Introduction

Religion in Representations of Europe

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The cover of this book shows the frontispiece of *Europe, a Prophecy* by William Blake. This complex image highlights the themes on which we reflect in this volume. In the illuminated etching, Urizen, the demiurgic character of Blake's mythological repertoire, designs the world. He is depicted as a mighty figure, his grey hair and beard blown by an invisible wind. On his knee bending forward, brows furrowed in concentration, the powerful man stretches his left, oversized arm in a vigorous effort to measure or create something placed below the frame of the image. This divine force is placed in front of a star, perhaps the sun, surrounded by heavy clouds, with the figure nearly blocking out its light. In this primordial scenario of cosmological proportions, the compasses, a human geometrical and architectural instrument, appear somehow alien to the act of divine creation. They evoke rational planning, measuring, drawing a perfect circle. According to Blake's visual representation, the demiurge does not create a dimension of life, he *constructs* Earth. The frontispiece introduces a book in which »prophecy« is understood as a deep, creative interpretation of what has already happened and as an invitation to take a position in relation to it. Prophecy in Blake's understanding relates to the hermeneutical effort of interpreting the society one lives in.[1]

1 For an introduction to the hermeneutic work of William Blake see Rowland 2022. Rowland describes prophecy as follows: »Part of the way in which Blake wanted to get people to understand things differently was through prophecy. That did not mean predicting what would happen, but understanding more deeply what was going on and telling the truth as one saw it. ›Every honest man [and woman] is a prophet‹, he wrote. Blake prophesied about the nations, about America and Europe in particular. In both cases he was writing after the event. Prophecy meant helping people to understand the deeper mean-

Created in 1794, in the aftermath of the French Revolution with its political, cultural and religious repercussions that echoed far beyond France and Europe, this powerful, both challenging and enigmatic image invites reflection on the role of religion in shaping images and promoting ideas of Europe as a common ground for the people who inhabit this part of the world. Blake's image challenges us to think about Europe as a material place, an idea and a construction. Europe, as we experience it in our present, requires continued – perhaps »prophetic« – interpretation to understand it and to imagine its future.

The case studies collected in this volume are the result of a research project undertaken in the context of the International Exchange on Media and Religion, an interdisciplinary network of scholars established in 2006 which focuses on questions of visual and material communication in studying religion.[2] Since 2019, we have collaborated on this project on religion in representations of Europe and met regularly to present our individual studies, to pursue collaborative studies, and discuss our conceptual premises, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches. The authors work in Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland, and the US, and from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including the study of religion, theology, the history of art, media and film studies, anthropology, classics, and philosophy. As a group we bring together not only various disciplinary fields and academic traditions, but, most importantly with regard to this specific topic, different political positions and identities in relation to Europe and the European Union which also shape our approach to the topic of this volume.

Our project was conceived and realised during a phase when the idea of Europe was challenged in various ways: the tormented process of Brexit questioned the sense of the stability of the European Union, as do the still unresolved controversies about the framework agreement between the EU and Switzerland. As we write this introduction, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have fundamentally impacted our understand-

ing of history, the repressive reaction of the nascent British empire to the American colonies, in *America*, on the one hand, and the resistance of the *ancient regime* in Europe to change, on the other, which was in fact being overtaken by revolutionary events in France after 1789 when Blake produced *Europe*« (686–687).

2 See https://media-religion.net. The results of the network's research projects have been published in Pezzoli-Olgiati/Rowland 2011; Pezzoli-Olgiati 2015a; Mäder/Saviello/Scolari 2021.

ing of Europe as a geographical area, as the result of political planning, and as a symbolic dimension. Today, borders, nations and their political choices, transnational relationships, and the values considered fundamental to Europe are more than ever under discussion, and these experiences will shape our imagination of Europe's past, present and future.

These current political and social crises and developments show that the terms we engage with in our case studies are contested. What is Europe? How are ideas of Europe represented? What do we think of when we speak about religion in such representations of Europe? And how does religion shape these imaginations, and what are their effects? These questions cannot be addressed in a general way, and there is no single answer to them because there are too many different ideas and concepts of what Europe and religion are, could or should be in the past, present and future. Instead, our project focuses on a selection of case studies where these ideas and concepts crystallise in a particular source: a text, a work of art, a place, a map. In each case, »Europe« stands for a different discursive formation: the Europe of our sources is what each researcher is pointing to when they use the term.[3]

In this sense, Europe appears to be more an expression of a relationship than a well-defined or stable entity. Yet, even if there is a broad range of representations of Europe, and often, these ideas and ideals of what it means are contested and challenge each other, they all impact ways of thinking of and living in Europe as shared reference points. Thus, this volume offers a panorama of different ways of imagining across time and space. It discusses the presence (or conspicuous absence) and function of religion in designed, described, desired, or contested representations of Europe as a common ground – something that is both a (perhaps imagined) foundation and a future project – drawing on symbols, narratives or practices that we perceive as inspired by or associated with a religious tradition or community.

A shared conceptual framework of this volume is our understanding of representations (here in particular of Europe) as the materialisation of mental ideas, expectations, imaginations, or ideals in different media. In relating material objects to mental images (and vice versa), representations are per-

3 We draw in this formulation on Damon Knight's (1956, 33) insight that there is no definition of »science fiction« that all users of this term would agree on but »that it means what we point to when we say it.« Something very similar is true with regard to the term »Europe«.

formative practices that include numerous agents in complex processes of communication through specific practices of production (like filmmaking, engraving, or designing buildings) and interpretation in academic or popular discourses, through quotations or transformations of other representations. Moreover, representations actively shape processes of meaning making and negotiation surrounding ideas of Europe as an entity, of European identity, of the values that characterise Europe, and the boundaries that delimit it. In this »work of representation«,[4] myths and metaphors play a crucial role as shared resources of representational strategies and possibilities which do not only express ideas of Europe but also contest and renew them.

In this introduction, we attempt to map out the discursive territory in which the idea of »Europe« is constructed and in which our case studies are situated. We then draw together some threads from the multiplicity of approaches and insights of the various chapters to highlight some significant aspects in the presence and function of religion in representations of Europe.

1. What is Europe?

One of the major issues in thinking about Europe arises from the very term itself. »Europe« is a polysemic, ambivalent word that resists any attempt to define it in a univocal way. Europe is not simply a reality that we can refer to when we talk about it. Instead, it stands for discursive negotiations that assume different meanings for different people. »Europe« may reference a geographical entity, or a civilisation rooted in classical antiquity,[5] Christendom[6] and the Enlightenment.[7] Or it can be understood as a way of life or a

4 Hall 1997, 13.

5 For a discussion of the values derived from Greek Antiquity (such as individualism, participation in the public sphere, or the importance of property) and the impact of the Roman legal system on contemporary Europe, see Meier 2008.

6 For the identification of Christendom with »Europe« in the Middle Ages, see Delanty 1995; Huber 2008 discusses values derived from the Jewish-Christian tradition still formative today, such as human dignity, tolerance, freedom and responsibility, and neighbourly love.

7 The Enlightenment has impacted European self-understanding both in terms of a particular form of rationality, political organization, and a secularist worldview (see for example Delanty 1995).

specific tradition in the arts, architecture, fashion or food. Europe is often associated with a community characterised by shared values, united by its experience of trauma and remembrance of conflict, war and genocide. Europe also stands for a political entity, and it is often linked to a certain way of conceiving knowledge and science.[8]

This plurality of understandings is complicated even further by the fact that each of them is in itself ambiguous, extending or delimiting what Europe encompasses. A geographical understanding of Europe might be the most immediate and straight-forward approach, yet the continent of Europe is difficult to delineate. The current war in Ukraine is the latest reminder of the historically constructed character of Europe's boundaries, in particular towards the east where Europe merges apparently seamlessly into Asia. Furthermore, the continent's western oceanic boundaries are also less clearly defined than one might think, with »Europe« reaching towards islands such as Iceland or overseas territories remaining from colonial times. While the geographic understanding can, thus, be quite expansive, Europe's definition as an aesthetic-stylistic unity tends to be more reductive, limiting what is considered »European« to the artistic production and traditions of western Europe. And even as a political entity, the European Union, Europe is unstable, because of continuing expansions and struggles about power and commitments between individual member states and the EU.

Further ambivalences emerge when looking closely at the implication of these different ideas of Europe and their functions: while aiming at internal integration, the idea of Europe also reinforces external boundaries and differences. Defining itself via a shared culture, it neglects the fact of its own cultural plurality resulting from exchanges throughout the centuries: Europe's identity is eccentric and achieved through integrating others.[9] In addition, whilst the »Fortress Europe« might be closed to migrants, it remains open for cheap labour and goods,[10] and ideals of mobility and freedom lead to a sense of unsettledness and insecurity.[11] Emphasis on peace and a shared past down-

8 See for example Quenzel 2005, 98–134, who identifies eleven different positions in discourses around Europe in the feuilletons, social sciences and humanities.

9 Fornäs 2012, 16, with reference to Rémi Brague's notion of »eccentric culture«.

10 Bauman 2004, 21.

11 Fornäs 2012, 15; Bauman 2004, 95–96.

play Europe's history and contemporary experiences of conflicts,[12] while the desire for a collective European identity is met by scepticism with regard to its normative implications.[13] The vision of Europe as transnational openness is counteracted by the emphasis on regional cultural and political identities.

These ambivalences also extend to the regulative dimension of the idea of Europe. Labelling something as »Europe« or »European« references hegemonic discourses, in a positive and/or negative sense. It may be a statement that associates a quest for a common ground linked to positive values such as solidarity or democracy, modernity or progress. Or »Europe« might be used as a strategy of demarcation against what is considered ideologically constraining or as an »other« from which to distinguish the »self«. The hegemonic power of »Europe« also expresses itself in its often implicit limitation to the western part of the continent as the »true« Europe, perhaps a heritage of the Cold War, with central and eastern regions remaining at the edges of attention.

Given the impossibility of defining »Europe« unambiguously, myths, metaphors and symbols are even more important to provide a common ground and a connection among those who relate to Europe, and »to appreciate our shared past and tentative future«.[14] Luisa Passerini outlines several functions of myths as they establish a range of relationships between self and nature (mystical function), with previous generations (chronological), among members of a community (sociological) and with future generations (pedagogical).[15] Ancient Greek myths provide elements to imagine Europe's origins (the myth of Europa and the Bull), its tenacious reconstitutions after conflicts, catastrophes and destruction (the myth of the Phoenix who rises from the ashes) and its focus on technological development (the myth of Prometheus). Jewish mythological narratives such as the Tower of Babel offer ways to understand the tension between linguistic and cultural diversity and unity as a risky but attractive challenge. These and other mythological narratives make plausible the idea of a common ground beyond historical contingency.

12 Delanty 1995, 2; Bottici/Challand 2013, 61.
13 Delanty 1995, 1.
14 Soskice/Melloni 2004, 9.
15 Passerini 2003, 22.

However, as Stuart Hall points out, the recurrent myths might also represent Europe as a uniform, closed entity which curiously contradicts the founding myth of Europa and the Bull: the figure of Europa is not »European« but a stranger who is forcefully carried to what is now considered Europe. To counteract these delimiting tendencies of the formative myths, Hall thus proposes to broaden the »canon« of myths to include other narratives, such as the Wandering Jew, that emphasise liminality, openness and otherness as positive values.[16]

Equally, metaphors play an important role in discursive formations of Europe since they offer a shared visual and linguistic vocabulary and an interpretative frame that enables integration and understanding at the same time as allowing for polysemy and creativity. Leading metaphors referring to the semantic sphere of a family or a shared house are particular widespread. They represent Europe as a community sharing a common home, linked by strong relationships and characterised by solidarity and mutual care or, alternatively, by the tensions that may shape family relationships. Also, plant metaphors recur frequently with images of Europe as a flourishing field or a growing tree conveying ideals of unity and prosperity. These myths and metaphors express varying ideas of Europe that go beyond the mere intellectual understanding of what Europe is or should be and enable emotional and rational identification.

Without being able to fully exhaust the wide-ranging, complex debates about Europe with its conceptual history, political dimensions and symbolic valences, we highlight here three aspects that shape Europe and that seem of particular relevance in the context of our project: the question of shared European values; the dialectic between integration and fragmentation, and the related tension between identity and difference or otherness. A brief look at the role of religion in discourses on Europe will conclude this section.

The question of values is, of course, an important one. Roman Siebenrock notes that, paradoxically, »Europe is a continent only because Europe is more than a geographical designation.«[17] If Europe is understood as something »more« than a geographical entity, if it is a community, a culture or even just a common project not yet fully realised, then shared values are one important element that ties this community together, provides a sense of identi-

16 Hall 2003, 42–44.

17 Siebenrock 2004, 11.

ty and informs its future goals. However, in the case of Europe, these values are only vaguely defined and, even if they become norms on the EU level, they are hard to realise, as ongoing controversies with Poland, Hungary and Germany over the value of the rule of law and the normativity of national vs. European court decisions show. Nevertheless, there seems to be a common sense understanding – or perhaps a shared imaginary – of certain values, rooted in different traditions, that shape European politics, culture and societies: freedom, equality, democracy, rationality, peace, solidarity, the rule of law, secularism, integration, tolerance, prosperity.[18] While these values are proposed as universally valid, Hall critically notes that they are limited in their traditional as well as current scope:[19] until quite recently, freedom was limited to white, male citizens and excluded colonial subjects and slaves, values of solidarity or mobility apply today to citizens of European states but not to migrants or refugees from outside of the continent. Just like Europe as a whole, its values, too, are in constant negotiation in response to geo-political and cultural developments and yet provide a common reference point – perhaps more as ideals than as formal guidelines of concrete political or individual practice.

As already mentioned, European integration and unity are a central concern which is, however, counteracted by Europe's cultural and political heterogeneity, its values of mobility and diversity, and its history of conflict. This dialectic between unity and diversity is mirrored, on a political level, in the EU's motto, »United in diversity«, and the circle of stars on the European flag expressing unity and harmony.[20] The heterogeneity of Europe as a metaphorical »family of cultures«[21] may be taken as enriching, as intended by the motto, or as a threat to the intended unity of the political or cultural entity, as experienced in past conflicts, an ambivalence that at times is also expressed through reference to the myth of the Tower of Babel. Integration may be seen as the way to the peace and solidarity envisioned for Europe, or vice versa as the totalising homogenisation of diverse traditions. Thus, for Johan Fornäs, »European integration policies must link transnational uni-

18 Baschiera/Di Chiara 2018, 244–245; Bottici/Challand 2013, 127; Quenzel 2005, 128.
19 Hall 2003.
20 Fornäs 2012, 105, 117.
21 Bondebjerg 2012, 650, with reference to Anthony D. Smith.

fication to issues of multicultural citizenship and polysemic identification« as experienced in internal and external migration and mobility.[22]

This dialectic between unity and diversity is, of course, connected to the relationship between identity and difference or otherness. While the concept of »identity« associates sameness and the identification with what is perceived as similar, Hall reminds us that instead, identity is »constructed *through* difference«.[23] That is, self-understanding and identity depend on the other as a necessary reference point. Attempts to shore up one's precarious self-identity against its dependency on the other might then develop into dynamics of exclusion or division given the power dynamics that influence the processes of identity formation on the individual and collective level. Through these dynamics, the self-understanding of Europe and European identity has been profoundly shaped by its »others« across history, from Germanic »barbarians« to Muslims, the »savages« of the Americas, the communist threat of the Cold War, and – again today – Islam as the paradigmatic »other«.[24] In contemporary Europe, Turkey and – in an even more evident fashion since the invasion of Ukraine – Russia represent for different reasons the otherness over against which Europe defines itself in geographical, political, cultural, social and religious terms. The construction of these external others suggests a unified European identity, which, however, is challenged by the experience of internal otherness, the heterogeneity of European cultures and languages. As the development of identitarian and populist movements across Europe shows, diversity is not always experienced as enriching. Constructively dealing with otherness as a part of identity is a necessary practice to avoid exclusion and racism.[25]

What then might be the role of religion in these complex processes of defining Europe, its values and the dialectics of identity and diversity shaping its community? Again, ambivalences emerge: while Christianity is usually named as one of the roots of Europe (together with ancient Greek and

22 Fornäs 2012, 16.

23 Hall 2003, 38 (emphasis in the original).

24 See Delanty 1995, who traces these developments from antiquity to the present; for a discussion of Islam, and the consequent emergence of religion as an issue in European identity discourses, as the contemporary other of Europe, see Bottici/Challand 2013, 145–165 and Fuess 2022.

25 Delanty 1995, 98–99, notes that historically, racism has been a core element of the idea of Europe through violence, colonialism and othering.

Roman culture and the Enlightenment tradition), this construct of a Christian Europe renders invisible both the presence of other religions within Europe throughout history, and the internal plurality within Christianity with its different denominations. Another ambivalence can be noted with regard to the role and presence of religion in Europe which is, on the one hand, recognised as formative of Europe given the historical identification of Europe as a religious, political and cultural entity with »Christendom« in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, religious traditions continue to play a foundational role in the lived experience of many Europeans. Yet, on the other hand, this complex religious constellation has been downplayed in favour of a secularised discourse of Europe, as is visible for instance in the controversies about the mention of Christianity in the draft of the European constitution and limited mentions of religion in the significant European treaties.[26]

Perhaps, given Europe's history of violent conflicts over religion, secularism is seen as the »safer« option, reflecting an understanding of religion – notably both the tradition considered »European«, Christianity, and its religious »other«, Islam – as a source of conflict and best limited to the private sphere. Bottici and Challand note »the biased and selective use that can be made of religion as a *positive* marker of an alleged European community by stressing a *negative* view of an other«[27] and call for the recognition of religion as a bridge among different groups and their existential questions.

2. »Religion« in representing Europe

The case studies presented in this volume show that religion continues to play an important role as a frame of understanding, in the legitimation of norms and values, and as a resource of myths, metaphors, and symbols through which to make sense of this precarious, amorphous reality that is Europe. With the concept of »religion«, we do not only address institutions; rather, we encompass also practices of the transmission and diffusion of religious symbols, narratives and practices in societies and cultures. These religious

26 Bottici/Challand 2013, 151–153.

27 Bottici/Challand 2013, 163 (emphasis in the original).

aspects of the shared cultural imaginary may be fragmented and/or diluted, but still, as we will see, they convey worldviews and values.[28]

The various chapters of this volume illustrate the ways in which metaphors, symbols and myths are used to imagine Europe as a community of shared values and traditions and/or as a future project by using more or less explicit references to the European history of religion and contemporary traditions and communities. The chapters are organised according to the different processes of the transmission of religious knowledge and worldviews, practices and institutions expressed in them.

The first part, *Representations of Europe through the Centuries,* draws a diachronic line with selected examples from the Middle Ages to Early Modernity, establishing a (religious-)historical frame to better understand contemporary practices of imagining and representing Europe, highlighting both ruptures and continuities.

Sean Michael Ryan's article arises out of an observation of the ways in which Britain (or, the United Kingdom) has been situated ambivalently in relationship to the European continent in discourses prior to Brexit. Ryan draws on maps, perhaps the most obvious representations of Europe, specifically an Anglo-Saxon *mappa mundi*, to show that this ambivalent positioning of England at the edge of Europe as both connected and separate, has a long tradition. His analysis of the map, its sources and associated geographical texts as well as monastic and theological discourses results in rich insights into the imaginaries that have informed Britain's self-perception and views of its relationship with Europe throughout the centuries. The tendencies to relegate Britain to the margins of the known world are counteracted in this map by drawing the island in closer to the continent, allied with Scandinavian trading partners and even asserting claims over territories to the south. For the monastic viewers of the map, Britain's peripheral status is re-valued when viewed from the perspective of eternity as integral to the missionary goal of the divine plan that the gospel be preached »to the ends of the earth«.

In the same geographical context, but drawing on a different source, Ann Jeffers provides an analysis of the role of religion and religious tolerance in Thomas More's *Utopia*. She approaches the text by highlighting its paratexts, in particular maps and translations. A comparison between different visual-

28 See Pezzoli-Olgiati 2015b.

isations of Utopia in maps emphasises different appropriations of the complex religious constitution of this imaginary island. Similarly, translations into vernacular European languages adapt Thomas More's ambiguous text to the different religious-political contexts, re-interpreting the depiction of the religions (plural!) of Utopia according to current debates in the various countries. Jeffers concludes that *Utopia*'s (self-)deconstructive mode of engaging with the social and religious discourses of its time opens new possibilities for European societies today.

Natasha O'Hear's contribution begins with two artworks originating from roughly the same period as More's *Utopia*, Pieter Bruegel's paintings, *The Tower of Babel*. In the context of the ongoing search for European identity, she analyses Bruegel's visual interpretations of the biblical myth, as well as its afterlife in 20th century visual representations of the EU, particularly in posters and architecture. *The Tower of Babel* informs both representations aiming at strengthening the EU as a political project as well as anti-EU propaganda. O'Hear's analysis provides insights into how supporters of the EU project imagine Europe, perhaps as a sort of quasi-religious community, and conversely, how some of the opponents of the EU were able to take this imaginary of Europe and turn it into anti-secularist polemic.

Natalie Fritz and Paola von Wyss-Giacosa also trace a line from Early Modernity to contemporary times in their discussion of visual representations of norms regulating food consumption. Their analysis of historical and contemporary sources, all of which originate from a European context, shows how visual representations regulate food consumption in the combination of economic, health and strongly religious-moral discourses. Following a diachronic approach, they note persistent motifs and lines of argumentation in normative discourses of food consumption in Europe. In this context, Europe functions as an imaginary normative power which has historically regulated – and still does – the life of its population in different ways, with its authority based on historically and religiously legitimised common values and norms that guide the coexistence and collaboration of different countries and the lives of individuals in this region.

In the second section, *Imagining Europe from the Outside,* perspectives on Europe from other continents and/or their religious traditions are collected, offering striking perspectives on processes of othering. It is noteworthy that in these outside perspectives on Europe, religious frames of refer-

ence play an important role in trying to access the European »other«. Alberto Saviello heeds Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to »provincialise Europe« and to challenge the humanities' Eurocentrism in the reversal of perspective in academic studies of cultural contacts. In his examination of visual representations of Europeans in Mughal painting at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, he asks what image of Europe these paintings evoke and how this image was related to the culture and the moral and religious norms of the Mughal court. He observes that the Mughal court's enthusiasm for the natural and technological »wonders« that Europeans brought with them, including visual arts that aimed at the mimetic representation of the visible world, was countered by an abiding scepticism about supposed European materialism. Saviello's analysis shows that in a kind of dialectical process, Sunni Mughal artists synthesised the mimetic approach of European art with the traditional idealising style of Persian painting to create a more sophisticated practice of representation that would be able to merge the external material world and inner truth.

Centring on a Tibetan perspective on Europe, Dolores Zoé Bertschinger analyses the little-known early 19th-century Tibetan geographical compendium by the 4th Tsenpo Nomon Hen Jampel Chökyi Tenzin Thrinley, focusing on his geographical representation of Europe and specifically, the Tsenpo's reassessment of Christianity. Through its identification of Spain with the mythical place of Shambhala, the text presents a »Buddhisation« of Europe. Bertschinger concludes that looking at Europe from an early-19th century Tibetan perspective opens up new approaches to its spatial order, its cultural practices and mythical dimensions in which Europe appears as a figure of never-ending layers of meaning and imaginations. In light of the Tsenpo's depiction of Europe, European readers might ask how their understanding of European histories, politics, economies, cultures, and religions would change were they to be reassessed through a Tibetan and Buddhist lens?

Applying a different perspective, Marie-Therese Mäder focuses on the exterior and interior design of the Latter-day Saints temples built in Europe to reflect on how these buildings represent the worldview of a religious community established outside of Europe. She concludes that these temples, which do not adapt to European architectural conventions, function ambivalently. On the one hand, they highlight this religious community's origins in the United States (especially Utah) by reproducing the same monumen-

tal design of their temples in the US all over the world. On the other hand, the impressive architecture of Latter-day Saints' temples expresses a separation from the outside world, a celestial purity and perfection that can also be achieved by members attending temples in their European cities.

Finally, the third part collects studies on *Contemporary Practices of Representing Europe*, focusing on the manifold occurrences of religious references in different media. Alexander D. Ornella begins with his childhood memories of crossing the Austrian border into Italy or Slovenia (Yugoslavia at the time) to reflect on the meaning of borders, in particular in the image of Europe as a fragmented whole, and their religious dimension. Drawing on his own experience and a photographic project tracing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, he shows how borders impose their power by materialising imaginations of the functions of borders as both connecting and dividing different entities. Although borders are human-made, they disguise their artificiality. Critically addressing borders and border territories, and observing human behaviour in these places, makes visible their human createdness as well as their paradoxical function in the imagination of a Europe without borders.

Carla Danani and Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati analyse the House of European History, a museum located in the EU quarter in Brussels aiming at developing a common historical knowledge of European history. The museum was designed to promote a common memory and, consequently, a common European identity. The authors analyse the museum as a place where visitors may engage in the process of thinking about what Europe means for them, what it is now, and how it could develop. The continent is represented as a uniform entity with roots in Antiquity and Christianity and characterised by secularisation since Early Modernity. The permanent exhibition focuses on the 20th and 21st century and stages historical events that characterise, according to the promotors and curators, European identity. While religion plays a marginal role in the museum, the plurality of languages receives great attention as an enriching trait of Europe.

Baldassare Scolari turns to verbal representations of Europe in his analysis of the metaphors used in Pope Francis's speeches about Europe. After tracing the continuities in the Catholic Church's statements concerning the European project, he analyses the main semantic fields from which metaphors are taken (especially the family, plants and construction) and the rhe-

torical strategies adopted by the Pope. Scolari underlines the fundamental role that metaphors play in discursive and imaginative practices aimed at giving a normative foundation to the project of the European community.

Drawing on a medium not commonly considered in discourses on Europe, Verena Eberhardt's contribution analyses an illustrated children's book and CD that take readers on a journey through Europe in stories, songs and dances. She explores the book's visual and textual representations of peoples, nations, and an imagined European community, arguing that Europe is understood as a very complex concept that is characterised by multiple cultural, geographical and political ruptures. At the same time, the book seeks to overcome these ruptures in the representation of Europe as united in a common canon of values.

A similar argument is developed by Anna-Katharina Höpflinger who analyses the role of religious motifs in the Europe represented in the Eurovision Song Contest. This music competition is held among the members of the European Broadcasting Union, which includes European nations and other countries from different parts of the word. In her chapter, Höpflinger focuses on performances using explicit religious symbolism. She argues that as part of an internationally received popular culture, the references to religion in the Eurovision Song Contest, which are not tied to specific religious traditions, convey values like diversity, democracy and commercialism.

Finally, Stefanie Knauss's contribution focuses on festivals of European film to reflect on how they imagine Europe through their mission and programming, and what role religion plays in these constructions. She argues that the festivals imagine Europe as marked by inclusivity and diversity, with an emphasis on Europe's geographical and cultural dimensions, as well as a focus on an ethics of social justice and concern for those at the margins. While religion is not a predominant theme in the festivals' profiles and films screened, it is nonetheless one of the voices heard in the public sphere of the festivals, and its presence and contributions challenge the secularisation narrative of Enlightenment Europe as well as dualistic perceptions of religious traditions as markers of belonging and difference, and thus sources of conflict.

The chapters collected in this book study a broad range of practices of representation in various media – often those that do not usually garner the attention of discourses on Europe or on religion. They privilege sources that address Europe as a – realized, imagined, desirable, contested, or impossi-

ble – whole entity. All in all, the book covers a broad territory, both literally in terms of the geographical European areas investigated, and metaphorically in the range of ways to imagine Europe, the roles that religion plays in them, and the theories and methods used to investigate them. Still, it is noticeable that a western and central European perspective is predominant in the volume, mirroring the authors' research focus, their linguistic, cultural and religious-historical expertise, as well as personal background. Studies focusing specifically on eastern Europe with its particular challenges in developing their identity as part of Europe after the Cold War and their particular religious configurations are missing here, as are those with a focus on northern Europe/Scandinavia. And thus, this field of investigation offers itself to future research, to compare and confront with the tendencies in representing Europe, and the roles and functions of religion in them, developed in this volume and traced, in an indicative fashion, in the following last section of this introduction.

3. Leitmotifs in representing Europe

Various ways to imagine Europe emerge from the studies collected here, thinking of Europe as a shared place, a common ground for living together on a continent whose borders are fluid and subject to frequent transformations.[29] These imaginations of Europe are moulded by the logic of the media and material representations we analyse, each with their own specific features.[30] As mentioned above, our case studies emphasise an understanding of representation as a practice in which material culture and mental images interact.[31] This tension between the materialisation of idea(l)s and expectations and their representation in different media is essential to understand the ways in which diverse imaginaries of Europe coexist while also being rooted in different places, times, and societal spheres. In fact, Stuart Hall argues that this »work of representation«[32] is fundamental for the reality of an entity such as Europe:

29 For an introduction to Europe as a continent see Flannery 2018.
30 See Hall 2003, 39.
31 See Hall 1997.
32 Hall 1997, 13.

> So nations and supra-national communities – if they are to hang together, and construct a sense of belongingness among their members – cannot simply be political, economic or geographical entities. They 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.[33]

The case studies draw on a broad range of media, such as maps, texts, engravings, posters, architecture, photographs, museums and their exhibits, verbal images such as metaphors, paintings, children's books, folk and pop music, television, internet sites, film and food. These very different media materialise a vast range of ideas of Europe and of the role that religion plays in its imagination. In spite of this diversity, it is possible to identify several recurrent topics and aspects that appear to be crucial in understanding how Europe is imagined, and the way in which religion functions in these representations.

First, spatiality appears to be a central, if complex concept that allows us to think of Europe as a common, shared territory, even if the precise boundaries of this territory remain somewhat fuzzy. The category of place plays a fundamental role as the ground on which to situate an imagined Europe. From a theoretical perspective Europe is understood as a physical extension, as the result of planning and construction (remember Blake's demiurge discussed at the beginning of this introduction), and as a »third space«, a symbolic expanse in which meaning-making processes arise, are negotiated and challenged.[34] This spatial approach promotes the analysis of representations of Europe as dynamic processes of construction through media. Still, representations do not depict what Europe *is*. Depending on the contexts in which they are produced and received, the images of Europe studied here represent this common ground as a movement, an intention, a changing dimen-

33 Hall 2003, 39.

34 About the different qualities of space see e. g. Lefebvre 2000, Casey 1996, Soja 1996 and Löw 2001. For an overview on different approaches to spatiality in a cultural studies key see e. g. Döring/Thielmann 2008.

sion or a relationship with others or otherness.[35] This is especially obvious in maps whose visual representations of Europe's geography are influenced by the significance attributed to Europe (or parts of it) by their creators. In these spatial dynamics, religion plays an important role as it provides a lens for understanding the spatial expanse, giving it meaning and significance. It helps to establish, legitimise and challenge borders, and to articulate relationships, even in cases where religion plays a rather marginal role.[36]

As a second central theme, the diachronic temporal axis emerges: Europe is both a place and a time. Imaginations of Europe rely on a tentative historical and/or mythological foundation and legitimation, a remembered common past that, at the same time, allows a projection into the future, shaping the idea of what Europe could or should become. In tracing diachronic developments, both continuities and discontinuities become apparent, in particular with regard to the continued presence and role of religious traditions by means of transformed, adapted or fragmented references. In the reflection on the chronological dimensions of imaginations of Europe, memory and remembrance are paramount. By shaping common memories, and associating them with feelings and emotions,[37] processes of inclusion and exclusion are formed. Memory is performed as a means of involving individuals and collectives into a process of establishing a common ground by projecting it on a diachronic dimension. Remembrance and memory are always a dialectical process of including and forgetting: some traditions are considered as an integral part of the performance of memory, others are excluded.[38] An example for this dialectic is the way in which representations of Europe consider linguistic and cultural traditions as constitutive of its shared memory, but omit religious traditions since they are associated with conflicts and divisions that no longer have a place in Europe's peaceful present.[39]

In these processes of remembrance, the collected case studies highlight three different strategies of dealing with religion. Religion can be identified with a specific tradition: references to mythical fragments from Antiquity, in particular the myth of Europa and the Bull, significant narratives such

35 Hall 2003, particularly 37.
36 Nexon 2006, 279.
37 See Passerini 2003, 27.
38 See François 2011.
39 On this aspect see e. g. Byrnes 2006 and Nexon 2006, 279.

as the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, or Christianity as formative of Europe's past, associate religion with a limited corpus of texts, narratives, and practices tied to a particular canon or institution. In this clearly delimited form, religion remains a relevant reference point. The second strategy considers religion as something that historically contributed to creating a common ground and shared values but has been overcome in secular modernity. Hence, imagining Europe diachronically describes a process of emancipation from religious institutions, particularly Christianity.[40] The onset of secularism is seen as the premise for building a strong, unified European identity in the present, especially in debates concerning the political structure of the EU. However, even if values or norms (such as those relating to food and eating) have been »secularised« over time, their religious groundings are not completely lost and may reappear even in a secular context. The third strategy becomes apparent in some sources which use symbols, narratives and practices that originated in religious traditions but are now recombined into new forms or transposed beyond religious communities and traditions. Here, remembrance is not a process of repeating and reproducing what came before but of the creative development of new forms that reference past traditions but also free themselves from them.

A third theme that emerges from the representations of Europe studied here is the tension between the two poles of diversity and unity. On the one hand, narratives emphasise the importance of diversity and plurality, on the other hand, they reflect a genuine interest in sustaining processes of identification with Europe as a common territory and community. In addition, the poles of unity and diversity each bear ambivalent values. Diversity may be understood as richness or as a motive for conflict; unity as community or uniformity. The case studies note a broad range of strategies to articulate the negotiation of identities and identification in the interplay between inside and outside perspectives, between processes of belonging and exclusion. European identity and unity may be grounded in a sense of a shared territory or a political entity, even if both are precarious foundations of identity given the fragility of this geo-political project. Identity processes may also be enhanced by media promoting the idea of a shared European culture which can designate both a tradition of (mostly western European) »high culture«

40 On the role of religion and secularism in the EU there is a long standing and broad debate. See e. g. Foret 2015 and an analysis of Foret's position by Nardella 2017.

or commercially successful popular culture, often produced with substantial economic support and taken to communicate shared values in a diversity of stories, sounds and images. In addition, European identity is often linked with multilingualism: Europe's many languages highlight its diversity as a gift and emphasise the possibility of mutual understanding through common languages and translation. Following a cultural studies approach, language here is understood in a very broad sense: music and visual representations are forms of communication and are presented as offering a possibility to »translate« among cultures and overcome differences. While space, politics, culture and languages may be seen as promoting the integration of diverse elements in the quest for Europe as a common ground, religion is understood, more often than not, as an element that creates division and conflict.

This last point shows that religion plays a peculiar role in these representations of Europe and the imaginations they materialise. We notice that in our sources, religions (especially Christianity, Judaism and Islam) are often addressed as homogenous entities and linked to generalising assumptions that neglect the complexity of religious traditions and communities, both diachronically and synchronically. Christianity is generally identified with the origins of Europe in medieval »Christendom« or represented as a promotor of values that are compatible with secular visions of Europe as a common ground and project. In addition, we find fragmented references to religious symbols that may occur in different religious traditions such as angels and demons, and specific references to Jewish-Christian scriptures or the mythological traditions of Antiquity that are now loosened from their original context and combined or rearranged. While in these instances, religious traditions provide resources for imagining Europe as a common project, at other times, religion is also represented as a source of conflict and as such, a threat to the project of European identity and unity, especially with regard to Europe's past of religious divisions that is considered to be overcome in secular modernity or by marking Europe's contemporary other as a religious other.[41]

Representations through the centuries, representations from other continents, and contemporary representations in various media: with these three perspectives on historical developments, different geographical and cultural

41 On the role and problems of religion in the construction of a »sense of common Self« see Bottici/Challand 2013, 146.

perspectives, as well as on different media we do not pretend to present an exhaustive selection, even if our case studies comprise a broad range of issues, media and contexts. Rather, our approach consciously privileges the in-depth analysis of the single case. Addressing imaginations of Europe through this inductive procedure presents us with the variety and diversity of attempts of conceiving of Europe as a whole. There is no common mode of dealing with Europe. In different cultural fields, times and media, Europe is associated with different traits and delimitated by means of various strategies. If Europe is a common ground – in terms of territory, values, goals or identity – it is, in a way, a shifting, unstable ground that moves beneath our feet. Imaginations of Europe are projections into the future with a utopian character. Imagining and representing Europe as a common ground is therefore more of a forward-projected attitude which may be understood as a strategy to overcome the fragility of Europe as a real common ground in the present.

In these diverse visual and material representations and imaginaries of Europe, religion is a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a univocal meaning-making process. »Religion« appears to be a contested element of European diversity and is used in contradictory ways, as already noted: on the one hand, religious references play a role in delineating a general sense of existential orientation that contributes to constructing a sense of belonging, inspiring values, promoting peaceful coexistence and flourishing; on the other hand, religion is understood as a potential cause of conflicts and divisions. While religion appears to be a contested issue when attempting to represent Europe as united in its diversity, the discourse of common values is dominant: whenever Europe is depicted as a whole, values are presented as the glue that keeps all the pieces together. Yet the (implicit) consensus focuses on the necessity of shared values but not on the definition of them. This reinforces the quality of representations of Europe as a utopian endeavour, not so much a project to be realised in a historical future but as an idea that points towards an eschatological future. And perhaps, this is the way in which religion is most present in imaginations of Europe, as a framework that allows us to think beyond history.

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