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## **Introduction to the Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference, Issue 1 (2013)**

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# “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 modern period’s 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 these remarks by Von Bismarck and Valéry are only two 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 entirely 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.

At present, ideas of Europe underlie many of the key debates and struggles that mark our times. Over the past years, questions of a rapidly changing Europe have been on every agenda, such as the prevalent issues of tensions within the Eurozone, possible accessions to or exclusions from the EU, and the permeability of European borders. Even though European history is characterised throughout by traffic of people and ideas in which Europeanness is impossible to delimit, what is at stake in these debates – implicitly but increasingly often also explicitly – is the question of what ‘Europe’ means. At the core of such discussions one often finds questions of inclusion and exclusion, which can easily indicate the extent to which matters of Europeanness involve political, economic, cultural, ethnic, or linguistic issues. Faced with such a scope, it is perhaps better not to insist on defining Europe; the point is to realize that Europe is a continuously recurring question of definitions. Insofar as it is a place, it is not a place to find oneself, but a place that one imagines. First and foremost, Europe is imagined.

This was the premise for the inaugural LUCAS Graduate Conference *Imagining Europe: Perspectives, Perceptions and Representations from Antiquity to the Present*, organized by Thera Giezen, Jacqueline Hylkema and Coen Maas for the Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines (recently renamed LUCAS) in January 2011. Framed by keynote lectures by classicist Edith Hall and historian Jonathan Israel, the conference featured a diverse range of papers. With participants from six continents, the conference included papers by historians, classicists, film scholars, art historians, and researchers in the fields of literature, legal history, and political science, spanning a period from the days of the Roman Empire to the aftermath of the fall of Communism.

Based on the patterns that emerged during the conference, three key features can be put forward regarding the history, space, and representations of Europe. As general as they may be, they set out some basic coordinates within which one can consider perceptions and representations of Europe. Firstly, an idea of Europe has been at work throughout history, from antiquity to the present day. Even though that which Europe is thought to signify is fluid and changeable, its active imagining proves to be a historical constant. Concomitantly, a perpetual question is of course who does the imagining – who has the power to determine the parameters that (provisionally) can circumscribe Europe and with it the power to affect ideology and hegemony, identity and alienation.

Secondly, while Europe should be thought of beyond strictly geographical categories, it retains a prominent spatial dimension. In its imaginings, Europe remains tethered to the continent to which it is evidently also not limited. As the selection of papers here already shows, the idea of Europe is fully functional anywhere between Japanese literature and Latin American political discourse. Europe's status is therefore twofold: conceptually it can traverse the globe, yet it simultaneously remains spatially anchored. It is at the same time stable and mobile, local and global.

Lastly, the processes and products of imagining Europe can be seen in myriad forms. Questions of Europeanness spring from objects as diverse as historical documents, religious maps, contemporary films, literary texts, works of visual art, journalism, architecture, and government policies. Conceptually similar questions can thus be taken up by all fields of the humanities, which makes 'Europe' a vehicle *par excellence* for

interdisciplinary inquiry – and conversely, this underscores the need for understanding Europe within an interdisciplinary framework.

The selection of the articles for this first issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* reflects the diversity that characterizes the consideration of Europe. They span a range of media, from literature to film, political discourse, cartoons, architecture, and policies for cultural heritage. Concomitantly, the articles demonstrate the approaches and methods that can fit within an overall interdisciplinary framework of analysis, from close reading to historical research. In addition, they take on European questions that are tied together within the historical context of Modernity, yet the approach of these questions could easily be extended to issues in other historical periods – as was indeed the case at the original conference.

Yet perhaps more importantly, within the general coordinates set out above, the papers in this collection complement one another particularly when it comes to the perspectives from which they take on the topic of Europe. The first three articles consider Europe from the ‘inside’, insofar as traditional and historical notions of Europe pertain to Europeans considering themselves – be it questions of European heritage or oppositional definitions in the context of the battleground for ideas of Europeanness that was Eastern Europe under communism. The last three articles all to some extent adopt a perspective on Europe from the ‘outside’, and all of them illustrate precisely how problematic any notion of inside/outside is when it comes to Europe – whether the perspective concerns Turkish migrant cinema, Latin American culture, or Japanese literature.

Kerstin Stamm examines the idea of Europe as it is reflected in the recent attempts of the European Union to establish a shared corpus of cultural heritage. In her article she asks if a narrowly defined, coherent European identity would in fact reflect the actual reality of Europe: a collection of nations, some EU-members, some not, that interpret the concept of ‘European heritage’ in very different ways.

Alexandra Tieanu considers Central European perspectives on Europe at the end of the twentieth century. She explores how the post-WWII division of Europe into a communist East and capitalist West engendered perceptions of identity that left little place for a

Central Europe between the two. By considering the work of dissident intellectuals and political discourses before and after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, TIANU investigates the changing perceptions and definitions of alterity that make up the history of Central Europe.

Focusing on visual representations, Mara Marginean's article zooms in on a historically even more specific battleground for ideas of Europe. In post-war Romania, the newly installed communist government had to reconstruct the image of (Western) Europe to justify its economic and social policies. Cartoons, published in modern mass media like newspapers and magazines provided an important platform for this reconstruction. Marginean provides a sharp analysis of the way Europe's image was constructed in this medium and places these cartoons within the discourse of political and cultural legitimisation of their period.

Ömer Alkin examines the image of Europe in Turkish migrant cinema produced by Turkish filmmakers from the 1960s to the present. While the Turks imagine Europe as a place of modernity and wealth, the basic experience of Turkish migrants in Germany is that of painful displacement. Alkin shows that, instead of challenging the European ideal, Turkish migration films stage the discrepancy between 'image' and 'reality' dramatically as a clash of expectations between the homecomer and his friends and family. The

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PAUL VALÉRY (1919)

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invariably positive image of Europe is explained both from the modernisation of Turkey after World War I and from the influence of Western mass media.

In her article “The View from the South: Defining Europe in Latin America”, Katie Billotte explores the way in which the notion of Europe influenced Latin American culture. Latin American countries have a unique relationship with Europe: these regions were among the first to be colonised and the colonial period itself was characterised by an unprecedented level of amalgamation between the native and non-native populations and cultures. In the post-colonial era the Latin American construct of Europe was heavily influenced by French politics and culture. Placing French primitivism in dialogue with magical realism, Billotte explains the hybrid nature of (post)colonial culture.

Emanuela Costa analyses how German-Japanese author Tawada Yōko challenges views of European borders in her literary work. In “Imagining Europe through a Pair of Japanese Glasses”, Costa shows the frictions Tawada’s Japanese characters experience when travelling to or living in a new, European country. These characters are confronted with the gap that exists between expectations of geographical borders and how these are envisioned by Europeans and non-Europeans. Moreover, they encounter the essentialising power of stereotypes employed by people in their environment, including immigrants among themselves. Costa concludes her argument for the performative function of Tawada Yōko’s work by touching upon the author’s engendering of Europe, through which Tawada calls for a new vocabulary outside of the now-familiar dichotomies that, she argues, have become necessary for sustaining a European identity.

Together, the articles in this volume show that Europe is a question of who is asking and from which position. More significantly though, together they demonstrate the importance of taking into consideration multiple perspectives, different objects, and different disciplinary approaches, if one is to avoid approaches that confine Europe within geographic or political boundaries. In fact, all the articles in this issue address discourses that underline precisely that while on the one hand attempts to define Europe or Europeanness may be at play, on the other hand it is the very impossibility of definition or demarcation that allows the idea of Europe to be so powerfully present throughout history. It is important to stress therefore, that the articles here do not

explore or illustrate discrete ‘facets’ that could accrue to a conception of Europe that one might consider to be a ‘whole’. Just as the geographical delimitations prove untenable, the articles here do not belong to some single history of Europe. Rather, it should be underscored that the collection here finds its coherence precisely in the *concept* of Europe – an understanding of Europe that is workable precisely because it is capable of accommodating the fluidity and diversity that have characterized Europe in every period. In short, the crux of this collection is a Europe that is not limited to any single dimension – be it political, cultural, or spatial – but that is localised there where all elements come together: in representations, discourses, and imaginings of Europe.

Finally, as the editors we think it is fitting, especially for the very first issue of a journal, to thank all of those who have been involved in producing it. First and foremost we would like to thank our publisher, Leiden University Library, for its assistance and enthusiasm in getting this project off the ground. We owe particular thanks to Birte Kristiansen at Leiden University Library, Rob Goedemans, Taeke Harkema and Joy Burrough-Boenisch for all their kind help and advice in the fields of publishing, information technology, the layout process and academic editing. We are also very grateful to all the speakers who submitted their conference papers and made the selection process very difficult for us, and to the six authors for their kind and patient cooperation in the revision and editing process. We also would like to thank our fellow PhD researchers at LUCAS and the Institute for History who acted as peer reviewers, and Max van Duijn for his contributions to the design of our logo. A final word of thanks goes to LUCAS itself and to its director, Kitty Zijlmans, for her constant and invaluable support.

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