# CYPRUS, EUROPE, MYTHOGRAPHY

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**Abstract**

*This article examines the discursive and mythical uses of continental identity. It starts by looking at the Cypriot politics of continental belonging. It then considers early representations of Europe and modern appropriations of the myth of Europa, which empower ideologically specific rationales that project European supremacy. It proposes an alternative reading of the myth, which views the European 'project' as a constant effort to recognise and reunify with the non-European, the Asian, the continent's enabling and legitimating other from where Europe 'mythically' originated.*

> 0 Europe! Europe! We know the horned beast which always attracted you most, which again and again threatens you with danger! Your ancient fable could once again become 'history'-once again a monstrous stupidity could master you and carry you off! And no god concealed within it, no! merely an 'idea', a 'modern idea'!
>
> (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* §239)

## Locating Cyprus

In the portico of Atticus under the Athenian Acropolis, during his speech for the ceremony of the signing of the Accession Treaty to the European Union, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, thanked EU institutions and member states 'for offering Cyprus the possibility to accede where it belongs historically, geographically, politically and culturally.'[1] Blunt in its oversimplifying identification, this unequivocal pronouncement of Cyprus' continental location, brushes over historical, geographical, political and cultural factors that tie the island as much to its two closest continents, Asia and Africa. One can mention, in this respect, etymological factors too, *irs* or *Alasia,* the ancient name of Cyprus in Akkadian and Hittite transcriptions, the originary word which according to some gave the Asian continent its (Greek) name.[2] Or the 'Cypriot character' in Aeschylus, grouped together with Libyans, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Nomads, and Amazons, and in specific opposition to Argive Greeks.[3] Of course, Papadopoulos' statement can be explained as being part of the Greek-Cypriot agenda of institutional Europeanisation. Yet it is also symptomatic of the unique geographical position of Cyprus, which has allowed different Cypriot regimes in different historical periods to

selectively employ continental identities as a means of fostering political solidarity and framing moral progress.

It is perhaps worth remembering that at the same time Cyprus 'joins the EU', at the United Nations the country remains in the Asiatic Group of states, and historically in the Afro-Asiatic Group before its break. It suffices to recall here another speech, by the first President of the newly established Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, in his first address before the UN General Assembly on 7 June 1962. Initially, in typical vein, Makarios eulogised the position of Cyprus at the crossroads of continents and civilisations: 'Our geographical location in the midst of three continents and our close relations with the peoples of these continents open great possibilities and create responsibilities for us.' But on the same day, addressing the UN Afro-Asiatic Group, Makarios gave his intercontinental image a different spin: 'The relation of Cyprus to the [Afro-Asiatic] group *does not simply arise from its geographical location...* but more importantly, from our faith in common ideals and objectives as well as from common historical experience.'[4]

The indirect elimination of Europe as a continent with which Cyprus had common ideals, objectives and history was not an arbitrary rhetorical move by Makarios. At that period of anti-colonial struggle, Europe represented a morally problematic space, a space that made the Holocaust possible, a place of imperialist powers that hypocritically and anachronistically denied the rights of humans and nations around the globe. At that time, the 'winds of freedom', the resistance to the violent order of things and old-fashioned colonial regimes was coming from the other continents, from the political spirituality of Gandhi, the struggles of Nkrumah and Kenyata, the Non-Aligned Movement, etc.[5] That is why, the diplomatic embracing of Africa and Asia at that historical period, was a progressive move that among other things inflated the political status of Cyprus and the Cypriots. In the case of Cyprus, the Afroasiatic identification then, functioned in an ideological and egocentric way, just like the European identification nowadays.[6]

The Cypriot application to join the EU in 1990 coincided with the decision to launch a new Cypriot coin in 1991, the polygonous fifty cent, which depicted on one side the legendary abduction of Princess Europa from Sidon by a metamorphosed Zeus.[7] This numismatic image was a version of an ancient Cypriot coin, issued by the ruler of Marion, Timocharis, and one of the earliest depictions of Europa on the bull, which was redesigned to support the credentials of Cyprus as a peculiar easternmost representative of European cultural space.[8] The same design became the logo of the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the following rationale:

> The logo of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a multidimensional symbolism. First of all, it symbolises the rich culture and civilisation of the island that dates back to antiquity. Moreover , it reflects the crucial role that Cyprus is destined to play as a future member of

> the European Union: as Europa was carried via Cyprus to the Continent that was to assume her name, in the same way Cyprus has to face the challenge of becoming the bridge that will link the European Union with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.[9]

Setting aside the fact that there is no classical reference that Europa has ever been to Cyprus (the Ministry's web-page on the previous paragraph says, 'very possibly via Cyprus') or the Continent (something Herodotus makes a fuss about as I show below), the mythical appropriation of Europa by the ancient and modern Cypriot regimes bears ironic similarities.[10] We can only speculate about the reason Timocharis issued his Europa coin in the fifth century BCE, but we know that he was a pro-Greek ruler who came to power after a period of pro-Phoenician and pro-Persian rulers in Marion. That he tried to propagandise and spite his pro-Asiatic opponents is a distinct possibility. But unlike modern rulers he had no illusion and no mission to prove that Cyprus was *geographically* in Europe. For it would have been a geographical oxymoron for an island that was 'in the middle of the earth' *(meso-gaia;* medi-terranean) to seek to belong to one of its constituent continents.

This article looks at the rhetorical use of continental representation as well as the political appropriation of the myth of Europa, an appropriation that in Nietzschean terms turns the fable into 'history' and seeks to rule Europe by a 'modern idea'. It suggests a reading of the myth that challenges its conventional appropriation, which fosters continental essentialism and European supremacy over the other continents. As shown in the case of Cyprus, counter-representations of the island's 'true' location are sacrificed in the process of developing new and expedient reference points. Political visions in and about Cyprus are subsequently supported through essentialist narrations of geographic identity, that is to say, according to totalising interpretations of what Europe, Asia or Africa are or ought to be. But continental representations change as official ideologies get revised. And though the predicament of continental extension intensifies on border locations like Cyprus, it is neither the prerogative nor the monopoly of such locations. Moreover, the production of continental meaning cannot be restricted to the organisational agendas of governmental policy, though it is often driven by such concerns as is, for example, the case of the EU.[11] State interests and governmental dilemmas may be predicated and shaped by continental imaginings produced at different historical periods and under different political conditions.

## Early Continental Representations

The core story of European supremacy with all its modern colonial and neocolonial manifestations is already part of the archaic 'knowledge' that inaugurated the science of Western medicine and geography. In his *Airs, Waters, Places,* Hippocrates outlines the impact of topology and meteorology on human health, but

also passes judgement on the health of the continents. The section on Libya (Africa) is largely lost, but the diagnoses of Asia and Europe, 'how they differ in every respect, and how the nations of the one differ entirely in physique from those of the other' is unequivocal.[12] Hippocrates identifies in Asia temperate climate, beauty and good nourishment. Nonetheless, 'courage, endurance, industry and high spirit could not arise in such conditions, either among the natives or among the immigrants [i.e. the Africans or Europeans]'.[13] On the whole 'Asiatics are feeble' and an important contributory cause that sustains this condition has to do with their despotic institutions, being governed mostly by kings, and thus lacking in freedom and independence.[14] Hippocrates notes exceptions of Asiatics in non-despotic regimes that surpass themselves, but which in the end prove the rule of feebleness. By contrast, 'Europeans are more courageous than Asiatics', given the harsher climate in which they live and conducive political institutions that encourage independence of thought and risk-taking.[15] Though differences among the Europeans are greater than among the Asiatics, Hippocrates is still confident that such diversity in physique, character and constitution is not critical to his general scheme and continental hierachization.

Similarly, in the second book of his *Geography,* Strabo begins his description of the three continents with an explanation on precedence: 'But I must begin with Europe, because it is varied in form and admirably adapted by nature for the development of excellence in men and governments.'[16] It is characteristic of Europe to deserve and be given priority not only because of its own human and political development, but 'also because ithas contributed most of its own store of good things to the other continents.'[17] As such, Strabo reduces the effects of transcultural interaction and Roman colonialism to an epistemic claim of geographic nature. Europe is proposed as the 'most independent' continent having the right balance between war and peace. Even when coming across European regions of poverty and piracy, Strabo does not alter his positive reading of Europe, suggesting such negative state to be the result of bad government and against continental nature. Unsurprisingly he is unwilling to extend such generous reading to the other continents.

Strabo's geography is explicitly strategic as much as it is political. Geography should serve the needs of 'the greatest generals' who hold sway over land and sea and who seek to unite nations and cities under a single government.[18] Geographical knowledge is strategically important for imperial expansion, and this, of course, is one of the early forms of European integration or intercontinental union. Geography is also crucial in assisting rulers and men of political affairs. That is why, for Strabo, geography should not be concerned with the uninhabited world, as it risks overrunning its utility to the art and practice of government.[19] Strabo, at least, was no hypocrite. Feeling that a geographer had an imperial mission to fulfil,

he politicised continental geography. By glorifying Europe, Strabo played his part to epistemically validate the spatial origin of the *Pax Romana* and legitimate its intercontinental rule.

By contrast to Hippocrates and Strabo, Aristotle seems to be more balanced in his representation of the continents, but only so as to politically elevate the in-between:

> The nations inhabiting the cold places and those of Europe are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and skill, so that they continue comparatively free, but lacking in political organisation and capacity to rule their neighbours. The people of Asia on the other hand are intelligent and skilful in temperament, but lack spirit, so that they are in continuous subjection and slavery. But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent; hence it continues to be free and to have very good political institutions, and to be capable of ruling all mankind if it attains constitutional unity.[20]

However, in one of the earliest known uses of the word Europe, Herodotus viewed the continental predicament quite differently. Herodotus voiced an interesting array of questions that we are yet to answer.

> But of Europe it is plain that none have obtained knowledge of its eastern or its northern parts so as to say if it is encompassed by seas; its length is known to be enough to stretch along both Asia and Libya. Nor can I guess for what reason the earth, which is one, has three names, all of women, and why the boundary lines set for it are the Egyptian river Nile and the Colchian river Phasis (though some say that the Maeetian river Tanais and the Cimmerian Ferries are boundaries); nor can I learn the names of those who divided the world, or whence they got the names which they gave.[21]

The lack of knowledge displayed by Herodotus about the continents is not merely cartographical. It is clear that it becomes difficult for him to explain not just the contingency of boundaries, but the peculiar practice of (if not desire for) geography; what causes men to write the earth, delineate, and then give parts of it the name of women. To devise an etiology requires for Herodotus an inappropriate move from historical to mythical time. However, his reluctance to epically recite the mythical– which is what gained him the reputation 'father of history'– is a conceit. His literary genre is as much influenced by as written against the mythopoetic tradition. His historiography transforms myth into logical argument. Human reason measures and corroborates the events of his narrative performance.

In the case of Europe, Herodotus artfully appropriates and reconstructs the legend of Europa. He is of course aware of the orthodox myth of how Zeus in the form of a golden bull, seduced and abducted princess Europa from Asia, taking her

to the island of Crete, and impregnating her with the seed of the Minoan dynasty. Herodotus states that this has led some 'to say that the land took its name from the Tyrian Europa having been till then nameless.' Even then, Herodotus considers it important to recall that Europa 'was an Asiatic, and never even came to this land which the Greeks call Europe, but only from Phoenice to Crete and from Crete to Lycia.'[22] Still, for Herodotus the divine intervention and act of hierogamy are not a simple romantic narrative but a complex historical event. The story of Europa is therefore retold and from the very beginning of his *Histories.* He narrates a number of similar stories to that of Europa in Greek mythology (including other famous women as lo, Medea and Helen), only to place them as part of a mortal male practice of seducing and stealing women among the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Trojans.[23]

Herodotus emphasises that Persians and Phoenicians told him these stories, not Greeks. He simply conveys to his audience what was said to him, and he does not know whether it is true or not. To that extent, Herodotus rationalises myth. He subverts and revises Greek mythology by narrating it as barbarian history (for Plutarch, he is therefore a liar and *philobarbaros;* for Seneca, at the same time 'the father of history' and the 'teller of tall tales'). The Greek audience before which he performs, on payment or in oral competitions, may thus critically review their own tradition, discovering their core myths to be transgressive versions of the common history of foreigners.

Herodotus introduces a new narrative style which reformulates the world of *mythos* as historiography by reference to the *logoi* of historical others. Put differently, his audience is made to confront the mythopoetic constitution of Greek subjectivity by being transported outside Greek temporality, momentarily undergoing the experience of barbarian rationality, temporarily becoming an other: a Persian, Phoenician, Lydian, Asian. By explicitly striving to step outside the national time and 'known' myth, early history employed the stories of foreigners in order to bring about an ec-static experience. Herodotus therefore warns the Greeks: Europe is not what you think it is; others, importantly non-Europeans, have a different version on how Europe *came to be;* their version problematises our core myth and it should therefore concern us.[24]

## Appropriating the Myth of Europa

In the contemporary world, by contrast, non-travelling or 'metropolitan' history tends to underestimate the need to unpack the mythopoetic constitution of subjectivity.[25] It assumes that scientific historiography has axiomatically overcome myth, which is, as Bataille says, the greatest myth of all.[26] But mythological references about the origin of Europe are far from uncommon, even today, and that in the midst of

intensifying rational debates on Europe and its future. The legend of Europa may be commonly approached as a strange narration of an ancestral imaginary. But note how it is also read as an allegory, a moral and political tale pregnant with symbolic significance, empowering interpretations and rationalisations of Europe.

This has been the case with the celebrated book by the historian Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (bed-time reading for the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, as admitted in an interview). This book of history begins with nothing less than a conventional interpretation of the myth of Europa. 'In the beginning', we are told, 'there was no Europe... [only] a long, sinuous peninsula with no name, set like the figurehead of a ship on the prow of the world's largest land mass.' Davies initially appears generous to the other continents but that is only a devise to elevate Europe. On the one hand, Davies says, the myth points to the Asian origins of European civilisation, including the adoption of the Phoenician alphabet by the Greeks (according to the legend the alphabet was brought to Greece by prince Cadmus, the brother of Europa, who searched for her in vain, and in the end stayed in Greece, founding the city of Thebes}. On the other hand, however, Davies argues that the legend 'captures the essential restlessness of those who followed in her [Europa's] footsteps.' At this point, the author makes a Strabo move. He spiritually charges the Mediterranean civilisation with 'a constant ferment of ideas' and 'energetic activity' as opposed to the Egyptian, Indian, Mesopotamian and Chinese civilisations that were 'lethargic in their geographical and intellectual development.' The European civilisation has not been lethargic for, 'like the vestments of Europa [while riding the bull], the minds of those ancient mariners were constantly left "fluttering in the breeze."' The myth thus spiritually charges an identity of distinctive (and higher} cultural value: 'a new civilisation that would eventually bear (Europa's] name and would spread to the whole Peninsula. '[27]

On a different tone, Sorbonne Professor Hélène Ahrweiler uses the myth of Europa to completely hellenise the meaning and destiny of Europe. In her embarrassingly Grecophilic *The Making of Europe,* she reads in the myth a 'legendary reality', a primordial statement about Europe's eternal essence.

> There is one thing I would like to emphasise: that whatever is linked with Greece has always to do with the root of things; it has always at its core the essential. This applies to Europa too. The name is Greek; she of the broad brow, the embracing gaze, the loud voice. She who in any case is farsighted; the myth of the birth of the land called Europe, is Greek. That, anyhow, is the hidden meaning of Zeus' passage over the waves and the high seas in the form of a bull, with Europa, abducted on his back. Europa who, incidentally, was the daughter of Okeanos; so she is herself organically linked with the waves and the seas.[28]

What follows from this suggestion is an attempt to distil the 'intellectual stature' of

Europe in contradistinction to Asia: 'I refer to the need for freedom as the basis of life, meaning the freedom which constitutes Europe's stand against despotism; the despotism which in history is always represented by Asia.'[29] To that extent, the resistance to the alterity represented by Asia is, according to Ahrweiler, 'always Greek'. The exploits of ancient Greece are nothing less than the 'exploits of the civilised world, of Europe' against Persians, Arabs, Ottomans, against 'Asians of a different creed.'[30] Like Strabo, she interprets the dark moments of European history, like war and genocide, to be somehow extraterritorial, aberrant and un-European.[31]

By contrast, in his two novels, *Europa* and *Europa in Limbo,* Robert Briffault reformulates the legend to critique the social and political conditions in Europe before World War II and to imagine alternatives.[32] The protagonist, Princess Daria Devidof, is nicknamed Europa and 'came from the East, like her mythological Phoenician predecessor, but the East was now Russia, the place of revolution and of a new order, with which Briffault identified.'[33] On the one hand, the protagonist figures within the wider sociological context of archaic matriarchal power capable of regenerating the world, that was already expounded by Briffault in his scholarly text *The Mothers.*[34] On the other hand, more specifically, she 'stands for both Europa and the fate of Europe in the novel, because her character alludes both to a process by which decadence give way to the hope of a new world, and to a power which women once had and might in some ways regain in the course of a vast process of liberation.'[35] Europa mythica is therefore repackaged as an ambivalent figure encapsulating both continental pessimism and future hope.

In another book with the title *The Meaning of Europe,* the legend is employed to problematise the fixed idea or limits of Europe. Specifically the myth is used to explain the constituted nature of Europe, starting from the political foundation of Thebes. Subsequently, the author, Denis de Rougemont, changes his problematisation into a romanticisation, which renders the project of Europe an incessant creative movement or adventure.

> It was by pursuing the mythical image of Europe that the Phoenician seamen discovered her geographical reality. But it was also by ceasing to look for Europe exactly as she lay in his memory that Cadmus set about building her. And ever since that age of the fable, how hard it has been to establish 'where Europe was to be found', that is if we are talking in terms of abstract principles, of platonic ideas, or of defining her as a complete and given fact of history; for it is the search for Europe which has created her. To seek Europe is to make her!... Perhaps she is simply an infinite quest, and this I call: adventure.[36]

Taking cue from its originary legend, just like Davies after him, de Rougemont ventures to explain 'the secrets of Europe's vitality' and its political potential, though not unproblematically.[37]

In his forward to Peter Gommers book, a former Commissioner of the EU, Karel van Miert, views the continued use of the myth by different 'European' counties as carrying a 'political message'. Van Miert suggests that '[t]he inquiry into the origin and the use of the name of Europe... makes us realise how throughout the ages myths, facts and interpretations around the name Europa have been known and analysed in the participating countries of the European Union.'[38] This provides evidence of a 'common culture' which is 'based on our Hellenic and Christian heritage' and 'is not a conscious activity, but it impregnates our daily life'. 'Only when we leave this common cultural area, do we suddenly realise that we are in a region with populations that have different cultural conceptions and appreciations.'[39] But given that stories of Europa as well as the Hellenic and Christian heritage cut across the geographical borders of Europe, this suggestion is highly problematic. Van Miert exaggerates the cultural capital of the myth, erasing cultural differences within Europe and commonalities without.

Finally in her collection of essays, *Cafe Europa,* the Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulic ponders on the question of the meaning of Europe after the Cold War. Here she speaks of how East Europeans saw in Europe nothing but a ghost – a phantom they constructed and dreamt about: 'Europe was built by those of us living on the edges because it is only from there that you would have the need to imagine something like "Europe" to save you from your complexes, insecurities and fears.' To be sure an exaggeration that seeks to deflate the image of Europe for East Europeans. Drakulic demythologises Europe, but interestingly by implicitly recalling and challenging the myth of Europa: 'Europe is not a mother who owes something to her long-neglected children; neither is she a princess one has to court.'[40]

**Rethinking the Myth of 'European Unification'**

How to respond then to this mythical appropriation of continental identity? In modern times, there have been two general responses towards myth. First, the Enlightenment or Cartesian response which counts myth among the prejudices that the rational subject must overcome, sweep aside so as to achieve scientific knowledge. Second, the Romantic response that criticises the Enlightenment tradition by calling for a 'new mythology' or a return to the old, inherited myths. Both these responses to mythology have come under challenge in contemporary social and political theory. First, the Cartesian response has been criticised for assuming a highly dubious and ethnocentric passage from *mythos* to *logos;* culminating, supposedly, in the overcoming of religious myth in the Enlightenment, and the secularisation of the sphere of politics and science. As far as European unification is concerned, the point in question is whether the discourse currently circulated (that is of civilisational or cultural unity, of common social and political ideals) is not supported by its own essentialist mythology as secular and technocratic rationales

imagine. Second, the Romantic response to mythology has been challenged in the way it assumes the existence of a secure epistemic or literary starting point projecting an authentic poetics or a primordial narrative. Founding Europe on a new myth or reinvented narrative could prove as teleological as contemporary logics of policymakers are. The romantic resurrection of a more authentic image of or destiny for Europe can render particular stories canonical at the exclusion of others; that is, privileging certain spatiotemporal beginnings and so empowering specific epistemic and political discourses.[41]

Perhaps we need to approach mythical appropriation neither in the traditional Enlightenment framework nor in the Romantic sense. That is to say, neither to take myth to be a 'primitive' or 'pre-logical' mode of articulation, a prejudice that needs to be swept aside if knowledge is to be attained; nor to take the Romantic view that mythical exploration can restore an essential lost truth. My suggestion is that myth and rationality can co-exist, especially if we accept that foundational logic is a logic of narration. Narrations become foundations when a story is established as part of a tradition; elevated to grand narrative; narrated collectively or *en masse,* giving reasons for being; offering imaginative accounts which seek to connect people, ideas, events and geographies. In this sense, the technical may be defined against but can never escape the mythical, the complex web of stories surrounding a past phenomenon.

Consider for example the foundational 'European' ideal of democracy as recently submitted by the Secretariat of the European Convention in the Draft 'Constitution for Europe'. The Draft Constitution starts with an epigram from Thucydides, taken from the Funeral Oration of Pericles, which the President of the Secretariat, Valery Gisgard D'Estaing, complimentary read in ancient Greek in the EU Thessalonica Summit on 20 June 2003. 'Our constitution... [sic] is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the greatest number.'[42] What the points of omission pass over in this selective epigram is the written testimony of Periclean imperial chauvinism, namely how the Athenian constitution 'borrowed nothing from others' and is rather 'a model for others'. By using points of omission, it seems that the drafters have been politically correct, perhaps even sensitive to the Fanonian critique that Europe should not become a model for the rest of the world, that there is a lot politically-postcolonially at stake in overcoming the idea that one should always look *there* to imagine and produce political ideals.[43] Still, by idealising Athenian democracy, the de-contextualised epigram appropriates a selective and crude version of the history of Thucydides, a version which airbrushes Thucydides' vision of Athenian 'democracy' in its oratorical application later on: 'In name a democracy, but in fact a government of the principal man.'[44]

To that extent, the myth of Europa may nowadays appear an incredible origin or ground, but it is not untypical – perhaps it is even exemplary – of narrations currently circulating in European wavelengths, such as the prolific recital of stories of civilisational or cultural unity, of shared social and political ideals. As shown above, the myth has been used mostly to support claims of cultural distinctiveness and superiority rather than to promote intercontinental fraternity, reintegration and cosmopolitan ethos. My proposition is that contemporary mythical appropriations or political rationales of European unification offer but historically and ideologically specific interpretations of the legend of Europa. I argue that these interpretations of European identity are at odds with a different interpretation of the myth of Europa, which is *my* interpretation, not *the* interpretation of the myth.

Modern political interpretations are historically and ideologically specific in two ways. First, because they approach the quest and question of Europe as referring to the life and politics of a separate geographical entity – and consequently understand unification as an esoteric process of integration. This esoteric process is sometimes problematic even for those countries that are geographically at the centre. Javier Solana, former Secretary-General of NATO, defined NATO membership for the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as a 'signal to the world that these countries' journey back to Europe is complete.'[45] But my point goes beyond the mere rejection of Solana's unreflective identification of European integration with NATO membership. For an equally credible understanding (based on a reading of the legend of Europa and the restless pursuit Davies and de Rougemont allude to) suggests that European unification originarily concerned not the union of political entities *in* Europe but rather the unification of Europe *with* Asia. That is to say, the venture was the taking of the Asian princess back home to Asia, reunifying Europa with her family. To this purpose, Europa's four brothers set forth to search for her, instructed by their father (king Agenor of Sidon) never to return unless they find her.[46] On other versions of the myth, Agenor even threatened to slay them with his own hand if they ever returned without her (this is significant, as they did not return).

To that extent, the task of 'the unification of Europe' can be narrated as a political quest addressing and seeking to redress an arbitrary familial separation – pictured geographically as the separation of the European peninsula from the Asian continent. Nowhere in the western imaginary is the violence of geographic separation more vividly illustrated than in the myth of Europa. It is only by erasing – and thus legitimising-this originary separation that an application from an Asian or African country to join the 'European Union' could appear strange. An example is the application of Morocco in 1987 to join the EU that was 'naturally' rejected without much consideration because Morocco was not in Europe. Though, according to the myth, one of Europa's brothers, Phoenix, travelled along all the

coast of North Africa in his European quest, building cities whose inhabitants are commonly seen today as non-European others, and not as descendants of the European family. Another case in point is Turkey, the region where another brother of Europa, Cilix, went, and a country whose European family credentials are still debated, be it in among the neo-Christian exclusivists or the institutional demonologists like d'Estaing. The European motto of 'unity in diversity' goes only so far in its narration of familial genealogy.[47]

The second reason why I think modern dominant interpretations of European unification are historically and ideologically specific, is because they work within an understanding of community that is (to employ Nietzschean terms) Apollonian: in other words, a community of *technē,* reason, form and boundaries.[48] To that extent, these dominant interpretations neglect the Dionysian aspects of daemonic energy and plural identity; communal bonds and idioms that are beyond order and control, and therefore conventionally relegated to non-political factors. Still the sweeping power of Dionysus, requiring political recognition, was taught to those 'early Europeans' (the relations of Europa) in Thebes. This is the polis Cadmus founded following the Delphic oracle in search of Europa, after marrying Harmony and bringing together 'the opposite extremes of the world... in visible accord'.[49] This is the polis that was to become the most tragic of all in the ancient Greek world, forcing Cadmus and some of his descendants to move westwards, towards the still unnamed continent.

The story of the return of Dionysus – 'the Asian god' – and his confrontation in Thebes is tragically narrated by Euripides' *Bacchae.* A lesson taught to these 'Europeans', remembered through the theatrical performance for the benefit of all Greeks, was how a community can change from Apollonian form to Dionysian ekstasis-meaning that identity is never complete, that every imposed political form hides within it the conditions of its own metamorphosis, the possibility of stepping outside its own self.[50]

The Dionysian celebrations-introduced in Hellenic cities after the triumph of Dionysus in Thebes-constitute an acknowledgment and a celebration of the annihilation of identity. Dionysian epiphany, as Vernant put it, is 'an extra dimension, an expansion of the human condition':

> What the vision of Dionysus does is to explode from within and shatter the 'positivist' vision that claims to be the only valid one, in which every being has a particular form, a definite place, and a particular essence in a fixed world that ensures each his own identity that will encompass him forever, the same and unchanging. To see Dionysus, it is necessary to enter a different world where it is the 'other', not the 'same' that reigns.[51]

By giving Dionysus his due, the political community gives recognition to the liquidity of identity, including its own political identity; recalling, and thus remaining aware, that the Apollonian community of *techne* and being is always – tragically – subject to the Dionysian community of *phusis* and becoming.

However, if that is so, contemporary political debates about European community currently remain almost entirely Apollonian – rational and technical – celebrating instead single, fixed and formal identity (they seem more prepared to expand that identity numerically and less, if at all, to consider or redefine it). They deny, consequently, the relevance and significance of other bonds that do not technically *serve* that identity, other forms of community, other common things people 'in' and 'around' Europe share: from religious beliefs, history, and oral traditions, to household customs, and protocols of festivity and hospitality. In short, certain commonalities are rejected and marginalised, in order for other commonalities – which legitimate specific political projects – to take central stage, produce sameness and empower specific regimes. These commonalities are subsequently presented as the natural and normal state of Europe.

## Epilogue

To the extent that our modern secular myths are versions of older narratives, they display not only our 'paganism' or mythical muse, but also the limits of our political imagination. Whether we are inside or outside Europe, whether we are Europeans or non-Europeans, Cypriots or non-Cypriots, we confront the boundary, the limit of identity. Still, we do not consider often enough how we are part of others, and others are part of us. Often forgotten in modern historiography is how Herodotus' historical narrative inaugurated a giant leap not so much out of mythical identity but of self-identification, rendering the knowledge of the other and the story of the other a condition for knowing the self, a knowledge that could still be mythical for all he knew.[52] Jacques Derrida sought to re-launch something of the kind while reflecting on this *very* question of Europe: 'And what if Europe were this: the opening onto a history for which the changing of the heading, the relation to the other heading or to the other of the heading, is experienced as always possible?'[53] This calls for other headings, other agendas, other histories, otherwise than being, but also new openings, new responsibilities, new ecstasies that renew the possible and the probable. And, from this perspective, it cultivates a European identity whose feature and narration work to transcend the geo-graphic limit.

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**Notes**

1. http://www.pio.gov.cy/news/speciaHssues/special-issue127.htm: accessed 19 April 2003. The speech was delivered on 16 April 2003.

2. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization; Vol. II. The Archaelogical and Documentary Evidence,* New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1991, pp. 232-34.

3. Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women,* pp. 274-290.

4. *The Complete Works of Archbishop Makarios Ill* [Apanta Archiepiskopou Kyprou Makariou 111], Vol. 2, Nicosia: Archbishop Makarios Ill Foundation, 1992, pp. 316,322; my italics. I first discussed this historical contrast in the Cypriot government statements just after independence and on the eve of acceding to the European Union, in Costas M. Constantinou, *'Epeirotikes Tautiseis* [Continental Identifications], *Philelefiheros* (Cypriot daily newspaper), 29 December 2002.

5. Typically the honoured statue next to the Cypriot House of Representatives in Nicosia is not that of a Cypriot, Greek, Turkish or other European but of, Mahatma Gandhi. It is especially ironic since the anticolonial struggle in Cyprus was antithetical to the Gandhian principles of non-violence. Note also that nowadays, on the eve of Cypriot entry to the EU the term 'third worldism' *(tritokosmiko)* is used negatively among Cypriot politicians and journalists to describe lack of development and civilisation. This view is intensified because of the presence of thousands of Asian migrant workers, especially housemaids, who economically and socially support the Cypriot drive towards 'modernisation', yet from a Cypriot popular perspective constitute a 'disorderly other'; on this point see Taisha Abraham, '"I Am So Sari": The Construction of South Asians in Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 14, No. 2, 2002, pp. 127-131. By contrast 'European standard' is used to upgrade and advertise anything and everything, from the discourse of human rights and bureaucratic efficiency to car safety and washing powders. For a similar ambivalent attitude towards Europe in Greece, though also with different terms of reference, see Michael Herzfeld, 'The European Self: Rethinking an Attitude' in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 139-170.

6. Of course the ambivalence of Cypriot post-colonial nationalisms needs to be acknowledged here. That is to say, the tension between the -continued Greek-Cypriot nationalism in the form of *enosis* and the pursuit by Makarios of ideological 'third-worldism' in the Non-Aligned Movement; but also Turkish-Cypriot nationalism fighting against Hellenistic nationalism yet under the umbrella of Kemalist pro-western ideology. More specifically on the impact of the European Union factor on 'the Cyprus problem', see Christopher Brewin, *The European Union and Cyprus,* Huntingdon, Eothen Press, 2000, and Thomas Diez (ed.), *The European Union and the Cyprus Conflict: Modern Conflict, Postmodern Union,* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002.

7. The classical myth of the abduction of princess Europa from Asia by a metamorphosed

Zeus is mentioned in a variety of ancient sources but the story has been romantically immortalised in the second book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* The myth captured the muse of the ancients but also of famous moderns, like, among others, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian and Veronese. For an extensive account of the variety of artistic representations of the myth of Europa, see Peter **H.** Gommers, *Europe-What's in a Name,* Belgium, Leuven University Press, 2001.

8. As put in a pamphlet of the Cyprus Press and Information Office, which featured on its front cover the ancient Cypriot coin of Europa, 'Cyprus, placed at the easternmost extremity of Europe can and must promote even further its cultural exchanges with the rest of Europe and constitutes a cultural springboard of Europe in the Eastern Mediterranean.' *Europe and the Culture and History of Cyprus,* Nicosia, PIO, 1992, p. 20.

9. http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/m.nfasf/MFAMinisr:tyL ogo: accessed 1 August 2003.

10. Cyprus is by no means exclusive in its ironic appropriation of European identity. See, for example, the ironic similarities in the Fascist and post-World War II discourses of a 'united Europe' in Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics between the Wars,* New York, New York University Press, 1999, and her 'From the Ironies of Identity to the Identities of Irony', in Pagden, *The Idea of Europe,* pp. 191-208.

11. Indicative of the latter point is the Commission's attempt to change the image of the EU into that of 'a Europe of the people'.

12. Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places,* 12.

13. Ibid., 12.

14. Ibid., 16.

15. Ibid., 23.

16. Strabo, *Geography,* 2, 5, 26.

17. Ibid., 2, 5, 26.

18. Ibid., 1, 1, 16.

19. Ibid., 2, 5, 34.

20. Aristotle, *Politics,* 7, 6, 1.

21. Herodotus, *Histories,* 4, 45.

22. Ibid., 4, 45.

23. Ibid., 1, 1-5.

24. More generally on Herodotus' historiography and representation of alterity, see Fran is Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988) and Norma Thompson, *Herodotus and the Origins of Political Community* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996).

25. For the term 'metropolitan history' and its postcolonial critique, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

26. Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism,* London, Verso, 1994.

27. Norman Davies, *Europe: A History,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. xv-xvii.

28. Helene Ahrweiler, *The Making of Europe: Lectures and Studies,* Athens, Nea Synora, 2000, p. 110.

29. Ibid., pp. 110-11.

30. Ibid., p. 111. Quite apart from the crude representation of peoples, continents and civilisations, Ahrweiler erases the possibility and history of Asiatic Greeks. Without ignoring cultural differences Cavafy reflected on the predicament from the other side of the (national) coin, in his poem *Return from Greece* (1914 ):

[...]
Let us at last accept the truth;
we also are Greeks-what else are we?-
but with the loves and passions of Asia,
with loves and emotions
sometimes strange to the Greeks.

31. Ahrweiler, *The Making of Europe,* pp. 21-22.

32. Robert Briffault, *Europa: A Novel of the Days of Ignorance,* London, Hale, 1936, and *Europa in Limbo,* London, Hale, 1937.

33. Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics between the Wars,* New York, New York University Press, 1999, p. 150.

34. Robert Briffault, *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions,* 3 Vols., London, Allen and Unwin, 1927.

35. Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe,* p. 150.

36. Denis de Rougemont, *The Meaning of Europe,* London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1965, pp. 18-9.

37. Denis de Rougemont is one of the major figures of the integral federalists whose problematic views are usefully explained and criticised in Thomas Diez, 'International Ethics and European Integration: Federal State or Network Horizon?', *Alternatives,* 22, 1997, pp. 287-312.

38. Karel van Miert, 'Foreward' in Gommers, *Europe-What's in a Name,* p. 5.

39. Ibid., p. 5.

40. Slavenka Drakulic, *Cafe Europa,* London, Abacus, 1996, pp. 212-13.

41. On modern approaches to myth and further to these discussions see Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History: The Philosophical Implications of the Philosophy of History,* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1957, Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth,* Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1985, and Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism,* Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1986. Generally on historical attempts to define Europe and their political implications, see Pim den Boer, Peter Bugge and Ole WfBver, *The History of the Idea of Europe,* London, Routledge, 1995, Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson, *The Question of Europe,* London, Verso, 1997, and Pagden, *The Idea of Europe.*

42. Taken from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian* War, 2, 37.

43. See the conclusion of Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farrington, New York, Grove Press, 1963. For an elaboration of Fanon's critique see James Tully, 'The Kantian Idea of Europe: Critical and Cosmopolitan Perspectives' in Pagden, *The Idea of Europe,* pp. 331-358.

44. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War,* 2, 65.

45. Javier Solana, 'Open Doors' in the *Time* special issue 'Visions of Europe', 1998/99, p. 55.

46. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 3, 1-5.

47. For an extensive account of the production of European identity through the exclusion and marginalisation of otherness, see Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'The East' in European Identity Formation,* Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 1999. On the changing appropriations of the Muslim other, see Talal Asad, 'Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam', in Pagden, *The Idea of Europe,* pp. 209-227.

48. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* New York, Vintage, 1967.

49. Roberto Galasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony,* trans. Tim Parks, London, Vintage, 1994, p. 389.

50. Cf. Edward Said, *Orienta/ism,* New York, Random House, 1979, pp. 56-58. The story of the *Bacchae,* in brief, unfolds as follows: Dionysus, the son of the niece of Europa, Semele,

is not recognised as the divine offspring of Zeus and so banished from Thebes and Europe. Dionysus finds sanctuary in Asia where, he is accepted as god, and returns to Thebes with a chorus of Asiatic women, the Bacchanals, who escort the god, singing, dancing, and in a general state of frenzy. The Theban women defy the commands of the young ruler of Thebes, Pentheus, leave their homes, and join the Asiatic Bacchanals for a Dionysian festival in the surrounding mountains. Pentheus challenges and tries to arrest Dionysus, against the advice of the soothsayer Teiresias and the founder of Thebes, Cadmus. In the end, Dionysus triumphs and the ruler of Thebes is killed and dismembered.

51. Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'The Masked Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae'* in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece,* New York, Zone Books, 1988, p. 394. For two other excellent analyses of the Dionysian, see Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1965, and Carl Kerenyi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life,* Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1976.

52. For a sustained exploration of this point in terms of *theoria* see Costas M. Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy,* Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 1996 and in terms of cosmopolitan practice, 'Hippopolis/Cynopolis', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* 30, 3, 2001, pp. 785-804.

53. Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 17. For the utility of a Nietzchean genealogical perspective in thinking the meaning of Europe, see Stefan Elbe, '"We Good Europeans... ": Genealogical Reflections on the *Idea* of Europe', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* 30, 2, 2001, pp. 259-283.