

Ritual and the Idea of Europe in Interwar Writing

Patrick R. Query

RITUAL AND THE IDEA OF
EUROPE IN INTERWAR WRITING

For My Parents

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Acknowledgments

The painter Stanley Spencer, a contemporary of the poet David Jones, was the source of what Jones considered the most “apt expression of the artist’s business” he ever heard. The expression was simply: “All must be safely gathered in” (EA 243). I think a similar ideal characterizes the less exalted business of writing a big book of literary criticism. What more apt way to express, too, the goal of acknowledging the host of people who over a period of years have played a part in the book’s creation? Here I will gather in many, but not all, and suggest in a small way how much they have meant to me.

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List of Abbreviations

Works of T.S. Eliot

- 4Q *Four Quartets*
- ASG *After Strange Gods*
- CC *Christianity and Culture*
- CPP *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*
- FR *The Family Reunion*
- OPP *On Poetry and Poets*
- SE *Selected Essays*
- SP *Selected Prose*
- SPO *Selected Poems*
- SW *The Sacred Wood*
- TCC *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings*

Works of W.B. Yeats

- AV *A Vision*
- CP *Collected Plays*
- CPO *Collected Poems*
- E *Explorations*
- EI *Essays and Introductions*

Works of W.H. Auden

- P *Plays, and Other Dramatic Writings, 1928–1938* (ed. Mendelson)

Works of D.H. Lawrence:

- MM *Mornings in Mexico*
- PS *The Plumed Serpent*

Works of Graham Greene:

- LR *The Lawless Roads*
- PG *The Power and the Glory*

Works of Evelyn Waugh

EAR *Essays, Articles, and Reviews* (ed. Gallagher)

RUL *Robbery Under Law*

Works of David Jones

DG *The Dying Gaul and Other Writings*

DGC *Dai Greatcoat*

EA *Epoch and Artist*

IP *In Parenthesis*

Introduction

Making, Watching, and Using Ritual

The second epigraph to Rebecca West's 1941 book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is a passage from Shakespeare's *Henry V* in which Fluellen says: "I tell you captain, if you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike."¹ A few pages into the book's Prologue, in which West surveys the history of the Balkans, she describes "a news film which had shown with extraordinary detail the actual death of the King of Yugoslavia" (14). One of the final scenes, in particular, resonates for West:

Now there is no jolly priest confident that he has the sacred mysteries well in hand ... All these men look as the King looked at his coming, as if there lay behind the surface of things a reality which at any moment might manifest itself as a eucharist to be partaken of not by individuals, but by nations ... They are intensely surprised that the eucharist was of this nature, but the King of Yugoslavia had always thought it might be so. (17)

Finally, she reflects a bit later on the difference between Croat doctors and English ones:

[T]here was in their minds no vista of shiny hospital corridors, leading to Harley Street and the peerage, with blameless tailoring and courtesy to patients and the handling of committees as subsidiary obligations, such as appears before most English doctors. There was no sense that medical genius must frustrate its own essential quality, which is a fierce concentration on the truth about physical problems, by cultivating self-restraint and a conventional blankness which are incompatible with any ardent pursuit. These people had an air of pure positiveness which amounted to contentiousness. They might have been bull-fighters. They were bull-fighters, of course. The bull was tuberculosis. (76)

The first thing that unites this otherwise heterogeneous and apparently idiosyncratic group of references—to drama, Catholicism, and bullfighting—is that all three represent the invocation of a cultural form not part of the immediate situation in an attempt to render that situation intelligible, an allusion to something tangible and (more or less) familiar to make sense of the intangible and unfamiliar. This is a common enough operation, to be sure, the fashioning of metaphors as footholds in alien territory. It has affinities, moreover, with the "mythical method" that, according to T.S. Eliot, James Joyce's *Ulysses* established for all subsequent narrative writing

¹ The first epigraph in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is a passage from Jean Cocteau's play *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*.

(SP 178). But West is also performing a more specialized operation. Just as the tenor of the metaphors above is always the likeness of Balkan culture to other parts of Europe, she has also chosen for her metaphors a common vehicle, the apparent heterogeneity of which diminishes with the realization that verse drama, the Eucharist, and the bullfight are all instances, at their core, of ritual practice.

The appearance of idiosyncrasy in West's choices diminishes, too, in light of the surprising frequency with which these three forms appear, often in combination, in the writing of West's contemporaries. The idea of invoking ritual—and particularly these three forms—as a means of framing explorations into unfamiliar cultural territory occurred to a number of other British and Irish writers of the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, it occurred to a number of those, besides West, whose writing has helped to form our understanding of the age. In West's case, the unfamiliar territory she was attempting to access was Yugoslavia, with a particular eye toward the implications of the Balkan story for Great Britain and the rest of Europe. Although the first term in that formula, Yugoslavia, was different for most of West's contemporaries, the concern for Europe was broadly consistent, taking precedence over even the psychological, the sexual, the religious, or the aesthetic. Shared, too, was the habit of attaching questions of European identity to ritual forms.

It must be noted that West's three references above do not amount to a sustained or even deliberate mediation on ritual. The allusion to Shakespeare is a quotation only; it does not dwell upon *Henry V* as verse drama, less still as ritual. Her invocation of the matador does not necessarily imply more than a superficial sense of the ritual of the bullfight, and the lower-case "eucharist" evinces the readiness with which that form, too, is employed as metaphor while being evacuated of much of its orthodox ritual signification. West gets the first word in this study because her use of ritual in the space of the first few pages of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*—one of the great twentieth-century works on the idea of Europe—exemplifies the sometimes glancing but nonetheless productive familiarity with ritual characteristic of any number of West's British and Irish contemporaries which, when sustained, narrowed, and deepened by a group of them, became the framework for a nuanced and moving exploration of what Eliot called "the mind of Europe." Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and others whose writing pursued an engagement with ritual as a clue to the mind of Europe, nonetheless betray some of the imprecision, limitations, and dangers of that engagement. The cultural depth and texture that ritual affords as material for writing, but also the fitful success with which that material is managed and deployed, are two hallmarks of a literary phenomenon spanning the interwar years, a phenomenon in which West is implicated and Eliot is at the center.

One is struck in each of West's allusions above by the level of specificity of her references, by her choice of such concrete and local particulars to try to clarify the reader's view of a vast and nebulous object. Part of the impetus behind the present study is the recognition that, for an important group of British and Irish writers between the world wars, no representations of European identity would be

meaningful so long as they remained safely superficial, that abstractions would never serve to pinpoint or nurture the idea of Europe so effectively as the particulars of Europe's local cultures. What Timothy Reiss calls the "hope of cultural community" (24) that has always existed in the back of the mind of Europe was, for these writers, brought closer to reality not by the erasure or denial of cultural difference but by the identification of what is shared in the culturally particular. It is an audacious thing to invoke Shakespeare and bullfighters as cultural signifiers in, of all places, Croatia. Considering how many of her contemporaries made similar moves, though, with reference to other European places, and the insights they gained as a result, such audacity begins to look more like real utility.

The three ritual forms West invokes and upon which this study is based—verse drama, the bullfight, and the Mass—have deep, though not unambiguous, roots in European history and possess a complex appeal for writers from across the English Channel. Although Europe possesses, of course, a great many other notable and revealing rituals, these three forms are of particular interest for at least three reasons. First, they conform to the anthropological definition I have chosen, and which I will elucidate fully below, of ritual as a communal, repeated but non-habitual action attached to a sacred space and to long tradition. Second, as publicly produced actions necessarily involving the participation of a number of persons, in which the individual and the group must interact, they partake of much of the same logic as politics proper. They represent a kind of political testing ground, situated in what Eliot called "the pre-political area" (TCC 144), that cultural sphere on which politics must draw but that also functions at a certain remove from the stiff polarities and demands for immediate results native to the political sphere. Third, verse drama, bullfighting, and Catholicism drew more attention than other ritual forms from some of the most important British and Irish writers of the interwar era, including all of those named above in addition to Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley. The writing these and other authors produced between the world wars constitutes a special body of work linking some of the rituals of Europe to a wide range of political meaning. Where they have been left out, other rituals or pseudo-rituals that might have provided excellent material for this study have most often failed to meet one or more of these three principles of selection. The pilgrimage, the pageant play, and the political rally, in particular, fall only slightly outside my chosen scope, as do some rituals of Judaism and Islam. Likewise, other authors who would have made interesting additions to the current list of subjects have usually had to be excluded because their engagement with one or more of the rituals falls chronologically outside the scope of the interwar years.²

² That is, the historical period and the rituals of verse drama, bullfight, and Mass came first in the development of this book's topic, and individual authors either adhered to or fell away from that focus. Although several women writers are treated in Chapter 5, their absence from the list of primary subjects above was an unexpected consequence—one in need of further investigation itself—of the paired historical and formal emphases.

Ritual keeps, clarifies, illuminates, and disseminates the key characteristics of a society. But, in the hands of modern writers, it also scrutinizes, repositions, and at times subverts those characteristics. One of my working hypotheses has been that the inherent dialecticism of ritual creates a framework in which some of the most pressing oppositions of the European idea interact and overlap in ways that challenge the usual sense of the rigid political dichotomy of the interwar period. Although ritual in general, and each of these three forms in particular, has been popularly associated with at least a political conservatism and even the extreme Right wing, the literature in question suggests an idea of Europe that is surprisingly inclusive politically. That interwar Europe was fiercely divided politically between communism and fascism, leaving little room in between for liberalism and little interest in democracy, has become a commonplace. In 1928, Eliot, neither a communist nor a fascist himself, wrote: "it is manifest that any disparagement of 'democracy' is nowadays well received by nearly every class of men, and any alternative to 'democracy' is watched with great interest" ("Literature" 287). Just as both sides of the divide, Eliot's "reactionaries and communists" (287), tended toward the ritual performance of their political ideals, writers of radically different political stripes were attracted to the old rituals of Europe for their modern political potential.

The Idea of Europe

In a 1990 lecture, part of a Turin conference on European cultural identity, Jacques Derrida wrote: "I am European, I am no doubt a European intellectual, and I like to recall this, I like to recall this to myself, and why should I deny it? In the name of what?" (*Other Heading* 82). He did not answer his own question, but he did acknowledge one potential deterrent to the continued investigation of European identity: the savor of conservatism that seems to accompany the project.³ "[T]he very old subject of European identity has the venerable air of an old, exhausted theme. But perhaps," he continued, beginning to suggest not only a way but also a reason to ask the European question anew,

this 'subject' retains a virgin body. Would not its name mask something that does not yet have a face? We ask ourselves in hope, in fear and trembling, what this face is going to resemble. Will it still resemble? Will it resemble the face of some

³ Although conservative commentaries are outnumbered in contemporary critical (especially literary) debates by the kinds of deconstructive approaches taken up in this Introduction, the seemingly intuitive association of "Europe" with ideals of order, tradition, and hierarchy remains, likely a function of residual cultural memories or a perceived rhetorical necessity. For an articulation of the conservative position on European cultural identity, see *The Future of the European Past* (ed. Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball), a product of *The New Criterion*. The essays in this collection focus on the diagnosis of a "crisis" in European culture brought on, for instance, by the influence of popular culture, and on the defense of European "tradition" in a fairly narrow sense.

persona whom we believe we know: Europe? And if its non-resemblance bears the traits of the future, will it escape monstrosity? (5)

This study proposes that the accepted answers—both conservative and progressive—to the question “What is Europe?” mask one of the faces of Europe. During the 1920s and 1930s, that face, I hope to show, resembled nothing so much as the reconciliatory action of three of Europe’s own ritual forms.

Before returning to the interwar period, some discussion of the European idea in broader (though necessarily abbreviated) terms may be useful. Although the question of European identity has been asked for as long as, or longer than, the word “Europe” has existed, the proffered answers have not changed a great deal.⁴ Bernard Crick, in his Foreword to the collection *The Idea of Europe in Literature*, surveys several, though not all, of the usual suspects. From the Zeus-abducting-Europa myth he derives the answer, Europe is not Asia.⁵ A second historically popular though relentlessly debated possibility is: Europe is Christendom.⁶ And, if one entertains this possibility, one must also consider whether Europe is actually the Roman Empire. Europe might also be the spiritual offspring of the Enlightenment, “felt,” according to Andreas Michel, “in such philosophical ideas as reason, liberty, and equality, in political ideals such as democracy and human rights, as well as in the enterprises of science and technology” (232).⁷ This view is related to that of Edmund Husserl (and many others) that the essence of Europe is traceable to the philosophical spirit of sixth- and seventh-century B.C. Greece,⁸ and to that of Benedetto Croce (whom Denis de Rougemont calls a “good European” (390)) that liberty and humanism are the core ideas of European identity (358). The famous political divide of the years between the world wars

⁴ In his seminal book, *The Idea of Europe*, Denis de Rougemont identifies the first mention of “Europe” as Hesiod’s c. 900 B.C. and “the first mention of Europe as not just a geographical but a human entity” as that found in the sequel to Isidore de Seville’s *Chronicle* c. 754. He devotes some six pages as well to sketching the main lines of etymological hypothesis concerning the term *Europe* itself (3, 25–30).

⁵ De Rougemont names Hippocrates as the “first to describe Europe and to compare it with Asia” (3).

⁶ Today, for instance, the idea of the European Union as a Christian club continues to present an unofficial obstacle to Turkey’s inclusion. See the work of Omer Taspinar. Jacques Derrida critiques Jan Patočka’s interpretation of the philosophical birth and development of Europe, which “traces ... a genius of Christianity that is the history of Europe” (*Gift* 3), but Europe-as-Christianity is also the third “mystery,” after “orgiastic” and “Platonic,” in Derrida’s own theory of European “responsibility” (2–34).

⁷ Michel understands all of these enlightenment associations to be subsumed within “the idea of Europe ... as a marker for the European project of universal emancipation ... The idea of universal emancipation shapes the claims of the enlightenment” (232).

⁸ Husserl famously explicated this view in his “Vienna Lecture” of 1935, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man.” In Husserl 269–300.

was matched, de Rougemont argues, by one focused on a particular aspect of European cultural history:

Two great schools of cultural historians differed violently with each other on this score during the so-called interwar period (1919–1939). One, programmatically optimistic, continued the tradition of the Enlightenment, of Promethean science and technology, and regarded Europe as a creation of the Renaissance. The other, pessimistic more by allegiance than by nature, regarded the great centuries of the Catholic Middle Ages (from the eleventh to the thirteenth) as the only Europe worthy of the name. The Europe of Man and the future vs. the Europe of Christendom and the past? What we have here is rather a polemic between two parties both genuinely concerned with saving the present-day Europe—a Europe threatened from without by the rise of ‘quantitative empires,’ and from within by age-old divisions. But to which of the saints should we appeal? Or to which of the scientists? (380–81)

More starkly still, Michel compels his audience to consider the possibility that the spirit of “universal emancipation,” coupled with a history of slavery, colonialism, and holocaust, indicates that the meaning of Europe amounts to “a geopolitics of exploitation” (233). Each of these possibilities, of course, like each of the potential answers enumerated by Crick, whatever its particular advantages, is riddled with too many blind spots, exclusions, and false assumptions to satisfy on its own.⁹ Crick, though, offers a further response that suggests the special contribution literary scholarship can make to the European question: Europe is ambiguous. It is a “core of meaning,” he writes, “around which clusters of ... associations revolve ... a magnetic field around which particulars revolve” (x). Underscoring the importance of the literary to a full understanding of European politics, he argues “how much more our perceptions of national identity and of political and social justice are shaped by literature than by formal history ... [I]maginative literature,” he continues, “is both the main source of most people’s understandings of ‘Europe’ and a potent factor from way, way back in the construction of the concept” (xii). Thus, not only does the capacity for ambiguity allow literature to comprehend more of an ambiguous Europe than, say, “formal history”; literature may be largely responsible for the European concept itself, including its ambiguity.

The literature under investigation here shows British writers drawing upon that ambiguity and pressing it to new lengths. These writers’ interest in ritual tends to draw their focus not to the traditional centers of liberal European *esprit*—Paris, Vienna, Switzerland, the Low Countries, for instance—but to some of Europe’s

⁹ For just one example, to cite Anthony Pagden: “[N]either the Roman Empire, nor Christendom was, of course, identical with ‘Europe.’ Much of the Roman Empire lay in Asia and in North Africa. Christianity had begun as an Asian religion, and the first Christian churches had been established on the North African littoral” (“Conceptualizing” 45). Neither does de Rougemont ignore the “symmetrically similar errors committed by both schools” in the interwar Catholic-versus-Enlightenment debate. Instead, he defers to Christopher Dawson to complicate and correct the narrower positions.

physical and traditional peripheries, such as Ireland, Wales, and Spain, and in several cases as far afield as Mexico and Japan, all of which become enfolded in a fluid, complex, and portable picture of European cultural identity. At least since Edward Said's *Orientalism*, it has been necessary to account for the non-Western *other* in any and all accounts of European self-imagining. As Robert M. Dainotto demonstrates in *Europe (In Theory)*, Eurocentrism (a thorny term I will explore more fully below) is rendered problematic not only "from the outside but from the marginal inside of Europe itself" (4).¹⁰ "A modern European identity," he writes, "begins when the non-Europe is internalized—when the south, indeed, becomes the sufficient and indispensable *internal* Other: Europe, but also the negative part of it." Dainotto's focus is southern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; that of the present study is somewhat broader geographically, somewhat later historically. It does not attend to all or even most of the "marginal inside" of Europe, leaving Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the extreme North, for instance, all but untouched. However, by foregrounding the Celtic, Hispanic, and other margins of Western Europe, it does attempt to complicate, as do the works of both Said and Dainotto, at least one "lofty" but also "parochial" version of the idea of Europe (Dainotto 4–5).

An idea of Europe constructed at Europe's margins—geographical, cultural, historical—necessarily invites a great deal of ambiguity as to the limits of European coherence. The ritual emphasis, however, has the effect of tethering such ambiguity to concrete reality, to the visible evidence of discrete places, objects, and bodies in action, rather than encouraging a meditation on the idea of Europe that is entirely free-floating, nebulous, hypothetical. As Reiss argues:

Writing does not dwell in a disembodied arena where there is no place for light and shadow, croissants and gouda, political dirt and concrete cultural dissension, gray ghosts of low clouds over polders, the gloom of broken San Sebastian bullfights, and the horror of half-wit soccer battles. It feeds on and lives in what Yourcenar calls 'the frightful smell of humanity,' caught up in 'life itself, with its chaos of formless and violent occurrence.' (16)

As with writing, so with ritual and, as Reiss implies, with the idea of Europe. However, in verse drama, the bullfight, and the Mass, much of that "chaos" and "formlessness" is given shape, and writers interested in these rituals often turn to them as a means of ordering violence without banishing ambiguity.

The tolerance of ambiguity is crucial to the argument of this study, not only because the cultural complexity of Europe seems to demand it but also because ritual meaning itself, as will be discussed below, is inherently ambiguous. Rather than insist on an answer to the question, What is Europe?—which in its implication

¹⁰ Dainotto's focus is on the traditionally assumed backwardness of southern Europe in the eyes of the north: indeed, "PIGS": Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain (2). The debt crises of 2010 and 2012, with their epicenter in Greece but implicating Italy, Spain, and Portugal as well, are a timely reminder of another kind of southern European marginality.

of essentials does imply an unproductive cultural conservatism—I will instead ask, What does an idea of Europe expressed in the literature of ritual contain? What cultural material adheres to it, and what falls away? How well does this idea of Europe experienced in ritual respond to the cultural and political demands of the interwar period? I will treat the concept of European identity rather as Derrida recommends: “Like the fission reaction it propagates in our discourse, the paradox of the paradox should lead us to take the old name of Europe at once very seriously and cautiously, that is, to take it lightly, only in quotation marks, as the best paleonym, in a certain situation, for what we recall (to ourselves) or what we promise (ourselves)” (82).

In his introduction to the *PMLA* special issue, “Literature and the Idea of Europe,” Reiss chooses *memory* and *imagination* as his operative terms, echoing Derrida’s “what we recall” and “what we promise.”¹¹ The articulation of any notion of European identity, Reiss argues, involves acts of selective remembering. What Europe means depends on what parts of the history of Europe one chooses to remember. And any remotely comprehensive idea of Europe must include the parts of European history and culture that argue against any positive identification. European culture, after all, is full of much that is, supposedly, *not* Europe, just as European history is fraught with violence of all kinds perpetrated against (and by) its global neighbors and between its own constituent parts.¹² “Both associations,” Reiss writes, “—with imperialism and with internal violence—show how the very idea of Europe falls ambiguously between the exclusive and the inclusive, how ‘Europe’ has always foundered over its identity and its relations with others” (19). Derrida argues that the fissures and wounds of Europe are inseparable from its cohesion:

Hope, fear, and trembling are commensurate with the signs that are coming to us from everywhere in Europe, where, precisely in the name of identity, be it cultural or not, the worst violences, those that we recognize all too well without yet having thought them through, the crimes of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, religious or nationalist fanaticism, are being unleashed, mixed up, mixed up with each other, but also, and there is nothing fortuitous in this, mixed in with the breath, with the respiration, with the very ‘spirit’ of the promise. (6)

¹¹ Similar pairs abound in modern philosophical formulations of the idea of Europe. Bruno Snell writes that the question “‘What do I want to do?’ is in [the Western] mind always linked with the further question ‘Who am I, and what have I been?’” (qtd. in de Rougemont 370).

¹² “Claimed historical unities,” argues Craig Calhoun, “tend to be constructed on the basis of highly selective readings of history” (52). As an “alternative to selfsameness as a way of approaching large-scale collective identities,” Calhoun follows Ludwig Wittgenstein in suggesting that one should “think of Europe as a field of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes even conflicting identities.” From such a field, European “similarity” does emerge, “not from a lowest common denominator nor from rigidly enforced boundaries but from characteristics that many Europeans hold in common without any being definitive of the whole” (52).

Skeptics take these troubling associations as evidence of the impossibility of formulating any meaningful idea of Europe in a world from which official imperialism has been banished and in which the ties of international commerce supersede those of historical or cultural identification. The history of Europe is, in Reiss's words, "fraught with conflict over national and international identity, individualism and community, sovereignty and collectivity" (19), a fact that might be taken to invalidate any notion of a European "identity." Yet what Luigi Barzini calls "the European Dream" has obstinately survived.¹³

Its most vocal adherents, moreover, have often been non-Europeans. Susan Sontag, an American "of European-Jewish descent," writes, "One might think that the notion of Europe would have been thoroughly discredited, first by imperialism and racism, and then by the imperatives of multi-national capitalism. In fact, it has not" (285–87).¹⁴ On the contrary, such tensions are what make the articulation of such a notion possible in a critical landscape in which all identity is multiple and riven with conflict, in which what contributes to identity and what is excluded from it are interdependent.¹⁵ The ambiguities of Europe—"of struggling sovereignties, of constituting identity, of the relation between European cultures and war and between them and what and whom they exclude" (Reiss 21), and of Europeans themselves as "foreigners in their own land, caught between an identity they are losing and the identity of an other that invites at the same time as it frightens them" (Gambaudo 225)—constitute the new basis for critical inquiry into the idea of Europe.¹⁶ Thus the present study prefers to conceive of "Europe" as a *way* instead

¹³ Barzini's "European Dream" describes the desire, "many centuries old," of seeing Europe politically unified on the basis of its "irrational, emotional" sense of identification (11). Among those who have championed it, Barzini cites Kant, Voltaire, Rousseau, Bentham, Garibaldi, "obdurate conservatives such as Klemens Metternich and revolutionary apostles such as Pierre Proudhon." Étienne Balibar ends his influential essay "World Borders, Political Borders" with the challenge: "Europe impossible: Europe possible" (77).

¹⁴ In her essay "The Idea of Europe," Sontag touches upon some historical and political implications of the European idea, but her appeal is primarily lyric: "If I must describe what Europe means to me as an American, I would start with liberation. Liberation from what passes in America for a culture. The diversity, seriousness, fastidiousness, density of European culture constitute an Archimedean point from which I can, mentally, move the world. I cannot do that from America, from what American culture gives me, as a collection of standards, as a legacy. Hence Europe is essential to me" (286).

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida argues that the spiritual development of Europe, from orgiastic to Platonic to Christian mystery, is itself a study of changing models of "incorporation and repression, what occurs between one conversion and another" (*Gift* 10).

¹⁶ In interpreting Derrida, Andreas Michel offers his own litany of "sinister historical events and conceptions involving Europe," including "slavery, colonialism, the holocaust, classism, sexism, and homophobia" (232). All of these, writes Michel, "occurred, for the most part, concurrently with the project of universal emancipation" and thus "seem to have been compatible with, perhaps even sanctioned by the idea of Europe." Like Derrida, Timothy Reiss, and Sylvie Gambaudo, however, Michel sees such troubling associations not merely as validating the anti-Eurocentric viewpoint but, rather, as suggesting the complexity, even the paradox, with which modernity itself is faced as it comes to terms with its Eurocentric elements.

of an object, and to approach the analysis of a body of literature as an attempt to create what Reiss calls “a field of relations that incorporates [European] identity, while denying such identity any singular accumulation of properties” (27). No monolithic “Europe” will emerge, but rather a pattern of literary representation suggestive of a complex and surprisingly fluid relation between the constituent parts of Europe and, at times, with its geographical and spiritual others.¹⁷

This formulation borrows the language of modern globalization studies, and the present discussion of the idea of Europe relocates some of the critical inquiries globalization has occasioned. The “relatively new culturalist orientation” to globalization theory has in recent years prompted scholars to find new ways of addressing what Paul Jay calls a “growing deterritorialization of culture” (37–38). Jay observes that globalization theory has mobilized and capitalized on the “relatively recent interest in culture as a fluid, mobile, transnational phenomenon that predates and often ignores nation-state boundaries” (37). One scholar pressing for the idea of the mobility of culture is James Clifford, who argues, “We need to conjure with new localizations like ‘the border,’ specific places of ‘hybridity and struggle, policing and transgression’” (109). Places, that is, like modern Europe.¹⁸

If there has been a critical reluctance to allow “Europe” an important place in literary globalization studies, it may be because what Derrida calls “the exhausted programs of *Eurocentrism* and *anti-Eurocentrism*, these exhausting yet unforgettable programs” (12) have continued to exert influence past their former usefulness. The current moment demands a more nuanced, more flexible model, and that model has begun to take shape in the writing of a few important theorists. Carlos Fuentes does much in a very few words to reconfigure the landscape. The “‘other face,’” of Europe, he argues, “is ‘Ibero-America ... whose colours are also Amerindian and African’ and which is as close in spirit as ‘Europe beyond the Danube is [as] a physical fact’” (qtd. in Reiss 19). Fuentes’s boldness is compelling, but to some critics it overlooks the problem of power relations.¹⁹ These critics, says Jay, argue that “globalization theory too easily colonizes discrete local cultures, subordinating them to sweeping formulations that are often Eurocentric” (41–42). What happens, as Dainotto has asked, when the cultures in question are all European, either “in spirit” or in “physical fact”? Globalization theory, with its emphasis on the dynamic interaction of local and global cultures, puts pressure on

¹⁷ Craig Calhoun similarly concludes, “Europe is constructed out of both categorical similarities and relational ties, but no one set of these reaches all Europeans without joining a range of non-Europeans as well” (52).

¹⁸ The language of globalization made its way into European studies long ago, even if the reverse is only slowly taking place. As Étienne Balibar argued in a 1999 lecture in Greece: “We must privilege the issue of the border when discussing the questions of the European people and of the state in Europe because it crystallizes the stakes of politico-economic power and the symbolic stakes at work in the collective imagination: relations of force and material interest on one side, representation of identity on the other” (“Borders” 73).

¹⁹ See, for example, Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity” 75 n.15.

the idea of Europe, challenges it, forces its continuous reevaluation (and Europe returns the favor), but it does not erase it. The term “Europe” names a unique phenomenon that globalization theory must account for if it is to fully realize its potential: a model of cultural identification that transcends economics and politics, extending beyond the nation-state but not to the entire globe, one that bespeaks internationalism even as it resists sweeping internationalization. Anthony Pagden writes: “Europeans are, I suspect, unusual in sharing in this way a sense that it might be possible to belong to something larger than the family, the tribe, the community, or the nation yet smaller and more culturally specific than ‘humanity’” (“Conceptualizing” 53). Europe is a unique and essential third term in the local-global dyad, one that any reasonably thorough discussion of globalization cannot afford to ignore.²⁰

Work on the relationship among individual, national, and transnational identity in modern Europe has been steadily increasing in the past two decades, and the coming together of this discourse and that of globalization studies seems inevitable. “Despite its ostensibly self-evident quality,” writes Lars-Erik Cederman, “Europe belongs to the most elusive and contested entities in today’s international system” (1). As Étienne Balibar has declared: “[W]e are dealing with “triple points” or mobile “overlapping zones” of contradictory civilizations rather than with juxtapositions of monolithic entities. In all its points, Europe is multiple” (“Borders” 74). Recent symposia have considered the idea of Europe in terms of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of the nomadic self spread across multiple national territories. And there has been growing discussion (pushed to a new level of interest in Dainotto’s work) of the ways the traditional peripheries of Europe—especially Ireland and, more recently still, Turkey and even Iceland—figure in the European whole.

One of the most wide-ranging book-length studies of the European idea published in the last decade is the collection edited by Pagden, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (2002). Pagden’s own chapter “Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent” very neatly illustrates key terms that have long governed debates on the meaning of Europe: language, religion, the rule of law, the city, the idea of exceptionality, and others. His is a historical-political survey, not a literary study, but its concern with identity does recommend it as a contextual aid to my own investigations. The same can be said of *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention with and among Nations* (ed. Mikael af Malmberg and Bo Stråth), a fascinating collection in which each essay considers the influence of the

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas sees a special significance for the European idea “in a complex global society,” namely, the lesson that “it is not just the divisions that count, but also the soft power of negotiating agendas, relations, and economic advantages ... The EU already offers itself as a form of ‘governance beyond the nation-state,’ which could set a precedent in the postnational constellation” (“February 15” 293–94). In another place, he cites Mario Telò and Paul Magnette, who write: “The Union may be seen as a laboratory in which Europeans are striving to implement the values of justice and solidarity in the context of an increasing global economy” (qtd. in Habermas, “Why” 12).

European idea on the process of self-identification of a different nation.²¹ Another important and even more recent collection, *Myths of Europe* (2007), edited by Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini, is especially relevant to the present study because it focuses substantially on literature and because its essays collectively cast a wide geographical net, from India to Ireland. The books' readings of literature are unlike my own in that they both cover the whole of Western history and are explicitly concerned with answering questions of twenty-first-century European identity. Its use of myth, while narrowing the discussion somewhat, describes a far wider field of investigation than does my own use of ritual. Still, in the questions it asks regarding the relationship between traditional inheritance and modern-day efforts at identity formation, *Myths of Europe* helpfully prepares some of the ground for my own, more acutely focused exploration.

Seamus Deane, like the contributors to *The Meaning of Europe*, looks at Europe through the lens of one locality—in this case, Ireland. Although some of Deane's ideas helped to inspire the present study, they also represent one of the key viewpoints from which opposition to my own premises may come. Deane's Field Day Theatre Company represents one of the most tangible and pertinent manifestations of the patterns of thought being explored here. Deane and the other Field Day founders have made it their business "to engage in the action of establishing a system that has an enabling, a mobilizing energy, the energy of assertion and difference" (15). Deane has made a career out of defending cultural particularity against the seemingly overwhelming discursive barrage of "diversity." His own work has focused on Ireland, but it is representative of a whole movement having as its aim the "repossession" of colonial and post-colonial writers "for an interpretation ... governed by a reading of the conditions in which their work was produced and in the [culturally specific] conditions in which it was read" (11). He has labored to restore their Irish particularity to, for instance, Yeats and James Joyce, who "had been (mis)read in the light of what was understood to be English or British literature, international modernism, the plight of humankind in the twentieth century ... to repossess their revolutionary and authoritative force for the here and now of the present in Ireland" (11). By extension, Deane has deplored what he sees as the recent rush in Ireland toward integration and internationalism, a movement that he sees, with the wisdom of considerable firsthand experience, as symptomatic of the clandestinely oppressive claims of global diversity. In 1990 his anxiety centered on the eagerness of the Irish Republic to embrace "all of those corporate, 'international' opportunities offered by the European Economic Community and the tax-free visitations of international cartels" (14).²² To resituate

²¹ *Engaging Europe: Rethinking a Changing Continent* (2005), edited by Evlyn Gould and George J. Sheridan, Jr., is concerned primarily with pedagogical questions, but its essays do provide very useful inroads to the idea of contemporary Europe. The book also features a most helpful bibliographic essay.

²² In the intervening two decades, Ireland of course shot to the forefront of both European and global economic cooperation, and then its star predictably fell somewhat. Whether the cultural results of the process for Ireland will be what Deane feared remains

Ireland in a global, or at least European, context in which all the meaningful Irish “lesions and occlusions are forgotten, in which the postmodernist simulacrum of pluralism supplants the search for a legitimating mode of nomination and origin, is surely to pass from one colonizing experience into another,” he argued (19). With this and with all of Deane’s views thus far enumerated the current project is entirely in sympathy. It is, predictably, on the question of Europe that differences begin to emerge.

Deane’s anxiety over the loss of cultural particularity in the face of European integrative measures is characteristic of the conservative position on the idea of Europe (and, for that matter, on the institution of the European Union). It is not my intent, in selecting a wider lens through which to view not only Ireland but also Great Britain, Spain, and other countries in the context of Europe, to elide or minimize difference, nomination, or origin, blending all into a bland (and false) picture of European “unity in diversity.” On the contrary, this study centers on origins, in the form of some ancient rituals that interwar literature invokes, and on the shock of difference that invariably accompanies a writer’s ingress to another country. Every effort to show the political multiplicity of which these forms are capable in the context of interwar Europe, and the ways in which they create connections between nations, will have to address the very real ways in which the same forms isolate and divide nations. Likewise, the emphasis on border-crossings, travel, and cultural exchange is chosen especially for what it *can* reveal about origin, nationality, and difference. As Susanne Fendler and Ruth Wittlinger rightly acknowledge, “the nation-state is still the most important political (f)actor in the context of European integration” (“Contribution” xix). It has long been (and probably still is) the most important “(f)actor” in European literary production as well.²³ Deane, speaking of Irish particularity, insists, “Nature may be a cultural invention, but it is nonetheless powerful for that” (17). At the other extreme is the view of Friedrich Nietzsche, who a century earlier decried “the morbid estrangement which the lunacy of nationality has produced ... between the people of Europe ... Europe wants to become one” (*Beyond Good and Evil* 120). Somewhere between them lies the idea of a European internationalism that

to be seen, but the presence of the usual multinational corporations in Ireland has already begun to suggest a certain amount of at least superficial homogenization. It is estimated today that of Ireland’s population of 4.2 million, some 500,000 are immigrants, the majority from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.

²³ Jürgen Habermas, who advocates a positive political unity for Europe, does so fully aware of the role of nationalism in Europe’s identity. “[W]hat,” he asks, “could hold together a region characterized more than any other by the ongoing rivalries between self-conscious nations? ... Europe is composed of nation-states that delimit one another polemically. National consciousness, formed by national languages, national literatures, and national histories, has long operated as an explosive force” (“February 15” 294). Yet he sees this history, and Europe’s responses to it, as the basis for the idea of Europe in the 21st century: “The acknowledgement of differences—the reciprocal acknowledgement of the Other in his otherness—can also become a feature of common identity” (ibid. 294).

contains nationalism without erasing it, a whole that maintains the integrity of each part. While the powerful political movements of the interwar period espoused a view similar to Nietzsche's, those who asserted it, especially the Nazis, did so in the teeth of an equally powerful inclination *against* pan-Europeanism. The perfect balance between the parts of Europe and an idea of its wholeness has throughout history been impossible to strike on the ground. Yet the provisional modeling of such a balance remains an attractive, and important, project for literary and cultural studies. Reiss concludes: "Neither community, as some kind of party-led mechanism, nor individualism, as some foundational absolute, can stand alone. Their interplay may be sensed first in aesthetic culture" (27). The special utility of European ritual is that, although it does exist in "aesthetic culture," it is also rooted in the public, material culture of Europe, so its modeling of "interplay" brings the observer a step closer to the elusive political reality.

Ritual and Literature

When one moves from anthropological, sociological, and religious analyses into studies of literary texts, there is at once a noticeable slippage in the precision with which ritual functions as a critical category, and an exponential expansion of the territory covered by the term. René Girard's enormously influential work—particularly in *The Scapegoat* (1986) but also *Violence and the Sacred* (1977) and *Things Hidden Since the Beginning of the World* (1987)—identifying the sacrificial scapegoat mechanism as a foundation of Western literary texts is partly responsible, for, very much in the manner of the Freudian Oedipal propositions it was designed to challenge, it established the precedent of totalizing the local object of inquiry—the scapegoat ritual—as a template for virtually all forms of human cultural practice. In the process, Girard shifted the focus from the individual psyche to the human community, and his formulations have proven very attractive indeed to scholars interested in transcending the critical hegemony of Freudian Oedipal codes.

Two recent books, William A. Johnsen's *Violence and Modernism* and Thomas Cousineau's *Ritual Unbound*, provide representative examples of the kind of investigations of modern literature, especially fiction, to which the Girardian hypothesis has led scholars. They are useful here both for their articulation of some of the principles that guide this study and for delineating the ways in which my own method differs from Girardian readings. First, Johnsen usefully points up the distinction between an interest in ritual and an interest in the primitive. Following Girard and Northrop Frye, he refuses the common view of "a 'return' of myth in modern times ... the usual literary journalism which talks of a psychological or cultural neoprimitivism" (ix). Like Girard and Frye, Johnsen is "careful to keep the relation of the primitive to the modern schematic, saying that myth ... [is] the logical (not necessarily chronological) origin of literature" (ix). Cousineau agrees that "the modernist use of ritual elements cannot be interpreted as simply an act of

recovery. Rather, it amounts to a profoundly critical act" (16). The verse drama, the bullfight, and the Mass wear a badge of the past fairly prominently. They all have long histories and, in the context of modern Europe, stand out for that reason. Twentieth-century writers' interest in these particular rituals naturally implies a certain amount of chronological looking-back, at least a superficial sense of the tradition behind the forms. Yet Yeats, Eliot, W.H. Auden, and others held virtually no interest in what Johnsen calls "some atavistic return to origins" (2).

Both Johnsen and Cousineau use the expansive analytical mode, characteristic of contemporary Girardian applications, which is quite different from mine. Based on a correct identification of the modern "secularization of violent myth and ritual" (Johnsen 18), this expansive mode tends to metaphorize ritual, making it possible to see ritual in all manner of human activity, diminishing, I would argue, the revelations that ritual in a stricter sense still holds. The underlying premise of the former view is that the ritual mechanism which once ordered sacrifice has been sublimated (to borrow from Sigmund Freud) as modern human patterns of organization and exclusion, and that the scapegoat ritual, as the basis for every cultural form, is visible in all of them. For Johnsen it includes, for instance, both "private, domestic, or social interactions ... and global relations" (x). For example, among the "forms of ritual exclusion" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Cousineau includes the way that "the members of the company affirm their solidarity through the judgment whereby they designate Kurtz as a pariah, and Marlow constructs a community of civilized white males by excluding black Africans and European women" (20). Similarly, the fact that "Lily, as a woman, should not intrude upon a male preserve" in *To The Lighthouse* is, according to Cousineau, part of Virginia Woolf's "portrayal of a community that resorts to exclusionary, sacrificial practices" (Cousineau 21). Even the social divisions depicted in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* are "ritualized exclusions" (Cousineau 24). Once ritual becomes metaphor, its potential applications, it would seem, are endless. Cousineau does acknowledge that "[t]he sacrificial rituals that we find in these novels are not so much observable communal practices as they are hypothetical constructions that have been projected upon the stories by their narrators" (17). His interest, like Johnsen's, is in unpacking the ritual significance not only in the stories themselves but also in the self-conscious narrative techniques of modernism, including the effects that point of view and authorial framing have on the way readers interpret those "rituals." Thus, "when Nick Carraway refers to Gatsby's death as a 'holocaust,' we recognize in his choice of this term his desire to construct a sacrificial scene that does not apply in an obvious and unarguable way to the actual circumstances of Gatsby's death" (Cousineau 17). Cousineau and Johnsen are both far more interested in the Girardian social themes of violence, victimization, and exclusion than in any quality or feature described by ritual alone. The objects of my attention, however, are precisely those "observable communal practices," cases in which the presence of ritual is "obvious and unarguable," or nearly so. If Cousineau, Johnsen, and others are interested in the ritualization of everyday life, to borrow another phrase from Freud, I am interested in those rituals that persist

deliberately apart from the everyday. The whisky-priest hero of Graham Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory* reflects upon the action of the Mass saying "everything in time became a routine but this" (PG 71), suggesting that, rather as Europe is resistant to the full diffusion and flattening of qualities globalization seems to herald, real ritual is distinguished by its resistance to the unreflective everyday.

When dealing with ritual in literature, one must come to terms with Girard's thesis. However, owing to the wide applicability of that thesis, a great deal more in literature has come to be called ritual than either Girard's original subject or what the present study intends. Certain literary scholars weary of being told that everything is sex have in turn begun to suggest that virtually every social act in literature is ritual—or sacrifice, or exclusion, or some other hastily applied synonym. For instance, in a Modernist Studies Association panel a few years ago, one participant proposed that bombing London during World War II was a ritual. Whether such scholars are right or wrong is not truly the concern of this study. I would suggest, however, that neither Girard's scapegoating thesis nor its many permutations in literary analyses of all kinds do an adequate job of explaining the attraction of modern writers to rituals in the stricter, anthropological sense. Even if ordinary modern social behaviors fulfill and replace the imperatives of the ancient sacrificial ritual (the way that sublimation or neurosis fulfills and replaces Oedipal desires), actual, formal enactments of that ritual still persist. And why, to press further, were they so attractive to British and Irish writers of the interwar period? Verse plays, bullfights, and Masses are not like the living creatures, assumed to exist only in fossil form, that occasionally emerge from the sea or the woods, confounding accepted explanations of present reality; they have never ceased to exist in plain sight, right alongside the processes of cultural substitution that are supposed to have displaced them.

Anthropologists do not always agree on the definition of ritual, but even in their disagreements there is a firmer and more satisfying basis for understanding than is offered by the bulk of current literary scholarship putatively concerned with ritual. I have chosen to rely primarily on the definitions of ritual offered by scholars of anthropology and religion because these more systematically formulate the kinds of deliberate formal structures that characterize the rituals here under investigation. Besides bespeaking an idea of Europe in a less diluted form, the verse drama, the bullfight, and the Mass partake so much more fully of the logic of true ritual than do the sundry social interactions for which ritual is often invoked as a metaphor that they stand apart and require separate attention. They retain something akin to what Walter Benjamin called the "aura" that adheres to original works of art but not to their innumerable mechanical reproductions (221).²⁴ In the

²⁴ "[T]hat which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" (221).