

The Abduction of The Abduction of Europa

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We are all involved in one myth of Europe or another. Indeed the very background for this volume – the setting of the colloquium, of dialogue, of science, progress in knowledge, of science sponsored by the State and supported by various formalized institutions of culture – is one version of a myth of Europe. It is Europe understood as a rational eschatology, as a meaningful, purposeful project where the meaningfulness of scholarly investigation is intrinsically guaranteed.

The purpose of this chapter is to open this question of myth and of rationality by exploring one singular myth, that of Europe, in order to argue for its generality. It is based on a surprisingly resilient and enduring myth with which most are more or less familiar, that of the *Abduction of Europa*. In what follows, I will try to suggest that this myth endures because it lies at the very core of the European self-understanding.

The myth

The first complete poetic treatment of the myth of Europa was made by Moschos of Syracuse, the Hellenistic poet, who lived in the 2nd century B.C., in his bucolic masterpiece, *Europa*. In the version of Moschos the main action of the myth takes place in Phoenicia, more precisely in Tyre or Sidon (in present-day Lebanon), according to other sources. Though the first lines of the poem promise an archeological poem about the

name of Europe it is instead a witty and elegant narrative recounting the abduction of the maiden Europa by Zeus disguised as a bull. The poem of Moschos is divided into four segments.¹

The first segment tells of a dream of the Phoenician maiden Europa. In the dream there are two women, the one representing Asia, the other 'the land opposite', the one native, the other foreign, who fight over Europa as an infant, each claiming to be Europa's mother. The latter tears her away, saying that according to the will of Zeus Europa is to be a gift of honor. Europa leaps out of bed, reflecting over the dream, wondering who sent them and who the figures represent. She expresses hope that the Gods would fulfill the dream. Europa then gathers together her childhood companions and prepares to go to the seashore to collect flowers.

In the second segment, Europa takes up her flower basket on which is painted an allegorical scene. The scene on the basket, a gift from her mother, is described in detail. The basket represents Io, daughter of Inachos, in the form of a cow, walking across the water. On the seaside a group of men look on with wonderment. At the head of the Nile Zeus transforms Io back into a woman.

In the third segment, the maidens pick flowers in the meadow by the beach. Each picks a different kind, daffodil, hyacinth, violet, thyme. All rush to pick saffron and purple roses. Zeus sees Europa and is filled with desire. He transforms himself into a bull, which is described as beautiful in terms of its color, its gentle gaze, and its delicate odor. The appearance of the bull in the meadow attracts all of the maidens, but first and foremost Europa. She reaches out to the bull, touches it, wipes away his sweat and kisses him, whereby the bull moos lovingly. The bull crouches unto its knees and Europa climbs onto it, whereupon the bull hurries away with her. She turns and reaches out a hand to her friends, but it is too late. The bull gallops across the waves dry-hoofed with Europa on its back, accompanied by various 'inhabitants of the sea', led by Poseidon. Europa holds tightly on to the horn with one hand, holding her billowing dress with the other.

In the fourth and final segment Europa interrogates the bull on its powers and their voyage and protests and sorrows over her fate. Zeus comforts her and reveals himself to her. He explains to her that they are going to Crete, from which he came, and which will be her home. There

they will marry and she will bear him famous sons, 'masters of the people'. They arrive at Crete, and all that Zeus has explained becomes true.

Variations of the myth abound (Bühler 1959:17–29; 1968:9–24; Campbell 1991:1–14; Hopkinson 1988:200). Its earliest fragmentary occurrence can be found in the *Iliad* (14, 321f). Other fragments preceding Moschos can be found in the epics of Hesiod and Eumelos, in the lyric poetry of Stesichoros, Simonides, Bacchylides, the tragic plays of Aeschylus. Versions of the myth following Moschos are best known in the works of Horace and Ovid. The versions differ in their emphasis on different moments in the poem, their inclusion or exclusion of details, and, significantly, on the degree of violence involved in the story, some describing Europa's relation to Zeus variously as an 'abduction', a 'rape', and a 'seduction'. Some make more explicit than others that the sons borne by Europa are the progenitors of the European culture, or that one of them is the famous Minos.

Evolution of the myth in graphic arts

Archeological discoveries have confirmed as early as the Bronze Age some kind of relationship between the Cycladic peoples (those based in the islands groups of the Aegean Sea) and the Phoenician coast. The earliest evidence of the myth of the abduction of Europa has been found in Boeotia, the Greek province just northwest of Attica, dominated, in ancient times, by the city of Thebes. According to an adjacent story, it is there the brother of Europa, Cadmos, stopped on his long and unsuccessful search to find his sister. The remnant is a representation, part of a Doric frieze from the 7th century B.C. Archeological findings again support the notion that Cadmos was the leader of some kind of westward immigration, and for this reason Greek legend regards Boeotia as the cradle of Europe (Wattel-de Croizant 2001:5–6).

A myth is an invention, but like all inventions it is never purely invented. It does spring out of the nothingness into being (Derrida 1987). A myth always has its legs firmly placed in some reference or memory, some material or immaterial basis. For this reason, classical studies in particular have always been closely associated with archeology. The progression of historical studies proceeds in a kind of dialectical relationship with the development of interpretations of mythical or literary narrative. This is the hermeneutics of history applied to the deep

1. The following summary is based on Bühler's German translation (Bühler, 1959:33–44).

past. On the one hand, archeological discovery has always leaned heavily on the guiding references of stories, legends, and myths. On the other hand, myth is nourished by archeology, which again and again offers partial confirmation of its content, complete fulfillment, but also limited de-bunking.

The myriad historical works, charting the genesis and development of history, inevitably rely at some point in their self-justifications on the tried and true science of archeology. In other words, to our jubilation or chagrin, the myth of Europa will never have been confirmed, never disproved. *Europa*, like Europe, is a story, a narrative of love, beauty, divinity, violence, westward migration, progeny whose destiny – if it has a destiny – is to seek the political-archeological confirmation or rebuttal of its own fiction (Passerini 1999).

Antiquity thus relegated to the Middle Ages and modern times a double European heritage. On the one hand, a myth, a story of love and violence, between a Phoenician princess and the Olympian god. Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (II:836–875) presents the most memorable version of it. On the other, it provides a geopolitical concept of Europe, incarnated in our time by the image of a woman on a bull, inspired by antiquity, or by a feminine allegory associated with a horse or a cow, symbolizing, depending on the situation, war, armed peace, economic or cultural prosperity vis-à-vis other countries. (Wattel-de Croizant 2001:2)

In the Christian Middle Ages, Europa's original form and implications as a mythical creature caught in the web of lecherous polytheism was discarded in favor of a Christian and imperialistic re-interpretation and political re-inscription. Europa was recast as a quasi-human figure, a symbolic person. She reappears variously as the Christ, thus unifier and ruler of the world, the Pope, ruler and unifier of the Catholic, apostolic Church of Rome and the various emperors of Europe from Charlemagne to Charles V and beyond. Europa thus becomes the warrior queen. Zeus the bull moves to the background. Also absent are the various themes of seduction, abduction, and all intimation of rape. Europa is henceforth a feminine guardian of Europe, by and large a Christian civilization preserved from the infidels (read: Arabs and Jews) and fratricidal combat.

In later representations, Europa reappears as the Goddess of Reason, the European princess of secularism of the last three centuries. It was also she, who, during the Renaissance and Classical periods particularly, reigned over the continents, which we see in pictures, monuments, charts and maps of the world portrayed as women coming with their symbols to pay homage to her, Europa. Henceforth, she appears as a

model of wealth, abundance, power and majesty. After almost five centuries as a world power, she is shown reduced to a much simpler expression following the Second World War. Queen Europa has not abdicated, however, and for the last fifty years, she has been able to present a certain unity of her multiple aspects under a flag of stars.

The 14th and 15th centuries, following the period of power displayed by the eminent, "unifying" persons, brought to light the 'Ovide Moralisé' in which the rule of princes gave way to the reign of symbols and Europa became the Christian Goddess of the illuminators, scribes and printers. Her role is henceforth to reveal the "Ancients" to the world of Christian morality with its Heaven of transfigured souls.

In the 16th and 17th centuries Europa becomes a baroque ornament. She is portrayed as superb, frenzied or tranquil in the world of painters or raised up as a helmeted goddess or Virgin Queen in statues and sculptures: the abduction, the queen, the virgin, the warrior. Each had tried and failed to dominate the warring kingdoms, all of whom would claim her for themselves.

With the Enlightenment, the myth of Europa is liberated from graphic and plastic forms to dramatic and other literary forms. The narrative is adapted for comedies, tragedies, operas, cantatas and ballets. The myth is ironized and eulogized.

The Romantic movement of the 19th century more or less reclaims the myth for spiritualism of Christian origin. It also becomes associated with the spiritual dimension of the nation-state. The French Revolution is explained in terms of the myth. Napoleon wanted to be identified with her and monarchs sought to take her place. This development is exhausted as the burgeoning European bourgeoisie and its closet fascination with the mystical and female sexuality, itself nurtured by the new discoveries of psychoanalysis.

Throughout the 20th century Europa has not wavered, but remained a viable symbol. Nazi Germany adopted Europa in the form of the helmeted Athena, warrior goddess. Modern artists – cubist, expressionist, Art Nouveau or abstract expressionism – use the narrative of Europa to study power, speed, progress, and technology. Trials and tribulations of European construction have involved the myth of Europa in a new cluster of meanings. The masculine impetus of the spirit of Europe – middle-aged men in dark suits – is portrayed at odds with the instrumental state of the EU. The instrumentality of European construction remains at odds with the nature of myth, with the tension between mastery and femininity that informs this historical trajectory.

Structural elements of the myth

The femininity of the European continent. Like no other region, a kind of essence of Europe is associated with the geographical area it covers. Europe is a statuesque continent with her basis in the Orient, the origin of her Greco-Judeo-Christian culture. The continent itself is conceived of as a work of art. Europe is a feminine continent, a sculptured peninsula, with moderate resources, a temperate climate, placing all her nations, like parts of her body but which she actually predates, close to the sea and forming a slim, elegant ensemble compared with the mass and corpulence of the other continents.

Victim and majesty. The most constant opposition in the imagery of Europa is that between the victim of abduction and rape to that of the figure of mastery power and empire. The Queen Europe, solitary and brave, armed, then panicked, tumultuous victim of sexual violence.

Woman and beast. The myth of Europa derives essentially from a cult of woman and beast, which preceded, and, heaven knows, has succeeded it. (The Norwegian tradition, which in all manners must be considered as an alternative to this Mediterranean narrative, nonetheless contains the story of a princess, who falls in love with a polar bear.) The paranoiac complex of the woman as beast is metonymized in the unthinkable sexual relation with the beast. Victorian psychoanalysis would change the course of European modernity by pathologizing this paranoia and perversion as structural and civilizational. Freud reaffirms the birth of Western civilization in complexes of perversion.

Abduction and mastery. The ambivalence of the fantasy of abduction is prolonged in the ambivalence of power in the images. Europa is again and again confused as both victim and aggressor. She is both the victim of rape and abduction, and majestic queen of a continent. Literature on violence toward women reveals a strange structure of condemnation. The victim of sexual violence is more times than not ascribed responsibility for an attack. A more or less unconscious fear of the less physically powerful woman leads to her demonization. According to the masculine paranoiac fantasy, the victim of abduction is the threat of danger.

Feminine eternity and masculine progress. This goddess is the symbol of the feminine continent, being carried away by the divine or demonic forces of a Promethean bull urged on by the force of speed and the power of machines.

Love and misogyny. The overwhelmingly powerful figure of the bull is also an expression of fear of the realization of Europa. Moreover the

question of who seduces whom is transferred to the question of who uses force upon whom (Hinrich). The image of Zeus, the overdimensioned bull symbol of power, might, and masculinity, on the one hand, and Europa as helpless virgin princess, on the other, contradicts the figure of Europa as soldier queen of the Europeans.

Seduction and rape. According to some versions of the myth, Europa is attracted to the bull and climbs willingly onto its back. She travels to Crete with Zeus, makes love to him there, and becomes the matriarch of the European peoples. In other accounts she is abducted by force, carried across the Mediterranean in an inescapable situation and raped there.

Timid or triumphant. In many renditions the bull is remarkably indifferent, nearly automatic. While Europa's departure is calamitous, and all around her are in a state of disarray, the bull calmly makes its way to the east.

Power and eroticism. A strong erotic element flows from the narrative of the abduction. The erotic dimension is more often than not the hinge of contemporary caricatures of the story. What is Europe's desire and how can men in dark suits, entice her, please her, in effect give her what she wants in order to collaborate in European construction?

Deliverance or demise. A number of elements make this ideal for Christian appropriation. Christianity both rejected and adopted it. The Renaissance revived it and Classicism admired it. It was refined in the century of the Enlightenment and underestimated in the century of the nation-states. Despite the violent connotations of violence and rape, the abduction of Europa is assimilated into Christian narratives of glorification. The voyage from Asia to the west is sanctification. In this way the narrative waivers back and forth between Christian and pagan references.

Violence and repetition: Girard's theory of myth

According to Luisa Passerini the explosion in interest for the myth of the abduction of Europa, the multiplication of images and the breadth of literary interpretations, testifies to a symbolic deficit in the process of European construction.

[...] today the poverty and the reticence on the symbolical level constitute a serious obstacle to the formation of a sense of belonging to Europe, which goes beyond considering it as simply the sum of (some) nations and at the same time defin-

itively superior to the stamps of eurocentrism and of the internal hierarchy among different European peoples and cultures. A new cultural identity could also exert a useful critical function with regard to the limited or bureaucratic versions of European unity, while the myth, refigured in art and literature can help us to understand in what sense we can and wish to call ourselves Europeans in relation to other people of the world (Passerini 2002:28).

As we have seen, the myth of Europe has endured for 25 centuries. However, as Passerini documents, a double transformation has emerged in its 20th century revival. It involves, on the one hand, a developing eroticization of the motif of the abduction of Europa, in conjunction with, on the other hand, a thematization of violence. Passerini identifies a unique trend in visual representations of the 'abduction of Europa' in the inter-war and immediate post-war periods. It is the struggle for modernity, the struggle implicit *in* modernity. (Passerini 2002:151).

Classical conceptions of myth, such as that of Max Müller (1823–1900) or Andrew Lang (1844–1912), regard it as a kind tool for understanding nature and thereby mediating humans' relations to nature. Myths are thus seen as allegories or keys to natural phenomena. For Malinowski (1884–1942) it is a social charter created by people to explain and regulate their community (practical, ethical science), providing a precedent for tradition, justifying the control of our social world. According to the Scottish orientalist William R. Smith, myth is the counterpart to ritual and the stories we have left are all that remains of the ritual itself. In the work of Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) myth is a search for origins and an attempt to understand the power of creation ('myth of the eternal return'). It is thus essentially religion and sacred experience which gives myth its utility and structure. Freud (1856–1939) saw myth as a simple expression of repressed psychology, dreams, repressed desires, and wish fulfillment, whereas his wayward disciple, Carl Jung (1875–1961), formulated a theory of myth as the 'collective unconscious' expressed through symbolic forms. Its source is thus a universal, primordial psychic reservoir of images and symbols. In the same vein, Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) considers myth as the desire for experience as a part of a collective unconscious – a cry to return to a universal and undivided psychic self (particularly the hero quest).

The first major international debate on the newly won terrain of the social sciences revolved around myth. Growing out of the methodologi-

cal scandal of Victorian psychoanalysis, it opposes the methodology of Carl Jung and structural analysis of Claude Levi-Strauss. In the 1950's a new type of methodology for the analysis of myth is developed in connections with the innovations brought by French structuralism. Structuralism emerged in France both as a formulation of the uniqueness of the blossoming social sciences and as a reaction against the hegemonic grip of traditional canonical understandings of society emblemized by the turn of the century academic establishment (Dosse 1992:9–16). Structuralism uses the advances made in linguistics and phonology to develop language-based models of myth analysis. Anthropology becomes anthropological semiotics. For Claude Levi-Strauss, myth is the mediator of opposites – binary systems – through a structure underlying the narrative/myth. Problems present themselves as pairs of opposites needing reconciliation: desire/reality, individual/society, good/evil, male/female.

In the context of the myth of Europa, where the love and desire are ambivalently associated with violence, abduction and rape, the work of René Girard makes a distinct contribution. In a series of books focusing on the structure and meaning of sacred violence, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978), and *The Scapegoat* (1982), Girard unfolds a theory of myth and its transmission. According to Girard, the origin of human society coincides with the transformation of what he calls 'mimetic violence' into sacrificial violence.

Already in his early book, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1961), Girard outlined a literary theory of desire as motivation of truth, toppling the notion of truth as free of pathological dimensions. In this work he analyzes the novels of Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust, and Dostoyevsky in terms of 'triangular' or 'mimetic' models of desire. In summary, he argues that our desires are imitated or repeated from models or mediators whose objects of desire become our objects of desire. Through this structure of object-jealousy the model or mediator we imitate becomes our rival if we desire precisely the object s/he is imagined to have. Or other imitators of the same model may compete with us for the same objects. Jealousy and envy are inevitably aroused in this mimetic situation. The romantic concept of a spontaneous desire is thereby illusory. Human desire is a *mimesis*, an imitation. Desire is triangular in the sense that, the relation between the desiring subject and the object desired is always mediated by a third part, the mediator, that indicates the objects of desire. According to Girard, all behavior, be it social or individual, takes place in relation to this triangle of desire and mimesis.

In other words, it is not the violence itself which marks the origin of society, but rather the particular type of transformation that characterizes it. 'Mimetic' violence refers to the violence of repetition and emulation. There is no particularity of aggressor and victim.

Violence is, so to speak, devoid of meaning. All violence was symbolically equivalent, equivalently vacuous. One act of violence entails another; one aggression causes an act of revenge, which again causes another. The chain is endless. Any given act is buried within this endless cycle, without individuality, either in the perpetrator or the victim. All violence is essentially against all.

This endless cycle of common human violence is given particularity and thus meaning when it becomes focused on one particular victim. The community commits a collective murder, establishing itself as a collectivity through the transfer of the guilt. The differentiation is, according to Girard, based on one single trait of the victim, which makes it stand apart. This particular victim is what Girard calls the *scapegoat*. The violence perpetrated against this one victim thus acquires signification in contrast to the violence of all against all, and against none. By setting the victim apart, the collective act of violence also ascribes to it a kind of superhuman or magical power. The community acknowledges and thereby accesses the power by repeating it, through ritual re-enactment in the form of sacrifice. Ritual violence is the process by which new victims are continuously substituted for the original, in an endless change, keeping the structural value of the originary act intact. As the original is far gone, beyond memory, myth – closely associated with the ritual violence – functions to both preserve the mythical origin and hide the origin (in order to preserve and protect it). Girard's theory is supported by a remarkable broad array of empirical support, both across a wide spectrum of world literatures and civilizations.

In this the protection of the origin by its masking becomes the structural equivalent of the symbolic violence. The very condition for the meaningfulness of human culture is the power to mask its origin. The origin must remain symbolic or mythic, or particular signification will collapse.

To a certain degree Girard's theory has a universal character: it seeks to give a plausible explanation for the way that repetition, ritual, religion and, not least, violence are structured in all human relations. The mimetic function arises out of a general need to give individual meaning to the course of human events. Religion, in this context, does not refer to any specific religious group, but to a universal anthropological disposition,

based on symbolic sacrifice, and the symbolic chain reaction which ostensibly leads back to an originary displacement in the form of real sacrifice.

Myth and culture heritage

Heritage is something from the past which has found its way to the present. It is something that finds its way by direction, or by indirection. On the one hand the heritage of the past arrives at our doorstep thanks, in part, to a conscious and thereby ideological administration of cultural artifacts. All states erect cultural institutions with the aim of managing the narratives and symbols of the past. Such narratives and symbols are deeply involved in the legitimization of the state, with the shaping of its structures of power, both domestically and internationally, and in the integrity of its polity. The management of cultural heritage is a classical ideological enterprise. Indeed it is ideology itself: it is the manipulation of meaning for political ends. Thus, cultural heritage is the bread-and-butter of the humanities. It simultaneously reminds us that the human sciences are more or less completely contained within the power structures that have always – necessarily – sought to manage cultural heritage.

On the other hand, cultural heritage comes to us despite institutional arrangements intended to create, preserve and shape it. Cultural heritage possess a remarkable tendency to resist management. At the same time, this resistance by no means frees it from the clutches of ideology. It simply illustrates a subsidiary effect of ideology. Ideology consists not only of an assertive dimension; it also contains negative traces with considerable effects. For example, the cultural artifact that did not make it into the museum collection is often present in its glaring absence. While the ideological use of narratives, such as *The Abduction of Europa*, have had unprecedented force in the formation of legitimate institutions and policies, they point constantly to the excluded, marginalized, and peripheral, to the alternative uses of one and the same piece of cultural raw material. Alternatively, this cultural heritage comes to us, in a distorted form and because of it with results different from those desired. There is, as we know, a necessary distortion of the past. This is not just the result of bad human science. It is the essence of science. This is why the term 'nation-building' has always been puzzling, and with it the more contemporary expression 'European construction'. Both figures imply that some sort of blueprint exists at the outset, that a structure is

already conceived capable of containing a given cultural substance. The culture is assumed to be there, and the task of the architects is to provide us with the necessary plans.

We have dealt with the troublesome question of the origin of cultural heritage. We have touched upon its past and present. One remaining problem is the question of its transmission. How does cultural heritage pass from one generation to another, from one individual, institution or government to the other? Heritage is something from the past, something transmitted from the past to the present. What is this transmission? The passing along of cultural heritage is not like passing a baton in the dark. To transmit culture is to give it away while at the same time keeping it. To receive it is to already have had it. Europa was already European when she took her trip across the sea. The bull already knew where it was going, had a sense already returned from Europe to pick up the spirit of Europe. This is consistent with the function of myth: The origin – which is unavoidably violent – must by nature remain invisible, unthinkable in its entirety.

The message is the myth: De Rougement's 'Message to Europeans'

Prehistory and history of the European Union is inseparable from the trajectory of a certain myth of Europe, a story of the origin of Europe, and of the natural or implicit unity of a continent in search of *de facto* unity (Burgess 2000; 2001:248–257; Schuman 1964). The spiritual unity, fervently announced in the writings of Monnet, Schumann, Spinelli, but also of Hugo, Valéry, Husserl and many others, escaped again and again the synthetic unification sought in the geopolitics of the fledging European nation-states. The calamitous 20th century illustration of mythic frustration is the concerted European attempt to render European security as a question of monetary reparations tyrannically forced on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, leading, as we know, to a level of *insecurity* seldom seen on the continent. The occupation of the Ruhr, the decline of the Franc, and the hyperinflation in both Germany and France in 1923 were nothing but proofs *ad absurdum* of the inefficacy of the Treaty of Versailles (Droz & Rowely 1986:9–10). Versailles thus represents the last cry of a certain myth of European unity. It expresses a mono-logic of cultural identity according to which cultural unity is and always has been what it is,

that the corruption of that unity is forcibly *external*, and that we are capable of locating 'the cultural' in any given phenomenon.

In many regards 1945 represents more than merely the German *Nullstunde*, the beginning of a necessary rebirth after a descent to Purgatory. It is also an exemplary moment of historical discontinuity on the European scale in which all of European and American political references are reduced to equality, and the European economic catastrophe is clearly a European shared interest. Strategies for saving the European soul understand the European destiny as a collective one. This time the ruins of Germany signify that the reality of Nazism's geopolitical aspirations issue from the same European heritage as the genius of the resistance to it. This is one key to understanding the evolution of the discourse of European unity: the assumption that the economic sphere represents the least common denominator for the nearly untenable diversity of the European cultural landscape. 1945 begins a process of strategic or geopolitical disunity among the allies, and a reassemblage of unity on the level of economic rationality. The Marshall Plan, announced in June 1947 is in this regard seen as an attempt to break the vicious circle of disunity caused by the pulverization of cultural unity. The 'dislocation' suffered by Europe is economic, political and social. The solution to it is to restore confidence in Europe as a *whole*, a Europe in which distant and widely differing forms of commerce should want to and be able to exchange their products against currencies whose value has no doubt (Mioche 1997:33–34). Cultural communication is relegated to the level of economics. Reciprocal confidence among diverse and distant peoples is sustainable through the norms and values of economic rationality.

The motivations for the early projects of European construction vary to some extent. In his famous 'Message to Europeans' communicated at the conclusion of the meeting of European federalists in 1945, Denis de Rougement describes the actual situation of Europe as one of danger and threat, a threat which issues from the divisions, both symbolic and material, that mark the European reality today.² Yet, what is threatened

2. 'L'Europe est menacée. L'Europe est divisée, et la plus grave menace vient de ses divisions. Appauvrie, encombrée de barrières qui empêchent ses biens de circuler, mais qui ne sauraient plus la protéger, notre Europe désunie marche à sa fin. Aucun de nos pays ne peut prétendre, seul, à une défense sérieuse de son indépendance. Aucun de nos pays ne peut résoudre, seul, les problèmes que lui pose l'économie moderne. À défaut d'une union librement consentie, notre anarchie présente nous exposer demain à l'unification forcée, soit par l'intervention d'un empire du dehors, soit par l'usurpation d'un parti du dedans' (Deering, 1991:425).

when 'Europe' is threatened? What is the Europe that finds itself in such peril? The response, argues de Rougement, lies in a regard toward the future. Europe is not merely the reality of an extant set of peoples, traditions, histories and cultural heritages. It is also a certain destiny, the participation in a future that is clearly privileged by the European self-understanding. Europe is a past and a present, of course. But Europe is far more a promise, a state of being all Europeans are ineluctably moving towards. It is in this regard the synergy of culture understanding and economic rationality becomes evident. Our task, as de Rougement insists, is to 'edify, together with those foreign peoples associated with our destinies, the greatest political formation and the most vast economic collectivity of our times' (Deering 1991:425–426). The European destiny is in place. All that remains is to erect the institutional structures that will guarantee its concretization. The 'vocation' of Europe is thus not merely to *be* European, to live the destiny which is properly European, but to work to clear away the impediments to the European. These impediments are to the greatest degree economic and anti-liberal: the barriers – geopolitical, institutional, economic, or otherwise – which hinder the circulation of goods, thus hindering the flowering of Europe as well. These barriers, argues de Rougement, and the very notion of a barrier, have undergone a significant mutation during the two World Wars. For Europe has reached a point in its evolution, where it has begun producing the seeds of its own decline, in which progress itself becomes a movement toward self-destruction.

Thus in de Rougement's understanding of what ails Europe there is a clear conflation of the circulation value of goods, persons and ideas (Deering 1991:426). The conceptual framework of human rights, set out in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* in 1789, undergoes a kind of transcription: not only are individuals naturally endowed with the right to be free, but also economic *goods* and intellectual *notions* enjoy a certain kind of naturally given liberty. In this way, de Rougement develops a kind of homogenization of three otherwise heterogeneous, even discontinuous discursive fields. Liberalization is conceptually generalized to cover economics, personal liberty and ideas. The notion of impediment to liberty is transformed into the basis of a liberation theology.

In some sense it is the object of this essay to study the development of this attempt at conceptual harmonization and homogenization. The spirit of universalization, profoundly inscribed in the program of Enlightenment, finds itself pushed to a kind of outer limit in the pro-

grammatic attempts at ideological programmatization proper to the European project. This is the very notion that Europe is sufficiently unified to form the basis for the massive project of institutionalization, which has been seen since the relaunch of the EMU in the Single European Act in 1986 by François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl.

This *materialist* twist on the Enlightenment program of *principled* universalization is prominent in the development of the Treaty of Paris, as well as in the writings of its principle proponent Robert Schuman. The Schuman Declaration of 18 April 1951 is widely considered the institutional point of departure for the European 'construction' as it is understood today, and the basis for the Treaty of Paris, which founds the European Steel and Coal Community. Setting aside for a moment the conceptual foundations of the treaty, to which we will return in a moment, we can note that the preamble to the Treaty of Paris builds upon the same kind of conceptual homogenization between the cultural sphere and the sphere of economic rationality, as the broad conceptions of de Rougement.

Conclusion: Europe as the abduction of Europe.

To sort through the grand narrative tradition exemplified by the various images of Europe is not just a parlor game. The meaning of Europe, the code to the cultural heritage of Europe *is its own abduction*. Europe has indeed been abducted. The virgin princess – this strange, erotic, majestic, violent, creative spirit of European heritage – has indeed been carried from Asian beaches, in the clutches of a lecherous demi-god, to become the noble mother of our culture. The grand tradition of the abduction of Europe is itself the story of abduction, of co-opting the myth of the origin. European cultural history is precisely this effort.

Owning the cultural *Thing* is the existential mode of European culture. This is why the guiding hypothesis of this volume is that culture, more than ever, must be understood in the field between economics and politics. The story of Europe is the story of the seduction, kidnapping and enslavement, and releases this meaning. It is the story of the fight for the right and the power to forge concepts and definitions, administer the categories, and, above all, the values that make possible the construction of societies, nations, governments and institutions.

The myth of the abduction of Europe has been abducted by the demi-gods of European construction. The names of its demi-gods are

Monnet, Schuman, Adenauer, van Zeeland, Bech, Maurice, Sforz, Stikker and van den Brink.³ These masters of European construction found themselves on Eastern shores, discovered the princess, changed their form, seduced her and carried her away to form the European Union. Like Jupiter, they were little aware of the ambivalence of her message and meaning. European politics is about the struggle for control of that meaning. European construction is an incessant and contested process of interpretation. Politics is fundamentally hermeneutic.

No political structure or institution is the natural consequence of a given cultural past. Surely, some are more appropriate than others. There is no natural way to acquire rights to cultural artifacts. The cultural basis of Europe is always abducted. All political institutions are bootleg editions of cultural myths. Both the myth and its pirating are necessary. Pirating serves to keep hidden the origin of the myth.

This is true not because there is no such thing as a legitimate cultural heritage, but rather because all political legitimacy is an abduction, a derivation, one interpretational choice among others, sometimes many others, one interpretation of the cultural past, one version of the meaning of the past. The European Union, like any political institution is, to borrow Eco's text-hermeneutic concept, an *opera aperta*, an open work.

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3. Østergård would have it that they are only saints. See his contribution to this volume.