'In but not of Europe'

Europe and its myths

Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall *takes a critical look at current ways of imagining Europe.*

Europe is literally an invention of the third world.

Frantz Fanon

Where does Europe begin and end? Has it always existed, and if not, when did it start? What is the 'new' Europe's relation to its past? Which parts of Europe belong to 'the idea of Europe' and which do not? Is Europe the product of a universal idea, whose contemporary existence can be adequately captured in terms of some earlier figure or trope? Or is it only now emerging in response to forces which are radically, constitutively, novel - the withering of the nation-state, the new global economy, the reconfigurations of global power, the challenge of a super-power American hegemony? What role does the imaginary or myth have to play in this process?

My title is drawn from some observations by C.L.R. James, one of the leading Caribbean-born intellectuals of his and of any generation, who lived for many years in Europe and North America, and who was the author of that still unsurpassed history of the slave revolution in Santo Domingo (Haiti) in the 1790s, *The Black Jacobins*. James's life and work could be seen as personifying many of the contradictions of the encounter between Europe and its others. He was born in Trinidad, but left it as a young man for England in the early

years of the twentieth century to become the first black cricket correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. He wrote a wonderful autobiographical memoir entitled *Beyond A Boundary*. James was 'schooled', like all of us colonials in the years before independence, in the classics of English and European literature. He told me with great pride that he read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* once every year, and spoke French well enough to research his history of the Haitian revolution from the original sources in the Bibliotheque National. A marxist and a passionate anti-Stalinist, he wrote a treatise on Hegel and the dialectic, and interviewed Trotsky in exile in Mexico on 'the Negro Question' (and then broke with Trotskyism because of the unsatisfactory nature of the old man's replies). He was active in the Pan-African movement in England between the wars, a close friend of Jomo Kenyatta's and Francis Nkrumah's, and mentor of Trinidad's Prime Minister Eric Williams (an outline for whose ground-breaking study *Capitalism and Slavery* James is alleged to have sketched on the back of an envelope). Active in left circles in the US in the 1940s, James wrote an unfinished masterpiece, *American Civilization* (the closest parallel is Gramsci's brilliantly prophetic essay 'Americanism and Fordism'); and when he was finally deported for 'un-American activities', he offered as his defence his reading of *Moby Dick* - he thought it '*the* great American novel'. He identified the great climacterics of European history - Greek drama, the frescoes of Michelangelo, the language of Shakespeare, Hegel and Marx, the ideas of the French Revolution, the music of Beethoven, Lenin and the Russian Revolution - as *the* privileged moments of human creativity.[1]

Yet when asked what his attitude was towards Europe, C.L.R. James replied that he was 'in but not of it'. 'Those people', he added, 'who are in western civilisation, who have grown up in it but yet are not completely a part [of it], have a unique insight ... something special to contribute'.[2] Georg Simmel said something similar about the figure of 'the stranger'. I don't know about a 'unique insight', or a 'special contribution'; but I do know, as someone formed through

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1. See *inter alia*, C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, Allison and Busby, London1980; *Beyond A Boundary*, Serpent's Tail, London 1994; *American Civilisation*, Blackwell, Oxford 1993; *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, Bewick, Detroit 1978.
2. C.L.R. James, 'African and Afro-Caribbeans: A Personal View ', *Ten8*, No16, 1984.

and through in a relationship of colonial dependency, subalternity and 'otherness' to Europe, that 'in but not of it' most accurately captures the ambivalences that haunt my own identifications. Much of this ambivalence is situational: I confess to feeling most aggressively 'European' in America, most aware that I can never really be 'European' when actually in Europe ...

I want to stay with James's ambivalent formulation because it says so much about the difficulties in finding a 'figure' for Europe. The Jamaican anthropologist David Scott argues that James represented Toussaint L'Ouverture, the slave leader of the San Dominican revolution, as ultimately a tragic figure.[3] Not because of his tactical mistakes, but because of the historical space in which he was obliged to operate. Toussaint abhorred the savage and humiliating plantation regime imposed by French colonists on the African slaves, and was drawn to the flame of resistance when it flared up in the slave villages. But his concept of 'freedom', as James shows, was also deeply shaped by his reading of the radical Enlightenment *philosophes*, and the ideas of the French Revolution itself. As a 'Black Jacobin', Toussaint looked to revolutionary France for the gift of emancipation. He was destined to be disappointed. *'Les amis des noirs'* at first emancipated only the 'coloureds'. Abolition was then reluctantly extended to all slaves, but when Napoleon came to power he revoked the edict and restored slavery. It was only many decades later that slavery was eventually abolished in the French empire.

According to David Scott, Toussaint's conception of the political future 'depended upon the horizon established by the categories liberty, fraternity, equality' - ideas which constituted the framework of his mind. Trapped in the horizon - the 'problem-space' - of these ideas, he was confronted by an impossible choice, for he could neither return to slavery nor conceive of San Domingue without France. Slavery and the Haitian revolution thus constituted *the limit-case* of the great, European idea of the Universal Rights of Man. 'Freedom' for black slaves represented an unsurpassable frontier - the constitutive outside - to the so-called 'universality' of the European conception of 'liberty, equality, fraternity'. Scott argues that the 'problem-space' within which Toussaint had to think the question of freedom, and the conditions he lived - which harnessed the 'backward' brutalities of plantation slavery to the 'advanced' European economy - condemned him to be a 'modern' figure, but of a modernity

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3. David Scott, 'Conscripts of Political Modernity', unpublished paper.

he could only live as *fate*. In Scott's felicitous phrase, Toussaint was a 'conscript of modernity'. I believe all of us who, in C.L.R. James's terms are 'in but not of Europe' - who live our intimacy with Europe, as well as its impossibility as 'fate' - are in that sense Europe's conscripts.

Inevitably, therefore, we conscripts view the rising demand to find a 'figure' for the new Europe - a myth which encapsulates and condenses 'the idea of Europe', which shows that the new configuration had its foundation in a classical idea of great antiquity - very differently from those who see it from inside. From within, Europe has always represented itself as somehow autochthonous - producing itself, by itself, from within itself; whereas we have always been obliged to ask, 'How does Europe imagine its "unity"? How can it be imagined, in relation to its "others"? What does Europe look like from its liminal edge, from what Ernesto Laclau or Judith Butler would call, its "constitutive outside"?'.[4]

For Laclau and Butler, all identities are ultimately an effect of power, since their inner homogeneity - what gives their members the sense that they belong together because they are all 'the same' - is the effect of symbolically excluding difference. Identities are thus constructed *through* difference: they are what they are because of all the things they are not, because of what they *lack*. But in so far as identities depend on what they are *not*, they implicitly affirm the importance of what is outside them - which often then returns to trouble and unsettle them from the inside. Nothing could be more true of Europe, which has constantly, at different times, in different ways, and in relation to different 'others', tried to establish what it is - its identity - by symbolically marking its difference from 'them'. Each time, far from producing a stable and settled entity, Europe has had to re-imagine or re-present itself differently. We are at another such moment now.

Of course I understand what is driving the search for 'the myths of Europe' - that idea, figure or image which might impose a unifying vision, a common framework of intelligibility, on highly diverse societies, whose histories have dramatically diverged over the centuries; a story, perhaps, which could lend depth and texture to the relative cultural 'thinness' which the emerging spectre of the 'new Europe', or The European Union, presents (not to speak of its

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4. See, *inter alia*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, London 1985; and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, Routledge, London 1993.

potentially fissiparous cultural diversity). It is an imaginative project to try to examine Europe from the point of view of a history of its imaginary. However, disconcertingly, the search for Europe's myth could also turn out to be an exercise in the production of yet another version of Europe's foundational story. After all, isn't this what foundational myths are for? They provide a magical starting point. They suggest that the present can be imagined as just another episode in a long-running story that has been unfolding since time immemorial, and which was already foreshadowed and foretold - and thus legitimated - in its origins. There is a possibility that current efforts to re-work the myth of Europe's foundations, and the search for some newly defined 'origin', will license Europe, once again, to disavow its historic instability and its deep inter-connections with other histories, and to somehow seamlessly re-connect the mythical past with Europe's disrupted recent present and future. We must beware lest - as all such foundational myths attempt to do - it binds the disconcerting discontinuities, brutal ruptures, grim inequalities and unforeseen contingencies of Europe's real history into the *telos* of a consoling circular narrative whose end is already foreshadowed by its beginning.

Benedict Anderson calls such efforts at narrativisation the construction of an 'imagined community'.[5] Imagined, he argues, because its members can never know or meet their fellow-members, so that the latter exist for them, principally, in the way each must 'live' the image of their community - what he calls their 'deep, horizontal comradeship' - *in the mind*. So nations - and supra-national communities - if they are to hang together, and construct a sense of belongingness amongst their members - cannot simply be political, economic or geographical entities; they also depend on how they are represented and imagined: they exist within, not outside, representation, the imaginary. Stories, symbols, images, rituals, monuments, historic events, typical landscapes, and above all *myths*, told and retold, lend significance to our humdrum existence by connecting our banal, everyday, lives with a larger, more poetic, destiny which predates and will outlive us. As Homi Bhabha observed, communities, 'like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye'.[6] Myths, Levi Strauss once remarked, are 'good to

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5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 1983.
6. Homi Bhabha (ed), *Nations and Narration*, Routledge, London 1990.

think with'.[7] But he also took care to remind us that the 'solutions' they seem to offer are often 'magical' ones.

The Europa myth

The Europa myth is an attractive starting-point. It is drawn from the ur-European myth reservoir of classical Greece, the wellspring of the European imaginary. The beautiful Phoenician maiden succumbs on the beach to the seductions of Zeus in the shape of the horned and garlanded white bull, and rides off on his back into the sunset, only later - much later - presumably when she has sewn her wild oats, conceding to a respectable union and domestic married bliss with Astrios. This lunar goddess, with the wide, round face and big eyes of the moon, whose abduction was the proximate cause of the founding of Thebes, symbolises - we are told - the continuous movement westwards: the migratory drift from Asia, Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean, the diffusion of the alphabet and writing, the spread of agriculture into the fertile western European plain. Her very name derives from a Semitic root meaning 'western'. She is indeed a prophetic figure for Europe: richly suggestive but difficult to decode. If she represents Europe, why is she from 'elsewhere'? If this is 'an allegory of love', what has it to tell us about the European conception of the relation between love and seduction, sexual desire and marriage? And who or what, pray, is the bull? - deceptively white, but with a definite aura about him of 'otherness', of sexual power, male compulsion and patriarchal possessiveness: something 'dark' and dangerous, who comes lumbering out of the European collective unconscious and steals Europa away to Crete.

Europa is a recurring figure in European art and mythology, as the beautiful book by Luisa Passerini, *Il Mito d'Europa*, demonstrates.[8] The many, varied ways she has been embodied down through the centuries - differently figured and bearing very different meanings - is a testimony to the versatility of the great myths, their multiple possibilities to carry and construct meaning, and to the imaginative capacities of mankind. The tracing of these rich and variegated symbolic patterns, and unlocking of the very different interpretive *schemas* and narratives within which Europa and the bull have

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7. Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London 1966.
8. Luisa Passerini, *Il Mito D'Europa*, Giunti, Florence, 2002.

been 'figured', is a major contribution to European scholarship. But in our enthusiasm for interpretation we must also be alert not only to meaning but also to function, to the *politics* of the enterprise, and to what Roland Barthes in *Myth Today* called its 'meta-meanings'.[9] Myth, Barthes reminded us, is 'de-politicised speech'. It does its work by a process of naturalisation - re-presenting History as Nature, which is another way of translating real time into mythic time.

Is there something almost too predictable and over-determined about the return to the figure of Europa? After all, it is by common consent many centuries after the era of classical Greece before anything vaguely resembling Europe or a 'European identity' begins to make itself felt. There was no such visible continental formation, identity or destiny until the late middle ages, and the period just prior to the moment when Europe finally overtook the hitherto superior civilisations of Asia, after about 1450;[10] before that it was only what Michael Mann describes as 'a multiple ancephalous federation', with no head or centre but a number of largely localised, cross-cutting interaction networks and overlapping powers. And even at that time its identification was 'primarily Christian, for its name was Christendom more often that it was Europe' (Mann). Greek culture has, of course, retrospectively become crucial to Europe's identity, because of the richness of its civilisation, the greatness of its achievements in art, literature, philosophy and culture, and its massive subsequent influence on every branch of European thought. Its mythological stories are therefore bound to be a particularly privileged and suggestive source for re-imagining Europe today. But this was not the only mythological system on offer - the Norse and the Celtic also have some claim on the European imaginary. Its centring in Greek classical mythology was in fact a process, not a product of Nature; accomplished, in part, by steadily detaching Greek culture from its roots in Asia and Egypt, and re-locating it firmly in Europe - an aspect of that 'Aryanization' of Greek civilisation which Martin Bernal (among other scholars) has written about in his riveting study *Black Athena*.[11]

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9. Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies*, Cape, London 1972.
10. Michael Mann, 'European Development: Approaching A Historical Explanation', in J. Baechler, J. Hall and M. Mann (eds), *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1988.
11. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, Vols 1 and 2, Free Association Books, London 1991.

Privileging Greek mythology as a way of fixing Europe's origin has the effect of effacing a profound truth about the emerging Europe - namely 'the steady western drift of the leading edge of power ... to the west and north'. Contrary to what the naturalisation of Greek mythological sources might suggest, European identity was created as much 'by the fusion of the Germanic barbarians and the north-western parts of the Roman Empire' as it was by the Greeks; and it partly emerged from the stimulus provided by 'the blocking presence of Islam to the south and east' - and of the Huns, Mongols and Tartar tribes of the steppes (Mann).

'Myth analysis is not enough. There is also the necessary work of deconstruction'

The real avenues of expansion lay in this westward movement - promoting agricultural innovation and navigational development linked to the rise of trade and science, and crowned eventually by Europe's break-out from its geographical and mental confinement at the end of the fifteenth century. John Roberts noted that the word 'European' seems to appear for the first time in an eighth century reference to Charles Martel's victory over Islamic forces at Tours.[12] Others, like Peter Hulme, speak of 'the consolidation of an ideological identity through the testing of Europe's eastern frontiers prior to the adventure of Atlantic exploration'. Hulme argues that Pius III's identification of Europe with Christendom in 1458 could be considered a symbolic end to the process; this offered that over-arching canopy of normative and moral regulation that no other system provided.[13] It is not surprising, therefore, that the point when we can most confidently say that a European identity exists coincides with the defeat and expulsion of the Muslims from Spain by a militant and purified Catholic monarchy; the expulsion and forced conversion of the Jews; and the launching of the great 'experiment' of conquest and exploration down the African coast and into the great unknown across the Green Sea of Darkness. As The Great Mariner, Christopher Columbus, put it: 'In this present year, 1492, after Your Highnesses have brought to an end the war against the Moors ... after having driven the Jews out of your realm, Your Highnesses commanded me to set out with a sufficient armada to the said countries of India ...'.[14]

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12. John Roberts, *The Triumph of the West*, BBC, London 1985.
13. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean*, Methuen, London 1986.
14. *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, J. Cohen (ed), Cresset Library, London 1969.

Some readings of the myth of Europa and the Bull argue that the myth *does* acknowledge Europe's wider, non-European roots. The fact that Europa is herself from Asia-Minor, and not in any proper sense 'European', but is taken to Europe by the bull, is cited as evidence that myths can sometimes speak more 'truthfully' than they appear to know. Michael Rice's work suggests that the Europa and the bull myth is almost certainly part of - and indeed a probably very late addition to - the cult of the bull, which belongs to a much wider and more ancient arc of religious cults and practices stretching from Asia-Minor, through the Levant, the Arabian peninsular and the Gulf, and arriving only quite late in the day in Crete.[15] Other readings suggest that, because Europa is a progenitor of the Minotaur, whom Minos, her offspring, confines below earth in the Labyrinth in the Palace at Knossos in Crete, the myth is also able to encompass the fact that Europe produced its own 'monstrosities'. According to this interpretive procedure, then, in the end, the myth can and does say *everything*. The problem with this approach is that these are *not* the ways in which the myth of Europa and the bull is actually being deployed today. This figure is certainly *not* being used to remind contemporaries that much of what now think of as Europe's achievements were originally external to Europe, and had non-European, Asian, African and Islamic roots. It is not being summoned up as a way of reminding us how deeply intertwined in the history of Europe are the values of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'. To the contrary, Europa and the Bull is being deployed 'foundationally' - as a way of inviting us to re-imagine the *new* Europe as somehow beginning with, and continuous with, that *old* Europe celebrated in classical Greek mythology. It is therefore not enough to allow each new reading to lie alongside all the others, untransformed. The meanings they carry point in very different directions, and those differences are precisely what makes them a significant site, not of celebration but of *contestation* - because it matters profoundly for the future which meaning about the past of Europe is being affirmed. Myth analysis is not enough. There is also the necessary work of *de-construction*.

In making this de-constructive move, are there alternative mythological sources we should attend to? One, more raucous, less literary and finely wrought, source might be those rich medieval mythological and legendary systems which

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15. Michael Rice, *The Power of The Bull*, Routledge, London/NY 1998.

imaginarily peopled the outer perimeters of the European heartland.[16] Their purpose was to establish, symbolically, the dividing line between 'them' and 'us'. This corpus of popular and scholarly legend mapped Europe's shifting internal borders, and began the process - still vigorously alive - of marking out the continent into its different zones, distinguishing between the 'real' European home and the rest, charting the always porous, always moving frontiers between civilisation and barbarism, and trying to fix the limit of Europe's internal 'others'. We can only gesture at its bewildering multiplicity: the 'wild men' and 'wild women', and the 'wild' armies of the night, who emerged from the borders; the progeny of Homer's Cyclops and the wandering bands of Graeco-Roman tradition, who were thought to haunt the woods and wildernesses surrounding the plains and cities and the outer edges of settlement, with their matted hair and naked, hirsute bodies. These figures, suspended half-way between fear and fantasy, dream and speculation, mapped out Europe's liminal edge; they were markers of the ever-shifting boundaries between Europe's inside and outside. Then there was the vast literature devoted to classifying the 'monstrous races of Mankind', from Hesiod to Pliny's *Natural History*, a repertory of exotic marvels. Herodotus helped to construct early prototypes of western Man, against whom the monsters, hybrids, hermaphrodites and anthropopaghi of the classical periphery could be measured and placed: 'Greece is the domain of measure, while the extremities of the earth are the domain of extreme riches and the extremely bizarre'. Into this simmering brew were fed the speculative geographies and legendary tall tales of the mysterious East, from Marco Polo's, Mandeville's and other travellers' tall tales, with their enticing accounts of Cathay's vast wealth, splendid cities and royal courts. And across all of these categories one could trace the itinerant pathway of that epitome of the internal Other - the wandering Jew.

The gaze which Europe first turned on the 'New World' was therefore not an 'empty' one. In some ways it was full to overflowing: shaped by a thousand legendary encounters, peopled by tribes of mis-shaped monstrosities, loaded down with the detritus of classical learning and the romance of travellers' tales. These discourses about Europe's internal others helped form the template within

16. J.B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1981; and Peter Mason, 'The Monstrous Human Races', in *Deconstructing America*, Routledge, London, 1990.

which the New World took shape in the European mind. The conquistadors did not always find what they were looking for. But they tried to assimilate what they saw into the epistemic framework through which they looked. The New World was produced within the speculary gaze of the West, within the conventions of European looking. 'Otherness' was from the beginning an invention of European ways of seeing and representing difference. It has been reinventing 'the Rest' ever since. For Todorov in his *The Conquest of America, The Question Of The Other*, America marks the start of Europe's attempt to assimilate the 'other', to deprive it of its radical alterity, while at the same time fixing it in its difference.[17] Though it was by no means the only space in which the European 'gaze' was developed and refined (the interiors of Africa, Asia and the Pacific were still to come), the New World constituted a formative episode in Europe's great adventure with, and negotiation of, difference.

The return of the myth

All, you might say, a very long time ago. And yet these matters, like most mythic structures, have a way of making a fateful return. The lowering of barriers within Europe, the coming together around the 'lingua franca' of a common market in goods, capital and ideas, the incorporation of a 'wider Europe' which the modern 'myth' of the Euro is supposed to symbolise, each continues to display its reverse side. What is 'open' within is increasingly barred without. 'Our common European home' is still more of a 'home' to some Europeans than it is to others, as the Poles, Bulgarians, Kosovans, Albanians and others from the former Soviet republics, clamouring for entry at the gates of 'Europe', testify. Then there are the suppressed histories. Moderate, liberal, democratic, tolerant, free-market, constitutional Europe may be a way of requiting for that other Europe, the one we can hardly remember - the Europe of the camps. But it has not prevented the horrendous spectacle of 'ethnic cleansing' from recurring at its very heart. Is there a myth which can help us to encompass in a single narrative the obscenity that was Auschwitz or the Warsaw Ghetto, and the obscenity that is Ramallah or the Jenin refugee camp today? Where is the myth that can re-connect the one to the other? By what historical equation did it come about that the destruction of European Jewry - a cataclysmic event as endemic within

17. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, Harper, New York, 1985

European history and culture as Plato or the siege of Troy - came to be a burden expiated by the native inhabitants of the West Bank? Can we explain within what mythic logic the latter could be said in any way to redeem the former? It remains to be seen whether Europe, against the background of its troubled, divided past, has something significantly different to say about the vale of tears that is the Gaza today, or whether it is content to be His Master's Voice (the US) writ small.

Consider the myth of The Promised Land. This myth provided consolation for generations of Jews that their suffering in the pogroms and massacres that marked their experience of anti-semitism in the European diaspora was not in vain, and would one day lead on to something better. Seventeenth-century English Puritans crossed the Atlantic to a new and inhospitable land in search of it. Black slaves in the New World seized on this myth, which they read in English in the *Bible*, and appropriated it as a way of metaphorically speaking their profound desire to be led out of slavery and into Freedom. The fact that they 'translated' it from the sacred text of a religion and a language that had served as instruments of their servitude did not undermine the power of the hope of redemption embedded in the narrative. Rastafarians who wanted to say that they were still enslaved 'in Babylon' re-used the myth of The Promised Land in the same way - to connote the dream of liberation - in the Caribbean and the twentieth-century black diasporas.[18] Does this varied but persistent lineage guarantee the myth's liberatory meaning? Not at all. For when the myth is transferred to the Middle East, and used literally to divide and appropriate a land that was once shared, we find that one person's 'Promised Land' can easily become another's historical nightmare. The myth of The Promised Land has underpinned the founding of a religious state to which only Jews can belong, and legitimated the illegal occupation of land and the driving into exile by Israel of thousands of Palestinians whose ancestors had occupied the land alongside Jews for centuries. Israel may exist because of the myth of The Promised Land. But Palestinians are dying because of it. The idea, then, that any and all versions of a myth which provide a 'charter for action' are valid is, in the light of this experience, ethically and politically indefensible.

Meanwhile, as what Edward Luttwak calls 'turbo-capitalism' unleashes

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18. See Stuart Hall, 'Thinking The Diaspora', in *Small Axe*, No.6, September 1999.

its forces across the globe, tens of thousands who can no longer survive at the margins of the system are loosed from their moorings and sent drifting across the world: Spinoza's 'multitudes'. Could Europe be a home for some of the homeless and hopeless, too? Or, as it lowers its frontiers within, is it proving only too effective at raising them, fortress-like, to face the new, straggling armies of the night? Thousands of those who have been nightly hurling themselves at passing Euro-star trains at the mouth to the Channel Tunnel are from that 'other' Europe on whose difference 'the idea of Europe' has always depended. Perhaps we have had enough of myths. Perhaps Europe has had one myth too many.

Of course, as Europeans keep saying, it couldn't happen here. If by this they mean that we can all sleep safe in our European beds until the jackboots appear on the streets again, then perhaps we have secured for Europe a gentle and liberal future. But what if this time around the storm troopers wear Armani suits? Today, in the face of current European political trends, when asked for 'a figure for Europe', I cannot help thinking of Paul Klee's image - not his Europa, with its beautifully enigmatic exclamation point, but his Angel of Progress, clanking towards Armageddon, with its face resolutely turned to the past: and of the myopic Walter Benjamin, peering through glasses as thick as marble, trying to make sense of it all and - failing to do so - taking his own life at some dark, lonely, forsaken European frontier check-point.