

CALL FOR PAPERS - LUICD Graduate Conference 2011

IMAGINING EUROPE - Perspectives, Perceptions and Representations from Antiquity to the Present

Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines
27 and 28 January 2011



Confirmed key note speakers:

Professor Edith Hall, Royal Holloway, University of London
Professor Jonathan Israel, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University

The conference

'Qui parle Europe a tort. Notion géographique'. Otto von Bismarck's elliptic remark, scribbled in the margin of a letter from Alexander Gorchakov in 1876, would go on to become one of the most often-quoted statements about Europe. But was Bismarck right? Is Europe nothing but a geographical notion? Even the briefest glance at history shows that more often than not perceptions and definitions of Europe go beyond the mere geographical demarcation of a continent. In 1919, for instance, Paul Valéry imagined Europe as a living creature, with 'a consciousness acquired through centuries of bearable calamities, by thousands of men of the first rank, from innumerable geographical, ethnic and historical coincidences'. Of course this is only one of a multitude of different representations. Europe has always signified different things to different people in different places – inside Europe as well as outside. Europe meant, for instance, something different to Voltaire, *l'aubergiste d'Europe*, at Ferney in the 1760s than to Athanasius Kircher in Rome a century earlier or to Barack Obama in Washington today.

This conference explores the different ways in which Europe has been imagined and represented, from inside as well as outside Europe and from classical antiquity to the present day. This wide scope reflects the historical range of the LUICD's three research programmes (Classics and Classical Civilization, Medieval and Early Modern Studies and Modern and Contemporary Studies) as well as the intercontinental focus of many of the institute's research projects. The conference aims to present a diachronic perspective of some of the many images of Europe, with particular attention to the historical, cultural and economic contexts in which these images were created and the media and genres in which they have been presented.

Although the emphasis of the conference lies on different and changing perspectives, perceptions and representations, it also wants to explore the notion of similarity – are there any aspects that keep recurring in the different visions, aspects that might even be said to be intrinsically European?

The conference aims to provide a platform for graduate students in the humanities, from Leiden as well as other universities in the Netherlands and abroad, to present and exchange their ideas in an international and interdisciplinary environment. The organising committee is honoured that Professor Jonathan Israel and Professor Edith Hall have accepted our invitation to act as keynote speakers and participate in discussions during the conference.

Proposals

The LUICD Graduate Conference aims to reflect the institute's interdisciplinary and international character and as such welcomes proposals from graduate students from all disciplines within the

humanities, from universities from the Netherlands as well as abroad. The conference wants to present a variety of different perspectives on Europe (from within as well as outside the European continent) and those working in fields related to other continents are particularly encouraged to submit a proposal.

Subjects may include historical events, processes and discourses, textual and/or visual representations, literary or art canons, colonial and post-colonial relations, philosophical developments and political issues. Questions that could be raised include: how did (and do) oppositions such as barbarism versus civilization, Christianity versus paganism or old versus new worlds relate to the conceptualization of Europe? What role does (perceived) cultural superiority play in these oppositions? What ideas might be regarded as predecessors of or alternatives to the concept of Europe? In what ways did (and do) forms of universalism and regionalism compete with identity formation on a continental level? How have individual artists represented Europe? How do different (literary) genres, such as travel literature, historiography or letters, construct a particular image of Europe or Europe's relations with other cultures? Is it possible for art collections to imagine Europe or to question existing perceptions of Europe? How do migrant literature and cinema reflect the changing identity of Europe today?

Please send your proposal (max. 300 words) for a 20-minute paper to C.Maas@hum.leidenuniv.nl. **The deadline for the proposals is 1 November 2010** – you will be notified whether or not your proposal has been selected before 15 November 2010.

After the conference, the proceedings will be published either on-line or in book form. More information on this will follow in due course.

If you have any questions regarding the conference and/or the proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us at the above e-mail address. More information about the conference will be published on the conference webpage, which will go online this summer.

The organizing committee:

Drs. Thera Giezen
Drs. Jacqueline Hylkema
Drs. Coen Maas