

Noble Women: Life Roles & Representations

Call for papers

This year the Dutch *Werkgroep Adelsgeschiedenis* (Society for Nobility Studies) exists 25 years. To mark this milestone, the Society organizes the international conference *Noble Women: Life roles and Representations* on 12 and 13 October 2018 at Zuylen Castle near Utrecht, birthplace of Dutch Enlightenment writer Isabelle de Charrière. The conference seeks to address the various modes and strategies through which noble women sought to represent themselves and were represented from the Late Middle Ages until the early nineteenth century.

Since the 1990s, gender history has become indispensable in the practice of history. Feminist theory and everyday practice have broken the androcentric picture of the past. The first wave of gender studies covered almost the entire social ladder – from women in the margins of society, such as prostitutes and maids, to women in leading bourgeois families. One group has long been considered to be underrepresented: noble women.

Today, in 2018, literature on noble women is growing and our understanding of their position in noble culture and in society has grown tremendously. New perspectives, new methods and new themes have broadened and in many ways revised our understanding of almost every aspect of their lives. Noble women are no longer seen as passive, will-less subjects: more and more emphasis is being placed on their ability to exercise political and social agency.

We would like to present these new trends at this conference. We cordially invite scholars from various disciplines to send in their abstract for paper presentations. We welcome abstracts for papers (20 minutes max. excluding discussion). Contributions can address, but are by no means limited to the following aspects:



- What was the role of noble women in the household?
- Women took over key functions in noble family life, such as religiosity and continuity assurance. How did they fulfil these roles?
- How did noble women act outside the household?
- How did noble women present themselves, e.g. in their writings, on portraits, in heraldry?
- How are noble women portrayed in novels, poems, plays, etcetera?
- Can we speak of a specifically aristocratic 'posture' (Jerôme Meizoz) in comparison with other social groups?
- Do sources produced by and about noble women require a particular approach?

During this conference we will be investigating these, and related questions to further our understanding of the diverse ways we can study noble women.

The conference wants to bring together scholars from various disciplines such as art history, literary studies, media studies, philosophy and history, to stimulate interdisciplinary reflection on how to study noble women. Papers are welcomed in **Dutch, English or German**. A selection of speakers will be asked to work their talk into an article for the peer reviewed journal *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies*.

Abstracts of papers consist of approx. 250 words and should include the name of the speaker, affiliation, full contact address (including email), the title, and the summary of the paper. Potential speakers are invited to submit a title and abstract by **May 15th**. These can be sent to **adellijkevrouwen@gmail.com**

The conference will include a tour of the house and gardens.

