benefit from disappearing under the wedding headscarf. Besides, her cheeks are covered with pimples. Marriage will cure that, the elderly ladies say. The slightest cold weather sweater already thick fingers with blisters. Marriage recure that too. They said is grumpy because of her stomach ailments. Marriage recure both her stomach and her grumpiness. And actually does in the novel. She is cured from all that after, once she's married. And we see it in the form of the text, the fact that the voice of the narrator and the voice of the old ladies are intertwined. kind of shows that there is some truth, there is some element of truth in what they're saying. It's a sort of recognition of this knowledge, this old woman's wisdom. Finally, a woman from Tetoin is also a woman consumed by guilt, by shame, by the fear of displeasing others, by self-sacrifice, a very Jansen history way of life. This is how she defines her own struggles as when it comes to love. At odds with countless heroines from the novels, because Mazel Tob is an avid reader, at odds with countless heroines from the novels who must wrestle with evil instincts, Mazel Tob instead must crush the ancestral inclination for chastity within her.

heart's happiness comes at such a price, meaning when her The characters she reads have to fight against desires of lust and sexuality. She has to fight her instinct for chastity. On the other hand, she has to make herself unchast to reach her heart's happiness. So to sum up, and it seems maybe quite obvious, but the woman of Teton is the product of the spirit of the time and place. in the way she's portrayed. That's why I think we can really benefit from the structures of feeling framework by Raymond Williams, as I mentioned earlier, who is a Welsh cultural studies theorist from the 50s. I'll go through the definitions really quick, so not to bore you with the theoretical details. But basically structures of feeling is as firm and definite as structure suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience. It is a way of responding to a particular world. Its elements are embodied, related feelings. There's another definition that I find very, it's a secondary source, but it explains the same thing much clearly. It's the felt sense of a shared, of a life, sorry, shared by a community. It finds in arts its most effective means of expression, and it can be realized and communicated as a whole experience. So to explain this and to summarize it in the case of Mazel Tob, structures of feeling are something of an intangible nature. It's not something that's describable or material. The Woman of Teton. It expresses itself in artistic form, the novel. It's part of a continuum of past, present, and group individual, and never an opposition between them. They are a collective way of inhabiting the world. It's rooted in material conditions. So I honestly think that we can draw from this framework to to understand this sort of situated feminism as the example of Blanche Bendehan shows it. Now, another example of a feminist, of a writer defining a feminine, a feminine, sorry, ethos in an intangible collective practice or practices is Louisa Usfin. There you go. She's much more radical than Blanche Bendahan. Her discourse is much more political. She attacks the edifice of coloniality head-on. She was born in 1988 in Cannes, and she's a writer and decolonial activist, very close to actually the extreme left of, and she's very vocal about it. primary stance is to write first and foremost as a member of an Algerian immigrant family in France, which means as someone who is locked in a form of modern indigenous situation or condition that does not speak its name. Officially, she's French, but we all know that there's a renewed indigenous situation for this generation of immigrants. She critiques the invisible structures of domination, which are rooted in racial relations inherited from colonialism, as well as Republican universalism. She has published 2 books so far. Res des Barbar in 2022, which has been translated to English in 25 in defense of barbarism, And a few months ago, in 2000, 2026. This one hasn't been translated yet. Of course, you will have gathered by now that the barbarian of the title is borrowed, but also another author who is very close to her and uses the same term, who is who's also extremely political in France, and she wrote both a little bit for so barbarians obviously is a reference to non-white people in France. So, we have these two authors, two Algerian French authors, calling themselves barbarians, which is not a new device. It's an old strategy used by many historically dominated groups, the reversal of stigma. A lot of them have

historically used a derogatory term weaponized against them by the dominant groups as a way to strip it of its violence. We see it in rap music, we see it in LGBTQ groups. The idea is to use the insult and to appropriate it as to nullify its power, to reclaim it as to nullify its power. It's the case here, but I also have to introduce some nuance because it goes beyond, I think, reappropriation. It touches on identity and resistance. The first, to my knowledge, the first one to have used this word is Algerian writer who is quoted at the beginning of and he said something interesting, which is, I feel that I have so much to say that it is perhaps best that I not be too learned. I need to hold on to some barbarism. I must remain A barbarian. And this is the opening of Reste Barbara. So the barbarians, like Kate to be seen, but also like millions of colonized people or immigrants, are the indigenous or the formerly indigenous. They are considered inferior, but they have nonetheless been welcomed into the great project of the French civilization, either through education or through immigration. They were policed, they were civilized, they were taught all the right things to think and say. They have been integrated, they have been assimilated. The problem now, according to Luisa Yusfi, is that education and the promises that were given to these barbarians are merely a means of subjugating them. It's only a way of taming them by blackmailing them with assimilation and integration. What she says basically is, to be one of us, you have to free yourself. You have to free yourself from the weight of an archaic culture that oppresses you. That's what you have to understand. You have to shed your language, your traditions, your religion, the barbarian side of you, to enter the republic, to become to enter the Republican contract, to enter the great secular assimilation, which is what happened for decades in France, as an example. Now, the real problem still according to Tarouza Yousfi is that even after freeing themselves from their language, their traditions, their religion, these barbarians still haven't been assimilated. It hasn't worked. in practice today, they are still in France today in practice, they are still seen and treated as inferior. That's because, according to integration is a scam. It was never meant, it never had any real intention of accepting these children of immigrants in her view. And you can just look at the French state homophobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, sorry. to understand that, to see examples, concrete examples of it. So what's the solution? According to Luisa Yusfi, the solution is to simply abandon the contract. Give it up. We might as well, she says, reclaim our barbarism. We might as well be what they say we are. We must reclaim the entire identity that has been stripped away in the name of integration. Reclaim our language, contextualize and understand our heritage, rediscover a form of spirituality, of superstition that resists erasure and the attempts at erasure by simulation. So the barbarian in the end is not a savage that's waiting to be educated. It's the other way. It's an identity of resistance for the children of post-colonial immigration in France. And this is the core of her thoughts, an identity of resistance. If we were to think of an example, we can take a very easy one, which is baby names. In France, there is a law that prohibits parents from giving their children names that go against their interests. And when you're a second generation immigrant,

the word interest of the child can have two meanings. The first meaning is to give them a name, their interest is to give them a name that's easy to assimilate, a name that's neither too Arab nor too Muslim, culturally neutral that will help them in the job market and at least spare them some police brutality and things like that. So secular consonants, no ha, no a, no things like that. And in the second interpretation of the child's interest, and here I quote Luisa Yusfi, she says that the interest of a child is to be reconnected to their historical identity, since that is what will give them the tools to face a country that is becoming increasingly hostile toward the descendants of immigrants. Giving them a first name that connects them to their history, to their lost world, is placing them under protection. giving them a strength, a strength that will accompany them throughout their life, and that will require this child, in the other hand, to make the journey toward that protection. It requires a very active process. So in other terms, the best interest of the child is to remain barbaric, to hold on to his barbaric origins, and to reject the alienation of fake integration. Now, this alienation, according to affects particularly women and especially women writers in France. Because when you're a woman, right, you're a woman from an immigration background and you write in France, it's a very difficult position, not just in France, really everywhere. It's a very difficult position. It's almost untenable. How can you write about your life, about your culture, ancestors and everything that you hold dear without offering it up as a spectacle, without making it, offering it as fodder to a gaze which is at best orientalist and at worst completely predatory and extractivist. Where do you, how do you write and erase decades of self-orientalism as well? So it's a very difficult position for these for these women specifically. I think Louise Iusfi found a solution, a way out of that. And it's interesting what she does. She has always been accused of being, of eluding the woman question, of not talking about women enough. I mean, usually these are right wing criticisms, but She's been accused of not being feminist enough, of being conservative, of being, they call it, meaning it's her brain that's wearing a headscarf. And of course, the reason behind this is very simplistic, as racism usually is. She's a brown woman, she's an Arab woman, so she must be oppressed. And so she has to stand up to oppression, she has to denounce it, she has to dedicate her work to the fight against misogyny and preferably Arab men's misogyny if possible. What she does is that she says no. She refuses to play along with this game of co-optation. Her way of being a barbarian as a writer is to refuse to be the token Arab feminist writer, even if it means not being considered a feminist at all. That's the price she's paying actually currently. And also beyond that, I also think that more seriously the figure or the framework of the barbarian can be interesting in the context of feminist literary analysis. That's why I have tried to tie them up, to tie them together. Because I also think Mazel Tov is a barbarian, or even Blanche Bendahan, to some certain extent, probably was a barbarian. She does not want to be liberated and civilized. according to that model. Even if it leads to her own death or the death of her lover, she wants to remain a Tetuani woman because for all the reasons she doesn't need even to explain.

So to sum up all this, I really think that structures of feeling provide an interesting framework for understanding both Blanche Bendahan and Luisa Yusfi's barbarian feminism. It is rooted in a continuum and never in opposition between past and present, individual and group, emotion and rationality, and all in again in an artistic form. At this point, am I okay with that? Yeah, absolutely. All right. At this point, I would like to turn to the second part, the second layer of the project. As I mentioned, I want to explore whether it is possible to speak of a feminism of the affect through these authors in North Africa and whether there are other texts that could lend themselves to this framework and precisely to see if there is enough material to visualize these works. My plan is to arrange them in a map, to put them on a counter map to be more precise. So let's move on to the second part of this presentation, mapping structures of feeding. As I said, I will be focusing on counter cartography. It can go by several names. You can find names such as deep map, counter maps, sensitive maps, critical cartography. Today, for the interest of clarity and brevity, I'll just use the most, the broadest of terms, counter maps and counter cartography. So how does it work? Basically, counter cartography challenges the widespread perception that maps are exact and neutral depictions of reality. We always can see, we have historically always imagined maps as true, as scientific truth, because they they are grounded in scientific tools, they are grounded in scientific terminology, and therefore they are undisputed sources of knowledge. Of course, now we understand that they're not. We understand that they are as politically situated as any other form of scientific discourse, and they're actually frequently produced, really, and deployed as ideological weapons. You can just look at the whole Mercator projection debacle. And it shows great example of that. So just to be quick and to define, to give a more broad and clear definition of deep maps or counter cartographies within the different taxonomies, I think we can sum it up in four. criteria really. The first one is that counter cartography, sorry, challenges A dominant narrative about a topic and or a place, or it brings to light some of its less visible or recognized aspects. This is something I will complete later. The second one is that they also aim to map themes or ideas or people who are usually dismissed as too subjective or unscientific or unimportant things like lived experience or self-reflection or minority experiences, the mundane, the ephemeral, the intangible. All of that is never mapped. Counter maps try to counter that, to counter that tendency. Thirdly, they include movement. They're not two-dimensional or linear, but they include movement, which means contrast, succession, superposition, layers. They can integrate time and reflect many various realities beyond geography itself. And that's possible because of the last criteria, which is that often, and this is particularly true of deep maps, they are multimedia. You can add text, you can add images, music, any sort of media you wish. So this is all very theoretical and I'd like to give you an example of a deep map. A great example actually of this methodology which is the MacMorris map created in 2025. This is a map created by scholars in 2025 and was funded by the Irish Research Council. And as you can see it's a It's a map of the monster province of Ireland, sorry. It's hosted

on the website that you see right under it. And it's accompanied by a book written by the heads of the team that led the project, in which they explain the methodology, the analysis, the commentary of the map. This is how they define it. This is how they create it. They introduce it, sorry. The MacMorris Project, and MacMorris is, I learned it recently, is the name of the only Irish character in Shakespeare, apparently. And it's also an acronym for the project. So the MacMorris Project seeks to capture the complexity and richness of early modern Ireland by mapping the full range of cultural activity across languages and ethnic groups from 1541 to 1660. This largely bilingual resource provides the first inclusive account of creative, scholarly, and intellectual activity in a time of conquest, plantation, and colonization. This is their general project. And this is the website. This is the main page of the map. And each little tick and each color is a category. So patronage, lordship, cultural production, blue is for bodies of water, green is for the wilderness, music and entertainment, etc. The idea is that there is a whole cultural and political production that has been disappeared, really invisibilized with the colonization. So the idea is to show it again, to collect as many texts as possible and to attach them to the places they have been created in, the places they speak of, to confront some ideas. You have letters from Lords complaining about something and a song, a folk song mocking them, for example. It creates a sort of horizontal appreciation of all the creations of that area at the time without any hierarchies. And this is a very important thing with deep maps. There aren't any hierarchies because you're on the same plane. You cannot, it's, no production is more important than the other. And that's why it's decolonial as the project mentions it. The other, another great feature that I wanted to show you is that when you click on something or text, There is also a network of hyperlinks that send you to connected persons or texts or places, which is really a very valuable tool for researchers when you're working on that era or that region. It can create all sorts of knowledge of connections between themes and characters. I wanted to really quickly show you other examples of deep maps just to see the range of this methodology. All right. This one, for example, is a website called Harass Map, which reports instances of sexual harassment in Cairo. Users are, they can log into the map and just pinpoint on wherever it happened. an instance of incident of sexual harassment or incident with intervention. It's really helpful because it's actually more accurate than, for example, police reports because we know that victims don't always come forward to report these things. So this can be a very helpful tool in social sciences research, for example. This one is an artistic deep map which is created by a group of European students about the lives of scholars in neoliberalizing academia. So you can see many things of many aspects of their lives. I think this one is the recruitment process. This one is money, so major preoccupation. This one I interpreted as the dream we all have of leaving everything and growing potatoes somewhere or leaving everything behind. Anyway, it was just to show that there are as many deep maps or forms or types of deep maps as there are lived experiences. And it's a really interesting tool to give it some visibility. Now, and this is

my final point, which brings me back to my first part. and connects the two main sections. How can deep maps be or counter mapping? How can it be interesting for studying these barbarians? How can we use this framework to define this feminism of the effect? It can be because first of all my goal is to conduct a sort of quantitative study. There is I'm looking for, I'm looking to see if there's enough material or enough text that could be described as a trend, a general trend in North Africa. And here the map would be a good way to actually visualize the quantity, the amount of text that we have. Secondly, deep maps are pertinent here, relevant here, because both, because, sorry, structures of feeling are geographically situated. in Williams' framework, you always study the structure of a feeling of a place in time. And then maps, sorry, in that way are very useful. Meaning, I think counter-cartography and structures of feeling are two frameworks that could really communicate wonderfully together in this context. Thirdly, the language of counter-mapping interests me because it gives voice to these realities which are neglected by official discourse. For example, affects, collective experiences, the wisdoms of the elders, the indangible, et cetera, rap music in the case of Luisa Yuschi. And it's interesting then to give it a sort of visibility. And finally, it all ties back to my very first point, which is forced emancipation of women, because let's not I mean, we know that the notion of modernity or emancipation is also specially situated. The cliche has it that free women are north of the Mediterranean, Europe is the place of emancipation, and Africa or North Africa is by very nature or determinism not. So this map could actually challenge that misconception. Now, With these arguments and encouraged by these arguments, I set out to create my map, which sadly I would not be able to show you today because of technical issues. I have to mention that I had the valuable help of the map room at the Western Library, which is a great place and great people for your mapping needs if you ever have any. They showed me how to create my own my own deep map, but I tried to build a map of the Mediterranean with the cities that I'm interested in, which are for now, for and Marseille as well. And I'm trying to add the texts and it works quite the same as the other one, which you haven't seen, sadly, either. But I'm looking right now at ways to organize the map. Should I organize it by feelings? And this is how I started, anger, for example, and excerpts from different texts, or should I organize it with, for example, the figures, la femme de detoin, in detoin, and then expand on that. So I'm looking at that at the moment. Yeah, that's where I am right now, and I hope I've explained the project clearly, which is really to just map feminism of the affects and the little lives of women, the feelings that make and unmake an existence, and eventually to counter the discourse on the emancipation for Northern African women. So as I said, going forward, I'm hoping to improve my skills at digital mapping, and there's certainly room for improvement. But I'm also looking at other texts or other authors I could think of. And for now, I'm looking at this Tunisian, this young Tunisian director, Irish Hilif. This is her second to last movie that I absolutely recommend. It's about teenagers in the summer. and in a small village in Tunisia. And in the summer, they're not studying, they're working in fig tree farms and they're collecting

fig trees. And the great thing about the movie is it's absolutely not any miserabilistic view of poor young teenagers. It's about their love stories. All of it is about teenagers falling in and out of love and jealousy and flirtations and the ways they use social media to have a completely other life on social media and the ways that girls have to try to have the upper hand on boys. It's very refreshing and I think it's also it falls under this framework. So yeah, that's what I'm headed next. So thank you. Thank you very much for your attention.

Michael Willis

Thank you very much, Farid. That was absolutely fascinating. And it's looking at sort of an old problem and an established problem that most people look at. And suddenly I look at it from the historical, more social science way. And to look at it this way gives all sorts of fascinating ways you can understand and look through things. Would you say that your sort of the use of the maps and the issues of feelings is a way of overcoming this? this colonial binary that just everybody keeps on falling back into. That seems to be what it is. You see both your characters are struggling with that. Do you see it as part of that's what you're trying to do?

Farah Ben Jemaa

Yes, that's exactly how I... Even as a reader, I'm looking for texts which are beyond that binary because it's really exhausting to read. There's been decades and decades of feminist writing really locked into these two tendencies. So trying to find, as I said, the 3rd way out of this reductive opposition is even for me as a reader is an interesting project. So I think yes, in a sense. The abandoning ideas of otherness or ideas of religious text versus secular life and everything, and going back to the material life that we all have as humans and as women, yes, it could be a way out of that binary, that colonial binary.

Michael Willis

It is interesting. I was lucky enough in March to go to an event in the Netherlands to mark the 70th anniversary of the independence of Morocco and Tunisia. And we were reflecting and we was in a heavily Maghrebi migrant suburb in Amsterdam. And we discussed in the panel and we turned over to the audience. And one of the most fascinating things was a lot of what the young women who had actually been born in Amsterdam from Tunisia and Moroccan Algerian backgrounds were saying that they're finding this third way. And it's in sort of lifestyle. And they said, We grow our hair curly now and we keep it dark. That wasn't really, people see that as an option. And they all talk about the way they dress, the use of makeup. It's suddenly escaping that. We found a new way, which I was intrigued by. It's sort of like a second generation finding this way forward that doesn't deal with things. And it's found that it goes back to this ordinary

life. This is a natural way. My hair is curly. I'm not going to dye it. I'm not going to straighten it because that's what the French particularly want.

Farah Ben Jemaa

I think there's a. work to be done on curly hair in young women of North African descent or otherwise. I know that African Americans have done it in America, for example. Even in Tunisia, you can see there's a lot of interest in curly hair in ways of, because it's not easy to maintain. And yes, we all grew up being told that we have to straighten our hair because otherwise it's messy and it's not professional and it's not. And now younger women are going back to just embrace their curls. And it seems trivial and not politically significant, but it's really not. It is one of the ways that we decolonize our lives And yeah.

Michael Willis

That was certainly they sorted, we're no longer subject to that and we feel comfortable doing that. We've been told that for ages. To fit in, we have to do that and we don't want to fit in that sense. We make our own way. It's just that.