

IMAGINING THE NORTH

BETWEEN REGIONALISM
AND COSMOPOLITANISM

Online Workshop
25 NOVEMBER 2020



RESEARCH
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North-South confrontations became commonplace conflicts in regional, national and global contexts with the rise of modern nation-states. In Europe, following the territorial expansion of the Roman Empire, the territories located beyond the Mediterranean region were indistinguishably termed Northern, a concept widely accepted and used in Renaissance scholarship. In antiquity, Southern imagination had constructed symbolic images of the savage and other-worldly *terrae incognitae* of the North (Hyperborea), which were perpetuated in the Middle-Ages under the mantle of supernaturalism, a 'motif that has remained remarkably consistent' within the 'shifting images of Northernness' (E. R. Barraclough, D. M. Cudmore, S. Donecker (eds), *Imagining the Supernatural North*, 2016, p. xiii). Although the European discourse on Northernness was persistently a discourse on otherness (p. xvi), it was gradually transformed at the age of Romanticism and was totally reshaped in the beginning of the 20th century as a result of the rise of ethnocentrism and the nationalization of history. Following the late 19th century historiographical debate over the cultural and racial origins of France and the question of its Germanic and/or Latin identity, the concept of Northernness was redefined with regards to its propagated inferiority in relation to Southern culture and was re-appreciated in its geographical, cultural, ideological and historical topoi. In 1925, the Flemish author André de Ridder published *Le Génie du Nord*, a book proposing Franco-Belgian cultural alliance on the basis of an idealized medieval past, aspiring to set the foundations for a cosmopolitan Northern culture. Expressions of disdain over Southern hegemony are furthermore traced in the writings of the British Vorticists, although Northernness in Britain has been principally approached from a local and regional rather than a pan-European perspective (Cf. Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination*, Neville Kirk, *Northern Identities. Historical Interpretations of the North and Northernness* etc).

This workshop focuses on 20th century discourses that stress the shared heritage and cosmopolitan culture of Northernness in North-Western Europe as well as the rejection of Southern cultural hegemony and the classic canon through the introduction of its Northern equivalent. We are seeking for papers that trace relevant references and concepts in interbellum art and literature. We are particularly interested in examples from the North-Western regions of Europe, namely Belgium, France, Germany, and Britain that investigate the symbolic geographies, mental maps and cosmopolitanism of Northernness in artistic and literary contexts.

The workshop will be held online via webinar presentations. Presentations should be in English. Extended and improved versions of selected papers will be published online by the Research Center for the Humanities (rchumanities.gr).

We invite abstracts (max. 300 words) for twenty-minute papers to be submitted electronically, with a short CV, to both

Prof. Marnix Beyen, University of Antwerp (marnix.beyen@uantwerpen.be) and
Dr Chara Kolokytha, RCHumanities / UoI (charakolokytha@aol.com)

The deadline is due on 18th September 2020.



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