

Legal Bodies (*Corpus / Persona / Communitas*): Personhood in Law, Literature and the Arts.

Annual Conference of LUCAS, the Leiden University Centre for the Arts and Humanities in Society, organized by Yasco Horsman, Frans-Willem Korsten and Nanne Timmer.

14-15-16-17 May 2014



LUCAS (the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society) will host a three-day conference *Legal Bodies: Corpus / Persona / Communitas* on the various ways in which literary texts and art works have represented, interrogated or challenged juridical notions of 'personhood'.

The received humanistic notion of 'personhood' – a central term in both the domains of the law and in the humanities – has recently been challenged by developments in the medical sciences, in biotechnology, and in the context of global-political developments. The implications of these shifts have been at the heart of a growing body of work by scholars in both the humanities, the social sciences and the law, such as Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook, Jeanne Gaakeer, Malick Ghachem, Peter Goodrich, Edward Mussawir, Greta Olson, and many others.

The aim of the conference is to bring together both established and young scholars to discuss how literature, the arts and law have reflected on issues of personhood. The guiding assumption behind this conference is that 'personhood' is not a (biologically) given, stable *property* of human beings that precedes their interaction with the law but rather that the notion of 'personhood' is assigned to selected 'bodies' by discursive regimes, such as law, medicine, politics, religion, and education. The focus of this conference is on how literature, art and culture might form domains in which the implications and scope of legal, political or medical conceptualizations of personhood can be articulated and thought through, and in which alternative understandings of personhood can be proposed.

The symposium broaches the question of personhood on three different levels: of the *body*, the *individual* and the *community*. Questions to be addressed could include: From which discourses did notions of bodily integrity historically emerge? Which social, political and medical developments are currently challenging these notions? How do artistic, cultural and socio-political phenomena (such as bio-art, body horror, the right-to-die movement, etc.) invite us to rethink our notion of the human body?

What literary and rhetorical figures made it possible to think of legal personhood in antiquity, the middle ages and the modern era? What is the legal status of 'not-quite persons,' such as children, illegal immigrants, the mentally disabled, the unborn and the undead? What could 'animal personhood' entail?

How do collective bodies acquire personhood? How did art and literature represent legal entities such as the medieval city, the seventeenth-century trade company or the nineteenth-century corporation? Or what is the legally defined status of sects, networks, conspiracies, and resistance movements?

The conference is organized in cooperation with NICA (the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis) and is made possible by LUCAS, the Leiden University Fund and NICA.

A 400-word proposal for a 20-minute paper can be sent to Frans-Willem Korsten, Nanne Timmer and Yasco Horsman (LUCAS, Leiden) at [legalbodies@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:legalbodies@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

Deadline: 14 February 2014

See: <http://hum.leiden.edu/lucas/news-events/legal-bodies-corpus-persona-communitas.html>

For more information on LUCAS and NICA, see  
<http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucas/>  
<http://www.nica-institute.com/>

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