

Call for Papers

PLACES OF ENCOUNTER

JEWS AND NON-JEWS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES BETWEEN 1500 AND 1800

International conference | 14 March 2013
Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Antwerp, Belgium
www.ua.ac.be/places

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In *Early Modern Jewry: a new cultural history* (Princeton 2010) David Ruderman built on a lifetime of studying and teaching Jewish history in an attempt to formulate a new, panoramic account of Jewish life in the early modern world. Among the factors that Ruderman identifies as critical to Jewish history in this period are accelerated mobility, a steep acceleration in the production and dissemination of knowledge and the blurring of religious identities. Central to these changes in Jewish life, both contributing to them and resulting from them, was the exposure to other groups, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

The Low Countries (1500-1800) offer rich cases to explore, within a specific local context, Ruderman's understanding of early modern Jewish history. It was an age of stark contrasts and of turbulent changes – of large-scale religious bloodshed and suffering, and of extraordinary economic and cultural prosperity. A region that began as the Burgundian Netherlands of Charles V broke apart into a Catholic South and a majority-Protestant Dutch Republic in the North. The cosmopolitan harbours of 16th-century Antwerp and 17th-century Amsterdam formed the hearts of vast international networks of commerce and information, while the universities at Louvain, Leiden, and soon Utrecht, Groningen and Franeker attracted and produced some of the leading scholars in all of Europe.

Several generations of social, economic and cultural historians have studied the New Christians who arrived first in Antwerp and then in Amsterdam, many of whom eventually converted to the Jewish religion of their persecuted ancestors. Early modern Jewish history in the Low Countries, from Western Sephardic trade networks to the flourishing Hebrew and Yiddish press to the intellectual encounters between humanists, theologians and rabbis tell stories simultaneously European, even global, and very local. The interaction, confrontation and collaboration in the Low Countries between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, between New Christians and New Jews, and between Jews and non-Jews, was unprecedented, presenting all involved with new religious, intellectual, legal and economic challenges.

The character of these encounters, often troubled and always complex, was shaped, determined, facilitated and/or symbolized by the space in which they occurred: the harbour, the stock exchange, the bookstore, the printing house, the theatre, the collector's cabinet, the literary academy, the court of law, the notary's office, the private library, the university, the musical salon, the artist's workshop, the surgeon's practice, the warehouse, the merchant vessel, the guild house, the brothel. The (new) spaces of the early modern era made new kinds of economic, religious, artistic, political and scholarly encounters possible. Each space had its own written or unwritten rules, dangers, challenges and possibilities, its own mechanisms of interaction between Jew and non-Jew. Rather than a period of mere transition, the early modern era was transformative, for the Low Countries generally, and for its Jewish communities.

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On 14 March 2013 the Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS) of the University of Antwerp will host the conference *Places of encounter: Jews and non-Jews in the Low Countries between 1500 and 1800*. This conference will coincide with the return of David Ruderman to Antwerp as the visiting chair of Jewish-Christian relations at the Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS) and the University Center Saint-Ignatius (UCSIA).

The organizers invite paper proposals around the theme of 'places of encounter'. We are eager for papers that test Ruderman's new early modern Jewish history by exploring places of intellectual, artistic, scholarly, economic, religious or political encounter between Jews and non-Jews, in the Low Countries (i.e. both the Southern and Northern Netherlands) between 1500 and 1800.

Senior and junior scholars as well as graduate students are welcome to apply. Proposals should be no longer than 400 words in length and should be accompanied by a short CV. Proposals and questions should be sent to Timothy De Paepe (timothy.depaepe@ua.ac.be). **The deadline for submission is 1 October 2012.**

The conference will take place at the University of Antwerp.
The conference language is English.

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Organizing committee

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