

Epilogue

‘Choose your ancestors’

Devise found on a coat of arms

The longevity of imperial mentalities in the age of mass culture and revolution appears to be a paradox, or at least an anachronism. Empires offered unequal benefits to their subjects, and in the twentieth century, people had more capacity to recognize this, thanks to the rise of global media, and the transnational connections of the revolutionary movements. Some historians have called this the puzzle of the ‘persistence of the old regime’, meaning the continued inequality in the national distribution of resources in European societies in the aftermath of the twentieth-century revolutions.¹ Even the most recent debates about Europe’s economic future see the continuity of power associated with patrimonial private wealth as one of the principal causes for social inequality.²

In this book, I have taken a step away from the ‘persistence’ debate by looking at the transformation of imperial prestige in Europe’s intellectual communities. Recovering the way in which the European intelligentsia spoke, thought, and felt about imperial decline, I hope, will invite more discussion of the question of ‘how’ patrimonies of empire were absorbed in transnational contexts. The European network of intellectuals discussed here recycled their sense of past empires into a new concept of Europe. Their varied experiences of imperial administration, the management of international relations between empires, were offered in response to the revolutions and civil wars in Russia, Germany, and Austria. In this context, their roots in the dissident fractions of Europe’s imperial elites became part of the peculiar prestige of this group.

¹ Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), *Europäischer Adel 1750–1950* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

² Thomas Piketty, *Le capital au XXIème siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).

In addition to uncovering this broader intellectual terrain, I wished to explain the importance of a particular set of German-speaking elites in shaping cosmopolitan visions of empire. This had nothing to do with the desire to rehabilitate some aspect of Germany's national past, or that of elites more generally. Rather, I hoped to rebalance the history of post-imperial European thought in transnational perspective. In the aftermath of Germany's second defeat in 1945, the relationship between German elite culture and liberal internationalism has been understandably obscured, since historians have been focusing largely on the history of Germany's political deviance. But a more recent turn to German intellectual history in transnational and global perspective has enabled a different perspective on this past.³

Pan-Europe: brief history of a separation

In a speech that he gave in the aftermath of the Second World War at Zurich University, Winston Churchill contrasted the 'frightful nationalistic quarrels' of the twentieth century provoked by the 'Teutonic' nations with the image of another Europe. 'This noble continent', he argued, 'comprising on the whole the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth, enjoying a temperate and equable climate, is the home of all the great parent races of the western world'.⁴ This noble Europe was the site of 'western civilisation', he argued, whose pedigree included the 'ancient States and Principalities' of the 'Germany of former days' but excluded the 'Teutonic nations'.⁵

With utterances of this kind, an essentially Anglo-American community of political leaders took it upon itself to save the idea of Europe after the defeat of National Socialism. Severing ideas of Germanness from notions of civility and nobility was one part of that undertaking.⁶ As they buried the failed League of Nations and proclaimed the United Nations as its successor, intellectuals and policymakers of a new world order in western Europe, the Middle East, and the United States were effectively saying:

³ Cf. Dirk A. Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008); Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen*.

⁴ Winston Churchill, *Europe Unite: Speeches 1947 and 1948* (London: Cassell, 1950), esp. 'A Speech at Zurich University', 19 September 1946, 197–202, and at the Albert Hall on 14 May 1947, 194–197.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 194–197.

⁶ On the concept of European rehabilitation in connection with German history, see especially Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

'Europe is dead. Long live Europe!'⁷ The impact of this idea of Europe on European society is that it has allowed Europeans to reconstruct their good conscience, to create a continent that is largely peaceful inside its borders, even though Europeans continue to fight wars beyond Europe and justify their arbitrary frontiers with references to historical pasts. The result could be compared to the way the ideal body of the king was remembered in medieval political theology: for the sake of a stable order, it is necessary that the ideal body survives the physical death of any particular office holder in the minds of its subjects.⁸ The difference was that here the physical bodies that had died were multiple and had disparate meanings for different communities: dynastic leaders in the First World War followed by millions of individual and unnamed soldiers, and populations which had become victims of ethnic cleansing.⁹

Membership in the new body of Europe, which was economically grounded in the Rome agreements of 1957, was the result of a longer process of selection and division in which historical arguments played a key part in justifying political changes. Thus in Churchill's mind, Germany's principalities became associated with the 'good Germany', while Prussia was relegated to the destructive, Teutonic side of German culture. Political considerations led others to a selective mapping of the rest of Europe as well. The recipients of the Marshall Plan, which was the economic side to this reconstruction, included Turkey but excluded Spain, which was then still under Franco's rule.¹⁰ The other part of the plan involved saving western Europe from the Soviet Union. The leaders of Europe's post-war reconstruction of Europe used the boundary established at Brest-Litovsk as Europe's eastern frontier, and joined the Soviet leadership in dividing Germany along the same principles.¹¹

⁷ The latter phrase is taken from the humorous essay by Aleksander Wat, 'Long live Europe', in *ibid.*, *Lucifer Unemployed* (1927) (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 77–81.

⁸ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); for more recent treatments of the theme, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or, Beyond Essence*, transl. Alphonso Lengis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005). Pablo Schneider, 'Political Iconography and the Picture Act: The Execution of Charles I in 1649', in *Pictorial Cultures and Political Iconographies. Approaches, Perspectives, Case Studies from Europe and America*, ed. Udo J. Hebel and Christoph Wagner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 63–83. For an older treatment, see Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges: Etude sur le Caractère surnaturel attribué à la Puissance Royale Particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1925).

⁹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Josef L. Kunz, 'Pan Europe, the Marshall Plan Countries and the Western European Union', in *The American Journal of International Law*, 42:4 (October 1948), 868–877.

¹¹ On the notion of 'post-war' as a formative paradigm of European identity, see Tony Judt's *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005). On Nazi government in Europe as an

At the economic level, the ideas of John Maynard Keynes and others were heeded in the late 1940s and 1950s, and the isolation of West Germany was avoided. But with few exceptions, this did not apply to much historical writing. In intellectual history, too, a selective and divisive interpretation of European identity prevailed throughout the post-war and Cold War period. Thus key intellectual contributions of German as well as Russian thought of the 1920s for liberal ideas of international order have fallen out of sight.

I would compare attempts to restore the ‘nobility’ of European civilization by means of selective history to the way twenty-first-century management consultants proposed to restructure bankrupt banks. Such a process involves separating the good parts in the continent’s credit history from the bad parts, and supplying the good part with an impeccable past and a refreshed or even a different name. This kind of salvation through restructuring is neither a miracle, nor a revolution; it is merely an attempt to preserve the status quo and the continued political functioning of society after a moment of crisis.¹² Associating the problematic heritage of European identity with essentially Germanic features, such as theories of race and the pursuit of *Lebensraum*, was politically an easy way forward, especially given that the Nazis had themselves prepared this kind of vision. Moreover, the catastrophe of the Holocaust indeed resists comparative perspectives not just by virtue of its scale. But more recent approaches to historical understanding of twentieth-century crises have shown that it is possible to account for the uniqueness of such excesses without forgetting their transnational entanglements.¹³

German intellectual history of this period has only recently been placed in a more global comparative context.¹⁴ The German case evokes other instances of historical retribution in colonial and imperial

‘empire’, see Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire. Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin, 2008).

¹² Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1951).

¹³ Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Tara Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis’, in *Slavic Review*, 69:1 (Spring 2010), 93–119.

¹⁴ Cf. Aimé Césaire, ‘Notebook of a Return to the Native Land’ (1939), in *Aimé Césaire. The Collected Poetry*, ed. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1983), esp. 42; with respect to the imperial elites, see esp. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects. Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge and Chicago: Polity and Chicago University Press, 2002), and the new collaborative research project on The Legacies of Slave-Ownership, www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/. See also Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (eds.), *Race, Nation and Empire. Making Histories, 1750 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,

contexts.¹⁵ However, the role of German intellectuals in the history of the European community remains to be recovered. As I have tried to flesh out, German intellectuals of elite background formed part of the European and transatlantic international community throughout this time. People like Coudenhove, who was once described as ‘a Bohemian citizen of the world turned visiting professor of history at New York University’, had deeply influenced both conservative and liberal models of Pan-Europeanism.¹⁶ He lectured at Chatham House in London, corresponded with Churchill, spent time as an expat in New York teaching European history at Columbia, and also brought together the French and the Italian advocates for European unity after the First World War.¹⁷ But beyond such individual personalities, the transnational networks of German-speaking dissident elites were also important in their effect as groups and networks.

‘Scraps of talk’: a social history of the civilizers

Is it worth reconstructing what Virginia Woolf called the ‘scraps of talk’ of intellectuals against this background? I hope to have provided a different kind of genealogy of Europe as an idea, one which centres on forms of speech and recorded utterances. Civilization talk formed a dominant theme in the discursive sphere of what Daniel Gorman has recently identified as ‘international society’.¹⁸ My analysis has centred on elite representatives of what I suggested to call the European intelligentsia, not because elites make history, but because their prestige was a key factor in the post-imperial culture industry. German aristocrats, in particular, became indispensable public figures even in mass culture such as Hollywood films of this period. Indeed, in America, the former counts and barons had particular appeal even though their appearance was often a cause of humorous remarks. One of Count Keyserling’s hosts at Harvard, the American actor John Lodge, who later starred as Archduke Franz

November 2010); see also Keith McClelland and Sonya Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire. Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Cf. Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen*; Anne-Isabelle Richard, ‘The Limits of Solidarity. Europeanism, Anti-Colonialism and Socialism at the Congress of the Peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa at Puteaux, 1948’, in *European Review of History*, 21:4 (2014), 519–537.

¹⁷ NN, ‘One Europe’, *Time Magazine*, 26 March 1945, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,803470,00.html?iid=chix-sphere, accessed 5 November 2008.

¹⁸ Daniel Gorman; Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht, and Morten Rasmussen (eds.), *The History of the European Union: Origins of Trans- and Supranational Polity 1950–72* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2009).

Ferdinand in a 1940 film by Max Ophüls, recalled that Keyserling's regular demands as a speaker included plenty of oysters and champagne and always having female company at the dinner.¹⁹ The aristocratic intelligentsia had particular appeal to new forms of the culture industry.²⁰

The figure of the declining aristocrat also appeared in the work of Russian parodists of early Soviet life Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, for instance, or, in the 1950s, the US TV comedian Sid Caesar.²¹ The lady that vanishes from Alfred Hitchcock's train in 1938 was also remarkably similar to Queen Victoria, the grandmother of so many German dynasties that vanished after the war.²² Imperial tunes of vanished empires remain audible in post-imperial Britain on such surprising occasions as the funeral of Margaret Thatcher, an occasion on which, among others, the Radetzky March was performed.

Throughout this book I suggested using the metaphor of a 'phantom' in the sense of a spectre of pain, and secondly, as a forensic phantom image. But when it comes particularly to the global and more universal reception of this afterlife of imperial imagination, a third layer of meaning becomes significant. In a perceptive book from 1927, the American publicist Walter Lippman defined the problem of modern democratic societies as the dilemma of a *Phantom Public*.²³ He argued that problems of institutional design and suffrage were secondary compared to a less obvious problem from which modern societies suffered: it was a lost sense of their own democratic constitution, an involuntary transformation of potential agency into back-row spectatorship. Absentee voters, non-voters, and voters who were voting in the dark: this was the bleak future of democratic modernity.

The mentality of the small fraction in this book explains one element behind this passive spectatorship. That fraction had a paradoxical constitution: at one level, it had a high level of self-consciousness and ability to articulate itself aesthetically and politically. At another level, these social circles of second-row, yet influential, imperial elites were also distinctly unwilling

¹⁹ John Davis Lodge papers, box 2, folder 2–3, Memorandum regarding the visit of Count Keyserling (1928), in Hoover Institution Archives.

²⁰ S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Edward Shils, 'Charisma, Order, and Status', in *American Sociological Review*, 30:2 (April 1965), 199–213.

²¹ I am grateful to James Collins for drawing my attention to the character of Sid Caesar.

²² Alfred Hitchcock, *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). I am very grateful to Josh White for drawing my attention to this film.

²³ Walter Lippman, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Macmillan, 1927). I am grateful to Georgios Varouxakis for drawing my attention to Lippman as Woodrow Wilson's collaborator after the First World War.

to situate themselves in the institutional landscape of democratic states. You do not need representation when you have visibility and celebrity. Culture was not only in the keeping of this intellectual minority but also in its captivity.²⁴

In this sense, the non-governing elites can create a milieu in which passivity is presented as an intellectual virtue, and in which certain ways of being an intellectual are reproduced without much thought. While civilization talk was mostly the remit of men, the listeners, note-takers, typists, and partners were often women. They were the ghostwriters of their post-imperial phantom pains. The story of this matrilineal lineage of imperial memory is yet to be told. They can become the loyal keepers of their partners' and fathers' memories in another sense of uncritical and eulogistic archiving. In the archive of this aristocratic fraction, it is sometimes difficult to remember that women are not a minority. Yet thinking of women as a de facto minority in this configuration cuts across both liberal and socialist values. Likewise, thinking of majorities and minorities purely in terms of legal status ratios, such as the ratio of men to women, or people of homosexual to people of heterosexual orientation, dominant or minor ethnic groups, is only an incomplete model for recognition. These Europeanists styled themselves as queer Brahmin-samurai-pariahs, which did not prevent them from asserting the legitimacy of the economic exploitation of non-European populations by Europeans as a norm, or of associating mostly masculine forms of sexual deviance with political dissidence.

In Europe after 1945, estrangement served a constructive function because it meant solving the puzzle of how so much civilization could produce so much barbarism. Perhaps this also explains how assuming an aristocratic identity behind or on the screen, or on the pages of historical fiction, was an opportunity for actors and writers of Jewish background to overcome a traumatic alienation from European culture in the wake of the Holocaust. In retracing their steps to a seemingly more serene period of European history through its aristocrats, perhaps, Stefan Zweig and Erich von Stroheim thought, some faint sense of connection could be restored to the deranged plot line of the twentieth century at least at the level of representation.²⁵ The Jews, insofar as they acquired new emotional

²⁴ On culture being in the keeping of minorities, see F.R. Leavis, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930), 13.

²⁵ On Yiddish and Jewish actors and overcoming alienation through film, see Stuart Samuels, 'The Evolutionary Image of the Jew in American film', in *Ethnic Images in American Film and Television* (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute, 1978); and Saverio Giovacchini, 'The Joys of Paradise. Reconsidering Hollywood's Exiles', in *The Dispossessed: An Anatomy of Exile*, ed. Peter I. Rose (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 281–307.

cohesion by being a community of traumatic memory after the Holocaust, were the largest European community to have suffered from a common ‘category crisis’.²⁶ To this, the paradigmatic image of the aristocrat served as a helpful foil for reflection.

The cadres of European memory

Searching for the proper cadre that might shed light on post-imperial dissolution as a transnational process, I relied on a set of mental images, each of which enables and precludes different dimensions of understanding. A map, for instance, captures the legal and geopolitical changes in the aftermath of the First World War, but obscures the presence of phantom empires behind the boundaries of nation states, and gives fragile borders the semblance of longevity.

Even the seductive new genre of videomapping, which modern technology makes available to all of us, does not solve the limitation of maps as representations of spatial identities. People see the same map differently, and they can also connect older feelings about landscapes to new places. Moreover, in the course of the longer period charted in this book, from the 1860s to the 1950s, we have seen how common it has become for people to recognize seemingly familiar European landscapes on other continents, to see the Carpathian mountains during the First World War in the Berkshire hills of the United States or in the mountains of Northern Mexico. A retreat from politics and revolution in the present was no longer expressed through the sentimental attachment to one’s own home landscape, like, for instance, the generations of English-speaking Wordsworth readers had done by assuming his feelings about *Grasmere Lake*. The children of the Victorian Wordsworth readers were appraising ‘foreign’ sentiments, such as Rilke’s contemplative wandering between the homes of other people, or the search for new adventures in E.M. Forster’s visions of India. Conversely, passionate readers of English and Scottish Romantic poetry and prose could be found in eastern and central Europe, in the United States, the Caribbean and the West Indies.²⁷ An exiled poet

²⁶ Cf. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Routledge, 2011).

²⁷ See the discussion of ‘Wordsworthiana’ in Richard Bourke, *Romantic Discourse and Political Modernity. Wordsworth, the Intellectual and Cultural Critique* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 257; see also references to Derek Walcott in Ann Laura Stoler, *Imperial Debris*. On C.L.R. James and Wordsworth, see C.L.R. James, ‘Bloomsbury: An Encounter with Edith Sitwell’ [1932], in Anna Grimshaw (ed.), *The C.L.R. James Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 42–48. Notable translators of Wordsworth and the Lake Poets in Soviet Russia included Samuil Marshak,

and writer like Czeslaw Milosz found himself unable to speak of his native realm, Lithuania, without reference to Africa or Chicago.

I have tried in this book to learn from these poets and their readers. Political thought about imperial fragmentation does not have to be fragmentary itself, but can take the form of a mosaic of multiple utterances of the kind that the artist Boris Anrep created.²⁸ Maps were important acts of visual persuasion. This idea of ‘mapping-in-use’ is something I have tried to follow both literally and metaphorically. Places were mapped in intellectual practice when they were recoloured and reproduced in particular argumentative settings, such as was the case with the map of Paneuropa in Coudenhove-Kalergi’s work, or the genealogical map of Europe in Nazi visions of the continent.

A second mode of mental image processing concerns the representation of the intellectuals who imagine European spaces themselves. Photographs and portraits, even if they are group portraits, made the faces of authors visible but risked supplanting my pursuit of reconstructing the social context of intellectual authority with a more literal reproduction of visibility. The painting by Vanessa Bell of a group of people gathered beneath a set of portraits of deceased members, or the photograph of a Pan-European congress featuring the portraits of great European intellectuals, are better at showing the social character of influence and memory than individual portraits. However, ultimately, the image I needed was once again more dynamic. It is in this sense that I would liken the evolving portrait of the European to the forensic practice of producing a hybrid phantom image from an assembly of existing sketches and photographic footage gathered as evidence.

Taking a step away from visual metaphors for the evolving sense of European identity among my protagonists, I also played with a classic conceptual tool of the historian, the timeline. This device organizes events sequentially, but often provides a false sense of safety and security in moving about past events. Some people think it is the business of historians to provide their patrons or their communities with a reliable timeline of

e.g., in Boris Kluzner (ed.), *Vosem’ romansov iz angliiskoi, shotlandskoi i bel’ giiskoi poezii* (Tallinn: Muzfond, 1955). On modernist postcolonial poetics and classical heritage, see references to Wagner in the work of W.E.B. du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: McClurg, 1902), in T.S. Eliot, and references to Rimbaud and Walt Whitman in Aimé Césaire, ‘Cahier d’un retour au pays natal’, in *Volontés*, 20 (1939).

²⁸ A great inspiration in this has been Robert Crawford, *Identifying Poets. Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), and, in practice, the work of Robert Chandler.

‘what really happened’.²⁹ Yet such a way of organizing our sense of the past by degrees of complicity in acts would have led me astray from the real pursuit of this book. I wanted to explore the hypothesis that identities, ideologies, and ideas do not ‘happen’; they are produced as a result of human interaction. From the point of view of explaining human motivation, that is, the question how some ideas, ideologies, and actions are grounded in memories, what matters most is the order in which people remember events, not the order in which things happen.

Rather than ‘applying’ a theory to a process, I wanted to make the history of social theory part of understanding the process. Situated in a social as well as an intellectual historical context, social theories such as Weber’s idea of social action and the paradigms of charismatic rule, Wittgenstein’s idea of meaning in use, Saussure’s idea of structure, Simmel’s idea of value, Cassirer’s notion of symbolic forms, and Elias’s idea of a civilizing process evolved together with the dissolution of social structures they had set out to explain. Ways of being in the world, such as typing on a typewriter, or travelling, are also ‘structures’. As such, they can orient our reading of a past in which the things that are being written about, or the spaces which are being crisscrossed, have changing and multiple names and partly incomprehensible provenances.

Travel, voluntary and involuntary, real and imagined, in war and in peacetime, became a leitmotif of this exploration of imperial memory among the Europeans. Travel seems hardly structured, particularly in the form of an existential, soul- and world-searching pursuit of an unknown goal in which it was practised in the Belle Epoque, but equally, in the form of inhuman and involuntary displacements in wartime. Yet accounts of travel have their own rules of genre and turn out to be subtle and insightful modes for grasping transitional identities, as the examples of such influential travelogues as Viktor Shklovsky’s *Sentimental Journey*, which themselves entered the canon of ‘theory’, suggest. In the case of my archive, the corresponding text was Hermann Keyserling’s *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, which, I would argue, supplied the equivalent of a theory to readers of European decline narratives such as Spengler’s *Decline of the West*.³⁰ In the *longue durée*, too, movement and sociability have given shape to the idea of Europe as a type of shared experience at least since the travels

²⁹ As formulated by Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker* (1824), 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1895), vii.

³⁰ Viktor Shklovsky, *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917–22* (1923), transl. Richard Sheldon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970).

of the humanists and Enlightenment scholars. This became increasingly a mass phenomenon in the twentieth century.

Another structural dimension of travel is that it enables the emergence of increasingly global contact zones and yet is often restricted to particular social circles.³¹ As I tried to show, some spaces in Europe, particularly the shifting frontiers of eastern Europe, reveal how photographic representations of geographic space with devices such as periscopes ground the production of seemingly abstract horizons of experience in the logic of strategic needs. Viewed in a dynamic and contextual perspective, the ground between enlightenment and intelligence is actually a liminal zone somewhere between humanistic scientific exploration and the essentially anti-human work of the secret services.

The optic of travel provides an understanding of the relationship between people, spaces, things, and time that exposes the constancy of relationships such as groups of friends or intellectual companions over the fragility of territorial units and even personal identities. As an individual, a Habsburg Archduke may have levels of self-doubt that are similar to those of any other traveller, yet even incognito, his social position frames his experience differently. Conversely, the value of a Manet painting might change over time, but what remains constant is the importance of 'Manet appreciation' for groups of friends like the Bloomsbury and the Kessler circle. The place of a memory of having been the first fans of Manet remains rooted in the emotional genealogy of these intellectuals. Based on this formula, there are at least three types of chronology that are intertwined in this book: a timeline of events, that is, the most widely accepted and shared account of the major political, economic, and constitutional changes in Europe; a timeline of situations in which the past is remembered; and a timeline of intellectual production in and through which ideas about empire and Europe could be traced.

Foregrounding travel was also a way of providing an account of my own extraction of evidence, and a personal history of 'civilization'. Indicating awareness of this process is the equivalent of the natural scientist's 'experimental report'. My first conscious encounter with the word 'civilization', or a 'civilized country', was on a journey to Soviet Estonia. In 1988, my father was invited to a conference in Tallinn. Our overnight train arrived early in the morning, when the city was only waking up, and the vision of this city with its Gothic spires and cobblestones made me think that I had been transported to one of Grimm's fairy tales. With the exception of

³¹ Marie Luise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Leningrad, which I had never seen by this point, the Estonian capital was the most Western and also the most ‘European’ city of the Soviet empire. The cathedral had not opened to tourists yet at this hour, and I was surprised to find that lying on the floor against its large wooden door was a camera in a leather case, which a distracted tourist must have left behind and which, as I imagined it, in Moscow, would have invariably been stolen overnight. Soviet school children like myself in 1988 thought Estonia was civilized because it had beautiful school uniforms, blue and grey, instead of the black and brown of our own. Later, from conversations in my parents’ social circle, I got used to thinking of Tallinn and its rival, the city of Tartu, or Dorpat, as the Germans had called it, or Yuriev, as the Russians used to call it, as havens of dissident culture: this is where, in the 1950s, the cultural historian Yuri Lotman had founded the school of semiotics, which had produced numerous scholars of language and culture based on the traditions of Russian formalism. Many of their followers became active political dissidents and left the Soviet Union. Many of them spent years in labour camps, some never returned. The conference that occasioned our trip had also been organized by a group of linguists from this circle, the early formalists Shklovsky and Tynyanov, and Lotman. It was the last gathering to take place in the capital of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic; Estonia would soon be independent for the second time in its twentieth-century history, twenty years later it would join the European Union and begin a wave of de-Russification in its history and monuments. Optimistically, it now turns out, some of the old Russian intellectuals from Tartu announced in the early 1990s that they had ‘ceased being structuralists’ because they looked forward to a less isolated future for Russia in Europe.³²

The Soviet guidebook to Tallinn, published in 1977, says that ‘the capital of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic is located in the North-West of the USSR’.³³ The whitewashed walls of the city’s cathedral are covered with the familial crests of the Baltic nobility, which had only briefly been removed by the nationalist government of Päts in the interwar period. The guidebook is careful to point out that the German (Teutonic) knights who built the cathedral and had colonized the area in the thirteenth century were ‘greedy and rapacious usurpers’, while the subsequent ‘annexation’ of Estonia to the Russian Empire after the Northern War of

³² Boris Gasparov, ‘Pochemu ia perestal byt’ strukturalistom’ (1989), in *Moskovsko-Tartuskauia semioticheskaia shkola. Istorია, vospominania, razmysblenia*, ed. Sergei Nekliudov (Moscow: Shkola ‘Yazyki russkoi kul’tury’, 1998), 93–95.

³³ Kh. Taliste, *Tallinn. Siolitsa estonskoi SSR. Putevoditel*, 3rd ed. (Tallinn: Periodika, 1977), 6.

the early 1700s had played a 'progressive role in the history of the Estonian people'.³⁴ Throughout these different phases of historiographical and literary debates about the Baltics, the nobility remained one of the central subjects of contestation. The Nazis wanted to make them German; the Soviet historians focused on their social status as exploiters and usurpers; and the vernacular nationalists concentrated on their status as ethnic strangers.

Throughout my research in archives or museums reaching from Moscow, Berlin, and Dečín to Darmstadt, Dublin, Rome, Geneva, New York, and Stanford, my access to the social process of memory has itself relied on being prepared to contradict my expectations. From the futile search for a manuscript I believed lost in northern Portugal to the unexpected find of a typescript in New Zealand thanks to a simple web search, elements of adventure and risk highlighted the importance of serendipity and contingency in the historical process as well. Preparing for my trip to the state regional archives at Dečín, I left myself only very little time for researching where to stay, and eventually settled on a small and cheap hotel called 'By the Old Bridge', which I booked online. Having the Old Bridge in Prague on my mind, I imagined that this location would be both central and picturesque, and a quick look at the map suggested to me that a brisk daily walk across the bridge to the archive would provide a good start to my working day. My disappointment was rather great when upon my arrival, I realized that the 'old bridge', originally from the twelfth century, was a mere ruin, and that towering over it was a prime example of Soviet town planning: a huge highway-style edifice of a bridge, with no room for pedestrians at all. Moreover, traffic on the bridge was one way only. To get to the archive, I had to get to a different bridge and then loop back through the other side of the city. A one-way bridge with no pedestrian access in a city of 50,000: I recognized this peculiar signature of Soviet civilization. In fact, I later learnt that the castle of Dečín had been the seat of the Soviet authorities in Czechoslovakia after 1945, just as Rilke's castle of Duino had been occupied by the British and American armies. Reconstructions of all these sites of imperial memory have been an integral part of post-1989 identity making. Whether in the Czech Republic or in Dalmatia, in Saxony or in Thuringia, the recovery of heritage has been central for the cultural restitution of identity in post-socialist societies.³⁵

³⁴ Taliste, *Tallinn*, 10.

³⁵ I have been following this process more systematically through an archive of 'aristocratic cultural memory', which my grandmother, Nadezhda Dmitrieva, has been assembling from the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* between 2009 and 2014, whose regional focus is East Germany, particularly, Saxony.

Such cultural restitution of the past was as partial as its economic restitution. It was also implicated in commercial and financial processes of European integration, which obscured origins while restoring them. Not only on the continent but also in Britain, these sites in the twentieth century often aim to recover the heydays of aristocratic culture, somewhere between the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which produces postmodern effects of synchronicity: a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, for instance, forgotten on the bookshelf of the library at Castle Sychrov, which is otherwise immaculately restored in the nineteenth-century style of *empire*. This points back to the place of heritage in cultural memory, a story that still needs to be reconstructed for Europe in a way that would integrate post-imperial and post-socialist memory.³⁶ Throughout continental Europe, the very idea of culture as an institution still takes the form of an aristocratic heritage. The German *Schloss* and the French *Château*, the Polish *zamek*, the Russian *dvorets*, and the Italian *palazzo*, they all contain elements of estranged uses of aristocratic culture. A team of anthropologists has recently called them constructed 'places of happiness'.³⁷

Resisting the Leopards

Everyone, as Hobsbawm says, 'is an historian of his or her consciously lived lifetime', and yet we may not be aware 'how much of it' – empire, that is – is 'still in us'.³⁸ In analysing key moments during which Europe's empires lost power, I suggested that Germanic elites played a particularly important role as authors of European identity narratives.³⁹ In seeking to understand how personal experiences were connected to publicly shared ideas and ideologies, one particular struggle I faced was the invasion of ready-made

See also Longina Jakubowska, *Patrons of History. Nobility, Capital and Political Transitions in Poland* (London: Ashgate, 2012).

³⁶ Cf. Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); for the history of English heritage, see Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), and recent work by Margot Finn's project 'East India Company at Home', as evidenced by her Inaugural Lecture at UCL, 'The East India Company at Home: Private Fortunes, Public Histories' (11 February 2014), UCL. On the project, see <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/>, accessed 5 May 2014.

³⁷ Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (ed.), *Topografia schast'ia: etnograficheskie karty moderna* (Moscow: NLO, 2013). Jakubowska, *Patrons of History*.

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), 5.

³⁹ For this critique, see Geoff Eley, 'Imperial Imaginary, Colonial Effect: Writing the Colony and the Metropole Together', in Hall and McClelland (eds.), *Race, Nation and Empire*.

images and fictional characters, which prefigured my expectations concerning the linkages between intellectuals, the idea of civilization, and the phantom image of Europe. These figures, carefully prepared by the best authors of literary fiction, were always larger than life. First and foremost among them was that grand figure of aristocratic decline, Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Leopard* (1957), whose year of birth coincides with a key date in the institutional founding of the European Union.

Listening in on the civilization talk in the interwar period, it became clear to me that the link between such melancholic or elegiac accounts and those who experienced imperial decline was best grasped in group relationships. The 'Leopards' were an emerging focal point of attention among an irreducibly transnational elite. In their role as objects of memory as well as in their subjective experiences of imperial decline and the world wars, the central figures in this book were emblematic of a particular form of elite precariousness.

As historians, we can easily be seduced by the iconic power of such narratives, which enforce viewing the history of post-imperial elites in terms of familiar plots, such as tragedy or elegy. But when this happened, I found it useful to ask myself what this tragic feeling was a tragedy of. At closer sight, it is not immediately clear why some of us identify with the narrators of such stories as Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March*. What do we mourn when we – people of the twenty-first century, women, descendants of former imperial subjects – identify with tragic or elegiac modes of thinking about political loss? In the 1930s, the British Mass Observation movement, a self-organized group consisting of social and literary scientists and a poet, decided to apply anthropological perspectives usually applied to the non-European, in a study of working-class cultures in a northern British town. Looking at such practices as drinking rituals in pubs, they were surprised to find just how many pubs were named after aristocratic figures, such as dukes and queens. Emblems of aristocratic identities, such as coats of arms, are also embedded in public buildings, bridges, and on station buildings.⁴⁰

What the Mass Observation group had suggested back in the 1930s is that the radical disconnection of the experience of buildings associated with aristocratic figures, and the lives of these figures themselves, introduces an element of alienation to one's own life. Estrangement does not only occur when there is a dramatic gap in class background, such as when

⁴⁰ Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People: A Worktown Study* (London: Gollancz, 1943).

my house is not big enough to allow me to understand what it is like to live in a palace. It is a qualitatively specific experience if the name I put on my ‘pub’ or my experience is not actually familiar to me. At another level, the aristocrats themselves are not necessarily more familiar with the labels they carry either. Queens, dukes, and duchesses are equally ‘estranged’ from the places, commodities, and services to which they lend their names. Working against such hegemonic plots, one can be inspired by poets who have captured something essential and universal about processes of revolution, dissolution, and ruination. But it is equally illuminating to consider the consumption of such narrative to be as important an object of analysis as these narratives themselves.⁴¹

Restoring some nobility to the idea of Europe was also a kind of political cross-dressing act. It was important politically in the post-Nazi era, where Anglo-American, Franco-German, and Soviet ideas of Europe were played out in different guises during the Cold War. But assuming the aristocratic pose, even if this is done ironically, like the Beatles did in posing as colonial governors on the *Sgt. Pepper* cover of 1967, can only provide a temporary solution to the way Europeans relate to their – or our – ambiguous past.⁴² As the history of the last three decades suggests, yesterday’s good banks can easily become tomorrow’s bad banks. If we consider the low turnout of voters for the European elections, regional economic inequality within Europe, or the fact that the European Court of Human Rights is used overwhelmingly to process the claims of non-EU citizens prosecuting their own governments, we might wonder to what extent the ‘good Europeans’ today are also just an estranged transnational minority which justifies rising levels of inequality through a new language of prestige. Here, historical and political judgement will have to part ways. If European identity retains elements of imperial contradictions, so do national, regional, and personal forms of organizing power and prestige. The European elites, whose affective genealogy I tried to recover, made sense of their implicated status within several waning empires by progressively retreating from political involvement. But whether their elegiac pathos concerning imperial decline should make any of us today equally estranged from the democratic process in Europe is a question not of the past but of present and future choices. Awareness of the power which imperial memory can have over us should

⁴¹ Eric Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁴² Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

not mean submission to this power. If there is one thing one can learn from these Leopards, it is not the content of their ideas or their ambiguous concept of civilization but their intellectual technique. They not only turned transnational phantoms of empire into new *devises* for the future. As model teachers of selective memory, they also excelled at forgetting.