

Thinking Sex after the Great War

International Conference, Brussels, 17-19 October 2018

Call for papers

The last few decades, the multifaceted relations between gender and the First World War have been explored in various historical studies. Historians have analysed the role of gender in the run-up to the outbreak of the war and in the war propaganda, they have depicted the gendered experience of the war by soldiers and civilians, and probed the ways in which the war challenged and blurred existing gender roles. Yet they have also described how the war in the end often seemed to reinforce gender stereotypes. Throughout this rich literature, the question of the impact of the war on gender relations often resurfaces, although most scholars seem to agree that a definitive and general answer on the 'net result' of the war in terms of increasing or decreasing equality, is hard to reach and probably beside the point.

The organizers of this conference invite historians to reflect on the impact of the Great War on gender from the specific angle of learned discourses. Intellectuals, philosophers, social scientists, physiologists, psychologists and scientists witnessed and experienced the war personally. Some of them were integrated in the military war machine (either as 'common' soldiers, officers or experts) and were relocated, while others stayed at home and continued their jobs, or registered themselves as 'conscientious objectors' and explicitly opposed the war. Like other citizens, they lost family members and friends, experienced love and desire, excitement and disillusionment, enthusiasm and indignation. These experiences inevitably impacted upon their view of society, human nature and the role of the sexes and sexuality. The conference will focus on the trajectories and experiences of intellectuals before, during and after the war, and how the war reinforced, challenged or changed research agendas, paradigms and knowledge about gender and sexuality.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- the links between sexuality, aggression and gender in post-war psychology, psychiatry, sexology, sociology;
- the exchange between military and civilian medical care, and the consequences for the interwar medical views on sex;
- the significance of the war for theories on the instinctual life of men and women;
- the influence of personal and intimate encounters of middle class intellectuals and working class men and women in the military (soldiers, nurses...);
- the impact of the presence of colonial troops in Europe and the resulting interracial sexual/romantic relationships, miscegenation etc.;
- female intellectuals and the experience of the patriotic/nationalistic wave cutting through the transnational feminist movement;
- the effects of travelling and dislocation (including experiences in the Ottoman Empire, the Middle-East...) on intellectual discourses on gender and sexuality.

Abstracts of papers (20 minutes) should contain no more than 400 words and should be sent, with a one-page cv, by email to henk.desmaele@uantwerpen.be. The conference

language will be English but contributions in French are welcome if accompanied by a powerpoint in English.

Abstract deadline: 15 December 2017

Notification of acceptance: February 2018

The organizers will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs of a limited number of participants.

A selection of papers will be published afterwards in an edited volume or special issue of a journal.

Organizing committee:

Henk de Smaele (University of Antwerp)

Cécile Vanderpelen (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Gita Deneckere (Ghent University)

Amandine Lauro (Université Libre de Bruxelles/FNRS)

Laurence Van Ypersele (UCL)

Florent Verfaillie (Cegesoma/State Archives of Belgium)

Kaat Wils (KU Leuven)

You can contact avg.carhif@amazone.be for further information.

The call is available on www.avg-carhif.be, that will also keep you up to date on the conference.