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Paul Stock

Towards a Language of 'Europe': History, Rhetoric, Community

Abstract

From Herder to Benedict Anderson, language and nation have been at the centre of ideas about (imagined) community. This hypothesis, however, poses a problem for analysing ideas about Europe. How can we understand 'Europe' as a concept or form of identity when language and nationality are considered the foundation of imagined communities and loyalties? This article addresses this difficulty. It uses J. G. A. Pocock's definition of 'sub-languages' to suggest that one can investigate the rhetorical strategies, images and vocabularies with which texts articulate ideas about Europe. These sub-languages evoke imagined communities, most obviously when texts name and identify particular groups of people as 'Europeans'. But by using images and rhetorics about Europe, these texts also appeal to a readership who comprehends – even if it does not fully accept – certain assumptions about the continent. In this way, texts evoke an imagined community of readers who purportedly share a similar way of understanding Europe, or who can perhaps be persuaded to think about it in similar terms. These processes are historically particular, and so the article concludes with concrete examples. It focuses on how early nineteenth-century philhellenes evoke a European imagined community to solicit support for the Greek Revolution.

Keywords

Paul Stock

<u>Towards a Language of 'Europe': History, Rhetoric, Community</u>

From Johann Gottfried von Herder to Benedict Anderson, language and nation have been at the centre of ideas about (imagined) community. For these theorists, real and imagined group identities are fostered by shared spoken or written language and this, in turn, allows the consolidation of national allegiances. This familiar hypothesis, however, poses a problem for analysing ideas about Europe. How are we to understand 'Europe' as a concept or form of identity when language and nationality are considered the foundation of imagined communities and loyalties? The present article explores some ways to address this difficulty. In doing so, it helps to facilitate critical understanding of 'Europe' as a historically specific form of identity and community. At the heart of my argument is the historian J. G. A. Pocock's expansive definition of political 'language' as 'idioms, rhetorics, ways of talking […] distinguishable language games of which each may have its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style'.[1] I suggest that one can investigate the 'sub-languages' of Europe: that is, the rhetorical strategies, images and vocabularies with which texts construct ideas about 'Europe'. Next, I argue that these sub-languages evoke imagined communities. Most obviously, this occurs when texts name and identify particular groups of people as 'Europeans'. But by using familiar images and rhetorics about Europe, these texts also appeal to a readership who presumably comprehends – even if it does not fully accept – certain assumptions about the continent. In this way, texts can evoke an imagined community of readers who purportedly share a similar way of talking about and understanding Europe, or who can perhaps be persuaded to think about it in similar terms. Naturally these processes are historically particular, and so the article concludes with a concrete example. In the 1820s, British and French philhellenes published many texts which sought to solicit military, financial, and moral support for the Greek Revolution. As part of their rhetorical objectives, these writings employ certain explicit and implicit ideas about Europe – ideas which were not simply meaningful to their intended readerships on a discursive level, but which were also considered persuasive enough to inspire practical action. The philhellenic texts therefore appeal to, and seek to

influence, a community of readers who understand 'Europe' in a defined way; they evoke a European imagined community.

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Benedict Anderson's highly-cited *Imagined Communities* has enjoyed enormous influence in several disciplines, not least due to the rich implications of its title.[2] It is important to remember, however, the specificity of its thesis: the interaction between capitalism, print technology and human linguistic diversity created 'unified fields of exchange and communication' – that is, standardised forms of English, French and so on. This made possible 'a new form of imagined community' at a level below Latin and above local vernaculars: 'fellow-readers' of standardised languages could imagine their participation in broad social groups defined by shared use of that tongue. These communities are imagined in that they depend on (assumed) networks of communication and mutual comprehension, rather than actual familiarity with other members. In this sense, print-language builds large-scale but exclusive 'solidarities' which, in turn, 'set the stage for the modern nation'.[3] Anderson is, of course, far from the only recent theorist of nationalism to have posited a close connection between language and social identity. Two decades earlier, for instance, Karl Deutsch traced the development of 'national consciousnesses through 'social communication'. A community is defined, he says, by 'a socially standardised system of symbols which is a language' as this permits 'an integrated pattern or configuration of communicating, remembering and acting'.[4]

In fact, both Deutsch and Anderson are part of a very long intellectual tradition which understands shared identities in terms of language use. Some historians have found the basis for such thinking in the medieval period: universities, for example, would categorise their students according to spoken language.[5] But it was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that ideas linking language to (national) identity became more prominent.[6] For Johann Gottfried von Herder, 'the affirmation of language is the most vital source of a people's collective consciousness'. Not only is it the 'medium of […] thoughts and perceptions' – and thus one's sense of self – but it also a 'collective treasure': the repository and bearer of shared history, 'social wisdom' and 'communal self-respect'.[7] In this sense, language has a pivotal political role: 'the possession of a common language' is the means by which 'a group's identity as a homogenous unit can be established'.[8] Johann Gottlieb Fichte adopts a

more intrinsic approach, stressing the 'inner frontiers' that divide speakers of different languages. He advocates German nationhood on the basis that speakers of the same language 'are capable of communicating more and more closely […] they belong together, they are by nature one indivisible whole'.[9] According to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, languages express the characters of the peoples who speak them: '*le caractère des Peuples influe sur celui des Langues*'.[10] Similarly, Wilhelm von Humboldt sees language as 'the outer appearance of the spirit of a people. […]Therefore language and the basis of all nationality have a direct resemblance to one another'.[11] If Herder sees language as part of the organic tradition that shapes nations, Condillac and Humboldt suggest that language is determined by inner faculties: in this sense, the nation constructs the language, rather than the reverse.

While few modern scholars would countenance Humboldt's essentialised ideas, language has remained an important part of theories about state-building. Introducing a collection of recent work on this topic, Stephen Barbour argues that: 'we can see standard languages partly as products of modern nations, and nations partly as products of modern communications that allow the effective functioning of states'.[12] Following this premise, many historians have explored how language policy and standardisation has both reflected and facilitated state centralisation and national sentiment in several countries.[13] Indeed, in order to understand the relationship between community and language more closely some historians have advocated greater engagement with sociolinguistics – that is, 'the study of language within, and in relation to, society'.[14] Peter Burke, for instance, calls for a 'social history of language' in which sociolinguistic insights help contextualise 'the place of language in expressing or constructing […] social relationships'.[15]

All this poses a significant methodological problem for investigating ideas about (imagined) European communities. If such communities are premised on the communicative possibilities of standardised shared language, does this mean that a European-wide imagined community is, effectively, unimaginable? Of course, one might explore the trans-European networks engendered by, say, scholarly Latin or diplomatic French, but this necessarily constructs a 'Europe' framed by specific languages.[16] When the late eighteenth-century French writer Antoine de Rivarol boasts of '*l'universalité de la langue française*' in Europe and '*le monde français*'

fashioned by French cultural dominance, he understands Europe merely as a magnified national culture. Any specific idea of Europe is absorbed within homogenous universalism and a celebratory elite nationalism.[17]

One way to address this difficulty might be to think about languages in a more expansive way. Rather than defining language as 'the whole body of words […] used by a nation or people'[18] – like Portuguese, German or Urdu – we can perhaps also understand it in the sense used by J. G. A. Pocock in his work on the history of political thought. Pocock investigates what he calls 'sub-languages': 'idioms, rhetorics, specialised vocabularies and grammars, modes of discourse or ways of talking about politics […] distinguishable language games of which each may have its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style'. Pocock's examples include the sub-languages of, say, of medieval scholasticism, classical republicanism and commonwealth radicalism, all of which possess their own signature vocabularies, rhetorics and styles. By analysing these sub-languages, one can show 'what functions, political and intellectual, they discharged or prescribed, what assumptions and implications they contained, and what were normally the consequences of employing them'. In other words, one can place an expressed idea within its 'paradigmatic texture' and explore both its 'cultural and social origins' and 'the modes, linguistic and political, of assumption, implication, and ambiguity' which it contains and helps to convey.[19] Given this, it would surely be possible to identify and analyse the 'sub-languages' of Europe: that is, the rhetorical strategies, images and vocabularies with which texts construct and communicate ideas about 'Europe'.[20]

Pocock's methodology is clearly derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's early twentieth-century linguistic theory: they both use the terms *langue* and *parole* to distinguish between whole systems of discourse and the individual 'acts of utterance which have been performed "in" them'.[21] This has two significant implications. Firstly, for Saussure, concepts are meaningful only by reference to other related concepts in the same system. For example, one can only comprehend how 'Europe' is understood and imagined through the study of other ideas and rhetorical terms used to describe it. Secondly, a concept's meaning is related to its social and communicative function: '*il faut une masse parlante pour qu'il y ait une langue* […] *celle-ci n'existe en dehors du fait social* […] *Sa nature sociale est un de ses caractères internes*'.[22] In

other words, an idea about Europe presupposes a community who understand the term 'Europe' in a similar fashion. Any mention of 'Europe' constructs (and depends upon for its meaning) a community for whom the expressed ideas about Europe are comprehensible. The task, then, is to explore and analyse the rhetorical strategies and concepts which comprise ideas about Europe – and to identify what kind of community is being evoked by the constituent components of that sub-language.

Saussure, notoriously, did not fully develop his evocative remarks about '*une masse parlante*'.[23] But Pocock talks about the 'communicative spaces, fields and structures within which political languages [are] created and diffused'; that is, the relationships between sub-languages and social communities. He employs the phrase 'community of discourse' to describe people defined by shared usage and understanding of certain sub-languages and idioms. In this respect, Pocock emphasises the mutually constitutive relationship between social structure – for example professional or institutional practice – and rhetorical language. This idea of a 'community of discourse' has two implications: firstly, social communities articulate and create particular kinds of language; but, in addition, communities are also defined by their uses or comprehension of certain languages.[24]

The question, therefore, is whether Pocock's expansive ideas about language allow us to reconceptualise imagined communities in a way that illuminates 'European' identity. Is it possible to understand and imagine communities in terms of (presumed) shared comprehension of certain rhetorics, tropes, narratives, and metaphors? Can the resultant imagined communities extend beyond nations? Certainly, some sociolinguists have proposed broader definitions of communicative behaviour in order to mitigate excessive focus on particular tongues or dialects: 'speech communities, broadly conceived, can be regarded as collectivities of social networks in which interpretative strategies are embedded […] and passed on as shared communicative traditions'.[25] This allows communities to be defined by their 'shared repertoires' – for example 'shared knowledge', 'mutual engagement in an endeavour', 'narrative themes', or 'descriptions of who belongs' – and not exclusively on mutual mastery of a single tongue or dialect.[26] In fact, similar implications are present within familiar theories of nationalism. Deutsch speaks about shared 'codes and symbols' that can convey information and thus connect communities. The Swiss, for instance, 'may

speak four languages and still act as one people, for each of them has enough learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, patterns of landholding and social stratification, events in history and personal associations, all of which permit him to communicate more effectively with other Swiss than with the speakers of his own language who belong to other peoples'.[27] Deutsch's reasoning opens space for a European identity founded upon shared symbols and rhetorics, and not upon a single spoken or written language. Anderson also talks about 'symbolic languages' which 'create a community out of signs, not sounds'. One such example is mathematical notation: 'what the Thai call "+" Rumanians have no idea, and vice versa, but both comprehend the same symbol'. This facilitates an imagined community defined by the shared symbolic resonance of a concept which exists in several tongues.[28]

Of course, the suggestion that 'language' in Pocock's sense of the term can construct (imagined) communities is not without problems. The linguist Dell Hymes, for example, criticises Pocock's apparently quite unspecific use of the term 'language': 'one reads variously of a topos, a type, a rhetoric, a whole new vocabulary (metaphors, images, neologisms), nomenclature, coinages, a popular vocabulary, discourses and narratives'. This is less a critique of Pocock's method – founded, as Hymes recognises, in different disciplinary concerns – and more a warning about loose notions of 'language'. Communicative practice can be defined broadly – Hymes talks about communities possessing 'a repertoire, a series or set of communicative means, each with its own appropriateness and social meaning' – but one still needs to be precise about what one means when discussing 'language'.[29] My interest, then, is in the rhetorical construction of 'Europe': the different vocabularies and rhetorical devices which together build an idea of 'Europe', the concepts which are connoted by the term, and the groupings of people evoked or addressed by that usage.

How, though, do 'languages of Europe' evoke communities? Most obviously, this occurs when a text names and identifies certain groups as 'Europeans'. However, by using particular images and rhetorics about Europe, texts also appeal to an audience which they assume will comprehend – if not wholly share – certain assumptions about Europe. In this way, the text constructs an imagined community of readers who purportedly share a similar way of talking about and understanding Europe, or who

can perhaps be persuaded to think about it in similar terms. In order to appreciate how a text constructs and appeals to an imagined European community, we therefore need to ask several questions about how ideas of Europe are presented and targeted. What explicit and implicit statements are made about Europe? To whom are these statements purportedly addressed? How does the text try to engage with the real-and-imagined interlocutor of the audience or readership? What communities or social relationships are presupposed that purportedly envelop the reader?

In brief, we need to think very carefully about the relationship between texts and their (imagined) communities of readers. We might explore what Hans Robert Jauss calls 'horizons of expectation'; that is, the 'mind-set that a hypothetical reader brings to a given text'. These 'systems of references' are shaped by the expectations of genre, existing comparable works, and contemporary understandings of historical circumstances. In Jauss's terms, every text 'predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions'. Texts thus direct their readers' perceptions within in the context of existing expectations. In this way, texts shape and are shaped by their own contextual possibilities, and they can only be understood by reference to other texts' horizons of production and reception.[30] Wolfgang Iser's ideas about reading also illuminate the interaction between texts and their communities of readers. He suggests that meaning is 'generated in the reading process. It is neither purely textual nor totally subjective (in the sense of being constructed solely by the reader), but is the result of an interaction between the two'. Importantly, texts do not transmit 'codes' which are simply deciphered by an audience. Instead, they contain ambiguities and implicit assumptions which guide possible responses, but which the reader must ultimately interpret according to his or her contextual perspectives and personal predilections. In this way, meaning is generated by both the text and its readers. All texts therefore invite 'some form of participation on the part of the reader'; they appeal to and rely upon readers who can engage with the ideas expressed.[31]

There are, of course, some profound epistemological questions here about the reading of texts and the nature of interpretation. Iser talks about 'implied readers', a phrase which refers to the pre-structuring of potential meaning by a text, as well as the

readers' interpretative role.[32] Other theorists of interpretation are more categorical. Some argue that texts 'cast' their readers in a role, deploying 'signals' and 'directives' to structure those readers' responses.[33] For others, such textual primacy is unwarranted: instead, strategies for interpretation exist 'prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than […] the other way round'.[34] Whether the text or the reader provides the original impetus for interpretation is perhaps an insoluble problem; for my purposes, it is enough to recognise the mutuality of interpretative processes. Textual meaning, in other words, is enabled by the interaction of a 'graphic mechanism, its semiological decipherment, and […] a collective, socially determined knowledge'.[35] When a text uses the phrase 'we Europeans', it is partly developing a rhetorical strategy to construct an imagined community and to guide the reader's opinion. But for the text to be understood, let alone for the strategy to persuade successfully, it is also dependent on the (presumed) reader operating within a framework or community of similar conventions and assumptions. Part of the analytical task is therefore to map the content and range of that framework by reference to other contemporary sources.

This, however, leads to another potential problem: a straightforward equation of the *imagined* communities presupposed by texts with *actual* communities of real readers. Historians of the book refer to the 'receptive fallacy', which can occur when 'the critic assumes that whatever the author puts into a text – or whatever the critic chooses to read into a text – is the message that the common reader receives'. For this reason, they call for greater attention to the actual reception of texts: an improved understanding of the intersection between text and context 'lies in creating a better sense of original audience […], in developing historical reader-response paradigms'[36]. This is easier said than done, especially for earlier periods. The extent to which imagined communities envisaged by texts overlap with actual constituencies of readers is not easy to measure in empirical terms. And in any case, it may be impossible to know 'the inner experience of ordinary readers' for certain.[37] To study the 'sub-languages' which constitute those imagined communities is not to assume naively that all readers were equal participants in some union of the like-minded; after all, some readers might disagree with the text's assumptions. Instead, it is to suggest that there was some intellectual currency and communicative purpose in addressing certain rhetorical modes to a readership capable of engaging with them. Imagined

communities – and the 'sub-languages' which generate and are generated by them – are not simply ahistorical, idealised abstractions; they are grounded in the complexities of particular circumstances and paradigms.[38]

How, then, might rhetorical sub-languages invoke and reflect imagined communities? At this point I want to study some examples, beginning broadly before focusing on a specific case in which texts employ a 'language of Europe' to evoke a European community. In her study of irony in written texts, Linda Hutcheon argues that successful execution of this rhetorical effect is premised on 'discursive communities': that is, a 'shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and communicative strategies' in which both text and reader participate. For an ironic comment to be operative there needs to be mutual acknowledgement that words can have multiple meanings, that implied or unspoken meanings can play against literal or surface meanings, and that there are 'culturally agreed upon markers' which signal when irony is employed. In other words, irony relies on a 'culture-specific […] common memory shared by addresser and addressee': it indicates and requires mutual participation in 'the same discursive community'. Conversely, if an ironic comment is not understood it may be because the ironist and the interpreter possess different cultural knowledge or priorities and thus do not participate in the same discursive community.[39]

To illustrate this effect in operation, let us examine a passage from Edward Gibbon's much-studied analysis of 'The Progress of the Christian Religion' in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89):

> Our curiosity is naturally prompted to enquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose; we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church.[40]

The phrasing suggests modest piety: it is 'obvious and satisfactory' that Christianity's truth should ensure its success, and the historian need only proceed 'with becoming submission'. But this surface orthodoxy is in tension with the controversial implications of Gibbon's project: that Christianity is explicable outside the terms of divine intervention. Instead, he focusses analytical attention on the 'secondary causes' of human passions and activities, and thus reduces providence's instrumental role.[41] One such cause is said to be 'the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church'.[42] The word 'ascribed' carries especial weight here, as does the inference that miracles are the province of human institutions rather than of divine action. As David Wootton explains, 'Gibbon does not announce a discussion of miracles, but of *belief* in miracles. The dangerous implication is that the truth of miracles is not relevant'. Similarly, when Gibbon describes 'the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire', he follows an apparently devout compliment with a hint at the faith's potentially seditious role.[43] Gibbon's strategy is often to repurpose standard Protestant attacks on Catholicism – the incredibility of miracles, the absurdity of superstition and fanaticism – as broader critiques of the faith in general, thus shielding irreverence behind a cloak of convention.[44]

For these various ironies to be comprehended both ironist and interpreter need to inhabit overlapping discursive communities – that is, they need to share an awareness of certain ideas and communicative strategies. There needs to be a mutual acknowledgement that the text contains double-meanings, that there is a tension between its overt orthodoxy and its implied criticisms, and that those tensions are signalled by key words such as 'ascribed'. In short, both addresser and addressee need to share culturally-specific knowledge for the rhetorical strategy to be effective: the mechanisms of irony itself, some familiarity with Christianity (and its post-Reformation rivalries), and, crucially, an awareness of religious scepticism. Importantly, all participants in this discursive process need not possess identical points of view. Some contemporary readers, after all, were unsettled by the *Decline and Fall*'s irreligious implications, though the resulting controversy also seems to have increased the book's circulation.[45] Instead, the reader needs merely to comprehend the possibility of irony and scepticism in order to participate in an imagined community effected by the work's rhetoric. It is arguable as to whether the

text actually *generates* this community by introducing specific arguments to its readership; or whether the text requires an existing community for those arguments to be successfully deployed. F. R. Leavis's often-cited remark that Gibbon 'insinuates a solidarity with the reader' lends persuasive impetus to an inveigling ironist.[46] Conversely, Hutcheon argues that 'the discursive community *precedes* and *makes possible* the comprehension of irony'.[47] To some extent, we have returned here to the familiar controversy about whether texts or readers are the primary drivers of interpretation. But either way it is meaningful to suggest that the sub-language of irony evokes an imagined community premised upon shared cultural assumptions and forms of expression.

Another example is the idea of 'sentimental communities' developed by the literary critics Margaret Cohen and April Alliston. They suggest that eighteenth-century sentimental novels employ certain stylistic devices and generic conventions to elicit emotional responses from contemporary readers. Typically, these devices include poignant description or dilemmas for the novels' characters: for example 'a spectacle of suffering' – such as a deathbed scene – 'that solicits the spectator's sympathy'; or a plot in which protagonists must choose between romantic love and duty to their parents. Such rhetorical strategies invite the reader 'to picture himself or herself occupying the place of the victim' and to identify with the moral and social predicaments on display. Crucially, there is a societal aspect to these identifications: by responding to the text in the expected and appropriately sympathetic manner, the reader can confirm his or her membership of a wider imagined community defined by social convention, emotional sensitivity, and good taste. Readers of sentimental novels thus share 'common investment in an imaginary representation': when their 'sympathies are aroused, they sympathise not only with the sufferings represented, but also with one another, and through this come together in a kind of community'.[48] In other words, the sub-language of sentimentality evokes an imagined community of readers all moved by their books and thus possessed of similar cultural and aesthetic values.

Importantly, this sympathetic community extends across national boundaries. Many popular novels – Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden*

des jungen Werthers (1774) – were swiftly translated and distributed to an international audience.[49] Thanks to the shared cultural contexts which made sentimental tropes comprehensible in different countries, readers of these novels could imagine themselves as part of transnational communities with similarly attuned tastes and sensitivities. Those reading, say, Goethe in English could therefore participate in a sentimental community alongside French- or German-speaking readers of the same novel. A significant principle here is the assumption that certain rhetorics (in this instance 'codes of sentimentality'), as well as the imagined communities evoked by them, can operate across various spoken languages. Cohen and Alliston thus purposely seek to extend the imagined communities concept beyond its usual linguistic parameters: instead they consider the 'transnational communities catalysed by sympathy' as among 'the first modern imagined communities'.[50] Although, as I shall discuss, this idea is not without controversy, it also offers a useful framework for thinking about 'European' imagined communities not tied to a single spoken language.

Having discussed in general terms how rhetorical sub-languages can evoke imagined communities, my final example directly concerns ideas about Europe. It focuses on philhellenic writings of the early 1820s: works written to justify and encourage military, financial and moral support for Greeks in conflict with their Ottoman rulers.[51] Often addressed directly to 'the European public', the 'friends of the cause throughout Europe' or '*jeunesse Européene*', they attempt to draw readers into a shared conception of Europe.[52] But what kinds of imagined European communities are constructed? To examine this question I want to first discuss the work of a single philhellene: Edward Blaquiere, an Irish naval officer and prolific author of philhellenic books. Blaquiere advises his readers that they are 'bound by every tie, both as Christians and as men, to succour the Greeks and contribute towards their speedy restoration to the European family, as well as to the blessings of an extended civilisation'. In essence, Blaquiere argues for a shared European genealogy shaped by religion and classical inheritance. He proposes that 'the modern possessors of civilization and science' should redeliver these attainments 'to the descendents of those from whom these inestimable blessings originally sprang'.[53] In this respect Greece, Europe and civilisation are mutually-defining concepts: the notion of civilisation was first expressed in ancient Greek culture; Europe is civilised because it

supposedly derives from Greece; therefore civilisation is necessarily European. Blaquiere employs these narratives to construct both Greek and European histories and communities; he argues for Greek nationhood partly by invoking a transnational Europe connected by religion and ancient culture.

The crucial point, however, is that Blaquiere's assertions and rhetorical strategies are not unique; they are part of established patterns for talking about Greece and Europe in the 1820s.[54] It is common for philhellenic texts to describe Europe as a 'family', a 'confederacy', or as '*voisins*' linked by 'certain principles and manners, knowledge, sciences, invention [and] arts'.[55] Philhellenes frequently emphasise Europe's shared Christianity, ignoring its long history of religious conflict in order to present the Greek cause as a holy war against Ottoman infidels.[56] They trace the influence of classical culture on 'civilised' modern Europe, and they interpret the conflict as a defence of that common legacy.[57] These tropes are self-consciously repeated from text to text. As Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis observes, philhellenic writers frequently read and cited each other's work, and they therefore propagate a shared range of 'opinions, ideas and perceptions' which form recognisable and marketable expectations for readers and authors alike.[58] By making assertions about Europe's Christian or classical culture, Blaquiere is thus participating in an established repertoire about Europe: a horizon of expectations consisting of well-known analogies, images and narratives. What constructs the (imagined) European community is not the actuality of some teleological descent from Greece, or of Christian unanimity; that would naively accept Blaquiere's rhetoric at face value.[59] Instead an idea of Europe is facilitated and framed by a set of rhetorical sub-languages, including, in this case, the notion that Europe is intellectually and politically derived from ancient Greece. Together, these sub-languages shape a belief-system about Europe accessible to those who can comprehend (and may go on to use) similar terms of reference. In this way, philhellenic texts presuppose and construct an imagined community of Europeans through shared interpretative strategies and meanings.

Of course, these constructions are heavily particularised. Blaquiere and his fellow philhellenes are often (though not exclusively) political radicals. They sometimes see the conflict as an opportunity to discredit 'despotic systems of government' and to

implement radical ideas about republicanism, a free press, representative government, and '*les droits à la liberté*'.[60] Their support for Greece also occasionally appeals to national triumphalism: some British philhellenes declare Britain 'the instrument of benevolent purpose' in Greece and promise to 'engraft English and Anglo-American principles on the minds' of its inhabitants.[61] This is not an entirely unselfconscious process: Sir Charles Napier, the English Resident on Cephalonia, describes Greece as a 'white sheet on which the legislator, the statesman, and the soldier, may write whatever is good: […] he may give to her every thing that the experience of Europe and America has approved'.[62] It is important to recognise that ideas of Europe are historically particular, often designed to appeal to specific constituencies in precise contexts; but also that they aspire to a broader reach as part of their rhetorical design. Imagining a European community is partly a transnational and transhistorical process, since it purports to construct identities stretching across borders and historical periods; but it is also rooted in the specificities of particular temporal and ideological circumstances.

An essential analytical task, therefore, is to discern the different kinds of European communities outlined within and by texts and their sub-languages. The rhetorical strategies of philhellenic writing identify certain groups of people as 'European': Christians, 'descendents' of ancient Greece, and so on. These imagined communities are very broad, encompassing disparate peoples from various spaces and times according to implicit and explicit ideological criteria. But philhellenic texts also address and construct communities of readers who, they assume, either understand Europe and Greece in similar terms, or can be persuaded to do so. These readers form another type of imagined community, defined and shaped by a particular kind of mutually comprehensible language about Europe. This community is necessarily more restricted, which results in some revealing conceptual contrasts. Blaquiere, for example, invites his imagined community of radical, classicist, English-speaking readers to disregard the potential divisions of nation, spoken language, Christian dogma and political beliefs in order to envision a united 'European family'. This contrast illuminates the complex identity constructions which constitute understandings of 'Europe'. In this case, the idea of a 'European family' does not necessarily occlude nationalist perspectives, but rather leads to their complication.

It is clear from this discussion that the imagined communities I am discussing are not commensurate with those communities evoked by spoken languages such as English, German, or French. In some respects, they are more specific: imagined communities premised on rhetorical strategies are necessarily restricted to those constituencies who can comprehend – even if they do not fully concur with – the 'sub-languages' on display. But the key question is whether rhetorical communities of this kind can extend across spoken languages. Cohen and Alliston's 'sentimental communities' are, in theory, accessible to speakers and readers of several tongues. If this principle is sound, can the same be said of ideas about Europe? Can European 'sub-languages' resonate in different spoken languages, thus appealing to and building an international community of readers with shared assumptions and beliefs about the continent? An affirmative answer to this question requires faith in the possibility of translation: one must accept that an idea may be expressed and understood in a commensurate manner in different languages. This, naturally, is a controversial position. According to some linguistic theorists 'the system of form and meaning in language A may be similar to that in language B, but is never identical with it', and there has consequently been a great deal of debate about the conceptual and practical limitations of translation.[63] For this reason, it might seem unwise to assume that ideas can transfer between spoken languages in a pure form separate from the medium of their expression.

To illustrate this point in more detail, I want briefly to discuss an especially pertinent example for my purposes: the writings of the Swiss cultural theorist Denis de Rougement on the meaning of 'Europe'. Rougement's anthology *Vingt-huit siècles d'Europe: la conscience européenne à travers les textes d'Hésiode à nos jours* (1961) was translated into English simply as *The Idea of Europe* (1966).[64] This change of title significantly alters the book's implicit arguments. The French version presents 'Europe' as a continuous presence in written records and human consciousness for thousands of years. But in the English alternative Europe is described less insistently (and more flexibly) as an abstract notion, rather than as a concrete historical constant and a habitual form of human self-awareness. Comparable differences continue in the first lines of the preface:

> *Ce n'est pas une histoire de l'Europe qu'on va lire, mais seulement une chronique – illustrée de citations – des prises de conscience successives de notre unité de culture, des temps homériques à nos jours.*[65]

In the English version this becomes:

> What you are about to read is not a history of Europe, but merely a chronical –
> illustrated with quotations – of how men from the time of Homer to the
> present day have come to think of Europe as a cultural entity.[66]

In the French text, the assembled evidence shows the 'successive consciousness of our cultural unity'. But the English is less assured, referring only to an interpretative position which people 'have come to think of', rather than a form of collective consciousness. Furthermore, whereas the French makes an explicit assertion of Europe's 'cultural unity', the English is more guarded, referring to Europe only as a 'cultural entity'. Similar subtle changes abound in Rougement's other books. The title of *Les chances de l'Europe* (1962) carries implications of good fortune, luck, and possibility (of success). But the word 'chance' in English often connotes 'unpredictable risk', and so 'chances of Europe' sounds idiosyncratic in that language. In translation, therefore, the book is called *The Meaning of Europe* (1963), a title which suggests that 'Europe' is a mystery or metaphor requiring explanation. Later in the text, the same problem is resolved differently. The chapter title '*Les nouvelles chances de l'Europe*' becomes 'Europe: What of the Future?' – a phrase which disassociates futurity from good fortune. [67]

It is a complex question as to whether translation differences such as these result from integral qualities of the respective spoken languages; the specific decisions or proclivities of individual translators; or attempts to address distinct audiences or publication markets (in this case, perhaps, less Europhile Anglophones). Either way, it is clearly problematic to assume that ideas can transfer between spoken languages in a crystalline form, as they will always be modified by the different contexts, vocabularies and connotations of distinct tongues. But it would also be an exaggeration to insist that ideas expressed in multiple languages are entirely separate and necessarily irreconcilable. For all the philosophical reflection on the 'impossibility' of translation, it is nonetheless the means by which theoretical concepts, historical and geographical information, literary traditions, religious beliefs, and practical knowledge – to choose general and obvious examples – have been communicated across cultures and around the globe.[68] If, on the one hand, we must avoid the naïve assumption that an idea expressed in one language can be transmitted whole and pure into another, we must also decry the converse supposition that ideas

are fully imprisoned by the spoken languages in which they are originally expressed. When Rougement defines Europe as '*l'union dans la diversité*' and as '*cette partie-là du monde qui a fait "le Monde"*', the English text speaks of 'unity in diversity' and 'that part of the world which *made* "the World"'.[69] Clearly these cannot be identical definitions as the means of their expression are unique to each language. But the key principles here – Europe's dominant globalising role and its shared culture emerging, paradoxically, from disjuncture – are accessible to readers of both French and English.

Let us return, in the light of this, to the philhellenes of the 1820s. In his *Report on the Present State of the Greek Constitution* (1823) Blaquiere argues that 'the torch, extinguished for a time by the effects of tyranny and barbarism, but which now illuminates the greatest portion of our hemisphere, was first lighted up in Greece'. Consequently, 'all we possess to cheer and animate existence, was derived from [Greek] forefathers'.[70] Obviously this is far from an original view, and philhellenic texts are replete with similar statements about Europe's purported Greek ancestry.[71] But it is nonetheless striking to read the French philhellene Claude Denis Raffanel's remark that: '*reconnaissante envers son ancienne institutrice, l'Europe rendit à son tour à la Grèce les lumières qu'elle lui emprunta jadis, et dont le lustre l'éclaire encore aujourd'hui*'.[72] Patently, Raffanel's argument here is not identical to Blaquiere's, but both authors use the vocabulary of exchange and the imagery of illumination to express Europe's cultural debt to Greece. In this sense, they employ shared rhetorical strategies about Europe which are not wholly unique either to English or French. Similar examples occur when philhellenic texts speak of '*la cause sacrée de la Grèce*' and the 'sacred cause' of the Revolution; or characterise the conflict as 'a struggle for freedom and national independence': '*une nation brave et généreuse doit aspirer à la gloire de conquérir seule sa liberté*'.[73] At these moments, rhetorical sub-languages – marked by particular cultural assumptions, allusions, or metaphors – can resonate effectively in different spoken languages; and this means that the resulting ideas about Greece, Europe, and their mutual connections are not tied exclusively to those spoken languages.[74]

The broader task for historians of the idea of Europe is therefore to trace comparable (though not identical) sub-languages in texts from different spoken languages. By

noting the extent to which those rhetorics resemble each other, imbricate, or change, one can discern the extent to which certain conceptions of Europe – and thus the communities those rhetorics emerge from and seek to evoke – cross spoken languages. In those shared assumptions one might detect groups of readers for whom Europe means similar things and who to some extent identify with those ideas, if only by finding them comprehensible. Here, in other words, one might find transnational groups with a shared sub-language of Europe: that is, a European imagined community.

Naturally, it follows from this that ideas about Europe cannot be timeless, because they are always located in specific historical moments and expressed by rhetorics grounded in particular contexts. This is not to say that sub-languages about the continent cannot purport to be ageless, or even endure over long periods of time. Indeed, the fact that some have proved long-lasting tells us a great deal about how imagined communities are educed. For instance, the idea that Europe's cultural unity derives from its common Christianity – even that 'Christian' and 'European' are synonyms – has been widespread since at least the sixteenth-century and probably earlier, and is still repeated in modern scholarship.[75] This argument evokes an unbroken cultural tradition and unified community supposedly extant since antiquity; and because this premise still has modern adherents, it evidently still resonates as a way to understand European identity. Obviously, it is not a straightforward description of the historical record. The notion of Europe's Christian unity ignores the continuous presence of other religions in the continent, Christianity's substantive following in other regions, and the faith's own incessant fractiousness – factors surely evident even to the earliest advocates of the idea.[76] Instead, an imagined community is evoked by the rhetoric itself; that is, by a sub-language which resonates with authors and readers. The theory of Christian-European unity educes an imagined community not by being true in any unqualified sense, but by appealing to people who find the core idea meaningful and who imagine themselves part of a community who think similarly. And what makes this idea especially powerful and durable is precisely the belief that it is perennial, shared by antecedents in earlier periods. The rhetorical purposes and effects of this are seen more clearly in the philhellenic examples above – in which Christian unity is used as a means to prompt collective support for a specific cause. The historian's task is to thus to de-mystify and

contextualise these rhetorics fully: to explore their forms of expression, their relationship to generic conventions, and the extent of their implied audiences, in order to understand more clearly how European identities and imagined communities are evoked.

Neither is it enough, however, to argue that ideas of Europe and their resultant imagined communities exist only as rhetorical devices. The philhellenic example reminds us that sub-languages about Europe are necessarily political and potentially effectual: they reflect and shape how identities, histories, cultures and politics are understood, but they also motivate and define political action. In the 1820s, philhellenes were inspired by certain understandings of Europe to travel long distances, to organise committees, to donate large sums of money, even to risk injury and death. Of course, how and to what extent ideas can lead to action – in this case, how imagined communities of philhellenes became actual companions and combatants – is one of the most difficult problems in intellectual history, and one which lies beyond the scope of this article. Certainly the extent to which specific sub-languages of Europe underpin political decision-making or other types of practical action is a ripe field for further research. But my concluding point is simply that sub-languages about Europe – precisely because they are concerned with society and community – cannot be divorced from concrete social or political circumstances.[77] Sustained attention to the sub-languages of Europe can permit new, complex ways to understand the history of imagined community and identity outside the more familiar parameters of localism or nationalism. But importantly, these enquiries also incorporate political and ideological practice: Europe, like all imagined communities, is always more than an idea.

References

[1] Pocock, 'Concept of Language', 21.

[2] Works influenced by Anderson's terminology are very numerous. A small selection from several fields might include: Huff, *Women's Life Writing*; Cobb-Roberts et al., *Schools and Imagined Communities*; Shavit, *New Imagined Community*; Smith, *Virtual Dreams, Imagined Communities*; Belfast Community Relations Council, *Dissenting Voices / Imagined Communities*.

[3] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6, 42-6, 133.

[4] Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 41, 87, 89, 96, 171-2.

[5] See Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood*, 3-5, 19-21; Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 104-10.

[6] Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity*, 23, 131; Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, 9, 195.

[7] Herder, *Essay on the Origin of Language*, 53, 164-5; Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy*, 233.

[8] Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, 57, 59.

[9] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 102-3.

[10] Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, 2:197.

[11] Humboldt, *On Language*, 46, 152-3.

[12] Barbour, 'Nationalism, Language, Europe', 13.

[13] See Barbour and Carmicheal, *Language and Nationalism*; Vick, 'Language and Nation'; Fishman, 'Language and Nationalism'; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 72, 89; Flood et al., *'Das unsichtbare Band der Sprache'*.

[14] Evans, *Language of History*, 10-11

[15] Burke and Porter, *Social History of Language*, 3-15; Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 3-6.

[16] See Burke 'Heu domine', 23-50.

[17] Rivarol, *De l'universalité de la langue française*, 1, 42.

[18] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'language', sense 1(a).

[19] Pocock, 'Concept of Language', 21-3; Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, 25, 28-9.

[20] For Pocock's own writings on the idea of Europe see: 'Deconstructing Europe'; 'Some Europes in Their History'.

[21] Pocock, 'Concept of Language', 21-22.

[22] Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 159-60, 112. 'In order to have a language, there must be a community of speakers […] A language never exists except as a social fact […] Its social nature is one of its internal characteristics' (translation from Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 77).

[23] Patrick, 'Speech Community', 578.

[24] Pocock, 'Concept of Language', 35, 25-6. See also Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, 12-16.

[25] Gumperz, 'Introduction', 362-3, cited in Patrick, 'Speech Community', 582.

[26] Meyerhoff, 'Communities of Practice', 526-48.

[27] Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 92, 97.

[28] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 13.

[29] Hymes, 'Afterword', 342, 335.

[30] Holub, *Reception Theory*, 59-60, 53; Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 22-3.

[31] Holub, 'Reception Theory: School of Constance', 319-46, 327; Iser, 'Interactions Between Text and Reader', 111-12; Iser, 'Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response', 13.

[32] Iser, *Implied Reader*, xii, 275-6.

[33] Ong. 'The Writer's Audience', 12.

[34] For more on this dispute see Holub, *Reception Theory,* 103-4; Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, 7-9, 171.

[35] Jacob, *The Sovereign Map*, 271.

[36] Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader',49; Hume, 'Texts Within Contexts', 78; Price, 'Reading', 303-30.

[37] Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette*, 177, 132.

[38] For a critique of 'idealised' communities, see Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 200.

[39] Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 89-101.

[40] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 450.

[41] Wootton, 'Narrative, Irony and Faith', 92-3.

[42] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 450.

[43] Wootton, 'Narrative, Irony and Faith', 92-3.

[44] Burrow, *Gibbon*, 60.

[45] For discussion of the *Decline and Fall*'s reception see Womersley, *Gibbon and the 'Watchmen of the Holy City'*, esp. 12-172. For sales and circulation see O'Brien, 'The History Market', 122-3.

[46] Leavis, 'The Irony of Swift', 366.

[47] Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 94.

[48] Cohen, 'Sentimental Communites', 106-32. There is a large literature on sentiment and sociability. See, for example: Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*; Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility.*

[49] *Clarissa* was translated into French in 1751; *Julie* into English in 1761; and *Werther* into English in 1779, initially from a French translation. See Greene, 'The French *Clarissa*'; Mander, 'Rousseau "*à l'anglais*"'; Long, 'English Translations of Goethe's *Werther*'; Reed, 'Continental Influence', 83.

[50] Cohen, 'Sentimental Communites', 123; Alliston, 'Trannational Sympathies', 145. For more on the 'international character' of the novel in general see Reed, 'Continental Influence', 77; Dow, 'Criss-Crossing the Channel'.

[51] For an overview of the conflict see St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*.

[52] Edward Blaquiere, *Narrative*, ix, 35; Bollmann, *Remarques*, 3.

[53] Blaquiere, *Report*, 18, 21. For more on Blaquiere's career see: Rosen, 'Blaquiere, Edward (1779–1832)'.

[54] For a detailed discussion see Stock, *Shelley-Byron Circle*, 175-97; Stock, 'Real-and-Imagined Spaces'.

[55] Hughes, *Address*, 1; Hughes, *Considerations*, 201-2, 207-8, 215, 220; Raffanel, *Histoire*, 2; [Anon.], *Cause of Greece*, 11.

[56] Sheridan, *Thoughts*, 433, 457; Erskine, *Letter to the Earl of Liverpool*, 1, 5-6; Hughes, *Address*, 8, 11-21; [Leake], *An Historical Outline*, 6-7, 13.

[57] Bulwer, *Autumn in Greece*, 62; Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824*, vii; Browne, 'Narrative of a Visit', 392, 400; Blaquiere, *Greece and Her Claims*, 7; Blaquiere, *The Greek Revolution*, 7, 178, 284; *The Cause of Greece,* 3, 15, 24; [Napier], *War in Greece*, 8.

[58] Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, 9-12; Stock, 'Real-and-Imagined Spaces', 3-4.

[59] For the mediation of classical texts through Arabic sources see Enrique Dussel, 'Europe, Modernity and Eurocentrism'.

[60] Blaquiere, *Narrative*, vi-vii; Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824*, 11, 142; Raffanel, *Histoire*, v. St Clair argues that the Greek cause was particularly attractive to people on the edges of political power. See *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 30, 254.

[61] Erskine, *Letter to the Earl of Liverpool*, 7; Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824*, 137.

[62] [Napier], *War in Greece*, 11-12.

[63] Winter, 'Impossibilities of Translation', 68-82, 69. For a selection of similar views see: Joseph, 'Why Isn't Translation Impossible?', 86-8. For the conceptual and historical issues at stake see: Steiner, *After Babel*, 248-311

[64] Rougement, *Vingt-huit siècles*; Rougement, *Idea of Europe*.

[65] Rougement, *Vingt-huit siècles*, 7.

[66] Rougement, *Idea of Europe*, xi.

[67] Rougement, *Les chances de l'Europe*, 65 ; Rougement, *Meaning of Europe*, 93.

[68] Eysteinsson and Weissbort, 'General Introduction', 1. See also Joseph, 'Why Isn't Translation Impossible?', 86-97.

[69] Rougement, *Les chances de l'Europe*, 46, 9 ; Rougement, *Meaning of Europe*, 65, 11.

[70] Blaquiere, *Report*, 13-14.

[71] Among many examples see: [Anon.], *Cause of Greece*, 23-4; Hughes, *Considerations*, 202; Parry, *Last Days*, 170. For the opaque authorship of the Parry volume see: St Clair, 'Postscript to *The Last Days*'.

[72] Raffanel, *Histoire*, 11.

[73] Bollmann, *Remarques*, 3; Stanhope, *Greece in 1823 and 1824*, 18 ; Blaquiere, *Narrative*, 54; Voutier, *Mémoires*, 329;

[74] For discussion of related issues in a late twentieth-century context see Chilton and Ilyin, 'Metaphor in Political Discourse'.

[75] See Hay, *Europe*, 87, 109-10; Burke, 'Did Europe Exist Before 1700?'. For recent scholars closely associating Europe and Christianity see: Geremek, *The Common Roots*, 84-94; Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea*, 17-31; Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe*, 5, 15-28.

[76] For critical reflections on familiar narratives about Europe and Christianity see: Burke, 'How to Write a History of Europe'; Lee and Bideleux, '"Europe"', 166.

[77] See Stock, *Shelley-Byron Circle*, 196.

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