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Revolutionary-Napoleonic Years**

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN WORLD-VIEW IN THE REVOLUTIONARY-NAPOLEONIC YEARS*

The Revolutionary-Napoleonic years, usually treated as a single episode, have always been considered as central to the political history of modern Europe. For historians, as for contemporaries, they mark, in no uncertain manner, a discontinuity and rupture in what is seen as the long-term flow of the evolution of European history, the end of the *ancien régime* (despite its persistence, in more or less overt forms, at least until the emancipation of the serfs in Russia in 1861) and the causal prelude of the “modern” history of Europe (and the world), characterized by the nation state. In the division of history into chronological slices in university and school courses and textbooks, not just in England, but throughout the western world, 1789-1815 has traditionally represented as important a marker as 1914. Attempts to insist on the continuities across the chronological divide, from Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic *Ancien Régime* in 1856 to Arno Mayer’s recent *Persistence of the Old Regime* (1981),¹ have failed to shift the historiographical hegemony of political narrative, perhaps because Tocqueville’s argument about administrative centralization and Mayer’s insistence on social power are so closely related to, and hence can be accommodated within, a predominant concern with the history of the state.

In the historiography, the fifteen years of Napoleonic rule have always enjoyed far less favour than the (variously subdivided) decade of the Revolution. It seems implausible that the bicentenary of Brumaire in a few years’ time will produce anything like the deluge of publications and celebrations that so recently recorded 1789. Conventionally the Napoleonic years are regarded in both French and foreign historiography as, on the one hand, the regrettable, perhaps inevitable dictatorial epilogue to the Revolution, and, on the other, as a political-military episode of

* I wish to thank Geoff Crossick for his valuable and helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

¹ A. de Tocqueville, *L’ancien régime et la Révolution* (Paris, 1856); A. J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981).

European history, in which the European powers resisted this renewed attempt by a military genius to impose on the continent on an unprecedented scale the hegemony of a single state.² It is not surprising that military historians, almost alone, have regarded these years as worthy of study in their own right,³ whereas historians of Europe in general have seen the Napoleonic episode as significant more for its effects than in itself. Two main consequences are derived. First, in terms of the relations between Europe and the extra-European world — despite the successful struggle for independence of the former Spanish colonies in South America — the Napoleonic years are (rightly) judged to have reinforced European dominance, particularly in the shape of British naval control; this was to have multiple implications, from the abolition of the slave trade, imposed on reluctant settlers, to new levels of European penetration of the world economy. Secondly, within Europe, the entry on to the stage of history of the new force of nationalism is traditionally ascribed to popular revolts against Napoleon.⁴

Like all historical interpretations that have achieved textbook orthodoxy, such assessments of the Napoleonic years are inadequate because of their simplified concentration on the most immediately apparent and easily readable evidence. What is built into the standard versions of the entire Revolutionary-Napoleonic period is the reiteration of a set of assumptions about Europe and

² See, for example, G. Lefebvre, *Le Directoire* (Paris, 1937); trans. R. Baldick as *The Directory* (London, 1964), ch. 15; G. Lefebvre, *Napoléon* (Paris, 1935); trans. H. F. Stockhold (London, 1969); G. Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium, 1799-1814* (New York and Evanston, 1938); J. M. Thompson, *Napoleon Bonaparte: His Rise and Fall* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 140-1; P. Geyl, *Napoleon: For and Against* (London, 1949); A. Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, 3 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1962-5), ii, chs. 2-5; J. Godechot, "The Internal History of France during the Wars, 1793-1814", in *New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols. (Cambridge, 1957-79), ix; F. Markham, "The Napoleonic Adventure", *ibid.*; D. M. G. Sutherland, *France, 1789-1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (London, 1985), chs. 10-12. For a bibliographical discussion, see J. Godechot, *L'Europe et l'Amérique à l'époque napoléonienne* (Paris, 1967).

³ D. G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (London, 1967); V. J. Esposito and J. R. Elting, *A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars* (London, 1964); G. E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries* (London, 1982).

⁴ On relations between Europe and the world, see, for example, *New Cambridge Modern History*, ix, x; J. Duroselle, *L'Europe, de 1815 à nos jours: vie politique et relations internationales* (Paris, 1964); L. Bergeron, F. Furet and R. Koselleck, *L'âge des révolutions européennes, 1780-1848* (Paris, 1973). On the origins of nationalism, see, for example, H. Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton, 1955), chs. 2-4; K. R. Minogue, *Nationalism* (London, 1967), ch. 2.

the nation state which were to become prominent subsequently in the course of the nineteenth century. Europe is regarded as if it were "outside" history by its identification and reduction to a purely geographical datum, without consideration of its construction as a cultural concept (which, incidentally, affected its geographical confines). Nationalism, whose political awakening is traditionally dated to these years, can even today, despite the ever-growing scholarly consensus to the contrary, be regarded as a primary value — like the family — that transcends history because of its permanence and the teleological inevitability of its development. Such interpretations derive directly or indirectly from the nationalist historiography of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which was deployed to justify the world role of the European states in terms of their destiny or mission.⁵ The new political realities and rhetoric that have accompanied the development of the European Community over the past decade explicitly challenge the old orthodoxies about the nation state, but there is a danger that they will repeat the same historical fallacy of determinism.⁶

Hence it is timely to look again, critically, at the relationship between the concept of Europe and the experiences of the Revolutionary-Napoleonic period. These years witnessed the construction of a cultural and political concept of Europe which was structured fundamentally around two perspectives. First, a European view of the extra-European world was consolidated which drew on earlier perceptions, but transformed them into a radically different unifying concept of European civilization and progress which allowed the classification, and justified the material exploitation, of the rest of the world. Secondly, a distinctive conviction was forged of what constituted the essence of Europe's superiority, based on the division of its land mass into nation states and the role of the rational state in furthering progress. Such was European self-confidence in these political values that

⁵ K. Robbins, "National Identity and History: Past, Present and Future", *History*, lxxv (1990), pp. 369-76; P. M. Kennedy, "The Decline of Nationalistic Historiography in the West, 1900-1970", in W. Laqueur and G. L. Mosse (eds.), *Historians in Politics* (London, 1974), pp. 329-52.

⁶ It is striking, although hardly surprising, that the (until recently) apparently irresistible progress of the European Community (and its commissioning policy) has stimulated interpretations of the history of Europe that see European unity as its likely or inevitable culmination. See, for example, J. Duroselle, *L'idée d'Europe dans l'histoire* (Paris, 1965); or the most recent work of the same author, J. Duroselle, *L'Europe: histoire de ses peuples* (Paris, 1990).

they were exported as a “model” to the rest of the world, even to the extent of imposing the particular European legal concept of the sovereign state on political entities, like the Ottoman empire, where it did not previously exist.

* * *

The Revolutionary-Napoleonic years are unusual in that they marked an almost complete break in the traditional relations between Europe (with the exception of Britain) and the extra-European world. The Revolution occurred at the end of a century during which such relations had been consistently expanded and intensified, and the mould set of cultural as well as of economic inequality. The two major pre-Revolutionary conflicts — the Seven Years War and the War of American Independence — had never seriously interrupted, but rather consolidated, the presence of the great European colonial powers in Asia, India and Africa, whatever the territorial adjustments between them. Knowledge of and interest in the world had increased considerably with James Cook's and Louis Antoine de Bougainville's explorations of Australasia and the Pacific, to the point that further, often officially sponsored, expeditions and explorations on sea and land continued throughout the Revolutionary-Napoleonic struggle in Europe, such as those of Jean François de Galaup de La Pérouse and Etienne Marchand, Mungo Park and Francisco José Maria de Lacerda, George Vancouver, George Bass and Matthew Flinders.⁷

Above all, Europe's development of its economic relations with the extra-European world was without precedent. Even if, as late as 1830, intra-European exports still constituted nearly three-quarters of world exports,⁸ the motor of growth of the eighteenth-century European economy was integrally tied to the colonies, and was reflected in the dynamism of the ports. With the conquest of Bengal and Java, the English and Dutch colonial companies finally began to penetrate trade between the Asian countries. The

⁷ See O. H. K. Spate, *The Pacific since Magellan*, 3 vols. (London, 1979-88), iii, *Paradise Found and Lost*; N. Broc, *La géographie des philosophes: géographes et voyageurs au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1974); A. Moorhead, *The Fatal Impact: An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific, 1767-1840* (London, 1966), ch. 5.

⁸ J. Goodman and K. Honeyman, *Gainful Pursuits: The Making of Industrial Europe, 1600-1914* (London, 1988), p. 53.

African slave trade created an inexhaustible demand from the American and West Indian plantations, rising from an average of over 300,000 slaves exported annually in the early decades to nearly 900,000 by the 1780s. White migration, mostly indentured, from the poorest agricultural regions of Europe, such as Ireland and the Palatinate, was small by comparison, running at most at a quarter or a fifth of the number of Africans up to 1820.⁹ But such white migration is further evidence of how the physical barrier of distance had been dramatically lowered in the European mentality since the discovery of the New World. The regular, repeated and ever more intensive patterns of trade and migration had rendered the names and places of the outside world familiar to Europeans. English gentlemen could migrate with the express intention of amassing a fortune, like the Beckfords in Jamaica or Warren Hastings and his contemporaries in India; land speculation in the newly independent United States attracted not just English lords, but Continentals like Saint-Simon's one-time Prussian partner, Sigismund von Redern.¹⁰

Distance had shrunk to the point that the transport of armies to defend or conquer colonial territories had become standard practice long before Consul Bonaparte's dispatch of an expeditionary force under his brother-in-law Charles Leclerc to suppress Toussaint Louverture's black revolt at St. Domingo in 1802. Distance, after all, bore relatively little relationship to time, at least if sea was compared to land travel. For while a sailing-ship took an average of 48 days to cross the ocean from England to the Caribbean and only 34 days to Rio de Janeiro in the 1820s, it required approximately 18 days to travel by post-chaise in 1812 from Paris to Warsaw and about 31 to St. Petersburg in the Napoleonic years.¹¹ The very frequency of descriptions, whether

⁹ P. E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 50; D. Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations: Some Comparisons", *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, lxxxviii (1983), pp. 252-5.

¹⁰ R. Pares, "Merchants and Planters", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, supplement no. 4 (1960), pp. 21, 25, *passim*; A. Mervyn Davies, *Clive of Plassey* (London, 1939), ch. 25; F. E. Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 427.

¹¹ Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations", pp. 270-1; *Etat général des routes de poste de l'empire français, du royaume d'Italie et de la confédération du Rhin pour l'an 1811* (Paris, 1811), gives all public routes by number of post-chaises. The distance between postal stations varied between 7 and 10.5 km., according to physical geography and the location of settlements; in 1789 the average distance a traveller could expect to cover on the main routes was 90 km. or about 8 *postes* a day: S. Bonin and C. Langlois (eds.), *Atlas de la Révolution française*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1987-92), i, G. Arbellot, B. Lepetit and J. Bertrand, *Routes et communications*, p. 49. Although the

printed or oral, provides the evidence for the literate élites of Europe (and indirectly, by hearsay, for some of the illiterate) possessing a growing sense of familiarity with other parts and peoples of the world. By 1808 Gilles Boucher de la Richarderie could publish a catalogue and *summa* of travel books in three tomes, of which the whole of the first was dedicated to descriptions of the world, from the ancients like Hanna and Pausanias via the discoverers of the New World (Antonio Pigafetta, Ferdinand Magellan, Francis Drake, Richard Hakluyt, *et al.*) to contemporaries, from Cook and Bougainville to Marchand and Vancouver.¹²

North Africa and the Middle East had formed part of the European consciousness at least since classical times, and with a sense of urgency during the peak of the Ottoman threat to the west from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The discovery of the Americas had aroused an initial enthusiasm as well as a perplexity as to whether or not the Indians were human. By the late eighteenth century not only the West Indies and the two Americas, but the entire African coast, India and the East Indies had been brought into the regular vocabulary of Europeans by trade and travel. China and Japan alone retained their mythical contours within what the *Encyclopédie* hack, the chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, called "the four principal parts of the earth"; which helps explain the renewed enthusiasm and curiosity aroused by the contemporaneous discovery of Australasia.¹³

By the end of the eighteenth century the European republic of letters had developed sophisticated tools with which to classify and understand extra-European societies. Alongside the time-honoured approaches of history and geography and the more recent methods of erudite biblical studies and the natural sciences, the *idéologues* turned to the sciences of palaeontology, anatomy,

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Napoleonic regime invested heavily in major road improvements, these did not extend east beyond Hamburg: *Exposé de la situation de l'empire présenté au corps législatif dans sa séance du 25 février 1812 per S. Exc. m. le compte de Montalivet* (Paris, 1813), pp. 45-6. Postal services were more rapid, particularly for western and southern Europe, since the seventeenth century: W. Behringer, *Thurn und Taxis: Die Geschichte ihrer Post und ihrer Unternehmen* (Munich and Zurich, 1990), pp. 17-18, 37, 44; Arbellot, Lepetit and Bertrand, *Routes et communications*, pp. 41-2, 70.

¹² G. Boucher de la Richarderie, *Bibliothèque universelle des voyages*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1808).

¹³ L. de Jaucourt, "Afrique", in D. Diderot and J. d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie*, 17 vols. (1751-72), i; L. de Jaucourt, "Amérique", *ibid.*; Spate, *Paradise Found and Lost*, esp. chs. 12-13.

ethnology and anthropology in their optimistic search for a science of man. Numerical descriptions or topographical statistics, with their cult of numbers, which soon became an integral part of the Napoleonic administrative endeavour to achieve a rational direction of society, were potentially applicable to more remote regions of the world. Philology, which was regarded as providing the clue towards an understanding of all societies, was to prove as ubiquitous among the European scholarly community from the late eighteenth century as statistics among European administrators in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

With such tools the European élites constructed an image of extra-European societies moulded to their own needs and preoccupations. Today our perspectives are inevitably very different. The passage of time since the end of colonialism and the remarkable literary flowering that first reinterpreted its demise, reinforced by influential methods of scholarship such as deconstructionism and discourse analysis, have led us to look more critically at such western perceptions of the non-European world. As Edward Said has explained magisterially with reference to the Orient, such accounts forged the European image of the world and, with nineteenth-century European expansion, were even to condition the historical evolution of extra-European societies. We must be careful not to read back into the *ancien régime* the commonplaces of nineteenth-century European imperialism. But whatever the grid of interpretation — whether of Christianity, capitalism or progress — the purpose of “the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation”, to quote Said,¹⁵ was necessarily and primarily to render intelligible for a European public the description of places and peoples which were not only distant, but often bordered on the fantastic. By far the greater number of such accounts were based on earlier publications, and hence doubly removed from the reality they claimed to describe. But even the imaginative descriptions of actual explorers and travellers, increasingly frequent by the end of the eighteenth century, were based on minimal and inevitably artificial contact with indigenous populations. The accumulation and,

¹⁴ G. Gusdorf, *Les sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale*, viii, *La conscience révolutionnaire: les idéologues* (Paris, 1978); J. C. Perrot and S. J. Woolf, *State and Statistics in France, 1789-1815* (London and Paris, 1984); S. J. Woolf, “French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire”, *Past and Present*, no. 124 (Aug. 1989), pp. 98-105; E. Said, *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (London, 1978).

¹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 58.

increasingly, the classification of physical details provided the matrix and justification of descriptions or inventions of a multiplicity of situations where social relations and the mental world were too remote (albeit, for these early anthropologists, by no means insignificant) for comprehension. The more distant the society, the more limited the vocabulary and imagery, in its declarative, repetitive and symmetrical (although always inferior) references to a European equivalent.¹⁶

Such images of the world, however indirect and superficial, mediated as they were through the narrative of travellers with an eye to their public, through their very ambiguity confirmed the Europeans' conviction of superiority. The capacity of Christian missionary zeal to prick the European conscience had steadily declined from the great sixteenth-century debate about whether American Indians had souls, through the ill-destined utopian communities of the Jesuits in seventeenth-century Paraguay to the scientific curiosity of the Jesuits in eighteenth-century China.¹⁷ Indeed, in the *longue durée* of Christian Europe's relations with a world of unbelievers, the missionary drive was probably at an unusually low ebb in the eighteenth century, symbolized by the reluctant departure of the Jesuits from China in 1724. There was a long interval in Britain between the foundation of the Societies for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1698) and for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701), and the creation of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the Church Missionary Society (1799) and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), which heralded the aggressive drive of primarily Protestant Christianity that accompanied nineteenth-century imperialism.¹⁸ Contempt for natives was at the very core of the brutality of the practices of the colonial trading corporations as much as of the slave trade. And if the anti-slavery movement was to gather

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-73.

¹⁷ L. Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (London, 1959); A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982); A. Armani, *Città di Dio e città del sole: lo "stato" gesuita dei Guarani (1609-1768)* (Rome, 1977); M. Mörner, *The Political and Economic Activities of the Jesuits in the Plata Region: The Habsburg Era* (Stockholm, 1953); K. S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London, 1929; repr. New York, 1967).

¹⁸ V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 64-8, 164-5, 214-15; C. P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, 2 vols. (London, 1948-53); R. Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London, 1952); G. Moorhouse, *The Missionaries* (London, 1973).

strength at the very end of the eighteenth century from a convergence of humanitarian, rationalistic, egalitarian and Quaker pre-occupations, it made little impression on the hallmark of racial superiority that characterized the commercial rivalries of the Europeans across the world.¹⁹

The religious ideals and material greed that had long motivated the Europeans' self-confident aggressiveness towards other peoples (as well as each other) received a new cloak of legitimacy with the Enlightenment doctrines of progress and "civilization".²⁰ Civilization advanced through the agencies of trade and "mores" (*moeurs*), both of which were self-evidently carried by Europeans to more primitive and less fortunate peoples. Although the Enlightenment debate was strongly marked by references to the noble savage (usually identified with the American Indian) and by admiration for the Chinese mandarin, this was not in contradiction with the concept of progress-civilization. Both noble savage and China could claim a distinguished ancestry in literary tradition (from Pierre de Ronsard or Michel de Montaigne to Marco Polo). More importantly their function was a highly polemical one in the *philosophes'* critique of aspects of contemporary politics and customs. For Denis Diderot, the simple life of primitive peoples provided the ideal contrast to the extravagant excesses of formalized court society; in the *Encyclopédie*, he described the Chinese mandarins as providing a wise and effective check on despotism.²¹

There was never any question about the Eurocentrism of progress and civilization among Enlightenment writers and their immediate successors, whatever their nationalities or other differences. At best they regarded those parts of the world more or less intensively settled by Europeans — such as the Americas — as new extensions of Europe. The United States of America was the most commonly used example (by Europeans and ex-colonials alike); but Jeremy Bentham's attitude towards the creoles of the newly independent South American republics was identical.²²

¹⁹ D. Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York, 1966), pp. 291-482.

²⁰ Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity", pp. 96-8, 104-5.

²¹ D. Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (Paris and Baltimore, 1935; 1st publ. 1771); D. Diderot, "Chine", in Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie*, iii.

²² Until much later in the nineteenth century, only the Atlantic colonies could be conceived as extensions of Europe, whether by Europeans or by their own élites. In Constantin François de Volney's words in the 1780s, it would be "a fanciful mistake

Some, like the *idéologues* or Alexander von Humboldt, might develop their ethnological interests in order to document and demonstrate scientifically the hierarchical progress of humanity. Others, like Johann Gottfried Herder, might argue against the hegemony of the French self-identification with civilization by insistence on its diversity through language. But the educated élites of Europe, or indeed of the newly independent United States, whether an Englishman like Edward Gibbon or an American like Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson, never conceived of progress outside the European context.

We should be careful to note that, although extra-European societies were represented as inferior, not all were regarded as equal. The concept of European superiority was unquestioned by the end of the eighteenth century and was not placed in doubt by the token gestures towards China, the ancient wisdom of whose philosopher-statesmen had mysteriously achieved the peaceful and stable social order for which the *philosophes* were still striving. Civilization was incorporated in European progress. Nevertheless a hierarchy was imposed on the outer world, which could only be accommodated to contemporary scientific (or moral) concerns about the progress of humanity with regard to the most primitive peoples. The identity of the noble savage, now regarded as living evidence of an earlier stage of civilization as well as a deep-rooted symbol of a utopian lost past, could be extended from the American Indian to the Pacific islander;²³ but even then the familiarity of slavery excluded the negro. More problematic, because unassimilable to the schema of these early ethnologists, were the description of and judgements concerning more developed societies. Here in particular it is possible to observe sharp differentiations.

Europeans' images of non-European peoples have shifted over the centuries, probably more according to the cultural lodestars of the European imagination than through the expansion of geo-

(n. 22 cont.)

. . . to describe as a new and virgin people a gathering of inhabitants of old Europe": *Tableau du climat et du sol des Etats-Unis* (Paris, 1803), cited in N. Canny and A. Pagden, "Afterword: From Identity to Independence", in N. Canny and A. Pagden (eds.), *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, 1987), p. 267; M. Williford, *Jeremy Bentham on Spanish America: An Account of his Letters and Proposals to the New World* (Baton Rouge, 1980).

²³ H. Baudet, *Paradise on Earth* (New Haven, 1965), pp. 30-42.

graphic and cartographic knowledge.²⁴ The Ethiopian, elevated in the Middle Ages by association with the mythical Prester John, had long since been submerged by the rising tide of African slaves. Indeed, following Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the Afro-Asian origins of the Greek-Roman cradle of European civilization were conveniently forgotten.²⁵ Said's powerful argument that the representation and realities of the sense of inferiority of non-Europeans were forged through the European scholarly and literary fabrication of "orientalism" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries misses the important distinctions made among the "oriental" peoples.

The Ottoman Turk, once feared and respected for his military valour, had become an object of condescension in the course of the eighteenth century, still to be disapproved of for his arbitrary government, but covertly envied for his sexual licence and above all patronized, often as a figure of fun. The negative transformation of the representation of the Turk, unequivocally tied to Ottoman military decline, was highlighted by the contemporaneous positive images of the Greek and the Arab. The Greek began to acquire the respectability that was subsequently to prove so essential for his struggle for independence primarily because of the seminal role for European civilization of his ancestors, the literary evidence of whose exploits was beginning to be supplemented by archaeological excavations. Most of the more than two hundred pages that Boucher de la Richarderie dedicated to travels in the European part of the Ottoman empire were dedicated to Greece. The Arab was rediscovered through the scholarly discovery of Islamic culture and the descriptions of serious travellers like Barthold Georg Niebuhr; the popularity throughout the eighteenth century of Henri de Boulainvillier's *Life of Mahomet*, Antoine Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* and Claude Savary's translation of the Koran is as telling an indicator of the

²⁴ See Baudet, *Paradise on Earth*; D. F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 5 vols. (Chicago, 1965-7); A. F. Wright, "The Study of Chinese Civilization", *Jl. Hist. Ideas*, xxi (1960); Said, *Orientalism*; V.-V. Barthold, *La découverte de l'Asie: histoire de l'orientalisme en Europe et en Asie* (Paris, 1947); N. Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966); M. J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, 2nd edn. (London, 1958); T. O. Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

²⁵ Baudet, *Paradise on Earth*, pp. 12-15; M. Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, i, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (London, 1987), pp. 212-14, 281-316.

new status of the Arab as Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* is of the Turk's decline.²⁶ Egypt benefited from this contrast between the Porte and its subject territories, even before Napoleon's expedition. But it was the more distant and exotic peoples that acquired the most positive ratings in the European hierarchy of civilization.

Of these the Chinese are of course the best known. But we should take care not to let nineteenth-century British white-washing cleanse away the cultural interest in Indian civilization that burgeoned in the half-century between the 1780s and the 1820s. The deciphering of Sanskrit and the transmission to the west through translation by Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, William Jones and Charles Wilkins of such classics as the *Zend Avesta* (1759), the *Bagavad-Gītā* (1785) and the *Upanishads* (1786), like the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and the publication of the abbé Dubois's description of Hindu customs (1817), were important as evidence of an Aryan language, religion and culture wholly unconnected with, and as old as, the Semitic.²⁷ To the ethnologically inclined readers of the Enlightenment, like Warren Hastings in India, or the *idéologues* who formed Bonaparte's scientific team in Egypt, this evidence of an obviously ancient but literate society provided further pieces, like the Pacific

²⁶ Boucher de la Richarderie, *Bibliothèque universelle*, ii, pp. 50-267; H. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival: British Travellers' Perceptions of Early Nineteenth-Century Greece* (London, 1990); A. Galland, introductory "Discours" to B. d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale, ou Dictionnaire universel contenant tout ce qui fait connaître les peuples d'Orient* (The Hague, 1777) — d'Herbelot's work itself was first published in 1697; A. Galland, *Les mille et une nuits, contes arabes*, 11 vols. (Paris, 1704-17), was constantly republished; H. de Boulainvillier, *Vie de Mahomed* (London and Amsterdam, 1730) — by 1793 there had been three French and two English editions; Claude Savary's *Le Coran* (Paris, 1783), was in its fourth edition by 1793; an earlier translation (*L'Alcoran de Mahomet*) by André Du Ryer de la Garde Malezair had already been published at Paris in 1647, with eleven editions by 1775. Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was first performed in 1782.

²⁷ A. H. Anquetil-Duperron, *Zend-Avesta ouvrage de Zoroastre* (Paris, 1771); A. H. Anquetil-Duperron, *Oupnek'hat*, 2 vols. (Strasbourg, 1801-2); W. Jones, *Institutes of Hindī Law: or, The Ordinances of Menu* (Calcutta, 1794); Warren Hastings wrote an introduction to Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagvat Geeta* (London, 1785); he contributed to the *Asiatic Researches of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, extracts from which were republished in W. Jones *et al.*, *Dissertations and Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the History and Antiquities . . . of Asia* (Dublin, 1793); J. A. Dubois, *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India, and of their Institutions Religious and Civil* (London, 1817; French edn., Paris, 1825); Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 76-9; D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1969); J. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist, 1774-1839* (London, 1974), p. 146.

islanders of recent geographic discovery, in the grandiose jigsaw puzzle of the stages of development of mankind. Equally Sanskrit, as revealed by the philologists, precisely because of its antiquity, seemed to offer negative confirmation of the superiority of a progressive and dynamic European civilization contrasted with the timelessness of India.

The Enlightenment representation of China is well known. Following Pierre Bayle and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the fashion of praising China in order to criticize contemporary Europe had become a banality among the *philosophes*.²⁸ In this sense the representation of China responded directly to its European referents. But, uniquely among extra-European societies, the basis of knowledge about this remote and significant state did not derive from a growing volume of western sources, but was channelled almost exclusively through the Jesuits in China. The paradoxical consequence of the Jesuits' admiration of the almost timeless achievements of Chinese civilization was the assimilation by the European élites of the mandarins' self-image of the cultural homogeneity of the Confucian way of life and the social cohesion achieved by their bureaucratic state. In part this resulted from the remarkable impenetrability of China, which (albeit less than that obtained by the Tokugawa in Japan through their expulsion of all westerners) was still far greater than anywhere else in the world because of the highly autochthonous character of the Chinese economy, the physical confinement of foreign traders to Canton, and the impermeability of imperial Confucianism to foreign political concepts.²⁹ But, in part, it was arguably the demonstration of the Confucian precept of *de* (rule by virtue), the influence of virtuous example applied to the case of the Jesuits, who adapted themselves so well as to seek to reconcile Christianity

²⁸ Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1769); Diderot, "Chine", 1. 8; V. Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France, 1640-1740* (Paris, 1932). The *Almanach impérial pour l'an XIII* (Paris, [1805]), p. 753, still used the Jesuit Father Amyot's estimate of China's population as 200 million in preference to the official "Peking Gazette" figure of 55 million. For Voltaire Confucius was the ideal philosopher; for the *Encyclopédie* (iii, p. 339) China was "the most populated and cultivated country of the world . . . the Chinese are most industrious, they love the arts, sciences and commerce . . . The mandarins, great lords of the country, are free to point out his defects to the emperor. Government is extremely mild". The drastic interruption of contacts between Continental Europe and the Far East froze this image of China until after 1815.

²⁹ J. K. Fairbank, "Introduction: The Old Order", in J. K. Fairbank (ed.), *Cambridge History of China*, x.1, *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 5-18.

with Confucian doctrine by explaining the latter's origins in the early revelations received in China "from the children of Noah".³⁰ The myth of the ideal government, pacific, wise, loved by its subjects and regulated by scientists and scholars, was accepted and widely diffused in Europe during the very century when the Ch'ing dynasty most successfully and repeatedly deployed military force to affirm its control and when Chinese science and technology — even map-making and mathematics — had fallen behind that of the Jesuits from the west.

The abruptness of the fall from paradise of the image of China, from admiration to contempt in the mere half-century between the French Revolution and the Opium Wars, can surely not be wholly dissociated from the extravagant and anomalous optimism of the earlier representations. We can note in passing that the reversal of images, with the brutal demonstration of western power, now presented the same problem of explanation to the Chinese that had sorely tried the Jesuits, and initially evoked a curiously symmetrical response: for Wei Fuan, the spiritual origins of western might derived from China, for the Christian religion was based on the Confucian classics which Jesus had had translated into Latin.³¹ But by the time Wei Fuan was writing, in 1844, European imperialism had moved on to a structurally different and unashamedly aggressive level of conquest of the world, which had substituted a far more materialistic and religiously fundamentalist ideology of progress for that of the Enlightenment.

The bridge between the two modes of Europe's relationship with the extra-European world is to be found in Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt (1798-9). In the intensity of its ambitions, it offers us a window on a process of change at a particularly significant moment, when styles and expectations of rule at home changed approaches to and perceptions of the extra-European world.

Bonaparte's decision to send a scientific expedition of unprecedented size (165 experts) to accompany his army of invasion struck the imagination of contemporaries. In urging the campaign,

³⁰ Wright, "Study of Chinese Civilization", pp. 233-45; Fairbank, "Introduction: The Old Order", pp. 5-9, 31-4; Lien-sheng Yang, "Historical Notes on the Chinese World-Order", in J. K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 20-2.

³¹ J. Ch'en, *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815-1937* (London, 1979), pp. 65-6.

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, with his characteristic cynicism, had already explained its purposes: to make Egypt a French dependency, to restore the cradle of civilization and, by the destruction of barbarous tyranny, to bring back material prosperity. Bonaparte, no mean pupil of Talleyrand, reiterated the same combination of political and cultural expectations, in which Egypt was to provide the base for an even grander expedition to India, but also for "civilization to radiate to central Africa".³² Such was the leitmotiv of the Directory years, in which the Revolutionary *grande nation* embodied the progress of civilization.³³ At the Battle of the Pyramids, the young general, fresh from his victories in the once great land of Renaissance civilization, claimed to have alerted his troops: "Soldiers, forty centuries are observing you".³⁴

Whatever his ulterior motives, there can be little doubt that Bonaparte shared with his *idéologue* colleagues at the National Institute of the Sciences and Arts (who were responsible for selecting the expedition's scientific personnel) their interest in the anthropological evidence of past civilizations that was circulating in the 1790s. Egypt offered the arena not only to pursue the struggle against England, but to win the sympathies of the educated élites of Europe. Jean Lambert Tallien's prospectus for the *Décade égyptienne*, conceived as an offshoot of the influential Parisian *Décade*,³⁵ stated quite explicitly: "These most extraordinary events, the discussion of matters of the greatest interest, of the most important questions, must necessarily fix the attention not just of France, but of all Europe".³⁶ The papers of the Egyptian Institute covered the same range of pure and applied science, history and literature as those of the great Institute itself in demonstrating what the most civilized minds could reveal even

³² F. Charles-Roux, *Bonaparte, gouverneur d'Égypte* (Paris, 1936), pp. 1-3; *Correspondance de Napoléon I*, 32 vols. (Paris, 1858-69), xxix, p. 430. By "central Africa" Bonaparte meant the upper Nile and Abyssinia.

³³ S. Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London and New York, 1991), ch. 1.

³⁴ *Correspondance de Napoléon I*, iv, no. 2816, 3 thermidor VI (21 July 1798). Since the aphorism was recorded during Napoleon's exile on St. Helena, the words may well be apocryphal, although they accord with Napoleon's sense of occasion.

³⁵ *La décade philosophique*, directed by Pierre Louis Ginguené and Jean Baptiste Say, in its Directorial-Consular heyday, was close to the *idéologues*: J. Kitchen, *Un journal philosophique: La décade (1794-1807)* (Paris, 1966).

³⁶ *La décade égyptienne, journal littéraire et d'économie politique: au Kaire, de l'Imprimerie nationale, An VII*, "Prospectus"; repr. in *The Journals of Bonaparte in Egypt, 1798-1801*, ed. S. Boustany, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1971), i, p. 5.

in so inhospitable and neglected a terrain as Egypt. From topography and botany to zoology and optics, from archaeology to Arabic writings, from astronomic observations to ancient Egypt's arts and crafts, with monthly mortality tables, the papers presented by Gaspard Monge and his colleagues could have been read in any European learned society.

Where they differed, in their number and radical nature, was in the practical propositions to modernize the country: projects to establish agricultural and design schools, stocktaking of the country's mineral resources, construction of windmills and repair of canals, reform of hospitals and hygiene and the introduction of new crops, rationalization of the fiscal system and improvement of the techniques of metal foundries, all offered a new scientific legitimation to this military invasion. "Learned Europe cannot observe with indifference the power of the sciences applied to a country where they have been brought back by armed wisdom and love of humanity, after prolonged exile under barbarism and religious violence", proclaimed the scientists.³⁷ As a footnote we may observe that the English were sufficiently worried by the novelty of this new cultural approach to publish in French a collection of letters allegedly written by members of the invading army and intercepted, with an introduction ridiculing the French claims to have "discovered" Egypt, when its ancient civilization was already well known.³⁸

As Napoleon's control of Europe grew more complete, the less "useful" of the sciences — such as the anthropological quest for the stages of civilization — lost favour and tended to go underground. Nevertheless the cultural impact of the scientific ambitions of the Egyptian expedition (or at least its propagandistic potential) was not lost. At the height of the Empire, in 1809, there appeared the first of the enormous, de luxe volumes of the *Description de l'Égypte*, whose completion in nine volumes of texts and eleven of plates was to provide the continuity with France's next and more successful colonial campaign, the conquest of Algeria. The justification of conquest in the name of progress was more explicit than ever: "This country, which had transmitted

³⁷ *Institut d'Égypte: travaux*, repr. as volume 7 in three parts in *Journals of Bonaparte in Egypt*, ed. Boustany, vii, no. 1, p. 15.

³⁸ *Lettres originales de l'Armée française sous le commandement du général Buonaparte en Égypte interceptées par l'escadre de Nelson et publiées à Londres: avec une carte de l'Égypte* (Hamburg, 1799), repr. *Journals of Bonaparte in Egypt*, ed. Boustany, x.

its knowledge to so many nations, today is plunged into barbarism: the more it is favoured by its geographic position and the extreme fertility of its territory, the more necessary are the benefits of the laws and arts . . . The Hero gave to the idea of this conquest a new elevation and grandeur, he imprinted on it the character of his genius. He appreciated the influence that this event would have on Europe's relations with the Orient and the interior of Africa, on the navigation of the Mediterranean and the fate of Asia. He proposed to abolish the tyranny of the Mamelukes, to extend the irrigation system and cultivation, to open a permanent communication between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Arabia, to set up commercial establishments, to offer the Orient the useful example of European industry, and to render the plight of its inhabitants more clement and obtain for them all the advantages of a perfected civilization".³⁹

Few participants in European imperialism in the mid- or later nineteenth century would have had difficulty in recognizing in this statement of 1809 their own sense of mission and duty to carry civilization to the less fortunate parts of the world. Among the French the anthropological interest survived into the Restoration: a Jesuit expedition to Brazil in 1818 and the publication of Gilbert Chabrol de Volvic's essay on the *moeurs* of contemporary Egyptians in the great *Description* in 1822, were followed by further scientific teams that accompanied the French military column in Greece in 1828-9 and the army that invaded Algeria in 1830.⁴⁰ The British, of more practical inclination, soon abandoned Hastings's curiosity about Indian customs to impose their own version of modernity. The hierarchy of Europeans' judgement of such "lesser" peoples would alter, even as imperial representatives distanced themselves from ultimately incomprehensible natives. Justifications for intervention and control would multiply, with the rectification of misrule and the saving of souls in competition, as the very right of these peoples to their own history was denied. But the Egyptian campaign had set a benchmark for the right and duty of Europeans to conquer the world.

³⁹ Fourier, "Préface", *Description de l'Égypte*, 21 vols. (Paris, 1809-28), i, pp. 3, 5-6.

⁴⁰ J. B. Debret, *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil* (São Paulo, 1972); G. de Chabrol de Volvic, "Essai sur les moeurs des habitans modernes de l'Égypte", in *Description de l'Égypte*, ii.2 (repr. 1826); *Expédition scientifique de Morée, ordonnée par le gouvernement français*, 9 vols. and atlas (Paris and Strasbourg, 1831-8); *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1840, 1841, 1842*, 20 vols., tables and atlas (Paris, 1844-53); P. Lucas and J.-C. Vatin, *L'Algérie des anthropologues* (Paris, 1975).

If the Orient was “orientalized”, as Said argues, Europe had been “Europeanized” by the construction of a unifying grid of civilization, against which all other cultures could be measured and classified. European writers and intellectuals had arrived at a definition of what characterized all Europe, beyond its differences, by contrast with the “other”, non-European societies. The superiority of Europeans immediately acquired substance as part of the nineteenth-century patrimony of undisputed truths. As long before as the fifteenth century Biondo Flavio had argued for the superiority of Europe in terms of her strength: “Those who know the old historians understand that Europe has always surpassed the other parts of the world in quality and in power”.⁴¹ Now military strength merely provided the demonstration of the material and spiritual dynamism of European progress that explained its superiority over the unchanging, static character of non-European peoples, even those that had declined from once impressive civilizations.

The precedent for the pseudo-scientific legitimation of Europe’s right to impose its own values on the extra-European world had been set, definitively, by Bonaparte’s Egyptian expedition. What was understood by Europe in political terms — alongside its civilization — was to emerge through the experience of, and reactions to, the years of Napoleonic domination of the Continent. It was in this period that the European élites, whether of west or east, forged a common conceptualization of the rational state and of the nation as the primary instruments of their progress. Such a conceptualization confirmed the leadership of western over eastern Europe and (at least in relation to the Napoleonic model of effective administration) further marked the distinctiveness of Britain from Continental Europe. But the role of informed rational administration and the nation state were not only fundamental henceforth to the European self-image; they were to be reified to the level of ahistorical demiurges throughout the non-European world.

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The wars that broke out in 1792 and lasted almost continuously until 1815 tore great rents in the thick and intimate web of

⁴¹ Biondo Flavio, “De expeditione in Turchis ad Alphonsem Aragonsem Serenissimum regem”, in *Scritti inediti e rari di Biondo Flavio*, ed. B. Nogara (Rome, 1927), p. 32. I would like to thank Riccardo Fubini for this reference.

relationships between Europe and the rest of the world, culminating in the years of the Continental blockade (1806-13). France and her unwilling allies, the United Provinces, Spain and Portugal, lost almost all contact with their empires because of British control of the seas and the general encouragement of corsairs. The loophole provided by neutral ships, whose owners made profits corresponding to the risks offered by the new situation, was always inadequate and almost closed as the British and French stepped up counter-measures. The Continental blockade was an early example of economic warfare on the grand scale, and as such cut both ways: it forced Britain's trading with the Continent into the artificial and inadequate conduit of smuggling, and at the same time reduced Continental commerce with the extra-European world to a thin trickle. A consequence of this unprecedented situation that is not often noted was to place Europe in sharper relief, for economic as well as for military reasons. For Napoleon's riposte to France's naval inferiority was to attempt to develop the European land mass as a single market, closed to Britain and dominated by France.⁴² The fact that Napoleon failed, that even he proved incapable of sealing off the coastlines, should not remove from view the importance that Europe (again, except for Britain) assumed as a whole, from the Atlantic to Russia and the Balkans.

Boundaries have always assumed a symbolic importance for human identity greater than their practical reality. Those of Europe are no exception, as is reflected in the shifting of its geographical confines to demarcate whatever qualities were defined as "European". Thus over the many centuries of the struggle with the Ottomans the identification of Europe with Christianity signified a retraction and fluidity of the south-eastern frontier with the fall of Byzantium and the later Habsburg revanche. By Napoleonic times this military frontier was well established diagonally across the Balkans in the area known as "military Croatia", although Europe's claims to what were regarded as the Christian Balkans (up to the Bosphorus) continued to be expressed in contemporary descriptions of "European Turkey".⁴³ During the Continental

⁴² Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, pp. 144-56; F. Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815", *Jl. Econ. Hist.*, xxiv (1964); G. Ellis, *Napoleon's Continental Blockade: The Case of Alsace* (Oxford, 1981).

⁴³ The division of the Ottoman empire between "Europe", "Asia", Egypt and Syria was standard practice among eighteenth-century travellers and in descriptions, as, for example, in the population estimates of the *Almanach impérial pour l'an XIII*, p. 753. Boucher de la Richarderie indeed, in his *Bibliothèque universelle*, ii, pp. 50-267, extended "European Turkey" to include Asia Minor.

blockade this region and its frontiers acquired momentary importance as France attempted to establish a new cotton route. With the Greek war of independence the Balkans (and ultimately the boundary with Asiatic Turkey) were to acquire that fateful significance for Europe that they have now reclaimed. The Greek notables who declared their independence in 1822 knew exactly the most evocative chords to sound in describing themselves as “descendants of the wise and noble peoples of Hellas, we who are the contemporaries of the enlightened and civilized nations of Europe . . . have determined to take up arms . . . to reconquer the rights of individual liberty, of property and honour — rights which the civilized peoples of Europe, our neighbours, enjoy today”.⁴⁴

Far more problematic was the location of the boundary between Europe and Asia in the north-east. Russia of course has always exercised a fearful fascination for the European mind, which is reflected in the ambivalence about whether it belongs to Europe or Asia. Although the myth of the “Third Rome” of Muscovy implied at least associate membership of Christian Europe, the great eighteenth-century luminaries were hesitant, at best (like Diderot or Immanuel Kant) regarding Russia as striving to emerge from an earlier stage of civilization.⁴⁵ The location of the Urals as the natural geographic boundary between the two continents was decided by Peter the Great’s geographer Vasilii N. Tatischev in the 1730s and had become an established cartographic convention by the end of the century precisely because it served the cultural purpose of identifying a Russian empire similar to those of the western powers, in which the metropolis formed part of European civilization, with an Asiatic colonial periphery.⁴⁶ But whatever the self-image that Russian reformers wished to project, what is certain is that the incorporation of Russia within Europe has always depended directly on western European judgements of the acceptability of the Russian government’s political comportment. For Bonaparte, until his break with Alexander I, political and economic reasons firmly established Russia’s European claim.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Kohn, *Nationalism*, p. 12.

⁴⁵ D. Groh, *Russland und das Selbstverständnis Europas* (Neuwied, 1961). For Kant, it was too early to ascribe any national characteristics to Russia: I. Kant, “On the Character of Nations”, in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. M. J. Gregor (The Hague, 1974; 1st pubd. 1797), p. 181.

⁴⁶ M. Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space”, *Slavic Rev.*, 1 (1991). I wish to thank Colin White for this reference.

Madame de Staël's insistence that Russians were "oriental" and "Asiatic" was a lone voice amid the Russophilia of the dominant legitimists in Restoration France — until the Polish Revolution of 1830-1, when the European frontier once more retracted west to Poland.⁴⁷

Russia, like the extra-European world, was measured negatively against the grid of what was regarded as the superior tradition of a progressive European civilization, which in practice was identified with the societies of western Europe. The most commonly accepted definition of the specificity of European civilization (which has survived to the present day) is that of its cultural tradition, as spelt out, for example, by Voltaire. By the end of the eighteenth century, alternative but complementary definitions turned to the anthropological evidence of the "stages" of the history of human society, or to an overriding philosophy of history, as in Marie Jean Antoine de Condorcet or G. W. F. Hegel.⁴⁸ But common to all these definitions of what constituted European civilization and explained the progress that was the essence of its superiority were three particular qualities: economic activity, sociability and public governance. Each of these, central to the classic Enlightenment model of civilization, was consolidated but also modified and extended through its absorption within Napoleonic administrative practices before it was passed on to the nineteenth-century political concept of Europe.

The political economists' credo of economic individualism lay at the core of the confidence in civilization as progress. Europe's wealth and power were explained in terms of the dynamism that derived from the competitive entrepreneurship of the market and contrasted to the static, state-dominated empires of China or Russia. The creation of appropriate structures to support and encourage such economic activities might be temporarily necessary, as in Napoleonic France or as subsequently theorized by Friedrich List, but there was an unbroken continuity of fundamental faith in economic individualism as a characteristic of European (and western) civilization from Adam Smith and François Quesnay through the *idéologues* to Jean Baptiste Say, Carlo Cattaneo or John Stuart Mill.

⁴⁷ *Mme de Staël on Politics, Literature and National Character*, trans. M. Berger (London, 1964), pp. 85-6, 285; P. Nora, "Préface", to A. L. L. de Custine, *Lettres de Russie: la Russie en 1839* (Stet, 1975; 1st pubd. Brussels, 1843), pp. 17-24. I wish to thank Steve Smith for this reference.

⁴⁸ Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity", pp. 96-8, 104-5; S. Woolf, *Europe and the Nation-State* (E.U.I. working paper HEC no. 91/11, Florence, 1991), pp. 5-7.

Sociability, in Norbert Elias's sense of the civilizing effects on "mores" (*moeurs*) of "manners" (*civilités*), "politeness" (*politesse*) and "rules" (*police*), was for eighteenth-century writers a measure of the level of achieved progress, which could be contrasted at the extreme with the "barbarism" of an earlier stage of civilization. Sociability, for Jean le Rond d'Alembert as for Friedrich Schleiermacher, signified the publicly accepted regulation of social relationships by which private virtues could be transformed into collective habits, even in apparent transgression of conventional status barriers. Its locations could vary, from the English coffee house to the Italian opera. But its most widely accepted form was that distinctively female institution, the Parisian salon. The history of the salon and of its transformation from an initially aristocratic meeting-place to the typically bourgeois nineteenth-century form of sociability remains to be written. But there can be little doubt about the role of the Napoleonic presence in Europe in its diffusion and consolidation, which was to be felt long after the collapse of the Empire. The salon was deployed by the imperial administration as a deliberate instrument of French policy at Paris and wherever the French ruled. The élites of Europe, summoned or attracted by Napoleon to Paris, met in its salons (as well as in the recent Revolutionary invention, the restaurant); within and without the frontiers of the Empire, French women, like Giulia Falletti di Barolo (née Colbert) at Turin, took the lead in holding a fashionable salon.⁴⁹ The very insistence of Napoleonic administrative philosophy and practices on the broadest possible incorporation of local notables within the system extended across Continental Europe and regulated in uniform manner the forms of sociability. The fixity of social modes of comportment, which was to characterize the life of the élites of nineteenth-century Europe, whether at home or in the colonies, owed not a little to their official adoption by the Napoleonic administrative class.

The third quality of European civilization — public governance — was that which underwent the most fundamental modifications through the Napoleonic experience. A well-established commonplace of the language of political theory, dating back at least to Niccolò Machiavelli and Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century, was that liberty was inherent to the administration of the *res*

⁴⁹ N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. E. Jephcott, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978-82); E. François (ed.), *Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse (1750-1850)* (Paris, 1986); Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, pp. 216-26.

publica in European states, in contrast to the arbitrary usage of power typical of all despotisms. The forms of government, whether republic or temperate monarchy, were unimportant, since the quality of liberty was also intimately related to notions of both natural and public law, common to all European states. A derivation of this "European ideology" (as Norberto Bobbio has called it), which underlay much colonial practice in the nineteenth century, was that non-European peoples merited their despotisms because they were more servile.⁵⁰

While natural law boasted an ancient lineage, public law, as spelt out by Emmerich de Vattel in the mid-eighteenth century, extended the scope of the "liberty" of European civilization to international relations. For Vattel, the existence of a number of states of relatively equal might had created a balance of power that was both inevitable and advantageous. It was equated by Vattel with the specificity of a European political system, "whose members — each independent, but all bound together by a common interest — unite for the maintenance of order and the preservation of liberty".⁵¹ It was precisely in defence of liberty defined in this dual sense of "the antient, civil, moral and political order of Europe", as well as of the balance of power of "the community of Europe", that Edmund Burke launched his onslaught on the French Revolution; and it was in the struggle against Revolutionary-Napoleonic France that the image of John Bull as the trueborn free Englishman acquired its full contours.⁵²

The overthrow of Napoleon's "despotism" seemed a posthumous vindication of Burke's passionate rhetoric. But in the process, by one of those quirks of history in which new meanings accrete to words, liberty as a quality of public governance had become intimately associated with the Napoleonic model of standardizing rational administration.

Napoleon's remoulding of Europe was embedded in his conviction of progress and modernity. It was not surprising that the

⁵⁰ N. Bobbio, "Grandezza e decadenza dell'ideologia europea", in D. Roche (ed.), *Actes du colloque "Cultures et cultures européennes"*, 28-30 mai 1986 (Florence, 1987); repr. in *Lettera internazionale*, iii (1986), pp. 1-5.

⁵¹ E. de Vattel, *Le droit des gens, ou principes de la loi naturelle* (London [Neufchâtel], 1758), quoted in F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 166-7.

⁵² E. Burke, *Two Letters Addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory*, 10th edn. (London, 1796), pp. 10-12, 144; J. Surel, "La première image de John Bull, bourgeois radical, Anglais loyaliste (1779-1815)", *Mouvement social*, cvi (1979), pp. 65-84.

underlying tenets and many of the formulations of his administrative reforms derived from Enlightenment propositions and Revolutionary experiences. It was generally accepted, from Herder to de Staël and the Revolutionary deputies, that the state or government (and the two were frequently interchanged) had a duty to encourage the development of the faculties of its members, to act as "instructors of nations".⁵³ If Brumaire marked the end of the Revolution, it was that of the political revolution of popular sovereignty and diffusion of power, not the initial ideal of the possibility of cancelling the past and creating a new society, nor the driving conviction of France's mission as the vector of civilization. It was the means of achieving these ideals that changed: the command orders were now unity of direction, hierarchically defined participation in public affairs, and above all the leading role assigned to the executive bureaucracy, whose duty it was to force the pace and orient society through the application from above of increasingly comprehensive administrative regulations and practices.⁵⁴

The modernization of the structures of the state, arguably the longest-lasting of the legacies of the Napoleonic experience, was no blueprint that emerged fully-fledged from the minds of Bonaparte and his collaborators following Brumaire. It was an essentially piecemeal, although increasingly coherent, process that extended throughout the period as an unending response to the unprecedented change in scale imposed by the expansion of French control. French territory and population increased from eighty-three departments with between 27 and 28 million inhabitants in 1789 to 130 departments with 44 million in 1812; the satellite and allied states more than doubled this.

The Napoleonic vision of modernity was constructed around three pillars: detailed, ideally comprehensive factual knowledge as the basis of policy; radical revision of existing juridical categories and institutions along lines of rationality and uniformity; and the identification and involvement of all élites in the service of the state. "Knowledge of facts", preferably statistical facts, was a litany that accompanied Napoleonic administrators wherever they set foot. Such statistical information was evidence of a rational and

⁵³ F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought from Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford, 1965), p. 79; G. de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* (1810), extracts repr. in *Mme de Staël on Politics*, trans. Berger, pp. 41-2, 224.

⁵⁴ For this and the following paragraphs, see Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, *passim*.

responsible approach to decision-making, an affirmation of control and a search for consensus.⁵⁵ Revision of the structures of the state through the replacement of the congeries of laws, bodies and practices that derived from history and privilege by rational codes, institutions and procedures necessarily aspired towards its uniform application across Europe; for not only were the benefits the new structures would produce self-evident, but increasingly (at least in Bonaparte's eyes) what was good for France was good for all societies. Co-option of the élites in the running of the state was necessary not just to ensure that the reforms were put into effect, but even more to overcome the debilitating social divisions of the *ancien régimes* of Europe and, through the role of the élites as leaders of opinion, to stabilize the new, well-ordered societies.

The more experienced of Bonaparte's bureaucrats, particularly those in the field, seemed to have recognized that the different stages of historical development and infinite variety of environmental factors, social relations and cultural identities that constituted the heterogeneity of European society made the remoulding of Europe in the image of France ultimately a mirage. Certainly Bonaparte's brusque insistence on the increasingly rapid and rigid application of the French model to all territories under his control created tensions and hostility towards these standardizing tendencies on so vast a European scale.⁵⁶

As a result of Napoleon's final débâcle and the dismissal by national historiographies of the years of French occupation and influence as a "foreign" intrusion, there has been a tendency to ignore the impact of the Napoleonic presence on the Continental élites of the time. The longer the period of the French experience, the deeper the impact. There was a consciousness of making history, of participating in an experience of unique historical importance, felt not only by the direct participants, whether in the bureaucracy or the *grande armée*, but even by hostile critics like Metternich and de Staël or by philosophic observers like Saint-Simon. The rupture and violence of the Revolution had of course

⁵⁵ S. Woolf, "Statistics and the Modern State", *Comp. Studies in Society and Hist.*, xxxi (1989).

⁵⁶ De Staël (admittedly a hostile commentator) regretted that Russians were abandoning oriental clothes for those of the west: "It seemed to me then [1812] that they were about to enter that vast uniformity of Napoleon's despotism, which first presents every nation with conscription, then war taxes, then the Napoleonic Code, in order to govern entirely different nations in the same way": *Mme de Staël on Politics*, trans. Berger, p. 285.

prepared the ground. But at the height of the Empire there was a strong and widely shared sense that a new epoch had begun, that civilization had reached a new level, with Paris as its heart.⁵⁷ In the aftermath, as the harsh negative aspects of French rule faded and were substituted by the Napoleonic myth, the feeling of loss grew sharper in nostalgia.

Whatever the overall reservations, there were none among the Napoleonic administrative class and very few in the following decades who had doubts about the methods of government that had been elaborated; statistics, utilitarian principles, a science of administration and the professionalization of the bureaucracy allowed them to understand and regulate the mechanisms of society and to force the pace in the direction of progress. Restoration liberalism, after all — apart from its belief that restricted representation could check arbitrary government — derived from the same matrix as Napoleonic administration, for both were predicated on the practice of government. It was not just that many of the liberals had been trained in the administrations of the Napoleonic years. They shared the same faith in economic and social progress and the same insensitivity of the propertied bourgeoisie towards the labouring classes, for whose moral elevation they regarded themselves as responsible as for that of the natives in the colonies. Napoleonic administrative centralization as the motor of progress, safeguarded against despotism by representation, became the nineteenth-century Continental liberal representation of the older European tradition of the liberty of its public governance. The Europeans' belief in their capacity for good government, understood as effective administration, fed back into their attitudes and policies towards the misrule or worse they saw as characterizing the extra-European world. The process of construction of this European identity through the Napoleonic experience accentuated the already marked difference between Britain and Continental Europe. The absence of strong central administration had of course always characterized English political development, although "the expanding reach of government" in Britain had become clearly visible precisely in the years of struggle

⁵⁷ *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laissés par le prince de Metternich*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1880), i, p. 292; *Mme de Staël on Politics*, trans. Berger, pp. 85-6; Manuel, *New World of Henri Saint-Simon*, pp. 150-6, 163-7.

against the French.⁵⁸ By 1815 Britain's separateness, stability and economic strength, combined with the deference that characterized the aristocratic dominance of social relations in England, incorporated the absence of state administrative leadership into part of liberal dogma. Where the British experience most closely paralleled that of Continental Europe (as C. A. Bayly has argued recently) was in the ideological attitudes and practices of firm guidance of the backward peoples of her newly expanded empire.⁵⁹

* * *

Nationalism, for its exponents and supporters from Mazzini to the present day, has based its claims on the identification of the "people" with the nation. Even if, until the late nineteenth century, nationalist activists came overwhelmingly from the educated classes, the legitimacy of their demands required a level of involvement of the people. It is in this sense that, in the historiography, the ideological origins of nationalism have quite properly been identified with the French Revolution.

Ascribing national characteristics to peoples forms an age-old element of European (and non-European) public rhetoric. As the *encyclopédistes* remarked, "Each nation has its own character: it is almost proverbial to say as light as a Frenchman, as jealous as an Italian, as solemn as a Spaniard, as malicious as an Englishman, as proud as a Scotsman, as drunk as a German, as lazy as an Irishman, as cunning as a Greek".⁶⁰ Montesquieu's influential formulation of the relationship between climate, institutions and national character had been expanded by the late eighteenth century to incorporate an ethnological theory of the survival of national characteristics, as well as language as a national identifier. For Voltaire and Kant, for example, successful invasions and conquest could overlay and modify or even obliterate such characteristics.⁶¹

⁵⁸ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 115.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, esp. chs. 4, 5.

⁶⁰ S.v. "Nation", in Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie*, xi (1765), p. 36.

⁶¹ "The barbarous government of the Turks has likewise enervated the Egyptians and Greeks, but has not been able to destroy the basic character and the temper of these peoples' spirit": Voltaire, "François", in Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie*, vii; Kant, "On the Character of Nations".

For de Staël, who introduced German writers including Herder to educated France, alongside climate, government, political institutions, religion and laws, “the accents of language enters intimately into the spirit of a nation”.⁶²

What is interesting about these platitudes is their remoteness from the later nationalist claims of identity between people, nation and state. These are the commonplaces the educated élites of Europe attributed to peoples who, in the Enlightenment and Napoleonic *Weltanschauung*, were ignorant, irrational and unknowable.⁶³ The identity of the people, because of their very anonymity, was habitually fragmented by association with an infinity of localized referents such as community, parish, village or region. At most, a de Staël, who merits attention precisely because of her sensibility towards Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s idea of the individuality of a nation, attributed to the German labouring classes (alongside their coarse habits) “that holy antipathy for foreign manners, customs and languages that strengthens the national bond in every country”.⁶⁴ There was never any suggestion that national characteristics could form the basis for an affirmation of political national identity, nor of a common cause between élites and people. In so far as claims of national identity began to be voiced, they were expressed exclusively by intellectuals in reaction to the Napoleonic imposition of uniformity. Not only did the concept of the German *Volkstum*, the sole example of an elaborated ideology of nationalism in these years, have nothing to do with the involvement of the people, but the exhortations of its proponents for a patriotic rising in Prussia were dampened down by the political leaders, only too conscious of the dangers of such appeals.⁶⁵

This contrast between the intellectual claims of national identity and the exclusion of the people merits close consideration in the Napoleonic era, not least because of the widespread historiographical affirmation that nationalism as a political movement

⁶² De Staël, *De l’Allemagne*, pt. 2, ch. 9, in *Mme de Staël on Politics*, trans. Berger, pp. 243-4, 229. Her source for such a conviction was surely Rousseau’s *Essai sur l’origine des langues*, originally published in his *Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique, lu par l’auteur à l’Académie des sciences le 22 août 1742* (Geneva, 1781).

⁶³ Woolf, *Napoleon’s Integration of Europe*, pp. 107-10, 186-8.

⁶⁴ De Staël, *De l’Allemagne*, pt. 1, ch. 2, in *Mme de Staël on Politics*, trans. Berger, p. 221.

⁶⁵ C. Dipper, “Esercito e chiesa quali strumenti di nazionalizzazione in età napoleonica”, *Rivista italiana di studi napoleonici*, xxvi (1989).

originated in these years.⁶⁶ Claims that the revolts against Napoleonic domination were nationalist are based essentially on the Spanish war. Elsewhere armed resistance to the French was rare and above all local, as in the Tyrol in 1809 or in Calabria. Perhaps even more telling was the virtual absence of popular risings (except in Russia and Spain) as the Napoleonic empire collapsed in 1814. But even the Spanish case has recently been subjected to revision.⁶⁷ It was a war of independence in the sense that it was directed against a foreign invader; and the constitutional members of the Cortes of Cadiz certainly saw themselves as spokesmen of the Spanish nation. But the popular struggle, from the risings of 2 May 1808 to the guerrilla "war by bands", owed far less to national than to regional loyalties: in keeping with the traditions of the Spanish monarchy, the risings were Catalan, Valencian, Asturian, Galician or Andalusian in the first instance, although this did not exclude at a more remote level identification with the legitimate king of Spain.

Nationalism was probably strengthened in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic period in countries where a strong sense of national identity and state structures already existed, as in Britain and supremely in France itself, where a nation state was forged by a combination of military patriotism and the legitimation of the leading role of the state. Elsewhere the construction of an awareness of national identity was the task of a new generation which, even where it was politically successful, still had to come to terms with the deep-rooted localism and regionalism of popular attachment. The European nation state of the nineteenth century is intimately related to the Napoleonic experience, not through

⁶⁶ B. F. Hyslop, *French Nationalism in 1789 According to the General Cahiers* (New York, 1934). The classic view is that expressed by Kohn, for example, in his *Nationalism*, p. 29: "Napoleon was defeated not only by his overbearing ambitions but also by the new force which his wars aroused abroad and which he did not understand — the nationalism of the European peoples, especially that of the Germans, etc.". It can be found in most textbooks, such as Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium*, ch. 8; E. Kamenka, "Political Nationalism — the Evolution of the Idea", in E. Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (London, 1976), pp. 25-7; J. Godechot, B. F. Hyslop and D. L. Dowd, *The Napoleonic Era in Europe* (New York, 1971), ch. 8; O. Dann and J. Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London and Ronceverte, 1988).

⁶⁷ L. Roura i Aulinas, "La crisis del antiguo régimen: del 'Panico' de Floridablanca a la Guerra de la Independencia", in A. Domínguez Ortiz (ed.), *Historia de España*, 12 vols. (Barcelona, 1988-), ix, *La transición del antiguo al nuevo régimen (1789-1874)*, pp. 91-136. On the whole question of anti-Napoleonic risings and nationalism, see Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, pp. 226-41.

popular nationalism, but because of the élites' concern to harness and ultimately re-educate popular loyalties through a strong state.

It could be argued that the model of France, perhaps even more than that of Britain, was central in this construction of the political concept of modern Europe, precisely because in the hands of the liberals national identity was combined with the leading role attributed to the state. For one of the most remarkable features of this legacy of the Napoleonic years was the growing association of liberalism and standardizing administrative reforms as the method to forge a unified state identity. In the years immediately following the collapse of the Empire, the liberal administrators of France's former allies in south Germany, such as Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg, identified progress with state power even more successfully than such anti-Napoleonic rulers as those of Prussia or Naples; in subsequent decades this was a lesson learned by statesmen like Cavour.⁶⁸ As new nation states achieved independence during the nineteenth century their governments insisted on the same methods against what they saw as the dangers of anti-national regional or ethnic identities. The same techniques of administrative uniformity, linguistic imposition and pressure for social integration that had marked Bonaparte's attempt to remould Europe were transferred by the statesmen of the new states of modern Europe within their national boundaries in order to eliminate what were regarded as the disaggregative forces of local identities. Thus it was not just the nation state as the modal political unit that Europe exported to the rest of the world, but its particular state-led version of the Napoleonic experience.

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⁶⁸ P. Nolte, *Staatsbildung als Gesellschaftsreform: Politische Reformen in Preussen und den süddeutschen Staaten, 1800-1820* (Frankfurt, 1990); S. Woolf, *A History of Italy, 1700-1860* (London, 1979), pt. 5.