

CALL FOR PAPERS

Writers and intellectuals on Britain and Europe, 1918–2018:

An international conference

Northumbria University | Newcastle upon Tyne | 1-2 November 2018

The British EU Referendum on 23 June 2016 once more threw into relief Britain's conflicted relationship to and with the rest of Europe. While newspaper discourse and political rhetoric have been the focus of much popular and critical attention, debates around the referendum and its likely consequences have not been limited to journalists and politicians. Writers and academics were among those publicly commenting on Britain's position in Europe, from J.K. Rowling, whose vocal tweets courted controversy among her fans, to EU law expert Professor Michael Dougan (University of Liverpool), whose videos on the subject of the Brexit campaign and its impact have been viewed by millions of people in Britain and abroad. 2017 also saw the emergence of what was quickly dubbed 'BrexLit', including high-profile titles such as Ali Smith's *Autumn* or Adam Thorpe's *Missing Fay*.

This conference seeks to connect the diverse literary and scholarly interventions in current and recent Brexit debates with earlier interventions by British writers and intellectuals into the relationship between Britain and Europe. It aims to bring together creative writers and researchers in literary and cultural studies with an interest in Britain and Europe to facilitate an exchange of ideas and encourage cross-period and cross-disciplinary exchange. The central questions and concerns to be addressed by the conference – Britain's relationship to Europe and the place of writers and intellectuals in the process of defining this relationship – are likely to remain topical for some time to come, as Britain's withdrawal from the European Union progresses through the negotiating stages.

The conference sessions will cover **three main strands**: (1) European debates of the inter-war years and the 1940s, (2) literary interventions in the wake of the 1975 United Kingdom European Communities membership referendum, and (3) present-day writers and intellectuals and the Brexit debate. The conference will offer a space to address any kinds of interventions, both for and against closer ties between Britain and Europe.

Three central questions will be addressed by the conference:

- (1) What contributions did/do writers and intellectuals make to debates about Britain's integration into Europe in the public sphere?
- (2) How did/do writers and intellectuals reflect privately and in correspondence with each other on matters relating to Britain's integration into Europe?
- (3) What motivations drove/drive writers and intellectuals' involvement in these debates, and how are these articulated?

The conference looks at writers' and intellectuals' contributions to Anglo-European debates over the past century, seeking to draw out parallels and to establish challenges and opportunities. A public round table event will serve to articulate some of the lessons to be drawn from such a comparison, and will look at the experience of writers and academics who have themselves intervened in debates around Brexit.

We invite proposals for papers from researchers and writers that speak to any one of the conference strands and/or questions. Please send abstracts of up to 300 words, accompanied by a short biographical statement and contact details, to Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus at ann-marie.einhaus@northumbria.ac.uk. **EXTENDED deadline for submitting abstracts: 30 July 2018.**

Thanks to generous support from UACES, there will be some support available for postgraduate speakers without institutional travel funds. Please indicate on your proposal whether you wish to be considered.

The conference website is www.europeanconversations.com.