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### 1 The Discovery of Europe

#### SOME CRITICAL POINTS

From a work of criticism, we expect today concrete results, or, at least, demonstrable theses and viable hypotheses. Yet when the word appears in the dictionary of European philosophy, “criticism” means rather an investigation concerning the limits of knowledge—concerning that which, precisely, is not possible to hypothesize or maintain.—GIORGIO AGAMBEN, Stanze

In his relentless (and relentlessly cited) *Clash of Civilizations*, the very man Henry Kissinger once commended as “one of the West’s most eminent political scientists” (qtd. in J. Bhabha 597n17) confidently argued that “Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin” (Huntington 158). For us in the humanities—still afflicted perhaps by some “realism of uncertainty” (Newman)—the absolute certainty with which Huntington could draw such a neat map of Europe was, to say the least, enviable. Putting an end to the hairsplitting sophistries of Brussels bureaucrats and academic theorists who kept chewing over the “old problems of boundaries” (Slack and Innes 3) and “what is meant by the term ‘Europe’” (Brugmans 11), Huntington almost gave us the specific coordinates to trace the boundaries of Christian and Western Europe: it was as if Santiago de Campostela in the northwest and the Virgin Mary’s House of Ephesus in the south-east could provide a definite and unquestionable geographical body to Europe.¹

Such a clerical map was at once the confirmation of Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen’s notion that continents were but cultural constructs and the outdoing of “metageography” itself. Is not a continent, the skeptical metageographers would have asked, “one of the main continuous bodies of land on the earth’s surface” (the definition, after all, is as authoritative as the *Oxford English Dictionary*)? But, if so, rather than a continent,
Europe would only be “a small heading of the Asiatic continent, . . . a western appendix of Asia” (Valéry 24 and 38; see also Rougemont 33; and Derrida, Other Heading 11–17). It looks as if the term continent, as applied to Europe despite the land continuum of Eurasia, embodies only some European fantasies, and no more: the fantasy of a Europe that wants to imagine itself different, that wants to separate itself from Asia; the fantasy, moreover, of a Europe that wants to think itself as a geographical, natural, and factual unity. But then again, where does Europe end? On the Adriatic? In Yugoslavia? Turkey? Or perhaps even Russia? One can see why Lewis and Wigen, writing only one year before the Clash, thought that “there are many reasons to believe that the . . . continental scheme . . . obscures more than it reveals” (2–3). But where Lewis and Wigen saw difficulties, Huntington only saw the certainties of (political) science. Ipse dixit! Centuries of beating about the bush of Europe and its borders had been ended with the straightforward ways that have always marked the “practical science” of the “Geheimrat” (Hardt and Negri 33–34)—what Immanuel Kant called the “political moralist, i.e., one who forges a morality . . . to influence the current ruling power . . . even at the expense of the people, and, where possible, of the entire world” (“Perpetual Peace” 128–29). Too bad that such practical science did not believe its business to be overly concerned with the limits of that morality. Too bad it had to do away with all complexities of a definition of Europe. Too bad it aimed instead at producing readily usable, if fundamentalist, civilizational hypotheses that the current power could immediately translate into “momentary commands” (Kant, “Perpetual Peace” 129).

What does the fortune of the clash theory tell us about cultural production today? If what we expect of theory is a set of readily usable hypotheses that can be promptly translated into political action, Huntington’s book has proven a sign of the times: “We have become all too practical. Fear of the impotence of theory supplies a pretext for bowing to the almighty production process” (Adorno 44). Between one cavalier theory of Europe and another of the West, the Clash has crowned an age in which all that has been asked from an increasingly scientific, practical, and Sokalized academia was not criticism and complications, but usable theses by the pound. The humanities have quickly succumbed; criticism—“questioning, upsetting and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged” (Said, Humanism 28)—
disbanded as an unnecessary complication, while the practical sciences have become hegemonic in all cultural discussions.

In all fairness (and to avoid some unnecessary clash of the disciplines here), quite a good number of social scientists have seen little science and lots of cultural prejudice in Huntington’s confessional view of world geography in which alternatives are homogenous and civilizational borders as unmovable as the mountain that never went to Muhammad. The civilizational thesis has accordingly been castigated as a “one-sided conjecture” (Wilson 255), and one, moreover, that “does not survive historical scrutiny” (Amartya 16). To which one must add, still, that Huntington did not really discover the civilizational boundaries of Europe, but adopted them ready-made, like Marcel Duchamp’s famous urinal, from an age-long cultural tradition of European thought in the process of discovering itself as European. The chapter that begins here would like to trace a brief and critical history of such a “discovery of Europe.”

Before the incipit of this story brings us back to another conflict of civilizations (in the beginning were the Persian Wars), let me offer an apology and a preface first. The apology concerns the telegraphic brevity, undoubtedly fraught with many simplifications, with which this opening chapter attempts to outline the story—after all, “no history could be written” (Pagden, introduction 1)—of the discovery of Europe from 500 BC to the early 1700s. Although the real concern of this book is with the emergence of an idea of dialectical and self-sufficient Europe in the late eighteenth century, I find that a brief outline of what precedes such surfacing is altogether necessary to my later argument. Not because I believe a history of the idea of Europe should or could be offered here: such history is impossible not in Anthony Pagden’s sense—too much has been written already (the same argument in Lützeler)—but in the sense that history, as Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests in Provincializing Europe, is the very thought that produces Europe as its own “sovereign, theoretical subject” (27). Writing a history of Europe, or of the idea of Europe, means, then, tautologically, to write a history of the European idea of history.

I will try to enter the logic of this tautology later in this book. Before doing that, however, what I would like to accomplish here is to reconstruct the repertoire of ideas and commonplaces, and analyze some critical points, that the eighteenth-century theorists of Europe will find available to them, ready to use and argue in their definitions of either
Europe or, mutatis mutandis, “Universal History.” As a preface, I would like to justify the title of this chapter by saying that Europe, too, had to be discovered. Not only in the sense that at different times in their histories, also Africa (Northrup), Islam (B. Lewis; Abu-Lughod), Japan (Keene), and the by now ubiquitous American tourist (Rahv) had to discover firsthand the “old continent” they only knew from literature or legend. More important than that, Europe had to discover itself as Europe—that is, to find unity in the plurality of all its imperial, national, local, cultural, and civilizational differences. When did Europe begin to see itself as one?

E Pluribus Unum: Theories of Beginnings

Sometimes it can seem hopeless. How do you mould a single European people out of the lumpen masses scattered across the continent? European citizens . . . still insist on speaking different languages, they read different papers, worship at the shrines of different celebrities, chortle at different television programmes. But there is one exception. . . .

—CHARLEMAGNE, “The Players Do Better Than the Politicians in Making Europe Loved”

In a chapter of his The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance, programmatically titled “The Discovery of Europe,” John Hale begins: “When in 1623 Francis Bacon threw off the phrase ‘we Europeans,’ he was assuming that his readers knew where ‘Europeans’ were, who they were, and what, in spite of national differences, they shared. This was a phrase, and an assumption, that could not have been used with such confidence a century and a half before” (3). For Hale, therefore, it was between 1450 and 1620 “that the word Europe first became part of common linguistic usage and the continent itself was given a securely map-based frame of reference, a set of images that established its identity in pictorial terms, and a triumphal ideology that overrode its internal contradictions” (3).

Robert Bartlett’s The Making of Europe, instead, follows Marc Bloch’s idea of the Middle Ages as the “childhood of Europe” (Bloch, Feudal 442) and sees Europe becoming one already in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when a militarily hegemonic Frankish center (Germany, France, North Italy) begins conquering, colonizing, and “Euro-
peanizing” the rest of the “continent” (Britain, Flanders, the Low Countries, Iberia, Southern Italy). Such colonization changed a previously “highly compartmentalized world” into one where religion, economy, and systems of education were shared by all, so that, eventually, a “cultural homogenization of Europe” was achieved under Frankish rule: “By 1300 Europe existed as an identifiable cultural entity. It could be described in more than one way, but some common features of its cultural face are the saints, names, coins, charters, and educational practices . . . . By the late medieval period Europe’s names and cults were more uniform than they had ever been; Europe’s rulers everywhere minted coins and depended upon chanceries; Europe’s bureaucrats shared a common experience of higher education. This is the Europeanization of Europe” (Bartlett 291).

Adopting a similar line of reasoning, but implicitly refuting the Frankish beginnings of Europe, Norman Davies’s Europe: A History dates a “birth of Europe” back to the period of “barbarian” migrations, invasions, and conquests that penetrated the Roman Empire from around 330 (date of the founding of Constantinople) to 800 AD. For Davies, Europe was (and still ought to be) an ethnic melting pot, the product of centuries-long racial dispersals and mixings—a cosmopolitan project, that is, forgotten by a later age of nationalism:

By the eighth century, therefore, the ethnic settlement of the Peninsula [Celts, Slovenes, Huns, Goths, Jewish, Afro- and Indo-European “Romans”] was beginning to achieve a lasting pattern. The eighth century, indeed, was the point when important social crystallizations occurred. Yet five more major migrations [Vikings, Magyars, Mongols, Moors, and Turks] had to happen before all the basic population of the future Europe was complete. Europe was conceived from the most diverse elements, and her birth was painfully protracted. (238)

Enrique Dussel, who has other continents in mind, goes forward to 1492, “date of the ‘birth’ of modernity,” to trace back an origin of Europe “as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity” (“Eurocentrism” 66). Only through a confrontation with its colonial Other, not through Bartlett’s internal forms of colonialism or Davies’s migrations, can Dussel’s Europe emerge as an identity. And while Helmut Reinicke (iii) maintains the same colonial beginning of Europe in the year 1492, Bernard Lewis, in The Muslim Discovery of Europe, goes back to another confrontation (and another Other) to find Europe born on the day
Charles Martel faced the Muslim armies in Poitiers. The year was 732: “It was indeed on this occasion that the very notion of Europe as an entity which could be threatened or saved appeared for the first time” (18).

M. E. Yapp, on the other hand, convinced that Poitiers is ideologically still a Christian, rather than a European, coming together, does not agree with Lewis in the least: “The emergence of the concept of Europe required . . . the waning of the power of the idea of Christendom. For that process we must look at a much later period” (138). Europe emerges then for Yapp with a much (much!) later “secular shift” (142)—when the religious threat of Islam wanes and, in 1714, the treaty of Utrecht remains the last testament to Europe as a “Christian Republic.” After 1714, in other words, with the secular “emergence of Britain as the leading naval and military power in Europe” (O’Brien 65), Yapp’s true and secular Europe began.

While some venture as far back as the homo abilis (Cunliffe; Phillips) to find the beginnings of Europe, others see the latter as a yet unfinished project, a still “hopeless goal” best left to Beckham to bend into conceptual and cultural unity under the auspices of the European Football Federation: “Over the past decade [in the 1990s] European football teams have turned into [the only] living, breathing embodiment of European integration” (Charlemagne, “Players” 55).

Rather than attempting the impossible task of determining which one is the true beginning of a self-consciousness of Europe, we would better ask ourselves, simply: Why so much ado about beginnings in the first place? The fact is that beginnings, as Edward Said once wrote, are always disingenuous: one begins from A not because there is some irrefutable reason to do so, but only because “the beginning A leads to B” (Beginnings 6). It is quite likely, in this sense, that Hale begins in 1450 (A) only to argue, as the undoubtedly Eurocentric reviewer does not miss a chance to remark, the universal value (B) of the Renaissance’s “stunning achievements that shaped (for better and for worse, but mainly for better) the future not only of Europe but of the whole world” (Nauert 1087). Bartlett and Davies (like Geary) begin with medieval conquest (A) only to dispel the myth (B) of all ethnonationalisms, whose “idea of exclusive national homelands is a modern fantasy” (Davies 217). And Bernard Lewis suggests the battle of Poitiers as a beginning of Europe (A) with the clear intent to theorize (B) the original and fundamental importance of Muslim-Christian rivalries—the clash of civilizations—in the shaping of Europe and the West.5
To paraphrase Denis Donoghue’s “America in Theory” (4), you think you are reading about the beginning of Europe—in the Renaissance, at Poitiers, in 1450 or 1492—and you suddenly find yourself within a systematic theory hinging on the word Europe and all its supposed meanings. It is in this first sense that, as the title of the present book maintains, Europe is in theory: speaking of Europe means—implicitly or explicitly, consciously or not—creating a theory not only of Europe itself but of a whole series of other things, such as culture (Hale), modernity (Dussel), nationalism (Bartlett), secularization (Yapp), and so on.

Assuming the game of beginnings is then not entirely naive, let me begin my story from the Persian Wars (500–449 BC), when the Greek states first reunited as “Europe” in order to confront the threat of Darius’s Persian Empire. It is a good date, after all, to start understanding the very secular and military origin of the east/west antithesis that still informs, as a rhetorical unconscious, more recent civilizational clash theories. It brings us back to an old Europe, no doubt, but one that may still bear on the ways a new one is imagined.

Old Europe

Today, the center of gravity is shifting.
—DONALD RUMSFELD, press briefing, January 23, 2003

I’m looking for a permanent center of gravity.
—FRANCO BATTIATO, “Centro di gravitè permeneate”

In a transcription of the notes he took for a course held at the University of Milan in 1943 (while yet another clash of civilizations was haunting Europe), Federico Chabod wrote:

European consciousness means differentiation of Europe, as a political and moral entity, from other entities . . . the concept of Europe must have first been formed as an antithesis to that which is not Europe. . . . Now, the first opposition between Europe and something that is not Europe . . . is the fruit of Greek thought. Between the age of the Persian Wars and the age of Alexander the Great emerges, for the first time, the sense of an Europe opposed to Asia—opposed in habits and culture, but, mainly, in political organization: Europe represents the spirit of “freedom,” against Oriental despotism. (23)
Before the Persian Wars, as we know from Denys Hay, “the word Europe was associated in the first place with myth” (1)—the myth, later popularized by Ovid, of Europa, daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre, who lived in what we now call Lebanon. From there, she was kidnapped by Zeus disguised as a white bull, and brought to, well, Europe: “The god little by little edges away from the dry land, and sets his borrowed hoofs in the shallow water; then he goes further out and soon is in full flight with his prize on the open ocean. She now trembles with fear and looks back at the receding shore, holding fast a horn with one hand and resting the other on the creature’s back” (Ovid 1.121). Europa’s flight may have meant “to record the westward flight of Canaanite tribes early in the second millennium BC”; and her rape may have represented the historical facts of “an early Hellenic occupation of Crete” (Graves 1:196–97). All that is certain, however, is that an explicitly political, cultural, and moral distinction of Europe, beyond the reach of mythology, was achieved only when Darius’s armies started threatening with insistence the Greek cities. Isocrates (436–339 BC), urging a pan-Hellenic unity against the Persian threat, leaves us the first written record, in his Panegyricus, of a political understanding of Europe (see Momigliano; de Romilly): the latter is a strategic alliance to make common front against the Eastern menace. If strategy requires uniting the cities’ forces into one Europe, war propaganda necessitates a demonizing of the enemy, which is accordingly depicted as ideologically and culturally opposed to “us.” Europe, though geographically united with Asia, begins then to emerge as a commonplace ideologically separated from, and rhetorically opposed to, a negative place “of lavish splendour, of vulgarity, of arbitrary authority, of all that was antithetical to Greece and Greek values” (Hay 3). To summarize with the unforgiving words of Neal Ascherson, “In this particular encounter [with Asia] began the idea of ‘Europe’ with all its arrogance, all its implications of superiority” (49).

What is intriguing about Arnaldo Momigliano’s theory is that it makes Europe originate quite instrumentally from a simple rhetorical antithesis concocted for specific military ends: for Isocrates, Europe is the land of freedom and good government; Asia is the threat and commonplace of slavery and despotism. Fighting together against Persia means, then, nothing less than to protect civilization against evil. As Aeschylus puts it in The Persians, those “Europeans” will never be vanquished—freedom, if not God, is on their side: “They are slaves to none, neither are they subject” (qtd. in Davies 102). A theory of Europe, from its very out-
set, is a theory of Orientalism, which is this book’s intention to follow throughout.\textsuperscript{8}

All this is nice. But it is also quite puzzling: Whatever happens to Africa—third continent in the Greeks’ tripartite \textit{oecumene}—in this rhetorical construction of free Europe against the despotic Orient? Well, it looks like Africa is a continent de trop in the fable of early European identity. It is as if, in Denys Hay’s poignant words, “two continents suited the Greeks better than three” (2).

Jacques Derrida could not have put it better: it is a binary logic of identity and otherness, a binary way of thinking, that begins “Europe.” Put differently, Europe arises as a structure “of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil . . . identity vs. difference . . . . The second term in each pair [being] considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first” (\textit{Of Grammatology} viii). In this second sense, Europe is \textit{in theory}, and born inseparably from it: at the same moment in which a place that starts calling itself Europe develops its peculiar logic—its binary way of thinking, its structure of language, its deep grammar, its logos, its “grammatology”—it also institutes the cultural and epistemological limits that make it possible for that place to identify itself as Europe: “The reflection on identity as open question and as relation to alterity, begins from the ‘philosophy’ and the way of thinking of Europeans . . . it may be that European peoples recognize in the question of identity their own different and common identity, the game of alterity as identity” (Gnisci 86).

In the theory of Greek beginnings—a theory of the origin of European identity in a Greek thinking characterized by an “attitude of continuous comparison and confrontation with the other” (Gnisci 20)—Europe thus emerges with (or as) a new way of binary thinking and dialectical antitheses: “All derives from this original ambivalence that has always been the foundation of European identity” (Iiritano 41); “the originality [of Europe] is exactly in its having developed a thought of oppositions that is absent, instead, in any other culture” (Perniola 117); “the antithesis East-West is a mythical-symbolic asset that is proper of Europe only” (Marramao 59); “in Europe, one thinks one is identical with oneself in as far as one is different from the other—identity is built on difference” (\textit{Le Monde}, qtd. in Pisano 289). Europe is the coming together of “Iranian oracles and Athenian rationalists” (Cassano, \textit{Pensiero} 25–30), of Dyonisian and Apollinean (Nietzsche), of “the world of nature (\textit{physis}) and that of men (\textit{nomos})” (Pagden, “Europe” 37).
While the ideological limits are set, the geographical boundaries, however, remain (until Huntington, that is) vague and mobile, as the most recent discussions on the European Union’s inclusions and exclusions still attest. Isocrates’ Europe, for instance, coincided with Greece, southern Spain, Southern Italy, Sicily, and lower France; Herodotus did not even take the idea of Europe as a continent very seriously at all, since, geographically speaking, Europe and Asia were not even separated by any sea (Herodotus 2.16). At any rate, wherever it was or ended, Europe was for the Greeks a heaven blessed by perfect weather (Herodotus 2.26), an “extremely beautiful land,” one “of highest excellence” (Herodotus 7.5). We will follow the unfolding of climatology—the idea, namely, that gentle and temperate climates engender gentle and temperate peoples living in gentle and temperate political systems—in the following chapter on Montesquieu. The first step of such unfolding, however, can already be found in Hippocrates (460–370 BC), for whom Europe and Asia form not only ideological but also climatic and moral antitheses:

A variable climate produces a nature which is coupled with a fierce, hot-headed and discordant temperature, for frequent fears cause a fierce attitude of mind whereas quietness and calm dull the wits. Indeed, this is the reason why the inhabitants of Europe are more courageous than those of Asia. Conditions which change little lead to easy-going ways; variations to distress of body and mind. Calm distress and pain increase courage. That is one reason for the more warlike nature of Europeans. But another cause lies in their customs. They are not subjects of a monarchy as the Asiatics are and, as I have said before, men who are ruled by princes are the most cowardly. (Qtd. in Mikkeli 8–9)

To which Aristotle added the following in the seventh book of the Politics: “The nations in cold regions, particularly in Europe, are full of [courage] . . . which is why they continue to be comparatively free . . . . By contrast, those in Asia . . . lack [courage]; which is why they continue to be ruled and enslaved” (7.7). Strabo (63 BC–21 AD), the link between Greek and Roman culture, followed by declaring Europe’s climate best “suited to the development of excellence in men and in governments” (Strabo 2.5.26). Both political and natural considerations, in sum, identified Europe against Asia and claimed the superiority of the former over the latter. Arguably, nature and geography were being transformed into symbols and commonplaces, into systems of meaning: cold was given a moral and political significance (courage), and heat another (cowardice).
The Romans, by and large, inherited much of the Greek definition of Europe, including the idea of Europe’s perfect weather. Pliny (23–79 AD), who called Europe “by far the fairest of lands,” was certain that its gentle climate had produced “gentle [people], clear reason, fertile intellects . . . and they also have governments, which the outer races never have possessed” (1.2.80). Yet the East had started to lose much of its immediate political signification for Rome: the Persian threat was on the wane, and, more significantly, Constantine had moved the capital from western Rome to eastern Byzantium (renamed Constantinople for the occasion) in 331. This does not mean that the memory—what I am calling the “rhetorical unconscious”—of a fundamental antithesis was lost. Traces of it were preserved in fact in the very science that had invented it—rhetoric—where the term Asiatic, for instance, started meaning a deviation from normative humanitas, and “tended to become pejorative . . . in a literary sense—bombastic and over elaborate composition could be thus described” (Hay 4).

At any rate, it is agreed that the term Europe was of little interest for the Romans, for whom Europe existed, at most, as a relatively superfluous geographical concept: “Caesar never used the word. Virgil referred to it now and then, but merely in passing; and the same is true of Cicero, Horace, Statius, Sallust, Tacitus, Appianus, and St. Augustine” (Duroselle 65). The Mediterranean, not Europe, was the organizing principle for a Roman rhetoric of self-definition, of politics, and even of mapmaking (Hay 6). The vague borders set by the Roman Empire, though “not always precise lines on a map or judicially defined” (Kormoss 84), configured, then, an identity pushing southward and comprehending the northern coasts of Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria.10 At the same time, a northern barrier, set between the Rhine river and the Hadrian Wall (begun in 122 AD), would separate a sedentary civilization from the nomadic barbarians of Tacitus’s Germania and Caesar’s Gauls. In a way, traditional east/west divisions were supplemented, if not replaced, by new north/south ones—with the south as the locus of a desirable humanitas, and the north as the site of barbarism (see Fournier 97): “On one side of the frontier the reunited Roman Empire held firm; on the other a restless mass of peoples, largely in the tribal stage of development, tilled the forest clearings or roamed the plain. Understandably enough, most Romans saw this division in terms of black and white. For them, the Empire was ‘civilized’—that is, subject to ordered government; the barbarians were, by definition, ‘uncivilized’ ” (Davies 213–14).
Despite its scarce interest in Europe, the Roman Empire will play a very important role in the genesis of modern Europe that I will follow in the next chapters: the Romans had been the first “Europeans” to conceive of the city-state (Pliny’s “governments”) as a legal person, a res publica that belonged not to the emperor (who could die and be replaced), but to its inhabitants. The Twelve Tables (450 BC), and the later Codex of Theodosianus (438 AD), along with the Justinian Laws (529 AD), had been the first attempts to legislate the limits of political power and individual rights (“individual” being understood as a nonslave, propertied male) within the republic. The Italian humanists of the fifteenth century were instrumental in making of Rome the symbol of whatever is good about, and culturally proper to, Europe: their work was meant as a preservation and recovery of Roman culture after the destruction caused by the barbarians from the north.

It was only with the growth, initially within the Roman Empire itself, of two oriental religions—Judaism first, and Christianity following—that Europe regained importance and began to acquire a new sacred connotation underpinned by the authority of the scriptures. While Arab-controlled Jerusalem replaced Rome and Byzantium as the center of the orbis christianus exemplified in the so-called τ-ό (or terrarum orbis) maps, the three continents of the Greek oecumene were tied to precise theological meanings through the myth of the diaspora of Noah’s progeny. According to Christian exegesis, the great human diaspora mentioned in the sacred texts of Christianity prepared what Maurice Olender has called “a geography of malediction”:

[Ham commits the sin] to expose publicly his Father’s [Noah’s] obscenity by laughing and making fun of his nudity. Ham therefore sees his cursed descendants become “servant of servants . . . unto his brethren” (Gen.9.25). The Church Fathers, who had read Josephus, attribute the peopling of Africa to him. To his two brothers who “went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness” (Gen.9.23), tradition grants two other continents. Shem, marked in Genesis by his privileged link to the eternal Elohim, receives Asia. Japheth, whose Hebraic name evokes “beauty” as well as “openness,” the “wide space” of a legacy capable of “dilation” and “expansion,” will be the father of Europe. For the readers of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the etymological fiction of a “Euru-opa,” meaning “wide vision,” could serve to
confirm the providential ambition of this continent which “sees far” (eurus, ops). Since Hecataeus of Miletus in the sixth century B.C. the Greeks had divided the world into three parts: Africa, Asia, and Europe. From this point on, this ancient geography was christianized thanks to the new biblical ancestors of humanity. (10; see also Ricceri 4–5)

Japheth’s descendants were then said to have occupied Europe, Ham’s Africa, and Shem’s Asia. In this “ethnic rationalization of space” (Mignolo, Renaissance 219), the subaltern position of Africa, and the hegemonic one of Europe, were sanctioned for the second time. Moreover, west and east, Europe and Asia, Japheth and Shem were once again bound together in a series of rhetorical antitheses of European and, as Edward Said calls it after Freud, “non-European” (Freud): uncircumcised/circumcised, New/Old Testament, future/past of monotheism, Hellenic/Semitic. The Jew would then occupy, to the days of Auschwitz and beyond, the formal place that was once assigned to the Persian as the very antithesis to Europe. To the Jew, a new child of Shem would soon be added as the figural antithesis to Europe’s race.

When Muhammad had his vision in a cave of Mount Hira, north of Mecca, it was the year 610 of the Christian calendar. The privileged place of Christianity as the latest prophesy that amended an older one was immediately shattered by the newer parvenu from the east that arrogated unto itself the privilege of all emendations. It was the beginning of a long warfare between Christianity and Islam, which eased only, and temporarily, with the breakup of the caliphate in the ninth and tenth centuries. Islam’s armies had soon started pushing at the doors of Europe, and the speed and extent of their conquests had been unseen since the times of Julius Caesar: by 643, they had reached Tripoli; by around 652, they started attacking Sicily (discussed in chapter 5 of this book); between 660 and the 670s, Arab navies kept besieging an apparently impregnable Constantinople; and by 711 Córdoba, Toledo, and most of Spain were in the hands of Muslim armies, now advancing toward the Pyrenees. The threat of Islam made different peoples—Romano, Gallic, and “barbarians” or Arian Christians—enter into a coalition, in 732, which the chronicler Isidor Pacensis called “Europeenses” (B. Lewis 18). This was a Europe, as Denis de Rougemont notices, quite limited in extension to “the people who live north of the Pyrenees and the Alps” (47). The Mediterranean was being replaced by the Alps as the center of a new Europe.
What the advent of Islam accomplished was to halt the spread of a self-declared universalistic and ecumenical religion on the Asian and African borders, thereby making Christianity coincide with a geography tentatively called Europe. It is at this point that Europe began, in a way, to lose some of its political meaning and reduced itself to a mere religious and geographical denotation: “The moral . . . almost ideological content of this Europe is the Roman Church” (Chabod 29–30). As an example of the loss of moral connotations, “it is instructive to witness the efforts of Bede, writing as late as the early decades of the eighth century. . . . He describes Gregory the Great as being pope ‘over the whole world,’ and being set over ‘all the churches which obey the true faith.’ Faced with exactly the same linguistic problem a century earlier, St. Columba had . . . addressed the pope as ‘Head of all the churches of the whole Europe’” (Hay 28). As Novalis would reminisce with longing in 1799, Europe is Christianity in those happy years known as Europe’s Middle Ages: “What a beautiful and happy time when Europe was a Christian land, and one Christianity humanly lived in this part of the world; one great common interest reunited all provinces of this spiritual kingdom” (10–11).

The symbol of such a Christian Europe is undoubtedly Charlemagne, king of the Franks (768–814), “inventor” of Europe for some (Curció; Jordan), and, for others, the one who made Europe disappear behind the hegemonic concept of Christianity (Perroy): “His title was none other than that of the true monarch of the West, of the monarch ruling over that entity which was called Europa by some, and the imperium Christianum by others, and also imperium Romanum by still others” (Ullmann 105). Between 800 and 814 A.D., Charlemagne was at work trying to reconstruct the waning Roman Empire into his new Holy and Roman Empire. Yet whether this domain was imagined as Europe or Christianity is not a matter of mere nominalism. A Christian world is one: it is the orbis christianus of τ-ο maps, made of the sons of Noah, brothers everywhere—some already enlightened by the glow of Providence, some others, like the children of Shem, still ignorant of Truth but convertible nonetheless. This wholesome world stood in intimate contrast with that of Europe, which coincided instead with a gens (Japheth’s), one “ethnic” (Lyser 37) people united under a secular authority. The distance between the terms, rather than suggesting synonymy, may have marked a perceived tension, instead, between a factual geographical Europe—a limit of Charlemagne’s expansion—and an ideal, speculative one—a “destiny,”
as it will later be called by Hegel—still in the process of becoming, and
toward which Charlemagne imperially strived. As K. J. Lyser puts it,
“Europe is here the geographical . . . setting of that world order that
alone counted, the Christian one” (34).

If Christendom was then the bearer of all moral and political mean-
ings, Europe remained the limit of its geographical realization. As a
limit, Charlemagne’s Christian Europe, unable until the end to recon-
stitute the old empire, “only succeeded to half of the Roman domina-
tions, and grew up on the north-western provinces” (Woodruff 1). As the
Venerable Bede saw it, Europe was composed of Gallia, Germania, and
Spain (Rougemont 48). Whereas the Romans, focused as they were on
the Mediterranean, had comprehended the African coast as part of the
empire’s identity, Charlemagne’s Holy Roman Empire clearly marked a
southern frontier: the Mediterranean was periphery and extreme limit
of Europe. In fact, in his study of the linguistic usage of the terms Oriens,
Occidens, and Europa between the sixth and the tenth centuries, the
philologist Jürgen Fischer follows Marian Henryk Serejski and counts
at least thirty mentions of Europe in the years of Charlemagne. Such
zealous accounting is meant to suggest that European was, around the
Carolingian court, a token of Frankish identity signifying an opposi-
tion to, and independence from, anything southern, Mediterranean, and
Roman. Although the lands immediately above the Mediterranean were
then technically part of the empire, the term Europe, if we follow
Fischer’s suggestion, was already alluding to a northern difference from a
south that was European in theory only: a negative Europe increasingly
abhorred as the site of corruption, decadence, and decay.

It is for this reason that theories about Charlemagne as the “ori-
gin” of Europe will usually be enmeshed in some kind of north/south
polemics—from Montesquieu’s theory of a Carolingian rebirth of Eu-
roppe, through Madame de Staël’s romantic Middle Ages, to the his-
toriographies of François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, Jules Michelet, and
Henry Pirenne. Around Charlemagne hinges in fact the vexed question
of whether the origin of European freedoms had been Roman or, rather,
Frankish. Were the Romans those who gave freedom and the law to
Europe? Or where they despots, whose chains were broken by the proud
Germans with their customary laws? The polemic, in fact, had begun
as early as 1573, when François Hotman wrote his Franco-Gallia against
the dismissal of the “barbaric” Middle Ages theorized by Italian (and
therefore Romano-centric) humanists.
Hotman’s text “narrates the German conquest of Gaul in order to show that the conquerors possessed among them freedom and equality” (Carravetta 46). The theory was based on some vague allusions taken from Tacitus’s *Germania*, but, no matter if “the improbability of . . . these assumptions is obvious to all” (Sergi 34), it acquired authority first with Montesquieu’s theorization of feudalism (discussed in the following chapter), and then with the German Romantics’ theories of the *Markgenossenschaft* (a communal village putatively typical of early German tribes). Tacitus’s allusions, in a way, were the rhetorical unconscious that started informing theories—let alone the historiography of Armand Maurer or the political science of Friedrich Engels—which served indifferently both the nationalist Right and the internationalist Left to theorize an “original” Europe beginning not with Rome but with the northern Germans (see Sergi 33–36).

In terms of chronology, the polemics between Roman and German origin of Europe meant an endless controversy over the issue of the Middle Ages: were they the ages of darkness, or the rebirth of (Carolingian) Europe? On the one side, southern humanists (we will follow Juan Andrés in chapter 3) claimed that the Middle Ages were a period of decay from the glorious epoch of Rome; on the other, the northern *philosophes* were unwilling to share humanism’s “pejorative concept of mediaevalism, whose purpose had been to undermine the legitimating doctrine of *translatio imperii*” (Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski 60)—the shift of hegemony from southern Rome to Charlemagne’s Frankish Holy Roman Empire.

Along with the north/south divide, at any rate, remained the east/west one. Charlemagne and the Christian-Frankish Empire, first of all, identified and defined themselves in opposition to, once again, the Orient: “The Frankish Empire would probably never have existed without Islam, and Charlemagne without Mahomet would be inconceivable” (Pirenne 27). Moreover, the Byzantine Empire, with its wealth and ostentation, with its display of a new kind of “Oriental” luxury in daily life and liturgy, created a new longitudinal division between Latin or Roman Christianity, on the one hand, and Greek and Slav orthodoxy on the other. The iconoclastic wars between an eastern church accused of worshipping images and a purer western one replacing crucifixes with crosses and Virgin Marys with whiteouts had begun already in the eighth century. Charlemagne, paying homage to Rome, and breaking away from Byzantine orthodoxy, had increased a sense of western Christian
distinctiveness that had come close to establishing, in Robert Bartlett’s words, “a quasi-ethnic” identity. The schism was finally formalized in 1054, with the Papal Bull excommunicating the Patriarch Cerularius, and with the latter’s Synodal Edict formalizing the breach. “This was no mere quarrel between rival sects. . . . It involved real hatred” (Duroselle 127). The Greeks, once central in the formation of the idea of Europe, became one “of the ‘borders of Europe’ . . . , one of the ‘peripheral’ countries of Europe” (Balibar 1). Dante's casting of Ulysses and Diomedes in hell is a chapter in this marginalization of Greece. For its re-Europeanization, we need to wait until the 1820s, when the Greek wars of national liberation against the Ottoman Empire will fuel the Romantic generation of Lord Byron.

Back to the Middle Ages: it is in the name of Christianity, and not of European expansion, that the crusades began to protect the loathed Byzantines from the continuing pressures of the eastern “Saracens.” In 1095, just as Europe was starting to grow toward Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary (Lyser 136–37), pope Urban II called on Christendom to take arms against Seljuk’s advance: “Dios lo volt” (God wishes it). The call, which would result in the forty-day siege and mass massacres of Jerusalem in 1099, had an effect similar to Poitiers: French, German, Provençal, and North Italian armies united and mobilized against the common enemy from the east. Once again, however, the unifying principle was not Europe—understood as a territorial or political concept—but Christendom, with its symbolic cross painted in red as the badge of a union authorized by the divine.

The Christian God of love had wanted a holy war. Under Him, Christendom constituted not only a moral and political concept but a race:

In 1098, for example . . . after the crusaders had taken Antioch, Jesus appeared in a vision to a priest in the army, [and] asked: “Man, what race is this (quaenam est hec gens) that has entered the city?” and received the answer: “Christians.” . . . French chansons and rhymed chronicles talk of la gent cristiane, and in one of them, La chanson d’Antioche, Jesus is pictured hanging on the cross, explaining to the good thief alongside him that “from across the sea a new people (novele gent) will come, who will take revenge for the death of their father.” (Bartlett 251–52)

As a race, Christianity had the imperative to defend itself from Shem’s Muslim progeny and take revenge on the Jew, time allowing, “for the death of their father.” The world had become, in the Christian mentality
of the Middle Ages, a clash of civilizations, a “territorial dichotomy that shaped mental geography in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The abstract ‘Christendom’ also summoned into being its mirror image: ‘heathendom’ . . . The world was seen as the arena of the clash of great religio-territorial spheres” (Bartlett 253–54).

Despite the monomaniacal obsession to conquer Jerusalem, which lasted for around two hundred years and climaxed in horrors—eight thousand Jews killed in Rhineland, seventy thousand Arab civilians in Jerusalem—that even the most pious Saint Bernard could not but denounce, the Christians never managed to “free” the Holy Land. As Jacques Le Goff summed up the results of the seven Crusades from 1096 to 1291, “their only fruit . . . was the apricot” that the Christians had brought from Armenia (95). Some indirect effect of the Crusades, however, can still be observed. First, they confirmed the Franks as the leading European power and as the paladins of its Christianity. Second, they exacerbated the implicit theory of the essential Christianity of Europe. Third, and just as important, the Crusades established a pan-European set of knights’ orders, and a landed aristocracy diffused over the territory. Like Charles Martel after Poitiers (Trevor-Roper 96) and Charlemagne in his undertaking to defend the territories of Christendom, the Crusader kings had to reward obedience and service in battle with landed property—the foeudum—and therefore divide the land of the empire among a class of landlords (Bloch, Feudal). For Montesquieu (see next chapter), feudalism was that uniquely European institution that created the social conditions for freedom to mature there and not elsewhere.

The rise of a popular literature in vulgar tongues, sometimes religious and didactic (the Italian “rhythms” of Lawrence and Saint Alexis), more often celebrating and codifying the oppositions of “courteous paladin[s]” and “heathen Arabs” (Chanson de Roland verses 576 and 2810), constitutes another contribution of the age of the Crusades to the culture of Europe. For the first time, imperial Latin was abandoned in favor of popular languages singing the “pride of France, renowned land, you see” (Chanson de Roland verse 3315); for the first time, rhetorical argumentation was leaving room to a catechistic acceptance of revealed facts that Erich Auerbach saw hinging on the rhetorical figure of parataxis; and for the first time, the kings and queens of tragedy, along with the serves of comedy, were being replaced by the intermediate baronial classes. The
result was a new literary code, as well as a new ethical one, both resulting in the codification of a Christian worldview in the chanson de geste:

The knightly will to fight, the concept of honor, the mutual loyalty of brothers in arms, the community of the clan, the Christian dogma, the allocation of right and wrong to Christians and infidels, are probably the most important of these views. . . . They are posited without argument as pure theses: these are the facts. No argument, no explanatory discussion whatever is called for when, for example, the statement is made: *paien unt tort et chrestiens unt dreit* (heathens are wrong and Christians are right). (Auerbach, *Mimesis* 101)

Supplementing the chanson de geste, which celebrated the exploits of Frankish and Arthurian chivalry, the chanson d’amor entertained the courts of Europe with songs of courting and love. The troubadours would bring these songs from one court to another, thus assuring the formation of a common European canon based, roughly, on a predilection for accent-based prosody, rhyme, decasyllabic verse, and the topos of courtly love.

Both the *philosophes* and, again, the Romantics saw the chanson d’amor as intimately tied to the development of one European culture: courtly love was for them a peculiarly European phenomenon, necessitating, as I will discuss in chapter 4, of a non-Oriental understanding of love, of women’s role, and of heterosexual, monogamous marriage (see Passerini). Despite this retroactive eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorization of love and epic poetry as European, the chansons were still written under the hegemony of the concept of *Chrestientet* (Christianity). Christian knights, not European warriors, people the *laisses* (strophes) of the *Song of Roland*, from which the very word *Europe* remains conspicuously absent:

D’altrè part est li arcevesque Turpin.
Sun cheval broche e muntet un lariz;
Franceis apelet, un sermun lur ad dit:
“Seignurs baruns, Caries nus laissat ci;
Pur nostre rei devum nus ben murir.
Chrestientet aidez a sustenir!
Bataille avrez, vos en estes tuz fiz,
Kar a voz oijz veez Jes Sarrazins.”
[On the other side is the Archbishop Turpin. He spurs his horse and mounts upon a hill; he calls the Franks, and tells them: “My lords, barons, Charles brought us here; He is our King, and we would die for our king, and to help him defend Christendom. You will fight, you all are bound to it, for you’ll see with your own eyes the Saracens”]

(Chanson de Roland verses 1124–31)

It is only with the institution of universities in the thirteenth century that a more secular culture of Europe begins to disengage itself from Christianity. Built on the remains of Alcuin and Charlemagne’s system of schools and monasteries, shaped after merchants’ guilds and corporations, and characterized by the extraordinary mobility—“from one end of the former Carolingian empire to the other” (Wieruszowski 21)—of its teachers and students, the university or studium generale soon became the main instrument for the hypostatization of a European culture as Culture, and for its dissemination in the Christian territories of the West.19 In Robert Bartlett’s words, the medieval universities, imposing “a common experience of higher education” through both curricular standardization and teachers’ mobility, were the true engine for “the Europeanization of Europe” (288–91). The university centers of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, while establishing “a kind of metropolitan cultural dominance” (Bartlett 288), also theorized what culture was and divided it into the two complementary parts of trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

Central in this curriculum, despite ecclesiastical resistance, was the figure of Aristotle.20 He soon began to represent “a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge” (Daly 79) for the medieval student to work on and study; “the entire encyclopedic and pedagogic project of the West was being founded” (Sini 63) on his concept of logics. Through Aristotle, indeed, the need for logic and demonstrable hypotheses was upheld in the new universities against the catechistic predilection for parataxis that had distinguished the previous age. What was canonized through the Analytica, the Metaphysics, Topica, and Politics was a veritable way of thinking, a theory of knowledge that competed with the authority of the scriptures and posited “empiricism as the basis of all knowledge, the role
of reason in the treatment of empirical matter and the eventual presentation of knowledge in logico-deductive systems of definitions, hypotheses (axioms), postulates, and theorems or propositions” (Pedersen 274). Abelard’s *Sic et non*, “set[ting] side by side judgments which seemed at first view contradictory” (Daly 11) only to solve them later through the mediation of reason, was but one example of the necessity to submit even revealed truth to the scrutiny of reason. Through Aristotle, the academic centrality of dialectics as the proper method of critical thinking and cultural transmission in Europe was, in short, instituted. Growing from the initial antithesis of east and west, Europe was now developing into a veritable dialectical and secularized thinking, into a binary logic recognized, undoubtedly with some Eurocentric presumption, as the only valid epistemology.

Already in the medieval university a theory of knowledge came close to fully theorizing Europe itself. It did not do that, however, because the kind of knowledge on which such a university depended was still in large measure reliant on an element that later theories of Europe would have to obliterate and repress in order to claim a purer Europeanness: the Arab (see Menocal, *Arabic Role*). While the Carolingian schools had confined themselves within the strictures of religious education, the enlightened Abassid caliphs of Persia (750–1258) had equipped the so-called House of Wisdom of Baghdad (762), the observatories of Cairo (1005), and the schools of Córdoba (1010) with all the Greek manuscripts they could import from Byzantium. Aristotle, forgotten, if not abhorred, in the lands of Christianity, had been “discovered” in the European universities of the thirteenth century only through the translations and commentaries of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rashid (Avverroës), who had preserved his texts. The study of geometry, arithmetic, mathematics, and astronomy, having fallen into oblivion in Charlemagne’s Europe, had also been brought from Córdoba and Toledo via Islam. Secular poetry, finally, marginalized by Christian diction, had entered Europe through the Sicilian court of Fredrick II, an “eighteenth-century man born in the thirteenth” (Amari, *Musulmani* 4:730), who had managed to create a center of cultural exchange among Greek, Arab, and Jewish cultures between 1196 and 1250.21

What came to be known as “Graeco-Arab philosophy” (Campanini 5) was the metaphysical and cosmological imaginary of medieval Europe—an imaginary famously depicted by Dante in the *Comedy*. But whether Arab philosophers could, in the end, be foundations to anything Euro-
pean at all—this was to be the core of endless controversies: was the Arabs’ role that of passive preservationists of an originally European culture (O’Leary)? Had the Arabs merely translated, as in a famous title by Richard Walzer, “Greek into Arabic”? Had they even “alienated” their Islamic faith in order to embrace Plato and Aristotle (Netton)? Or were the Arabs creating and planting the very roots of Europe’s modern science (Saliba)? Despite their differences, all these positions inherently deny a fundamental (and fundamentalist) opposition between Europe and Islam. In order to claim such fundamental opposition again, Arabs and Jews—the progeny of Shem—had to be transformed, in the European imaginary, from producers to objects of knowledge. The transformation, which will culminate in the academic institutionalization of Oriental studies (Said, Orientalism) that I discuss in chapter 5, begins perhaps in 1311, when the Council of Vienna first instituted the teaching of Hebrew and Arab in the major European universities. The new discipline of “oriental philology” (Pedersen 298; Dvornik 65) was a science largely understood within the logic of the church’s ecumenical mission of speaking to the unbeliever: knowledge of the unbeliever was useful for conversion; or, plainly, for the self-defense of Christianity. The most serious consequence of this creation and institutionalization of a new discipline was that the “Oriental” element, now symbolically relegated within the field of “oriental philology,” left the disciplines of philosophy and logic uncontaminated by any spurious, non-European element.

Bracketing away Ibn Rashid, Aristotle became, then, the foundation of European knowledge—and such knowledge could study, but not be studied by, the “Oriental.” At any rate, the canonization of Aristotle despite Christian reservations clearly hints at the emergence of a secular Europe somewhat independent from Christendom. The hegemony of the Roman Church was slowly breaking down. Among the causes of its enfeeblement is, in 1378, the establishment of the residence of the French antipope in Avignon, France. The French attempt to take away the papacy from Rome started a rather unbecoming dispute:

No one conducted a more vigorous campaign against the residence of the popes at Avignon than the Florentine exile, Petrarch. In 1366 he published a letter claiming that only the crudest motives retained pope and cardinals in the Rhone valley. From this point a lively controversy developed between Petrarch and a series of French apologists for Avignon. The exchanges were scarcely edifying and much turned on Petrarch’s accusa-
tion that the French were barbarians, like all other trans-Alpine peoples, and counter charges of corruption and incivility in Italy: all a curious anticipation of the later battle of the books which developed between the two countries in the sixteenth century. (Hay 73–74)

This was the seed that would later produce the schisms of the national churches (Gallican, Anglican) from Rome. The weakening of Christian unity, however, was its most immediate effect. By 1396, when the Crusaders were defeated in Nicopolis, the idea of a common Christianity seemed unable to maintain a unitary front against the emboldened enemy. The Crusades were over. Christendom immediately saw its confines shriveling under the attacks from the east: in 1427, the Turks occupied Serbia; in 1446, Mourad III invaded Greece; in 1448, after the victory of Kosovo, the Turks held total control of the Balkans; in 1453, Constantinople fell—scandal and wake-up call for Christianity—and the victorious Mohammed II started moving toward Bosnia, which fell in 1465.

Another Europe—an eastern one with Poland as frontier, “periphery and shield” (Mikkeli 38)—was being shaped by the advance of Turkish and Muslim armies: to the rest of the continent, this other Europe appeared dark, threatening, and quite Oriental; its sinister symbol, concocted between 1462 and 1465 by Florentine writers at the service of the Christian court of Hungary, was Dracula, the demon from the east haunting the dreams of Christianity (Berenger). What was clearly a living dead, however, was the unifying force of Christendom. Another imagined community, so to speak, was needed to defend “us” from the scurrying Turks: a linguistic shift from Christianity to Europe had to occur once Christianity had lost any cementing power. It is not that, to be sure, Christianity disappeared altogether; simply, some of its moral and political signification was being transferred, relocated, and translated into the idea of Europe.

Translation was, slowly but surely, effacing its original, and incorporating it. Eager to submit Christendom to the concept of Europe was the Vicar of Christ himself, Silvio Enea Piccolomini, elected pope Pius II in 1458. At the congress of Mantua (1459), he already seemed less inter-

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22 Traces of this translation are clearly visible as late as in Sebastian Münster’s *Universal Cosmography of the Whole World* (1575), or in Abraham Ortelius’s *Theater of the Universe* (1587)—one insisting that “Europe comprehends today Christendom,” the other that “Europe is name of the part of the world since ancient times comprising Christendom” (qtd. in Céard 58).

23
ested to recapture the holy places to Christendom than “to drive the Turk out of Europe.” And in the letter to Mohammed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, the pope did not ask the victorious Saracen to convert for the gain of paradise, but to surrender, rather, for the sake of “admiration from the whole of Europe” (qtd. in Hay 85). The importance of this pope in the promotion of the concept of Europe, which had been previously eclipsed by the linguistic hegemony of his own faith, should not be underestimated. For one, to quote Denys Hay, Pious II turned the word [Europe] into an adjective. There was little classical encouragement for a use of “European”: Europaeus and Europensis are found, but not commonly or in the most admired authors . . . . Dante, for instance, goes out of his way to avoid the word in a passage where he writes of “Asians and Africans” but styles the natives of the third continent as “inhabitants of Europe.” . . . In Pius II, however, the word has come to stay. Its usefulness made it have real significance. (86–87)

So Europe became a quality, an attribute that could determine or qualify the object to which it was attributed. Just as heat makes the iron warm, or blueness makes the sky blue, so did Europe now make its inhabitants Europeans. It was a spirit of the place, shaping its people in its own image. This may imply, incidentally, that a relative cultural consensus had already been achieved regarding what, exactly, Europeanness was supposed to qualify: in the cultural horizon within which Europe emerged as an adjective, European meant a cultural, humanistic value based on the tradition of the so-called classics, on the cult of ancient Rome, and on the study of ancient thought. It was Jacob Wimpfeling’s Europa colta—the place of culture (Chabod 45–47)—that would become the core of Europe as the Republic of Letters I discuss in chapter 3.

Europe was back—as a unifying, moral, and political concept. Yet this was not necessarily the same Europe of Isocrates, but one decidedly moving northward: “Enea Silvio [Piccolomini],” suggests Philippe Braunstein, “gave [Europe] a German body” (35). The true spirit of classical Europe, for Piccolomini, was no longer to be found in the “heretic” (read orthodox) Greeks, nor in the corrupted Romans, but in the Frankish and German north, raised up from barbarity by Charlemagne, the new center and heart of modern Europe. Nor was the pope the only one to push the center of Europe up north: as the decline of Christendom had been in good measure determined by frictions between the Roman papacy and the nascent Gallican church of Avignon, it
is unsurprising to see the new Europe bearing the signs of this tension. The anonymous writer of a pamphlet advocating a move of the papal see from Rome to Avignon insisted that France (more precisely, Marseille), not Rome, was the geometric center of Europe (qtd. in Hay 74–75).

In 1407, Richard Young, from England, would rehearse similar arguments: “The French are at the very heart of Europe” (qtd. in Martene and Durand 749). In sum, a growing interest in the word Europe, increasingly privileged over Christianity, seems historically to coincide with “a transfer of the center of gravity away from the Mediterranean . . . to the triangle Germany-France-England” (Elton 97). Long gone are the days when Francesco Petrarca (in Italia mia) could boast the self-confident superiority of Mediterranean Europe separated by the providential Alps from a ranting and raving north: “Ben provide Natura al nostro stato, / quando de l’Alpi schermo / pose fra noi et la tedesca rabbia” (Nature well sought after our well-being / when She posed the Alps / as a shield between us and the German rage) (611). In the age of Pope Piccolomini, a Mediterranean hegemony is no more. From now on, a Mediterranean dignity will need to be defended, more or less hysterically, through the usual and desperate claims to origins—that modern European poetry begun in Spain (Andrés’s claim, discussed in chapter 3); or that philosophy, the “thinking of Europe,” must have begun midway between the Greek archipelago and Southern Italy (for a history of such a claim, see Casini 35–67).

Continuing with our story of the unfolding of dialectical Europe, we should stop, at this point, to single out two “discoveries” that seem quite important for the Renaissance self-understanding of Europe: the printing press and America. By embedding language in the manufacturing process of mass-produced books, the printing press transformed words and ideas into commodities (Ong, Orality 118) that could be sold and exchanged in markets much wider—continental—than the ones the amanuenses could have ever dreamed of covering. Printing, then, made local phenomena (the Italian Renaissance, German Protestantism) pan-European ones; it made old classics and new authors widely (and cheaply) reproducible, thereby promoting the canonization of (European) culture; it made maps of the world easily accessible, thereby articulating a new consciousness of space, and of Europe’s place in it; it moved Europe toward a new stage of the Aristotelian cult for logics and precision by imposing unprecedented standards (dictionaries, grammars) to linguistic expression; it also made the exchange logic of early capitalism
an integral part of the cultural production, embedded already in the
printing, circulation, and sale of the book commodity (Eisenstein).

In 1469, Giovanni di Spira introduced printing in Venice, and the next
year presses would be found in Milan, Verona, Foligno, and Florence.
Niccolò Machiavelli would publish one of the very first European best
sellers—*The Prince*—in the brand-new Blado Press of Rome on January
4, 1532. Starting to imagine politics as a science, Machiavelli’s text, like
the *Art of War* that was to follow, theorized not only an entirely secular
Europe—Christendom being reduced to the all-too-secular papal state—but
also, and most important, a certain self-sufficiency of Europe. Apart from
very few examples taken from Asia—I count Moses, Cirius, and Darius—all
possible forms of government, and an entire repertoire of princely
conducts, could be theorized by looking at Europe, and at Europe only:
“My reasoning in matters of war needs not go beyond Europe. Hence, I need
not recount what the Asian habits were” (566). To legitimate such closure
of Europe, and bracket away the world entire, Machiavelli had to theorize a
plurality of the European world that both Montesquieu (chapter 2) and Hegel
(chapter 5) would put at the basis of their dialectical Europe (on Europe’s
plurality and multiplicity, also see Morin 27): “Europe has had many
excellent men of war; Africa a few; and Asia even less. This has happened
because in these last two parts of the world, there have always been one or
two empires at most, and only a few republics; only Europe has had a few
empires, and an infinite number of republics” (585).

A fragmentation of power among different states, for Machiavelli,
made Europe the place where courage and military genius had to grow:
if no single authority existed and controlled all others, each prince then
needed to acquire political skills (which political science would impart),
military cleverness (which war could form), and personal fortitude
(which republican freedom nourished). Not only did Machiavelli’s Eu-
rope have many republics; moreover, each of its republics had multiple
centers of power that balanced authority among each other, thereby
preventing a single authority from becoming despotic: “The examples
of the two kinds of governments can be observed today in Turkey and
France. The Turkish monarchy is governed by one lord, and all others
are servants. But the king of France is placed amidst a multitude of long-
established lords” (127). Machiavelli’s theory (or its rhetorical uncon-
scious) will return for instance in Houdar de la Motte’s ballet *L’Europe
galante* (1697), where Europe is represented as a set of different national
characteristics (see Hazard, European Mind 54). It will also reappear in Montesquieu’s distinction of Europe from an Asia “where [instead] the rules of politics are everywhere the same” (1.252). On the other hand, Machiavelli is already echoing here the memory—or rhetorical unconscious—of Isocrates’ initial definition of political Europe as the locus of freedom. Curiously enough for a book published after 1492, also Isocrates’ binary oecumene returns to inform Machiavelli’s political science: not only Africa but also, and most strikingly, America, is now absent from Machiavelli’s antithesis of Europe versus Asia. Has America not registered yet in the symbolic order and rhetorical unconscious of the Europeans? The new geographical fact means nothing yet? Machiavelli, in fact, is not an exception: “It has . . . been shown that during the sixteenth century books . . . on the New World were relatively few in comparison with those on Asia Minor and the Orient” (Hay 99).

Despite Machiavelli’s silence, Columbus’s return from the Americas would, in the end, spur a novel interest in the self-theorization of Europe. Reshaping the whole European notion of space, the existence of America “shattered at a blow traditional geography and especially the traditional geography of religion” (Hay 99) that so far had divided the world into three continents; it “forced a redefinition of Europe and its place on the globe” (Mignolo, Renaissance 264). Paul Hazard adds:

> Of all the lessons derived from the idea of space, perhaps the latest had to do with relativity. Perspectives changed. Concepts which had occupied the lofty sphere of the transcendental were brought down to the level of things governed by circumstance . . . . Practices deemed to be based on reason were found to be mere matters of custom, and, inversely, certain habits which, at a distance, had appeared preposterous and absurd, took on an apparently logical aspect once they were examined in the light of their origin and local circumstances. (Hazard, European Mind 11; see also Dupront)

> A process of Occidentalization—which had begun, if not with the Persian Wars, then at least when “Christendom” had separated from eastern orthodoxy—reached the final stage when “Europe began to look West to build an extension of [its] own destiny” (Mignolo, Renaissance 325). Europe was moving further from the Mediterranean; now, Europe was the West, and western was its future. The new allegorical world maps, such as Nicholas Visscher’s 1658 “Orbis terrarum,” personified
the four continents in the corners of the map and earnestly attested this Occidentalization of Europe: “In a culture with alphabetic writing, where conventions have established that reading proceeds from left to right and from top to bottom, a hierarchy for a meaningful distribution of objects on the space of the page has also been established. The places where the four continents were located are highly significant, reinforcing the meaning already expressed by clothing and sitting positions. Europe, of course, is at the upper left corner” (Mignolo, Renaissance 279).

While becoming the West, Europe, which in the τ-ο map had usually (but not necessarily) occupied the lower left corner, was also moving up north. And, as if this were not enough, it was becoming center too: in 1569, the Flemish cartographer Gerhard Mercator produced what would soon become the most widely used cartographic projection of the world (now spherical again) on a plane surface. In the attempt to represent compass directions (useful for commercial navigation) as straight lines, Mercator’s projection had to distort proportions: and it may not be mere chance that, centering between Paris and London, such distortion “shows . . . Europe . . . as relatively large with respect to most of the colonized nations” (Turnbull 7).

This frenetic activity of mapmaking, which both the cheaper printing process and the “discovery” of America had ushered in, must have had some considerable effect on European minds: first, it canonized, once and for all, a definite position of Europe in the world—west, center, and north—all at the same time. Moreover, Columbus’s deed (like Vespucci’s, Magellan’s, Drachs’s, and even Cortez’s) could be easily read as a sign of Europe’s superiority—the “smallest continent” on earth, yet capable of conquering, “with its skills and courage,” all others (Louis Moreri, qtd. in Céard 63). Mapmaking, in this sense was only asked to represent such superiority in visual ways, and to compensate for relative smallness with the centering on Europe in Mercator’s projection.

Mapmaking was also instrumental in personifying Europe again, long after the myth of Europa had downed, as a type, a character, and a genius loci. Represented as a woman-queen, Europe graciously accepts, in a condescending version of colonial exploitation, the gifts of the other continents. Here is Walter Mignolo describing Visscher’s personifications of the four continents on the edges of a 1636 “Orbis geographica”:

Europe and Asia are represented by well-dressed ladies, while Africa and America are represented by seminaked women. Comparing the represen-
And here, as a supplement, is Denys Hay describing, in more general terms, the typical European iconology of the four continents between 1577 (the anonymous Habitus praecipuorum populorum) and 1611 (Cesare Ripa’s Iconologia): “Europa—crowned, cuirassed, holding a scepter and an orb, with weapons, scientific instruments, a palette, books and Christian symbols; Asia—garlanded and richly dressed, holding an incense-burner, and supported by camels and monkeys; Africa—naked, with elephants and lions, snakes and palms, and often with the sun’s rays like a halo on the head; America—naked, with a feathered head-dress, holding a bow and arrow” (104). Personifying Europe was an immensely powerful rhetorical procedure of definition and selection: at the most explicit level, such personification founded the identity/sameness of Europe and its peoples against that of other continents. It did so by fashioning an identity that was highly appealing to the Europeans of the time: Europe was not the pillager of tribal communities or the continent torn by wars of religion and dynastic succession, but, rather, represented elegance, science, culture, Christian ethos, and, in a word, civility. Sure, it wore the insignia of the warrior, but how else could it face the animal threat of Asia or the plain savagery of Africa and America? The confrontation of civilization and savagery, as often remarked, generated two apparently contrasting paradigms of the “European man’s discovery of himself as . . . a moral being” (Elliott 159). On the one hand, the prevailing European position was the one taken by François Ranchin in his History of the World (1637). For Ranchin, savagery ought to be civilized by Europe—and Europe, accomplishing this most pious mission that admittedly brought back some gold, was not pilfering America’s wealth, since robbery was said to presuppose property, and property civilization (qtd. in Céard 58). A “Europeanization of the world” (Cocks 16) was a moral mission that meant, among other things, an education of the savage into the bourgeois ethics of property. The other position was
Montaigne’s critique of European civilization (the thirtieth of the *Essais* titled “Cannibals,” 1588), or Bartolomé de Las Casas’s accusation of Cortez’s (*Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, 1552), in the name of a purer “good savage.” Despite obvious differences, both positions do assume a European superiority in relation to the savage: European superiority is argued explicitly in the case of Ranchin’s civilizing mission—some kind of “white man’s burden” that Europe (and later the West) ought to carry in order to bring social, cultural, and moral development to all corners of the world; and the same superiority is assumed implicitly in the case of Montaigne and Las Casas, as “denunciation of one’s faults becomes intellectual gymnastics [for strengthening and bettering the image of Europe], not recognition of the superiority of the other” (Dupront 51).

Ranchin’s thesis of a fundamental coincidence of civilization and property, and of both with Europe, will be put (see chapter 2) in the service of the theorization of Europe as the place of true wealth—that is, private property—different from the apparent or “unrealized” wealth typical of the “vacant places of America” (Locke 5:120). Its most immediate effect, however, was to open for Europe one of the major sources of its primitive accumulation (and, therefore, of its capitalistic modernization): colonial plunder.≥≠

Personifications of Europe, finally, gave an immediate, conceptual image of unity symbolized by the harmony of the body in all its parts. We can find such symbol neatly represented in Sebastian Münster’s famous *Cosmographia universalis* (1544), which represents Europe as a woman with Spain as its head (France and England have not yet displaced her from hegemonic position). Unity, in turn, meant the implicit institution of some standards of Europeanness: if Europe was a person, then it had, like a person, one character, one way of life, one “genius,” and one mode of conduct.≥∞ This was the duck stage of the theorizations of Europe: a place had to walk like Europe, look like Europe, and quack like Europe in order to *be* Europe. What Europe had to look like, in turn, was sufficiently summarized in the iconology of Europe—“a scepter and an orb, with weapons, scientific instruments, a palette, books and Christian symbols.” Any deviation from this standard, abroad but also within Europe itself, was to be considered as nothing less than a defect of Europeanness: could the ugly-duckling Turks without Christian symbols ever be Europeans for Montesquieu (chapter 2)? Could eighteenth-century Spain (chapter 3), alleged to be behind by now in both scientific
instruments and books, be considered fully European? And would Sicily, eternal colony without a scepter (chapter 5), ever claim to be a part of Europe? 1492, the year of the “discovery,” is, then, also the year of Europe’s first planned ethnic cleansing, of her cohering into one character: the fall of Grenada, with the ensuing conversion or expulsion of Jews and Moors ordered by bishop Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros in that year, points already to the disturbing fantasies of one “pure European identity” (Ali 37).

From this process of differentiation, personification, and identification, a sclerotic and one-way consciousness of Europe—both in its geographic and in its moral and political sense—was cementing between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. England, in the meantime, was rising as a major player in European affairs. The Portuguese state (which had begun European expansion overseas in 1415 with the seizure of the Muslim port of Ceuta, followed by Madeira in 1420, Mauritania in 1448, and the Congo River in 1482), and the Spanish crown (which had financed Columbus in 1492) were quickly declining, suffocated by debts contracted with foreign merchants to cover the military and commercial costs of their colonies overseas. A more entrepreneurial class of merchants, instead, had begun British expansion overseas: its exploitation of the colonies profited the state enough cash in taxation to grant, in turn, sufficient military power to consolidate possession, protect the routes from pirates, and monopolize commerce with the Orient. Once British expansion was in motion, the system kept reproducing and amplifying itself: exploitation of the colonies’ riches and labor power kept generating new wealth; exploitation of the colonies’ preexisting ethnic, caste, or tribal divisions kept providing the low-cost bureaucratic and military apparatuses for the control of the territories. Marginal to Europe in terms of both geography and demography, England soon became not only a visible part of Europe but its antonomasia. For the explorer of Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis, therefore, it was only natural to compare Atlantis’s food not simply to England’s but to “any collegiate diet that I have known in Europe” (107); to desire to “see Europe” in the moment of despair (108); or to speak comfortably of “we in Europe” (113). Also, William Shakespeare’s Sebastian, in The Tempest, could confidently talk of “our Europe” (act 2, scene 1, verse 103). Europe was England, and the other way around.

Even outside of England, Europe was in everyone’s mind—first of all, after the obsession with space that the “discovery” had entailed as a
precise geographic place on the map. Rabelais’s *Gargantua* (1534), comforting cuckolded Panurge with a little lesson in geography, goes to show what sharp interest in cartographic matters the man of the Renaissance, cuckold or not, must have had: “Thy beard, with its hues of grey, white, yellowish, and black, hath to my thinking the resemblance of a world-map. Look, look here. Here’s Asia. There are Tigris and Euphrates. Africa’s at this juncture. And here is the mountain of the Moon. See the fenny march of Nile? On this side lies Europe” (438). *Don Quixote* (1605–15) echoes such interest in geography while advancing the author’s classicist criticism of the kind of modern “comedies that would start one day in Europe, continue with a second day in Asia, and a third in Africa; and if there were a fourth day, it would be in America, so all four parts of the world would be covered” (Cervantes Saavedra 1.358). Ironies apart, Don Quixote had an assured vision of a wholeness of Europe (*toda la Europa*) (Cervantes Saavedra 1.156)—an idea of wholesomeness and unity that would be taken up, in turn, by the “whole Europe” (*Europa toda*) of the Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões, enthused to see Lusitania at the head of this unity.32

Eis aqui, quase cume da cabeça  
De Europa toda, o Reino Lusitano,  
Onde a terra se acaba e o mar começa,  
E onde Febo repousa no Oceano.  
[Lusitania is here,  
almost like the head of the whole Europe,  
where the earth ends and the sea begins,  
and where Phoebus rests in the Ocean.] (54)

While echoes of the “false kidnapper of Europe” (Góngora y Argote 63) would return in the mythologizing of Góngorismo and baroque theater alike, it was images of Europe’s unity that prevailed since the sixteenth century. John Donne, most dramatically, wrote in the *Devo- tions* (1631): “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less” (126). Even the inhabitants of the Low Countries, who since the technical introduction of windmills with rotating turrets, circa 1550, had managed to drain their lands to new levels of security and prosperity, had combined ideals of independence (from the Hapsburg family) with ideas of European wholesomeness. Erasmus of Rotterdam,
in the *Consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo* (1643), reestablished the need for European military unity vis-à-vis the despotic Turk—and added, with a wink to the nascent economy of capital (what Blom calls “commercial republicanism”), that another difference between “us” and the east had now to be noticed: “European wealth” (qtd. in Hay 106). In fact, if by European wealth one understands the nascent economy of capital, the emergence (quite literally!) of the Low Countries defined Europe as an ethic of capitalism opposed not only to the east but also to the south, and to Spain in particular.33

Perhaps more exemplary of the rehabilitation of the notion of Europe around the Renaissance was Ludovico Ariosto, whose *Orlando furioso* (1516–32) secularized and Europeanized those very women, knights, armies, and loves that the chanson de geste had kept instead under the banner of Christianity. A geographic consciousness of Europe animates the travels and adventurous moves of Ariosto’s characters. In canto 4, stanza 45, Atlas sends a hippocriff to Roger to help him flee Europe (“perché d’Europa con questa arte il toglia”). Roger flies on his winged horse, and eventually “lasciato avea di gran spazio distante / tutta l’Europa” (he left all Europe far behind) (Ariosto 6.17). What constituted “all Europe” seemed, in spite of an ironic tone, a certainty for Ariosto: Russia was the border, the threshold separating the “continents” of Europe and Asia.≥∂ A bird’s eye view of Europe’s border could then be precisely mapped out when Roger “giunse alle parti di Sarmazia: e quando / fu dove Asia da Europa si divide, / Russi e Pruteni e la Pomeria vide” (he made it to Sarmatia [between the Vistula river and the Caspian Sea]; / and once he got where Asia and Europe separate, / he saw Russia, Pruteni, and Pomeria [the Baltic region]) (10.71).

More than a geographic designation, however, Ariosto’s Europe was a prosopopoeia: “Europe is in arms [against the Moor], and looks forward for the battle” (Ariosto 5.99). As a persona, her alter ego is the “cruel Saracen” (*Saracin crudele*, 14.47 and 18.10); the “uncanny Saracen” (*Saracin bizzarro*, 18.36); the “haughty Saracen” (*Saracin superbo*, 24.68 and 35.41); and, last but not least, the “rascal Saracen” (*Saracin ribaldo*, 26.59). Nothing new, one might say, under the skies of Europe: Ariosto’s was the old antithesis of east and west, of Christianity and Islam. The Christian age of the *Chanson de Roland*, however, was clearly over, and secular Europe had become the limit and interpellation of a cultural community.

So much insistence on European unity, in truth, only veiled the reality
of profound conflicts that traversed and fragmented the region. The Hundred Years War (1337–1453)—which had nothing to do with any eastern menace but rather with inter-European religious, dynastic, territorial, and commercial conflicts—was still fresh in Europe’s memory. A new nationalist spirit seemed to have possessed the continent, to the point that Christian Europe, too, was now divided: the Gallican church in France, the Anglican one in England, the Teutonic churches in Germany, all of which followed different flavors from place to place according to one “Germanic liberty” or another. More important still, Protestantism—Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia, Episcopalians in England, Zwingli’s Reformers in Switzerland, and Calvinists between Geneva and Edinburgh—had divided Europe once more after the break of Byzantium. As the Orthodox Church had split Europe between east and west, Protestantism was now parting Europe between the reformed churches of the north and the Roman Catholic ones of the south. The Catholic south took, in Protestant eschatology, the place of antithesis once assigned to the Muslim of the east:

Eschatology had been used in anti-Islamic polemic since the Middle Ages, but during the Reformation, it became widely prominent among both theologians and preachers. With its emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus, eschatology enabled communities within the Reformation movement to affirm their unique role in the fulfillment of God’s design in history—when God would raise His elect to glory and destroy their enemies. Particularly in the exegesis of Martin Luther, the figure of the Turk became associated with the Papal enemy of God—both of whom were identified with the “Little horn” in the Book of Daniel and the “Beast” in Revelation. For Luther, the eschatological kingdom of Christ was to prevail after the destruction of the Catholic and the “Mahometan” adversaries. (Matar 153)

With the Reformation, a latitudinal crisis “between an increasingly wealthy protestant North and an increasingly impoverished Catholic South” (Pagden, introduction 13) completed the latitudinal fracture of Europe, shifting its center of influence away from the Mediterranean. From this crisis, according to some, would be born “the Spirit of modern Europe” (Ritter 15).35

That spirit, however, was a restless one. Neither the foundation of the Jesuit Order in 1540 (see chapter 3), nor the spread of this “spiritual militia” in the service of the Roman Church in the four corners of the
continent (and the known world) served to pacify such religious zeal. France was the very eye of its storm: from 1559 to 1598, Paris was bloodied by incessant wars of religion. The edict of Nantes, signed by the French king Henry IV in 1598 to grant freedom of religion within his territory, only partially diminished the tensions between Protestant Huguenots and Roman Catholics, which flared up again in 1685 when Louis XIV revoked the edict of tolerance. Also Northern Italy, Central Europe, and Germany were troubled, since 1618, by the Thirty Years' War fueled by the religious controversies between Catholics and Protestants. It was enough to make the likes of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz nostalgic of the lost Carolingian unity, and eager to protect the spoils of the Holy Roman Empire—the German Reich coinciding with the novel notion of “Mitteleuropa”—not only from the Turks of the Orient but also from the Catholics of the South (Baruzzi 28; Le Rider 10). England, for its part, had finished a civil war (1642–49) with the spectacular execution of its king. And if religious controversies and regicides were not enough, other imperial and dynastic wars were flaring up all over: the Franco-Spanish wars (1515–1713); the Anglo-Dutch wars (1641–74); the eight Franco-British wars (1689–1815); the Swedish expansionist movements for a Scandinavian empire. This was the background in which Thomas Hobbes, perhaps unsurprisingly, started looking “in the nature of man, [to] find three principall causes of quarrel” (185).

Apart from some vague reference in *Leviathan* (Hobbes 684 and 685), however, Thomas Hobbes’s concern hardly centered around Europe: what really mattered was the legitimacy of sovereignty—divine right, original consent, or popular representation—in “these parts of Europe” (392), in England, that is. Less than ten years after the *Leviathan*, Europe mattered quite a lot, instead, to Maximilien de Béthune, the Duke of Sully and a high minister of the just assassinated King Henry IV of France. In the generalized European state of warfare he saw around, Sully managed to bring discussions about Europe to an entirely new level when, in the thirtieth book of his *Oeconomies royales* (1662), he tried to revive the assassinated king’s “grand design.” The idea was that of bringing all warring factions together by creating nothing less than a united Europe—or, in Sully’s words, “of bringing the whole of Europe together as a family” (De Béthune 77). Such a family, which Sully unsurprisingly believed ought to be paternalistically fathered by France, was to create nothing less than a “union” (87), a “general counsel of Europe” (88), and a “confederation” (90).36 What else could anyone want in a Europe that
was, slowly but surely, becoming *caput mundi*, the leader of the world, and expanding its empires in the whole known world? “No, the French have nothing else to desire, if not that the heavens give them pious, good, and wise kings; and that those kings will use all their power to keep Europe in peace” (74). After Sully, the themes of Europe’s more or less utopist union for the sake of perpetual peace—which, beyond utopia, answered well to the mercantilist need of breaking down local barriers to trade (Cocks 17)—was taken up by William Penn (“Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe,” 1693), the Abbé de Saint Pierre (“Projet de paix perpétuelle en Europe,” 1712), Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (“Observations sur le projet de paix perpétuelle en Europe,” 1714), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (“Jugement sur la paix perpétuelle,” 1756), and Immanuel Kant (“Zum ewigen Frieden,” 1795), among others.≥π

Just as instrumental for a self-consciousness of Europe were all the real and fictional encounters with often exoticized other cultures that now included, along with the usual Arabs, also Persians, Americans, Indians, and, increasingly, the Chinese.≥∫ The growth of an exotic literature from the late seventeenth century is certainly a sign of the times, but it is also a sign of the kind of ideal place that Europe was starting to mean. *Les six voyages* of J. B. Tavernier (1676) in Persia, the *New Voyage* (1697) of the buccaneer William Dampier, the *History of Japan* (1727) by Engelbert Kaempfer, the *Travels in Arabia* of J. L. Burckhardt; and then Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726)—as critical of Europe as these texts could sometimes be, they all proceeded from some shared assumption of what Europe, despite its local differences, actually meant: culture versus nature, society versus kinship, dressed versus naked, cooked versus raw, civilization versus naivety. In sum, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver “was an Englishman” (Swift 180), and, as such, “the scourge of France” (127). But he was also, despite such contrasts, profoundly European in culture: “I spoke,” he says, “High and Low Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca” (19). He was European in “infernal habits” too: “Yahoo as I am, it is well known through all Houyhnhnhmland, that, by the instructions and example of my illustrious master, I was able in the compass of two years (although I confess with the utmost difficulty) to remove that infernal habit of lying, shuffling, deceiving, and equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very souls of all my species; especially the Europeans” (vi).

In the literature of perpetual peace, as well as in the exotic one, a concept of Europe, infernal or heavenly, starts crystallizing to the point...
of becoming prescriptive and didactic: Europe is in need of unity, and, after all, differences apart, it is one if compared to any exoticized place. No need to beat this dead horse since a few authoritative quotes may indeed suffice: “In this literature, the concept of Europe is ultimately defined” (Chabod 85); through this literature, “Europe looked as if it had taken permanent shape” (Hazard, *European Mind* 53); and so, “in the course of the seventeenth century the processes which had led to this result were finally brought to a conclusion. By the beginning of the eighteenth century it is in terms of Europe that Europeans view the world” (Hay 117). Which is to say: by the early eighteenth century, Europe is already “made” (Treasure), “discovered” (Hale), “invented” (Pagden, “Europe” 70), “germinated” (Mikkeli 61), and one.

**Toward a Modern Europe**

To recognize the importance of European unity hardly means that someone has to suffer passively the ways and methods through which such unity is constructed.

—FRANCO CASSANO, *Modernizzare stanca*

Expanded from North to South... . . .

—WILLIAM BLAKE, *Europe: A Prophecy*

It is then at this point that canonical histories of the idea of Europe stop, short of an *interruptus*, their otherwise turgid narratives: for Denys Hay, by the beginning of the eighteenth century Europe has “emerged,” is well formed, and *rien ne va plus*; for Heikki Mikkeli, who sees postwar theories of European unities and European federations as a completion of an otherwise unfinished project of the Enlightenment, it is “towards the beginning of the eighteenth century [that] a feeling of belonging together prevailing among the European intellectuals . . . had been growing stronger and stronger” (60); and for Federico Chabod, what happens next is but a *disappearing* of Europe, its retreat “in the second half of the eighteenth century . . . with the affirmation of the idea of nation” (122)—an affirmation, namely, which culminates in National Socialism and against which Chabod tries to resurrect the idea of Europe.

But it is exactly from this point that I need to start my real story. Because, first of all, it would be wrong to assume that this Europe, which
has formed by the eighteenth century through confrontations with exotic Others and fantasies of perpetual peace, was in fact an amiable affair. The sort of perpetual peace that Europe could insure for Sully, we should not forget, was predicated on the hegemony of France. A True-Born Englishman, for one, would hardly agree to being subaltern to a country “where mankind lives in haste, and thrives by chance. A dancing nation, fickle and untrue” (Defoe). (Nor did the Englishman love Spain, “President of Hell”; or Italy, “where Blood ferments in Rapes and Sodomy”).

The idea that a sense of nationalism would begin only in the late eighteenth century, and immediately ruin a sense of beautiful and peaceable Europeanness, sounds, frankly, a little disingenuous. A modicum of ephemeral peace in Europe was obtained, whenever it was, through the never-theorized but ordinarily practiced doctrine of the balance of power. According to it, any change in one nation’s power constituted a potential threat to all others: not only colonial expansions but also domestic territorial partitions and distributions had to be regulated by internationally negotiated treaties—Utrecht in 1713, Vienna in 1738, Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, and Paris in 1763—that prevented one power from becoming preponderant. Such a balance of power obviously mirrored preexisting conditions of supremacy: risen and rising empires—France, England, the Dutch—divided territories overseas and within Europe between themselves. Weaker territories—like the Italian ones discussed in chapter 5—were treated as bargaining chips exchanged by the big nations in a debonair “spirit of cheerful cynicism” (Davies 582). Moreover, the context in which this eighteenth-century Europe “emerges” is one in which the previous religious divide between a (Protestant) north and a (Catholic) south is doubling into more fundamental contrasts—economic, cultural, political—between north and south.

With such a state of affairs, it would be quite surprising if the concept of Europe that emerged in the eighteenth century did not also mirror, and legitimate, the same division of power. Since the fulcrum of the seventeenth-century balance of power, the center of “the intellectual hegemony of Europe” (Hazard, European Mind 55), and “far and away Europe’s greatest power” (Davies 579) was certainly France, it would be quite surprising if the “Europe” that Mikkeli, Hay, and Chabod accept as Europe were not, in fact, what Rougemont with less scruples claims as “a French Europe” (143). Moreover, it would be equally surprising if the same eighteenth-century Europe, which the scholarly doxa insists to see as fundamental for any new one, would not carry within itself the germ
of a north-south divide: after all, as Heikkii Mikkeli concedes, “by 1700 the term ‘Europe’ was, especially in the political thinking of the Protestants, in regular use” (60; emphasis mine). Eighteenth-century Europe, in short, is a French theory of Europe, and one expanding from north to south—privileging the former and marginalizing the latter.

French and northbound Europe begins to be theorized through a French theoretical quarrel between the ancients and the moderns: “The Past abandoned; the Present enthroned in its place!” (Hazard, European Mind 30).

In France, several ideological conflicts conjoined to produce a climate in which attitudes to the past became highly politicized and dangerous indicators. France was evolving rapidly into a centralized state, for which French apologists sought a cultural history which revolved neither around Rome nor the Roman conquest. Secular pressure to invent a Gallican culture was compounded by pressures for a Gallican Catholicism with greater autonomy from Rome. And these conflicts were minor compared with the tensions building in France between sympathizers and opponents of the German Reformers. Finally, the Wars of Religion were incited by a feuding nobility, whose arguments over monarchical succession and the balance of power between king and nobility were naturally backed up by competing histories of the “true” French constitution. . . . The concern of some of the French noblesse de robe with a proper, critical practice of history reflects their attempts to find new, sure and useful ways to legitimate French institutions. (Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski 62)

To be precise, French Europe begins not with a dismissal of history—Cartesian submission of history to transhistorical reason; Jansenist submission of history to morality; and the philosophes’ submission of history to the superior relevance of the present. It begins, rather, with a retheorization of history that, following Paul Hazard, we can date to the year 1668, when Charles de Saint-Évremond Réflexions sur le divers génie du peuple romaine first appeared in print. From its very outset, Saint-Évremond’s celebration of modernity relies on a clear philosophy of history: humankind is endlessly perfectible, and history is the story of its endless progress. Antiquity, accordingly, is now assigned the unflattering task of representing nothing more than backwardness. All this has at least one consequence: the place of authority once assigned to Rome and Greece as the perfect models of Europe is now questioned in the name of
more recent perfections that Saint-Évremond can hardly find in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. If Europe has any model at all, it is not the foundation of Rome but that of the French Academy: “It would appear, in short, that the powers who have the moulding of our destinies had then no other concern than the founding of the city of Rome. . . . I hate admiring references which repose on mere fables” (qtd. in Hazard, *European Mind* 38).

What about the Greeks? Were they not viable models in the formation of a modern European culture? Not so for another Frenchman, Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, who, in the *Digression sur les anciens et les modernes* (1688), dismissed the Greeks as childish pranksters, good only at spreading bogus fables from which modern Europe should promptly be disabused:

As children, we are taught so much about Greek myths, and get so accustomed to them that when we grow up we do not recognise how extravagant they really are; but if we could disabuse our minds of our ingrained idea of them, if we could see them with fresh eyes, we should realize with amazement that what is called a nation’s early history is in reality nothing but a phantasmagoria, a string of childish tales. Can it really be, we ask ourselves, that such things were ever given out as truth? If those who passed them on did not believe them, what was their motive for deceiving us? (qtd. in Hazard, *European Mind* 38)

For Fontanelle, a European “quality of mind or genius” is the achievement of a more recent age. Not only is Europe better than Asia, Africa, and America. *Modern* Europe is, also, better than the ancient one. Modern Europe, moreover, begins exactly in those Middle Ages that southern humanists had condemned as periods of barbarity and decay, and which the new French historians now praised by “inventing complex Frankish and Gallic societies” (Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski 61) that resisted Roman conquest, gloriously defeated Rome, and, in so doing—as we will see very clearly with Montesquieu—laid the foundations for modern Europe to grow. If modern history should be rewritten and retheorized, then, it is because the “mere fables” of the Romans and the “childish tales” of the Greeks can hardly account for the luminous present in which France first, and, second, the whole northern world of Europe, stand today. To understand that present, a new history should now be devised (see Pisano).39

What we have, then, codified already in Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet’s
Discours sur l’histoire universelle (1681), is a new theory of history understood not as a recovery of the past, but as metaphysics—a universal history, that is, shaped as a chronology and a teleology of great epochs carrying a precise meaning in the great scheme of things. At the heart of their meaning, and at the end of these histories, lay a new, modern theory of Europe: its end was nothing else than the formation of a theory not of the universe, but of “what Europe is in the universe” (Bossuet 4). And, within this Eurocentric theory, there was a supplementary one, one concerned not with the centrality of Rome or Greece in any theory of Europe, but with “what Paris and the Ile de France mean within Europe” (4).

Much of what passes today as modern Europe begins—this is the contention of the present book—from this theorization of history. From it begins, for instance, a theory of Europe as the end of history claimed, before Hegel (chapter 4), already by Montesquieu (chapter 2) and John Locke, who saw America arrested in history, representing, as it were, “still a pattern of the first ages of . . . Europe” (5:151). Progress, teleology, and manifest destinies—these are the key terms of the history of universalized Europe that only begins in the eighteenth century. Yet in this history, it is no longer the confrontation with the exotic Other (the Persian, the Muslim, the American savage, and so on) that interests the theorists of Europe, but rather a dialectical confrontation of Europe with itself, with its own internal Other. History, so to speak, unfolds as a geography pitting a past of Europe—the Greek and Roman south—against its most luminous and giddy present—what Paul Hazard calls “the light from the North” (European Mind 53–59).

Europe (in Theory) starts from this crisis of north and south, from where theories of Europe have typically ended. Its objective, as my epigraph suggests, is not to create a demonstrable theory of Europe and patch the crisis with viable hypotheses, but rather to study the limits (its south?) of a theory of Europe that becomes hegemonic with the names of Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron of La Brède, and of Montesquieu, around the year 1740. This is not a theory of Europe, but an analysis of that which, precisely, a theory of Europe has found recurrently impossible “to hypothesize or maintain” (Agamben, Stanze xi).