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## **Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference, Issue 1 (2013) Imagining Europe: Modern Perspectives, Perceptions and Representations**

Kerstin Stamm, Alexandra Tieanu, Mara Marginean, Katie Bilotte, Omer Alkin, Emanuela Costa et al.

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2013

# Imagining Europe

*Modern Perspectives,  
Perceptions and  
Representations*

The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* was founded in 2013 to publish a selection of the best papers presented at the biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference, an international and interdisciplinary humanities conference organized by the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). The peer reviewed journal aims to publish papers that combine an innovative approach with fresh ideas and solid research and engage with the key theme of the LUCAS, the relationship and dynamics between the arts and society.

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*Modern Perspectives,  
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# Imagining Europe

# FOREWORD

‘IMAGINING EUROPE - Perspectives, Perceptions and Representations from Antiquity to the Present’ was the first of the two-yearly graduate symposiums organized by PhD researchers at the Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines, which has been one of the seven research institutes of the Faculty of Humanities since its reorganisation in 2008. The LUICD united the study of European languages and cultures (literatures, arts, media) from classical antiquity to the present and of contemporaneous Latin American, North American and African languages and cultures. Precisely because we uphold the interdisciplinary exchange of expertise in a wide array of diachronic, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural methods, as well as the ways in which the arts act on and shape the societies in which they are created, preserved and disseminated, the institute decided last year to change its name into LUCAS: Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. A name that expresses the institute’s aspirations far better.

From the foundation of Leiden University in 1575, the humanist interest in the languages, literature, art and cultures of all human beings, in Europe and the rest of the world, has been the university’s core business, and it is now the core business of LUCAS in particular. This interest has transformed itself over time into a study of culture in all regions of the world, from a deep knowledge of European culture – but not from a Eurocentrist perspective – based on the conviction that to understand the arts is to study all human cultures and the interac-

tions between them. The subject of the symposium then, ‘Imagining Europe’, reflects this ambition outstandingly.

The conference explored the different ways in which Europe has been imagined and represented, from inside as well as outside Europe and from classical antiquity to the present day, with particular attention to the historical and cultural contexts in which these images were created, both visual and textual. So what is Europe, the organizers asked? A piece of land? A union of a multitude of countries and cultures, a way of life, a metaphor, an ideal, the old world? What do the images or representations we encounter in a wide variety of media actually tell us? Although the emphasis of the conference was on different and changing perspectives, perceptions and representations, it also aimed to explore the notion of similarity; are there any aspects that keep recurring in the different visions, aspects that might even be said to be intrinsically European?

This conference originated from an initiative of LUCAS PhD researchers, who wanted to bring together a new generation of young scholars from the Humanities worldwide to meet and exchange ideas, perspectives, commonalities and differences in approach, focus, issues and themes now current in the field of the Humanities. In that respect, the overarching theme of the conference, Europe in both its unity and diversity, mirrored the aim of the social aspect of the conference: to bring together many different young scholars who are connected by their united interest in matters of the mind and imagination, and their related cultural practices. The conference indeed succeeded in this. It was already a success before it actually started: 45 graduate speakers from six continents were present! And long before that they had already met frequently at the Facebook group especially set up for this research exchange. This also found so much acclaim that the group is still functioning.



The effort and perseverance of the organisers resulted in a great conference in which graduate students, PhDs as well as several MA's, presented their research and shared their thoughts and ideas on a great variety of topics, ranging from Barbarians and colonizers, art and cultural identity, borders, the Cold War and after, the Occident and the Orient, the classics, to migrant cinema, the Enlightenment, and issues of self and other. Apart from scholarly debate, the conference was a social happening - and a lively one too. Two outstanding keynote speakers set the tone: Jonathan Israel from the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton and Edith Hall of the University of London. When Professor Israel received the invitation to give the keynote lecture, he agreed immediately, adding that it sounded like "a most interesting conference". And it *was* great.

I am extremely proud that the papers of the first LUCAS Graduate Conference have resulted in this Journal, and I would like to express my thanks to all those who have made an effort in realizing it, foremost the initiating and organising committee of the conference: Thera Giezen, Jacqueline Hylkema and Coen Maas; the editorial board of Issue # 1: Linda Bleijenberg, Anna Dlabacova, Corina Koolen, Han Lamers, Daan Wesselman; and last but not least, the Series Editor: Jacqueline Hylkema.

Kitty Zijlmans  
Director of LUCAS





# “QUI PARLE EUROPE A TORT. NOTION GÉOGRAPHIQUE.”

Otto von Bismarck’s elliptic remark, scribbled in the margin of a letter from Alexander Gorchakov in 1876, would go on to become one of the modern period’s most often-quoted statements about Europe. But was Bismarck right? Is Europe nothing but a geographical notion? Even the briefest glance at history shows that more often than not perceptions and definitions of Europe go beyond the mere geographical demarcation of a continent. In 1919, for instance, Paul Valéry imagined Europe as a living creature, with “a consciousness acquired through centuries of bearable calamities, by thousands of men of the first rank, from innumerable geographical, ethnic and historical coincidences.” Of course these remarks by Von Bismarck and Valéry are only two of a multitude of different representations. Europe has always signified different things to different people in different places – inside Europe as well as outside. Europe meant, for instance, something entirely different to Voltaire, l’aubergiste d’Europe, at Ferney in the 1760s than to Athanasius Kircher in Rome a century earlier or to Barack Obama in Washington today.

At present, ideas of Europe underlie many of the key debates and struggles that mark our times. Over the past years, questions of a rapidly changing Europe have been on every agenda, such as the prevalent issues of tensions within the Eurozone, possible accessions to or exclusions from the EU, and the permeability of European borders. Even though European history is characterised throughout by traffic of people and ideas in which Europeanness is impossible to delimit, what is at stake in these debates – implicitly but increasingly often also explicitly – is the question of what ‘Europe’ means. At the core of such discussions one often finds questions of inclusion and exclusion, which can easily indicate the extent to which matters of Europeanness involve political, economic, cultural, ethnic, or linguistic issues. Faced with such a scope, it is perhaps better not to insist on defining Europe; the point is to realize that Europe is a continuously recurring question of definitions. Insofar as it is a place, it is not a place to find oneself, but a place that one imagines. First and foremost, Europe is imagined.

This was the premise for the inaugural LUCAS Graduate Conference *Imagining Europe: Perspectives, Perceptions and Representations from Antiquity to the Present*, organized by Thera Giezen, Jacqueline Hylkema and Coen Maas for the Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines (recently renamed LUCAS) in January 2011. Framed by keynote lectures by classicist Edith Hall and historian Jonathan Israel, the conference featured a diverse range of papers. With participants from six continents, the conference included papers by historians, classicists, film scholars, art historians, and researchers in the fields of literature, legal history, and political science, spanning a period from the days of the Roman Empire to the aftermath of the fall of Communism.

Based on the patterns that emerged during the conference, three key features can be put forward regarding the history, space, and representations of Europe. As general as they may be, they set out some basic coordinates within which one can consider perceptions and representations of Europe. Firstly, an idea of Europe has been at work throughout history, from antiquity to the present day. Even though that which Europe is thought to signify is fluid and changeable, its active imagining proves to be a historical constant. Concomitantly, a perpetual question is of course who does the imagining – who has the power to determine the parameters that (provisionally) can circumscribe Europe and with it the power to affect ideology and hegemony, identity and alienation.

Secondly, while Europe should be thought of beyond strictly geographical categories, it retains a prominent spatial dimension. In its imaginings, Europe remains tethered to the continent to which it is evidently also not limited. As the selection of papers here already shows, the idea of Europe is fully functional anywhere between Japanese literature and Latin American political discourse. Europe's status is therefore twofold: conceptually it can traverse the globe, yet it simultaneously remains spatially anchored. It is at the same time stable and mobile, local and global.

Lastly, the processes and products of imagining Europe can be seen in myriad forms. Questions of Europeanness spring from objects as diverse as historical documents, religious maps, contemporary films, literary texts, works of visual art, journalism, architecture, and government policies. Conceptually similar questions can thus be taken up by all fields of the humanities, which makes 'Europe' a vehicle *par excellence* for

interdisciplinary inquiry – and conversely, this underscores the need for understanding Europe within an interdisciplinary framework.

The selection of the articles for this first issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* reflects the diversity that characterizes the consideration of Europe. They span a range of media, from literature to film, political discourse, cartoons, architecture, and policies for cultural heritage. Concomitantly, the articles demonstrate the approaches and methods that can fit within an overall interdisciplinary framework of analysis, from close reading to historical research. In addition, they take on European questions that are tied together within the historical context of Modernity, yet the approach of these questions could easily be extended to issues in other historical periods – as was indeed the case at the original conference.

Yet perhaps more importantly, within the general coordinates set out above, the papers in this collection complement one another particularly when it comes to the perspectives from which they take on the topic of Europe. The first three articles consider Europe from the ‘inside’, insofar as traditional and historical notions of Europe pertain to Europeans considering themselves – be it questions of European heritage or oppositional definitions in the context of the battleground for ideas of Europeaness that was Eastern Europe under communism. The last three articles all to some extent adopt a perspective on Europe from the ‘outside’, and all of them illustrate precisely how problematic any notion of inside/outside is when it comes to Europe – whether the perspective concerns Turkish migrant cinema, Latin American culture, or Japanese literature.

Kerstin Stamm examines the idea of Europe as it is reflected in the recent attempts of the European Union to establish a shared corpus of cultural heritage. In her article she asks if a narrowly defined, coherent European identity would in fact reflect the actual reality of Europe: a collection of nations, some EU-members, some not, that interpret the concept of ‘European heritage’ in very different ways.

Alexandra Tieanu considers Central European perspectives on Europe at the end of the twentieth century. She explores how the post-WWII division of Europe into a communist East and capitalist West engendered perceptions of identity that left little place for a

Central Europe between the two. By considering the work of dissident intellectuals and political discourses before and after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Tieanu investigates the changing perceptions and definitions of alterity that make up the history of Central Europe.

Focusing on visual representations, Mara Marginean's article zooms in on a historically even more specific battleground for ideas of Europe. In post-war Romania, the newly installed communist government had to reconstruct the image of (Western) Europe to justify its economic and social policies. Cartoons, published in modern mass media like newspapers and magazines provided an important platform for this reconstruction. Marginean provides a sharp analysis of the way Europe's image was constructed in this medium and places these cartoons within the discourse of political and cultural legitimisation of their period.

Ömer Alkin examines the image of Europe in Turkish migrant cinema produced by Turkish filmmakers from the 1960s to the present. While the Turks imagine Europe as a place of modernity and wealth, the basic experience of Turkish migrants in Germany is that of painful displacement. Alkin shows that, instead of challenging the European ideal, Turkish migration films stage the discrepancy between 'image' and 'reality' dramatically as a clash of expectations between the homecomer and his friends and family. The

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“A CONSCIOUSNESS ACQUIRED  
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AND HISTORICAL COINCIDENCES.”

PAUL VALÉRY (1919)

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invariably positive image of Europe is explained both from the modernisation of Turkey after World War I and from the influence of Western mass media.

In her article “The View from the South: Defining Europe in Latin America”, Katie Billotte explores the way in which the notion of Europe influenced Latin American culture. Latin American countries have a unique relationship with Europe: these regions were among the first to be colonised and the colonial period itself was characterised by an unprecedented level of amalgamation between the native and non-native populations and cultures. In the post-colonial era the Latin American construct of Europe was heavily influenced by French politics and culture. Placing French primitivism in dialogue with magical realism, Billotte explains the hybrid nature of (post)colonial culture.

Emanuela Costa analyses how German-Japanese author Tawada Yōko challenges views of European borders in her literary work. In “Imagining Europe through a Pair of Japanese Glasses”, Costa shows the frictions Tawada’s Japanese characters experience when travelling to or living in a new, European country. These characters are confronted with the gap that exists between expectations of geographical borders and how these are envisioned by Europeans and non-Europeans. Moreover, they encounter the essentialising power of stereotypes employed by people in their environment, including immigrants among themselves. Costa concludes her argument for the performative function of Tawada Yōko’s work by touching upon the author’s engendering of Europe, through which Tawada calls for a new vocabulary outside of the now-familiar dichotomies that, she argues, have become necessary for sustaining a European identity.

Together, the articles in this volume show that Europe is a question of who is asking and from which position. More significantly though, together they demonstrate the importance of taking into consideration multiple perspectives, different objects, and different disciplinary approaches, if one is to avoid approaches that confine Europe within geographic or political boundaries. In fact, all the articles in this issue address discourses that underline precisely that while on the one hand attempts to define Europe or Europeanness may be at play, on the other hand it is the very impossibility of definition or demarcation that allows the idea of Europe to be so powerfully present throughout history. It is important to stress therefore, that the articles here do not

explore or illustrate discrete ‘facets’ that could accrue to a conception of Europe that one might consider to be a ‘whole’. Just as the geographical delimitations prove untenable, the articles here do not belong to some single history of Europe. Rather, it should be underscored that the collection here finds its coherence precisely in the *concept* of Europe – an understanding of Europe that is workable precisely because it is capable of accommodating the fluidity and diversity that have characterized Europe in every period. In short, the crux of this collection is a Europe that is not limited to any single dimension – be it political, cultural, or spatial – but that is localised there where all elements come together: in representations, discourses, and imaginings of Europe.

Finally, as the editors we think it is fitting, especially for the very first issue of a journal, to thank all of those who have been involved in producing it. First and foremost we would like to thank our publisher, Leiden University Library, for its assistance and enthusiasm in getting this project off the ground. We owe particular thanks to Birte Kristiansen at Leiden University Library, Rob Goedemans, Taeke Harkema and Joy Burrough-Boenisch for all their kind help and advice in the fields of publishing, information technology, the layout process and academic editing. We are also very grateful to all the speakers who submitted their conference papers and made the selection process very difficult for us, and to the six authors for their kind and patient cooperation in the revision and editing process. We also would like to thank our fellow PhD researchers at LUCAS and the Institute for History who acted as peer reviewers, and Max van Duijn for his contributions to the design of our logo. A final word of thanks goes to LUCAS itself and to its director, Kitty Zijlmans, for her constant and invaluable support.

The Editorial Board and Series Editor

Linda Bleijenberg, Anna Dlabacova, Corina Koolen, Han Lamers,  
Daan Wesselman and Jacqueline Hylkema

# UNITED IN DIVERSITY?

## CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE IMAGE OF A COMMON EUROPEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

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**ABSTRACT** - *This paper discusses the European Heritage Label scheme as a contemporary example of creating an image of Europe as a cultural entity. It reflects upon the notion of a European cultural heritage as the basis for a common European identity. The analysis focuses on the link between identity and cultural heritage and the process of constructing a common cultural heritage for Europe, closely linked to its institutionalisation. It invites the consideration of the exclusive character of the official EU-initiative of the European Heritage Label critically and asks whether, with regard to creating a European identity, a more coherent image is at all required, or how coherent an image of a common European cultural heritage would need to be.*

### INTRODUCTION

1. European Union, preamble to *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (Brussels, 2007), Art. 1.8, 'Symbols'

2. "The Symbols of the EU: United in Diversity", European Union, accessed August 31, 2012, [http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/motto/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/motto/index_en.htm)

'United in diversity' is the motto of the European Union (EU) and as an official symbol of the Union it is also included in the so-called Lisbon Treaty.<sup>1</sup> "The motto means that, via the EU, Europeans are united in working together for peace and prosperity, and that the many different cultures, traditions and languages in Europe are a positive asset for the continent."<sup>2</sup> Still, with currently 27 member states, the European Union is not Europe and Europe is not the European Union. In a most basic distinction, the EU is a political



body, whereas Europe is a continent. This paper does not aim to provide an ultimate definition of Europe, or a conclusive statement as to how the EU and Europe are to be distinguished. Rather, the aim here is to highlight one issue of the progress of European integration and the EU-Europe relationship: today, it is mostly through the policies and actions of the EU – the political body – that the integration of Europe – the continent – is advancing. The historian Wolfgang Schmale remarks on the relationship between Europe and the EU that “Europe is more than the EU, but without the EU, it is nothing today.”<sup>3</sup> He states that at present “any process to describe and to define Europe is substantially based on EU-dynamics.”<sup>4</sup> According to Schmale, this tendency could already be observed as early as the 1950s, since the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), but by now it has become irrevocable.<sup>5</sup> This trend can also be seen in the field of cultural heritage, where EU-policies are about to become a dominant element on a European level. Given that the European context actually goes beyond the EU,<sup>6</sup> the key questions of this paper – following an introductory outline of the notion and function of cultural heritage – are: how could ‘European heritage’ be defined, and by which authority?

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

What is cultural heritage? A worldwide acknowledged general definition is that of the *UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), better known as the World Heritage Convention. It defines cultural heritage as:

Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;  
Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings

3. Wolfgang Schmale, *Geschichte und Zukunft der Europäischen Identität* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 7

4. Ibid., 7

5. Ibid., 7

6. Consider for example the different numbers of member states of the Council of Europe and the EU: the Council comprises 47, the EU 27 member states.

which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.<sup>7</sup>

7. UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Paris, 1972), Art. 1.

8. Cf. UNESCO, *Convention on the Protection of Intangible Heritage* (Paris, 2003)

9. "Heritage Days put Europe in Pride of Place", French Embassy in the UK, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Heritage-Days-put-Europe-in-the.html>

10. For a comprehensive overview of the development of heritage conservation, see for example Jukka Jokilehto, *History of Architectural Conservation* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002); on the notion of heritage, see for instance Françoise Choay, *L'Allégorie du Patrimoine* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992); a systematic study of the institutionalisation of heritage is provided by Dominique Poulot, *Patrimoine et Musées. L'Institutionnalisation de la Culture* (Paris: Hachette, 2001)

11. Cf. Jean-Pierre Babelon and André Chastel, *La Notion de Patrimoine* (Paris: Editions Liana Levi, 1994), 49f.

While this definition of cultural heritage continues to be valid, the pre-eminence of architectural and archaeological – that is, tangible – elements has lessened since, and today intangible assets are internationally recognised as cultural heritage as well.<sup>8</sup>

As far as the use or function of cultural heritage is concerned, a survey conducted in 2007 in five European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Finland – revealed that 60% of the interviewed citizens were of the opinion that "having a European cultural heritage 'reinforces the sense of belonging to Europe'."<sup>9</sup> By supporting an individual sense of belonging – that is, identification – with a group or community, the notion of a common heritage contributes to creating a collective identity.

Today, cultural heritage appears to be an indispensable element of group identities worldwide, as for instance for most nation states. How cultural heritage has developed into this role is a long and complex story.<sup>10</sup> For the purpose of this paper it is sufficient to underline one particularly important point: the radical changes of land and property tenures in the wake of the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, when in countries across Europe large expropriation schemes turned hitherto royal and ecclesiastic properties into common, public property. The understanding of *public* property brought an unprecedented form of *public* consciousness into being: the notion of collective identity.<sup>11</sup> Public space had become public interest. The freshly 'inherited' properties in public ownership were to be

preserved both for their material and immaterial worth, shared by all citizens. Beside their material value, they were understood as testimony of past events, personalities and places. Historical – that is, symbolical – value was attributed to architectural elements, and as a ‘bearer’ of information about the past, built cultural heritage became essential for the education of the collective. This educational intention is especially highlighted when an explanatory plaque is put up at buildings considered historical monuments, for example at No. 5 Rue Payenne in Paris (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. House No. 5, Rue Payenne, Paris (Kerstin Stamm)

Many buildings of heritage value bear no explanatory label, however: they are considered valuable in their existence as such, as the remains of an otherwise intangible but significant past that should be kept alive in contemporary consciousness, and they should therefore be protected and conserved for the sake of public interest. The first article of the *European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* acknowledges heritage accordingly as “a source of European collective memory.”<sup>12</sup> It is this understanding of history and its political and social value that is the foundation for the notion of cultural heritage.

With or without an explanatory plaque, heritage conservation means es-

12. Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* (Malta, 1992), Art. 1



Fig. 2. The European Heritage Label-plaque at the Acropolis, Athens (Kerstin Stamm)

tablishing, describing and documenting the specific value of each heritage asset. This task is usually carried out by the responsible heritage authority, which in most European countries is a national institution. The exact documentation of the heritage value of a monument can be understood as recording – and in a sense permanently fixing one interpretation of – the history of each monument. It can be argued, however, that every such narrative, every history told remains but one out of many possible interpretations, and that in this sense every interpretation could be regarded as an ‘invented’ tradition.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, many communities, and in particular big, territorial ones like the modern nation states, are only ‘imagined’ or intangible in the sense that the community members are not necessarily personally acquainted with each other. Therefore, the cohesion of such a community depends to a significant degree on the abovementioned individual sense of belonging, which is usually transmitted through an image of the community that all its members share, or are at least familiar with. This process of self-imagination of a collective in turn relies to a large extent on the use of symbols and images that the community members can identify with. It is by having this personal identification in common that the individual members form a collective identity, which Benedict Anderson has described as an ‘imagined community’.<sup>14</sup> Because it connects the immaterial symbolism of the imagined community with the tangible, material reality, the concept of cultural heritage constitutes a very powerful symbol to support the notion of a common collective identity.

13. Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

14. Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006)

While the range and type of symbols for this purpose is practically unlimited, their effectiveness essentially depends on their dissemination. Therefore, to transmit the symbols for the shared image of the community, education is an indispensable element of community building. Informing the wider public about those ‘tokens’ of collective identity is essential for the creation of a shared image. If any collective identity built on symbols and images is a construction, the common element within each individual community member therefore must necessarily be understood as the result of education. An emblematic quotation from the nineteenth century highlights this interdependence of collective image and identity and its construction: after the unification of various independent Italian states into the Italian Republic, the Italian statesman Massimo D’Azeglio remarked: “We have created Italy, now we have to create the Italians.”<sup>15</sup> Over a century later Jean Musitelli, the president of the French National Heritage Institute, made a similar point: “European heritage is a fact that is still to be invented.”<sup>16</sup> The European Heritage Label is an extraordinary example of a strategy along those lines. At the same time it illustrates the extent to which the European Union, representing only a part of the European countries, claims the authority to attend to issues pertaining to Europe as a whole, in this case European identity.

## THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL

In the first half of the year 2005, participants of the Meetings for Europe and Culture<sup>17</sup> initiated an intergovernmental scheme for a European Heritage Label (EHL). The greater context of this meeting is worth noting: it took place shortly before the French and Dutch referenda on the ratification of the *Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe*, a document to advance the European integration. When both national referenda rejected the treaty, the whole ratification process – and with it the process towards a greater European integration – came to a halt for the time being. In the following year, France, Hungary and Spain signed a joint declaration to establish a European Heritage list. This proposal was finally agreed upon by the EU-Member

15. Massimo d’Azeglio, *I miei Ricordi*. (Firenze: Barberà 1883), accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.barne-sandnoble.com/w/i-miei-ricordi-massimo-d-azeglio/1027637897>, p. 483

16. Jean Musitelli, opening lecture to the 15th edition of the *Entrétiens du patrimoine*, Paris, 19-21 May 2007, on the theme “Patrimoine de l’Europe. Patrimoine Européen?” accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/conferen/donnedieu/edp07.html>

17. Held in Paris, 2-3 May 2005

18. "Heritage Days"

19. "European Heritage Label", Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/index.html>

20. "European Heritage Label", European Commission Culture, last modified March 16, 2010, accessed August 31, 2012, [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc2519\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc2519_en.htm)

21. "European Heritage Label", European Commission

22. *Impact Assessment Report: accompanying Document to the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union Action for the European Heritage Label*, European Commission, (Brussels, 2010), 3, accessed August 31, 2012, [http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia\\_carried\\_out/docs/ia\\_2010/sec\\_2010\\_0198\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2010/sec_2010_0198_en.pdf)

23. *The European Heritage Label. Building the future for European Citizens*, Madrid, January 25, 2007, accessed August 31, 2010, <http://www.ugr.es/~ophe/020DOCUMENTACION/016-001a.pdf>

24. Cf. "European Heritage Label", Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

States in Berlin in February 2007.<sup>18</sup> The first monument granted the European Heritage Label was the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, (Fig. 2) and in March 2007 the first EHL-plaque was put up at Cluny Abbey in Burgundy, France. By the year 2010, there were 68 cultural heritage assets in 19 countries bearing the European Heritage Label.<sup>19</sup>

How does the label relate to European identity? The key motivation for the label was a perceived lack of attachment to the European Union among its citizens,<sup>20</sup> as seemingly confirmed by the double rejection of the abovementioned Constitutional Treaty in the referenda. This lack of attachment to the EU was attributed to a "weak knowledge of European history, the role of the EU and its values";<sup>21</sup> thus it was thought necessary to make European history more tangible in order to enhance European identity. Cultural heritage was perceived as a useful medium through which to achieve this. Hence the principal aim for the EHL was to reinforce the citizens' sense of belonging, but also to support diversity and to enhance intercultural dialogue.<sup>22</sup> As formulated in the introduction to the intergovernmental EHL-initiative, "[the European Heritage Label] aims to strengthen the support of European citizens for a shared European identity and to foster a sense of belonging to a common cultural space."<sup>23</sup> Participation in this non-EU-initiative was voluntary and open to all European countries, irrespective of their EU-membership. So far, 18 EU-member states and Switzerland as a non-EU-member have taken part; other countries, some of which are longstanding members of the European Council or early members of the EU, do not or not yet participate.

What heritage properties are labelled? The present EHL-list covers a time span from as early as the Bronze Age to the twenty-first century. It comprises all types of cultural heritage assets – tangible and intangible, immovable and movable objects. There are monuments, buildings, libraries; but also sites with reference to certain historical events or personalities, sites of religious importance, and various other properties of artistic, scientific and historical value.<sup>24</sup> The great diversity of cultural heritage assets that bear the

European Heritage Label poses a question, however. It was the explicit aim of the EHL to provide an image of one shared European heritage; but how is such a diverse array of heritage, individually selected by each participant in this initiative, to offer a coherent image, a shared symbol for a common European identity?

## CONFLICT OF IMAGES

Without doubt, this diversity of cultural heritage properties represents the many different aspects of what is considered European heritage. However, the *Impact Assessment* of the European Commission criticised the first EHL-list exactly for its disparity. “The reading or interpretation of cultural heritage in Europe, including of the most symbolic sites of our shared heritage, is still to a very large extent a national reading. The European dimension of our common heritage is insufficiently highlighted.”<sup>25</sup> The intergovernmental structure of the first initiative, with each participating state giving its own interpretation of the ‘European-ness’ of its EHL-candidates, was considered the reason for the diverging definitions of European Heritage: “as a consequence of the current selection procedures, the nature of the selected sites [and] their relevance [...] are rather disparate and in some cases difficult to comprehend.”<sup>26</sup> In conclusion, in December 2010 the European Parliament decided to make the intergovernmental initiative an official EU-action, in order to allow the intervention of the European Union.<sup>27</sup> EU involvement in the EHL was expected to improve coordination between member states and thereby to contribute to the development and application of new “common, clear and transparent selection criteria,” as well as “new selection and monitoring procedures” for the EHL, ensuring “the relevance of the sites in the light of the objectives.”<sup>28</sup> The objective of the officialised EHL is now “to enhance the value and profile of sites which have played a key role in the history and the building of the European Union.”<sup>29</sup> The two most often quoted examples in line with this interpretation of European heritage are the house of Robert Schuman, the French statesman who is regarded as

25. *Impact Assessment Report*, 2

26. *Impact Assessment Report*, 2

27. European Parliament, *European Parliament legislative resolution of 16 December 2010 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label*, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:169E:0223:0233:EN:PDF>

28. *Impact Assessment Report*, 3

29. *Impact Assessment Report*, 3



one of the founding fathers of the EU, and the Gdansk shipyards in Poland, birthplace of the Solidarnosc trade union which helped trigger the collapse of communism in Europe.<sup>30</sup> Two other examples with the European Heritage Label recall completely different aspects of European history. The Bradlo Mausoleum in the city of Brezova pod Bradlom, Slovakia, was proposed for the EHL because it “constitutes a symbol of the life and work of Milan Rastislav Štefánik; the monument to his memory forms part of the heritage of democratic Slovakia and represents the Slovak contribution to the creation of modern Europe. Therefore, the Mausoleum of M.R. Štefánik is not only of national significance, but it also has a European dimension.”<sup>31</sup> The second is the museum of the Soviet genocide victims in Vilnius, Lithuania.<sup>32</sup> There is no question that all four examples refer to eminent individuals and significant events in European history; their approval as legitimate elements in a narrative of European identity clearly depends on the perspective, however. The dispute about their being adequate candidates for the label or not reveals the conflict of images of European heritage and identity. The question is, if the dispute has to be resolved, by which authority? An alternative approach could be to ask if this conflict has to be resolved at all: could not the disparity and diversity of images be appreciated as a demonstration of the motto “United in diversity”? Finally, what about cultural heritage in countries that do not participate in the initiative – is it not European heritage? Since the EU became involved, participation in the European Heritage Label remains voluntary, but has now been restricted to member states of the European Union. As a result of the EU intervention, there will be a review of the assets labelled so far to determine whether they meet the new criteria; failure of compliance will result in withdrawal of the Label.<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

What is European Heritage, for whom and why? The heritage conservator and art historian Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper put it like this: “If a monument can be used for one identity construction, it can equally be used for another.”<sup>34</sup>

30. Cf. “European Heritage Label”, European Commission Culture

31. “European Heritage Label: Bradlo Mausoleum and the birthplace of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik”, Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, accessed August 31, 2012, [http://www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/Red/Eslovaquia\\_CiudadBrezovaBradlom.html](http://www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/Red/Eslovaquia_CiudadBrezovaBradlom.html)

32. “European Heritage Label: Museum of Genocide Victims (1940-1941) in Vilnius”, Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, accessed August 31, 2012, [http://www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/Red/Lituania\\_MuseoGenocidioVilnius.html](http://www.mcu.es/patrimonio/MC/PatrimonioEur/Red/Lituania_MuseoGenocidioVilnius.html)

33. *Impact Assessment Report*, 8

34. Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, “Wahr oder falsch? Denkmalpflege als Medium nationaler Identitätskonstruktionen”, in *Bilder gedeuteter Geschichte*, Vol 2, ed. O. G. Oexle et al (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2004), 255

Or, as a journalist of *The Independent* somewhat laconically commented on the EU-reformed EHL: “One man’s coal pit is another one’s symbol for European integration.”<sup>35</sup> While the idea of labelling historical sites in order to highlight them as elements of an imagined heritage – in the way commemorative plaques do – cannot be rejected completely, doubts remain as to whether or not a *single* definition of European heritage could adequately express its inherent diversity. As the first, intergovernmental scheme for the European Heritage Label demonstrated, there is not just one perspective on the interpretation and narration of European history, as symbolised by monuments, sites, places and artefacts. In the light of the uniqueness of the EU – it is neither a continental nation-state, nor a federation of states – EU-policies concerning cultural heritage could in fact aim at other goals than constructing an image of EU-European cultural heritage modelled on that of a national heritage. Rather than trying to unify them under an exclusive label, EU policy makers could employ the various – and contested – interpretations of European heritage as a means to imagine European identity beyond recent EU-history, thus maintaining its unique diversity. Instead of streamlining an enormous variety of interpretations into a single definition, the European Heritage Label could actually serve to highlight the rich diversity of European heritage – and the equally varied images of it.

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# PICTURING EUROPE DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR YEARS

## THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL CARTOONS OF THE COMMUNIST OFFICIAL PRESS, 1948-1953

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*ABSTRACT - This paper investigates how Europe was imagined in the cartoons published by The Spark between 1948 and 1953. I depart from the assumption that by the time they were published, cartoons had become central to (re)imagining the continent by representing Western Europe as a complete alterity from Eastern Europe. During the early Cold War years, both sides of the iron curtain had invested impressive resources to represent themselves as the true defenders of peace, promoters of social well-being and generators of progress. However, within the Eastern Bloc in general, and in Romania in particular, views on modernisation were reformulated in terms of intensive industrialisation intended to convey the political priorities of the communist regime, in search for internal political and cultural legitimacy, into a meaningful message. Accordingly, 'othering' through visual discursive semantics implicitly stressed the changing values of identity, productivity and everyday life within the Romanian socialist system. This article argues that cartoons became central to the articulation of a discourse legitimizing the newly established Romanian communist leadership that employed Marxist-Leninist principles to question the Western European projects of economic recovery.*

A cartoon published by *The Spark (Scântea)*, the Romanian Communist Party official newspaper, on 1 January 1948, depicts a worker addressing a group of individuals: "Imperialists, whether you like it or not, you will need to return home!" (Fig. 1). The worker's silhouette is sketched hyperbolically, occupying the image entirely. His dimensions confirm that he is the central character. At his feet, in the lower-left corner, the 'imperialists' have been marked with labels like "United States of Europe", "Mein Kampf", and "Franco". As a result of their diminutive size, they appear intimidated by their opponent. In the upper-right corner the image of a factory completes the composition. This picture alone is evocative of a communication strategy frequently used by mass media in post-war Eastern Europe. Arranged di-



Fig. 1. Doru, "Worker to the Imperialists!" *Scântea*, 1 January 1948, p. 1

agonally from the lower-left corner to the upper-right corner, the elements composing the image convey an idea of ascension. The worker's position, looking down on the imperialists, implies a fracture between a presumptive powerful East and a weakened Western Europe:<sup>1</sup> by blocking the Westerners' perspective on the future, it aimed to ascertain that the subsequent events in Eastern Europe would occur under the new political and economic rule. In other words, this image encapsulated the Eastern Bloc's reading of the ideologisation of economic capital, a rhetoric based on the Marxist Leninist principle which claimed that development of heavy industries would provide the basis for the state's modernisation. Within the Romanian context, nevertheless, the image carried an additional connotation. This was the first issue of *The Spark* published after the forced abdication of King Michael on 30 December 1947. As a result of the country's absorption into the Soviet Bloc, it became necessary to (re)imagine Europe's image. For centuries, Europe – as a cultural space – had traditionally been a model of modernisation for the Romanian people.

This paper investigates how Europe was imagined in the cartoons published by *The Spark* between 1948 and 1953. Placing cartoons ridiculing the West and realistic representations praising the East side by side, these depictions unveil an image of a divided Europe based on the premise of irreversible opposition. I depart from the assumption that by the time they were published, cartoons had become central to (re)imagining the continent by representing Western Europe as a complete alterity from Eastern Europe. During the early Cold War years, both sides of the iron curtain had invested impressive resources to represent themselves as the true defenders of peace, promoters of social well-being and generators of progress.<sup>2</sup> However, within the Eastern Bloc in general, and in Romania in particular, views on modernisation were reformulated in terms of intensive industrialisation, intended to convey the political priorities of the communist regime in search for internal political and cultural legitimacy into a meaningful message. Accordingly, 'othering' through visual discursive semantics implicitly stressed the

1. Gyorgy Peteri, "Introduction: The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Identity," in *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Gyorgy Peteri (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 7.

2. National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, fond CC al PCR – secția Propagandă și Agitație, d. 15/1953, ff. 5-11. See also Jessica Gienow-Hecht, "Culture and the Cold War in Europe," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. I, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 398-399.

changing values of identity, productivity and everyday life within the Romanian socialist system.<sup>3</sup> This article argues that cartoons became central to the articulation of a discourse legitimizing the newly established Romanian communist leadership that employed Marxist-Leninist principles to question the Western European projects of economic recovery. This argument is constructed as follows: first I will briefly discuss the cartoons' visual function within the media discourse in order to stress how such images served the process of constructing political power. The main part of the article provides the reader with several examples of Europe's image. I will conclude by discussing to what extent such graphic images were effective in forging a socialist identity in Romania.

#### FORGING AUDIENCES THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN

The cartoons published in the Romanian press pictured a highly politicized public space. They served as a tool for agitation in a troubled period and were conceived to be read immediately. The political instrumentalisation of images was carried out through mass media dissemination and served both as a reflection of, and the principal driving force behind the emerging socialist society. While the transmission of a message through various visual constructs was an expression of modernity, the symbolic connotations of these constructs, as well as the context in which they were created, are equally important. Within the Romanian political system of the late 1940s and the early 1950s these images seem to be part of a concerted strategy of monologue practices, which became the basis for constructing political legitimacy. Michel Foucault's approach of hegemonic discourses is particularly important here. In the context of Chinese propaganda posters, Evans and Donald discuss Foucault's approach of hegemonic discourses as follows: "these are the layers or trajectories of meaning that are common throughout the visual imagination of a society or group and that operate on the level of assumption. A hegemonic discourse may be naturalized to the point of being synonymous with common sense; it is natural because it is there."<sup>4</sup> Such a

3. Charles S. Maier, "The World Economy and the Cold War in the Middle of the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. I, 44-45.

4. Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, "Introducing Posters of China's Cultural Revolution," in *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China - Posters of the Cultural Revolution*, eds. Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 17.

discursive mechanism was conducted by ‘inventing a tradition’, which means that:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past [...]. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.<sup>5</sup>

The actual practice was nevertheless complicated by the fact that the images had a double connotation. On the one hand they were part of a broader mechanism of image management within the period of high Stalinism (1946-1953), when Eastern European society was represented as a paradise. The visual constructs from this period had to integrate the working class within the historical tradition of Marxist Leninism by replacing any references to identity as an outcome of nationhood, ethnicity, language or religion. On the other hand – as they were meant to reformulate the country’s previous relations with the West so that they would fit into the newly formulated in-

5. Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-5.



Fig. 2. „Every percent above the plan is a strike against the imperialists” (1950), *Iskusstvo*, 5-1950, p. 1.



ternational socialist rhetoric – these images were charged with an additional meaning within the Romanian context.

## REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

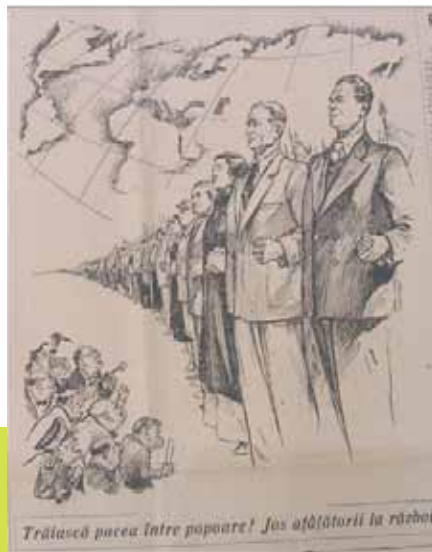
The cartoon published by *The Spark* on 1 January 1948 synthesized a particular strategy of image production in terms of composition, symbolism and ideological engagement with the Cold War rhetoric. Within the Eastern European visual framework, Western Europe was pictured as a distorted representation of those values that played a central part in an ideological articulation of socialist identity: collectiveness as opposed to individuality, pacifism as opposed to imperialism, and work as opposed to consumerism. Broadly speaking, the so-called unity of international socialism would differ from what in Eastern Europe was regarded as the physical disintegration of Western Europe. The working class' collective leadership would overcome the anti-national actions of the Western bourgeois politicians. Finally, the social modernisation through the development of heavy industries and a politically self-conscious population would make Eastern Europe immune to the decadent capitalist consumerism that was invading the everyday life of the masses in the West.

The same antagonistic view is noticeable within the cartoons' visual repertoire. Socialist realism, the official Soviet aesthetic at that time, featured symmetrical compositions, classicist-inspired elements and heroic representations as sources of ideological legitimacy. Accordingly, the traditional aesthetic categories - 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'grotesque', 'comic' - had to be replaced with deeply ideological concepts – 'reflection' on the party, 'revolutionary character', 'positive heroes' as the main characters of the visual narrative, 'realism' as opposed to 'abstraction' and 'vernacular features'.<sup>6</sup> Cartoons, along with the rest of artistic production, mirrored a socio-economic reality within which the working class identity surpassed any other forms of self-identification (Fig. 2). From the Soviet point of view, Europe was a "capitalist

6. Bernice Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 293-294.

Fig. 3. “Long live peace between people,” *Scântea*, 12 December 1952, p. 1

Fig. 4. “Two balances of economic development,” *Scântea*, 3 January 1953 p. 1



culture that needed to be criticized” because “capitalism denied people the possibility of becoming heroes,” whereas culture in Eastern Europe was understood as an outcome of economic development.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the representative of the East fighting against the aggressive West was not a member of the political elite, but a worker – an anonymous figure emblematic of the first years of socialist construction with whom every citizen had to identify. In contrast to the heroism of the socialist worker, the depiction of Western Europe consisted of asymmetrical compositions, derogatory and ironic images, which sought to accentuate the viewer’s negative emotions by inducing repulsion or amusement.<sup>8</sup> The cartoons’ vicious message, for example, became unambiguous after observing the marginal elements: small, minimalist figures, with distorted physiognomies. A telling example is the image of the Soviet-inspired rhetoric regarding the ‘struggle for peace’:

The relationship between peace forces and their enemies is shown clearly through the artistic mechanisms of exaggeration of size and symbolism. The worker’s strong, accusing hand exceeds the proportion of the arsonist, stunted and caught in ac-

7. Erik van Ree, “Heroes and Merchants. Joseph Stalin and the Nations of Europe,” in *Imagining Europe. Europe and European Civilisation as Seen from its Margins and by the Rest of the World, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Michael Wintle (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 53.

8. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, “Socialist Realism’s Self-Reference? Cartoons on Art, c. 1950,” in *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, eds. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 155-157.

tion, many times. The poster's author sought to visually emphasize the powerful forces of nations eager for peace. However, the poster also points out that the enemy is still dangerous. He must be exposed, charged and tried.<sup>9</sup>

The West was depicted through a limited representational repertoire: bones, skulls and other death related symbols, guns, as well as elements related to national currencies and monetary policies.<sup>10</sup> There were three leading categories of representation – their meanings often overlapping – of Western Europe: first as an instrument of US aggression against the rest of the world; second as a demonstration of the inability to make political decisions; and finally as an illustration of economic failure (Fig. 3 and 4). However, if one would have to synthesize the Romanian cartoonists' view on Western Europe in a single image, it would undoubtedly be the US dollar. Immediately after the launch of the Marshall Plan in 1948, the Soviets formulated their anti-capitalist agenda, according to themselves to prevent the United States from achieving global hegemony. As the main point of confrontation between the former war allies was the question of how to tie economic development effectively to the post-war social reconstruction process – that is the modernisation of societies – the politicians' main concern was to identify the best way to convey economically strategic interests into social policies. Given that the Soviets were vehemently opposed to Eastern Europe benefiting from US aid, it was necessary to come up with a convincing justification as to why a financial offer that could have been the key towards rapid economic recovery was declined unequivocally.

Economy and politics were always depicted together. The cartoons implied that the accelerated decline of industries and currencies formed an obstacle for a successful reconstruction of Western Europe. Moreover, the images suggested that Western European countries were unable to handle the challenge of reconstruction successfully on their own terms. In addition, to further enhance the economic and ideological gulf between the two

9. P. Poszau Glauber, "Caricatura în luptă pentru pace," *România liberă* (12 June 1955): 2. My translation.

10. George Oprescu, *Artele plastice în România după 23 august 1944* (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1959), 122. Alexander Shkliaruk, *Our Victory. Posters of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945* (Moscow: Kontakt-kultura, 2010). Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2.

worlds, Western Europe was presented as a victim of American imperialism. Focusing on France and the United Kingdom, the traditional allies of the United States, and shortly afterwards also on the Benelux countries, cartoons stressed the close ties between economic dynamics and political decision-making. As a result, the Western half of the continent was on the verge of physical extinction. Europe was falling apart piece by piece as the national leaders ceased any rights of particular interest to their own countries in favour of the US. Furthermore, the same Western-European leaders were falling into nothingness while inflation reached higher rates. In 1949, immediately after the communist parties' representatives were removed from Western governments – as was the case in for example France and Italy – and the Vatican announced its anathema to socialists, the cartoons published by *The Spark* implied that the mirage of the dollar provided the most plausible explanation for the Westerners' alleged renunciation of self-interest in favour of the Americans (Fig. 5 and 6).

Fig. 5. Doru, "As they would like..." *Scântea*, 10 April 1948, p. 4

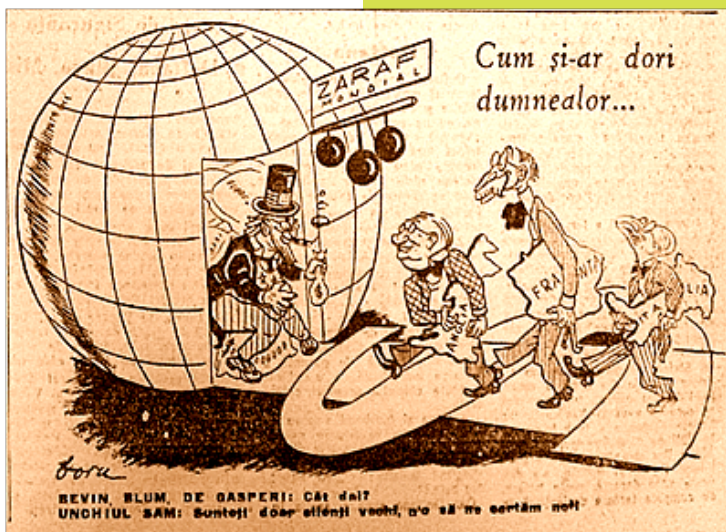


Fig. 6. *Pravda*, 9 August 1949, p. 4



Similar to the Soviet newspapers printed during those years, the Romanian political press abounded in references to how Eastern Europe fought against fascism. Understanding the political construction of Western European societies as an outcome of actions of the Marshall Plan entangled with fascist practices, resulted in portraying the enemy as an aggressive presence close to the Eastern Bloc. Accordingly, the anti-imperialist cartoons in *The Spark* illustrate the militancy of the West and endorse the Romanian authorities' effort to protect the controversial domestic economic process of heavy industry development, which was increasingly coming under attack in the West. On that note the explosion of anti-Western graphics published by *Pravda* and reprinted by *The Spark* immediately after the launch of the Marshall Plan, could be explained as well (Fig. 7, 8 and 9).

Furthermore, within a five-year span the visual representations of modernisation as a form of social progress within non-socialist Europe were virtu-

Fig. 7. Doru, "Marshall Plan marching," *Scântea*, 26 February 1948, p. 5



Fig. 8. "Currencies' devaluation in Marshalized countries," *Scântea*, 20 September 1949, w p. 4



Fig. 9. E. Taru, "Two currencies," *Scântea*, 5 February 1952, p. 3



ally non-existent. There were very few newspaper articles describing the everyday experience of the Western population. As a rule written material was illustrated by expressive collages claiming that the high level of unemployment, poor living conditions, and lack of food, housing and consumer goods, were part of daily life for the Western European population. Several cartoons published in the early 1950s, for example, compared the population's living standards on the two halves of the continent. Adopting the compositional model of an ascending diagonal arrangement from the lower-left corner to the upper-right corner, the author chose to divide the visual field through an ascending line of what was meant to be the dynamic of the socialist economy. In contrast, the corresponding line of the Western economy was much more levelled and represented by a chain, an obvious allusion to enslavement and lack of freedom (Fig. 4).

#### EUROPE (RE)IMAGINED?

Following Benedict Anderson, this article approaches the political cartoons as parts of a discursive mechanism that aimed to imagine a Romanian community based on Soviet values.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the discourse changed over time. Immediately after the beginning of the Cold War, there seemed to be a greater concern amongst the newspaper's editors with the articulation of a narrative that pointed out the negative features of Western Europe. Later, as the political legitimacy of the newly imposed communist regime strengthened, the cartoons became more concerned with stressing the socialist values within Romanian society. Accordingly, such graphic products must be read within the context of a particular dialogue between politicians, as emitters of an ideological message through controlled mass media, and their receptors – the public who had access to such images and whose conduct had to comply with certain ideological expectations. Given that “social actors are more inclined to think, feel and act based on what they see,”<sup>12</sup> to what extent were the cartoons published in the Romanian political press efficient instruments in constructing a socialist identity?

11. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

12. Robert Hariman, John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.



The transfer of Soviet visual constructs to Romania occurred relatively fast. The close collaboration between the VOKS (Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) and ARLUS (The Romanian Association for Strengthening Relations with the Soviet Union) was coupled with a wide circulation of cartoon and poster albums designed by Boris Efimov, whose work was published frequently by *Pravda*, and was also put on display in several art exhibitions throughout the country. More visually oriented than *Pravda*, *The Spark* regularly published various sorts of images, including photos, posters and cartoons. Some of the cartoons were reprints from *Pravda* or the Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil*, while the rest was designed by Eugen Taru, Chik Damian or Rick Auerbach – local artists previously connected to the interwar artistic avant-garde.<sup>13</sup>

The large number of cartoons printed by *The Spark* could be a consequence of the high degree of illiteracy of the Romanian population in the early years of communism. According to the available data, the great majority of workers employed by the newly developed centres of heavy industry were very poorly educated: they had received no more than four years of primary education. To overcome these obvious shortcomings, trained propagandists had to organize daily readings and discussions about the articles published by *The Spark*, so that industrial workers would familiarise themselves with the intended ideological meaning. Workers were expected to continue the discussion about the ideological matters at stake during lunchtime, and later at home with their families.

Here Vadim Volkov's approach to *kulturnost* in Stalin's Russia during the 1930s, based on Norbert Elias' understanding of 'civilizing processes', is particularly useful. According to Volkov the modernisation of Europe was entangled with processes of changing peoples' behaviour – "subtle changes in social organisation of everyday life, such as manners, public conduct, standards of hygiene, speech, food consumption, things of everyday use, dwelling space."<sup>14</sup> On an economic level, these civilizing processes meant that

13. Virgiliu Țărău, "Caricatură și politică externă în România anilor 1950-1951," in *România și relațiile internaționale în secolul XX*, eds. Liviu Țărău and Virgiliu Țărău (Cluj Napoca: Clusium, 2000), 215-226. Boris Efimov, *Pentru pace trainică* (București: Editura Cartea Rusă, 1951). Rik Auerbach, "Pentru o discuție asupra caricaturii românești," *Contemporanul* (8 October 1954): 4. Amelia Pavel, "Tradiție și stil în caricatură," *Contemporanul* (22 June 1956), 2. Gheorghe Măndrescu, "Grafica și propaganda în primii ani ai regimului comunist în România. Exemple din colecția Muzeului Național de Artă din Cluj-Napoca," *Tribuna* 48 (1-15 September 2004): 20-21.

14. Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of *Kul'turnost*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process," in *Stalinism. New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 211.



they had to be reflected in the labour productivity of the industrial workers. Soviets believed that economic structures depended on political control, as opposed to the Western vision of sustained economic growth. The civilizing process provided a “relatively coherent framework which connected the rise of centralised states with the transformation of everyday behaviour,” which “led to the emergence of a less violent and more complex type of society.”<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, *kulturnost* meant (re)creating the future as a socialist society, which is exactly what the Soviets argued the economic vision of Western Europe did not do. Using newspapers as the main instrument of mass communication, the communist authorities aimed to convey the idea that the party was capable to fulfil the masses’ needs. The social context in which the population read those images, however, was somewhat problematic. The intensified and forced process of industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture conducted in Romania during the first years of the Cold War produced massive migration from rural areas towards industrialised spaces. While official rhetoric claimed that industrialisation would greatly improve the workers’ living conditions, it soon became apparent that the authorities’ promises were unrealistic.

In this context the cartoons became central to a self-legitimizing practice targeting the domestic audience, which aimed to reconfigure the connections between economy, labour and culture. The socialist reading of Eastern Europe was fuelled by the idea that within the newly industrialised society,

15. Ibid., p. 210.

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economics would establish a homogenous Soviet cultured community, consisting of politically conscious individuals. Moreover, Soviets claimed that they were the sole protectors of European culture. This culture had first been threatened by the fascists, whom the Soviets defeated, and was now besieged by American consumerism, which they promised to fight as well. In other words, these images claimed that since the post-war Western European economic system was built on the US vision – a vision regarded by the soviet propaganda as cultureless – there was no real reason why the European construct would last.<sup>16</sup>

16. Jessica Gienow-Hecht, "Culture and the Cold War in Europe," 401; see also "'How Good Are We?' Culture and the Cold War," in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945–1960*, eds. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 226

# FROM ALTERITY TO IDENTITY

## A CENTRAL EUROPEAN VIEW OF EUROPE AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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**ABSTRACT** – *In general, communities usually construct their own identity by imagining themselves in opposition to a significant 'Other'. The notion that Central Europe was part of Europe became a discourse for the intellectuals living in this region especially during the 1980s, when the dominant Other that mirrored the Central European identity was the Russian/Soviet East. On the other hand, Central Europe's relation to Europe (understood as Western Europe) gradually changed in terms of perception. This article describes the evolution in the perception of Europe in the Central European identity-building process. The manner in which Central Europeans related to Europe varied throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. During the 1980s, (Western) Europe was seen as a distinct Other that gradually shifted towards a similar Other, and the works of dissident intellectuals offer a meaningful insight into this transformation. The 1990s saw the Central European states define themselves as part of Europe: this is obvious in the written press as well as the official political discourse of the region. This gradual process is most noticeable in the terminology used by Central Europeans in order to define their own region: from Eastern Europe to Central Europe as a preamble for a final 'return to Europe'.*

1. György Konrád, "Is the Dream of Central Europe Still Alive?," in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Currents* 5 (1986), 112.

In 1986, György Konrád wrote that the "road to Europe and a wider world beyond leads by way of Central Europe".<sup>1</sup> The positioning of this region in Europe went through several processes of self-definition in the last decades of the twentieth century, every time conditioned by the geopolitical circum-

stances of the moment. Nowadays, there is a vast literature concerning the debate on the idea of Central Europe, as a region and as a concept in literature, history, culture, and so on. The rediscovery of the particular character of Central Europe within the dissident environments from the Communist countries (especially in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland) after the 1975 Helsinki Agreement underlined not just a cultural differentiation from the rest of the Socialist Eastern European bloc, but also a peaceful discourse of challenging the postwar geopolitical division of Europe.

This article focuses on how Central Europe has defined itself as a region and a culture in relation to Europe before and after the fall of the Communist regimes established after the Second World War. In order to analyse this shift, I will first present how Central Europe as a spatial and cultural construct was created in relation to Europe at the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s by the dissident intellectuals from the Communist states of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and then proceed with a discussion of how this representation was adapted to the new geopolitical situation that followed the fall of the Communist regimes. My analysis will start from the intellectual discourse formulated before 1989, a milieu in which 'Central Europe' re-emerged as a concept and as a cultural, historical, and even political region of Europe, and will continue by also examining the political discourse at the beginning of the 1990s to see how this region changed its representation and its alterity to Europe in order to attain the national interests of its individual states.

Either as a geographical region or as a philosophical idea, Central Europe was imagined almost without exception in opposition to an Other, real or imagined. Before 1989, Central Europe was constructed in opposition to the Russian/Soviet East as a way to challenge Soviet domination over the East-Central part of Europe, but also in a way that made it different from Western Europe. After the events of 1989, when the Soviet Union no longer represented such a threat to the new democratic states, the 'return to

Europe' meant creating other forms of alterity to highlight Central Europe's similarity to Western Europe: a European discourse emerged that gradually transformed alterity into identification.<sup>2</sup> The article will deal with the narrow understanding of Central Europe, which comprises Czechoslovakia (after 1993, Czech Republic and Slovakia), Hungary, and Poland. As far as the term *Europe* is concerned, to Central Europeans this actually refers to Western Europe, as this is an important reference point for their political aspirations and cultural values.

This image of Central Europe, defined in relation to its neighbours, was created by intellectuals during the final decades of the twentieth century, mostly as a cultural concept with the possibility of acquiring a political dimension. The manner in which the region defined itself in connection to (Western) Europe has followed an indirect long-term trajectory, first of contesting the Communist regimes, then of acceding to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The main goal was to intellectually and geopolitically move the region closer to the West and further from the East, constantly reconceptualising its meaning and using its specificity in order for it to be accepted as fully and equally European, both in political and cultural terms.

### FROM ALTERITY TO IDENTITY: CENTRAL EUROPE'S VIEW OF EUROPE IN THE 1970S AND 1980S

After 1945, the installment of Socialist regimes in the Eastern part of Europe meant the disappearance of whatever form of Central Europe had been previously formulated. The German 'Mitteleuropa' reminded everyone of the horrors experienced during the war, while the other concepts of a distinct 'Central Europe' could not be accepted by the Soviet Union to denominate a region that was part of its Communist Empire. Therefore, the geopolitical status of the postwar bipolar division of Europe allowed only the existence of a Western Europe and an Eastern Europe, both in an antagonistic and tense relation with one another. The official discourse of the Communist

2. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1-39. The identity of a group is defined by its relation to an Other, different and foreign, that is similar in a way to the community but is constructed in opposition to it.

regimes followed the ideological line and expressed this relation to Western Europe as the completely different Other.

However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the forgotten concept of Central Europe re-emerged as an intellectual protest against an oppressive regime, representing the intellectuals' way to challenge the Communist state after all open revolt was crushed (in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and several times in Poland). In these countries, the concept of 'Central Europe' was used in its narrow version, referring only to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, as opposed to the broader version that included all the states between Germany and Russia that fell under Soviet influence after the war. The particularities of this narrow version of Central Europe were based not only on their similar revolts against Communism, but also on shared cultural and historical characteristics.<sup>3</sup> This notion specifically had a profound cultural character as political constraints did not permit anything else, and it came close to the idea of a 'middle Europe', of 'the lands between' a free Western Europe and a Soviet Eastern Europe,<sup>4</sup> clearly opposing the latter but somehow similar to the former.

As the Central European dissident intellectuals strived to distance their region from the Soviet Eastern Europe by insisting on a specific character of their area, they also created a shift in its perceived relation towards Europe: the accent was on the similarity in culture, character and values with the rest of Western Europe as opposed to the East. The discourse on Central Europe promoted within the underground dissident circles integrated the region's culture and identity within the European area, delimitating themselves from the official Communist discourse centred on the Soviet Union. This phenomenon is most noticeable in the works of the respectively Czech, Hungarian and Polish authors Milan Kundera, György Konrád, and Czesław Miłosz.

In 1983, Milan Kundera first published his essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe", a text that gave a maximum impulse to the debate on Central Europe

3. Jenő Szűcs, "Three Historical Regions of Europe," in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, ed. John Keane (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 291–331; Peter Hanák, "Central Europe: A Historical Region in Modern Times. A Contribution to the Debate about the Regions of Europe," in *In Search of Central Europe*, eds. George Schöpflin and Nancy Wood (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 57–69; Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom. A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

4. Judy Batt, "Introduction: Defining Central and Eastern Europe," in *Developments in Central and Eastern European Politics*, Vol. 3, eds. Stephen White, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 9–11.

and highlighted the particularities of the Central European region, its closeness to Europe, and its alterity to the Russian/Soviet civilisation. According to Kundera, after 1945 “several nations that had always considered themselves to be Western woke up to discover that they were now in the East”.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting on the postwar reality of Europe, Kundera insisted on the historical differences between Western and Eastern Europe, an evolution based on religious and political affiliations which situated Central Europe more on the Western side from the point of view of values, religion or traditions. He continued with an expression that characterised Central Europe’s destiny from 1945 until 1989:

As a result, three fundamental situations developed in Europe after the war: that of Western Europe, that of Eastern Europe, and, most complicated, that of the part of Europe situated geographically in the centre —culturally in the West and politically in the East.<sup>6</sup>

Stressing the similarity to Europe and the desire to copy all that is European, Kundera’s Central Europe finds its Other in Russia/the Soviet Union:

a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety, [...] a reduced model of Europe made up of nations conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest space. How could Central Europe not be horrified facing a Russia founded on the opposite principle: the smallest variety within the greatest space?<sup>7</sup>

The Hungarian author György Konrád also referred to Central Europe and its peoples in his famous *Antipolitics. An Essay*, stressing the “in-between-ness” of the region:

[...] we Hungarians, Czech, and Poles huddle here on the Western

5. Milan Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” *The New York Review of Books* 31 April 1984: 33, accessed 21 February 2008, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1984/apr/26/the-tragedy-of-central-europe/>.

6. *Ibid.*, 33.

7. *Ibid.*, 35.

margin of the empire and on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain, with a cautious strategy of self-preservation and a troubled mind, because we don't want to identify with the East and we can't identify with the West.<sup>8</sup>

In Central European mythology, the West as an aspiration, a 'promised land', was always contrasted to the East,<sup>9</sup> as a land of authoritarian rule, economic backwardness and cultural limitations. In Central Europe, the boundaries always fluctuated due to its turbulent history, and therefore people's ways of relating to them was in a relationship that implied a 'we' living here, within, and a 'they', in a positive or negative connotation, living there, beyond, ahead or behind us.<sup>10</sup> Referring not only to the geopolitical postwar situation in Europe, Konrád also argued that the mentality and attitude of the Central Europeans are different from both Western and Eastern Europe: "I am a central European; here my attitudes are Western European, there they are Eastern European"<sup>11</sup> and "It is here in East Central Europe that Eastern and Western culture collide; it's here that they intermingle".<sup>12</sup> Contrary to Kundera, Konrád does not insist on Central Europe's alterity to Russia, but focuses on its belonging to Europe and European culture.

The Polish writer Czesław Miłosz<sup>13</sup> also talked about how Central European intellectuals were looking to the West, hoping for something, whether political, spiritual, or cultural. He referred to Central Europe as a "certain cultural unit, placed in the Eastern orbit by force of arms and by pacts between the superpowers, but maintaining its own identity."<sup>14</sup> In his essay "Central European Attitudes" (1986), Miłosz defined Central Europe as "an act of faith, a project, an utopia even".<sup>15</sup> Here, he discussed Central Europe by means of its shared history and traditions that have imprinted the region with a specific sensibility, even if it is situated between Western Europe and Russia. But despite the common past of this region and the rich ethnic and linguistic diversity that continues to be witnessed in the present of Central Europe, the author makes references to the larger European culture and its influence

8. György Konrad, *Antipolitics. An Essay* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984), 91.

9. Barbara Curyto, "Barbarians at the Gate... The Ideas of Europe in Central-Eastern Europe," in *Central European Journal of International & Security Studies* 5.1 (March 2011): 4.

10. György Péteri, ed., *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 2.

11. Konrad, *Antipolitics*, 128.

12. György Konrad, "Letter from Budapest," in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Culture* 1 (1982): 12.

13. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1981), 37-39.

14. Czesław Miłosz, "Looking for a Center: On Poetry of Central Europe," in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Currents* 1 (1982): 10.

15. Czesław Miłosz, "Central European Attitudes," in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Currents* 5 (1986): 106.



on these territories.

One of the most important consequences of the 1980s debate on the term 'Central Europe' started by these writers' ideas was, therefore, a shift in the manner in which Central Europeans perceived themselves. In its connection to Europe, Central Europe was living a paradox: it sought to differentiate itself from the West, while at the same time it imitated the West.<sup>16</sup> Historically, as a region Central Europe belonged to Europe, and as such it was related to Western Europe, but it distanced itself from Western Europe by means of its traditions and culture.<sup>17</sup> Central European intellectuals perceived Western Europe as a superior civilisation, an idealised utopia, an expression of a dynamic character as opposed to the rigidity and levelness of the East.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of the 1980s, as a democratic wave swept through the region, the philosophical idea of Central Europe seemed to become a political project. This is the moment when the Central European identity was marked by a transformation in its characteristics and relation to Others, especially to Europe as a whole:

It is characteristic that in their current searchings, Eastern Europeans are satisfied with the label 'Central Europe' when it concerns their immediate socio-political preferences. But when philosophical aspirations, convictions, and attitudes towards history and politics come into play, Central Europe ceases to be the name of the new utopia. A name with a richer and somewhat more universal tradition is invoked instead. This name is 'Europe.'<sup>19</sup>

16. Csaba G. Kiss, "Central European Writers about Central Europe: Introduction to a Non-Existent Book of Readings," in *In Search of Central Europe*, eds. George Schöpflin and Nancy Wood, 135.

17. Oscar Halecki, "The Historical Role of Central-Eastern Europe," in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 232 (1944): 9-18; Szűcs, "Three Historical Regions of Europe" 291-331.

18. Curyło, "Barbarians at the Gate...": 3.

19. Barbara Torunczyk, "Kings and Spirits in the Eastern European Tales," in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Currents* 7 (1988): 184.

#### BECOMING ONE: CENTRAL EUROPE IDENTIFIES WITH EUROPE AFTER 1989

After 1989, the idea of Central Europe was used not so much as the expression of the distance from the Soviet Union/Russia but to stress its closeness to Western Europe. The main attitude that drove the political discourse and orientation of the Central European states in the first decade after 1989 was

that of 'returning to Europe', bearing in mind that the Europe everyone was referring to was not predominantly that of Western European culture and values, but that of the Euro-Atlantic political, military and economic institutions. Therefore, the main objective that the first democratic representatives stated for their countries in 1989 was to 'return to Europe' by asserting their European values, traditions and culture.<sup>20</sup> For example, the newly elected president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, stressed the foremost important political goal of the post-Communist Central European states:

Europe represents a common destiny, a common, complex history, common values, and a common culture and way of life. More than that, it is also, in a sense, a region characterized by particular forms of behaviour, a particular quality of will, a particular understanding of responsibility.<sup>21</sup>

After 1989 all public speeches and documents became heavily impregnated with the use of a 'European' terminology: such as 'Europe', 'European values and norms', 'European Community' (then 'European Union'), and 'European structures'. An interesting aspect of the relationship between Central Europe and Europe as a unit is that up to the second half of 1991 there was much reference to Europe by stressing the common values, traditions, and the need to accept the new democratic states from East-Central Europe into the Euro-Atlantic structures.<sup>22</sup> This reflects the uncertainty of the former Communist states about their rapid integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures and it shows that they were using every opportunity to convince Western Europe that they shared the same values and culture. But after the signing of the Association Agreement to the European Union in 1991, the expression 'our Europe'<sup>23</sup> was frequently used to reflect the former Communist states' success in their negotiations with the European institutions, but also to reflect that they had been accepted by Western Europe as Europeans.

The relationship between Central Europe and Western Europe shifted rather

20. Václav Havel, "New Year's Address to the Nation," Prague, 1 January 1990, accessed 21 March 2009, [http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index\\_uk.html](http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index_uk.html); József Antall, "The Proposal to dissolve the Soviet Military Bloc, 7 July 1990," in *József Antall, Prime Minister of Hungary – A Historian in World Politics. Selected Speeches and Interviews*, ed. Géza Jeszenszky (Budapest: Antall József Alapítvány, 2008), 250-54.

21. Václav Havel, "The Hope for Europe," in *The New York Review of Books* 20 June 1996, accessed 8 December 2011, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1996/jun/20/the-hope-for-europe/?pagination=false>.

22. For example, Václav Havel, "Address to the Polish Sejm and Senate", Warsaw, 25 January 1990, accessed 21 March 2009, [http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index\\_uk.html](http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index_uk.html).

23. For example, József Antall, "Hungary's Role in a Free Europe, 24 June 1992," in *József Antall, Prime Minister of Hungary – A Historian in World Politics. Selected Speeches and Interviews*, ed. Géza Jeszenszky, 291-296.

quickly in order to adapt to the new geopolitical circumstances: the states from Central and Eastern Europe regained their democratic status, and the Soviet Union imploded under the weight of its own problems soon after. Eastern Europe was no more, so there would soon be no need for Central Europe as all states aimed to 'return to Europe'. The constant reference to 'Europe' and to the 'European institutions' proved that the Central Europeans perceived no longer (Western) Europe as a similar Other, but that they identified completely with it. The Central European identity redefined itself first as the success story of the democratic transition, and then towards the end of the twentieth century as the story of belonging to Europe after being associated with and accepted into the Euro-Atlantic structures. This can easily be seen in all Central European countries, if we follow the preponderance of the use of the term 'Europe' during the 1990s. For example, the European narrative became dominant even in the writings of the former dissident intellectuals from the Central European states, especially in the cases of Václav Havel (who became the first freely-elected president of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and then of the Czech Republic in 1993) and of György Konrád.

From the beginning of his presidency, Václav Havel underlined the need for the Central European states to collaborate in order to build "a whole Europe, a Europe of the future".<sup>24</sup> He referred to three different meanings of Europe as seen from Central Europe: a geographical Europe that has a rather impersonal significance; Europe understood as the European Union in the sense of a community of nations that peacefully developed democratic systems, civil societies, and economic prosperity; and a Europe perceived in terms of a "common destiny, a common, complex history, common values, and a common culture" and way of life".<sup>25</sup> It is the latter two representations of Europe that the Central Europeans have considerably related to and sought to fully adhere to during the 1990s.

24. Václav Havel, "Address at a Meeting of Leaders from Three Neighboring Countries," Bratislava, 9 April 1990, accessed 21 March 2009, [http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index\\_uk.html](http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index_uk.html).

25. Václav Havel, "The Hope for Europe".

In the mid-1990s, György Konrád adapted his perspective on Central Europe to the new post-Communist realities that focused on the main objective of

joining NATO and the European Union:

After 1989, Central Europe has grown. When there is no longer an Iron Curtain between Vienna and Budapest, Berlin and Prague, when the two sides of Central Europe will be sooner or later integrated into the same groups and we will all belong to the countries of the European Union, then we will reconnect the past and the horizon with each other, and yesterday's separateness will become less important.<sup>26</sup>

Konrád identified and emphasized catching up with Europe and becoming a full member of its political and economic institutions, and being accepted as such, as new characteristics of the Central European. He based his conception not only on the efforts made by the new democracies in the region, but also on their cultural similarities to European civilization.<sup>27</sup>

These shifts in European discourse can also be observed in the Central European media, for instance in Poland's bestselling newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. I have analysed how this newspaper's representation of Central Europe was formulated during the 1990s by examining the articles relating to the idea of a Central European community and looking at how this was perceived within the states from the region.<sup>28</sup> What I observed was that the first decade of post-Communism shows an evolution in terminology, from 'Central Europe' (used predominantly during 1989-1991 as a legacy of the 1980s debate) to 'Visegrád Triangle/Group' (used from 1991 to 1994, as a form of regional cooperation that marks the closeness to Western Europe by proving the region's success story in terms of political and economic cooperation, but also in stressing its common values and similarity to Western Europe), and in the end, to 'Europe' as in the European Union. These transformations in how Central Europe perceived itself were constantly related to Europe and reflected the efforts to create a favourable image of a group of states that could be easily integrated within the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

26. György Konrád, *Die Erweiterung der Mitte. Europa und Osteuropa am Ende des 20. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Picus Verlag, 1999), 9, (my translation).

27. György Konrád, *The Melancholy of Rebirth. Essays from Post-Communist Central Europe, 1989-1994*. (San Diego-New York- London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), 156-157.

28. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8 May 1989-31 December 1999.

Therefore, this shows the predominance given to the meaning of the phrase 'Visegrád Group' as a successful cooperation and transition to democracy, instead of 'Central Europe', which was left in the cultural realm, followed by the preference for using the phrase of 'Europe'. In Jacques Rupnik's words, what the Central European states wanted by promoting their success story of transition was to lose the adjective 'Central' as soon as possible and to integrate into the West.<sup>29</sup> In 2004, the Central European states finally became full members of the European Union. The need for an external Other was no longer present now that they had become Europeans and were acknowledged by the world as such.

## CONCLUSION

In distancing itself from the East and becoming European, Central Europe went through several spatial representations, every time moving a little closer to the West: from Eastern Europeans becoming Central Europeans, and then from Central Europeans becoming Europeans. Throughout the last decades, the Central Europeans' history was defined by two concepts: that of distance and that of closeness, all in relation to the regions and circumstances surrounding them. Central Europe aimed to distance itself from the East and to be accepted by the West as a part of the European family whose characteristics it shared. Although the political circumstances in Europe changed drastically in 1989, Central Europe's cultural efforts to represent itself as part of the European cultural and civilisational realm were continued during the following decade as the result of an associated strong political interest. Starting from the cultural bases formulated by the dissident intellectuals, the European discourse from the Central European states stressed the common values and interests of maintaining peace and uniting the whole continent.

29. Jacques Rupnik, "Europa środka," *Gazeta Wyborcza* 104, 6 May 1994, 15.

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# THE VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

## DEFINING EUROPE IN LATIN AMERICA

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*ABSTRACT - This article will examine the construction of 'Europe' and 'European' in Latin America from the early twentieth century through the present. It will explore how Latin Americans have defined 'Europe,' with particular attention to distinctions which have been made among various national identities. Latin American engagement with European culture has, by its nature, been more fraught than in other regions where the complete rejection of European culture might be a more viable option for those engaged in the project of a postcolonial (re)assertion of identity. Defining Europe is ultimately an exercise in the assertion of identity, regardless of who is undertaking that definition. By engaging the Latin American discussion of what defines Europe, it is possible to highlight critical issues in that definition and its relationship to larger questions of identity. This paper will attempt to grapple with those issues and in doing so provide a unique and relevant perspective on what Europe might be.*

In recent years there has been an ever increasing interest in defining Europe. The reformation and reappraisal of Europe and its place in the geopolitical order has been an important feature of post-war thought, as the loss of overseas territories shapes the political and psychological realities of the continent (which is, more often than not, no longer The Continent). In this sense, Europe itself is every bit as much 'postcolonial' as those regions which were formally colonised by Europeans. For this reason, the national and regional identities developed in regions normally identified as postcolonial in relationship to Europe are remarkably helpful in coming to a comprehensive view of what Europe means today.

This article aims to seek a non-European perspective on the definition of Europe by focusing on the perception and construction of Europe within Latin America. Since the period of formal political colonisation (which here is roughly defined as lasting from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth century) is critical in understanding the world's perception of Europe and Europe's perception of the world. For this reason, it is particularly helpful to examine how Europe has been constructed in Latin America, the first site of European colonisation in the modern era.

While Spain and Portugal, the first European colonisers of Latin America, might seem the obvious templates on which Latin American concepts of Europe are based, the actual picture is much more complicated. One complicating feature is the now century-long intervention of the United States in the region. This long history of intervention in Latin American affairs (like most histories of such interventionism) has not been a happy one. "Pobre México, tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos" (Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States) goes the old refrain widely attributed to Don Porfirio Díaz, Mexico's most famous revolutionary-cum-dictator. This is a sentiment that is not only familiar to Mexico but to the other nations south of the United States border.

The political consequences of American interventions in Latin America have been well-documented. The aesthetic and cultural consequences however have been less thoroughly examined. Yet these manifestations offer the best possibility to see the circumstances which have shaped the Latin American conception of Europe. This conception was largely formed by the Franco-phile impulses that emerged as a response to the American involvement in Latin America. France has, in many instances, become the foil for the United States, and embracing French culture and a French conception of 'Europe' has proven to be a very effectual way of culturally combating American neo-imperialism in a way that is (as we shall see) not completely alien to the historical realities in the region.



This French-American dichotomy is a paradigm that is not only seen in Latin America. In the twentieth century, particularly since the end of the Second World War, Franco-American antagonism has run the gambit from the serious to the silly. Everyone knows that an 'American in Paris' should result in much entertainment and we need not forget 'freedom fries'. The idea of the United States and France representing two opposite, competing poles has manifested itself in a variety of ways, mainly within the two nations in question – which is what makes the Latin American case so fascinating. Latin America, particularly the Latin American Left, has entered into this debate heavily on the side of France. Lacan, for example, is taught in the psychology departments of universities throughout Latin America – something that almost never happens in North America or in Europe outside of France where Lacan has largely been relegated to modern language departments. Moreover, politicians and political theorists in Latin America sprinkle their talk with concepts like 'Republican universalism' and rail against Anglo-Saxon contamination of labour laws in a way that would make any Frenchman proud.

The French affinity of Latin American political language dates to the French Revolution, which along with its American counterpart is largely responsible for independence movements throughout the region. Latin America was one of the first sites of European colonialism, but it was also one of the first regions to gain independence. The period of Latin American revolutions against the European powers, therefore, coincides with and relates to the revolutionary upheaval of nineteenth-century France. Napoleonic reforms to the civil and criminal code deeply influenced newly formed Latin American nations and continue to shape the legal and political landscape of those countries.

The adoption of French law by Latin American nations was not solely a matter of military conquest (though that undeniably helped). This was also a conquest of ideas as the principles of the French Revolution spread and were

reflected in legal practice. The example of Mexico highlights the relationship between these two kinds of French intervention in the region.

Taking advantage of Spain's occupation by Napoleon's troops, Mexico declared its independence from Spain on 16 September 1810. In 1814, seven years after Napoleon's army left, Spain recognised Mexican independence.<sup>1</sup> The period following independence was one of great upheaval in Mexican life. Mexico lost nearly half of its territory to the United States in 1848 at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War. There was persistent and violent civil conflict between Liberals and Conservatives, and by the 1860s the country was heavily in debt. In 1861 the Mexican president, Benito Juárez, suspended interest payments on foreign debts, a move which enraged Mexico's primary creditors: France, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In response, the three creditor nations signed the Convention of London in which they agreed to occupy Port Veracruz in order to force repayment. While all three nations initially agreed not to pursue territorial claims in Mexico, Napoleon III had different ideas and ultimately installed Maximilian, Archduke of Austria as the puppet emperor of Mexico. Maximilian's actual reign was quite brief: by 1867 he had been captured and executed by Liberal forces. However, the consequences of the French intervention in Mexico were significant.

Although his reign was supported largely by Mexico's conservative landowners, who feared the repercussions of the French Revolution, Maximilian himself had been deeply influenced by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment ideas that had created it. He brought with him notions of liberalism that were quite different from those promulgated in the United States, which had hitherto been the primary source of not only resources but also ideology for Mexico's Liberals.<sup>2</sup> One of the results of the new French influence on Mexican liberalism was the adoption of a penal code in 1871 which was heavily derived from the Napoleonic Penal Code. The importance of France's influence on Latin American political thought is difficult to overestimate. Not only has French political and legal philosophy found its

1. It is important to note for our purposes here that Spanish recognition of Mexican independence came one year before Spain adopted a new penal code that was largely inspired by the French penal reforms.

2. For an introductory comparison of the American Revolution and the French Revolution, see John Dunn, *Modern Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

way into practical application throughout Latin America, but France has also provided an intellectual framework for democratic government which is not obviously tied to the United States, a country that has arguably frequently undermined the execution of democratic principles in the region.

All this is to say, that for many in contemporary Latin America to imagine Europe is to imagine France. Not necessarily as France is, but as what it could symbolise—something that is not American and where artists instead of cowboys are famous, where culture and fashion rule the day and everyone is very, very sophisticated.

#### WE ARE THE PRIMITIVES: FRENCH PRIMITIVISM IN LATIN AMERICA

3. John Beverley, "The Impossibility of Politics: Subalternity, Modernity, and Hegemony," in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 55-57. Also see Alberto Moreiras, "A Storm Blowing from Paradise: Negative Globality and Critical Regionalism," 94-96; and Josefina Saldana-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?: Re-writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanism from Lacandón," 402-423, both in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*; and Thomas Davis Schoonover, *The French in Central America: Culture and Commerce 1820-1930* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2000).

4. Angel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1984), 120.

The translation of this affinity from politics to literature and art provides an even more remarkable picture of a mutual staring contest. It is, perhaps, in Latin America where the hybrid nature of (post)colonial culture has been most pronounced.<sup>3</sup> It is in Latin America that the real or imagined pre-colonial past is most distant, creating limitless peril in artistic assertions of identity. The famed twentieth century Uruguayan writer Angel Rama said of Latin American literature:

The literatures of Latin America, those born under the violent imposition of a ruthless colonial regime, blind and deaf to the humanist voices who recognised the rich otherness of America; Latin American literatures, progeny of the rich, varied, elite, popular, energetic, savoury Hispanic civilisation, then at its zenith; Latin American literatures, offspring of the splendid languages and sumptuous literatures of Spain and Portugal; Latin American literatures have never resigned themselves to their origins, nor ever reconciled themselves with their Iberian past.<sup>4</sup>

The indigenous, pre-'Columbian' past however has proven just as difficult

to reconcile with as the Iberian one. As both a political and aesthetic matter, 'traditional' indigenous culture has proven important within the Latin American context. The pre-Columbian 'Indian' has been an important symbol of an independent Latin America that exists separate from European and American colonialism. Yet even this seemingly independent source of identity is deeply linked to European conceptions of the 'Other' and of Latin American conceptions of Europe.

The effects of primitivism as an ideological and aesthetic ideal have proven very important in the creation of Latin American art and literature. As an historical, political, and aesthetic phenomenon, primitivism is a set of concepts, as opposed to any one unified model.<sup>5</sup> In 1935, Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas argued in *History of Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* that there are two principle types of primitivism. The first is a 'chronological' or historical primitivism which posits that history is the story of decline from the Golden Age that existed at humanity's origin. The second is 'cultural' primitivism, a cultural attitude in which urban, 'civilised' people express a dissatisfaction with the ultimate outcomes of civilisation and imagine that the lives of those living in more natural and rustic surroundings, such as a rural peasantry or foreign tribal groups, experience greater happiness or plenitude.<sup>6</sup> Lovejoy and Boas establish here a system for understanding primitivism that nicely reflects the situation in Latin America.

It is important to note that both these ideological systems predate colonialism and were fundamental in the establishment of colonial ideology. European perceptions of native people were indelibly influenced by utopian and pastoral imagery from Classical antiquity; arguably, these images were as influential in shaping colonialism as the Christian concept of evangelism and the evangelical efforts of Counter-Reformation Catholicism.<sup>7</sup> Unlike their French and English counterparts further north, the native people that the *conquistadores* first encountered in the New World were not, by and large, the hunter-gatherers that conventional primitivism would desire. The Aztec,

5. Eric Camayd-Freixas, "Narrative Primitivism: Theory and Practice in Latin America," in *Primitivism and Identity in Latin America*, ed. Eric Camayd-Freixas and Jose Eduardo Gonzalez (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 100-125.

6. Ibid.

7. David A. Lupton, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006), 140-53; 265-93. Also see José Rabasa, "Utopian Ethnology in Las Casas' Apologetica," in *1492-1992: Re/Discovering Colonial Writing*, ed. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: The Prisma Institute, 1989), 263-291.

Mayan, and Incan empires were vast, urban, and highly developed. This glaring fact certainly complicated the creation of a colonial ideology for the first Spanish conquerors.<sup>8</sup> However, after much debate the notion of the indigenous peoples of the New World, as well as those indigenous populations of subsequently colonised lands, as primitive savages in need of Europe's civilising influence emerged as the principal model of discourse. Later colonial powers such as Britain and France did not experience the same level of anxiety around these issues as the first Spanish colonisers. Debate, if any, on the subject did not centre on whether or not subject populations were 'primitive' but whether or not the attainment of civilisation was a wholly good thing.<sup>9</sup> We need look no further than Shakespeare's Caliban to see this question in effect. There is no arguing that prior to his contact with Europeans Caliban was in all ways 'savage' and yet Caliban is quick to note that "You taught me language, and my profit on't/ Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/For learning me your language!"<sup>10</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, this had become the focus of the colonial debate. As independence movements swept through Latin America, greater and greater emphasis was given to the native past. This was particularly appealing to the middle classes who not only made up the base of revolutionary support, but where overwhelmingly mestizos, that is of mixed European and indigenous ancestry. This class had been denied political and social power on account of its indigenous heritage. Reclaiming that heritage was not only politically expedient, but personally empowering. The empowering aspects of this reclamation were not lost on the leaders of the Chicano Movement in the United States. The construction of Chicano ethnic identity was heavily focused on the indigenous aspects of mestizo identity and was even marked by sporadic attempts to reintroduce the Nahuatl language of the Aztec.

Yet this reclamation of a non-European history was - ironically - largely influenced by aesthetic trends coming out of Paris. The icon in most Western

8. Lupher, *Romans in a New World*, 9-58.

9. Camayd-Freixas, "Narrative Primitivism", 100-125. Maxwell A. Cameron and Brian W. Tomlin, *The Making of NAFTA: How the Deal Was Done* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

10. The *Tempest* I.ii.366-68.

minds of artistic primitivism is Paul Gauguin fleeing the refined environs of Paris to the natural backwater of Tahiti. This story, among other things, is a very colonial narrative, even as it seems to celebrate the colonised society as a better way of life than that of the coloniser. Gauguin is celebrated for some kind of triumphant return to a more natural way of life. In the words of Eric Camayd-Freixas in his brilliant essay “Narrative Primitivism: Theory and Practice in Latin America”:

This idea that the modern psyche somehow harbours the primitive or encompasses it, as it were, as part of its patrimony, suggests an absorption of the Other into the same, an act of cultural cannibalism, ultimately another way of proclaiming the ‘universality’ of modern Western man.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these obviously colonialist and imperialist overtones, aesthetic primitivism proved enchanting to Latin American artists and intellectuals seeking a means of creating a cultural identity outside of the colonial context.

## MAGICAL REALISM

It is from this desire to reclaim the primitive, or rather to reclaim the indigenous cultural heritage, that magical realism in Latin America was born. Magical realism gains its strength from its ability to accommodate local epistemological systems and conversely challenge the epistemological boundaries which have governed Western thought – arguably from the Renaissance onwards, but certainly since the Enlightenment.<sup>12</sup> There are several ways in which magical realism challenges these boundaries. Perhaps most notably, magical realism embraces a mystical conception of time. Camayd-Freixas, once again, expresses it best when he writes the following:<sup>13</sup>

Time for primitive man does not flow in a straight line but follows natural, liturgical, or ritual cycles, such that men who live today meaningfully repeat the archetypal, transcendental actions of

11. Camayd-Freixas, “Narrative Primitivism”. Cameron and Tomlin, *The Making of NAFTA*, 110.

12. Robert A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologization* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). Also see Paulos Gregorias, *A Light Too Bright: The Enlightenment Today* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

13. Camayd-Freixas, “Narrative Primitivism”. Cameron and Tomlin, *The Making of NAFTA*, 116-117.

their mythical ancestors, and associate their reality with a primeval age.<sup>14</sup>

This circular conception of time is radically different than the modern linear chronology and has many cultural consequences. The Messianic natures of all the Abrahamic faiths impose upon time a linear trajectory which will flow predictably from Creation to the Final Judgment. This is certainly not a feature of many non-Abrahamic faiths which look to circular chronology. The chasm between these two views can be seen in all the cult hype in Western societies surrounding the conclusion of the Mayan calendar in 2012. While it is fashionable in Western media to associate the end of the Mayan calendar with 'the end of the World', the understanding of this date as the end of a cycle which will lead into other cycles is much more in keeping with Mayan understandings. Magical realism is true to the ideals of primitivism expressed by Gauguin and others when it rejects the Western notion of linear time in favour of a cyclic chronology.

Magical realism also defies modern Western notions by adopting a perspective that embraces the unity of the natural and the supernatural and accepts a mythic causality to events.<sup>15</sup> In the past three hundred years, Western science (and consequently Western society) has made a radical break from the past moving beyond the traditional Western dualism of body and spirit to an epistemological position which completely denies the existence of a spiritual dimension. This is a radical break from the whole of human history which has, at the very least, posited the existence of a spiritual realm. In fact, the importance of the spiritual dimension often outweighed that of the material and was seen as influencing the events within the material world. Spirits, curses, and oracles have been a consistent feature in human societies from their earliest days. Though Western modern culture has attempted to divorce itself from this kind of superstition, it is important to remember that it was not long ago that the relics of saints were sold as cures on the streets of Europe and that the last trial for witchcraft in the United States took place in

14. Ibid.

15. Camayd-Freixas, "Narrative Primitivism". Cameron and Tomlin, *The Making of NAFTA*, 118-121.

1878. Magical realism not only reclaims this older epistemology, it reaffirms and legitimises it by re-normalizing it. The characters of a Garcia Marquez novel give no more thought to the appearances of spirits than they do to the passing winds. The cultural authority which this asserts works to powerfully subvert the dominant, Western discourse of empiricism.

By writing in a literary style that is paradoxical to contemporary Western framing, Latin American literature in general and magical realism in particular could have completely alienated themselves from the dominant literary culture. But the fact is that primitivism, magical realism and other ways in which Latin American literature celebrates the indigenous past do not exist in complete opposition to Western paradigms and aesthetics. They are, as discussed above, part of and in conversation with Western aesthetic understandings, particularly as those understandings relate to the construction of the Other. French primitivism provided for Latin American writers and artists an acceptable Western, European image of themselves. In accepting this image, they also accepted the image of Europe painted within these paradigms. That is they, in many ways, accept the model of the primitive versus the civilised even if that model is dressed up in the longing for a lost innocence.

## CONCLUSION

The sceptre of France looms large over the Latin American conception not only of Europe, but also of its own identity. France has provided Latin America with the ideology of its revolutions and the means by which it could embrace its indigenous past and communicate that past to the larger world. The relationship between Europe and Latin America is now centuries old and it is fair to say that both entities exist not only in relationship to one another, but also largely because of one another even if it is impossible to completely tell what each is.

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# EUROPE IN TURKISH MIGRATION CINEMA FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT

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**ABSTRACT** – *Since the 1960s Turkey has produced a large number of films on the subject of emigration, which reflect and explore different images of Europe. These images of Europe go back to political and cultural reforms in the wake of World War I and were further influenced by Western mass media. Starting from the premise that Turkish migration films present a counter-example for Turkey in terms of modernity and prosperity, this article argues that the image of Europe as a place of wealth and modernity is principally at odds with the sense of displacement and alienation experienced by Turkish emigrants during the large-scale labour migration to Germany from 1961 onwards. However, this image of Europe in Turkish cinema has changed recently, reflecting the changes in social awareness brought about by Turkey's attempts to join the European Union. The article will conclude with a discussion of two of these recent films: *Avrupalı* (2007), which represents Europe as a projection screen for the stabilisation of Turkey's national self-image, and *Made in Europe* (2007), which evokes Europe as a place in which emigrants have differentiated experiences of globalisation.*

## GURBET – SORROWS OF DISPLACEMENT

1. *Passengers to Exile* [Turkish: *Gurbet Yolcuları*], directed by Sırrı Gültekin (San Film, 1962).

Sırrı Gültekin's film *Gurbet Yolcuları* (*Passengers to Exile*; 1962) opens with images of a Turkish village occupied by the French during World War I: its mosque has been closed and the villagers are forced to abide by the occupiers' laws.<sup>1</sup> We see three villagers talking about the impossibility of practising

their own cultural values in a place where they are forbidden to pray on a day as holy as the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed. This sense of inability alludes to a specific experience, namely to suffer from *gurbet*. There is no exact translation for this Turkish word in English, but it describes the experience of estrangement in a place far from one's home. The word is commonly used to refer to painful migrant experiences and it is no surprise that several Turkish films dealing with migration use this term in their title.<sup>2</sup> The notion of *gurbetçilik*, to live far from home, also involves what the three villagers in *Gurbet Yolcuları* are experiencing: strangeness, inconvenience and a yearning for oneself.<sup>3</sup> Their situation differs from typical *gurbetçilik* since they actually are in their own village, yet the foreign occupation has estranged the three men from their own home. They have become foreigners in their own village and can no longer perform their identity as they would normally do at home.

The films discussed in this article address the more typical notion of *gurbet*, the experience of forced displacement from home, and explore the theme of the socio-cultural consequences of migration to modern European nation states, Germany in particular. In addition they share a notable tension between the image of Europe and the representation of Germany: while this European country is associated with the actual experience of *gurbet*, Europe itself remains a positive ideal of modernity and prosperity. This tension points at a crucial gap between how Turkish migrants experience and represent their German displacement and how their relatives at home in Turkey imagine their emigration to Europe. This article will chart and map this complex gap between the 'European' ideals of the Turkish homeland and 'German' experiences of the diaspora, and relate it to the socio-cultural dimensions of Turkish migration film.

## THE CORPUS

The corpus analysed in this study consists of more than fifty films of different genres and periods that all explore the theme of emigration from Turkey to

2. See, among other films, *Birds of Exile* [Turkish: *Gurbet Kuşları*], directed by Halit Refiğ (Artist Film, 1964); *The Foreigners* [Turkish: *Gurbetçiler*], directed by Osman F. Seden (Haydar Film, 1974); *When A Brave Goes Abroad* [Turkish: *Bir Yiğit Gurbete Gitse*], directed by Kemal Kan (Arsel Film, 1977); *Song of Exile* [Turkish: *Gurbet Türküsü*], directed by Hulki Saner (Saner Film, 1965).

3. The Turkish noun *gurbetçilik* can be translated with 'being in the state of living in a place other than one's home'.

Germany and were produced by Turkish filmmakers between 1960 and the present. Much has already been written about films dealing with the emigration experience outside Turkey, such as the films by German-based director Fatih Akin, but this article will focus on Turkish films in which emigration is explored from the point of view of the homeland. My aim is not to exhaustively map and chart all the images of Europe painted in Turkish films, but rather to explore how images of Europe and the subject of migration feature and function in Turkish cinema. The article's main argument is that the image of Europe in Turkish migration films is multifaceted and generally positive, but at odds with the socio-historical dimensions of Turkish migration to Germany. The article will conclude with a brief discussion of two more recent Turkish films, both made in 2007, that reflect a new and more complex attitude towards Europe.

### IMAGES OF EUROPE – WEALTH AND MODERNITY IN THE WEST

Most of the films discussed in this article focus on the emigration of a single person. Young Turkish men, mostly fathers, emigrate to Western countries in order to improve their financial circumstances and plan to return to Turkey at some stage to enjoy a better life with their relatives. In some cases, the protagonists hope to build enough financial stability in Germany that will allow them to free themselves and their families in Turkey from the landowner (*ağa*), or be able to pay the large sum of 'head money' their future bride's father might demand to compensate for the loss of his daughter.

The Turkish classic *Davaro* (1981) focuses on such a fiancée, and it is to this film that we will now turn our attention.<sup>4</sup> The inhabitants of an Anatolian village welcome back Memo, who left the village for Germany three years before to earn and save the compensation sum for his future bride Cano. However, the villagers also hope to gain from his return: the repair of the school, the completion of the mosque and their own debts to the *ağa* are all to be paid with Memo's German Marks. At the village gate, the villagers watch out

4. *Davaro*, directed by Kartal Tibet (Başaran Film, 1981).

for the Mercedes that Memo posed with on a picture he sent to his future wife. When they spot a Mercedes, they start playing the drums and horns, but the Mercedes drives past the crowd. Telling each other that the car did not look that nice anyway, the villagers solemnly wait for the next vehicle. But the next car rushes through as well. Suddenly they hear the singing voice of a young man: Memo has arrived. No Mercedes, but a simple wooden coach brings the hatted *alamancı* to the village, and the crowd gives him a very grudging welcome.<sup>5</sup> Memo does not understand the astonished anger of the villagers and explains the situation: the Mercedes in the photo belonged to a friend. Three years of black labour barely yielded enough to save the head money, let alone buy a Mercedes. Their hopes dashed, the villagers leave in anger. Memo's mother stays behind and comforts her son, who does not understand why the villagers expected him to return a wealthy man. The image of Europe implied in the villagers' expectations is one of financial wealth and salvation. The emigrant is not just a returning son - he is a saviour.

It is important to note that the villagers' image of Europe and their expectations are largely based on their communication with the migrants abroad. The emigrants communicate through 'micro-narratives' (such as Memo's photograph with the Mercedes) that evoke an image of a modern and wealthy Europe that does not correspond with the migrants' real experiences in their host countries.<sup>6</sup> Alienation, lack of recognition, feelings of displacement, and yearning for home, loneliness - all experiences of *gurbet* - are what migrants are confronted with. Instead of prosperity, they bring back home negative experiences of displacement. Memo's return in *Davaro* is uncommon, in the sense that it does not reflect the reality of actual homecomings and in deviating from this reality, the film hints at the dynamics of image-building that actually occurs. Unlike Memo, most emigrants abroad do indeed present themselves in line with how they think the people back home want to see them, the result of which is a vicious circle. Those who return try to accommodate the expectations of the home front, based on their own earlier representations, by presenting themselves as financially

5. *Alamancı* is a colloquial word in Turkish used for people who emigrated to Germany.

6. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 10.

well-off. This, in turn, creates new expectations in the villagers which future emigrants will want to fulfil. In this way, the differences between the way emigrants present themselves to their home communities and what they really experience in their host countries keep growing and their self-representation is a performance that is increasingly incongruent with their precarious social situation abroad.

The representation of Europe through material attributes is a recurring feature of Turkish migrant cinema. In *Baldız (Sister in Law, 1975)* too, the returning migrant's car, as well as 'European' attributes, is charged with symbolical meaning. The migrant protagonist returns wearing a hat and a big golden ring and drives a green BMW: all symbols of the alleged prosperity and success of the emigrant during his displacement from the homeland. The protagonist of *Baldız* has even decorated his car with miniature flags of European countries to denote and emphasise his Europeanness. The story of *Sarı Mercedes (Mercedes Mon Amour, 1987)* is based entirely on the ambition of the migrant Bayram to return to his village in his yellow Mercedes.<sup>7</sup> He expects a celebratory crowd that will validate his success: he perceives himself as a man of high status who on his return will finally receive recognition for his hard labour abroad. At the end of the film, he will understand that he himself has changed, as well as his world. Rather than being welcomed and validated by a celebrating crowd, he finds an empty village where the only activity is that of a group of Western archaeologists' excavation.

Sometimes a migrant's return affects his perception of home in a negative way. In *Dönüş (The Return, 1972)*, for instance, Ibrahim returns home from Germany and is reunited with his wife Gülcan and his son, whom he had left behind in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> As in the films discussed earlier, the migrant's return darkens due to unfulfilled expectations. Yet unlike the homecomers in *Davaro* and *Baldız* (who do not receive the warm welcome they expected as they fail to fulfil the financial hopes of their friends and relatives) Ibrahim is confronted with a strange desire to return to Germany. His inner conflict ap-

7. *Mercedes Mon Amour* [Turkish title: *Sarı Mercedes*], directed by Tunç Okan (Odak Film, 1987).

8. *Return* [Turkish: *Dönüş*], directed by Türkan Şora (Akün Film, 1972).

pears best from a scene in which he takes a shower with the help of his wife Gülcan. In this scene, the village's meagre washing facilities are contrasted with images of Germany's modern showers. Ibrahim finds himself alienated from life in his home village. He yearns for German comfort and luxury and decides to return to Germany again in vain pursuit of a better life. The image this evokes of Europe is not an imaginary one: the German shower was part of Ibrahim's German experience and denotes the actual modernity and wealth that he lacks in his village.

So far, my analysis has shown how the films discussed construct an image of Europe as a place of modernity and wealth. They often do so through references to individual material objects and symbols (such as Mercedes, BMW and hats). The image of Europe they sustain appears as a collectively shared construction that remains unchallenged. In order to understand the fixity of Europe's image in Turkish filmic imagination, it is important to realise that the notion of Europe as a place of wealth and modernity is inextricably bound in with the history of the Turkish Republic and is both socially and historically motivated. It inspired, for instance, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal 'Atatürk' to bring about and shape his political and cultural reform of Turkey. In fact, European modernisation formed part of the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. As Kemal's successful modernisation of Turkey according to European standards is part of Turkish national myth, the Turks can hold a generally positive image of Europe without flouting their patriotism. The name of Europe went on to evoke Western success and progress mainly as the result of the emergence of mass media in Turkey.<sup>9</sup> As Western mass media entered everyday Turkish life, mainly via television, Western films and series, they conjured up images of the West, which catalysed a complex cultural development in which the Turkish imagination was fed an image of Europe that would have a profound impact on the relationship between Turkey and the West.<sup>10</sup> Together the inextricable connection of Turkish identity and images of Europe and the diffusion of Europe as an icon of modernity and wealth via Western mass media in Turkey

9. Although I will not go into this subject in this article, it is possible to analyse these images of Europe as a specific form of exoticism and there are several films that explore or reflect this notion. For a discussion of the image of Germany as a form of exoticism, please see: Kayaoğlu Ersel, "Das Deutschlandbild im türkischen Film", in *Türkisch-deutscher Kulturkontakt und Kulturtransfer. Kontroversen und Lernprozesse*, ed. Şeyda Özil et al. (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2011), 95-106.

10. Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey. A New Critical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

help to explain the unchallenged image of Europe as conveyed in the films discussed here.

#### ALMANYA – A PLACE OF GURBET IN A PROSPEROUS EUROPE

*Almanya* (i.e. Germany), understood as a specific liveable place and nation, is crucial to gain an understanding of the images of Europe in the films discussed in this article. As a result of the increase in Turkish migration to Germany following the 1961 Recruitment Accord between Germany and Turkey, Germany became a projection screen for the material dreams of the Turkish migrants as well as an opportunity to realise a European lifestyle.<sup>11</sup> The political process of nationalisation after World War I and the embracing of national myths accelerated the country's desire for modernity and wealth. In addition, the increase in mass media consumption and, in particular, the popularity of European and especially American TV and film stimulated such desires further.

11. Deniz Göktürk et. al., eds., *Transit Deutschland. Debatten zu Nation und Migration* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2011), 770.

12. *Almanya Acı Vatan*, directed by Şerif Gören (Fatoş Film, 1979) and *Almanya Acı Gurbet*, directed by Yavuz Figenli (Kalkavan Film, 1988).

13. See *Gurbet*, directed by Yücel Uçanoğlu (Sine Ay Film, 1984); *Gurbetçi Şaban*, directed by Kartal Tibet (Uğur Film, 1985); *The Immortal Tree* (= *Ölmez Ağacı*), directed by Yusuf Kurçenli (Maya Film, 1984); *Polizei*, directed by Şerif Gören (Penta Films, 1988); *Foreign Doors* (= *El Kapsi*), directed by Orhan Elmas (Umut Film, 1974).

As *gurbet* prevailed as the dominant experience of Turkish migrants, Turkish emigrant cinema generally abandoned the idea of Germany as a salutary and advantageous European country. While the image of Europe as a symbol of wealth and progress persisted, German emigration was now mainly associated with the experience of *gurbet*. This, for instance, is reflected in the films *Almanya Acı Vatan* (1979) and *Almanya Acı Gurbet* (1988).<sup>12</sup> These films stand in a cinematic tradition that present emigration to Germany as a *gurbet* experience and focus on the issues experienced by Turkish migrants in Germany, which include psychological and social problems caused by experiences of foreignness, unemployment, violations of social rights and the pain caused by being separated from relatives.<sup>13</sup>

*Almanya Acı Vatan* (*Germany, Bitter Home*) presents two emigrants trying to cope with their life in Germany: Mahmut, a man in his mid-thirties, and Güldane who accepts Mahmut's offer to marry him in exchange for a large

sum of money so that he is able to stay in Germany legally. They travel to Germany together, but Güldane leaves Mahmut on his own in the foreign country. As they are mutually dependent (Güldane needs protection when she finds herself harassed by a stalker while Mahmut needs his wife to prove that he is not an illegal worker) they decide not to end their marriage of convenience, but to actually create a pleasant life together. The more permissive German lifestyle entices Mahmut to enter liaisons with German women so that Güldane is left alone. While Mahmut is exploring his newly won German freedom, she is confronted with the harsh situation of the typewriter factory where she works. She finally refuses to work and rebels against the inhumane treatment of factory workers by the German supervisors who are trying to increase production efficiency.

Unlike *Almanya Acı Vatan*, the melodrama *Almanya Acı Gurbet* (*Germany, Bitter Land*) does not directly address the everyday circumstances of life in Germany. The film depicts displacement from home, or *gurbet*, as the cause for all migrant problems. Ceylan, a young Turkish girl, and her blind uncle Murat are staying illegally in Germany at the home of Ceylan's older sister Nilgün. Ceylan and her uncle are united through tragedy: Ceylan's parents died in the car accident in which Murat lost his sight. They are also united through music. Ceylan is a fabulous singer and Murat a good *bağlama*-player and together they are offered a job in a Turkish café.<sup>14</sup> They accept, in order to save the money needed for the medical treatment of Murat's eyes. When their success starts to threaten the café's other singers, Ceylan and her uncle are put under pressure by the competing singers' father. In the end, Ceylan is deliberately hit by a car and so badly injured that her doctors have little hope that she will survive. Thanks to Ceylan's sister Nilgün, Murat undergoes the surgery and recovers his eyesight. He decides to take revenge for Ceylan and shoots the singers' father. He does however get injured himself and in a state of mental disorientation, he takes Ceylan out of the hospital. Murat tries to bring Ceylan to Turkey, but Ceylan dies in his arms. Murat curses Germany, curses *gurbet* and then dies of his injuries. In these films, Germany is associ-

14. The *Bağlama* is a classical string instrument common in Turkish folk music. It belongs to the group of *saz* instruments.



ated with *gurbet* either because of the social situation of Turkish migrants there (*Almanya Acı Vatan*) or as a result of their belief that displacement from home is fate-inflicted (*Almanya Acı Gurbet*).

#### GERMANY AND EUROPE: TWO IMAGES

Most of the films discussed in this article (such as *Baldız* or *Dönüş*) identify Europe with wealth, progress and modernity. Europe is not identified geographically with a specific continent: the films' characters imagine it as a diffuse concept and ideal that may be gauged from the characters' attitudes towards Europe, how they talk about it and from the objects they associate with it (e.g. the flags in *Baldız*, Memo's hat in *Davaro*, the Mercedes in *Sarı Mercedes*). The notion of Germany as a country that engenders experiences of *gurbet* does not cloud the image of Europe in these films. Rather, mental images of Europe reinforce one another and together form a coherent product that, after the 1961 Recruitment Accord, could be obtained through emigration to Germany. To say that Germany means Europe is wrong, but if we understand how Turkish people deal with the desire for prosperity, then we are able to understand how Europe is defined in their eyes. Europe is not a space the migrants can actually go to and live in, but an image and an ideal that remains untouched by the experience of *gurbet*. While Europe is a largely implicit mental project shaping the process of modernisation in Turkey, Germany emerges as a liveable cultural place which is directly associated with *gurbet* because of the painful experiences of alienation there.

These images of Europe and Germany are not congruent and the relationship between the two is complex. Europe represents an idealised place, mythologised as a counter-space that offers the possibility to live a well-to-do life on an individual level, while on a social level it represents an ideal of modernity and progress. The negative life experiences in Germany cannot ruin Turkey's positive image of Europe. The films make the characters return to an image of Europe that is shaped by politics (the formal inclusion of Turkey

in Europe has been a Turkish ideal since 1923) and the media (the introduction of Western cultural products to Turkish TV in the 1980s). It is part of everyday discourse as well. These images are not visually explicit, but refer to an implicit collective imagination.

If we perceive cinema as a socio-cultural practice, it could be argued that the association of Germany with the experience of *gurbet* has a double function. The concept of *gurbet* indirectly strengthens the own position vis-à-vis the Turkish homeland as it is based on the feeling that nowhere is better than your own home. It also enables emigrants to shape their self-image on the basis of self-pity, stressing the involuntary displacement from home. This in itself relates to more complex socio-psychological and historical processes and ultimately leads back to questions of Turkish identity. These issues recur in filmic discourse about migration from the villages to cities and are also present in works about Turkish cinema and identity.<sup>15</sup> I feel that the notion of *gurbet* as a concept of identity displacement and of self-pity is rooted even more deeply, yet this is not the place to dwell on this particularly complex issue.

The film *Davaro* explores the intersection of the images of Europe and Germany and impressively presents the incommensurability of both images. In *Davaro* Memo does not meet with understanding for his sufferings in Germany as illegal employee, but rather with the impatient contempt of the villagers who have never really experienced Europe but, via Memo, do expect to receive material benefits from it. The villagers maintain their image of Europe as an abstract ideal, while Memo returns with real-life experiences of *gurbet* from Germany. Their images of Europe and Germany do not interpenetrate to form something new, but they are parallel lines that will never meet.

#### A NEW IMAGE OF EUROPE? COMPLEXITY BETWEEN GLOBALISATION AND NATIONALISM

To conclude I briefly want to discuss two more recent films: *Made in Europe* (2007) and *Avrupalı* (2007).<sup>16</sup> *Made in Europe* tries to represent the personal

15. See Colin Dönmez, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) and Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

16. *Made in Europe*, directed by Inan Temelkuran (Unknown, 2007) and *The European* [Turkish: *Avrupalı*], directed by Ulaş Ak (Muhteşem Film, 2007).

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experiences of migrants who live in different parts of Europe (Madrid, Berlin and Paris) by showing three dialogue-oriented episodes. The film sets out to go beyond the *Almanya*-image of migration and presents specific forms of subjective experiences of male Turkish emigrants in their host countries. In order to achieve this goal, *Made in Europe* tries to work out the specific differences between different forms of migration experiences in Europe as typical forms of experiences of globalisation. This is achieved by means of the classical unity of time and action that interconnects the episodes. The much-criticised comedy *Avrupalı* explores a more specific problem related to recent tendencies in Turkish and European politics. The protagonist of the film is a Turkish man, with traditional Turkish ideas and values, who has to deliver a speech at a European congress and is pressured by the American government to publicly admit Turkish responsibility for the Armenian massacre. The protagonist refuses to deliver such a speech and, instead, gives one in which he emphasises the importance of Turkey for the future of Europe and the world in general and in doing so rejects the European demands for Turkey's entry to the EU. The two films hint at a socio-cultural development, a new cultural image of Europe within the Turkish collective imagination: Europe imagined as a place in which emigrants have differentiated experiences of globalisation (*Made in Europe*) and Europe imagined as a national counter-place from where Turkey, after a history of emigration and idealisation, will finally emancipate.

# IMAGINING EUROPE THROUGH A PAIR OF JAPANESE GLASSES

## RETHINKING EURASIAN BORDERS IN THE WORKS OF TAWADA YŌKO

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*ABSTRACT - This paper focuses on how Europe is imagined in the works of contemporary writer Tawada Yōko. It argues that Tawada engages in a discourse that invites readers to reflect upon the relativism of geographic and linguistic borders dividing Europe and Asia. Specifically, I aim to show how Tawada develops a series of narrative strategies to rethink seemingly obvious categories of identity and belonging to European spaces. First, I will focus on the clash between landscape and mindscape, suggesting that Tawada’s writings – along the lines of contemporary discourse on the ‘spatial turn’ – aim to decolonise taken-for-granted assumptions about Europe. Secondly, I will look at how stereotyping in Tawada’s work functions as signifying practice for essentialising definitions of Europeanness and Japaneseness. At the same time, I will consider how Tawada, by insisting on the fictionality of her visions of Europe, rejects any claim for ‘authentic representation’. Then, I will briefly touch upon Tawada’s en-gendering of Europe in relation to the question of ethnic and linguistic subalternity, leading to the conclusion that the act of imagining Europe through literature has a significant performative function in changing our ways of thinking geographic, racial and cultural differences.*

This paper analyses the way Europe is imagined and portrayed in the literary works of transnational writer Tawada Yōko. Born in Tokyo in 1960, Ta-

wada moved to Hamburg in the 1980s, after an inspirational train ride on the Trans-Siberian railway. Since 1989, she has developed a parallel career in Europe and Japan, writing both in German and in Japanese. Her work has recently gained critical attention and appraisal throughout Europe, Japan and the US because of her borderless imagery and polyglot qualities. This paper argues that Tawada's representation of Europe problematises traditional ways of conceiving space by shedding light on how the perception of geographic landscapes relies heavily on socially and politically constructed mindscapes. In other words, Tawada's narratives suggest that imagination is at the core of geography just as it is essential to literature. The literary representation of geography, even when it is 'objectively' represented as the projection of a real place, is never the purely mimetic image of that space, not only because complete objectivity is an epistemological impossibility, but because the notion of space itself is not self-contained and self-referential; instead, it is built on a dialectical relationship between its real-world referent and human perceptual and cognitive structures.

In doing so, Tawada's work reveals an engagement with postmodernist paradigms of mobility and deterritorialisation that question the meaning of geographic borders in this era of profound political and cultural shifts. At the same time, Tawada's insistence on borderlands and frontiers foregrounds issues which prominently feature in postcolonial thinking and in gender discourse, such as the relation between center and margin as well as the problem of female agency in transnational contexts. While these topics have been extensively addressed in contemporary literature and Tawada's

JACQUES DERRIDA

SOMETHING UNIQUE IS AFOOT IN EUROPE, IN WHAT IS STILL CALLED EUROPE EVEN IF WE NO LONGER KNOW VERY WELL WHAT OR WHO GOES BY THIS NAME. INDEED, TO WHAT CONCEPT, TO WHAT REAL INDIVIDUAL, TO WHAT SINGULAR ENTITY SHOULD THIS NAME BE ASSIGNED TODAY? WHO WILL DRAW UP ITS BORDERS?

engagement with such issues might therefore not seem ground-breaking, this paper suggests that Tawada's Japanese work is worth exploring from the perspective of cultural geography, postcolonial theory, and deconstructionist thinking to shed light on how her works give shape to a literary vision that challenges both European and Asian readers to develop a culturally aware and self-critical reading of the meaning of Europe and Asia in the current era of transnational flows of people, objects and ideas.

In this respect, Tawada's way of imagining Europe is less concerned with recreating an 'imaginary homeland' – to borrow Salman Rushdie's memorable phrase – than it is with pointing out how notions of geographical inclusion or exclusion have functioned to foster discourses of national belonging to an 'imagined community'. Nevertheless, Tawada's figurations of Europe, as we shall see, do not suggest a simplistic dichotomy between East and West, but suggest the complicity of Asia in perpetrating Orientalism, implying that both Europeans and Asians have built up an image of Europe that fails to acknowledge the significant contribution of non-Europeans in the making of Europe itself. Imagining Europe through the lens of literature thus becomes for Tawada a means to call for a much-needed change in the way we define and mark the boundaries of 'European' and 'Asian' identity in the wake of globalisation. To what extent do non-Europeans living in Europe partake in defining the notion of Europe itself? Can transnational subjects actually produce new meanings to the notions of Europe and Asia?

#### GEOGRAPHIES OF THE MIND: EUROPE AS LANDSCAPE, EUROPE AS MINDSCAPE

Tawada's first work in German was a collection of stories significantly titled *Wo Europa Anfängt* (1991).<sup>1</sup> The centrepiece of the collection is a fictional travelogue about a Japanese woman travelling on the Trans-Siberian Railway to visit Moscow, a city which has long stood in her imagination as the threshold to Europe. In the text, Moscow functions first of all as a dream place and as objective correlative of Europe cherished in the mind of the young nar-

1. Yōko Tawada, *Wo Europa Anfängt* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag, 1991)

rator for decades.<sup>2</sup> This ends when “a poster advertising a trip to Europe on the Trans-Siberian Railway transformed the immeasurably long distance to Europe into a finite sum of money.”<sup>3</sup> The meaning of the woman’s journey, however, is increasingly put at stake the closer she gets to Moscow. Day by day, she discovers that what she had taken for granted – namely that Moscow is in Europe – is a matter of dispute among her interlocutors:

Europe begins not in Moscow but somewhere before. I looked out the window and saw a sign as tall as a man with two arrows painted on it, beneath which the words “Europe” and “Asia” were written. The sign stood in the middle of a field like a solitary customs agent. “We’re in Europe already!” I shouted to Masha, who was drinking tea in our compartment. “Yes, everything’s Europe behind the Ural Mountains,” she replied, unmoved, as though this had no importance, and went on drinking her tea. I went over to a Frenchman, the only foreigner in the car besides me, and told him that Europe didn’t just begin in Moscow. He gave a short laugh and said that Moscow was not Europe.<sup>4</sup>

2. In an interview Tawada claims: “To me as a child, Moscow was also a dream city because of the many Russian fairy tales and stories that I read. Besides, I was not just dreaming about Moscow. During the 1980s I traveled to Moscow at least five times. The city became real, but the notion of an imaginary city continued to interest me independent of the actual city of Moscow.” Quoted in Bettina Brandt, “The Post-Communist Eye: An Interview with Yoko Tawada,” *World Literature Today. A Literary Quarterly of the University of Oklahoma* 80 (2006): 41.

3. Yōko Tawada, *Where Europe Begins*, trans. Susan Bernofsky and Yumi Selden (New York : New Directions, 2002), 125.

4. Ibid. p. 141.

5. David B. Knight, “Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72 (1982): 517.

The passage quoted here is particularly relevant to the understanding of Tawada’s idea of Europe, as it highlights a key concept the author aims to problematise: the gap between landscape as an actual locality, and mind-scape as the subjective meanings our minds project on landscape itself. In other words, Tawada shows here how territories can be appropriated as living entities, contributing to the creation of ‘geographies of the mind’ which, as Knight contends, “can and do find expression in the way space is structured.”<sup>5</sup> The delusional reaction of the protagonist in Tawada’s story stems precisely from the sudden realisation that her fellow travellers do not agree with the image of Europe she envisioned. The apparently neat and unequivocal borderlines dividing Europe and Asia thus become empty signs – two mere arrows – with no clear referent: geographic space, albeit real and experienced, here reveals its arbitrary nature and destabilises the way the main

character perceives herself in relation to place.

Borders, frontiers and liminal zones play a pivotal role in the story, because of their epiphanic power to reveal how individual and collective senses of belonging to a place are culturally constructed. In this respect, Tawada's interest in interstitial zones can be read in the context of postmodern discourses on the 'spatial turn', which work at the intersection of human geography (in the tradition of Foucault, Lefebvre and, more recently, David Harvey and Edward Soja) and the humanities (with particular reference to the process of deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation configured in the works of Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Bhabha, Anzaldúa, to name a few) in order to explore the dynamic relationship between space and its narrative articulation. Tawada's questioning of the stability of borders and her doubts about the frontiers of Europe echo Derrida's preoccupation about who will draw up its borders, and suggest – along the lines of postcolonial thinking – that the spaces once thought to be autonomous and self-evident according to a Eurocentric vision of the world, are in fact constantly shifting. Borders in Tawada's works are overtly porous, as they are permeable to both the influence of geo-political changes and socio-cultural constructs.

6. Tawada, *Where Europe Begins*, p. 139.

Yet the simple acknowledgment of the social production of space is not sufficient to redefine frontiers and reconstruct a new 'border narrative'. If geographic coordinates have so far encapsulated space – firmly establishing a 'here' and 'there'— how can we express them through language now that such distinctions have become unreliable? In Tawada's story the main character is caught in precisely this semiotic trap when a child asks her where she is from. The woman promptly answers "Tokyo", but the boy has no idea of where it is, so his grandfather explains that Tokyo is in the East. At this point, the woman realises that, in order to define her own identity, she also needs to refer to the same geographic coordinates: "Hadn't I also asked questions like that when I was a child? — Where is Peking?—In the West—And what is in the East, on the other side of the sea? —America."<sup>6</sup> This conversations,



and others on the train, play a key role in the text: in fact, contrary to what we would expect from a travel narrative, the novel abounds in recollections of dialogues, whereas descriptions of places seen during the journey are of little importance to the protagonist, conveying the feeling that the narrator is fonder of the *idea* of reaching Europe than of visiting it. As Kari van Dijk notes, the problematic notion of ‘arrival’ lies at the core of *Wo Europa an-fängt*, complicating the possibility of agreeing on a common European voice, culture or territory.<sup>7</sup> The act of arriving implies reaching a destination as well as a definition, both geographically and conceptually, of what Europe truly is and where it originates. As the narrative unravels, however, it becomes clear that every passenger anchors his view of Europe in distinctly local contexts. The journey thus turns into a process of deconstructing the protagonist’s image of Europe, which is ultimately confirmed when, at the end of the story, the protagonist arrives in Moscow only to be denied an entry visa. Once the idea of Europe, as she had imagined it, collapses, the only thing the woman can see is a building with the letters MOSKVA in flames – a row of empty signs with no reference. The letters eventually vanish and the woman finds herself standing, cold and confused, in the middle of Europe.

7. Kari van Dijk, “Arriving in Eurasia: Yoko Tawada Re-Writing Europe,” in *Re-thinking Europe: Literature and (Trans)National Identity*, ed. Nele Bemong et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 172.

8. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, ed. Akhil Gupta et al. (New York: Duke University Press, 1997), 10-11.

9. Yōko Tawada, “Perusona,” in *Inu mukoiri*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), 8-76.

## THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF STEREOTYPES: ORIENTALISM AND SELF-ORIENTALISM

Tawada’s questioning of European borders and her way of imagining Europe as an unreachable space testify how, despite the fact that actual places and localities nowadays have become ever more “blurred and indeterminate” as a result of frequent mobility and increased communication through technology, “ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient.”<sup>8</sup> The fragmentation in the perception of Europe is a theme that also features in Tawada’s Japanese novel *Perusona* (1998), which revolves around the emotional turmoils of Michiko, a Japanese girl living in Germany.<sup>9</sup> The cause behind Michiko’s identity crisis can be traced to the trauma she experiences upon hearing that her friend Seonryon, a Korean

male nurse who works at the local hospital, has been accused of sexual harassment. At first, the German staff of the mental hospital where Seonryon works refuse to give credit to such a slanderous claim against a man who is known to be serious and hardworking, but eventually the nurse's reputation is put at stake when a therapist interprets the lack of expression on his face as proof of a skilfully hidden cruelty. The accident causes Michiko to ponder the racist attitude displayed by the Germans, and to question her own status and identity as an Asian expat in Europe. When articulating her feelings, however, neither her German nor her Japanese friends seem to understand Michiko's concerns, so the girl starts wandering around Hamburg in order to find her 'identity'. When the girl reaches Floating Europe, an immigrant district situated along the river Elbe, she expects to feel at ease, imagining that all the inhabitants of the area share a sense of alienation regarding their immigrant condition. Through this image Tawada creates an alternative space to conceive Europe, elaborating on the meaning of being a European from Eastern Europe as opposed to the Europeans in Western Europe. The idea of a floating Europe refers, on the one hand, to the fact that the houses in this area are small houseboat-like buildings that float on the water of the river. On the other hand, it metaphorically refers to the peripheral position occupied by its inhabitants, who all come from countries such as Rumania, Albania, Poland and are somewhat marginalised because of their origins. Even though they receive support from the government to study German and integrate in the new country, their being gathered in a district partially built upon water – i.e. on a border zone – suggests how their 'Europeanness' is not on a par with that of individuals coming from Western Europe. At the same time, Tawada does not portray Eastern Europeans as mere victims of a system which exploits them and then subtly tries to acculturate them. Instead, she focuses on how the immigrants are complicit in reinforcing their outsidership by fostering the same logic of national identification and cultural stereotypes which cause their isolation. In Floating Europe Michiko is looked down on by the inhabitants of the area because of her Asian ethnicity – she is first mistaken for a Vietnamese, then for a Korean and for a Filipino

– as if intrinsically inferior because of the colour of her skin.

In similar fashion, the Japanese expatriates who appear in the story display strong nationalistic feelings and are not at all interested in establishing relations outside their small expat community. Michiko's brother Kazuo, for example, rejects any comparison between his own status in Germany and that of other Asians. When Michiko feels offended by the comments of the Germans about the supposedly inexpressive face of Asians, Kazuo responds unsympathetically, as if he is not involved: "Kazuo didn't mind that his sister used the word 'East Asian'. Clearly there was no such a word in Japanese."<sup>10</sup> Here, Tawada does not attempt to propose an easy East-West dichotomy, in which Germany stands for the lofty European country that looks down on its exotic other, while Asia plays the role of the victim. Although the Europeans in the story are clearly reticent to trust immigrant communities – and with their behaviour they prove that the foreigner is, after all, a perennial guest – the Japanese in the story are also not interested in erasing cultural stereotypes. As Stuart Hall points out, stereotyping is a signifying practice essential to the maintenance of the social and symbolic order: "it sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them."<sup>11</sup> Stereotyping in this novel plays the same role for both Europeans and Asians as a means of avoiding disruption and confirming the social order according to a binary logic of same/other.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Japanese immigrants in the novel is complicated by the dynamics of what Koichi Iwabuchi defines as 'self-orientalism'.

10. Ibid. p. 22. My translation.

11. Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 258.

While Japan's construction of its national identity through an unambiguous comparison of itself with "the West" is a historically embedded project, Japan's modern national identity has, I would argue, always been imagined in an asymmetrical totalizing triad

between “Asia,” “the West” and “Japan.” [...] Japan is unequivocally located in a geography called “Asia,” but it no less unambiguously exists outside a cultural imagery of “Asia” in Japanese mental maps. [...] This duality points to the fact that “Asia” has overtly or covertly played a constitutive part in Japan’s construction of national identity. While “the West” played the role of the modern Other to be emulated, “Asia” was cast as the image of Japan’s past, a negative portrait which illustrates the extent to which Japan has been successfully modernized according to the Western standard.<sup>12</sup>

Tawada herself discusses the issue of such reverse nationalism in her essay “Eigentlich darf man es niemandem sagen, aber *Europa* gibt es nicht” (Don’t tell anybody but Europe does not exist) where she provocatively argues that, just as the East has been for a long time a trope of the West, the idea of Europe is a fictional one.<sup>13</sup> She argues that in Japan many people believe that European culture is not the property of the Europeans, as it is easy for others to imitate. In order to see ‘Europe’ she therefore has to put on an imaginary pair of “Japanese glasses”.<sup>14</sup> However, the writer contends there is no such thing as an authentic Japanese viewpoint either, because, after all, the ideas of Europe and Japan are both the outcome of a perennial process of mutual fabrication:

My Japanese glasses are not a tool that you can easily buy in a store. I cannot put them on or take them off according to my mood. These glasses emerged from the pain in my eyes and grew into my flesh, just as my flesh grew into the glasses.<sup>15</sup>

Tawada here brings forth the issue of authenticity, elaborating on the intrinsic fictionality of cultural identities. Traditionally, Tawada suggests, Europe has envisioned itself through self-images and, in a rather ethnocentric fashion, it has conceptualised ‘the others’ on the basis of their implied difference

12. Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 7-8.

13. Yōko Tawada, “Eigentlich darf man es niemandem sagen, aber *Europa* gibt es nicht,” in *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 1996), 45-51.

14. Ibid. p. 49.

15. Ibid. p. 49.

and diversion from the normative Western modes of thinking. These ‘others’, however, while somewhat complicit in maintaining such essentialising procedures of Orientalist conceptions of non-Western societies, have also appropriated the same categories of belonging superimposed on them and in turn they have created their own representational narrative. As Claudia Breger suggests, “the Japanese eye is, in Homi Bhabha’s words [...] ‘evil’: its mimicry produces a ‘partial vision of the colonizer’s presence, a gaze of otherness’ that displaces identity and thus disrupts his authority.”<sup>16</sup> By shedding light on the dynamics behind the formation of paradigms of cultural belongings, Tawada wittingly undermines the authority of any narrative presented as an ‘authentic’ account or deep insight into cultural differences. She denies the existence of reliable viewpoints and, with a certain irony, she dismantles the authority of both the represented self and the observer, showing the impossibility of achieving an objective representation of otherness.

Nevertheless, the reference to the fact that, whenever talking about Europe, the author has to put on an “imaginary pair of Japanese glasses” which has grown into the flesh, also implies that essentialist cultural positions are so embedded in our perceptions of identity that it is impossible to eschew them. Tawada is aware that, imperfect as it is, this binary way of envisioning belonging is deeply embedded in our experience and thus it is hardly possible to move away from it. Furthermore, this imaginary pair of Japanese glasses described by Tawada is deeply embedded in language, which makes it difficult for non-Europeans to articulate their ideas of culture in a different way. In the closing line of the essay, Tawada confesses that at first she could not express herself in Europe because she had little grasp of European languages. Nevertheless, even now that she is able to articulate her thoughts in German, she cannot brush away the feeling that she is speaking in the way Europe wants her to speak, through its imagery and set of values. “I repeat Europe in Europe”, she laments, suggesting between the lines that, unless a new language of hermeneutics is developed within non-European cultures and then acknowledged by Europe itself as equally valid, there will

16. Claudia Breger, “Narratives of Nomadism or Copying German Culture,” in *Writing against Boundaries: Nationality, Ethnicity and Gender in the German-speaking Context*, ed. Barbara Kosta et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 56-57.

be no opportunity to develop a new ‘vocabulary’. This vocabulary would go beyond the binary categories of identification that are generally assumed unproblematic and “hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition.”<sup>17</sup>

## EN-GENDERING EUROPE

The strategy Tawada develops to illustrate and criticise the conceptualisation of Asia as other to Europe, involves an act of en-gendering to contest the positioning of Europe as autonomous and self-reflexive ‘centre’ of cultural production. Tawada engages in a critique of European culture by imagining Europe as a two-folded mythological figuration. On the one hand, she sees Europe as an ambiguous female figure whom Europeans are perpetually in search of. Since they keep talking about the loss of Europe and the urge of finding her but never actually engage in such a quest, Tawada suggests that the Europeans have idealized the image of Europe precisely because it is helplessly lost: “The female figure of Europe must have been lost in a mythical time.”<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Europe as a male character is imagined as a very aggressive figure: the European body, Tawada contends, wants to be the focus of people’s gaze every time (“the male figure of Europe asks, above all, for the constant gaze of the public”).<sup>19</sup> Europe is very critical towards itself and towards other cultures, but such forms of (self-)criticism are not necessarily a form of narcissism. Indeed, Tawada points out, they are essential to Europe because they put it in the spotlight and prevent it from vanishing.<sup>20</sup> It can be argued that Tawada’s way of imagining Europe operates on the basis of an epistemological reversal: instead of defining the other as what Europe is not, Tawada challenges Europe to define itself not in oppositional terms. The result, the writer suspects, will prove the inconsistency of a claim for a coherent ‘European identity’: any assumption of cultural superiority might be no more than a lack of self-confidence hidden behind the façade of rigorous criticism. According to Tawada’s imagination thus, Europe is obsessed with criticising the other or even itself because

17. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

18. Tawada, *Talisman*, p. 48. My translation.

19. Ibid. p. 47. My translation.

20. Ibid. p. 48. My translation.

this is the only strategy to maintain the established hierarchies of cultural and political power. Without the established dialectics of same/other, here/there, centre/margin, it is Europe, rather than others, that would lose its referents. After all, the writer notes, something that is not being looked at can disappear at any time.

In this respect, it is significant that Tawada imagines Europe as an aggressive figure as well as a subaltern lost one. Tawada seems to suggest that for the Europeans, identity cannot be conceived outside binary juxtapositions. Europe can only be defined against a subaltern image, be it that of the exotic other or the woman who needs to be rescued. The double figuration of Europe as a gendered entity thus hints at an ontological weakness of Europe, a soft spot that can be potentially breached. To formulate the question according to the well-known formulation of Gayatri Spivak, Tawada's envisioning of Europe suggests that the subaltern can speak upon the condition that it finds a way to escape the trap of ethnically predetermined language. While the realisation of this latter aspect is not yet actualised in Tawada's essay, her way of problematising the meaning of Europe by turning it into the object of the Asian gaze lays the foundations for a reassessment in the perceptions of Europe that takes into account the globalised, intertextual dimension of cultural production in the contemporary age.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a key feature in Tawada's narratives is the portrayal of characters who wander around a labyrinthine Eurasian landscape in which signposts and maps fail to provide a place for locating identity. Through their travelling, Tawada calls for an understanding of Eurasian frontiers as interstitial zones permeable to changes, suggesting how borderland territories are often the space where the most relevant cultural and political activities take place. This attitude, which develops along the lines of postmodernist and postcolonial discourses on space, invites the reader to re-examine the eth-

nocentric ideologies that still persist in this supposedly multicultural world.

Tawada imagines Europe as a counter-empire of empty signs where, behind the physical surface of the ‘real space’ – i.e. the geographic space that Tawada’s characters cross – the protagonists never find a correspondence between the actual landscape of Europe and the notion of Europe constructed in their mindscapes. Speaking from the position of a voluntary Asian expatriate in Europe – with a solid cultural background in both Japanese and Western philosophical and literary thought – Tawada contests Europe’s legitimacy to claim for any ‘authenticity’ of its cultural narrative, while refusing to essentialise ‘unique’ characteristics of Japanese and German culture from a ‘foreign’ perspective. Far from being ethnographic, Tawada’s approach confirms time and again the fictional nature of her prose. Ultimately, imagination becomes the only possible mode of representation because, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, fantasy is what allows our mind to make sense of the world: imagination provides a framework through which we see reality.<sup>21</sup> Unconstrained by the demands of documentary veracity, Tawada’s way of imagining Europe suggests how fiction can detect new meanings hidden in the folds of the real. Literary imagination thus not only manifests its ability to represent the world, but it is able to participate actively in its making.

21. Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997).

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

The editors of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* invite all speakers at the 2013 edition of the LUCAS Graduate Conference, 'Death: the Cultural Meaning of the End of Life', to submit their papers for publication in issues 2 (to be published on 1 February 2014) and 3 (1 February 2015).

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Cover illustration: *The Rape of Europa* (Valentin Serov; 1910).



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