



Seminário aberto:

Gendering Translation: the strange case of Isabelle Eberhardt

Abstract: Isabelle Eberhardt was born in 1877 near Geneva and died in 1904, at the age of twenty-eight, killed by a desert flash flood on the border between Algeria and Morocco. Over the following century both her image (captured in a small number of photographs) and her writings were repeatedly reframed. As a European girl who converted to Islam and travelled through Northern Africa dressed as an Arab man, Eberhardt has been presented as a scandalous yet fascinating romantic figure, a pioneer of female travel, as well as an ambiguously attractive feminist icon. Her story and its multiple retellings offer an extreme example of the role played by translation practices in processes of cultural representation. The seminar will examine the French, Italian and English editions of a selection of Eberhardt's works. Particular attention will be paid to how these re-articulate categories of gender, sexuality, race, national and class identity, religious allegiance, or linguistic and political belonging. The agents involved in these processes of retelling are key figures in constructing the multiple and often contradictory tales which still circulate today about 'Isabelle'. The voices of translators, editors and biographers have become superimposed on Eberhardt's words as well as on her body, contributing to repeated transformations of her persona which are closely linked to the complex writing and over-writing of gender and sexuality.