

Genre and Gender An interdisciplinary epistemological tool

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In 2004, the journal *Diogenes* devoted its Issue 208 to “Myths and Gender”, predominantly focused on the figures incarnating the in-between, from the androgyne to the third sex. The current issue represents an extension of this theme, but, if its title recalls the term “gender” – the choice of English translating the strangeness to which it seems condemned in France – it is to enunciate it less in relation to myths than to the theoretical mode.

Some of the contributions remind us that “gender,” while remaining a fact of language, has emerged from the sole field of grammar to permeate discourse, indeed even discourse on discourse, as a critical tool of analysis. Engaging in an incessant back-and-forth between theory and practice, gender remains the stumbling block of the social relationships between the sexes, whether they take the form of a balancing between inclusion and exclusion, public sphere and private sphere, or whether they render the feminine sex, literally and figuratively, a blind spot, if not an element of disorder. Although Judith Butler’s seminal work, *Gender Trouble*, published in the US in 1990, was only translated into French in 2005, gender studies – born on the other side of the Atlantic and awkwardly translated in France as the expression “études sur le genre” or “études de genre” – have become over the past several years an unavoidable object of research. Their popularity is only matched by the resistance which they still encounter in political and academic circles.

While the publications, colloquia and seminars explicitly, or even exclusively, pertaining to gender issues multiply, the latter struggle to find an echo in civil society, which prefers to relegate them to the realm of pure intellectual speculation, or else to consider them contraband imported from the US.

Faithful to the interdisciplinary and international vocation of the journal, this issue does not focus on France, but on the contrary stimulates dialogue between specialists of different countries and different disciplines in which gender studies have renewed and refined approaches while continuing to arouse debates, certainly less and less

virulent, about their legitimacy. Crossing sociobiology and the biological/technical sciences, medieval history and religious studies, film studies and theories on the impact of gender in art, serving as a basic principle for intersectionality theory or queer studies, gender imposes itself as a mobile and dynamic concept, lending itself equally to division and grouping together, but whose fecund framework offers new perspectives that serve more as points of departure than of destination. It is to the debate on these perspectives that *Diogenes* seeks to contribute.

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