Workshop – Lyon, April 6, 2020
École Normale Supérieure de Lyon

Ancient deviances:
the city confronted with transgressive behaviours

Organized by the members of the Junior Laboratory TAntALE

Call for papers

Open to postgraduate students and researchers
Deadline : January 6, 2020

After focusing on defining the concept of "transgression" in Antiquity and examining the rise of transgressive figures shaped as models or counter-models, the junior research team TAntALE proposes to continue its reflection on this notion by broadening the scope and object of the concept of transgression.

If transgression were to be only understood as a purely individual and one-off act, a wide range of transgressive practices would be overlooked: behaviours that deviate from the norm within the community, expressed at its margins, and that cannot be read and analysed through the prism of the exceptional figure. Social sciences have developed the concept of "deviance" to describe and analyse these behaviours: sociology studies practices and identities which are perceived as abnormal,

mechanisms that explain conformity or nonconformity with norms, as well as the social reaction that deviant behaviours provoke (punishment, stigmatization, etc.). The transgressive act of Prometheus cannot be put on the same level as the behaviour of the initiates of the Eleusinian Mysteries for example, and, more generally, of minority behaviours which are excluded from the social framework of the community and constitute an alterity within the city. In the first case, individual figures are put into light whether in a negative or positive way and are sacralised or at least inspire fascination; in the second case, these behaviours are marginalized: from people frowning to judicial sanction, societies have a wide range of options to punish these behaviours. Discredit, marginalization, exclusion, stigmatization and criminalization are the mechanisms they can use when they are forced to reduce these practices to clandestiny in order to preserve its standards and norms; paradoxically, the city must sometimes learn to coexist with deviant practices.

Understanding the dynamics of deviance in Greek and Roman antiquity, its reality and perception, will be the purpose of this third workshop.

Transgression within the city: typology and contexts

Who are the ancient outsiders[1]? What social norms do the ancient deviant behaviours transgress? Papers can for example address the fields of religion, - mystery rites, superstitions, deviant practices in the time of early Christianity -, sexuality, gender and social relations. Are these practices collective? Under which circumstances, social milieu or kind of period do they emerge? How do some practices come to be considered as transgressive? What is the role of social recognition in the emergence of deviant behaviour?

Managing deviance: institutionalization, social control and marginalization

When it is no longer possible to silence the transgressors through the death sentence or exile, which legal and moral mechanisms does the community use in order to control these habits and reject them at the margins of the political space? Faced with these behaviours, the city applies standardization strategies which develop at all levels and through various bodies: the legal corpus, changes in legislation, phenomena of stigmatization and discredit are all aimed at provoking the rejection of these deviating attitudes. It might be interesting to study how a cohabitation between transgressive practices and authority can take place, the latter tolerating them without being able to silence them: authority has no alternative but to delegitimize them by making them inaudible, invisible and, above all, morally unacceptable. To that end, the city delimits spaces for transgression, in which deviant practices are allowed to be expressed in a controlled and marginalized setting: the rites of passage studied by Jean-Pierre

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[1] *Cf.* H.S. Becker, *Outsiders. Études de sociologie de la déviance*, Paris, Éditions Métailié, 1985.

Vernant[2] and the carnival atmosphere of the Saturnalia in Rome can be seen as significant examples of this process.

Taming discordant voices within discourse

As the city space is the scene of these transgressions and their management by authority, literary discourse is a reflexive space which crystallize these dynamics, *via* its power of representation and its normative dimension. Within the work itself, whatever its form, discordant voices and transgressive behaviours can be heard or read, while also framed and marginalized by an authority that sets the limits of the representation of deviance within the text. Textual productions such as oratorical, historiographical, theoretical and normative discourse (treatises covering all fields, such as rhetoric, grammar, antiquities) can be analysed from this perspective.

Papers addressing these themes through the variety of disciplines (history, law, anthropology, literature, rhetoric, epigraphy…) specific to the Classical Sciences will be particularly valued. We will also pay a particular attention to diachronic approaches highlighting the phenomena of continuations and historical ruptures in the managing of deviance, and/or comparatists approaches, aimed at bringing the invariant patterns out or, on the contrary, the cultural variations that characterize these behaviours and their management by authority in different societies.

The participants who have been accepted will present papers up to a maximum length of thirty minutes, followed by a discussion. Proposals for a paper, including title, abstract of 300 words maximum (in French or English), as well as a presentation of the sources and a brief indicative bibliography, shall be sent to tantalens@gmail.com, before January 6, 2020. Notification of acceptance will be given on January 20, 2020.

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[2] *Cf.* J.-P. Vernant et P. Vidal-Naquet, *La Grèce ancienne. 3. Rites de passage et transgressions*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.

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