

Salon I: 'Where was Europe?'

Transcription

Dr Lisa Skogh: Hello, you are listening to the V&A Podcast series *What was Europe? A New Salon*. In this series of four conversations, we bring together 27 experts to discuss the geographical and social-historical landscape of Europe from 1600-1815, reflecting on its intercultural exchanges and ephemerality and making connections to the Europe we know today.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests. My name is Lisa Skogh and I would like to welcome you to the new Salon series 'What was Europe? A New Salon'. This evening's event inaugurates a series of conversations inspired by the intellectual and social ideals that led to the creation of the Enlightenment Salon. It is also in a very real sense a salon within a salon, because it takes place within an installation created by the Cuban art collective *Los Carpinteros*, which is directly inspired by the same impulses of intellectual curiosity, enquiry and debate.

This evening we sit at the heart of the V&A's new galleries devoted to European art and design from 1600 to 1815. Amongst more than 1,000 historic objects from across the continent, our purpose is to discuss and reflect upon the past of Europe at a time when the very concept of Europe seems now more contested than ever. In addition to the 27 fantastic speakers and guests around us, we wish to in particular give thanks to the British Academy for their generous support of the series, to the British Academy fellows Lisbet Rausing and Simon Schaffer, as well as to Evelyn Welch for endorsing the project, and to the V&A for providing such a spectacular setting for these historic conversations.

Before we begin, we will have a few words of introduction from my two co-hosts, namely Bill Sherman, Head of Research here at the V&A and Simon Schaffer, Professor of the History of Science and Philosophy at University of Cambridge.

Prof Bill Sherman: So I am absolutely delighted to open the inaugural salon within a salon. I'm Bill Sherman, Head of Research here at the V&A. And as soon

as I knew there would be a salon room, I thought, “What can we do? We must do a salon; we must activate the room as a salon.” It’s not something we do in the museum very often. There are lots of rooms that... music rooms where music very rarely happens. There are lots of examples where we would like to activate. Here’s a really rare opportunity to put a room to use in very much its historic function. So I’m delighted to be able to do so.

But when we thought, “How do we react or activate a salon in the early modern sense?” we thought, “What do you need?” And there were some models around. The galleries here provide us with some visual examples and we’ve had a look. One thing that’s clear is a need of animals, there has to be a dog. The problem is there are no dogs allowed in the galleries. The second thing you need is lots of alcohol or caffeine or both. And again the problem, we don’t have food in the galleries. So we weren’t off to a good start. Music is good as well. We’re on a better footing there because we do have our first musician in residence present, and he will be playing for us later in the series.

And then, finally, we’re on much better ground when we realised that we need a female host in general and we have Lisa Skogh which is fantastic. And then the final item and really by far the most important, is you have to have clever people who know something about something and who are willing to talk about it in an open and equal, and free, way. That’s very much the spirit of the enlightenment that the Salon was the embodiment of, the vehicle for. And so our idea here is to bring together intellectuals, academics, other interested parties to talk about a particular topic. So Voltaire was a very famous figure in the early modern Salon. He was not available, but we have several other extremely qualified people, above all our Voltaire, Simon Schaffer. So over to you Simon, for the introduction to today.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Well Voltaire of course is here, he’s just sitting behind Surekha over there. He is known to us all, of course, as the brilliant and most important critic of optimism. And he, by design, faces the work of Franz Messerschmidt behind me, who is the archetypical embodiment of pessimism. Messerschmidt, as you will know and you will see the relevance of this in a moment, believed himself to be haunted by the spirit of harmony who lived with him in his workshop. And who according to Messerschmidt felt betrayed

by Messerschmidt's extraordinary sculptures, and thus gave form to the kinds of faces that you see in that remarkable object.

So the relationship between optimism and pessimism is already a theme that we'll come back to, I suspect, many times in these salons. There will be four of them. The first, of course, asks a slightly but deliberately ungrammatical question: 'Where was Europe?' It does so for two reasons. One is what the papacy tends to call *aggiornamento*, a way of understanding how important almost all the themes that are embodied in this remarkable set of galleries are for where we are now and where we will be in our immediate and long term future. Rarely has the set of issues around the geographical and geopolitical character of anything like Europe been so evidently on everybody's agenda, for good or ill and the remarkable round table that the museum hosted on Monday of last week, I thought, bore eloquent testimony to that.

So please don't resist the temptation to be ridiculously anachronistic and judgmental. We all have, most of us anyway, that professional deformation of the Academy, which is embodied so well in the kind of sentimental historiography that these galleries also beautifully represent, which is that we want to understand these works and their culture and their techniques on their own terms. We want precisely to put the actual and contemporary as far as we can at arms' length. And there is something magically escapist about the space that has been created here. A space of civilisation, of court society, in which to paraphrase Greenblack "there are hardly any wounded artefacts at all".

And yet at the same time, it's presumably precisely by engaging with what might be said to be European, or rather specifically what might be said to show us what counted and counts as Europe, in geographical, cultural, aesthetic and technical senses, that much of what's on show in the gallery here and much of what is not, is so eloquent and so moving.

The second theme I guess – I don't want to anticipate too much because I'm a host, not a chair, we don't have chairs – but might come up in the conversation we're about to have, is that it addresses something which is I think really pressing for us, which is the nature of display, representation, collection and engagement. The various media that are being used to bring all of these figures

and themes to presence. For the Victoria and Albert Museum, this is part of their founding brief. And for us as scholars, intellectuals, co-workers, colleagues and so on this crops up in many, many different ways. From the oxymoronic notion of digital humanities all the way to what we might be prepared to say and do with the material that's collected around us. So the fact that Voltaire is turning the other way because he can't stand looking at us, and that the Messerschmidt piece is obsessively gazing towards us, might be something that we want to return to.

Over in that corner of this room open at the relevant page, is a facsimile of Picart's survey of all the cultures and religions of the world. It's open to the page that shows the dervishes of Istanbul dancing, and it stands for what is liminal. What counts as Europe and what does not, what counts as Europe and what does not, and that's going to be the principal theme of our conversations this evening.

Okay, that's enough from me. We have three Rising Stars, that's the name the British Academy has chosen for the funding scheme that's aiding and abetting our project. Lisa of course counts as the Rising Star. But there are more stars than one in the firmament, as you're about to discover. The first of them is Surekha Davies who is a Professor at Western Connecticut State University, and has already an extraordinarily rich and intense career in working on histories of monsters, of ethnography, history of mentalities from the 15th through the 19th centuries. Publicity: her book, which is not yet published by the slothful Cambridge University Press, nevertheless already has its own website, which I strongly recommend. The book is called 'Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters'. And Surekha is going to talk for seven minutes. When seven minutes are up, I will be seized by a coughing fit. So Surekha, thank you so much.

Dr Surekha Davies: Thank you Simon, Lisa and Bill, and also thanks to the V&A and the British Academy. Okay. Where was Europe? I think before we can answer that we need to know what Europe was. What is this thing we're looking for? Is it a land mass? Is it a people? Let's try this land mass thing. Well, I'm afraid a land mass with a name might need to have clear borders. And typically, you know, we think of continents joining other continents where

there's a narrow bit but Europe and Asia actually are joined over a great deal of space.

And the notion of the continent is not intrinsic to anything physically geography. It's arbitrary; humans set continental land masses over time. Now let's look at how this has been done. Now in classical antiquity, Europe was separated from Asia by the River Don in Russia and separated from Africa by the Mediterranean. But water is something that connects people as much as it separates them. The Romans talked about the Mediterranean as *mare nostrum*, our sea. Pliny wrote about the Mediterranean as this pond around which civilisations gathered, like frogs around a rather smaller pond. So the Mediterranean has never been a hermetic seal. And you know, in the current climate, with the refugee crisis, we might well remember that if we were to go back to the 1930s or 40s, those refugee ships in the Mediterranean were full of people leaving Europe and desperately trying to make it to Africa.

Now border lands and Europe aren't just something we need to think about in relation to the south and the east, but also the north and the west. And according to classical humeral theory, these kind of northern climes that we live in the island of Britain were deeply nasty, wet, damp, cold – the people were only going to be monstrous in behaviour and bodies. So really those Euro-sceptics among the British population should feel perhaps thankful that Europeans condescend to come here and share their intellectual and cultural riches with us.

Where then was Europe in the block? And here, I want to move from thinking about physical borderlands and space to cultural borderlands. If Europe is a people term we might want to think well, is Europe something you identify by the genealogies of bodies who pass through a certain space? Or is Europe some kind of cultural or scientific culture, a political way of thinking? Is Europe something we identify through material culture?

Now if we think about Europe as a people thing with bodies in it, the problem is that bodies with a European genealogy, quote unquote, travelled all over the world between 1600 and 1815 and even before. We might think about colonists, missionaries, for example. If we think about Europe as a place united by

religion. Well conversions in Asia, Africa and the Americas bring those people into Christendom, that medieval notion of Europe. Equally, there were people within Europe who didn't recognise one another as being Christian after the reformation. There were Jesuits who talked about there being another Indies in the south of Italy where people were barbarous and practiced pagan practices. And as for Germany I mean heaven help us, from the point of view of a Jesuit they were lost.

So the religion thing doesn't work either, it doesn't help us to map Europe in practice in the baroque to that popular notion of European geography today. Equally with science, you might think about certain intellectual practices as being quintessentially European but you cannot look at, say, modern medicine without also bringing out all the indigenous medical knowledge that went in to feed it during the baroque.

Politically, Europe was hardly unified in what it thought of as the proper way to act. Philosophes like Montesquieu and Diderot compared Europe, perhaps polemically, to everyone from the Tahitians to the Persians, and Europe didn't come off looking terribly good. Equally within Europe, there were those groups that don't fit what popular culture describes as Europe today. The Ancient Greeks and Romans were pagans. There were the Barbarian hords of Germany. The European renaissance can't be understood without the Islamic, Jewish and Byzantine contributions to it and to Biblical scholarship. And as for material culture, you only have to go through these galleries to see so many types of material be it ivory silk, porcelain, tropical hardwood, that mean that baroque art is completely un-separable from places outside of the traditional boundaries of Europe.

So, you know, where is Europe? Well that depends. Depending on what you're studying, I think you need to draw that boundary more as a network rather than a fixed geographical space. Just the way we think about time periods today. I mean nobody thinks that one day you know, everyone who woke up and it was the Renaissance, and the lights came on and the painting became better. Equally, Europe as a concept is not something where you know, you cross one street and then magically you are there.

What's at stake? Well, whenever people kind of try to call for their own distinctiveness and uniqueness, that has a nasty way of leading to inhumane practices; to treating some people differently and worse from themselves. And you know, to kind of bring this back to Britain for a moment, if you think about Euro-sceptics who are concerned about Europeans coming in and taking British jobs for example, they're being, I would say, both parochial and arrogant. There's never a sort of sense that you could also go out into all of those places in Europe, with significantly better weather. You know, what's not to like about that?

And maybe thinking about kind of Europe in a negative way here in Britain, is an excuse to not use your reason, to not use your, you know, emotional intelligence to look at more what the real problems might be. You know, why aren't you for example, moving to Cracow or moving to Sweden or moving to Germany, or moving to the South of Spain where the weather is better? It might be because language teaching at British schools is absolutely abominable. Perhaps that's the thing to focus on rather than being concerned about losing something from being part of something bigger, rather than gaining something.

So to kind of sum up, I think what's kind of important to think about in the question of 'where is Europe?' is how what Europe is, is not something that has remained fixed over time. That, you know, if we are to actually behave humanely, there are many categories that do not help us. And perhaps the kind of notion of what Europe means needs to be unpacked alongside the question of where Europe is, and that this question doesn't have to have one fixed answer.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Thank you. So our next speaker, *Rising Star*, is Helen Pfeifer who's an Ottomanist. She's a lecturer in the History Faculty at Cambridge University. She's an authority on what we're doing now. Forms of sociability in settings dominated by interest in material culture, the entanglement between Ottoman and let me venture to say other European social forms. Her current book project is called, almost as though it was planned, 'Empire of Salons: Conquest and Community in 16th-Century Ottoman Lands'.

Dr Helen Pfeifer: Yes, well thank you so much. Thank you to both Simon, Bill and Lisa and to everyone who made this wonderful evening possible. As Simon said, I do study Ottoman Salons, specifically as spaces of intellectual exchange. So I'm delighted that you're reviving this really important forum and that one might say is shared across Eurasia.

So as a historian of the Ottoman Empire, I am far from my natural habitat in these galleries. As Simon says I am other, I am liminal to these galleries. And so the people that I study are represented down the hall, in the Islamic Middle East galleries. So in the colour-coded language of the Victoria and Albert Museum, I am orange. And I am flanked by South Asia and South East Asia; that is the sort of geographical understanding that is developed by the layout of the Victoria and Albert Museum. However as I walked into the Al Thani gallery, where the new exhibit, the new galleries opened with Europe and the world, I felt that I might find a home in this space after all.

Now on first impact, there isn't much that is Ottoman in these galleries. There's an Ottoman gun in the cabinet. There's a Greek waist clasp that is labelled as Ottoman. But really the most prominent place for the Ottoman Empire is right next door in a glass case labelled "Fantasies". A glass case devoted to Chinoiserie and Turquerie, where men in turbans sit alongside Chinese dragons. So from this perspective, one might assume that the Ottomans were just as distant and just as foreign to Europeans as the Chinese were. However if you scratch the surface of many of these objects in the galleries – objects that are not obviously Ottoman – a thousand histories of exchange bloom.

So I don't have time to talk about many, but just to invoke a few. First of all, take the tulips that are strewn across Dutch still lifes; that are refined in French cabinets. Long before they were introduced into Europe in the late 16th century, tulips experienced a blossoming in Ottoman culture where they decorated tiles, velvets and poems. When they were taken to Europe at the end of the 16th century, they were perceived sometimes as oriental, but often not as actual oriental objects. Rather, I think we can think of tulips in the 17th century as shared commodities, commodities that really satisfied the cultural taste across Eurasia. And in fact in the Ottoman Empire as much as in Europe, tulips stood

both for wealth and status and also came under critique for being symbols of luxury and excess.

Now other Ottoman objects that we see displayed amongst them, actually had heavier Ottoman connotations in the early modern period. And one example is coffee. So again, coffee was all the rage in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, before it was introduced into Europe in the 17th. So one early proponent of coffee in Europe said that coffee was quote: “One of the principal honours the Turks bestow upon one another during visits. And for this reason, they endow it with the epithet honour.” So the argument being made here is that coffee should be consumed by elite refined Europeans, because elite refined Ottomans consumed it. So it was consumed not despite its oriental connotations, but because of them. And that’s why Madame de Pompadour, who we see depicted by Boucher right next door, actually commissioned another portrait of herself wearing Ottoman costume and drinking coffee and she exhibited this portrait in Bellevue in her (unclear).

So indeed if we remove all of the objects, all of the images from these galleries that somehow had their origin or their references in the Ottoman Empire – camels, turbans, half-moons etc. – we could be left with significantly emptier galleries. So am I then arguing that the Ottoman Empire was not liminal, that it was actually part of Europe or it was actually Europe? Well, I think it’s incontrovertible that the Ottomans had consistent and very intense relationships, interactions, with various European colonies throughout our period. From the 14th century onwards, the Ottomans expanded in South Eastern Europe, in what is now considered Europe.

Trade brought the Ottomans in close contact first with the Venetians and the Genoese, then with the English, the French and the Dutch. And the Ottomans were imbedded in networks of diplomacy in Europe. So in our period that we’re interested in, scholars have estimated that 40 to 50 embassies were exchanged between France and the Ottoman Empire alone. Yet all of that material and cultural exchange coexisted with an understanding that there were real differences, religious, cultural differences, between Ottomans and Europeans, and we see this displayed in the religious ceremonies and customs of all peoples of the world to which Simon just referred.

So the point that I am trying to make is not that the Ottomans were just like the Europeans in all ways, although I do think that this history of interactions bred a number of shared associations and cultural references and practices. Rather the point is, I think, that we should not try to define Europe's historical boundaries or its present boundaries by cultural homogeneity, as contemporaries often do when they say that Turkey does not belong in the European Union because it is culturally too different. Regions, I think, are best understood not by its citizens, which often evaporate under closer scrutiny, rather regions are best understood through patterns of interactions. And these interactions made the Ottomans more familiar to Europeans than the Chinese for example, in the early modern period. And it also afforded all parties, Ottoman and European, a richer cultural vocabulary for understanding and defining themselves, both with and against other groups. Thank you.

Simon

Thank you very much, Helen. Our third and last speaker is William Kynan-Wilson from Aalborg – I've probably pronounced that wrong haven't I, sorry – University where he's a Postdoctoral. He's also an associate at the Ottoman Studies Centre in Cambridge. William's work has really opened our eyes extraordinarily, I think, to different ways of thinking the process of travel and exchange, which is a theme we'll absolutely come back to not only this evening but on several occasions in the Salon series. His current work, which I'm extraordinarily envious of I have to say, is on costume albums, Ottoman costume albums, from the 1500s to the 1600s. William, the floor is yours. Thank you very much.

Dr William Kynan-Wilson: Thank you very much for having me and I'd like to thank all of those that made this evening possible. It's a great pleasure to be here. My interest centres on Ottoman-European contact and exchange and in particular I'm very interested in the role that travel texts and travel images played in colouring expectations and experiences when one travelled. So I'd like to offer a few thoughts on that, before turning to some items in the galleries.

The question 'where is Europe?' suggests geography, space, boundaries, borders. But one thing that struck me when I returned to the sources – I work

with early images, depictions of the Ottoman world and travel literature – is very few people talk about crossing a boundary and leaving Europe, entering the Ottoman world. There weren't lines in the sand. And yet today, we have this very lyrical divide of prosperous Europe on one side, Asia on the other and yet it was never that simple, never portrayed in those ways, in the 16th, 17th centuries at least.

And this is where the process of travel, I think, is very important. You didn't go from the one non-place to another non-place, from an airport to an airport. It was a gradual... the process of travel from say Britain to Constantinople was a long and gradual one, of similarity as well as difference. And often it's when you pass through the Straits of Gibraltar that suddenly, a very mixed and complicated world open before you. So for instance, a British traveller's first experience of Islam could be in North Africa, but then these port cities were often a mix of Italian, Spanish, Jews, Muslims, all sorts of different peoples. So they're not simple spaces that are unique to one culture, and exclusive to one culture.

Another thing I'd like to think about is how you can create European space abroad and possibly outside of a traditional sort of European geographic boundary. And again, Constantinople provides a vivid example because European visitors, merchants, ambassadors would be based in Pera or Galata, outside of the old city of Constantinople. They would be allowed in during the day – dragomans would be their sort of intermediaries – but at night, they would have to return to their enclaves. And so hostels and inns along national boundaries, I think, are important. And it's the English ambassador's house in Constantinople, is that an Ottoman space of an English space or a European space? Equally turning that around, we find a great taste for Turkish rooms in Europe, particularly in German speaking lands. Is that an Ottoman space, or is it the German idea of an Ottoman space?

And then to wrap up my sort of general thoughts before turning to the exhibition, I thought, as we probably all will throughout these Salons, about Edward Said's seminal work in orientalism. And he rallied against this idea of a homogenous, monolithic orient, but in so doing he sort of constructs a homogenous occident, this single vision of Europe. And I think that when you

look at European contact with the Ottoman world, it's a varied picture. English responses and engagement with the Ottomans was very different to French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish. There are, of course, similarities but there are also great differences. So I think we need to break it down and think of Europes and Occidents, perhaps.

I'd just like to close with some thoughts I've had looking through these wonderful new galleries. And whenever I see an exhibition, I think of the stories that it tells. And two stories stood out to me. The first is that there is some common themes, classical heritage and legacy, you can see iconographically, in a number of places. Christian iconography is present in some places. But also there's great difference and variety, which I think speaks of this Europes. One case in particular labelled "Local Traditions" really caught my eye. Here, we have items from Malta, Switzerland, Norway, Spain, Sweden. Geographic places that aren't always represented in every room or greatly, and just the diversity and these vernacular local traditions, I think, also comes out.

The second story that struck me is one of the absences here. Museums often don't like to talk about what they don't have. It can be awkward or difficult and tough to convey. But of course there are some places like Malta and Norway are not represented whereas France, Germany are. And I think that has a... it tells a very interesting story about Britain's perceptions of continental Europe at a certain time when the collections at the V&A were being formed, and so we need to bear that in mind.

So to sum up, I think for me, these galleries demonstrate that Europe was an elusive movable and changeable concept, indeed it still is. And we see that beautifully with items such as the two banyans, an Indian word to describe this textile drawn from Japanese Kimonos with sort of Chinese silks and then manufactured and presumably worn in western Europe. I think that just shows how you can be European and also non-European possibly to do with what you're wearing, what you put on your walls, what you drink, what you eat. And I think that these galleries show the cultural capital and the power of that idea; how Europe can be created and projected, appropriated and denied in various ways. And I think that's the story that we're seeing played out very vividly today. Thank you.

Prof Simon Schaffer: William, thank you very much. So we have about an hour, the floor is open. You can if you wish stand, as some of our speakers have done, or remain seated on these delightfully comfortable benches. So, if anyone wants to launch.

Dr Danielle Thom: I'm Danielle Thom and I am the Assistant Curator here at the V&A. A couple of points sprung to mind, a couple of ideas rather, while all of our excellent speakers were giving their summaries. And one is that, I wonder is it worth zooming out on the globe so to speak and thinking of you're in the context of the Atlantic world? Thinking about British, French, Spanish engagement in North America particularly of all the colonial project, and looking at that as a kind of project to impose almost European-ness on the so-called New World. Can we think of the peripheries of Europe as extending across the Atlantic, particularly in material culture in terms of literature, in terms of print culture as well?

The other point I wanted to offer, which in global terms is almost at the opposite end of the spectrum is to think locally and internally. We are talking about 'where was Europe?' and we're talking about it in terms of peripheries and boundaries. But in terms of 'where was Europe?' as a lived experience, it's worth recollecting the absolute flux internally, in Europe, throughout this period. We start off, 1600 we start off with conflict in the Spanish Netherlands, the on-going struggle to form the united provinces of the Dutch Republic; we have the absolute devastation of the 30 years' war, the 7 years' war, lots of wars. By the end of this period, it's you know, bookended if you like by Napoleon and his absolute vast conquest of most of the European land mass. And in terms of what it means to be European and how European-ness relates to local identities and national identities that internal flux, I think, is a crucial component of our understanding.

Mr Liam Byrne: It strikes me that the sort of idea of Europe, inherently, is something that is a bit transcendent or aspirational. It's the idea of a kind of national identity that's bigger than one and one country. And so I wonder whether there might be – you reminded me of this when you spoke about going and sort of evangelising a European ideology across the Atlantic Ocean,

that perhaps the sort of the borders of the space can actually be defined by a desire to participate in a certain aspirational ideology, then which would also apply to kind of the Ottoman traders and artisans who were wanting to participate in a certain idea. It's kind of there's a, perhaps a European sort of cultural spatial border can be defined by a desire to participate in a certain set of subtle ideals, which could also be one of the reasons why this idea of aspiration is something that's always been very difficult for Britain. And if there's something about this idea of aspiring towards a thing, might be part of the reason that Britain struggles and has struggled, with a certain amount of European-ness.

Dr Danielle Thom: So you could say – I don't want to dominate the point – that in a sense Europe is a mentality and where is Europe? Europe is wherever a European, self-defined, is wherever they are in the world Europe is something that you carry with you in your head, as opposed to something with physical borders.

Mr Liam Byrne: It's also... it's a desire to kind of transcend those borders at the same time.

Prof Simon Schaffer: There's no need to put up your hand. If you wish to do so that's very polite.

Professor Evelyn Welch: I'm being very polite, we are in a Salon. I'm Evelyn Welch. I'm a professor of Renaissance Studies at King's College London. And it's been very interesting listening to the concepts, and about othering there. And you need to be near something that is different from you in order to identify who you are yourself. If I just take us back to five or six years ago, when the V&A was actually bringing together its many different departments to think, 'How are we going to present these galleries to an international public?' And being a research organisation, they actually asked visitors, before these galleries were opened, what is Europe? What happens in Europe between 1600 and 1800? Louis XIV was the only thing that people could come up with then. And then warfare. Lots and lots and lots of warfare, lots of conflict and lots of people dying horribly.

One of the aspirations was to – actually Louis XIV does sit in the centre of it because people will sort of go, “Phew. I recognise that there.” The conflict, swords, scuffles are also part of their understanding and engagement there. And one of the things I’d like to give as a suggestion is that of course the fascinating thing about the material culture of this growing globalised world, is that sometimes it pronounces its exoticism, as with these banyans, and sometimes it hides it, as with beaver hats for example, where you really have to know the making of it and the origin of beaver fur to make that felt, in order to appreciate just that Atlantic distance that it’s travelled there. So I think that’s what’s exciting, would be in five years’ time to ask that same question of visitors to the V&A ‘what is Europe, where is Europe, who is Europe?’ and see what differences the displays have made. And maybe they might even recognise that coffee is not European in origin.

Mr Tobias Thyberg: I think, looking at where I’m coming from which is one expression of European-ness, namely the European Union, what some of the speakers have talked about, namely the aspirational element of the European idea or the Messianic idea of Europe as a commonality of ideas, is something quite contested today. And I think there’s sort of... in Brussels, there’s two very distinct ideas of what is Europe. One of them, which sort of crudely speaking can be embodied by the southern European states as a commonality of interests. Another one is sort of a more northern and eastern European idea, which is a commonality of values. The idea of Europe as a commonality of values, which is also a very dynamic idea, because the idea about values is you need to spread them. Whereas the idea of interests is you need to protect them, which is slightly more static.

And it sort of plays out, I think, in the sort of, the rivalry we’re having in Europe today between southern European countries who sort of... they’re very comfortable with Mediterranean as a “Yes, it’s a pond, it’s a watering hole in the Savannah where the sort of animals come to attract and feed, but it’s also a comfortable and clear boundary.” And I was thinking about somebody who... I think you spoke of the Ottoman Empire as always being understood as something which we share, we have something in common but it’s also distinctly different.

In eastern Europe, the idea of an expanding Europe is still very strong. Because the memory of the expansions of NATO, the expansion of the European Union and the fall of the Soviet Union is still extremely fresh in these memories. And these two ideas are clashing because it's very distinct, it's very clear to me that those who think of Europe as a commonality of interests are very uncomfortable with the idea of Europe as a commonality of values that need to be spread. And I think that's sort of, to some extent, at the heart of the debate that we're seeing in Europe today about for example, what should Europe's relationship be with a country like Ukraine, or a country like Georgia, or a country like Moldova? Countries which in a sense are the next peripheral circle of what happened in 2004, when Europe enlarged to embody a number of eastern European states.

So I think whereas the idea of sort of expanding or a sort of an idealistic Europe is still very strong, it's also very contested. And my feeling is that today, I put my money on Europe as a commonality of interests rather, because of the pessimism which is so strong within the European Union today.

Prof Simon Schaffer: So we have themes of aspiration in various ways, some material, some quite strikingly idealist, in the technical sense of that term. We also, I thought very interestingly in a lot of the initial interventions, want to attend to mobility. So it's as if the question 'where was Europe?' doesn't only invite a geographical answer, it invites an answer that focuses and attends to certain kinds of travel and displacement and so on. But as we've just been reminded, many European aspirations wish to resist mobility as far as they possibly can, for good or perhaps more often ill.

So is the answer to our question Europe is not just where Europeans or any European is – as has been I think very interestingly proposed – but also Europe... if the question is 'where is Europe?' Europe is precisely not over there. But there is a negation, in a very important tradition of rejection and boundary making and exclusion, which we would do well to attend to at least as often. And if there's a pessimism, that's part of that pessimism.

Dr Surekha Davies: We also need to think about whether the word Europe has become shorthand for the European Union. And that's a dangerous

slippage because you know, I mean if you go back a few years then that would be removing from. You know, is the Czech Republic in and Moldova out, is that so straightforward? Is France in and Byzantium inheritors not? So the short-hands of the language are also problematic.

Dr Felicia Gottmann: It's Felicia Gottmann, from Dundee. But there's also the third version of Europe, which is the distinctly British one which is, Europe is on the other side of the water. And that is what, I think if you come to the V&A and go to the Europe galleries as a kind of European in the British sense, the first thing that will strike you is that it reinforces this uniquely British view of Europe, it doesn't include Britain. As a British person talking about Europe I'll talk about it obviously as someone who has collected it, as we do here, but not really as something that's part of it. And that couldn't happen in any other part of Europe, in the British version. If a German museum does Europe, they would hardly have a section on Germany and then a section of Europe because you're part of Europe. And this is just such a... at the same time, it is obviously part of Britain's British collection of European art, which is a profoundly British and European. So it's a very interesting contrast that, I think, has very many repercussions in what's currently going on.

Prof Bill Sherman: Can I just follow up on that? It's Bill Sherman again, in case you don't recognise me. And I went to the Oxford English Dictionary, as I usually do when I want to find something interesting and I found that the definition of salon itself follows that point extremely well. First of all, it's the least interesting definition in the OED; it's a thoroughly boring and inadequate definition. But it does say that, the only reference to what we are doing here is "a room more or less elegantly furnished", this one's very elegantly furnished. "Used for the reception of guests", well we've got guests here but it says "now only with reference to France or other continental countries." So actually we don't... we're in a room that shouldn't exist. So it's in some virtual Europe, linguistically speaking, but not geographically. So I think there is that sense.

The other one is there is actually a specialised sense which is "the reception room specifically of a Parisian lady of fashion, hence a reunion of notabilities at the house of such a lady". But that's it. Nothing about the idea of a conversation, nothing about being together or possibly in other places. So

that's... I guess that is an English version of quite a clearly European phenomenon.

Dr William Kynan-Wilson: If I could...

Prof Simon Schaffer: Go on.

Dr William Kynan-Wilson: Thank you. If I could just pick up on the point of sort of Europe being synonymous with the continent. I think that has a very long, rhetorical history, where in Britain we like to appropriate Europe when it's helpful and reject it at other moments. And you can think of the talking about the sort of angels in Rome. They're angels, they're from another world, and this liminal status medieval writers talk about a lot. And I think we can perhaps still see that in some of the politics today where we want to opt in for some things but not everything. So I think it can be played both ways.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Without intervening too strongly, on 20th January we will gather again, precisely to discuss with Danielle and others the theme of Europe and Britain. I see that it's as though everyone who enters this Salon gets there from Dover rather than from South Kensington. I wonder if there's anyone who wants to pursue... it's a point that William made and it's absolutely connected with what you've just said, this thought that one is as it were most European when one is definitely elsewhere. Right, I mean that's a very familiar point in cultural history. It's especially a familiar point in the cultural history of early modernities.

So the places where there are Europeans are certainly not Europe in any sense, in our period. But Canton, Mexico City, Surat I think above all; Istanbul, certainly; and on the slave plantations in the Caribbean and in the New World, to pick up the New World point. And is that a theme that we might want to look at more closely? And that's a very familiar point, as I say, in the historiography and study of early modernity that one is... so that the English really only identify themselves as Europe when they're in Pera or when they're in Surat and then they really are European. That theme might need interrogation precisely in the light of what's in this gallery, because it's clearly

visible in some ways but one needs a certain kind of connoisseurship to see that it's so. Is that a theme that people want to explore?

Prof Evelyn Welch: Can I ask Helen to talk a little bit about what a Salon actually meant in the Ottoman setting? And would Europeans have recognised themselves as safely in Paris in that setting or was it still, as Simon is saying, a place where you feel foreign and therefore Parisian or European?

Dr Helen Pfeifer: So thank you for asking, in fact I was just about to push back against what Simon said. I mean there was certainly an Ottoman tradition, of a Salon tradition, that was absolutely exclusive of Europeans because it was built on Islamic knowledge and on Arabic or Ottoman Turkish, which very few Europeans would have mastered, and so it was both sort of self-consciously Islamic and hence exclusive. But certainly in the 17th and 18th centuries you have a rising number of Europeans who are actually travelling – (unclear) or Lady Mary Montague – who are willing to travel to the Ottoman Empire and often enter the Salons of Ottoman elites and find that it's actually not as foreign, in the sense that they admire the sort of civility of the Ottomans. And John-Paul Ghobrial who will be coming at a later Salon has spoken of sort of Ottoman and European sociability.

And so to me that introduces actually a very important sort of aspect that Will and I talked about earlier today, that we haven't talked that much about, which is a sort of class or status. That is, you know, to what extent these sorts of aspirational participation in a particular culture – intellectual and material culture – is actually a sort of aspiration to be part of a shared sort of maybe Eurasian elite, refined sort of sociability? So to me that's an important aspect when we think about what is Europe?

Dr Danielle Thom: Could I broach something that somewhat turns this question on its head. We're thinking about Europeans self-identifying as European when they're removed from that geographical context. Thinking about it the other way, non-Europeans coming into the geographical boundary of Europe. And you mentioned slave plantations. It's a bit of an elephant in the room but this is a period which economically is absolutely... it's pinned to the trade in human flesh. Is European-ness inherently at this time synonymous

with whiteness? Or is it something that can elide so-called racial difference? Is a figure such as Olaudah Equiano or Ignatius Sancho, a European? Would they have considered themselves European and been considered as such by their white peers and contemporaries? How does it work when you break down that genealogical, if you like, definition of Europe and its forebears?

Dr Lisbet Rausing: I'm Lisbet Rausing. I always think a complicated factor to that argument is the on-going and accelerating enslavement of white people in eastern Europe. So that to what extent in the period slaves are being so alienated from the land into mines, into craft shops and so on. So I think Europe also colonises itself.

Dr Tessa Murdoch: Tessa Murdoch, V&A. I was just going to pick up on Ignatius Sancho, who was sheltered by the 2nd Duke of Montagu and given the opportunity to develop his own career as a grocer in Soho and write his memoirs. And I think within that circle of patronage he was very much accepted as a European, but that was a particularly enlightened form of patronage that was probably coloured by travel within Europe and the aspiration to colonise, on the part of the 2nd Duke of Montagu, part of the Caribbean.

So that particular nobleman was educated in such a way, being the son of an ambassador as it happens to Louis XIV's Versailles, exposed to international culture and able to embrace it within his own platform, and indeed to encourage that particular individual, Ignatius Sancho, to excel at all aspects of the arts and even to compose music, which has recently been performed.

Dr Marta Ajmar: Marta Ajmar, V&A. I think that this discussion around whiteness and non-whiteness is particularly appropriate for the chronology that we are thinking about because in many ways, a lot of the, if you like, kind of post-colonial assumption is that there is a polarity between black and white. Well that is not something that we find in early modern sources. Early modern sources talk about colour whether applied to human skin or applied to objects, on a spectrum. And Euro skin is perceived as having a lot of different colours kind of sitting next to each other and the associations bear no relationship between that spectrum and the conventional division of the continents. And so that, I think, is something interesting to bring up.

Dr Surekha Davies: True. I can see that invention of blackness and whiteness in the slave codes of places like Barbados in the mid-17th century, where the plantation owners are trying to separate white endangered labour from slave African labour and to really bring everybody into a system that supports slavery by saying... you know, fining anybody who helps a runaway slave. So it was important to, it was convenient to have a group that could be identified from the outside.

Prof Bill Sherman: Can I jump in and just ask another question for the speakers first but others as well? That if you are asked where something is and you don't know you generally now turn to a map. Right? So if we do that in the period that we're studying, what do you learn? What's the answer?

Dr William Kynan-Wilson: I mean one obvious thing that springs to mind when thinking about the Ottomans in Europe are the borders are shifting a lot in certain parts of Europe, Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, modern-day Bulgaria, Romania. So the answer that people there might give would depend on which day of the week it would be. So I think that's an important issue. With hindsight, we see these neat lines in a history book showing what was Ottoman, what was perhaps (*unclear*). But it wasn't like that on the ground.

Dr Helen Pfeifer: Or another example would be actually the Spanish Reconquista, which many Spaniards thought of actually as continuing in North Africa and not stopping in the Gibraltar Strait.

Prof Bill Sherman: Well on the other hand you know, when you have Atlases with the four key regions – continents, whatever – they are people, and they have codes. You know, they're represented by figures. They're bodies really, in those great world atlases.

Dr Surekha Davies: Saying one fixed, as either the number of four or five or six, in the period we're looking at, sometimes North and South America are a separate continent and you have five. Occasionally you have six in which you have (*unclear*), this great southern continent. On a lot of European world maps there are no boundaries around things. So if you look at the Americas, you will

see place names like Patagonia and Peru but no boundaries to show where for example, Peru might join Mexico. And for the kind of European empires, for somewhere like Spain, they were in many ways looking at the former Messica and Inca empires and looking for vassals. So they weren't any different from say the Dutch Habsburg lands, which the Dutch also talked about in a very different way.

Prof Bill Sherman: But is Europe itself ever divided?

Dr Surekha Davies: Into nations...

Prof Bill Sherman: Is there always a figure of Europe or *Europa*?

Dr Surekha Davies: That is a concept with a classical pedigree, yes.

Dr Earle Havens: There are lots of... Earle Havens, John Hopkins. There is a lot of these sequences of the four continents that are (*unclear*) as a series of... constantly redone like it's the cover of the Ortelius. You know, the Europa is on top, in front, and then you have the implied hierarchy of Asia, then Africa and then the true savages of the New World. But actually I don't want to distract from this line of conversation, but one of the interesting things is what we've learned recently from very good scholarship, is the active collecting of elements of conquest as essential components of the cabinet of curiosity.

And I do think if there's anything positive to be said about this European-ness in a context of a place like this, it's the curiosity that causes one to gather together the elements of the world in one enclosed space. It isn't an accident I think, thinking of mapping, that the first collections of cabinets of curiosities are literally being mapped and illustrated at precisely the time that this exhibition covers. Beginning in 1599 with Ferrante Imperato's Cabinet, published in Naples, republished in the 17th century. I noticed in the other room we have (*unclear*), book published...a large folio copy of that. And these places are also Salons. I mean these images actually show people talking to one another inside these spaces.

And so Europe does exist inside the cabinet of curiosities, as alongside the rest of the world. And it wishes to create a conversation that locates Europe outside of... imaginatively in that way. So we've heard the word aspiration, I'd just throw in the word curiosity as another element of this, and maybe not as pessimistic.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Thank you. No, I'd certainly like to back up what Earle is pointing towards. And in a way I think it does deal with some of Bill's question, which is the immense importance of the non-human - the key component in a way of the cabinet. So that there's a history to be written, and it's been written by great historians, of the role of elephants and armadillos, bison and (*unclear*), not just metonymically but in fact they constitute what counts as regions and zones. Absent certain perhaps to us more familiar boundaries but there's an ecological project there. And where one sees that best is, as some of my Cambridge colleagues have pointed out, is in the stunning geographical ambiguity that European collectors associate with beasts with uncertain provenance, like pangolins and armadillos, who are exchanged, even though one group comes from South America and the other group comes from the East Indies in Europe. They're not from around here. And that makes them fit to stock the non-European bit of the cabinets in which they appear. Pangolins and armadillos are treated as interchangeable astonishingly, as has been pointed out.

So one of the things just to keep your eye out for, as you wander around here, is how the non-human is being used iconographically and practically in this extraordinary gallery, because they're subject to the most amazingly moving, in every sense of that word, treatment. Whether it's the elephant in the room, which is just there, which is apparently a Chinese elephant made in the Low Country; or the shelves that stock so much of what's in the earlier rooms of the gallery. That's a theme it must be said... the reason I'm wittering on about this, is that this is part of the theme of our 4th Salon in March when we get on to ephemeral. Okay, we have quite a bit more time. José.

Dr Jose Ramon Marcaida: Hi, I'm Jose Ramon Marcaida. Here I wanted to bring that point again Simon about movement of non-humans in connection with something we discussed at some point before, the idea of pilgrimage

linked to etymologically with the idea of something being *peregrino*, something being exotic, rare. Not from here. So in a way we are witnessing not just the protean nature of Europe whatever that is, I'm not sure, that protean and ever-changing nature of these places. The print on these items that are travelling items, they are *peregrinos*. They are pilgrims in all kinds of ways. So they come from places which we don't identify as our place and yet our place is also with respect to them a place that is a place of destiny that is also changing. So this idea of *peregrinos*, this idea of pilgrimage, in a way is giving us a hint of how to understand both changing environments, and I think we will come back to this probably in later sessions but I think it should be mentioned here.

But in contrast to this, maybe we have to throw in the word which has been used once before, "empire", which in a way, it provides another access to this story because to what extent if I talk about this empire where the sun never sets? That's a map. That's a very simple map, that thinking in these round spherical environments it's a very clever map. And it's not even 2D. So how do you accommodate a place where the sun never sets into an idea of Europe as this sort of single identity? I find it really striking, especially for cases like the Spanish Empire where the sun never set.

Dr Elaine Tierney: Elaine Tierney, University of Manchester. I'm just (*unclear*). There's something that we've not really kind of touched on yet and that's the issue of language. Now I speak to this terribly erudite international audience as someone who's a product of the British and Irish state school system where you have terrible language skills. I can kind of fight my way through French and a bit of Italian but that's pretty much it. I can fight my way through English to some extent, on a good day.

I'm just thinking about English as being this language which is steeped in so many other places, both European and global. And I want you to think about for a moment, if anyone wants to, how language might complicate what we're trying to do here, this kind of sense of the European and start thinking about language in terms of exchange, in terms of communication, in terms of not communicating, as a barrier. But both historically but also as scholars. Because what does it mean to not be able to... because I was terribly impressed (*unclear*) this evening. You have an array of wonderful languages that you have access to.

I can only dream of being able to do. So if I'm looking at, that's the space...but what language can tell us. And what is the job of language in the definition of the process we're trying to talk about this evening.

Prof Evelyn Welch: Well some of the most fascinating recent work in early modern studies has been on interpreters and translators, particularly the *dragomans* whom you were discussing. And the uses of different vernaculars, Italian becomes a really important translation language for Russians for example, who were travelling in Europe. The role of Latin as a common language, which of course excludes your men in the mines there. So there can be commonalities amongst elites wherever you are, European, non-European, if you share Latin, or if you share clock-making or map-making. There can be astonishingly skilled professional translators in places like (*unclear*) and Istanbul, absolutely extraordinary.

And then you can choose a language that none of you speak really, to communicate effectively. And I certainly have seen in the work that I've done, that far from being a barrier as we would assume now; if I don't speak Chinese I can't possibly understand that culture. But the flexibility, the ability is set to one side words and use doing as another means of communicating or find somebody who can find you and translate seems to be far more flexible and open in this period, where oddly enough I think you can communicate better than we do with the internet.

Dr Spike Sweeting: Spike Sweeting. I'm going to jump in a bit on that, about the internet point because I think we also need to think not just in terms of language, but format. And I think trade is really important in this, that Italian book-keeping is a European-wide phenomenon in this period. People were constantly counting, comparing fiscal systems and numerical and fiscal techniques are absolutely key in how Europeans see each other, how they communicate with each other and who they communicate with especially at an elite level as well. But just to add that into the mix, that format is key I think.

Dr Elaine Tierney: Well that's also a basis to do trust on, isn't it? You know, having systems and formats that are agreed on as a basis of trust.

Dr Jose Ramon Marcaida: I couldn't help thinking of the beautiful quote by Don Quixote when he claims that the translation from one language into another is like looking at a tapestry on the back of a tapestry where the figures are distorted. So I wonder if in these spaces of intersection between different languages and this distortion, it's really the right picture of the sort of distorted Europe that we are trying to investigate.

Dr Surekha Davies: Well culture travels partly with language but identity, culture and language are very kind of different things and the point is to talk about the notion of ethnogenesis or ethnicities being invented, you know, being born, through collisions, through people consciously identifying themselves as X or Y or Z, for particular purposes. In the Atlantic world, you have the phrase *Carib* the name for a certain tribe, being something that Europeans use to label hostile groups. You then say well they are cannibals, so it's just to conquer them to spare the victims they would otherwise eat. Equally you have indigenous groups pointing out *Caribs* over there and pointing to their enemies.

And also today you have other groups, so acquiring and appropriating that term as something of a post-colonial, you know, counter-narrative to the jungle that is modernity. And it is kind of useful to kind of pass out what notion of Europe inheres in people speaking a language and one also does not travel? And equally what travels back? I sort of mentioned this earlier, I mean English as a language is the ultimate modern-role language. So, you know, Britain not in culture nor in language has been hermetically sealed from Europe or the world.

Prof Simon Schaffer: So one thing that comes through there, I mean it's absolutely (*unclear*) point right, is the period that is concerning us here, the 17th and 18th century, is apart from all the other things, precisely the period when those kinds of linguistic genealogies occupy absolutely the centre of historical and humanist and erudite enquiry and political argument too. So I wonder if folk have thoughts around an answer to 'where is Europe?' in our period, in the 17th and 18th, is always a geological question. Is it? It's always a question about descent. So one answer to that is Noah's third son, that's where Europe is. Because it's not Semitic and it is Japhetic. And that is going to become an even more – I mean perhaps rather surprisingly in a way – an even more important

thing towards the end of our period, in Orientalism. Whether it be in Calcutta or in Mexico, the mosaic and Noaharchic tracing out of the origin of what it is to be Europe and where Europe has ended up is something to do with the Ark and the deluge and its secularisation. Is that the possible answer to this question? Or is that just hopelessly anachronistic?

Prof Evelyn Welch: I'd like to propose that Europe is where the postal systems could get to. The astonishing thing about the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries is where you could send tulip bulbs, plants, perfumes, soaps, correspondence which could be read, correspondence which was deciphered, and you could guarantee that it would get there. And at certain points though that guarantee comes to an end there and you can't trust that your precious object, unless you really know that it's been given into the hands of a mariner or a particular captain, that it really make it to its destination.

But if you look how fast this postal service works in this period and how quickly information can travel even in times of warfare, you can create a common information economy. And for me it's where does that information economy stop? Does it stop in Bergen? Does it stop in Lisbon? Or does it keep going on to Goa because in fact the trust of that very, very high quality communication system in the if you like, the Iberian empires there, mean that Europe goes exactly where it needs to go in order to get its taxes back?

Dr Danielle Thom: Can I pick that up and run with it, on a slight tangent? You're talking about a postal system and that is an example of infrastructure. We've also been talking about languages coming together, disseminating and networks and modes of trade. What this raises in my mind is to what extent is Europe, despite it being this vast land mass of many, many square miles to what extent is it actually a network of connected urban centres? Is our Europe actually a network of cities? Of course it's more nuanced than that. We could look at for example the country house as a kind of satellite version of the urban centre, a centre of cultural expression and conversation.

But to what extent are we really concerned with the increasing urbanisation of this period, the increasing building and coming together and physical gathering in one place and the networks between that place and another place of

gathering? Or should we be thinking about this in a more natural, more spread out way? Is it a mistake to focus too much on the city, at this time?

Dr Elaine Tierney: Well I suppose that kind of then presupposes there's all sorts of people who aren't Europe, in the bits between. So which raises the question of who's excluded and not, from these definitions.

Dr Hannah Williams: Hannah Williams, Queen Mary. I just want to come back to this issue of identity and thinking about who is this period is actually thinking of themselves as European and *is anybody?* Is this the moment when people do start to think of themselves as European or this idea of the lived experience of Europe? I mean people that I work on who live in Paris, you know an urban environment, aren't really I don't think thinking of themselves in the 18th century as European. They're thinking of themselves as Parisians or maybe of being from a particular country; it's a very local sense of identity. And maybe that sort of brings us to the point of what the category of Europe is useful for. And obviously it's a very useful museological category, but is it maybe not a very useful anthropological category if what you're interested in is the lived experience of you're in this time, in this moment?

Dr Olivia Horsfall Turner: If I could pick up on that, Olivia Horsfall Turner, V&A. I wonder if it's a revealing at all to think of necessity as a driver for definition, but there are certain moments when it becomes, as you were saying, useful to define. And we've heard various examples this evening. Either when you're having your portrait painted, there's a necessity to define yourself, and defining yourself as European might be part of that. When you're collecting, when you're creating taxonomy, you might be evoking a definition of Europe and locating Europe. When you're travelling, you might find it necessary to position yourself within Europe or outside Europe. But that sense of necessity as a driver for the implication of Europe.

Dr Felicia Gottmann: I... it's Felicia Gottmann again. The notion of identity and possibly necessity also come together with I think, opportunity and what we said before that I think is really important, is the notion of class. Because what we have at the moment, I'd guess and I have no statistics on this but if you look at people now who'd self-define as European, they'd self-define as cosmopolitan. They are the people who currently have the money and the

education to travel. And from the people I looked at in the 18th century that was similar, the way the... the Republic of Letters. You could be European, because you have the correspondence network in the whole of Europe because you could afford to and you had the time to. If you were a merchant and you had a commercial network in the whole of Europe, you might also potentially think of yourself as that because you have both the means and the interests.

If you were you know, an urban tradesman, if you were a peasant somewhere, probably you wouldn't. You didn't have the money, you didn't have the language skills, and you had absolutely no need or interest in it. In a similar way today, that is still partially true. It's not just a question of money or sort of interest as well but the divide that we have of, you know, increasing mobility and cosmopolitanism on one hand and the rise of the right in all over Europe, all over the world but also in Europe, might have a lot to do with this kind of binary of class and opportunity and lack of it.

Dr Marta Ajmar: Interestingly though when we think about how many of the objects that we see in these galleries come about, they do come out of networks of people who would have typically been mobile during their working life. And I'm talking about what according to some maybe is over-optimistic statistics, but have been by historians the finest artisans, including anything from the sculptor to the baker, according to some ideas of Europe at this point represents up to 70% of the population. If 70% of the population is basically designed to some extent to have to face mobility during their lives simply because their economic prospects do not guarantee their stability in a way that kind of comes with a certain amount of resources, then I think this kind of complicates a lot this kind of discussion about cosmopolitanism exclusively associated with high culture or elite culture.

Prof Simon Schaffer: I'm sensitive to the time, we're about to start a theme for a whole new Salon. So our plan calls for our three *Rising Star* speakers who launched this to respond or comment in any way they feel fit. They each have two minutes to do that. Surekha, tell us what you thought.

Dr Surekha Davies: Okay. I've thoughts under three rough kind of themes. One thing that very much came out today is that Europe exists, but it exists as a series of multicultural networks. There is the Atlantic world for example; there is the global network of the Iberian empires. Secondly, each bit of Europe was hardly homogenous. It was wildly heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic experience, the lived experience, wildly diverse in terms of where all these people have come from. You know, Britain has been French for almost a thousand years for example, never mind the Dutch and the Africans who came in the 17th century and the Angles and Saxons before them. 1600 to 1815 is a period of a great deal of migration as Europe spat out its religious dissidents and its poor to other parts of the world. So that also is a part of the lived experience of the ordinary so-called European.

Then you might also get... looking at material culture and the baroque, I mean it's truly a global style. The iconography, the materials, the money needed to commission and buy these things. And very cultural practices, from coffee drinking from the Ottoman Empire to chocolate drinking from the Americas. So much of what happens even now in Europe comes from elsewhere, and we might really think of all of these European empires of our period as being parasitic, drawing in things, drawing in practices, but also being itself culturally infectious. People are infected by, for example, the language.

So, you know, in terms of Europe's borders, we might think about who chooses to participate in some of these networks. And as we think about time periods, think about Europe as this moveable feast that is shorthand for different conversations we may have. At times, you know, the Ottoman Empire and Venice would have had far more to do with each other than say Venice and London. Equally, as we sit here in a Salon, surely some of those kind of Parisians in early modern Salons would have recognised practices in an Ottoman Salon more easily than they would have recognised some kind of local festival happening in rural Europe.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Helen.

Dr Helen Pfeifer: Yeah, I mean I just wrote down some of the various very interesting ideas that were thrown out about what is Europe? How is it

defined? We thought of Europe as a network, as a set of interactions, as a set of claims, as an aspiration, as a desire, as a genealogy. As a set of interests, as a negation or as an information economy. And I think all of these have certain overlaps, but I think they also offer, you know, a sense for how, depending on what we're looking for, we do find a very different Europe.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Thank you. William.

Dr William Kynan-Wilson: There were so many fascinating things but there are three themes, all conveniently around the letter 'C' but I'd like to talk about that. Class has emerged as a theme, initially, that's come up. And class actually is a sort of cultural leveller in some ways, having told us about how western European elites found the sort of kindred spirits in intellectual circles in Constantinople. So perhaps issues of class actually complicate our notion of Europe.

Equally, classicism. In the galleries there are lots of classical motifs, there's inheritants of Ancient Rome, Greece, as a sort of traditional peg upon which to hang European identity. But I feel again, in the Ottoman Empire, they were deeply aware and fascinated with sort of ancient cultures and civilisations, and they played upon that in so many ways. I don't think it's always represented in museums, in Ottoman lands. It's not a narrative that people expect or necessarily want. I don't think it's spoken about or displayed but I think you can see evidence of this deep interest in classicism. So again, I think that problematizes the issue.

And again, this issue of collecting. And once more, in the galleries, we see this wonderful sort of absorption, Europe as a sponge, sucking up lots of wonderful things from across the world. But again, in the Ottoman world, one of the finest collections of Chinese porcelain is in the Topkapi Palace. Again, it's not what people, visitors expect. They want Iznik tiles with tulips, and so on. And so again, it's not really showing and I think that just underlines to me the really important role that museums in this country and around the world play in forming our ideas of national identity and culture, and how actually it's maybe much more problematic than we often realise. Thank you.

Prof Simon Schaffer: Thanks a million. I'm supposed to talk for two minutes now. That was magnificent. It shows you the, I'm sure you will all agree, the vitality and worth of the format of the Salon, assuming that that is what we've just experienced. I've just had two or three very brief thoughts. One is to think again and it's made certainly me, as an historian of the sciences, think very much again about the particular ambiguity which our language frustrates. In English we fail to make a distinction, which in most European languages is now exceptionally common, which is a distinction between *globalisation* and *mondialisation*. It's an extremely important distinction for example in the work of Serges Gruzinski on Central and Latin America and "the four parts of the world" and other scholars and critics too, in Spain and in the German lands as well, which is roughly a distinction after all between as it were Europe as an episode in the history of the postal system, to go back to what Evelyn was very importantly reminding us of. A certain kind of metrology, a certain kind of standardisation, perhaps with perhaps without the panoptic qualities that that word carries with it.

And on the other hand, *mondialisation* which is the extraordinary presence of *metisage*, of appropriation of local sensibilities. So that the answer to 'where was Europe' is everywhere and nowhere in that peculiar sense; that one is struck precisely in the period covered by these galleries by the exquisite forms of adaption and hybridity, that are evident on gallery but also evident historically and in terms of material culture more widely.

The second theme I thought that came through very well indeed, I mean clearly the use of the word "aspiration" points our attention towards this unambiguously, is the question of urbanity and disparity. So it may well be the case that in the period we're considering, which is a period of absolutely decisive economic and social transformation in the condition of European cities, their size. It's the first time that they overcome the Malthusian Trap. It's the first time that a European city is going to be one of the largest in the world; that was absolutely not true before 1600 and it begins to be true by the end of our period, very interestingly. Is that the clue? Is a certain kind of urbanity along with urbanism what's at stake here? An enormous proportion of the material that we have here is either domestic or courtly. That seems rather suggestive.

And then the third point that I thought the Salon was particularly good on – ten out of ten – is mobility problems. Right? So some of what's at stake perhaps in the period – and we'll absolutely come back to this in the future Salon – is that this is the period when the leaders of European natural philosophy invent a principle which absolutely did not exist in natural philosophy or in technique before this period, which is action at a distance. And so *the* great transformation in European models of the cosmos is that this is a system which depends on being able to act instantly where you are not. And there is a very important resonance I think, between what we have in this extraordinary gallery and that very peculiar thought. That it's possible and in fact necessary to be where you are not, instantly elsewhere at infinite distance and that that is what keeps the cosmos going. And that will become at the end of our period, *the* definition of European science.

That's a very striking fact to think about in the light of some of our conversations, especially since the initial formulation of that view was produced by someone who never went on a boat, who never saw the sea, whose universe was defined by a small market town in the East Midlands of England and two rather down at heel suburbs of this city. And yet it was possible for him using the *Welchian* information system, to gather data from everywhere from Cape Horn to Canton to St Petersburg to the slave plantations of Virginia, and make a cosmos a bit like this.

Okay. So we have three more Salons and most of you thank goodness will be with us on this journey. Just to remind you the second Salon is on 'Europa and Britannia'. We've lapsed into Latin. And as they say... sorry I'll lapse in taste now. They say at the end of every music hall show, "we should thank our performers but chiefly yourselves".

Dr Lisa Skogh: Thank you for listening to What was Europe? A New Salon. We would also like to thank the British Academy for generously supporting this new Salon series. In the next Salon our journey into the past of Europe continues with the second of our conversations focusing on the concept and relationship between Europe and Britain. We hope to see you then.