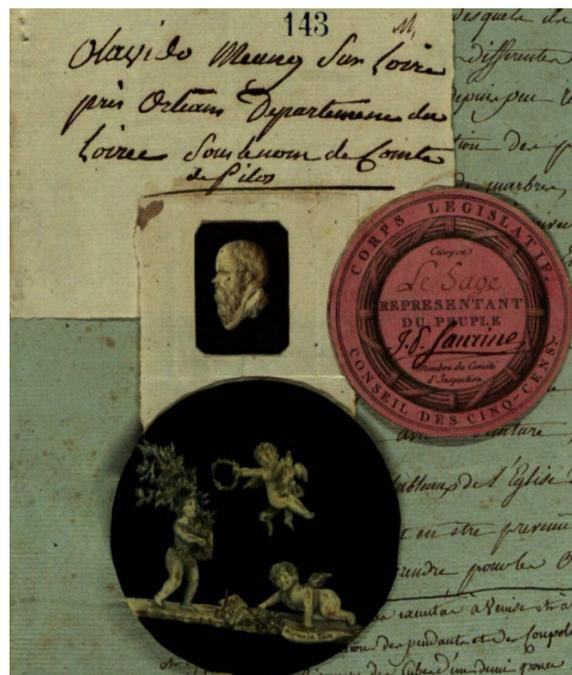


Letters and the Politics of Emotion in Early Modern and Modern Empires

20-21th November 2025, Villa Salviati,
Sala Torrino



Organizers: Mónica Bolufer Peruga (EUI), Carlotta Sorba (EUI), Mónica Burguera (UNED)

Are letters a reflection of the soul? Western epistolary culture, particularly the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility and later Romanticism, has pretended that they should pour out on paper the spontaneity of feelings. Yet historians, in dialogue with literary scholars, anthropologists and linguists, interpret letters less as expressions of a pre-existing inner self than as mechanisms through which subjectivity and emotions are performed and shaped by intersubjective relations, by the tensions between epistolary conventions, moral norms and personal experience, and by material and social constrictions. They have also explored letters in/as action, building and nurturing communities and networks and pursuing all sorts of material and symbolic goals.

In this workshop we will discuss different ways of approaching epistolary sources with a transnational, comparative approach covering Europe, North Africa and the Spanish and British Atlantic from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. We will focus specifically on the role of 'private' letters by different actors (from intellectuals and elite men and women to ordinary people, including slaves) in the building of selves and in the making and unmaking of empires.

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 20th, 14-18h

14h Welcome and introduction

14:15h-15:45h Letters and the construction of the modern self (I)

Mónica Burguera (UNED): *Finding Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814-1873) in her Love Letters: Women's Writing, Intimacy, and the Social Making of the Modern affective Self.*
Carlotta Sorba (European University Institute): *"Adelaide del mio cuore", "Giuliano amato mio": love letters from the Italian theatrical world*

Discussion

Discussant: Barbara Trojanowska (European University Institute)

15:45-16:15h Break

16:15h-17:45h Letters and the construction of the modern self (II)

Xavier Andreu (Universitat de València): *Crafting a Modern Self: Private and Public Letters and the rebirth in England of José María Blanco White (1810-1823)*
Alexia Yates (European University Institute): *Letters and the Making of Financial Subjects in Modern France*

Discussion

Discussant: Dani Carron (European University Institute)

FRIDAY 21ST

10:30-12:30h Letters and empires: emotions

Amelia Almorza (Universidad Pablo de Olavide), *Women, Marriage and Family Correspondence in the Spanish Emigration to America (seventeenth century)*
Mónica Bolufer Peruga (European University Institute): *Seeing the World from Afar, Building Affective (Political) Identities. Women's Letters in a Transnational and Transatlantic Correspondence*

Pablo Hernández Sau (Universidad Pablo de Olavide), *Writing Across Empire(s): Emotional Community, (Trans-)Imperial Correspondence and the Global Bouligny Family*

Discussion

Discussant: Natalia Woszczyk (European University Institute)

12:30h Lunch and visit to Villa Salviati

14:15h-15:45h Letters and empires: politics

Ângela Barreto Xavier (Universidade de Lisboa): *Public Happiness and Private Letters. Goan Correspondence and the Making of a Conspiracy in the late 18th century*

M'hamed Oualdi (European University Institute): *Letters and imperial belongings: the enslaved North Africans in Europe (1750s-1810s)*

Discussion

Discussant: Ana Mafalda Pereira Lopes (European University Institute)

15:45h-16:15h Break

16:15h-17:45h Women's networks

Judith Farré (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas): *Affective Markers in Women's Transatlantic Letters in the Early Modern Period (CARTER@S)*

Elisa Heinrich (European University Institute): *Travelling, Hosting, Writing Letters. Intimacy and Belonging in Transnational Women's Networks in the late 19th century*

Discussion

Discussant: Georgia Katakou (European University Institute)

17:30h Final discussion

Chair: Giselle Bernard (European University Institute)

19:30h Dinner

This workshop takes place in the framework of the collaboration between the Department of History, EUI, and the research project *Género, política y emociones en el largo siglo XIX. Los tránsitos de la Modernidad en España en perspectiva global*. (TRAMOS. PID2022-139190NB-100, UNED) *Gender, Politics, and Emotions in the Long Nineteenth Century. Modern Transitions in Spain from a Global Perspective*.