Imagining Europe

Europe and European Civilisation as Seen from its Margins and
by the Rest of the World, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Michael WINTLE (ed.)

What do people think 'Europe' means? What are its values, what are its borders, and what does it stand for? An important topic, without doubt. But the authors of this research collection are not so much interested in what Europe thinks of itself, but rather in what others think of it. They take a number of scenarios from recent history, and examine how Europe has appeared to people in other parts of the globe: America, China, the Arab world, for example. But they go further, and pose the question for some parts of the world which are 'inside' Europe, but which for one reason or another hover on the margins, like the Balkans, and Turkey. Furthermore they include the views about Europe held in parts of the continent which have without any doubt whatsoever belonged to Europe's core, but which much of the rest of Europe, later, would like to forget about, or marginalise: Stalin's Russia, and Hitler's Germany. Most of the elements investigated here are central to the imagining of Europe, and despite many Europeans' wish to distance themselves, such views should be recognised and taken up as an important and indispensable contribution to the debate about 'What is Europe?'.

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He has published widely on Dutch and European history, including the following recent books: *An Economic and Social History of the Netherlands* (2000); *The Idea of a United Europe* (2000); *Ideas of Europe since 1914* (2002); *Image into Identity* (2006); *The Image of Europe* (2008 forthcoming).

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Cover picture: Daniel Chester French, The Continents Personified: Europe, America, Africa. Bowling Green, New York City, 1907.

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Preface

This book, in its present form, is one of the eventual products of a workshop which took place at the Royal Academy in Amsterdam in June 2005, to honour the retirement of Bruno Naarden as the Professor of Russian History and East European Studies at the University of Amsterdam. At that well attended and lively symposium, which included Professor Naarden's valedictory lecture, on the subject of the Amsterdam *burgemeester* Nicolaas Witsen's writings on Russia in the seventeenth century, four of the contributors to this book gave embryonic versions of their chapters as papers to the workshop. Since then they have been reconsidered and entirely rewritten, in order to address more directly the common research agenda; moreover five entirely new chapters have been specially commissioned from other specialist scholars. We have moved well beyond Bruno Naarden's farewell celebrations, but nonetheless this book is dedicated to him as a token of our appreciation for his untiring work for European Studies at the University of Amsterdam and elsewhere.

I am grateful to those who helped plan the original occasion, especially Ben de Jong, and to all those who took part in the workshop. I am also happy to thank the Institute for Culture and History at the University of Amsterdam, which provided generous financial support for the project at various stages. Most of all I am indebted to the authors, who have been infinitely patient and understanding throughout the vagaries of the editing and publishing process: both their scholarship and forbearance are much appreciated.

Michael Wintle
Amsterdam, December 2007

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

Perceptions of Europe
within and without

Michael WINTLE

This collection of essays revolves around the highly topical question, "What is Europe?" What are its values, what are its borders, and what does it stand for? Many academic enquiries have posed these questions; this book, however, asks them from a different point of view.

Perception and image-formation often have to do with identity formation: images of self-perception are what we use to define our own identity, and we are helped in doing so by our perceptions or images of what we are not: our opposites, or Others. Europeans too have formed a collective identity in the same way, certainly since the Renaissance, defining what unites them, and what they think they are not. But what have the others thought of Europe? The authors of the essays in this volume are thus not so much interested in what Europe thinks of itself, but rather in what others think of it. The contributors take a number of scenarios from recent history, and examine how Europe has appeared to people in other parts of the globe: America, China, the Arab world, for example. But we go further. The question is also posed for some parts of the world which are "inside" Europe, but which for one reason or another hover on the margins, like the Balkans, and Turkey. Also included are the views about Europe held in parts of the continent which have without any doubt whatsoever belonged to Europe's core, but which much of the rest of Europe, later, would like to forget about, or marginalise: Stalin's Russia, and Hitler's Germany.

Among these outlook positions with their views on Europe, some are conventional external Others, like those which are indisputably outside geographical Europe; some are various forms of internal Others. Of the examples chosen here, perhaps only China represents a complete alterity for Europe, and *vice versa*. All the rest share something with Europe – often something crucial and even essential – through post-colonial hybridity in Latin America, the jointly held "Western" civilisation in the case of the US, the geographical location of the Balkans in southeast Europe, and the centrality of totalitarianism to European "civilisation" in

the case of Stalin and Hitler. Nonetheless, these views of Europe all differ from those *self*-views conventionally held by the modern democracies of the EU, which see (and like to see) great differences between themselves and the parties dealt with in this volume. However, most of the elements elaborated here are central to the imagining of Europe, and despite many Europeans' wish to distance themselves, such views should be recognised and taken up as an important and indispensable contribution to the debate about "What is Europe?"

The approach taken here is multi- and interdisciplinary, with a focus on political and cultural history. The evidence used to answer the question of what Europe has meant to the world varies from Stalin's speeches and Mustafa Kemal's writings to literary texts, paintings and maps. The theoretical approach takes account of concepts of identity, Othering, geopolitics and the psychology of international relations. It complements well the large number of publications on what Europeans think about Europe, and puts specialised views of Europe and/or the West, like Kagan's *Paradise and Power*, or Buruma and Margalit's *Occidentalism*,[1] into a global and comparative perspective.

The collection starts with a broad and so necessarily selective survey by Michael Wintle of views of Europe "from the outside". This introductory chapter uses as evidence mainly the *visual* images which non-Europeans have held of Europe. This contribution to "visual history", then, literally looks at various images of Europe (in the sense of visualisations), for example in Arabic and Asian maps, colonial and postcolonial paintings, and American cartoons, drawings and statues. The conclusions drawn are that representations of Others are indeed crucial to identity formation, that Europe was quite often ignored by the rest of the world in the past, particularly before the nineteenth century, and that in the modern period the relationship with Europe was almost invariably complex, intertwined and hybridised.

Following this introductory section, Parts II and III deal with views of Europe from what might be called, for quite different reasons, its "margins". The first category consists of the views of totalitarian Europe, specifically Stalin's views of "European civilisation", and the Nazi vision of Europe. The second category, in Part III, is marginal in the sense of being on the geographical edge of Europe: Turkey (especially under Atatürk), and the Balkans. They are clearly part of the continent, but at various times actively excluded from "Europe" by other "Europeans". These are border regions, in the sense that they glide in and out of

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[1]   R. Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, London, Atlantic, 2003; I. Buruma & A. Margalit, *Occidentalism: a Short History of Anti-Westernism*, London, Atlantic, 2004.

Europe, subject to the prevailing political and cultural situation. The totalitarian regimes in Part II certainly belong to the European core, like the fascist ones in the south, but at the same time they have also been banished by other Europeans to (at best) a periphery. Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Nazi Germany. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the Nazi experience is absolutely central to the experience of Europe. Unpalatable as it is, the Third *Reich* and the Holocaust are as essential to European identity as are Charlemagne and the EU. It indicates adroitly that identity politics are actually much more complex than "them" and "us", for there are internal and marginal Others which are just as important to self-definition as external or constituting Others. It has been argued that the Nazi episode (itself a marginalising expression) functioned for a long time as Europe's Other,[2] and perhaps it still does, but it constitutes at the same time an essential part of what Europe was and is.

In Chapter 2, Erik van Ree treats Joseph Stalin's views of the various national characters in Europe, which he classified on the basis of the archetypes of the hero and the merchant. The Soviet leader divided the nations of Europe, roughly, into those of the East and those of the West, measuring them along two axes of civilisation and strength of character, which were more or less negatively correlated. The Eastern nations he believed to be relatively uncivilised but endowed with heroic, martial qualities. The Western ones were considered the more developed, but with their commercialist orientation they suffered from a deplorable lack of iron in their character, in Stalin's view. Van Ree also explores the remarkable similarities of Stalin's image of Europe with that also nurtured by German Conservative Revolutionaries such as Werner Sombart.

David Barnouw takes on the difficult subject of the Nazis and Europe in Chapter 3. After the defeat in World War I, Germany felt itself crippled and asset-stripped: the Treaty of Versailles had relieved it of more than ten per cent of its territory. Most Germans wanted to regain at least some parts of those losses, but the Nazis in particular wanted a complete *Neuordnung* of Europe, to make Germany as large and strong as possible and to prevent another humiliation like Versailles. This hunger for land, or for *Lebensraum*, required a scientific grounding. Hundreds of scholars were involved, harnessing their academic skills to the promotion of an expansionist and often racist policy. Geopolitics, *Ostforschung* and *Westforschung* were discourses which paved the way to the conquest of Europe, in order to give Germany and the Germanic

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[2]   E.g. in T. Lawson, "The Myth of the European Civil War", in R. Littlejohns & S. Soncini (eds.), *Myths of Europe*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 275-289.

people their historic place as masters over inferior peoples. Barnouw offers a critical survey of the different scholarly currents involved in the shaping of a new, Nazi view of Europe, and some analysis of the fortunes of those scientific activities since the War.

In Part III, on the Margins of Europe, we begin with Turkey's view of Europe, which is deeply ambivalent, and a good example of a marginal, changing and divided position. As Erik Zürcher shows in Chapter 4, on the one hand Europe (and especially Western Europe) has been seen as an example to emulate, if Turkey were to become truly strong as well as modern. The Turkish upper and middle classes, with their strong commitment to secularism, define the world in black and white terms. In their eyes, being a part of Europe (or more generally, the West) is imperative if Turkey is to be secure against attempts to reintroduce an Islamic social and political order. In the eyes of these Kemalists, modernity, civilisation and the West are one. On the other hand, Turkish nationalists, whether religiously inspired or not, see Europe as the force that carved up the Ottoman Empire and tried to put an end to the very existence of Turkey as an independent state. They suspect that Europe, or the West, has a role in every attempt to undermine the Turkish nation state, whether it originates among the Armenian diaspora or the Kurdish minority. Phrases like "a new Sèvres" and "crusader mentality" abound in the popular media, and spread an image of Turkey under permanent threat. Both images, that of Europe as an example and that of Europe as a threat, go back to the nineteenth century and are deeply embedded in the Turkish psyche.

Secondly in this section on the geographical "margins" of Europe, Joep Leerssen engages with the issue of the Balkans, in Chapter 5. Much outstanding work has been done in recent years on the European view (and indeed construction) of the Balkans.[3] However, the process also worked the other way: there is such a thing as a Balkan construction of Europe, and Leerssen's chapter examines that process. When the European ideology of Romantic nationalism hit Ottoman Europe, intellectuals and activists from various Balkan regions conceived, and worked on the basis of, a specific idea of Europe. This served both as a point of identification (an alternative to the Ottoman Empire) and as an uneasy semi-Other (as the locus of Western Christianity). To chart this process, a variety of very different language traditions must be taken into account: Greek, Albanian, Romanian, Serb, Bulgarian. The intellectual network that spanned nineteenth-century south-eastern Europe worked

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[3]   One example among the many: L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford UP, 1994.

across these linguistic divides, however, and ideas on Europe travelled freely and dynamically between Vienna, Odessa and Istanbul.

In Part IV we move to consider the view of Europe from areas certainly geographically defined as being outside Europe, and which generally considered themselves extra-European as well, albeit with specific links, positive and negative, with the European continent or civilisation. In Chapter 6 Ruud Janssens investigates the views of Europe held by Americans in the United States. To Americans, Europe and Europeans have been at various times and simultaneously a threat, a trade opportunity, and a cultural ideal. In the context of national security, it was George Washington, the first President of the United States, who warned his countrymen against entangling alliances with Europeans. In his view, Europeans always fought wars among themselves, and he wanted Americans to avoid getting caught up in such conflicts. Trade with Europeans was fine, but there were to be no military alliances. This perception of Europeans has essentially remained in place. The main difference is that since the end of World War II, American political leaders have decided that Europeans cannot be left to their own devices, because of their track record in involving the Americans in major conflicts. Consequently, American governments supported European integration and NATO at the end of the 1940s, and their expansion during the 1990s. Cultural relations with Europe were at least as complicated for Americans as the issue of national security. Especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europe was an ideal of civilisation for Americans, manifested in the presence of many wealthy Americans in Europe, American academics at European universities, and American artists in cities like London and Paris. Yet it was also important to distance themselves from Europe, to show that the United States created its own culture, and was not just a lesser version of European culture. In this chapter these different approaches to Europe by Americans are brought together. It is intriguing to note that, although Americans are very aware of ethnicity in their own country, they tend to think more in terms of a "European culture" and "Europe" than Europeans, who often consider themselves in more nationalistic terms. Janssens finishes with an examination of several Hollywood filmmakers' views of Europe, which invariably embodied a juxtaposition of contradictory feelings, such as superiority and longing: Europe was a place that it was necessary to escape both *from* and *to* at the same time.

In Chapter 7, Stefan Landsberger casts his eye over Chinese views of the West and of Europe, and does so by using the prism of images in popular culture, not least his own collection, unrivalled in the West, of Chinese propaganda posters. In this book it has not always been easy to separate ideas about Europe from ideas about the West in general. In the

American (US) case there is clearly an ambivalence, because Europe and the US are both prime players in "the West"; in the case of China, however, the Chinese consider themselves entirely outside both Europe and the West. "The West" as a concept does not have a very long pedigree, dating really only from the Second World War, and it may well be falling apart now, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increasing divergence between the US and the EU in key policy areas. In many fields, like development economics, North/South is a now more meaningful watershed than East/West. Nonetheless, Landsberger's chapter covers the period since the end of World War II, and he has to tread carefully along the fine line between the two concepts of "West" and "Europe". After the People's Republic opened its doors to the outside world in the late 1970s, living conditions improved and ownership of radios and televisions became widespread. As a result, images of events and peoples outside China started flooding in. In previous decades, the appearance of people from the West in the media had been crafted carefully and determined largely by China's identification of friends and foes. Propaganda posters played an important role in the construction of these images of the Other, supplementing newsreels and press photographs. To complicate matters further, another categorisation enters the scene: that of race. When analysing the images of non-Chinese in the Chinese media, it is impossible to avoid reference to Chinese feelings of ethnic superiority. They resulted in the Chinese traditional ordering of mankind into a racial hierarchy of biological groups, led by the yellow and white races. As a consequence, there was often no real distinction made between the origins of the Westerners shown: they were all just white. After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, political allegiances became much more important. Images of foreigners almost disappeared by the early 1970s, when China had few friends left in the Western world. Finally, Landsberger examines the carefully constructed image of the West that has come to dominate television in present-day China.

In Chapter 8, Robbert Woltering tackles the diverse subject of the Arab view of Europe, in which he finds almost infinite variety. There is of course at this time every need to improve our understanding of the relations between the Western and the Arab worlds, for the Arab world is the Muslim region nearest to Europe. Many recent publications have tended to focus on past and present animosity between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Woltering takes a much wider look at Arab perceptions of Europe by giving due credit to the modernisation project of the *nahda* (Arab renaissance), and Islamic reforms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which came with a sometimes ambiguous but generally positive image of Europe. These findings

are then used in the subsequent analysis of appreciations of Europe in post-Cold War cultural and political discourse among Arab intellectuals, mainly from Egypt. His account also pays attention to the way in which Europe and the EU are contrasted with the United States in the Arab media.

Finally, Peter Beardsell moves in Chapter 9 towards establishing what Latin American views amount to, and a very complex matter it is too. The colonial experience caused a legacy of mixed images of Europe in Latin America. While many there regard themselves as the direct descendants of the original indigenous civilisations, there are many others who trace their descent straight from Europe. The profound effects of racial and cultural hybridity add to the complexity, as do social and political factors. Latin America's relations with the United States play their part too. For these reasons Beardsell analyses contrasting images of Europe: as invader, neo-imperialist power, destroyer of the natural world, an alien culture; and on the other hand, as a model of civilisation in opposition to barbarity. He then addresses the issue of Latin America's identity, in which Europe has a fundamental role as both Self and Other.

This collection of studies concerning what some people outside what might be called "mainstream Europe" have thought about "Europe" in various times and various places is of course not systematic enough to be able to deliver an unequivocal answer to the question of "What is Europe?", whether in a geographical, political or cultural sense. Nonetheless, some provisional conclusions are possible, and need to be drawn. In the first place, not everyone thinks about Europe at all: often it was entirely ignored, especially before 1800, and by such powerful parts of the world as China for long afterwards. However, in the last two centuries Europe has usually generated a response of some sort, and the feelings are mixed. There has been, of course, resentment at the overbearance of European economic, political and cultural imperialism, but there is also respect for aspects of European culture and sophistication. We have seen disgust for the tyranny of commercialism and decadence which has been held to engulf Europe, as well as cultural legitimation. The image of Europe has been caught up, often rather inextricably, with the concept of "the West" in the twentieth century; this complicates matters, especially for China, but on the other hand some parts of the world do indeed draw a close distinction between Europe and the West, and where they do not it is yet further evidence that Europe does not always evoke any reaction at all, however strange that may sound to Europeans. That itself is a conclusion worth drawing. But the principal finding of this rich set of studies must be that the Othering process, as part of identity formation both in Europe and all other parts of world, is

unendingly complex in its workings, and defies simplistic characterisation in terms only of "us and them". Hybridity is the kind of concept which indicates that complexity, and Peter Beardsell's implicit allegiance in Chapter 9 to the theoretical framework offered by Homi Bhabha may offer lessons to us all. At the very least we should recognise that absolute rejection or absolute adulation of any Other, external, internal or intermediate, are hardly ever the case in reality, now or in the past, despite the strident voices of so many in the political and media worlds.

Europe as Seen from the Outside

A Brief Visual Survey

Michael WINTLE

The imagining of Europe has been a much-visited subject in recent years, as the European Union struggles to define itself and its role in the world. There are Euro-enthusiasts who would like to expand or at least strengthen the supranational structures and powers of the Union, and who believe that the way to legitimate that course of action is to define and develop a European identity, akin to the way in which a national identity legitimises a national government and state apparatus. There are just as many who disagree with that project fundamentally, and who set out to prove that there is not and cannot be a European identity, or at the least that it is quite different from national identity. All this stimulates the academic interest in what Europe is, has been, will be or should be: how to define Europe is now a constantly posed question, and it has been a topic of periodically intense interest since the Renaissance. Of interest, that is, to Europeans.[1]

For nearly all of these definitions, imaginings, views and images of Europe have been self-images. Moreover, most of these images have been concerned to glorify Europe in one way or another; they are Eurocentric. When looking at *visual* images (the main burden of this introductory chapter), maps have been very important, and the great example of a Eurocentric cartographic image of the world is of course the Mercator projection, dating from 1569. That view of the world, emphasising the centrality of Europe and exaggerating its relative size, eventually became universally familiar amongst Europeans, and the great majority of European maps of the world ever since have opted for the Eurocentric Mercator projection.

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[1] A sample of relevant studies: G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1995; M.J. Wintle (ed.), *Culture and Identity in Europe*, Aldershot, Avebury Press, 1996; B. Stråth (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, Brussels, PIE Peter Lang, 2000; R. Littlejohns & S. Soncini (eds.), *Myths of Europe*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007.

**Figure 1.1. Gerard van Keulen, World Map,
"Paskaart vertonende alle bekende zeekusten en landen op den
geheelen aardboodem of werelt", Amsterdam, c. 1720**
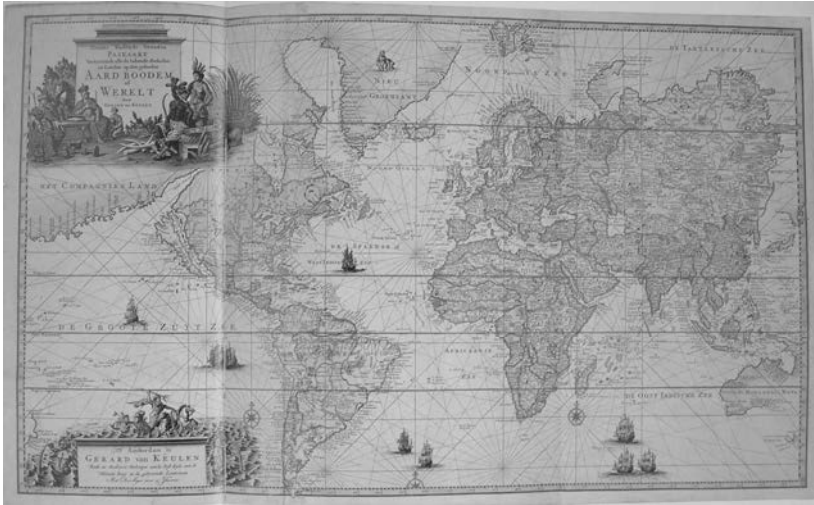
Source: Whitfield, *Image of the World*, pp. 108-109; original in a private collection.

A fine historical illustration is Gerard van Keulen's world map of about 1720, reproduced in Figure 1.1. Van Keulen came from a cartographic family of long standing; he was official hydrographer to the mighty Dutch East India Company (VOC) at the height of its power, and his maps "enjoyed an unrivalled position of authority during the eighteenth century".[2] The map bristles with rhumb lines and geographical data: it is conducting a hegemonic discourse of authoritative spatial ordering. It covers a full 360 degrees of longitude, and apart from the serious compression of Asia, the assertion that California is an island, and some understandable vagueness about the North American west coast, it is remarkably accurate in outline, especially in South-East Asia, where the Dutch colonial interest predominantly lay. A number of features stand out. First, it is a colonial map: Van Keulen was in the service of the VOC, so there are copious references to "the Company", Dutch-language labels cover the sea coasts, and Dutch East Indiamen dominate the seas. Second, it uses wide open spaces, especially in America and Australia, but also in parts of Africa and Asia, to indicate vacuity and vacantness. Third, it is a hugely Eurocentric map in a very literal sense: there is hardly a better example to be found of the Mercator

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[2]   P. Whitfield, *The Image of the World: 20 Centuries of World Maps*, London, British Library, 1994, p. 108.