

Images of Julius Caesar (Quebec, 4-6 Oct 07)

H-Net Announcements

The Centre Interuniversitaire d'Étude de la République des Lettres will hold a three-day Conference entitled

'IMAGES OF JULIUS CAESAR IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE'

4th-6th October 2007,
at the Université Laval, Quebec.

Surprisingly little attention has been accorded to the fortunes of Cesar in Europe during the early modern period. As far as French studies are concerned, although Cardinal Grente's famous *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises* devotes a few pages to the images of Caesar in medieval literature, nothing is said about the representation of the Emperor during the 16th, 17th and 18th-centuries. Nevertheless, like Augustus or Alexander, Caesar remains a key reference for the intellectual history and political thought of early modern Europe. Yet, there is a gradual shift around the 1600s: to take but two French examples, if a laudatory *Devisé du grand Henry IV où il est comparé à César, et les guerres de la Ligue avec celle de César et de Pompée* was published in Utrecht in 1598, we find in 1652 a Parisian Mazarinade pejoratively entitled *Les curieuses recherches faites sur la vie de Jules César, pour montrer les conformités de Mazarin avec les vices de ce Romain*. These two texts show that political representations associated with Caesar have greatly mutated: a symbol of clemency in the Renaissance, the Emperor tends to be considered a usurper after the end of the sixteenth century. The fortune of his self-promoting *Commentarii* is also indicative of this negative evolution. With not less than 134 editions of this book between 1450 and 1599, Caesar, according to Peter Burke, stands as the most famous and the most published historian of the Antiquity throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, whereas only 55 editions were issued in the seventeenth century.

Such a crucial evolution of Caesar' image has never been studied and this Conference aims to analyse the causes and consequences of such a decline in popularity. Among questions raised are the following:

- Who is Caesar associated with
Which virtues are components of modern
images of Caesar: magnanimity, mercy, ambition, usurpation

Are there similar phenomena in the different European countries

- What kind of political, ideological or intellectual aims may explain these images

- How can shifts in representations be described
Is this an evenly-spread phenomenon throughout Europe

- Can such an evolution be explained by the gradual introduction of absolute monarchy
Is there a parallel shift at the end of the eighteenth-century

- Is such an evolution linked to a better historiographical understanding of the Ancient world

- Who are the new heroes replacing Caesar as a model king, and why

- What is the impact of this evolution on literature and the arts

We invite 250-word proposals in French or English. They should be sent, with a brief vitae, before the 15th of November 2006, to:
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Organisation:

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