

## Unhomely Europes<sup>1</sup>

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As for Europe, no one can say whether it is surrounded by the sea or not, neither is it known whence the name of Europe was derived, nor who gave it name... Herodotus, *Histories*, IV, 45

When Mercury had inflicted this punishment on the girl for her impious words and thoughts, he left Pallas's land behind and flew to the heavens on outstretched wings. There his father calls him aside, and without revealing love as the reason, says 'Son, faithful worker of my commands, go, quickly in your usual way, fly down to where, in an eastern land, they observe your mother's star, among the Pleiades, (the inhabitants give it the name of Sidon). There drive the herd of royal cattle, that you will see some distance off, grazing the mountain grass, towards the sea shore!' He spoke, and immediately, as he commanded, the cattle, driven from the mountain, headed for the shore, where the great king's daughter, Europa, used to play together with the Tyrian virgins. Royalty and love do not sit well together, nor stay long in the same house. So the father and ruler of the gods, who is armed with the three-forked lightning in his right hand, whose nod shakes the world, setting aside his royal sceptre, took on the shape of a bull, lowed among the other cattle, and, beautiful to look at, wandered in the tender grass.

In colour he was white as the snow that rough feet have not trampled and the rain-filled south wind has not melted. The muscles rounded out his neck, the dewlaps hung down in front, the horns were twisted, but one might argue they were made by hand, purer and brighter than pearl. His forehead was not fearful, his eyes were not formidable, and his expression was peaceful. Agenor's daughter marvelled at how beautiful he was and how unthreatening. But though he seemed so gentle she was afraid at first to touch him. Soon she drew close and held flowers out to his glistening mouth. The lover was joyful and while he waited for his hoped-for pleasure he kissed her hands. He could scarcely separate then from now. At one moment he frolics and runs riot in the grass, at another he lies down, white as snow on the yellow sands. When her fear has gradually lessened he offers his chest now for virgin hands to pat and now his horns to twine with fresh wreaths of flowers. The royal virgin even dares to sit on the bull's back, not realising whom she presses on, while the god, first from dry land and then from the shoreline, gradually slips his deceitful hooves into the waves. Then he goes further out and carries his

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prize over the mid-surface of the sea. She is terrified and looks back at the abandoned shore she has been stolen from and her right hand grips a horn, the other his back, her clothes fluttering, winding, behind her in the breeze. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk II:833-875 Jupiter's abduction of Europa

In the story told by Ovid (*Metamorphosis* Bk II, 833-875) Europa is collecting flowers in a meadow near Sidon, in present-day South Lebanon, in the company of some nymphs, when Zeus, disguised as a white bull who breathes a saffron crocus from his nostrils, seduces her. He then carries her on his back across the Mediterranean Sea to Crete. Homer (*Iliad* IV, 321) writes that Europa was the daughter of Phoenicio, King of Phoenicia, on the coast of present-day Syria, Lebanon and North Israel. This foundation myth is complicated across the centuries by the layering of additional stories, and by numerous interpretations. Although this is not the place to explore the myth and its readings in depth, especially given that Passerini (2002) has written about the variations of the myth, its symbolic impact, historical becomings and its interpretations in her book *Il mito d'Europa*, some of the elements of the myth can be brought into play to think about Europe today. In particular, in relation to this issue of *Portal*, the myth can shed some light on the making and thinking of 'European values.' This process, although imagined as a collective effort towards 'harmony,' comes into being as a process of friction, intended as the engagement of often particular, narrow and localised issues with global developments, an engagement that for Anna Tsing is 'shaped and transformed in long histories of regional-to-global networks of power, trade, and meaning' (2005, 3). Friction can be used to understand how in Europe particular local histories and local knowledge intersect with global issues, and conversely how what appears to be 'European' is, in fact, the result of global encounters. Narratives of European values need to be located in this striated space, while friction as an organising metaphor also explains the slippage and relation between the lived, heterogeneous embodiments of contemporary Europe and abstract notions of values.

In the wake of the now infamous Dutch and French 2005 rejections of the European Union's (EU) draft constitution, politicians and media commentators have also called for revised definitions of Europe, with an emphasis emerging on multiple Europes, divergent and flexible borders, and new, more relevant, definitions of European values and belonging. Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel argued in the wake of the referenda that the EU's first priority should be 'to accentuate more clearly the identity

question' and to send the message that 'there is no European uniform mass, but more identities, that constitute the European sound' (in Beunderman 2006). Analysts responding to the referenda results have also called for new conceptualisations of Europe's values, borders, and citizenship. Many observers regard such developments as proof that Europe and the idea of Europe are, if not yet 'dead' (as seen from the Greek-Australian perspective of novelist Christos Tsiolkas, discussed in Nicholas Manganas's contribution to this issue), at least in crisis.

This special issue of *PORTAL* constitutes an indirect, sideways reflection on the EU's move toward (re-)discovering, establishing, and promoting shared cultural values. It seeks to unveil not the official historical contexts and traditions in which contemporary inventions of cultural identity occur. Rather, its aim is to discover and listen to competing voices and alternative visions—be they cultural, social, political, literary or cinematic—that give different shape to trans-European identities and model union, commonality, and belonging, according to transregional or translocal values. The special issue, then, is an exploration of possible forms of frictions occurring across the European cultural and historical landscape. It questions the pre-eminence of formal EU discourses on values, and the branding of Europe in the global marketplace, by listening to marginalised, unheard or discordant Euro-voices. The issue demonstrates the need for more rigorous theorisations of notions such as 'value,' whether 'shared' or 'cultural,' in the European region, and posits alternative mappings and visions of European belonging and identity. The essays included in this special issue consider Europe as a locus of frictions, consensus, tension, contestation and reconciliation. This locus is capable of co-locating Scotland with the Costa Brava, crossing Swedish views of Russia with their converse, recognising a Europe of borders that continuously unfold, acknowledging the interference of historical memories, and inflecting the Houellebecquian Euro-futurescape with Greco-Australian undertones; to cite a few examples of vibrant transvaluation occurring in the issue.

To better understand this emerging Europe we start from the myth as narrated by Ovid, and are seduced, like Europa, by the bull, and by the images the story leaves behind. These are images of the beginning of change and of movement, for Europa is represented in the moment when she leaves 'home' with the bull, destination unknown. Images of otherness and strangeness—the *white* bull, who breathes a crocus through his

nostrils as a party trick. These are images of a subtle power struggle: surely the bull appears more powerful than the girl Europa, but it is after all Europa who first leaves 'home' of her own volition. The myth can help us to think about a Europe without a (cultural) 'home,' an un-homely Europe as it were, where the familiar and the once repressed (other) coexist. We use un-homely with a specific reference to the English translation of the Freudian concept of *unheimlich*, sometimes translated as uncanny, which has been used to describe a feeling of something that is frightening, that 'arouses dread and horror' (1919, 193), but that is not external but 'that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (195). Freud further unpacks the semantic layers of *unheimlich* by playing with the ambivalence of the word in its constructed opposition to *heimlich*, that which is familiar.

What interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word '*heimlich*' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, '*unheimlich*'. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*.... In general we are reminded that the word '*heimlich*' is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other what is concealed and kept out of sight. (Freud 1919, 199)

Thus, as Freud suggests, the feeling of the *unheimlich* emerges in places where one should feel most secure, or familiar: 'everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light' (1919, 200). More interestingly, for Freud the *unheimlich* is not simply 'not home,' for it is that which is familiar but forgotten, that which having being repressed comes to light in the most familiar of places. This approach to the play between the familiar and the repressed allows us to ask what the EU has forgotten in the push towards 'shared cultural values.' What are the stories that seem to vanish at the margins of Europe when constructed as a successful brand, and what is this Europe's constituent imaginary? What is returning to haunt familiar perceptions of Europe? Is the un-homely at the core of the tension between imaginary, symbolic and political constructions of Europe? How do we conceptualise and understand the multiplicity of Europes?

In addition to the complexities implicit in the idea of Europe, we have inherited theoretical tools to think about Europe as a geopolitical space that were developed to think about nation states, but not about a diverse, multicentered region in becoming. This inheritance is a good example of the pervasiveness of European categories, the idea of the nation-state itself one of the concepts Europe disseminated along with its colonial

project. Can we rescue any of these tools to think about nation-states in our analysis? What happens, for instance, if we update and move Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) into contemporary debates on European identities? According to Anderson we can better comprehend the nation and nationalism if we analyse the cultural system out of which they came into being:

The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness .... [Few] things were (are) suited to this end better than the idea of nation. If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and ... glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being. (19)

According to Anderson, 18<sup>th</sup> century developments in print media, including newspapers and the novel, were a factor in the rise of the nation intended as a geopolitical and social entity. It was possible to imagine nations because people agreed on their sovereignty, assumed there were deep horizontal relations between inhabitants and recognised a common territory marked by identifiable boundaries. According to this theory, borders are fundamental to the establishment of a sense of nation because they define what is outside it. Similarly borders, as the debate on European enlargement indicates, and as Damian Spruce explores in his contribution to the present issue, are vital factors in the definition of what Europe is, and, more importantly, what Europe is not. Exchanging Anderson's print media for more contemporary forms of communicative and cultural practices, and moving his notion that nations are 'imagined communities' into a regional sphere, this issue of *PORTAL* considers the ways in which Europe is always already an 'imagined community.' Each contribution demonstrates that shifting, de-materialising and re-materialising borders—geopolitical, historical, social or cultural—play a central role in the process of imagining Europe.

Luisa Passerini (2002, 28) proposes that in going back to the myth of continental origin, Europe can start to heal its 'symbolic deficit.' Borrowing from Passerini we propose that, in the collection of essays presented here, a Europe intended as the smooth space of shared values envisaged by the European Union also suffers from an 'imaginary deficit.' While the EU has invested and invests resources in the shaping of a common symbolic realm, from the invention of rituals and symbol (the flag, the anthem) to the construction through specific cultural policies of European cultural repositories and of a

European 'cultural home' (see, for instance, Tobias Thielers's *Political Symbolism and Political Integration* 2005), the un-homely Europe produces its own dystopic imaginary. Down the track from measurable successes in achieving economic, political and social integration, the domain of cultural integration, most often thought of as 'European values,' is increasingly identified by the EU as the area where 'work needs to be done.' The urgency of this work can be detected beyond the failure of the constitutional project in tendencies such as the inability of the Belgian electorate to recongeal as a coherent national community, at the very heart of the officially imagined European home, following the 2007 elections. A parallel dystopic tendency is the continuing miscommunication between the EU and its eastern neighbour Russia, while another is exposed by the social and economic discrepancies driving both internal and external migration flows across Europe's striated landmasses. It is not by chance, therefore, that the EU is preparing for its '2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue,' an explicit bid to forge a sense of belonging and common citizenship across its member states and the communities that span them.

With the addition of more member states since 2004, the increasing certainties of migration and global capital flows (and, one could add, of terrorism and the causes of terrorism), Europe has undergone some of the most important changes in its history in the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The enlargement of European borders and the rearticulation of national ones have transformed the understanding of what constitutes European identity, emphasising a need to transform Europe from a 'mosaic of cultures' to a region where different cultures are in constant dialogue (Figel 2005). As a result, the European Commission is promoting a number of policies and initiatives aimed at endorsing cultural diversity in a bid to 'move from a multi-cultural society to an inter-cultural society' (Figel 2005). The arts, in particular, are considered instrumental in bringing about this change by providing citizens with the appreciation of cultural values and knowledge of one another through cooperation between artists, cultural producers and institutions (Article 151; European Council 2002; Commission for the European Communities 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006). The result is a flourishing of cultural projects that explore the changes to European borders and the consequent transformation of Europe as a region of contact zones between different cultures, and the emergence of an interest in the borders and borderlands that cross Europe, and that are crossed in accessing its shores. The 2008 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' has the aim of

fostering the understanding of cultural differences as ‘an essential tool in forging closer links both between European peoples themselves and between their respective cultures’ (European Commission 2005).

This special issue of *PORTAL* identifies the need for constant redefinitions and renegotiations of European identities, acknowledging that being European, and being in Europe, are the result of past histories and of the transnational networks of globalisation. In contrast with any homogenising narrative of Europe that describes the region as a clearly distinguished space with correspondingly easily defined characteristics, this issue echoes Hassan and Dadi (2001) by setting out to ‘examine critically the contradiction between Europe’s homogenising official narratives, and *localised* experiences of urban life, where heterogeneity, cross-cultural influences, and hybridity have long been the living norms’ (2001, 12). This issue of *PORTAL*, therefore, serves to interrogate the official discourse on common destiny and shared values with a different perspective of Europe as a site of production of overlapping encounters across cultures: Europe as borderlands.

This approach recognises that definitions of Europe are arising well beyond the geopolitical borders of the European Union. At the same time, our approach recognises a proliferation of new types of social, political and cultural borders within various regions of Europe, and within Europe’s metropolitan centres, which turn all of Europe into a borderlands. As a consequence of such borderisation, the whole of Europe can be conceptualised as a contact zone of different cultures, a vast borderlands where identities are fluid and in constant transformation. According to Balibar this new European space is affected by the complex historical relations between European states, national conflicts, and imperialism, so that ‘contemporary European people can be all considered *post-colonial* communities, or projections of global diversity onto the European space’ (2004, 34). The essays collected in this issue point towards the process of the frictions that play, to echo Tsing (2005, 4), in all their awkwardness, inequalities and instabilities, across European differences. Other conceptual models are possible. One 2007 publication, the special issue of *Culture, Theory and Critique* edited by Murray Pratt and Mireille Rosello entitled ‘Creolising Europe: Towards a Non-Eurocentric Europe,’ develops the related notions of creolisation, community and cosmopolitanism in relation to Europe’s changing socioscape. A multidisciplinary approach is necessary to

understand the complexities, not only of hybrid practices deployed in the European cultural project, but also of the entanglements of the examined projects with current political, philosophical, and social debates.

Further synergies between the essays in the issue merit attention. They each assume transformation processes that are incomplete or ongoing, at either geopolitical or cultural levels. Europe therefore emerges as a project in becoming, one that is still open to different articulations, and viewed in askance. The essays also indicate the extent to which Europe's past remains a problem, as a legacy or contemporary burden that needs dealt with (Beattie, Medeiros), or as a dystopia or dead weight (Manganas). The state of flux at the imaginary level (Goode, Sicard-Cowan, Kristensen) is reflected by the state of flux at a geopolitical level (Spruce) and in evolving processes of sociocultural identification (Fernandes). In short, Europe is indeed the *vrai bordel* (complete mess) identified by Xavier, the border-crossing exchange student in Cédric Klapisch's *L'Auberge espagnol* (The Spanish Apartment, 2003). This issue goes some way towards suggesting that new models are needed when thinking about Europe, and more specifically, how to narrate and figure diversity and heterogeneity as lived actualities against the ubiquitous temptation of politically expedient 'harmonisation.'

The opening essay of the collection, by Nicholas Manganas, offers a sustained mediation on the narratological drives and tensions underpinning the move to cultural unification in Europe. Unearthing an unbridled optimism at the dark heart of Eurodiscourse, Manganas teases out the contradictory and tenuous storylines on which that discourse is founded. His consideration of novels by Michel Houellebecq and Christos Tsiolkas constitutes a subversion of the Eurooptimist moment, one that renders the continent's futurology as necessary yet impossible. In a fascinating interplay between the extra-European and the traditions and myths of the continent, a new imaginary emerges in his discussion that is far removed from the assumed norms of formal Eurocracy. A second literary essay, by Ana Medeiros, takes a more local approach to the issue of how contemporary Europe is haunted by its pasts. Medeiros's skilful analysis of Assia Djebar's *La Femme sans sépulture* draws on genre theory and the context of the novel's production to rethink the ways in which today's Europeans, whatever their origins and stories, are in debt to the continent's colonial histories. As with the narrator of the novel that Medeiros considers, our duty is to hear the voices,

however faint or unfamiliar, that constitute our geoculturally embodied (rather than nationally reconstituted) collective memories.

The focus on the past continues with Andrew Beattie's contribution, which examines the role of history and memory in the discussions of European values and identity. The article critiques recent suggestions that Europe could learn from German experiences of confronting multiple difficult pasts as a starting point for considering what lessons those experiences might hold for 'Europe.' The essay considers some of the political implications raised by a contemporary trend that posits Germany's unification (the merging of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990) as a model case for European unity. Identifying the lack of plurality in the German process as an important shortfall, Beattie suggests that the European context has the potential to address more openly questions of diversity and difference in historical accounts of the past and in popular memory, both within nations and between them. But by focusing on debates about the East-West division of the Cold War, and the place of Communism and Nazism in public memory, Beattie also cautions that contrary to common assumptions German experiences are not necessarily worthy of, or appropriate for, European emulation.

Damian Spruce takes as his point of departure the idea, discussed above, that notions of borders are central to the constitution not only of European geopolitics but of an European imaginary as well. Spruce recognises how processes of globalisation and EU integration have transformed the borders of the European nation states. In an analysis that complicates readings of globalised flows of capital and people alike, Spruce concentrates on reading the changes of borders in themselves. He thus aligns his work with recent debates among scholars and activists who argue that rather than fading away, borders are proliferating in the globalised world and their functions are spreading into many different areas of society.

Moving from the political sphere to the cultural (although the two cannot be easily dissociated), Martine Fernandes's vibrant analysis (in French) of blogs by French-Portuguese teenagers offers an insight into the ways that national demarcations fail to take anchor within the new European borderlands. At once (and not) Portuguese and French, the identities of the bloggers is over-determined in their eagerness to ride

national hobby horses, under-determined in their ability to sustain the coherent and exclusive rhetorics of nation-mongering, and haunted by the political experiences of their own generation, as well as those of their parents and grandparents. Emerging from Fernandes's analysis is a sense of cultural dissonance, an interplay between social flux and cultural patriotism, that colours the Luso-Franco-blogsphere in new forms of territorialisation that fail to respect official parameters.

The special issue's contributions on European film raise several of the issues posed in this introduction. Ongoing scholarship in the discipline of film studies has shifted the focus from national formations to transnational exchanges and flows. The paradigmatic shift in film studies is twofold, in that on the levels of theory and methodology the borders of the national are consistently 'de-materialised' as the search for historical unity and cultural identity is exchanged for mappings of difference. This is signalled clearly by the central position that the study of hybrid films, co-productions and international audiences (to mention a few) is currently occupying in the discipline. That is, in the cinematic objects of study and research the 'unhomely' is now (paradoxically) familiar. The three essays included in the present issue offer a clear manifestation, then, of cinema's potential to contest and displace 'Europe.'

Hélène Sicard-Cowan offers a close reading of *Western* (Manuel Poirier, France, 1997), which identifies multiple transnational axes. This film by a Peruvian-born French director has an international cast and a story, set in Brittany, that revolves around the relationship between 'a European man and a "nomadic" foreigner.' Furthermore, the film, as its title suggests, knowingly mobilises imaginary and symbolic conventions of a genre (the western) that has a distinctly non-European genealogy, anchored as it is in the cinematic, historical and mythical imaginaries of the US nation. As Sicard-Cowan demonstrates, the use of an 'alien' genre in conjunction with the narrative of interaction, defamiliarises the landscape and enables a vision of Brittany as a multicultural and multilingual space of alterity. Lars Kristensen's contribution is possibly even more explicit about the inescapable centrality of the transnational when imagining and thinking about Europe. His essay compares *Lilya 4-ever* (Lukas Moodysson, Sweden/Denmark, 2002) and *Interdovochka* (Petr Todorovsky, 1989, USSR), films with a strikingly similar story line (Russian woman travelling to Sweden) but made in different countries and, more significantly, at different moments of European history:

prior to and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kristensen's sophisticated reading of *Lilya* pays particular attention to the critical reception of the film and offers a valuable insight into the complex dynamics of cultural exchange in a (New) Europe. He argues that the theme of human trafficking is articulated in the form of a 'return narrative' that is symptomatic of a widespread European 'anxiety.' Kristensen suggests that the narrative theme also offers an opportunity to enact fantasies of Western European cultural and moral superiority as an antidote to anxieties around change and expansion. Finally, Ian Goode explores how certain perceptions of Europe, and, in particular, of European cinema, can influence in profound, aesthetic, political and institutional ways the formation of a peripheral cinema, in this case that of Scotland. Goode examines the multiple and contested nature of discourses on Europe and the ways in which such discourses can interact with regional and national hegemonic struggles around culture and identity. In demonstrating how multivalent forms of connectedness and identification crisscross European experience, in film and beyond the cinematic world, his essay provides a necessary coda to this issue's attempt to identify the new articulations, discursive associations and tidal flows by which Europe is viewed and voiced in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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