

## Fictions of Europe

### Imaginary Topographies and Transnational Identities across the Arts

Palace of the Academies, Brussels, Belgium  
28-29 March 2019

Rising nationalisms within Europe, the so-called 'refugee crisis' and not least the Brexit vote have increased the debate on the state and future of Europe and provided those calling for the development of a European identity with a renewed sense of urgency. This conference aims to contribute to the debate by examining how Europe is being imagined in contemporary artistic production. Rather than concentrate on representations of Europe as seen through European eyes only, the conference wishes to draw attention to the manifold ways in which the idea of Europe has inspired writers, film- and theatre-makers from across the globe. Do fictions of Europe echo antagonistic reactions to Europeanization processes or do they rather shift the focus from national to transnational and/or cosmopolitan identities? What kind of topographies of Europe do they propose? By combining the study of Europe in postcolonial, migrant and settler art with an exploration of 'first world' fictions of Europe, this conference seeks to compare imaginings of Europe across various cultural and linguistic contexts and artistic media.

Papers may address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- What kinds of Europe (cradle of culture, Fortress Europe, El Dorado, etc.) and what kinds of relationship with Europe (ancestral home, place of refuge, imperial mother country, 'imaginary homeland' etc.) feature in the artistic imagination? Do utopian or dystopian references to Europe prevail?
- To what extent do fictions of Europe support or destabilize a monolithic, undifferentiated notion of Europe, in which the 'old continent' is regarded as synonymous with the imperial 'centre' or 'the West'?
- How do references to Europe relate to the construction of national identity? Are fictions of Europe characterised by a transnational and specifically European sensibility?
- How are European and non-European spaces conceptualized (fluid/static, discrete/ entangled, memorial layers/terra nullius etc.)? Do contemporary fictions of Europe perpetuate or challenge existing and potentially Eurocentric topographies and spatial divisions? How do European borderlands and other 'topological hotspots' in particular help to reflect on Europe and its spatial/cultural demarcations?
- (How) Do fictions of Europe reflect (on) present socio-political contexts? Which issues (e.g. cross-cultural exchange, shifting peripheries, post-national tendencies, failed European integration) or discursive and political functions can be linked to the depiction of European spaces?
- How can imaginings of Europe be compared across different artistic media? Are certain aesthetics strategies (e.g. recurrent modes and genres, shared metaphors and motifs) specifically predisposed to the exploration of 'imaginary Europes'?

Abstracts (max. 300 words) for 15-20-minute papers and author bios (100 words) may be submitted electronically to Janine Hauthal **by 1 December 2018** ([janine.hauthal@vub.be](mailto:janine.hauthal@vub.be)). If you have any questions, please contact the conference organizers: Elisabeth Bekers ([elisabeth.bekers@vub.be](mailto:elisabeth.bekers@vub.be)), Janine Hauthal ([janine.hauthal@vub.be](mailto:janine.hauthal@vub.be)), Bart Philipsen ([bart.philipsen@kuleuven.be](mailto:bart.philipsen@kuleuven.be)), and Arvi Sepp ([arvi.sepp@uantwerpen.be](mailto:arvi.sepp@uantwerpen.be)).