



**INVISIBLE SYMPOSIUM:**

**EUROPEAN DREAM FESTIVAL**

**WITH CHARLES GRODIN, MASTER OF CEREMONIES**

September 19, 2006

Celeste Bartos Forum

The New York Public Library

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**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Good evening. My name is Paul Holdengräber and I'm the director of Public Programs here at the New York Public Library. I'm in charge of a program called LIVE from the New York Public Library. It used to be called PEP, Public Education Programs, and that sounded like something you would take if you had stomach problems, and so we changed it to be called, now, LIVE from the New York Public Library, and the goal I have stated for myself here is to make the lions roar.

We are waiting at this moment—and I'm sorry we started a little bit late—we are waiting at this moment for the supermodel Helena Christensen, who's a little bit late, due probably to the United Nations being in session. That often happens for supermodels.

**(laughter)** This event tonight—you will have noticed in the program that I co-curated it. What that simply means is that I gave license to some wonderfully inventive, creative people to come to the Library and present this program, where twenty-three different nations from Europe come together. What better place could there be than at the Library? After all, Walt Whitman, as you said—as you know, said, “I contain multitudes,” the goal here is to bring everybody together under this wonderful roof of the New York Public Library. **(applause)**

What we are here to celebrate is, I suppose, Europe, the European dream, as it were, and the future of Europe. Whenever I think about the future I always am reminded of Paul Valéry’s wonderful line, where he said that the future isn’t what it used to be. **(laughter)** I myself have a *mitteleuropa* upbringing, come from parents who are Viennese, Austrian, my grandparents were Russian and Romanian, my sister is Mexican, and as all of you can tell, I was born in Houston, Texas. **(laughter)** So, nothing that ten years of therapy won’t help.

But here we are to celebrate the European Union. I lived in Belgium, where, as you know, a very unified country, with the Flemish and the French, but we are here to try to, I suppose, stress the dream of Europe, the dream of a unification, I’m told, through diversity. And of course this is a goal, this is an ambition. It’s hardly at this moment in time, I think for very few countries, it’s hardly a realization. This European Dream Festival tries to bring together these twenty-three countries of Europe and it does so with this wonderful festival which will happen for the next five, six, seven weeks, maybe five,

six, seven years, in twenty-three different locations throughout New York. So go, European Dream Festival, is what I say. After the event, we will have a reception to which all of you are invited, where we will have wines from seven, eight, or nine European countries, and that's where, obviously, the truth will come out about this festival. **(laughter)** In vino veritas, I am sure.

I invite you all to join the e-mail list of the New York Public Library and its LIVE Program. As you know from what you have seen on your chairs, we have a few events. Last week we had three events, this week we have two, tomorrow we have the wonderful architect Cameron Sinclair with John Hockenberry. Next week we have Sam Harris and Oliver McTernan and then we have, I can't even remember, but I'm interviewing Frank Rich and Jan Morris and many other people. So join the e-mail list, become a sponsor of the Library by at least coming to these events and enjoying evenings such as this one.

I would like to thank a few people, Corinne Erni, first of all, the project coordinator of the European Dream Festival, Alenka Suhadolnik, Consul General of Slovenia, Stefan Huesgen, program director of the Goethe Institute, and very especially Jakab Orsós, the director of the Hungarian Cultural Center, who proposed this idea to me, and I'm very grateful to him for this idea and I'm very grateful to be part of this evening tonight.

I would like now to introduce Angel Carro Castrillo, the deputy head of the delegation of the European Commission to the United Nations, who will say a few words before Helena Christensen takes the podium.

**(applause)**

**ANGEL CARRO CASTRILLO:** Thank you very much, Mr. Holdengraber. I'm being squeezed between a very good speaker and a better one, probably. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to apologize for Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner's absence. Timing is everything, as they say, but unfortunately tonight, a meeting of the twenty-seven—more than the twenty-three artists participating—twenty-seven ministers have to meet at the UN and she could not make it here. The commissioner asked me to appear on her behalf to welcome you to the start of the first-ever European Dream Festival. We, the European Union, are proud to have been a financial sponsor, but that really is the easy part. The difficult job of winning the grant from us and bringing together some twenty-three European countries and their artists in the festival fell mainly to the four grant recipients—The Goethe Institute, the Alliance Francaise—French institute—the Italian Cultural Institute, and the Czech Center—who have moved mountains and red tape to make this happen. I want to mention also the managing committee, which was also mentioned by Paul. This festival is a New York City celebration at some of at most interesting and cutting-edge venues of the most creative artistic voices in performing art, film, and literature, from across our expanding Europe.

Since Paul has done the political part of his speech, I will not repeat myself and leave it to him to make his judgment about how far Europe is going, but what is clear is that Europe is moving and is moving ahead both on the political front and in the artistic front

as you will have the possibility to witness already tonight. We believe this festival will build on and add to New York's great capacity for cross-fertilization in the arts, making this a new and positive transatlantic dialogue. Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that the European Union Festival, as well as tonight's Invisible Symposium about to take place, will stimulate, challenge, and delight you over these six coming weeks. On behalf of my invisible commissioner (**laughter**), I thank you for being here tonight.

**(applause)**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Thank you very much and now I would like to know if Helena Christensen is visible here. If she is not visible . . . is Helena Christensen visible? Is she visible? I know she would like to say a few words, a few tangible, palpable, auditory words. Maybe she's coming up now. I think she is. Ladies and gentlemen, here's Helena Christensen.

**(applause)**

**HELENA CHRISTENSEN:** I'm sorry to have you waiting here. I just got out of a parent-teacher meeting at school, and I had to sneak out of there. So sorry about that. So, my name is Helena Christensen, I guess you know now. I am from Denmark. Denmark is a very small country and it is not the capital of Holland, (**laughter**) but it is part of Europe and I'm very honored to be here tonight launching off the European Dream festival. I'm a traveler, and I have always been, but my roots are still firmly in Denmark,

and I am always amazed at the abundance of incredible art coming both from my country and from the rest of the countries in Europe. The more I travel, actually, the more I travel outside of Europe, I realize how much I have to be proud of, and how amazing it makes me feel to come from a part of the world that is so rich in history, culture, and art.

My son and I live in New York, and we do love this city more than anything, but I always make sure he knows about his background, and I bring him with me back to Europe as often as I can and teach him about the history of the countries, the capitals, and all the amazing history that Denmark, first of all, being one of the oldest countries in the world, and the rest of Europe possesses. It is great discovering the world with my son, but it is even more rewarding to feel his growing love and respect for his heritage. So it's a wonderful idea to infuse even more European art into America. And I know it'll be six very successful and inspiring weeks together with the European Dream Festival here in New York. Thank you.

**(applause)**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** And now without further ado, thank you very much, Helena Christensen, without further ado I'd like to introduce the Master of Ceremonies, Charles Grodin.

**(applause)**

**CHARLES GRODIN:** I can't help myself—if you'll just indulge me a moment. There's a few mixed signals, because this is a very serious event. I do think we're all going to come away from this at least knowing more about the European Union than we do now, which in my case isn't saying very much. But it's a very serious event, and there are very serious people who are going to do this event. But just to take a moment. For some reason a few years back, I was invited to speak at the dedication ceremony of the computer center at Ellis Island, and I followed Irving Berlin's granddaughter, and she spoke about how her father came over and saw what a wonderful country America was and it inspired him to write "Blue Skies" and Joel Grey then got up and sang "Blue Skies" and then I was on. And I said my great-grandfather actually preceded Irving Berlin to Ellis Island and he wrote "Gray Skies," which just didn't catch on. **(laughter)** My son was sitting in the audience and he said the guy sitting behind him said, "This guy, always with the jokes." So I'll try to control it because this is a serious event tonight.

This is the Invisible Symposium. It was conceived in 1948 by a Hungarian art movement called the European School. Writers, scholars, and philosophers were asked to write answers to questions about the relationship between art and politics. The answers were then published in an extended dialogue between the participants, as if the participants were in the same room. That's what we're doing tonight and that's why that was called the Invisible Symposium. In 2006, on the occasion of the European Dream Festival in New York, which is a whole other story, the Hungarian Cultural Center has adapted the concept to scrutinize the status of unified Europe. European intellectuals, philosophers, and writers were invited to send their responses to eight questions about Europe, its past,

and its future, and the distinguished MIT editor Roger Conover edited the responses into a dialogue. This is going to be a lot more complicated than just, say, learning the alphabet, but it's worthwhile, so each participating European writer will be portrayed by an American actor, and tonight the invisible symposium becomes visible.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** Good evening, bon soir. I am Hélène Cixous, and I was born in 1937 in Algeria. I am French and I am a feminist and I'm also a writer and a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris and a longtime collaborator of Ariane Mnouchkine at the Théâtre du Soleil. I am glad to be here tonight.

**DUSAN MITANA:** Good evening, Hélène, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Dusan Mitana. I was born in Slovakia in 1946. In the '70s I wrote quite a bit of anti-regime material and I lost my job. Since then I've written several books and screenplays and novellas. I also founded a new religion. I call it the Invisible Church of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Currently I am the only member of that religion.

**MART VALJATAGA:** Good evening. I am Mart Valjataga, an Estonian poet and translator. I lecture in literary theory at the University of Tallinn and I am the editor of the cultural journal *Vikerkaar*. Very pleased to be here.

**JORG LAU:** Good evening, I am Jörg Lau, I am a journalist, and I am currently the culture editor for the publication *Die Zeit*, which allows me to write and to attend functions such as this. I write on architecture, art, literature, and I am German.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Good evening, my name is Mitja Velikonja, I am a cultural theorist from Slovenia and currently serve as the head of the department of cultural studies at the University of Ljubljana. I focus mainly on political mythologies in Central Europe and ethno-religious issues.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** Good evening, I am Vittorio Zucconi, I am Italian, **(laughter)** I was born in 1944, I am a journalist and an author, currently the U.S. representative of the newspaper *La Repubblica*. I have worked in many cities. Among those Brussels, Moscow, Paris, and Tokyo.

**AGNES HELLER:** Good evening. I am Agnes Heller. I was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1929. I have written over forty books in subjects ranging from Marxist theory to Shakespeare and everything in between. I currently teach at graduate studies at the New School for Social Research and I divide my time now between Budapest and New York City, and I am delighted to see you all.

**METIN ARDITI:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Metin Arditi. I am Turkish-Swiss. I am a playwright, essayist, and a novelist. I am currently living in Geneva, Switzerland, but I was educated at Stanford University at California in the U.S. of A. I am chairman of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and founder and chairman of the Arditi Foundation.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** Hello. I'm Marieke Sanders-ten Holte, a Dutch politician and teacher. I'm a former member of European Parliament from the Dutch Liberal Party and I'm currently serving as women's representative from the Netherlands to the general assembly of the United Nations.

**MAREK TAMM:** Marek Tamm, Estonian. I am a cultural historian and I lecture at the University of Tartu, as well as the Estonian Institute for Humanities, Tallinn University. I am also, with my colleague Mr. Valitaga, a contributing editor with *Vikerkaar* magazine.

**PETER NADAS:** I am Peter Nadas, a Hungarian born in Budapest, essayist, playwright, novelist. I am devoted to fiction.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** And good evening. My name is Leonidas Donskis. I am from Lithuania, where I am a professor and a dean at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. My research and publications deal with conceptualizations of culture and the ethics and politics of nationalism and the role of intellectuals and artists in post-Communist societies. I'm also a member of the European Cultural Parliament.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** The world ended in 1989, at least one world did. British historian Eric Hobsbawm claims the twentieth century lasted seventy-five years, from the start of World War I to the fall of Communism. In the last months of 1989, things in Europe were changing so fast that it was impossible to understand the events bringing the twentieth century to an end, let alone record them. Then we entered something new, something for

which there was no blueprint. But one thing has become clear. We are living in the midst of a remarkable experiment in politics, economics, and culture. Born in the political and cultural aftermath of Communism, the European Union is something that has never been tried before, a new way of thinking about human society and how it operates. Its success will affect not simply European nations but nations all over the world, and the very idea of “nationhood” itself. So will its failure. Thus as Europeans and Americans, as citizens of the world, it’s more important than ever to think about what the European Union is, how it’s doing, and where it’s heading. So let’s begin with the future. Is the experiment of the European Union going to work? Who will be its beneficiaries and who will lose the most? Hélène Cixous, I’d like to hear your views on the question first, if you don’t mind, and then we’ll open it up to the rest.

**HÉLENE CIXOUS:** As my grandmother, from Osnabrück, and as my mother Eve Klein, I have been waiting for this experiment for over a hundred years. I’m patient enough to believe it, to make Europe means to redefine the concepts of state, humanity, international law, the market, and freedom of opinion. Who will benefit? Those who, since forever, have been devoted to the work on the self, who tends to extend its own frontiers. All those who want to cultivate the hospitable dimensions: curiosity, complication, renewal, welcome. But: it is urgent that we respond to the crisis of the end of work produced by globalization. The workers *are* the internal exiles. Never, ever, have there been so many men and women deprived of a working future as there are today. One ought to invent the verb “to Eu-rope.” You rope, the good rope. The one that ties but does not strangle.

**DUSAN MITANA:** But H  l  ne, H  l  ne, I myself am not fascinated by the European Union and the mythical idea of integration as a chimera of Holy Roman Empire and ninth-century German nation. I place myself alongside the British Conservatives or the French Gaullist and share their vision of mutually cooperating nations. Regional self-government is the only antidote to the danger of a deified totalitarian Euronation. Don't imagine that once Euro-Moloch is formed, central government will generously decide to surrender some of its powers to national local governance. I fear the biggest loss will be the cultural memory of the small nations. In the worst case, the EU experiment will become an unsuccessful attempt to rebuild the Tower of Babel.

**MART VALJATAGA:** Like it or not, Dusan, this experiment *is* a working reality. Now who are the beneficiaries? Europeans as consumers, litigators, entrepreneurs and tourists. Who are the losers? Europeans as democratic citizens and political participants. Why? Because political decision-making is shifting to a transnational level and to unelected executives.

**JORGE LAU:** But what exactly is this experiment? A unified common market? The biggest, all over the world. The European social model? An alternative foreign policy to the U.S.? State subsidies for opera houses, theaters, and writers. Those who formerly profited from the European welfare state are already suffering as Europe is slowly adapting to open markets and mass migration. It's more than a loss of social security benefits—it's a loss of orientation and of purpose. That's why you find a lot of

resentment inside Europe against the way things are moving in Brussels. Not only against the Constitution, but against everything with the label “European.”

**DUSAN MITANA:** Yes, yes, yes, it seems that the bureaucrats from Brussels are the only ones who gain benefits from this, this European Union experiment.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** As you say, Mart, Europeanism is already working. Not because of its promoters, but in spite of them. The Yugoslav example from a few decades ago speaks for itself. Yugoslavism worked, really, not as an ideological tirade or compulsory political plan. Instead it worked in ways that were beyond the control of the regime. Mass culture. Youth culture. Leisure time. Family ties. Friendships. Who will be the losers in a United Europe? The smaller countries, the smaller cultures and languages, are the most vulnerable. I'll explain this with an anecdote. This year's all-European cultural project was something called Café d'Europe, and the theme was the diversity and colorful nature of the EU. The poster featured a pile of books with the names of all the different European languages on their spines. Well, guess what? The name for Slovenian was written wrong—Slovenčina instead of Slovenščina. I seriously doubt that the name of a major European language would have been misspelled.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** Yes, but this just proves, Mitja, that it is the European bureaucracy that has not caught up with reality, not vice versa. And yet the experiment has worked in spite of all the bureaucracy. The young people of Europe take for granted the absolute freedom of moving and studying and marrying and living in any of the

member states. There's no turning back from that. Traveling from Palermo to Berlin to watch a soccer game with the same currency in their wallets, or from Dublin to Barcelona to pursue college courses, is as natural for the new generation of Europeans as it is for Americans to commute from Boston to New York on business. A war between Germany and the United Kingdom or between France and Spain, for example, is as inconceivable today as a war between Virginia and Pennsylvania.

**AGNES HELLER:** Democratic countries do not wage war against one another. The European Union is going to work as a European Empire. It's going to be an empire of several independent yet not entirely sovereign states. Of course, of course, open borders benefit young people above all, yet one can observe a kind of fatigue, a certain kind of cynicism in Europe. This apathy might help to maintain internal peace, but it could also contribute to the erosion of values. It could become dangerous for Europe if European pluralistic ways of life need to be defended and require sacrifice.

**METIN ARDITI:** The European Union is already working at the economic level. An efficient economic system can generate winners only.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** Until people in the Union realize that Europe is more than an economic market, that Europe is also a community of values and culture, real integration will not work.

**MAREK TAMM:** We shouldn't "essentialize" the EU. It's not a *Ding an sich* whose destiny is completely unpredictable. The success or failure of the EU is very much in our hands, and it depends on our decisions. Until now the European construction has progressed rather well, and I'm optimistic about its future.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** Well, yes, Marek, but will it be an exclusive British, German, and French club with some minor actors attached, or will it be a Europe of equal nations, hmm? And if so, the small nations of Europe will benefit. Nations that have long suffered under the duress of oppression and political dependence. Those who still see Europe as rightfully dominated by big nations will lose out. The shift in political roles and the redistribution of power and prestige cannot be easy. It never is.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** But this is where we are, and there's no way back. Globalization and international problems are crying out for cross-border solutions. Terrorism, environmental problems, international crime. These things don't just stop at the border. They can only be solved by close cooperation between the member states.

**PETER NADAS:** The Union experiment has no alternatives, but we are out of guarantees for its success. Now in the short run it will be primarily India and China who will benefit the most. But in the long run, the poorest of the world will lose out first, then the environment itself, and then eventually, everybody.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** I can't help but think that the whole concept is hovering between theory and practice, and it will only really be settled by time. Time will be the test of this. So let's move on to the next question. Do you think that the European identity will ever take precedence over a national identity, and, if so, how many generations would that take? Mr. Donskis.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** Well, it's pretty hard to imagine having a lump in the throat listening to the anthem of Europe. **(laughter)** On the other hand, national identity and European identity are not in and of themselves mutually exclusive. In our world, identity is a matter of achievement, rather than inheritance. It would be ludicrous to compare the identity of a liberal cosmopolitan with the identity of someone for whom reality begins and ends with local power games or fights over European funds. European identity for a public official or bureaucrat for whom Europe is an efficient technical project, is one thing. European identity for an artist or a scholar who cannot live other than through his European professional liaisons is another. Personally, I would refrain from any attempt to forge a sort of once and for all pattern of European identity. Identity is self-discovery, activity. The link between imagination and reality. There's no reason to reduce it to a political project.

**DUSAN MITANA:** European and national realities do not—identities, do not exclude each other. The values of life are common for all mankind and are created by individual nations. Every nation contributes its specific values to the universal and every nation enriches itself *from* this universal. The beauty of the world is in its variety.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Yes, I agree with that. It's better to speak about increasingly hybrid identities, which are more flexible. We must not forget that we belong—willingly or not—to different cultural traditions at the same time. What are we, Europeans or Slovenians? We are both, and much more, fortunately.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** Well, ironically the current U.S. administration has contributed a great deal to the creation of European identity with its blind but highly selective pursuit of regime change and wars of choice. The U.S. has antagonized the vast majority of Europeans from Oslo to Naples. Identity is often born of negatives like this, as in the case of a teenager who has first to define herself in opposition to her parents. The transition to a more positive adult attitude, of who we are as opposed to who we are *not*, takes longer and is a much harder process, and anyway there's more in common now between a Milanese and a Berliner than between a Bostonian and an Alabaman.

**(laughter)**

**JORG LAU:** In the U.S., I am obviously a European. In the Arab world, I am a Westerner. Within Europe, I am definitely a German. Globalization works for national identity.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** I cannot imagine that I will ever feel other than Dutch or Drents, my native country and the region of my youth, but in some situations I

also feel European, and that's as it should be. The new Europe needs citizens that look across borders.

**AGNES HELLER:** European nations are very bad at integrating strangers. I believe this is one of Europe's most pressing problems today.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** The Europe that I desire is the theater of a permanent auto hetero deconstruction. A space where inheritance, belonging, and deracination are at work at the same time. An ultramondialist space open to enlargement. I imagine a Europe armed for peace. I imagine a Europe altogether in translation, like a work in progress.

**MART VALJATAGA:** Listening to you, I am reminded of a line in Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. "The Danes had forgotten long ago that once they had formed a nation."

**PETER NADAS:** Nation state! The very concept its dreadful history and even its effort to overcome its dreadful history by a profane union. This is all part of a common European identity. Now we should not forget that the history of European nation states is preceded by a common cultural history that reaches all the way back in antiquity, and the epoch of national identity is merely a recent episode.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Well, how would you establish a European identity? You'd have to do it by everyone agreeing on the rules to live by, so which would be the next question would be do you think a European Constitution is important? Agnes Heller.

**AGNES HELLER:** I absolutely believe in the importance of such a document. Without a constitution a modern democratic state has no foundation. Neither does a modern democratic empire.

**DUSAN MITANA:** Although the constitution is a document of the highest legal power in every country on the basis of this Constitution's text, the European Union will *not* become more democratic. This Constitution actually *decreases* the political legitimacy of decision-making. It *increases* the portion of central bureaucratic power. It restricts economic liberties. It promises only a fictive social solidarity. The text of this Constitution is not good. A community of individual states can be created even without it, after all. Even though the French and the Dutch rejected the Constitution, it hasn't really caused any tragedy.

**PETER NADAS:** Oh, I think the European Constitution would be an important document if the Dutch and French voters hadn't punched a hole in the bottom of the ship. **(laughter)** And it will be a difficult hole to fix. And without a common constitution no political community can be created. And the European Union will remain a customs union.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** I regretted the massive “no” in the Dutch referendum but I don’t think that a European Constitution as such is an important document for the citizens of Europe. There’s a charter to protect human rights and citizens have the possibility to seek their rights at a European level in the European Court in Luxembourg, and the internal market has set up all kinds of regulations to create a level playing field. We don’t really need a Constitution to confirm this.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** Ladies and gentlemen, a trace and a date must be made to inaugurate a place of assembly. There has to be a “there is,” a parliament, a constitution as a *synagogue*, a place of being with, a pact, an alliance, which signifies “here began,” like a title for the theater play called *Europe*.

**METIN ARDITI:** The European Union’s core mission should remain an economic one and in keeping with that, multilateral contracts are more appropriate than a Constitution.

**MAREK TAMM:** We may already have a judiciary Europe with the courts in Luxembourg and Strasbourg. We may already have a monetary Europe with the Central European Bank. We may already have a single currency with the Euro, but we still do not have a political Europe with a clearly defined mode of governance, so I do believe that we should espouse this document. To enlarge the EU without reforming its mode of governance is to put the EU at the risk of total paralysis.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Yes, but if you'll forgive the play on words, Europe cannot be constituted solely on its Constitution. It must be constituted on the common goals and interests of its citizens. As I analyzed in my recent book *Eurosis: (laughter) A Critique of the New Eurocentrism*, the average citizen—I know—the average citizen acts much more mature than the Eurocrats and other ideologues of infant Europism, uttering EU-thusiastic rhetorics. A European identity cannot be built upon big declarations and historic documents. It can only come into being with small deeds, piece by piece, towards a better future for us all.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** The constitution is an important document, yes? But it has to be a *good* document, not the proverbial horse designed by a committee that turns out to be a camel. **(laughter)** This constitution was a top-heavy piece of paper written by uninspired professionals in legalese with all the charm and passion of a deed of trust. It was bound to be defeated. There is already a *de facto* constitution, the day-by-day experience of being a European. Superimposing a piece of paper on that experience would do more harm than good.

**JORG LAU:** The European Constitution is not such an important document, it is simply a group of contracts, most of which have been there before. It has little to say about who we are and who we want to be. It should be a crisp, short, moving text instead of a boring bureaucratic document that symbolizes all that is bad about Europe: the lack of transparency, the lack of democracy, the lack of accountability. For the time being, the Constitution *is* dead, no matter who else might ratify it.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Is it important to establish a European mass culture to combat the American mass culture?

**HELENE CIXOUS:** Mass against mass? Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, until everyone will be one-eyed, blind, and toothless? Or, rather, it's Christian mass for Islamist mass. The word "mass" leaves me gasping for breath.

**DUSAN MITANA: (laughter)** I am sorry, but I am not able to answer that question. European mass culture is building itself as well as American mass culture. The sooner that both mass cultures destroy themselves in a fratricidal war, the better it will be for culture.

**JORG LAU:** Never start a war you can't win. **(applause)** Plus American culture already *is* European culture. **(laughter)** Ever since the early days of Hollywood, think of Adolph Zukor and George Cukor and Miklós Rósa, and Michael Curtiz, all who happen to be of Hungarian origin. Some of America's biggest blockbuster films were directed by Germans like Roland Emmerich and Wolfgang Peterson, and there is British pop culture as well, with its eternal appeal. All over the world. But will it count as European mass culture? A European mass culture is very hard to construct, and the French way of protecting the "exception culturelle" is not helping very much. I would suggest not trying too hard to create a brand called European mass culture. It's very uncool. You just have to trust the international appeal of archetypal European mass products like chicken tikka

massala (**laughter**), Doner Kebab, Rai music, young Turkish German Cinema, things like that.

**PETER NADAS:** European mass culture? It has already been existence for a long time as a subsidiary of American mass culture. The cultural elite, drunk on the nectar of populism, is sitting on a branch it is busy cutting.

**METIN ARDITI:** The whole concept itself is flawed. In the first place, there is no such thing as European culture. I mean, culture is nothing but the distribution of art. The ingredient of culture is art, and art is an expression of an individual's most intimate emotions and will always be the reflection of his intimate world. The European Union has no place in this process. On the other hand, one *can* speak of the American culture, as America is one country with a strong identity, a core of strong common values, and a common language. The idea of combating American culture is simply a ridiculous notion. American culture is a great culture, the expression of a great country, different from any other culture, and that, my friends, is what culture is all about.

**MAREK TAMM:** Instead of building a European mass culture, we should try to create a European public space, because right now, as Timothy Garton Ash said, the best way to reach the widest political intellectual audience is to publish an essay in the *New York Book Review*.

**AGNES HELLER:** Europeans are unable to compete with America in the production of mass entertainment. But it doesn't matter. It is of no great importance. It is far more important to distinguish between art on the one hand, and mass entertainment on the other hand, or good and bad art on one hand, and good and bad mass entertainment on the other hand. Art and entertainment are not competitors. They have different functions.

**MART VALJATAGA:** If we take into account the fact that British pop music and TV programs are at least as popular as American ones, then the question is not so much European versus American mass culture as English-language mass culture versus the rest.

**LEONID DONSKIS:** Mass culture will never be reconciled to the humanist cultural legacy of Europe, Mart, no matter whether it speaks English or any other European language, but to construct a European identity through anti-American manifestations and obsessions is the last thing I would do, and the last thing I would wish for the EU. Usually we blame nationalists for subordinating culture to politics, and quite justifiably so. Why should we slip into this? We can resist the temptations of modern barbarity only through our attempts to restore the European canon and study the humanist culture of Europe.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** Yes, just look at our history. The Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Romanticism. These are distinctly European cultural movements. They were never confined to one country. It took over two hundred years for the Renaissance to develop in what we only recently call Italy, but we think of the

Renaissance as essentially Italian, and it became the foundation for widespread intellectual and cultural thinking all over the continent. Why not consider the actual process of the European Union as a renaissance, a rebirth of the common European civilization after a century of national fragmentation of our continent?

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** We shouldn't speak about a clash of cultures. That only reinforces and legitimizes political neoconservatism and neoracism. Let's speak instead about symbiosis, not about European culture versus American culture, but of European culture *with* American culture, or African or Indian or any other. Punk culture needed both the Sex Pistols and the Ramones. It needed Nina Hagen as well as Pankrti.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** This is a serious and dangerous question, a serious and dangerous issue. Creating cultures is a bureaucratic and dangerous myth that smacks of Stalinism. Cultures create *themselves*, and throwing money at moviemakers or barring imports of foreign product will not protect anything, it will only stifle creativity and generate state-sponsored greenhouse work in the sad Soviet fashion of the mass-culture years. If we Europeans cannot find ways to fight off the American invasion by offering something that is different—and possibly better—than the Hollywood made soap, we simply do not deserve to survive as a culture. But we can, and we *will*.

**(laughter/applause)**

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Some Europeans see the pervasive use of English as a convenience. Some see it as an inevitability. Some see it as a threat. Mr. Lau, do you think that English will become the language of Europe and all the cultural politics?

**JORG LAU:** No doubt about it. **(laughter)**

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** The Europeans have always had a dominant language. And English—perhaps pidgin English—is today’s Latin as French was in the past centuries. By the way, the preferred language of the first king of Italy, in 1860, was not Italian, it was French. The difference now is that English has become the Latin of the masses. The worldwide explosion of the Internet has sealed the dominance of the English language for the foreseeable future.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Yes, isn’t English already not only a kind of European language but the world’s Esperanto? However, it’s not an English English, that is to say, a pure English. It’s a kind of Newspeak. Slangs of different groups, computer experts for example, or international traders, include and combine English words with their local tongues. I call this process “glocalization,” **(laughter)** in the best sense of the term or the worst if you’re a grammatical purist or a cultural absolutist.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** The wonderful diversity of European languages should be cherished and protected. Speaking one’s native language is a democratic right. Although English will become the pan-European language of communication for

practical reasons, it should always be a second language, except in Great Britain, of course.

**MAREK TAMM:** Every citizen of the EU should know at least three European languages. The EU *must* be multilingual, or it will not *be* at all.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** Exactly. We all have to struggle against linguistic hegemony. First, by cultivating an intelligent, poetic, and knowledgeable intimacy with one's originary idiom, but without nationalism, and then by promoting a trilingualism, that is, more than/no more of one language therefore more than/no more of two languages.

**MART VALJATAGA:** English has not become a truly global language yet.

**PETER NADAS:** This is not a question about the future. It's happening right now. When you have Finns singing in English, French studying English, the story is poorer.

**DUSAN MITANA:** If I'm not mistaken, the Finns suggest Latin, but you should ask the French about that. **(laughter)**

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** I adore the English language, and yes, Peter, I admit it has become our lingua franca. Yet, it would be disastrous for Europe to allow English to replace national languages.

**METIN ARDITI:** I frankly don't think English will become the pan-European language that the rest of you seem to think it will. I come back to the point I made earlier, that culture is nothing but the dissemination of art, and art needs intimacy to be bred. An artist cannot find intimacy if he's cut off from his childhood, from his roots, from the expressions that are closest to him. My friends, language does not come from the mouth, but from the heart.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** At the risk of being offensive, which European countries have the most compelling intellectual, political, cultural life? **(laughter)** Be specific.

**(laughter)**

**AGNES HELLER:** It's no problem to be specific.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Why?

**AGNES HELLER:** Because the intellectual life is still most interesting in France because, because, the traditional and attractive cultural snobbism of the French has not yet died out. A man or a woman of letters remains an authority on several different questions outside of his or her proper field. The opinion of such a person matters even in domains where they are not experts. Politics included.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** Well, I find intellectual and political life much more interesting in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, and Slovenia.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** I have to say Spain, particularly in the movie industry, where creativity, art, and the sheer joy of telling a good story, which used to be the trademark of the Italian cinema, have benefited from the late start due to the Francista regime. And Spain also has a younger and more dynamic political class than other much more petrified and traditional Western European democracies.

**JORG LAU:** When it comes to the real challenges facing Europe today or in the future, Turkey is the most interesting country politically. Why? Because the next years will show if Turkey will show if Turkey will be able to adapt the Ataturk model of a secular society to what some call an Islamist Revolution in Europe. Will Europeanization in Turkey mean a more relaxed attitude, say, to the headscarf, or to religious and secular education? Will this put Turkey's society under even more strain than it is under now? Will it alienate Turkey from non-Muslim Europe? This is not just a political, but also a cultural struggle. Just think of the situation of Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, but on the level of political machinations, it is of course still hard to beat Italy.

**AGNES HELLER:** As far as political life, Europeans are not concerned with the political conflicts of their neighbors, or let alone with those of the European Union. The only shared interest of Europeans in things European is soccer. If it comes to soccer, Germans know full well what happened yesterday in Manchester and Munich or Madrid.

**MAREK TAMM:** This is a tricky question. Of course I'm inclined to respond that I find Estonia most interesting, for the very simple reason that it is my country, the only country where I know all the important aspects of political and intellectual life. But more seriously, for some reason I do follow the political and intellectual aspects of France and England.

**DUSAN MITANA:** I am most familiar with life in Slovakia, so it's only natural that I consider life in my country the most interesting. I think Mr. Tamm would agree that many writers and intellectuals from so-called post-Communist countries consider their lives equally interesting. We are not yet completely reconciled with our totalitarian past. We are still asking basic questions. Who are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go now?

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** Yes, in the new countries of the EU, political debate is alive and vigorous. Especially in the Baltic states. There's a very dynamic cultural life, a hunger for recognition. But the real debate on Europe and its future takes place in Berlin, Paris, and London, and Amsterdam.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** Excuse me, but to cite this or that country would be to go counter-Europe in the direction of a naïve and facile national narcissism. The principal character is not always the one you believe it to be. *Interesting* are the ones who are interested in the other, who allow themselves to be surprised, to accede to the other's coming, expose

themselves to the other's language. The other, who comes from afar, from foreign lands, or the interior other.

**MART VALJATAGA:** With all due respect for my colleagues, I don't think any of us is competent to answer this question. Of course everybody knows something about Parisian intellectual luminaries, twisted Italian politics, German soul-seeking, Scandinavian social experimentation, etcetera, but there is no common platform from which to view, compare, and judge all the goings-on in the different countries.

**PETER NADAS:** Intellectual life is always more exciting in a democracy than a tyranny. In a tyranny we fantasize about who we *could* be. In a democracy we're allowed to see who we *are*. But the fact is that since the fall of the Soviet empire, politics in the old democracy is run not by politicians but by businessmen and industrialists. Politics in the new democracy is made by frustrated dilettantes and common criminals. Today, instead of minding the public good, democracies operate to promote an ever-increasing consumption. Europe and America exercise certain intellectual twitches, but let's face it, they lack an intellectual life. Painters are in the hands of gallery owners. Writers are in the hands of a populist book market. Doctors are in the payroll of pharmaceutical companies that are in turn in thrall to the stock market. Engineers and scientists are engaged in a joint effort to find the most efficient ways to destroy the environment. And philosophers offer their services to businesses, corporations, political parties. Seems to me that from the Middle Ages, ever since, Western culture has not sunk this deep into the mire of its own opportunism, and hasn't enjoyed wallowing in it, swine-like, this much.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Well, I see the situation in another light entirely from Mr. Nadas. It's the grassroots, borderless political movements that are the most interesting. Groups of dissent and opposition that spring up outside of established political structure. The same is true of intellectual and cultural life. A squatter from Amsterdam has more in common with his squatting colleague from Ljubljana or Copenhagen than with his fellow countryman who lives an ordinary life. The same goes for members of rave culture, hackers, ecologists, and so on. The interesting things are inevitably cross-boundary.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Is European solidarity a meaningful concept to you? What does it imply?

**AGNES HELLER:** European solidarity is an empty concept. The first question that comes to mind is solidarity: against whom or with whom? Solidarity against totalitarian countries? Fanatics? Or solidarity against the United States, as it is unfortunately frequently voiced. Solidarity with the poor nations, solidarity with the poor and downtrodden within the Union? It is a fine thing that fraternity has been replaced by solidarity, but why don't we specify the concept and put it into a context first?

**HELENE CIXOUS:** No, but solidarity means solidarity with the most vulnerable, with the most downtrodden. Women, children, animals, poets, artists, foreigners. The defenseless of every kind.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** Solidarity is absolutely a meaningful concept for me, Professor Heller. First and foremost it implies a desire to fill the gap between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, and to prevail over the time-honored fatalism of the divided Europe. European solidarity implies that there cannot be *two* Europes.

**DUSAN MITANA:** Europe is not the center of the universe. Global, all-planetary solidarity is necessary in order to rescue the world from self-destruction.

**MAREK TAMM:** The political concept of solidarity is a European creation. It is the crucial element of its identity. In this present era of globalization the idea of solidarity is even more important than before.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** But the question is, how far should solidarity go? Do only the rich countries take on the financial burden? There is a kind of unfairness in the system at the moment, which gives rise to a lot of Euroskepticism. More and more people are asking what the benefits of the EU are. They ask themselves, “What’s in it for me?”

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** I’m sorry, I don’t even understand what “solidarity” means, and how it applies amongst neighbors and villages in the same region. I mean, I shy away from these abstract and loaded concepts. I mean, there have been and always will be instances of solidarity amongst European nations and people, but human nature will not be changed by law. Solidarity will be a function of perceived common interests, not a

noble sentiment. Oh, and by the way, H el ene, in terms of an earlier question, there's nothing wrong and there's a lot right with growing up bilingual.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** I really don't know whether to understand European solidarity in a sarcastic or in a utopian sense. Sarcastic because of the horrendous atrocities that Europe has perpetrated. Utopian because I still cherish a hope that we'll finally learn a lesson from the past. In contrast to Theodor Adorno, I still believe that poetry can and must be written after Auschwitz, or should I say, after the many different Auschwitzes that Europe has committed so far. However, the rise of nationalism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, sealed by the Schengen regime against non-Europeans makes me pessimistic.

**PETER NADAS:** Solidarity, as Professor Heller pointed out, is used as a substitute for fraternity, one of the three slogans of the French Revolution. But fraternity and capitalism are incompatible. Bourgeois society is capable of charity at most and in this sense talk of solidarity is hardly more than a loud proclamation about the human capacity for empathy. And socialist societies got even into deeper trouble with fraternity, for in the absence of freedom, there is no room for solidarity, or charity either. If people become equal in poverty, then in the interest of their own survival they have to remain indifferent to the suffering of other people.

**JORG LAU:** In a cultural sphere solidarity simply means the willingness to listen to the other and to integrate the other's perspective into our own cultural memories. And we have a lot of others, that's for sure.

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation. I have one final question. **(laughter)** Looking to the future, which scenario do you think is most likely for Europe: Stronger integration, with diminishing economic gaps between the members? Slow progress or stagnation, and integration without new members catching up? De facto secession and lip service paid to unity, or something else? Mr. Mitana?

**DUSAN MITANA:** I am not a prophet, but I venture to predict slow progress and stagnation in integration but anything can happen this year or next, so I would never, ever rule out the alternative of something else.

**LEONIDAS DONSKIS:** Well, whatever happens, it will not be easy, but the small nations are going to be the real beneficiaries of European integration. The largest ones will face the biggest challenges.

**METIN ARDITI:** The Union will not have any kind of dramatic political influence or impact on its individual members' countries' economic and cultural differences. The union will simply continue to improve as an efficient economic system.

**AGNES HELLER:** Only a soothsayer or a fool could answer these questions. These are not just European issues. One can predict nothing in Europe without taking into consideration the fragility of the globe as a whole.

**MART VALJATAGA:** Agnes Heller is right. There are other continents, countries, and contingencies in the world that can move the future of the EU in any direction.

**MARIEKE SANDERS-TEN HOLTE:** I believe we'll see stronger integration in the future. But which countries really should be part of the Union, and how to come to terms with the differences in religion? Respect and tolerance are crucial for living peacefully together, but as 9/11 has shown, the world can change overnight.

**MITJA VELIKONJA:** Of course we cannot predict the future, but Europe should be seen as a union with multiple possibilities and several possible constructions, rather than as an impenetrable Fortress Europe.

**PETER NADAS:** Integration will be compromised by all the incompatible mentalities, but it will be interesting to see how France, still triumphantly embracing the Republican ideals while besieged by a growing Muslim community, will relate to a Poland swept up in a frenzy of national Catholic perversion and aggressive missionary zeal.

**MAREK TAMM:** It is no secret that the EU is presently in crisis. But the history of Europe's construction is full of crises that were overcome.

**HELENE CIXOUS:** I want integration, I fear stagnation, I dread lip service paid to unity. It is something else that will win out. In 2026, who will remember what we believed we thought in 2006? Desire is the beginning of reality. May Europe come about.

**VITTORIO ZUCCONI:** We cannot all be and we do not all *want* to be Parisians or Catalans or Bavarians or Irish or Romans. We've already had our bloody civil wars, and even those who bitch and moan against Europe don't want to fight one another, we don't want to fight another World War I or another Thirty Years War to settle our differences.

**JORG LAU:** We have *no* progress in integration. The new members are *not* catching up. There is a lot of lip service to unity. Still, Europe is doing great. **(laughter)** In the eyes of every person on this planet, it is still the most attractive place to be. Now we just have to live up to that image.

**(applause)**

**CHARLES GRODIN:** Well, I think we're all a little certainly a little more informed than we were when we began this evening, and I appreciate the Library providing us with this opportunity. **(applause)** There is food and wine, in Astor Hall, and I hope you'll all join us and enjoy yourself, and thank you so much for coming. Thank you.