



Call For Papers

Female Figures in the Borders of war-torn Europe.

The Year of 1918 as a Turning Point in Literary Representations of Femininity, Identity Shifts and National Changes in Central and Oriental Europe.

International Conference

Paris 3 New Sorbonne University (France) /
Paris Sorbonne University (France)

Dates: October 11-12th, 2018

Location: Paris Sorbonne University (France)

Organising Committee: Cécile Rousselet (Paris 3 New Sorbonne University, France) and Jean Boutan (Paris IV Sorbonne University, France / Franz Werfel Program OeAD)

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- Luba Jurgenson (University Paris Sorbonne)
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Deadline for abstracts: May 1st, 2018

Women in the XIXth century were swept aside from politics that was primarily a men's concern, and from the exercise of war. Therefore, due to their social status they seemed to be excluded from all forms of representation of Nation – which was a major issue of this XIXth century and of the First World War. The values nurtured during the war and the nationalist conflicts were almost those of virility. Cultural imaginaries should not build henceforth an automatic poetic link

between Nation-in-arms and feminine characters. Nevertheless, numerous feminine figures tend to embody these issues about nationalities – for example the *Germania* from Friedrich August von Kaulbach, the *Libuše* that Czechoslovakian legionnaires painted on their trains, the *Fräulein Feldgrau* in 1914 or the *Wonder Woman* from the 50s.

The year of 1918 is the theatre of profound changes in literary and critical fields in Europe and bodes great upheavals in social and political contexts, notably by setting up a new standing for women in the “Roaring Twenties” that seemed to reinvent post-war femininity. Margins represent a key concern in these issues. On a political and ideological level, the increase of orthodox discourses inevitably split the discursive production between ideological centers and margins that question and subvert them. About aesthetics, avant-gardes examine the possible meanings and symbolic significances both of margins and distant lands of Europe. The margins tend to become in these artists’ productions, aesthetic counterpoints to official lines.

Feminine characters stand at the center of these changeovers. They tend to become a mean of outreach for the popular culture increasing by war propaganda and by some avant-gardes that emerge from the conflicts. Female figures are suited to move the broader public as they stand as projection screens of male fantasies, and occur to question the power structures that the thematisation of sexuality may express. To adopt a topographical approach of this issue in the changing European area consists on setting out its relation to its borderlands. Geographic and aesthetic borders, but also themes of birth and death that literary fantasies may often articulate to female figures. Last, numerous literary texts and intellectual outputs link feminine figures and peoples that are associated to the geographical and/or ideological borders of Europe.

Gender studies in post-colonial fields, following the works of Benedict Anderson on “imagined communities” or these that concern subaltern studies, enable to consider the interactions both between imperialist policies and representations of women, and between movements of national and feminist emancipation. However, this approach will not misunderstand the specificities of the European Area, nor will it neglect the imperial issue that organize numerous of literary texts from the Central and Oriental Europe at the turn of 1918 – as Claudio Magris wrote about. This conference will focus on the heuristic approach that this articulation builds when they refuse the anachronisms that such linkages may lead to in the investigation of Central European spaces at the turn of the XXth century. All this is about geographic, national, gendered and literary spaces. Because of the esthetic and political reconfigurations, central and oriental Europe around 1918 become the scene of major changes. This conference will focus on these concerns, by articulating the study of gendered representations and the historical and contextual issues about Europe as a space in mutation.

There is no fee to attend and we can cover travel costs and accommodation for invited speakers.

*Proposals are due **May 1st, 2018**. They should include a title, an abstract (of no more than 500 words), and a short biography including your university and department affiliation.*

Please direct proposals and questions to femmesconfins1918@gmail.com.