Introduction

Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand

Both the name Europe and the political entity Europe are relatively recent inventions. Although the name can be traced back as far as 700 BCE, the term in its contemporary meaning only became widespread after 1700 CE.¹ The political entity is an even more recent construct. It was only with the first steps toward European construction in the second half of the twentieth century that the contours of a political community bearing this name emerged, even if its borders were still far from clearly defined. Yet even with the existence of today's European Union (EU) the meaning of the term remains highly contested. Does Europe mean only the EU? Is it a geographical or a political entity? Where are its boundaries? How did these boundaries come about?

This special issue of *JEMMS* aims to address these questions by investigating how Europe has been perceived in both its spatial and mythical dimensions. Numerous studies now consider the meaning of Europe from a variety of perspectives; however, the interplay of myths and maps in this regard has been the subject of only a handful of publications. Numerous examples of political science research on the EU are available, all of which focus either on what the EU is—a regulatory state, a civilian power, an empire—or on how to make it work better.² As a consequence of their emphasis on the European Union these works address Europe merely as a political entity, attending only briefly to the term's more general significance. Other philosophical works on the meaning of Europe, such as Morgan's idea of a European superstate, tend to focus on what Europe should be without considering how the meaning of Europe has evolved over time.³ Finally, even the sociological and historical studies on the subject, which take a broader approach and look at the historical and social evolution of the idea of Europe⁴ do not centrally focus on the interplay of its myths and maps.

This special issue therefore aims to view representations of Europe through a more precise prism: How have myths and maps of Europe been related? Which myths have been reinforced or questioned by

which maps? How have changing maps of Europe suggested a readaptation of certain myths over time? The underlining assumption of this approach is that myths are not objects given once and for all over the course of history; they are processes. They elaborate on single narrative cores (or *mythologems*) that respond to a need for significance and must therefore adapt to ever-changing historical circumstances.⁵ A narrative core either readapts to the new circumstances, thus producing variants of itself, or it ceases to be a myth and becomes a mere narrative. We must differentiate between myths and narratives: although every sequence of events is a narrative, not all of them are myths. If we recount how the name Europe was used in Latin sources, disappearing for a while and then returning with a different meaning, this is a narrative insofar as it displays a sequence of events. It is not a mythical narrative. If, however, we recount how a Phoenician princess named Europa was raped by a bull and brought to the west, the story is likely to work as a myth. In other words, two conditions must be fulfilled if a narrative is to work as a myth: it must be able to provide significance within given circumstances and it must evolve over time to produce variants of its core that respond to new circumstances.

This is a crucial point. The (few) works that have focused on the symbolic dimension of European integration⁶ have done so without focusing on the specificity of myths. Consequently, the latter are treated within the more general category of political symbolism and their specificity is lost. This is particularly unfortunate because myths and symbols are not identical. The contributions in this issue aim to focus particularly on myths by investigating how the latter have reinforced or questioned specific maps of Europe.

A map is a representation, usually on a flat surface, of an area of the earth or a portion of the heavens, portraying its subject via the relevant shapes, sizes, and relative position in accordance with a standard convention. Maps represent a reality “out there” and of necessity express what people think this reality is. They always reflect a *choice* of what is worth representing. They schematize distances, connections, and associations, thus reducing complexity to a few lines. They are produced to orient their users in time and space, including within the spaces of the mind. A “complete” map reproducing every single detail of reality would not only be impossible to produce but also completely useless. Maps must offer a model of reality that provides selective information and shortcuts for decision making.

Because of their visible and tangible evidence, maps are often confused with what they represent. They are treated *pars pro toto*:

a part that is considered the whole and behind which the whole is made to disappear. Yet, as we have suggested, maps represent how reality should be. This renders them the natural allies of myth. It is a companionship in which maps offer the bare outlines along which myths may embroider detail. The Greek philosopher Anaximandros (611–546 BCE) drew an early map of the world, which is now unfortunately lost. The geographer Hekataios (560–485 BCE) combined the speculations of his predecessor with practical seafarer knowledge of the Mediterranean based on wind directions and coasts. This map has also been lost, although it has often been reconstructed.⁷ Descriptions by his contemporaries lead us to conclude that he used a bird's eye view in which the north was drawn above and the south below, the east to the right and the west to the left. His compatriots recognized the sea as the one they know because it entwined the map with the myth as laid down in early Greek cosmogony, mingling practical details of coastlines and estuaries with a theory of what the world might look like.

Maps of Europe, as a first-hand way to approach spatial representations of Europe, appeared relatively early in history. Specialist literature details the broad variety of historical, thematic, and topographical maps (or atlases) that convey specific images of Europe.⁸ Today we are more accustomed to physical and political maps, where the former represent features of the natural environment that are useful for a specific purpose (rivers, mountains, natural boundaries, etc.), and the latter demarcates political entities from one another via two-dimensional representations in which colors or lines mark the borders of a political community. Yet this is far from being uncontested. Today cartography is understood as a mainly mathematics-oriented discipline, perfecting and rationalizing its techniques of measuring and representing space. But maps entail many diacritic signs that direct its readers back to a more or less hidden agenda. As the maps of Europe discussed in this issue demonstrate, each one contains an answer to the question “what is Europe?” Quite often, the answer recalls a (political) myth by drawing on previously existing cultural repertoires, and is an invitation to take action within a collective (political) project.

Maps of Europe have to a large extent often been supported by a mythical image in the stories they tell. The mythical elaboration of Europe has gone hand in hand with continual work on its spatial representations which—unlike physical maps that may deteriorate and become outdated as do the myths deposited in our books—

absorbs and implements new insights. The images that myths and maps convey remain in the reservoir of the collective imaginary, ready to be mobilized when new occasions arise. This is the reason why myths and maps of Europe are best analyzed from the *longue durée* perspective. Among the most powerful *mythologems* of Europe that have recurred over time are those of Classical Europe (Europe as the heir of Greek civilization), Christian Europe (Europe as the land of the Christian civilization), and Enlightened Europe (Europe as the cradle of the Enlightenment and modernity). These are, however, only some of the most common Europe myths that have been embroidered into both high and popular culture.

Although every contribution to this special issue relies on a specific methodology appropriate to its own objects of analysis, all of them share at least one methodological premise: an interdisciplinary approach. This is necessary when studying such an elusive and multifaceted issue, even more so when focusing on the interplay of its spatial and mythical dimensions. The issue aims to subject myths and maps to a critical examination, not least in order to clarify our dependence on them in our everyday lives. As the contributors to this special issue demonstrate, myths may emerge when we wish to research Europe's past, to teach it, to employ our knowledge of it to a political purpose, or even when we simply wish to watch a soccer game.

Chiara Bottici's opening contribution provides a theoretical analysis of myth. By discussing the concept of cultural and political myth, Bottici argues that Europeans have seen themselves in the light of different narratives that have worked both historically and mythically at different times. With regard to the latter, Bottici analyzes icons—images that by means of a synecdoche can recall the whole myth that lies behind them. Among the icons circulating in contemporary history textbooks of Italy, Germany, and France, the myths of classical Europe and that of the modern, prosperous Europe are the most powerful.

Gerdien Jonker also tackles the myth of Europe as born of Greek genius, but from another perspective. She traces the historical semantics of the term "Europe," which originally meant "west," from its emergence in the Babylonian context through the Mediterranean until its adoption as a self-designation in early medieval Spain. Her reconstruction covers a stretch of 1,400 years and a range of historical contexts for which she consulted Babylonian, Phoenician, Greek, Latin, Jewish, and Arab sources. She also considers alternative terms that were in use among Jewish and Arab travelers and wonders why the term "Europe" was chosen at all. Her contribution aims to break

through the tenacious East-West mystification that has steered our awareness for so long.⁹

Benoît Challand assumes a more contemporary perspective, identifying connections between myths of Europe and the post-1945 European context. In his analysis of the European narratives deployed in history textbooks from France, Germany, and Italy between 1950 and 2005 he disentangles “sequences” in narratives that support a view of Europe as a political project. The presence of external Others in these sequences, something that has changed over time, has lent a particularly dramatic connotation to the European project. Specific myths surrounding it, such as that of Europe as a barrier against the threat of communism or that of a culturally homogenous Europe now facing new Others, most notably on its south-eastern borders, are thus fueled and reinforced.

Adrian Brisku provides a view of Europe from its margins and periphery, specifically arguing that post-socialist Albanian myths and images surrounding the concept of Europe need to be considered from the triadic dimension of (geo)politics, modernities, and cultural identity as well as within the larger historical perspective of the modern Albanian political and intellectual landscape. From a *longue-durée* perspective that stretches from the late nineteenth century to the present, the triadic Europe appears pluralistic—with continuous as well as contested images and narratives. One constant myth of Europe stands behind these images and narratives: a political and military power and prosperous marketplace through which Albanians have tried to navigate their modern existence.

Finally, Paul Dietschy, David Ranc, and Albrecht Sonntag argue that, although history textbooks and politicians’ discourses are revealing sources of what is considered worthy of collective memory, they only tell half the story. A study of the non-official “parallel pantheons” of popular culture can also contribute significantly to understanding patterns of (self-)perception as well as mental representations of “Europe.” For more than a century, soccer, Europe’s most widely shared social practice, has contributed to shaping perceptions of what can be encompassed by the term “Europe.” Dietschy, Ranc, and Sonntag focus on the “popular maps” of Europe that soccer has drawn over the last half-century, identifying the myths of cultural commonality that underpin them. It appears that although soccer represents a somewhat ambiguous metaphor for contemporary Europe, it can also supply interesting insights into the emergence of new horizontal bonds between Europeans.

All contributions focus on the way in which history is written, the interests that are at stake in this process, and how it supports and reflects both boundary drawing and myth making. This issue of *JEMMS* aims to examine how this process takes place in the works of historians and philologists of the past, of those who write and use textbooks in the present, of politicians both in and outside Europe, and among producers of popular culture such as soccer players and their fans.

Why have we chosen this moment in time to examine the myths and maps of Europe? We are currently witnessing a major change of frames. Mapmakers not only draw mental maps that express what the maker thinks the world is like, they also reflect the world around them, thus endorsing a certain frame. Back in Antiquity, traveling Greeks drew a circle and placed themselves in the very center. Their maps belonged to the insignia of power. They were modeled in lead and displayed in the palace. In the early Middle Ages, learned Christian writers drew T-maps in which Asia, Africa, and Europe were grouped around the Mediterranean. Their center was Jerusalem and if they drew attention to the other parts they did so with the help of the apostles or the churches they had founded. Their maps expressed Christian eschatology and were placed in prayer books and scholarly treatments of the apocalypse. Each of these mapmakers drew a hermetically closed picture of the world, thus rendering it habitable for themselves.¹⁰

Once Europe became more established, the center of the map moved to the north, portraying Europe as large while other areas appear small and slight, and simultaneously the world expanded with the “discoveries” made by northern European explorers. Here, Europe became the lady who kept court to receive the gifts of the colored continents, a myth that became deeply rooted in the minds of the Europeans. The ruthlessness with which merchants, explorers, and missionaries subjugated other peoples, and with which European powers divided the world among themselves appears in illustrations and in the coloring of maps.

We have witnessed a change of frames since the fall of the Iron Curtain; the time when Europe stopped holding the center stage and other areas started to realize their independence. In the era of EU enlargement, of globalization, and fast-changing demography, Europe’s established roots have become the topic of debate. They are increasingly confronted with the existence of other myths and alternative maps of the world; indeed, it is thanks to such a change of frame that Europe is being given the chance to “provincialize” itself. Europeans

can no longer ignore alternative perspectives. At the same time, it is in such a globalizing world that European citizens are experiencing the absolute novelty in the history of political constructions of the “European Union,” now encompassing most European countries. It is in this context that we ask “What is Europe?” “Where are its boundaries?” and it is in this context that we aim to disentangle its myths.

Notes

We extend our thanks to Bo Stråth for arranging funding for the conference, *Myths and Maps of Europe*, held at the European University Institute, Florence, in March 2007. It was here that most of these articles were first presented and discussed.

1. Peter Burke, “Did Europe Exist Before 1700?” *History of European Ideas* 1 (1980): 21–29.
2. For an overview of these different trends, see Giandomenico Majone, ed., *Regulating Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Jan Orbie, ed., *Europe’s Global Role: External Policies of the European Union*, (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Philippe Schmitter, *How to Democratize the European Union—And Why Bother?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); and Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
3. Glyn Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate: Public Justification and European Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
4. See, for instance, Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995); and Pim den Boer, Peter Bugge, and Ole Wæver, *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
5. See Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
6. See, for instance, Luisa Passerini, ed., *Figures d’Europe. Images and Myths of Europe* (Bruxelles: P.I.E.- Peter Lang, 2003); and Barbary Henry, “The Role of Symbols for European Political Identity—Political Identity as Myth?” in *A Soul for Europe*, ed. Furio Cerutti and E. Rudolph, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 49–70. See also Tobias Theiler, *Political Symbolism and European Integration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
7. See <http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/> (accessed 12 October 2008).
8. See Evelyn Edson and Emilie Savage-Smith, eds., *Medieval Views of the Cosmos. Picturing the Universe in the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2004). See also <http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/>.

9. It is not by chance that Jonker's article has been the most controversial of all those published in this special issue. We were faced with a difficult editorial decision in view of the fact that the peer review process resulted in contradictory reports. Jonker's text provides an overview of a range of topics and controversial genealogies, proposing a bold thesis that challenges one of the most persistent myths of Europe. We decided to publish the article in order to provide the reader with the opportunity to reach her/his own conclusion during what is certainly a fascinating literary journey.
10. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). This process becomes explicit in the words of Arab mapmaker Ibn Hawqal (950 CE):

I have described the earth in its length and breadth (and) collected all that has ever made geography of interest either to princes or to people. But I have not described the country of the African blacks and the other peoples of the torrid zone because, naturally loving wisdom, ingenuity, religion, justice, and regular government, how could I notice such people as these, or magnify them by inserting an account of their countries? (<http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/EMwebpages/213.html>, accessed 8 October 2008).