

no doubt formed part of its self-propagating power as an ideology). This is an oversight which imagology may help to address.

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NORTH/SOUTH

The dualism of North and South is one of the most long-standing distinctions in European cultural history. The perception of a region as 'northern' or 'southern' has played a significant role in the development of cultural identities. As a major result of the Enlightenment's urge to human self-reflection, the opposition between North and South has proven itself to be a dynamic historical presence, with both negative and positive connotations over time.

In Greek →mythology, the land of the Hyperboreans indicated the mysterious land far beyond the North wind Boreas, vaguely located in the Northern Atlantic Ocean. Closely connected with the cult of Apollo, it represented on the one hand the place of the Greek paradise as opposed to the tenebrous underworld of Tartaros, located in the South. On the other hand it was described as a cold, and frightening region (Homer). This ambivalent image was reinforced by the travel book of Pytheas of Massilia (fourth century BC), whose description of Ultima Thule was referred to by Pliny. However, the images of the North remained relatively vague – given the →ethnocentrism of ancient Greece, which identified all non-Greeks as →barbarians. An explicit, rigorous rejection of the North by the South (involving at the same time a critical vindication of Nordic people as leading a freer, more natural life) occurred in ancient Rome. Whereas Tacitus (98 AD) opposed the Teutons as positive example to the 'decadent' Romans, authors like Pomponius Mela (43 AD) codified the perception of Northern Europeans as economically, politically and culturally deficient. These stereotypes were later internalized (adopted as self-images) by Northern Europeans, and survived into the Middle Ages.

The humanistic perspective on Classical antiquity remained dominant until the eighteenth century. The identity of the North was silhouetted *ex negativo* against attributes of the exemplary South (thus with Goethe and Winckelmann). The distance in space was closely related to an antagonism in time: the difficulty of bridging the geographical distance between Northern and Southern Europe (symbolically represented by the Alps), corresponds with the equally large-looming gap between Ancient and Modern times. Artists from the North could only be “unfortunate imitators” (Schiller). Classicist nostalgia lured many authors in the eighteenth century (especially Germans) southwards, especially to Italy. Their →travel writings rarely show documentary interest in the economical, political or cultural situation of their destination. Rather, Italy is approached as an Arcadia or cradle of European arts, and travellers see themselves in a deliberately and ironically exaggerated way as representatives of the cold and dark North.

Meanwhile the image of the North was significantly revalorized, due to a paradigm shift in the European history of ideas when the idea of historical progression began to replace the concept of static periods. The backwardness of the North, for a long time perceived as a fundamental handicap, was now considered an immense benefit for the future. In a teleological view on the ages of mankind, the Northern nations were still ascending towards maturity, whereas the Romance cultures had already passed their zenith. While authors like Winckelmann saw the only way to achieve excellence in imitating the Ancient artists, authors like Herder stressed that the representatives of the North should focus on their own roots. Two sources in particular served to build a Nordic cultural identity: Norse mythology and the Christian Middle Ages. Embracing Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Scandinavia, a Nordic cultural self-awareness revolted, in the second half of the eighteenth century, against the supremacy of the ancient Romance culture and their modern representatives. France, until then the premier cultural nation of Europe, was replaced as such by England; Homer by Shakespeare and Ossian. Deriving from Montesquieu’s →climate-based theory of cultural relativism (*De l’esprit des lois*, 1748), a moral and aesthetic pluralism emerged: justice, truth, and beauty were complemented by the sublime, the interesting, and the grotesque. The →character of a worldly-wise, a-moral, sensuous and collectivist South was opposed to a youthful, open-minded, moralistic, cerebral and individualist North.

At no point did the North-South opposition play a more comprehensive and formative role than in the process of cultural nation-building in Europe. What is more, the opposition has been invoked to describe political conflicts (e.g., Northern against Southern states during the American Revolutionary War 1775-83) or to mark an economic division in a country (e.g., Northern vs. Southern Italy in the twentieth century). Application of