

Nationalizing the Past

Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe

Edited by Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz



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Nationalizing the Past

Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe

Edited by

Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz

**EUROPEAN
SCIENCE
FOUNDATION**
SETTING SCIENCE AGENDAS FOR EUROPE

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Those who don't want to talk about the long, bloody history of nations, should also remain silent about Europe

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Preface

This volume is the result of a truly cooperative effort of scholars from many different national historiographical traditions, who, over the course of two years, in 2006 and 2007, have met twice (in Manchester and Prague) to discuss their contributions to this volume, revising and refining them after each meeting. As editors, we are, above all, immensely grateful to our contributors and thank them for their patience and the time and effort they have put into making this volume work, we also thank Kristina Berger for compiling the index. We would, furthermore, like to express our thanks to Michael Strang and his team at Palgrave MacMillan for looking after this volume and many other NHIST volumes. NHIST is the acronym of a five-year European Science Foundation Programme entitled 'Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe' (2003–08). (For details, see www.uni-leipzig.de/zhsesf.) It has been planned and executed in close collaboration between the members of the executive group of the project, and we would like to thank Ilaria Porciani, Lutz Raphael, Jo Tollebeek, Matthias Middell, Lluís Roura, Frank Hadler and Tibor Frank for their input, their collaboration and their friendship over the years. We are also grateful to the European Science Foundation and its unstinting support for the programme. Last but not least, we also want to thank the Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies for providing a very friendly and hospitable home for both editors in 2008/9 and 2009/10 respectively. It also helped the conclusion of this book. As always, any remaining shortcomings of this volume are the sole responsibility of the editors.

Stefan Berger, *Disley*
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Introduction

*Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz*¹

‘God is in the details’

Gustave Flaubert

‘The Devil is in the details’

Unknown

Although the notion of ‘micro-studies’ is lacking one unambiguous meaning, its basic idea is that certain phenomena can best be studied at the micro-level and that at this level the essential is shown by unravelling its details. This idea will be familiar to students of historiography because the intuition that history is ultimately determined by human details has been formulated and defended for at least over the last two centuries. Ever since the early nineteenth century Romanticism, with its cult of the genius, influenced generations of historians, the cult of the detail has been somehow connected to the idea that individual action matters, that freedom of choice exists, and that the course of history is contingent and not predetermined by supra-individual structures and entities. The quintessence of this idea had already been phrased in 1670 by Blaise Pascal in one of his *Pensées*: ‘If Cleopatra’s nose had been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been different’, because if Cleopatra had not been so seductive she would not have been able to make Julius Caesar and Marc Anthony work for her. Thus the cults of the individual and of detail have gone hand in hand in history, just like the cult of the general and of the supra-individual have been firmly connected.

Why both of these connections, or *Wahlverwandschaften*, have existed in history writing is not difficult to see, nor why the cult of the detail and of

¹ We want to thank the *Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies* for offering both of us the opportunity of finalizing this volume during our respective stays in Freiburg in 2008/9 and 2009/10.

the individual have been so intuitively plausible. This plausibility is firmly grounded in the *prima facie* role of specific 'great' individuals – like Cleopatra or Napoleon – in shaping the course of history. Take, for instance, the role of Adolf Hitler in bringing about the Second World War and the Holocaust. If Hitler had been killed in action during the First World War, he surely could not have become the leader of Nazi Germany and could not have launched the Second World War and the Holocaust. The same argument holds for Hitler's 'narrow escape' in a car accident in the summer of 1930, when his car was hit by a lorry while he was sitting in the 'dead man's seat', or when he escaped the bomb attempt by Georg Elser in Munich on 8 November 1940.² And to continue this train of thought: without Hitler and without a Second World War the ensuing Cold War would not have taken place, nor the partitioning of Germany into the GDR and the FRG. In that case we also would not have witnessed German reunification in 1990. So, all in all, there seem to be good grounds to argue that the whole twentieth century would have looked pretty different from the way it actually did if the above-mentioned 'details' relating to Hitler had been different. The cult of the detail therefore is inextricably linked to counterfactual questions in history.³

Now a sceptic could of course object that the 'details' relating to Hitler did *not* materialize *in fact* and that their consequences therefore are only a matter of 'speculation'. For quite a few 'empirical' historians this objection has been the end of the matter, although counterfactual reasoning demonstrably has been the basis of essential 'historiographical operations' (in the words of Michel de Certeau), like presenting causal arguments.⁴ Nevertheless, we will leave the role of counterfactuals in historical reasoning aside here and instead present an argument supporting the essential importance of 'details' based on an episode of solid 'factual' history. This history concerns the so-called 'Silesian Wars' in the eighteenth century, which led to Prussia's rise as a new Great Power in Europe and were therefore a key precondition for the rise of the German Empire as a major power in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. How did this history develop?

² See H. A. Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* (New York, 1996). Also see D. Lindenfeld and H. Turner's discussion in 'Forum on Structure and Agency in Historical Causation', *History and Theory* 38:3 (1999), 281–306.

³ For example, A. Demandt, *History that Never Happened. A Treatise on the Question 'What Would Have Happened If'* (Jefferson, 1993); N. Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (New York, 1997).

⁴ For a recent argument, see J. L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 91–111 ('Causation, Contingency, and Counterfactuals'). The basic counterfactual argument is this: when a historian names something (an action, a person, a circumstance) as a 'cause' of an event, he or she argues that this event would have been different than it factually was if this 'cause' had been absent.

During the 'First Silesian War' of 1740–42, Prussia under Frederick the Great succeeded in conquering the richest and most populous province of the Habsburg Empire: Silesia. By this conquest Prussia not only doubled its population, it also massively increased its economic potential and thereby transformed itself into a new Great Power. The Habsburg empress, Maria Theresa, was of course pretty upset about the loss of Silesia and tried to win it back during the 'Second Silesian War' (1744–45). However, due to various circumstances this attempt failed utterly. Although Silesia became officially a part of Prussia in 1748 with the Peace Treaty of Aachen, the Habsburg Empire continued its efforts to regain this important lost province. In 1756 it unexpectedly concluded a coalition to that effect with its traditional arch enemy and main competitor in Europe, France.

In what became famous as the 'inversion of alliances' the Habsburg Empire allied itself not only to France, but also to Russia, Sweden and Saxony against the upstart Prussia. Given the fact that all three of Prussia's neighbouring enemies were bigger, its chances of success looked bleak. Since England saw France as its main competitor – both inside and outside Europe, in India and in North America especially – it allied itself with Prussia and a number of smaller German states. When these two coalitions collided on the battlefields the 'Third Silesian War' – better known under the label of the 'Seven Years War' (1756–63) got underway. Because this war was fought on three continents – later also Spain and Portugal joined the coalitions on opposite sides – this conflict is often seen as the real First World War. While the French suffered consequential defeats against the British in both India and in North America – ending the French colonial empires there – Prussia suffered what looked like definitive defeats against the Habsburg, the Swedish, and especially the Russian armies. The Russian army even succeeded in occupying both Königsberg for several years and Berlin for a shorter period. However, at the moment when Frederick the Great no longer had the slightest hope of recovering Prussia's *status quo ante*, all of a sudden, in 1762, his 'personal enemy', Elisabeth the First, the Empress of Russia, died. She was succeeded by Peter the Third, who happened to be an admirer of Prussia. Peter was born in Kiel as the son of Karl Friedrich, the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and Anna Petrovna, a daughter of Emperor Peter the Great. As such he had been raised in German lands, which explained his Prussophilia. As soon as Peter became the new emperor he immediately withdrew Russia from the war with Prussia and asked almost nothing in return. During his short-lived reign – Peter was assassinated the very same year, probably with the support of his wife Catherine, who succeeded him to the throne – he even forged a coalition with Prussia against Denmark in order to regain Schleswig to his Duchy of Holstein-Gottorp. As a consequence of Russia's completely unexpected withdrawal from the war, Frederick the Great could reorganize his armies and his campaigns. When the war ended in 1763 with the Treaty of

Paris and the Treaty of Hubertusberg, Prussia kept Silesia within its pre-1756 borders. So, by sheer contingency – by two small human details: the death of Elisabeth of Russia in 1762 and her succession by the Prussophile Peter the Third – Prussia miraculously survived a series of disastrous defeats in a catastrophic war against three of its neighbouring states. By the same contingency Prussia got time to recuperate and consolidate its status as a new Great Power in eighteenth-century Europe. After its renewed alliance with England and Russia in the Napoleonic Wars, Prussia could develop into the most powerful of the German states and play a decisive role in setting up the German Empire after having again settled the bills in wars with Denmark (1864), with the Habsburg Empire (1866) and with France (1870–71). So, on closer analysis, the course of both German and European history since 1762 has been conditioned by a couple of contingent details. So much for the role of contingent details in German and European history for the moment.

The present volume *Nationalizing the Past* (*NTP* from now on) contains a collection of ‘detailed’ histories of history writing. Without any problem *NTP* can be read on its own although, historically speaking, it is a continuation of the earlier volume *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Religion, Class and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008; *TCN* from now on). The continuity pertains both to its topic – the writing of national histories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its relationship to conceptions of ethnicity, religion, class and gender – and to the editors and some of its authors. These continuities notwithstanding *NTP* is an entirely different volume pursuing completely different objectives, though within the same historiographical project. To start with, the object of *NTP* is fundamentally different from *TCN*. While *TCN* aimed to ‘map’ or ‘synthesize’ the landscape of national historiographies in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the object of *NTP* consists of *individual* national historians and of *particular* ‘schools’ of national history. While *TCN* aimed at a broad synthesis of the representations of ‘the nation’ *vis à vis* representations of ethnicity, religion, class and gender, *NTP* aims at an in-depth analysis of representational or narrative strategies in individual cases in a comparative setup.

The second difference is directly related to the first: *NTP* differs fundamentally from *TCN* in its method. Instead of the synthesizing macro-approaches of *TCN* – focusing on ‘big pictures’ and on long-term historiographical developments and trends – *NTP* focuses on the narrative strategies of individual case or micro-studies. In this modest sense *NTP* is an attempt to present a collection of microhistories, although they are a novel – because explicitly comparative – kind of microstudy. In contrast to the ‘normal’ kind of microstudy *NTP* contains micro-studies which are explicitly internationally comparative in their set-up. This comparativism is a feature *NTP* shares with *TCN* and which is distinctive of the NHIST-project. In order to clarify the background of the volume, we will now first clarify the concepts of microhistory and of microstudy.

Microhistory and microstudy: a conceptual history

As Carlo Ginzburg – no doubt the one historian who did most to promote microhistory in practice and in theory – has indicated, the prefix ‘micro’ in microhistory refers to a ‘reduced scale’ and derives its meaning only in relation to its opposite ‘macro’.⁵ This clue indicates the context in which the concept ‘microhistory’ is rooted. Although Ginzburg traces the origin of the word ‘micro-history’ to a publication of the American scholar George Stewart in 1959, he is very clear about the fact that microhistory as a historiographical programme must be situated in the 1970s – at the time of the hegemony of ‘structural’, quantitative history of the *Annales*-type.⁶ Microhistory was meant as a clear break with the presupposition of the dominant *Annales*-historians that the individual event only had meaning if it formed part of a general, repeating series – microhistory was in clear opposition to the Annaliste *histoire sérielle* and it sought to represent an alternative vision of writing history. Microhistory ‘reveals a dissatisfaction [...] with the macroscopic and quantitative model that dominated the international historiographical scene between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s.’⁷

Rejecting the subsumption of the individual event under general macrosocial structures microhistorical approaches also rejected fitting the individual event into modernist teleological schemes – especially as represented by all variants of Enlightenment and modernization theories, including the Marxist ones (which conceptualize history as ‘the classless society in the making’) and the nation-centred ones (which conceptualize history as ‘nations in the making’). Therefore microhistory was also part of the anti-modernist, ‘bottom up’ approaches to history characteristic of the 1970s, which often sailed under the label of ‘historical anthropology’.⁸ This ‘bottom up’ approach also explains why the central individuals in microhistories are not ‘great men’ or ‘great women’, belonging to high culture – like Cleopatra, Elisabeth the First or Hitler – but individuals belonging to popular culture – like Carlo Ginzburg’s miller, Menocchio, and Natalie Zemon Davis’s farmer, Martin Guerre.⁹

⁵ Ginzburg did so by turning *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, 1976) into a worldwide bestseller and by theorizing this book in publications like *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1989).

⁶ C. Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It’, *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993), 11.

⁷ Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 12.

⁸ In Germany *Alltagsgeschichte* and *historische Antropologie* can be regarded as related historiographical currents. Hans Medick once characterized them as ‘sisters’ of microhistory. See H. Medick, ‘Mikro-Historie’, in W. Schulze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie. Eine Diskussion* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 40–53.

⁹ N. Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

This did not at all mean that microhistory denied the structural conditioning of individual events – to the contrary – but it emphatically rejected its cognitive reduction: ‘To select as a cognitive object only what is repetitive, and therefore capable of being serialized, signifies paying a very high price in cognitive terms.’¹⁰ Neither did it mean that microhistorians regarded microhistory as ‘the only right way to do history’.¹¹ Ginzburg only wanted to rehabilitate explicitly the cognitive value of what could *not* be generalized – serialized and quantified – in history. At this point we can locate the roots of Ginzburg’s later systematic distinction between the ‘Galilean paradigm’ of knowledge – as exemplified by the quantitative and generalizing physical sciences – and the ‘clue paradigm’ of knowledge – as exemplified by the ‘intuitive’ kind of knowledge characteristic of hunters, detectives, psychoanalysts and art connoisseurs. Ginzburg’s ‘heroes’ of the ‘clue-paradigm’ are therefore Sherlock Holmes, Sigmund Freud and Aby Warburg.¹²

His microhistory explicitly claims a cognitive ‘surplus value’ for what is exceptional, deviant and anomalous in history – although he simultaneously acknowledges that ‘certain phenomena can only be grasped by means of a macroscopic perspective’.¹³ This is not the time nor the place, however, to evaluate the debates about the validity of all claims made by microhistorians or their numerous theoreticians¹⁴ – for instance the claim that microhistory enables us to analyse the ‘typical exception’ or the ‘exceptional normal’, thus claiming a special form of representativity for a case-study which cannot be

¹⁰ Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 21. Also see 34 where Ginzburg *post facto* contextualizes his individual contribution to microhistory: ‘To my surprise I discovered how important to me were, unknowingly, books I had never read, events and persons I did not know had existed [...] the “I” is porous.’ Matti Peltonen also emphasizes that the distinction between the micro- and the macro-level in microhistory should not be identified with the distinction between (individual) freedom and (social and economic) determinants, as was usually the case in romantic *Historismus*. See M. Peltonen, ‘Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research’, *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 347–59.

¹¹ Ginzburg himself has characterized his later book, *Extacies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbath* (Baltimore, 1989), as a product of a macroscopic approach.

¹² C. Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1989).

¹³ Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 27. Ginzburg remains ambivalent.

¹⁴ We will make one exception for the remarkable clash between Frank Ankersmit’s post-modern interpretation of microhistory and its vehement rejection by Ginzburg himself. See Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 31–3. For overviews of the debates, see J. Schlumbohm (ed.), *Mikrogeschichte, Makrogeschichte. Komplementär oder inkommensurabel?* (Göttingen, 1998); Peltonen, ‘Clues, Margins and Monads’; Sigurdur Magnusson, ‘The Singularization of History: Social history and microhistory within the postmodern state of knowledge’, in R. W. Burns (ed.), *Historiography: Politics*, vol. 5 (New York, 2006), pp. 222–60; T. Molho, ‘Carlo Ginzburg: Reflections on the intellectual cosmos of a 20th-century historian’, *History of European Ideas* 30 (2004), 121–48.

reduced to statistical notions of representativity. With Peer Vries and with Tony Molho, we think that in the end the relationship between the individual and the general in Ginzburg's microhistory remains unresolved.¹⁵ The contributions to this volume therefore do not claim to be either 'typical' or 'exceptional'.

We will also bypass the suggested precursors of microhistory, like Leo Tolstoy, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Siegfried Kracauer.¹⁶ With Molho, we subscribe to the conclusion that Ginzburg's microhistorical project can best be explained as an attempt to 'save' the individual in history and argue for his/her epistemological worth – against its reduction to series, structures and numbers. From the 1980s onwards this project also developed into a moral defence of the notions of historical reality and of historical truth, which had been attacked by postmodernists. For Ginzburg historical reality and historical truth do not only constitute epistemological values but also represent moral values, because their denial or relativization implies the denial or relativization of the Holocaust and of Holocaust-survivors.¹⁷

Although the focus on particular narrative strategies in this volume does not fit in the microhistorical programme as such, it can be related to Ginzburg's specific emphasis on the constructed character of microhistory. Microhistory 'accepts the limitations [of the fragmentary character of all evidence] while exploring their gnoseological implications and transforming them into a narrative element.'¹⁸ It is 'based on the definite awareness that all phases through which research unfolds are *constructed* and not *given*: the identification of the object and its importance: the elaboration of the categories through which it is analyzed, the criteria of proof; the stylistic and narrative forms by which the results are transmitted to the reader.' This awareness of the constructive elements of historical knowledge, however, does not lead, as signalled before, to the postmodern scepticism of 'anything goes': for Ginzburg, the distinctive quality of (Italian) microhistory is to be found 'in this cognitive wager'.¹⁹

Although the explicit comparative setup of this volume does not fit into the focus on particularity in microhistory, here too a connection can be made because, against Frank Ankersmit's claim that microhistory is a particularly post-modern form of history writing is Ginzburg's denial of this, instead emphasizing

¹⁵ Peer Vries, *Vertellers op drift. Een verhandeling over de nieuwe verhalende geschiedenis* (Hilversum, 1990); Molho, 'Carlo Ginzburg', esp. 135–40.

¹⁶ See especially Ginzburg, 'Microhistory'; Schlumbohm, 'Mikrogeschichte, Makrogeschichte. Zur Eröffnung einer Debatte', in Schlumbohm (ed.), *Mikrogeschichte, Makrogeschichte*, 7–33; Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins and Monads'; and Molho, 'Carlo Ginzburg'.

¹⁷ See especially Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric and Proof* (London, 1999); Molho, 'Carlo Ginzburg', esp. pp. 135–40.

¹⁸ Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', 28.

¹⁹ Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', 32. For the general constructivist argument, see C. Lorenz, *Die Konstruktion der Vergangenheit* (Cologne, 1997).

the importance of context and the 'inevitability' of (explicit or implicit) comparison in microhistory.²⁰ We do agree with him, although *explicit* comparisons are indeed very rare in microhistory and thus we are left with the problem of implicit comparison.²¹ So much for the concept of microhistory.

The concept of microstudy has a different family tree and originated in a different context. The sociologist Ervin Goffman introduced the term in 1972 in his book *Relations in Public – Microstudies of the Public Order*. The concept designated 'the realm of activity that is generated by face-to-face interaction and organized by norms of co-mingling – a domain containing weddings, family meals, chaired meetings, forced marches, service encounters, queues, crowds and couples'. These 'microstudies' (based on the viewpoint of the actors) were considered to be the object of 'micro-sociology', which was opposed to 'macro-sociology' as the study of 'social structures' or 'social systems' (based on the viewpoint of the observer). This distinction runs parallel to the distinction between structural and microhistory and predates the later attempts of Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens in the social sciences to 'overcome' the micro-macro problem in theories about 'practices', 'communicative action' and 'structuration'.²²

The concept 'microstudy' acquired a new meaning from the 1970s onwards in the history of science, technology and medicine.²³ As was the case with the concept of microhistory, the idea of microstudies in the history of science was connected with the critique of modernity – especially the critique of progressivism and of teleology in general and of the idea of a unitary 'scientific method' in particular. This critique was both epistemological and political – as a challenge to the dominant master narrative of 'value-free' science and of the social power of scientific knowledge.²⁴ This critique originated in Thomas Kuhn's fundamental historical attack on traditional philosophy of science – in its positivist and Popperian variants – and gained momentum with the 'new sociology of science' which followed in his trail.²⁵ Microstudies focused on single cases, especially on single controversies. They analysed 'the production

²⁰ Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', 33.

²¹ In *The Cheese and the Worms* explicit comparison is to be found only in the last chapter, where Ginzburg compares his main character, Menochio, with three other millers.

²² A. Harrington (ed.), *Modern Social Theory* (Oxford, 2004).

²³ See Soraya de Chadarevian, 'Microstudies versus big picture accounts?', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 40 (2009), 13–19.

²⁴ De Chadarevian, 'Microstudies', 14–15. Molho, 'Carlo Ginzburg', also emphasizes that Ginzburg's idea of microhistory was driven by both an epistemological and an ethical agenda.

²⁵ The starting point was of course T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962), followed by sociologists and anthropologists of science like S. Woolgar, D. Bloor, S. Shapin and B. Latour.

of knowledge' as a practice in which 'scientific actors' were in a constant face-to-face process of (re-)negotiation with each other and with other actors relevant to the domain in question (usually in a laboratory environment). Therefore microstudies in history of science are often also found under the label of 'anthropology of science'. Like microhistories, microstudies are based on the idea that only a bottom-up and close-up view can reveal knowledge-making processes in the necessary detail. And like microhistories, microstudies 'contend that the universality of scientific facts is not given but produced'.²⁶ As the production of historical knowledge usually starts as a one-man or one-woman job – in contrast with the social setting of laboratories and the like – the first 'negotiating actors' usually are other *texts* pertaining to the same topic. Therefore in this volume there is a strong emphasis on the intertextuality of historical work.

Unsurprisingly in the context of microstudies, as we already observed when discussing microhistories above, the problem of the relationship between the individual case and the general picture has surfaced – and thus the issue of 'synthesis' and of comparison, because only on the basis of comparison can the particular and the general characteristics of individual cases be established. Here too the 'problem of scale' has been raised: 'we can distinguish two different ways in which "microstudies" aim to pertain to the general, that is, firstly, by entailing the general and, secondly, by functioning as characteristic exemplar. While the first approach resonates with the microstudy tradition, the second use is characteristic of an epistemological approach that draws on historical case studies to illustrate more general features of investigative practices.'²⁷

In the end we subscribe to the argument recently formulated by John Lewis Gaddis that historians are fundamentally free to choose their topic as well as their temporal and spatial scales: 'Historians have the capacity for selectivity, simultaneity, and the shifting of scale: they can select from the cacophony of events what they think is really important; they can be in several times and places at once; and they can zoom in and out between macroscopic and microscopic levels of analysis.'²⁸ No temporal or spatial scale is privileged, because all 'mapping' of the past is relative to the questions asked and thus to the problem to be solved. This means nothing else than 'our modes of representation determine whatever it is we are representing.'²⁹ So neither the local – *pace* Ginzburg – nor the global level are privileged *a priori*. With

²⁶ De Chadarevian, 'Microstudies', 14.

²⁷ De Chadarevian, 'Microstudies', 16.

²⁸ Gaddis, *Landscape of History*, p. 22.

²⁹ Gaddis, *Landscape of History*, pp. 29, 33: 'there's no such thing as a single correct map. The form of the map reflects its purpose.'

our comparison of 'local' cases we are trying to steer a 'middle course' in this volume, after our 'synthetic' setup in *TCN*. So much for the conceptual background of *NTP*.

The structure of the volume

This volume analyses some of the most important national historians in Europe from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. All of the chapters are comparative and they deal with both Western and Eastern Europe. The key questions that the contributions to this volume seek to answer are based on the major themes of *TCN*. Moreover, they are based on the assumption that the questions, in this case concerning the narrative framing of national histories, can only be pursued in necessary detail in the form of microstudies:

- Which narrative strategies contributed to the success of national histories?
- What was the relationship between 'the facts' and the possibilities of narratively framing those 'facts'?
- How did the beginnings and endings of national histories determine their narrative structure?
- What was the relationship between national and religious, ethnic, class and gender master narratives in national histories?
- How did the experience of multi-national empires impact on the construction of national histories?
- How did the traumatic experiences of wars, of totalitarian dictatorships, and of loss of empires impact on the narrations of nation?
- Did national history decline after 1945 or was there a renaissance of national history from the 1980s onwards?
- How did myths contribute to the construction of European historical narratives?

The volume is subdivided into five sections. Following the introduction, a group of four chapters discuss some of the major theoretical frameworks which are relevant to all microhistorical studies of national historiographies. Jan Eckel starts off with a succinct summary of the 'narrativity debate' in history writing since the 1960s. He asks how narrativity has influenced our understanding of history in general, and national history in particular, by tracing the debate on narrative from the structuralist conception of historical narrative (R. Barthes) to analytical debate (A. C. Danto), and further to the textual theories of Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur. Eckel concludes that the presence of the author, the narrative ordering of time, and the plot structure are important devices in the construction of historical narratives. In the second part of the chapter Eckel shows, on the basis of the example of the historiography of the Weimar

Republic, how four different narrative storylines – of Karl Dietrich Erdmann's *Die Weimarer Republik*, Detlev Peukert's *Die Weimarer Republik*, Heinrich-August Winkler's *Weimar 1918–1933*, and Richard Bessel's *Germany after the First World War* – construct four very different relationships between the German past and present.

If Eckel in Chapter 1 tackles the issue of narrativity head-on, the subsequent chapter by Chris Lorenz analyses some problems of the comparative method, which, as he reminds us, have been at the heart of attempts to relativize and overcome the fixation of history with the nation. As Lorenz explicates in relation to the history of historiography of Quebec and Germany, the comparative history of historiography has to take account of inter-representational as well as inter-national comparison. In order to establish what is different and what is similar in different national histories, the comparison has to work on the level of the various representations of the same nation and at the level of the representations of other nations. Lorenz argues that the historiographies of Quebec and of Germany are united by a strong sense of particularity which, in both cases, is related to an experience of catastrophe in national history. In both cases, Lorenz also identifies national narratives of 'normality' which are related to a historical consciousness of being 'beyond catastrophe'. In both cases and to a large extent, the societal and political framework conditions the framing of the national history – and this makes it necessary to analyse 'the politics of comparison' of historians, including the implicit and explicit 'contrast-cases' involved. Here Lorenz locates an inevitable form of presentism in national history writing.

We can only understand national history by paying attention to the diverse ways in which such histories have been framed in different narratives and also in which temporal and spatial frames of reference are implicitly chosen by the historian. Any understanding of both national history and national historiography involves such double comparisons, and the historian has the choice only to be explicit or implicit in his foregrounding of such comparisons. The contributions in this volume attempt to make a start on the road towards this difficult objective of comparing historiographies by taking this first step towards the comparison of national histories.

The first two chapters discuss fundamental problems of narrative and comparison in national history writing. The third chapter problematizes a more specific, but very widespread problem for national historians. How do they construct beginnings, middles and ends of their narratives? After all, national historians are usually keen to trace the origins of 'their' nations back to the mists of time, but the closer they get to the mist, the more difficult it gets to differentiate myths from historically verifiable facts. At the same time, the presentism of national histories often finds its expression in a particular teleology which culminates and ends either in the present or the future. Hence national histories are rarely

open-ended. Together, beginnings and endings of national histories determine to a large extent the narrative construction of the middle – what is highlighted, what is de-emphasized, and how historical time slows down or accelerates in the narratives. Joep Leerssen in Chapter 3 points to a fundamental distinction between some nations, which were represented as having continuous histories since times immemorial, and others, which were represented as subject to discontinuities, such as conquests and migrations. In Germany, for example, national propagandists constructed notions of unbroken continuity based on ethnicity and place of settlement. Many other nations accommodated serious disruptions within the construction of an overarching line of continuity. Belgium, for example, was represented as a meeting place at the crossroads, where unity was to be found in social life rather than ethnic origin. And Irish historians looked for native authenticity no less than their German counterparts, but ultimately many Irish historians accepted that their history was one of migration. Still, they distinguished between mythical peoples and the first settlers, about whom sources existed, that is, the Celts. The Celts were part of history; whereas other peoples were part of mythology. Source criticism was vital in differentiating history from myths – at least in theory. Hence the very act of writing scientific national history allowed the construction of continuity.

The fourth and final chapter of the first section of the book is the only one which extends the focus of the book on nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography backwards – into the eighteenth century. Angelika Epple provides a comparison between Enlightenment conceptions of history in Britain and Germany. She argues that British eighteenth-century history had achieved a higher degree of ‘literacy’ than its German counterpart. This greater ability to narrate history meant that it was more market-oriented. Its popularity ensured that writers could earn a living from history. At the same time authors such as David Hume and Catherine Macauley upheld notions of objectivity, impartiality and causality (cause and effect as structuring device for narrative composition; causal explanation as basis for historical progression), but their adherence to narrativity (and especially to the idea of unity in narrative composition) often brought them in conflict with those ‘professional’ values. Although Hume and Macauley came to very different interpretations about the national past, their epistemology was very similar. In contrast, the German Göttingen school, as represented by the historians Johann Christoph Gatterer and August Ludwig Schlözer, adhered to those professional standards more closely, which made German historiography look more cutting-edge, but it was necessarily combined with a loss of narrative quality, which meant that German history became less attractive for a general reading public. Much sooner than in Britain, the borders were drawn between popular historians and professional historians and they became hard borders. In the German lands amateurs and women were excluded from ‘the profession’ to a greater degree than was the case in Britain.

The following three sections provide comparative microstudies on the relationship of national master narratives to their potential 'others': religion, ethnicity/ race, and class. Genevieve Warland in Chapter 5 provides a fascinating comparison of the representation of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wars of religion in the national histories of P. J. Blok, Karl Lamprecht, Ernest Lavissee and Henri Pirenne. All four historians shared a liberal national background, but all also had a particular position *vis-à-vis* organized religion which impacted on their portrayal of the wars of religion. Warland argues that it was the relationship between state and religion which stood at the centre of their attention, whilst they engaged hardly at all with theology. Their narrativization of national histories valorized religious tolerance and juxtaposed it with the negative impact of religious divisions in national histories. They linked religion to what was perceived as core national values, for example liberty and equality in France, or cosmopolitanism in Belgium. Other nations were contrasted negatively to one's own nation in terms of religious policies: for Blok the 'Other' was France, and Catherine of Medici in particular. For Pirenne it was 'Calvinism', which he rejected as a brutal form of religion. Lavissee connected Protestantism to German violence and argued that French Huguenots were national traitors, as they helped to make Germany powerful. Lamprecht emphasized the cultural community of the Dutch and the Germans and the antagonism between Calvinism and Lutheranism. He himself displayed a strong preference for Lutheranism. Overall, the national histories under discussion here give a lot of attention to the wars of religion, as they use narratives about those wars in order to demonstrate key liberal values underpinning their national histories.

If wars of religion were central to the construction of national histories, the same can be said for heretics. With the sacralization of the nation in the nineteenth century, religious figures of dissent were put into a new nationalist context and were often celebrated as national heroes. In Chapter 6 Monika Baár compares two prominent instances where heretics were claimed by national master narratives and turned into iconic figures of nationalism. Jules Michelet's treatment of Joan of Arc in his seminal history of France and František Palacký's treatment of John Hus in his equally seminal history of the Czech lands are compared in detail to demonstrate the crucial importance of heretics as national heroes in French and Czech national master narratives. Both authors canonized a pattern which can be traced throughout French and Czech national histories from the nineteenth century to the present day. In their portrayal of the adversaries of Joan and Hus respectively, both authors portrayed the nation's 'Other' – England and Germany – in unfavourable terms and highlighted the special qualities of their national heroes. Overall, the narrative enactment of the heroism of both heretics served the purpose of both historians in that their heroes came to stand for the particular political and moral visions that the historians had for their respective nations. In this respect, their portrayal

of Joan and Hus was entirely presentist – a fundamental feature of history writing analysed by both Eckel and Lorenz in the first two chapters. As critical ‘scientific’ historians, both authors were keen to debunk some of the myths surrounding the historical figures of Joan and Hus. At the same time, however, both also contributed to the mythologization of these figures in the national pantheons of France and the Czech lands. In national history writing, mythologization and demythologization were closely related.³⁰

Presentism is also a prominent feature in attempts by both Protestant British and Catholic Irish writers to harness history for identitarian purposes in Ireland. In Chapter 7 Marc Caball contrasts the writings of three nineteenth-century historians of Ireland – Standish James O’Grady (1846–1928), Richard Bagwell (1840–1918) and Alexander Martin Sullivan (1829–1884). In particular he examines their portrayal of Tudor conquest in Ireland and the introduction of the Reformation in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, highlighted by all three historians as a key era in Irish history. Caball contrasts the various ways in which contemporary concerns framed the construction of historical narrative. O’Grady and Bagwell were both broadly Unionist, having a Protestant Anglo-Irish background, yet they approached the topic quite differently. O’Grady was writing a populist and Romantic history, which was inspired by bardic traditions. He wanted to highlight the achievements of early Irish civilization and can be described as a cultural nationalist, who was averse to Catholic political nationalism. Bagwell, by contrast, set his stall out as a scientific historian and therefore underlined his position of impartiality and objectivity. This also led him to be remarkably critical of Elizabethan government and its attempt to push through the Reformation. Had she allowed the two faiths to coexist, Bagwell argued, many future problems of Ireland might have been prevented. He was scathing about absentee landlordism and keen to stress elements in Anglo-Irish history which might lead to reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant parts of the population. Sullivan, the third historian explored here, came from the Irish Catholic nationalist tradition, depicting an epic struggle of the Irish against the English yoke. As popularizer of Irish Catholic cultural nationalism, he cultivated a sense of moral superiority of the Irish over the English. Throughout, he underlined the symbiosis between Irish nationalism and the Roman Catholic religion. Overall, Caball’s contribution goes a long way in destroying lingering notions that nineteenth-century Irish historiography had a fatalistic undertone lacking both in scientificity and in epic breadth.

³⁰ See C. Lorenz, ‘Drawing the Line: “Scientific” History Between Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking’, in S. Berger, L. Eriksonas and A. Mycock (eds), *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 35–55; S. Berger, ‘On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe’, *European History Quarterly* 39:3 (2009), 490–502.

The next section on the interrelationship between nation and ethnicity/race starts off with Jörg Hackmann's overview in Chapter 8 of Estonian, German and Russian historical narratives about Estonia. In particular he discusses works by Hans Kruus, Ea Jansen and Mart Laar, and compares them with narratives produced by Baltic German writers, such as Reinhard Wittram, and Russian/Soviet perspectives as represented by Iuri Samarin. Kruus emphasized the constructed nature of Estonianness and was keen to contribute to the emergence of a civic national identity in Estonia. He was writing against conservative ethnic nation builders in Estonia itself, but also against Baltic German historiography, in particular Wittram. The latter was closely associated with 'Volksgeschichte' in the inter-war period. He argued prominently that the Baltic Germans missed the boat in promoting a German national identity for the Baltic. He therefore proposed to go for a strong national orientation of the German population in the Baltic, which was German *Kulturboden*. Iuri Samarin and Soviet Russian perspectives were attempting a merger between Russian and Baltic national identities, stressing 'natural' connections between the two, thereby justifying the incorporation of Estonia into the Soviet Union. The common enemy was the Baltic German nobility. In Soviet Estonia, Ea Jansen in many ways continued the work of Kruus, exploring the possibilities of a civic nationalism from a left-wing perspective. In her work nation-state formation was closely related to processes of emancipation from the traditional elites of the German-dominated estates society. After the 'singing revolution' of the early 1990s, the writings of politician and historian Mart Laar marked a return to a more ethnically connoted Estonianness which championed primordial views on nation formation in Estonia.

The Baltic space is a good example of the interrelationship of different national historiographical traditions, Estonian, German, Soviet, on one and the same territory. In South-Eastern Europe, we encounter similar mergers of different national traditions, which are explored in Chapter 9 by Effi Gazi, who deals specifically with the merger between scientificity and historiographical nationalism in the Greek and Romanian cases. Taking Western historiography (mainly French and German) as a model, Spyridon Lambros attempted to transpose Western 'scientific' history to Greece. He championed the publication of source editions and introduced auxiliary sciences, as well as seminar-style teaching to Greek university curricula. He proposed professionalized history writing, which was to distance itself from the traditions of the philosophy of history. Furthermore, he tied the professionalization of historical writing to historiographical nationalism. For Lambros, the historian's desk was best compared with the military camp and the historian's pen was as useful as a weapon in constructing nations.

Lambros's case in Greece had very strong parallels to Nicolae Iorga's case in Romania. Iorga studied in France and was much influenced by French

'scientific' history, seeking to transfer French scientific historical practice to Romania. He combined his interest in professionalizing history with direct involvement in politics. Like Lambros, Iorga stressed the need for the poetic/artistic framing of historical national master narratives. In line with 'Western' thinking on historiography, they insisted on the compatibility of 'scientificity' with the notion of history writing as an art form. Iorga trawled the European archives in order to collect sources for Romanian history in the desire to lay the foundations for a professional Romanian historiography.

The uncanny parallels between Lambros and Iorga continue if we look at the themes which both pursued in their writings on national history: both concentrated on the Middle Ages in order to stress the continuity between the alleged ancient roots of the Greek and Romanian nations and the present. The history of Byzantium fulfilled the 'bridge-function' in both cases. In the Greek case it helped to refute the so-called 'Fallmerayer thesis' of the Slavization of Greeks in the Middle Ages. In the Romanian case, it allowed Iorga to celebrate peasant culture as the key carrier of the 'national essence'. Peasants, according to Iorga, were at the heart of resisting a succession of invasions and guaranteeing national continuity. The Ottoman period was judged positively by Iorga as it led to the flowering of this Romanian peasant culture.

Through orthodox religion, the central tenets of Romanian national identity were also preserved. The common interest in Byzantium led to a strong mutual interest in each other's work. Like the Baltic, the Balkans formed a transnational region, in which historical consciousness and historical national master narratives shared many ingredients and where historians frequently took note of each other across national borders.³¹

In many parts of Europe, ethnic master narratives were closely bound up with linguistic identities and the development of national languages, national literatures and national theatres. Norway and Finland are cases in point. In both countries, literature and the theatre had an important role to play in legitimating the 'authenticity' of the nation in the nineteenth century. Ilona Pikkanen in Chapter 10 explores the narrative strategies with which Finnish and Norwegian theatre histories, published around the turn of the twentieth century, contributed to projects of nation building in both countries. In particular she provides a close reading of the theatre histories of Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä (*The History of the Finnish Theatre*, I–IV, published in 1906–10) and T. Blanc (*Christiania Theaters Historie. Tidsrummet 1827–1877*, published in 1899). The Finnish and Norwegian cases are particularly intriguing because in both the cultural elites in the nineteenth century were not Finnish- and Norwegian-speaking. Under the influence of an ethnic/cultural nationalism, they, first of all, had to create

³¹ S. Troebst (ed.), *Geschichtsregionen: Concept and Critique*, special issue of the *European Review of History* 10:2 (2003).

and learn the language which would form the basis of their cultural nationalism. National theatre projects were developing in contexts of multi-lingualism and strove to create a literature which would both be in the national language and aspiring to the highest international standards.

Ethnic perspectives on national history were also of crucial importance in 'imperial nations' such as Britain or Russia, whose historiographies had to negotiate hierarchies of belonging to cores and peripheries of empire which often involved ethnic ascriptions. Andrew Mycock and Marina Loskoutova argue in Chapter 11 that such national-imperial historiographies emerged in the British and Russian contexts as a response to peripheral nationalisms in both empires striving for greater autonomy or even independence. Focusing their analysis on *The Expansion of England* by John Robert Seeley (1834–1895) and the *Course of Russian History* (Курс русской истории) by Vasily Osipovich Klyuchevsky (1841–1911), they underline that in both cases the dilemmas and insecurities of empire and anxieties over imperial overstretch provoked the historians to write national histories with empire at its core. By doing this, they tried to stabilize the empire and also increase adherence to it on the national peripheries. Retelling the national narrative from the perspective of empire meant refocusing the national storyline away from the more established master narratives. In Seeley's case, it meant transferring an ingrained strain of Whiggism in British historiography to the level of empire. By the same token, Klyuchevsky introduced new socio-economic and geographical themes and topics into a national historiography largely preoccupied with the state and the law.

Both historians were more interested in processes and structures than in heroes and the biographies of 'great men'. Their histories were histories of geographical expansion, which was at odds with notions of ethnicity as the core of national belonging and sought to unite different ethnicities under the umbrella of the imperial nation. At the same time, however, both authors did not leave any doubts about the pre-eminence of the English and the Russians as ethnic cores of their respective imperial nations. Their concern with ethnicity often led them to the adoption of racialist views, according to which particular races had a higher position in the civilizational pecking order than others.

Religion was equally important to both authors, but it was probably the certainty with which Seeley connected the British imperial nation with Protestantism and Klyuchevsky did the same with Russia and Orthodoxy, that ultimately led both authors not to emphasize the religious element in their master narratives too much, even if they left no doubt that the non-Protestant (in the British case) and the non-Orthodox (in the Russian case) would have problems of fully belonging to the empire nation. Both authors also were wary of making too much of the class divisions in their respective imperial nations, although their histories contained frequent references to class, including a highly critical attitude towards the aristocracy. Both also gendered their histories – with

Seeley prone to feminizing England as well-meaning matriarch, whereas Klyuchevsky underlined the masculine virtues and characteristics of the Russian imperial nation.

The nineteenth-century desire to write national history as imperial history contrasts with the extreme unease with which national historians incorporated empire into national master narratives under conditions of de-colonization after the Second World War. As Stuart Ward and Robert Aldrich point out in Chapter 12, this was the case in particular where the experience of decolonization was traumatic, for example in France. But even in Britain, far less traumatized by its experience of decolonization, a period of silence and decline of imperial history gave way to renewed interest only during the 1980s. The revival of imperial history in Britain began with John Pocock's influential essay on 'British History' and his plea not to neglect the imperial dimension in that history. This plea was strongly tinged with his own national identity as a New Zealander, but it was infinitely more interesting than A. J. P. Taylor's fallback to little-England national history (paralleled on the political right by Enoch Powell). Overall, Aldrich and Ward conclude that conceptions of national history have been more fundamentally challenged by processes of decolonization in France than in Britain, which is demonstrated by a comparison of Benjamin Stora's work on Algeria with Catherine Elkins's work on Kenya. In both cases empire historiography combined with fundamental ethical questions. The politicization of the subject area was also visible in the way in which school curricula became embroiled in the debate. The enduring legacy of empire still has the power to challenge and reconfigure national identities in both countries.

If some of the major debates on the past in Europe are currently taking place around questions of empire, the Second World War has, of course, been the defining moment for Europe between 1945 and, at the very least, the end of the Cold War around 1990.³² In Chapter 13 Stefan Jordan and Hugo Frey analyse the impact of the war on national narratives in France and Germany by looking closely at the seminal writings of Robert Aron and Friedrich Meinecke. They stress how both attempted to salvage their nations from the ruins of the Second World War and maintain a patriotic outlook despite the catastrophes of National Socialism and Vichy. Modernity, mass society and the loss of traditional values were high up on their list of factors which had led to the catastrophes of their respective nations. The form of both texts is very different: Aron wrote a highly personal account of his experience of the Vichy years, full of vignettes about Vichy personalities and Aron's judgements on them. Meinecke, on the contrary, provided a history-of-ideas type re-interpretation of the entire German

³² S. Berger, 'Remembering the Second World War in Western Europe, 1945–2005', in M. Pakier and B. Strath (eds), *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 119–36.

history from the late eighteenth century onwards. Yet despite those differences both authors arrived at remarkably similar results, arguing that it was, above all, a decline of traditional humanistic values which led Germans and Frenchmen astray and towards the abandonment of positive national traditions. Passages which critique their respective nations' historical trajectories were carefully arranged next to passages which upheld what both regarded as the positive national legacies of their respective countries that were needed to rebuild their nations after 1945. Although both included passages on the Holocaust, they did not make the destruction of European Jewry a central concern of their texts nor were they able to engage with it in a convincing way. In both cases, the Holocaust did not become a stumbling block on the road to a more positive national identity of the future, and the prime aim of both authors was precisely to provide their countrymen with a roadmap to that national future.

The third section of this volume presents microstudies of the interrelationship of national and class narratives in historical writing. Thomas Welskopp provides us in Chapter 14 with a comparison of Eduard Bernstein's *History of the Berlin Labour Movement* with Robert Grimm's *History of Switzerland as Mirrored in its Class Wars*. He points out that both works were primarily works of political pedagogy, written out of a political need and for a particular historical moment. Bernstein was keen to demonstrate the sobriety and responsibility of the labour movement which could be entrusted with political power. In addition he wanted to trace the forward march of labour from the bloody birth struggles of 1848 to the years of martyrdom under the Anti-Socialist Laws, and further to the rise of the SPD in Wilhelmine Germany. Grimm's overriding objective, after the failed 'Landesstreik' and the attempt on behalf of the liberal-bourgeois Swiss state to co-opt the Swiss labour movement into the political system, was to sustain the unity and distinctiveness of Swiss Social Democracy. Both authors are portrayed as organic intellectuals/autodidacts who occupied very similar positions in their party and were political journalists of some renown. They wrote history in order to write the working classes and the labour movement into national history under circumstances where professional historiography had excluded them. Bernstein positioned himself closer to 'scientific' history writing by minimizing the issue of authorship and setting himself up as chronicler of truth. Grimm, in contrast, openly asserted the perspectivity of all historical knowledge and aimed at retelling national history from the working-class point of view thereby breaking the bourgeois hegemony over national history. Welskopp also highlights the differences between both texts. Whereas Bernstein's emphasis is on gradual change and responsibility, Grimm's is on violence by the ruling classes, but the underlying aim of both texts remains the same: to make a claim for national recognition on behalf of the Social Democratic spokespersons of the working classes and that means: for inclusion in the history of the nation.

Pavel Kolář subsequently in Chapter 15 compares Eva Priester's *Short History of Austria* with František Graus's *Outline of Czechoslovak History*. Both were Marxist attempts to rewrite national history in Austria and Czechoslovakia after 1945. Both demonstrate, above all, the diversity of Marxist national history writing after the Second World War. Priester was writing in opposition to the dominant trends of Austrian historiography after 1945, whilst Graus was the 'shooting star' of state-imposed Marxist-Leninist historiography in Czechoslovakia – secure in the knowledge of having the full resources of the Communist state behind him. Priester was an 'amateur' who was working as a journalist and did not have a position in the academy. Her text remained without influence within historiographical circles. Graus was trained as a historian after 1945 and quickly rose in the historical profession of post-war Communist Czechoslovakia. He followed the ideal typical patterns of Stalinist historiography more closely than Priester. The characteristics of this Stalinist historiography were: nationalism, in particular focused on Russia; rehabilitation of the state as main subject of history; the return of personality to history; the cult of national heroes; the iron cage of the five-stage schema of historical development; and a radically Manichaean worldview in which enemies had to be eradicated.

In terms of narrative structure, Priester's work is organized to an amazing extent around political events and, more precisely, the history of state formation, whereas economic and social developments are not necessarily central. Priester restructured more traditional emplotments of national history with a clear teleology so as to make everything point forward towards an independent Austria, free from negative German influences. She played up the achievements of Austrian culture and astounds through surprisingly positive judgements on the Habsburg dynasty and on the Jesuits. Her enmity to Germany meant that she attempted to move Austrian history closer to Czech history. Graus, by contrast, emphasized the economic base of national history far more, with an emphasis on 'popular masses' and 'objective interests'. His positive hero was the Czech ethnic-national community. There was no shortage of external and internal enemies. His history was also telos-oriented towards a communist classless society and national liberation, which was to be completed by the expulsion of the Germans after 1945. Overall, the articles by Welskopp and Kolář demonstrate clearly how closely related the constructions of class narratives were to the retelling of national histories in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe.

The fourth section of this volume assembles microstudies which investigate diverse ways in which liberal-democratic national narratives were constructed. Árpád von Klimó in Chapter 16 compares Benedetto Croce's *Story of Italy from 1871 to 1915* (1927) and Gyula Szekfű's *Three Generations* (1920), a history of Hungary. Both, he argues, were responses to the crisis of liberalism after the First World War. Brief biographical sketches are followed by an analysis of the

content of both histories and a discussion of how both texts tried in different ways to revise liberal master narratives.

Croce critiques historiographical and political nationalism. He was, after all, one of the leading 'neutralisti' in the First World War. He also rejected anti-Semitism. Szekfü, by contrast, was not only an ardent Catholic nationalist, but also an anti-Semite. In Szekfü's national history, the liberal period in Hungarian history was one of decline, whereas for Croce, the liberal period in Italian history was one of progress.

Despite those fundamental differences, there are also a number of similarities: both were representatives of *Geistesgeschichte*, looking for ideas as driving forces for state actors. Both rejected narrow-minded historical specialisms, and sought to answer the broad and big questions through their works focused on the nation-state. Both identified 'foreign ideas' as basis for the decline of the nation-state. For Szekfü, liberalism and capitalism, which were represented as having Jewish origins, were responsible for the decline of Hungary. Only Catholic conservatism would lead Hungary back to greatness. Croce defended the liberal tradition in Italy, as epitomized by the Giolittian period just before the First World War, which promised to set Italy on a path to parliamentary democracy, and he traced the progressive development of the idea of liberty in Italy. Both idealized their heroes and made them into ideal historical actors from whom the following generations deviated: for Szekfü this was Széchenyi; for Croce it was Giolitti. Both narratives suffered from major contradictions: Croce's championing of liberalism cannot explain the crisis of liberalism after the First World War, and Szekfü wanted to condemn Hungarian liberalism but could not help to pay tribute to one of the greatest liberals, Széchenyi, even if he did his best to downplay his liberalism.

Staying with constructions of Italian national history, in Chapter 17 David Laven examines the diverse historians of the Lombard League coming from different national backgrounds. He argues that their stories were framed by patriotic purposes. The major problem for the Italian patriotic accounts of the League was the 'northernness' of its patriotism, and the manifold fissures and divisions characterizing the League. Starting with Ludovico Muratori, Laven establishes a common pattern of interpretation: bad luck and nasty foreigners were made responsible for the divisions of Italy, which were aggravated by internal divisions and the failure of Italian will power to unite. Carlo Cattaneo was the most outspoken champion of the republican city-states whose history he presented as a success against the odds story, brought about by their resilience, bravery and resolution. The monarchist Cesare Balbo presented quite a different picture and portrayed the history of the League as a missed opportunity for national unification due to the divisions of the Italians. Luigi Tosti's neo-Guelf patriotism, finally, upheld Pope Alexander as patriotic model for the contemporary Pope.

Among the non-Italians, the Swiss historian Simonde de Sismondi saw the medieval Italian republics as ideal political entities. He contrasted them positively with empires and stressed their sense of patriotism, liberty and independence. Juxtaposing the civilized ‘communi’ with the barbarous ‘Germans’, he even made something positive out of the constant internal strife: civil war toughened up the Italian city-states and made them ready to face Frederick II. Unsurprisingly, German historians were likely to disagree. Heinrich Leo provided a very nuanced and scholarly treatment emphasizing interest politics and the importance of ideology. He defended the German invaders against the charge of intrinsic brutality, but was also very critical of German administrative practices. He attempted to draw contemporary lessons from his history: empires, including his own contemporary German Empire, could only be successful if they were able to tolerate the laws and customs of occupied lands and if they valued both trade and *Bildung*. Johannes Voigt also used the story of the Lombard League for patriotic purposes and spelt out a warning to his fellow Germans: be united or face the terrible consequences. All interpretations clearly write this episode in medieval history with specific national educational strategies on their minds.

How to construct nations from regional entities and how to overcome regional divisions in the process was a major concern for national historians far beyond the shores of Italy. But, as Xosé-Manoel Núñez demonstrates in Chapter 18, transnationalism could also be a considerable challenge for national historians. On the Iberian peninsula, Iberianism was based on notions of a shared civilization in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography. Whilst it never mounted a major challenge to the dominant national paradigms in either Spain or Portugal, it appealed to a handful of intellectuals in both countries. Their attempt to construct a transnational identity which would have boosted the national one remained very much a minority position. Iberianism is thus presented by Núñez as a failed attempt to rewrite a national history from a transnational perspective in a moment of crisis for both nation-states.

Concrete proposals that are discussed here varied from a customs union to a federal Iberian republic. The chapter focuses in particular on the work of the Portuguese historian Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins (1845–1894), and his Spanish counterpart Rafael Altamira Crevea (1866–1951). The Iberianists’ concept of civilization often circled around ideas of ‘people’s psychology’, of a common set of ideals and values, but they were rarely able to overcome tensions between the concepts of nation and civilization which had to be brought into harmony in their transnational constructions of nation. Núñez also argues that in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Americas there was some sympathy with Iberianism in the face of an overmighty neighbour in the form of the United States, but on the whole intellectuals and historians there were far busier constructing their own national narratives than exploring Iberianism.

Subsequently, in Chapter 19 Peter Schöttler investigates the ways in which the experience of the two world wars had a major impact on the intellectual framing of the histories written by Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch. In Pirenne's case, the experience of the First World War set in motion a conversion process which turned him from being the foremost national historian of Belgium to becoming a champion of comparative history. By drawing on Pirenne's largely unpublished wartime writings, Schöttler can demonstrate that it was during the period of his enforced exile in Germany that Pirenne came to realize the dangers inherent in writing any national history. In order to avoid the dominance of historiographical nationalism, Pirenne began to champion alternative forms of history writing, among which the comparative method took pride of place. He also revised his magnum opus, the history of Belgium, in a way which de-emphasized ethnic and racial factors. His concern after the war was with denationalizing his own national history.

The experience of world war, in his case the Second World War, also had a profound impact on Bloch's conceptualization of historical writing. Bloch was an admirer of Pirenne and already in the 1920s followed Pirenne in championing comparative history. The experience of the Second World War produced, above all, two books, *Strange Defeat* and *The Historians' Craft*, which are at the centre of Schöttler's analysis in this chapter. Here Bloch developed his ideas of the political and social responsibility of historians, who cannot only concern themselves with 'science', but have to fulfil a socio-political role in trying to draw lessons from history and even predict the future on the basis of such lessons. Otherwise they are in danger of failing the wider public, and, in an extremely self-critical manner, Bloch used the example of French historiography of the inter-war period to show how a lack of concern with the socio-political function of history writing contributed directly to the defeat of 1940. He also drew personal consequences by abandoning his explicit apolitical stance from the inter-war period and joining the Resistance (and it is small wonder that Marc Bloch became one of Carlo Ginzburg's historiographical heroes because his father also did not survive the war, being executed as a member of the Italian Resistance).

The Second World War is often made responsible for an alleged crisis of national master narratives in Europe after 1945. However, one can at best talk about a 'delayed crisis', which, in Western Europe, begins in the late 1950s and continues throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Yet there is no teleological movement towards a denationalization of history writing since the 1960s. Stefan Berger, in Chapter 20, looks at the revival of national narratives in Western Europe from the 1980s to the present and investigates in particular the role of Heinrich August Winkler's and Norman Davies's national histories for the historical master narratives in Britain and Germany. Both histories are presented as historiographical milestones seeking to implement a different master narrative from the one that was dominant in both national contexts.

Berger pays special attention to the beginnings and endings of Winkler's and Davies's national histories, arguing that both presuppose and pre-structure their respective narratives in major ways: Winkler's 'Sonderweg' conception of German national history and Davies's attempt to write against his countrymen's 'one-island fixation' correspond to endings in German reunification and the prediction of an imminent break-up of Britain. Winkler's national history is a classical events history, whereas Davies is narratively more ambitious. Both historians introduce perspectivity into their studies, although Davies is more radical in slipping out of the 'scientific', professional pose. The chapter explores comparatively: the political frameworks of the nation in both histories; the role of empire in the stories of nation formation; the stories of subjugation and domination which structure the narratives; the importance of religion for national narratives; the relationship between class conflict and national unity; the question of key 'others' or enemies in those histories, and the relationship between gender and nation. Berger concludes by arguing that both Winkler and Davies are indeed attempting to frame the national master narratives of Germany and Britain anew. Both narratives reveal clear patriotic motivations and both use traditional methods of national history writing to achieve their aims. Thus the remarkable continuity of national history writing is still with us today, all talk of 'post-nationalism' and 'being beyond the nation-state' notwithstanding.

The fifth and final section of this volume shifts its attention from national to European histories – Europe being the wider spatial frame of 'its' nations. Jan Ifversen asks in Chapter 21 how far historians of Europe relied on myths in their construction of European history after 1945. Carefully delineating myths from memory and history, Ifversen postulates the crucial importance of myths for constructions of identitarian narratives, including European ones. Historians felt attracted, above all, he argues, to the myth of 'chaos', of the dark half-century between 1900 and 1945, which, they maintained, informed attempts to build Europe on peace, security and prosperity. Ifversen provides a close reading of Mark Mazower's popular book *Dark Continent* from 1998 and Tony Judt's equally popular *Postwar* which was published in 2005. He arrives at the conclusion that both volumes set out to debunk crucial myths about Europe only to end up constructing new ones. In the final section of this microstudy, the author reviews a range of textbooks on European history, published more recently in the English language, to determine which myths are most popular in structuring recent narratives of Europe.

Finally, in Chapter 22 John Harvey provides some transatlantic perspectives on the construction of European national histories. He traces the emergence and development of the Harper series *The Rise of Modern Europe* as an example of American interpretations of Europe. Conceived as a 20-volume project in the 1920s, it stands as a perfect example of the difficulties of translating

theoretical innovation into historical practice. In its conceptual ambition, it was meant to take up the ideas of the 'New History' and apply them to Europe. However, in reality, many of the volumes stuck with very traditional high politics and military history presented in traditional narratives and time frames. Harvey highlights the remarkable cases of pro-fascist sentiments and the high doses of racism, including anti-Semitism, that can be found among authors penning volumes published in the inter-war period. In addition, we encounter a tendency in many volumes to show a marked disdain for lower social strata. The latter was often combined with admiration for European high culture. American historians of Europe were still writing European history so as to arrive at a better understanding of the roots of American society and culture, perceived as European. Such aspirations, however, often led to little more than a celebratory and self-congratulatory idealization of 'Western' high culture. Overall the series lacked intellectual coherence, as volume authors ploughed their own furrow and as the series' general editor, William Langer, was unable and unwilling to impose a more rigorous analytical or interpretative framework on authors. The series set out self-consciously to 'supplant traditional national histories', but at the end of the day, national histories shaped the outlook of the volumes to a significant extent. For the many Germanophile historians working on the project this was not only reflected in the very positive treatment of Germany's history, but it was equally strong in writing Russian history out of European history.

All in all, the microstudies in this volume illustrate the remarkable complexity, multi-layeredness and continuity of 'writing the nation' – until today. National histories have been prominent in a variety of political regimes – liberal democracies, fascist dictatorships and communist regimes. They have been able to merge with class, ethnic/race and religious histories and they have prominently structured discourses about Europe. Whilst many authors have identified a whole host of problems with national histories, they have been and continue to be regarded as indispensable. Their power and persistence through the ages makes them worthwhile objects for further study.

1

Narrativizations of the Past: The Theoretical Debate and the Example of the Weimar Republic

Jan Eckel

'Narration' has been a pervasive term in the cultural theory of the past two decades, stimulating theoretical reflection across disciplinary boundaries. Literary critics, historians, philosophers, psychoanalysts and psychologists, anthropologists, film theorists and scholars studying memory have all attempted to determine the narrative quality of their objects of study. The discovery of the 'ubiquitous' presence of narration has even led some observers to speak of a 'Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences'.¹ These theoretical explorations have not only conceived narration as a form of representation which conveys the content of a story. Rather, narration has come to be seen as a basic mode of constructing reality. Theorists have argued that important elements of human knowledge and cognition emerge in a narrative process. Sociologists, for instance, have pointed to the role that autobiographical accounts play for the self-conception of individuals, suggesting that the identity of a person can be understood as his or her ability to tell a coherent life story.²

Historians and philosophers of history took up this topic in the 1960s. To a larger extent than scholars working within other disciplines, they have tended to think about narrativity with regard to their own profession. 'History' – the object of historical study – does not exist outside historians' texts, but is created in the process of writing. This is why reflections on narration and narratives have implicitly and explicitly raised the question of what historians actually do

¹M. Kreiswirth, 'Tell Me a Story: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences', in M. Kreiswirth and T. Carmichael (eds), *Constructive Criticism: The Human Sciences in the Age of Theory* (Toronto, 1995), pp. 61–87, 63. Cf. C. Nash (ed.), *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature* (London and New York, 1990); A. Nünning and V. Nünning (eds), *Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär* (Trier, 2002).

²Cf. P. Alheit and E. M. Hoerning (eds), *Biographisches Wissen. Beiträge zu einer Theorie lebensgeschichtlicher Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989).

when they 'write history'. Therefore, discussion among historians has largely centred on general and theoretical aspects, such as the narrative character of history and historical research. This approach has spawned intense and philosophically fruitful discussions. At the same time, however, it has limited the focus of the debate. All-too-often historians have overlooked how narratological theories can help analyse historical works and contribute to the history of historiography.³

Generally, 'History' is not only the product of narrative techniques and structures. Numerous factors influence the process of writing history and in one way or another shape the views of the past that historians convey in their texts.⁴ Historical texts are based on other texts – on primary sources – which historians use according to long-established methodological rules. Moreover, they are bound by the conventions and norms of different genres; a textbook might not allow for the same kind of statements – or, for that matter, tone – that readers expect in a monograph. Finally, historical works are part of what Pierre Bourdieu calls an academic 'field' and of various historiographical traditions. Even so, however, narrative structures or, put in more general terms, the process of writing a text deeply affects the image historians present of the past. Every single element in this process, ranging from chapter titles to the selection of facts and further to the space dedicated to specific events, contributes to the overall meaning of historical works. The composition of a text adds an important dimension to the historical interpretation, which sometimes conforms to the judgments stated explicitly in the text but may also run counter to them or simply provide additional nuances. This fact is well established in the study of literature and it equally applies to historiography in so far as it is a linguistic product.

German historiography on the Weimar Republic offers a particularly useful example for exploring how the writing of a text shapes the interpretation of history. One of the most influential and expansive fields of West German '*Zeitgeschichte*' (contemporary history) since the end of the Second World War, the historiography on the Weimar Republic has so far received scant historical attention. The vast body of scholarship on Weimar, which covers a wide range of topics and includes a large number of synthetic studies, suggests that the history of Weimar has always been at the centre of the attempt to understand German national history of the twentieth century. At the same time, historical research on Weimar has been characterized by a remarkable degree of consensus. Even though historians have fought bitter debates, especially in the 1950s and 1970s, they seem to share a number of basic assumptions. The gist of this consensus can

³For some of the exceptions, see below. Cf. S. Jaeger, 'Erzähltheorie und Geschichtswissenschaft', in A. Nünning and V. Nünning (eds), *Erzähltheorie*, pp. 237–63.

⁴Cf. J. Eckel and T. Etzemüller (eds), *Neue Zugänge zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 2005).

be summed up in the view that Weimar was essentially a *prelude* or a transitory phase that eventually gave way to National Socialism. According to this perspective, Germany's first democracy was strained from the beginning, unfolded under extremely unfortunate circumstances, and finally collapsed with a certain inner logic. The tangible tension underlying the historiography of Weimar – the fact that historians consider these 15 years worthy of repeated study and yet often differ very little in their conclusions – merits some further explanation. Narratological analysis can be particularly helpful in this endeavour. It can draw attention to deeper intellectual mechanisms and dispositions that do not appear at the textual surface – in other words, at the level of explicit arguments and positions – but nevertheless frame the historiography in important ways.

Thus, the following chapter has two objectives. First, it aims to demonstrate that narratological theories can inspire the history of historiography by offering profound insights into how historical texts operate. Therefore, I will begin by discussing historians' various approaches to narrativity, giving an overview of a prolonged debate that to date has never been studied in its entirety. Drawing on this discussion, I will then develop a model of narratological analysis, which seeks to provide the necessary tools to identify the key narrative elements within historical texts. Second, the article examines the role that the Weimar Republic has played in German historiography. For this purpose, I will analyse three historical syntheses of the first German democracy, including books by Karl Dietrich Erdmann, Detlev Peukert and Heinrich August Winkler. The final section puts the results of this analysis in a broader context by contrasting them with the account that Richard Bessel, a British historian,⁵ has given of Weimar. This comparison explores if and to what extent specifically national perspectives and narratives influence the various accounts.

During the past four decades, reflections on narrativity in historiography have evolved into a far-flung and rather heterogeneous debate. Historians and philosophers have cast light on a wide range of aspects and in the process have developed differing and sometimes incompatible theoretical perspectives. No account of these debates would be complete without mention of French structuralism, which laid the groundwork for the structural and semiotic description of texts in the 1960s and which has become a common standard in the study of literature since then.⁶ However, most structuralists have not applied their categories to the writing of history. The notable exception was Roland Barthes, who determined some basic features of what he called 'historical discourse', such

⁵Richard Bessel was born and socialized in the United States, but he spent most of his working life in Britain.

⁶G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY, 1980) [French: 1972]; T. Todorov, *Poetics of Prose* (Ithaca, NY, 1977) [French: 1971]; R. Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' [French: 1966], in R. Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge* (New York, 1988), pp. 95–135.

as the fact that historians usually do not appear explicitly as narrators of their text ('referential illusion' or *illusion référentielle*) or the tendency of historians to present their object as existing outside historical discourse, despite the fact that it can never be accessed outside of discourse ('reality effect' or *effet de réel*).⁷

Even though Barthes' influence can still be observed today, it was the theories of the so-called analytical philosophers, publishing their most important works around the same time as the French theoretician, that provided the actual starting point for the debate about narrativity in history.⁸ Their approach grew out of the attempt to refute the claim of Logical Positivism, an important current in scientific thought at the time, that historical research was based on deductive, causal explanations and was therefore fundamentally the same as the natural sciences.⁹ Analytical philosophers countered this view by defining *narration* as a *type of explanation*. Since they considered narration to be specific to historiography, they had developed a criterion to claim that writing history was an autonomous operation. The most influential book to elaborate on this position was Arthur C. Danto's *Analytical Philosophy of History*,¹⁰ in which he argued that historical narratives *explained* a change occurring between two points in time by describing all the events bringing this change about. Other philosophers agreed with Danto, suggesting that the 'narrative form' or the 'story' was a distinctive feature of historical representations. Walter B. Gallie focused on the 'follow-ability' of historical narratives, which in his view created a specific mode of understanding as it transformed contingent events into a coherent whole that could easily be grasped.¹¹ Similarly, Louis O. Mink spoke of a 'configurational mode of comprehension' that, in his view, guaranteed that 'actions and events [...] can be surveyed as it were in a single glance as bound together in an order of significance.'¹²

This strand of historical narratology also influenced German historians, who in the 1970s started to deal with the same topic. They addressed many of the questions that Danto in particular had raised. Thus, they remained largely

⁷R. Barthes: 'The Discourse of History', *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981), 7–20 [French: 1967].

⁸The studies of the 1950s at best implicitly dealt with narratological aspects. Cf. W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (London and New York, 1951); W. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London, 1957).

⁹Cf. C. G. Hempel, 'The Function of General Laws in History [1942]', in P. Gardiner (ed.), *Theories of History* (Glencoe, IL, and London 1959), pp. 344–56; K. R. Popper, *Poverty of Historicism* (Boston, MA, 1957).

¹⁰A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, 1965).

¹¹W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London, 1964).

¹²L. O. Mink, 'History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension', *New Literary History* 1 (1969/70), 541–59, here 554. Cf. L. O. Mink, 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument', in R. H. Canary and H. Kozicki (eds), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding* (Madison, 1978), pp. 129–49. Cf. also M. White, *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (New York and London, 1965), pp. 4, 219–70.

within the boundaries of the philosophical explorations set out by the American theorists.¹³ It was specific to the German debate, however, that it centred on what many historians believed to be an opposition between 'narrative' and 'theory'. Seeking to establish a new paradigm within the discipline, proponents of the burgeoning 'Historical Social Science' (*Historische Sozialwissenschaft*), had long denounced the rather epic historiographic tradition prevalent until the 1960s. They saw this tradition as naïve and wholly insufficient for analysing the complexities of the past. 'Narrative historiography', in this perspective, had come to be synonymous with purely factual accounts devoid of theoretical reflection. A notable exception to this prevailing current was the philosopher Hans Michael Baumgartner. Contesting the views of Historical Social Science (*Historische Sozialwissenschaft*), he developed a position with far-reaching implications. Baumgartner argued that it was erroneous to understand narration as a (non-theoretical) form of presentation. In contrast, he claimed that 'historical consciousness, historical research, historical representation and history in general are constituted only in the mode of narration.' Thus, Baumgartner went further than even Arthur Danto, describing narration as the 'transcendental condition' of historical research.¹⁴

Irrespective of the fact that historians and theorists articulated widely differing views, until the 1970s the debate was an almost exclusively philosophical enterprise, striving to clarify the epistemological status of historical narration. Against this background, the works of the American literary theorist Hayden White marked a starkly new departure. White's explorations, first laid out in his book *Metahistory* and subsequently modified in numerous articles, would influence the discussion more than any other single contribution before or after.¹⁵ White was the first scholar to look at the narrative form of historiographical *texts*, even though it should be stressed that he did not engage in detailed textual analyses, instead confining himself to building a complex theoretical edifice. His basic premises were linguistic. In his view, language

¹³Cf. R. Koselleck and W.-D. Stempel (eds), *Geschichte – Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich, 1973); H. M. Baumgartner and J. Rüsen (eds), *Seminar: Geschichte und Theorie. Umriss einer Historik* (Frankfurt/M. 1976); J. Kocka and T. Nipperdey (eds), *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte* (Munich, 1979); W. Schiffer, *Theorien der Geschichtsschreibung und ihre erzähltheoretische Relevanz. Danto, Habermas, Baumgartner, Droysen* (Stuttgart, 1980); S. Quandt and H. Süssmuth (eds), *Historisches Erzählen. Formen und Funktionen* (Göttingen, 1982).

¹⁴H. M. Baumgartner, *Kontinuität und Geschichte. Zur Kritik und Metakritik der historischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt/M. 1972), 289, 249. Cf. H. M. Baumgartner, 'Erzählung und Theorie in der Geschichte', in Kocka and Nipperdey (eds), *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte* (Munich, 1979), pp. 259–89.

¹⁵H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD, 1973); H. White, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD, 1978); H. White, *Content of Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD, 1987).

was essentially composed of four rhetorical tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony, which he considered to be fundamental ways of making chaotic reality understandable and meaningful. Moreover, he distinguished between three forms of explanation: explanation by formal conclusion, ideological implication and narrative structuring. Each of these types had four variants, corresponding to the four basic tropes. It was in describing the third type of explanation that White sought to determine the narrative dimension of historiographic texts. His most influential observation was that historians 'emplot' their texts in order to create a meaningful story out of a random series of events. Consequently, the term 'plot' in White's use referred to a narrative pattern that went beyond a mere temporal sequence of events, which had been Danto's opinion, and constituted the actual meaning of historical representations. Although White argued that historians could find plots for their historical accounts in a wide range of artistic products and cultural forms of expression, he focused on the four he considered the most fundamental: tragedy, comedy, satire and romance.

White's studies were path-breaking. Virtually all subsequent authors dealt with his theory in one way or another. Especially in the United States, many historians and literary theorists enthusiastically welcomed the fresh approach to historiography. White's works also received serious criticism, however,¹⁶ and these objections have to be taken into account when applying White's insights to a close textual analysis. Nevertheless, in the wake of White's theory, and largely because of it, the narratological discussion became much more diverse. Among later contributions, Paul Ricœur's comprehensive, if somewhat solitary theory on the relation between narrativity and time stands out. The French hermeneutic philosopher argued that only narration made time comprehensible, since it created a specific concept of time that readers could experience while reading; whereas at the level of philosophical reflection, time was doomed to remain abstract. In this context, Ricœur ascribed to narration an integrative power reminiscent of Hayden White's idea of the historiographical plot. He argued that it was a process of narrative configuration or '*mise en intrigue*', which transformed the heterogeneous elements and isolated events on which stories are based into a coherent whole.

The work produced in the 1980s and 1990s followed various paths, as scholars tried to illuminate the semiotic character of historical representations and their character as linguistic artefacts. Dutch philosopher Frank R. Ankersmit's theory was particularly noteworthy because he showed that narration is not only a form of explanation or temporal or logical re-ordering but that it also

¹⁶Cf. S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Cambridge, 1992); R. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 1997); D. Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington, IN, 1986).

has important implications for the *interpretation* of history.¹⁷ According to Ankersmit, historical accounts are composed of 'narrative substances' that generate a specific 'image' or 'picture' of the past, for example, when historians describe the late eighteenth century as the 'age of Enlightenment' or when they speak of the 'decline of the church'. In another important strand of studies, authors examined the relation between literature and historiography.¹⁸ A particularly controversial debate evolved around the question whether a line could be drawn between historiography and fiction. This debate had been provoked by Hayden White's radical view that historical narratives are to be seen as 'verbal fictions' that were closer to literature than to science. Most theorists rejected what they understood as an undue blurring of boundaries. They pointed to a wealth of techniques of representation specific to either fictional or non-fictional accounts and therefore distinguishing them. Of course, some fictional works playfully question this very distinction by adopting non-fictional elements.¹⁹

Finally, several authors in the past two decades have closely examined historical works, engaging in what can be considered narratologic micro-analysis.²⁰

¹⁷F. R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language* (The Hague, 1983).

¹⁸Cf. R. F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge and London, 1995); S. Gearhart, *The Open Boundary of History and Fiction: A Critical Approach to the French Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ, 1984); L. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London, 1988); H. Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, WI, 1989); D. LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY, 1985); A. Rigney, *Imperfect Histories: The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2001); D. Fulda and S. Serena Tschopp (eds), *Literatur und Geschichte. Ein Kompendium zu ihrem Verhältnis von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin and New York, 2002).

¹⁹Cf. D. Cohn, 'Signposts of Fictionality', *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 775–804; G. Genette, 'Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative', *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 755–74; A. Nünning, "'Verbal Fictions'?: Kritische Überlegungen und narratologische Alternativen zu Hayden Whites Einebnung des Gegensatzes zwischen Historiographie und Literatur', *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, N.F. 40 (1999), 351–80; M. Fludernik, 'Fiction vs. Non-Fiction: Narratological Differentiations', in J. Helbig (ed.), *Erzählen und Erzähltheorie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 2001), pp. 85–104.

²⁰S. Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge, 1984); L. Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1990); L. Orr and Jules Michelet, *Nature, History, and Language* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1976); L. Orr, *Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1990); J. Süßmann, *Geschichtsschreibung oder Roman? Zur Konstitutionslogik von Geschichtserzählungen zwischen Schiller und Ranke* (Stuttgart, 2000); T. Elm, 'Funktion des Narrativen – in Zeitgeschichte und Gegenwartsliteratur', in J. Janota (ed.), *Kultureller Wandel und die Germanistik in der Bundesrepublik*, vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 178–86; S. Jaeger, 'Multiperspektivisches Erzählen in der Geschichtsschreibung des ausgehenden 20.

Ann Rigney has studied how prominent French historians of the 1840s depicted the French Revolution.²¹ On the one hand, Rigney looked at how these historians, by selecting and composing events, shaped the representation of the Revolution and infused it with divergent meanings. On the other hand, she analysed the various configurations of the historical actors, that is, the revolutionary masses as well as the protagonists Robespierre and Danton, pointing out how they contributed to the historians' political and symbolical interpretation of the Revolution. Another important study along these lines was Philippe Carrard's book on the school of the *Annales*. He, too, concentrated on the narrative 'surface structures' (as opposed to White's concept of the 'deep structures'). His analytical focus was even broader than Rigney's since he examined a vast array of textual categories. In addition to examining closely the narrative composition of events and actors, he focused on the presence and position of the narrator, the inscribed reader, the use of documents and the use of rhetorical figures. Carrard aimed to determine strategies of textualization that he deemed characteristic of historical representations in general. At the same time, he also sought to gain specific insight into the historiography of the *Annales* School, observing a notable gap between the historians' innovative theoretical premises, or promises, and their largely conventional writing practices.²²

As can be seen from this overview, detailed analyses of texts have been a relatively recent phenomenon. For most of the time, historical narratology has been dominated by theoretical reflections on the epistemological status of historiography and its general mode of operation. The essence of this debate, shared by analytical philosophers as well as by theoreticians such as Ricoeur and Baumgartner, can be seen in the assumption that narrativity is the basic and distinctive mode of historical knowledge – if only because all historical representations are based on a temporal ordering of events. This observation is certainly important in order to adequately understand historiography. However, it cannot directly be applied to the analysis of textual structures.

Those authors who have dealt with historiographical texts, for their part, have convincingly demonstrated that linguistic structures and patterns contribute decisively to the meaning of historical works and to historians' interpretation of the past. The structure most prominently commented upon is 'emplotment',

Jahrhunderts: Wissenschaftliche Inszenierungen von Geschichte zwischen Roman und Wirklichkeit', in A. Nünning and V. Nünning (eds), *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivstruktur im englischen Roman des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts* (Trier, 2000), pp. 323–46.

²¹A. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three narrative histories of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990).

²²P. Carrard, *Poetics of the New History: French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier* (Baltimore, MD, 1992), pp. xiii, xvi.

as Hayden White called it. It is an operation that Paul Ricoeur (*'mise en intrigue'*) and Louis O. Mink ('configurational act') have observed quite similarly. No consensus has emerged, however, on the question of whether all historiographical texts do in fact have a 'plot'. By and large, narrativists have based their theories on nineteenth-century historiography. Thus, their findings do not necessarily apply to later phases, especially not to those currents of the twentieth century that attempted to develop non-narrative forms of representation. Several authors have pointed out that the generalizations of Hayden White and other narrativists are not well founded and that a larger and more diverse group of historical works should be studied.²³ These objections are clearly justified. Nonetheless, since the configuration of the story may be an important part of the overall interpretation, every analysis of historiography should take this dimension into account, determining at least if a plot can be discerned. In recent years, some authors have made helpful suggestions as to possible ways of examining plots, most of which critically elaborated on White's theory.²⁴

Finally, those authors who have used techniques derived from the study of literature, such as Rigney and Carrard, have pointed to a number of narratological elements besides the plot that are integral to historiographical works and shape historical representations in important ways. These studies have largely focused on a purely formal analysis, and consequently have not addressed the questions that historians might have when they examine past historiography. Nonetheless, they have developed categories which can be very useful in examining textual structures.

Building on these works, I would like to suggest a model of textual analysis, which for the sake of clarity is divided into three dimensions. The first dimension to be examined is the *presence of the narrator/author*. Just like fictional literature, historiographical works have a narrating voice that conveys the story and, unlike

²³ Cf. A. Rigney, 'Narrativity and Historical Representation', *Poetics Today* 12 (1991), 591–605, 603; P. Ricoeur, *Zeit und historische Erzählung* (Munich, 1988), pp. 282, 342; R. J. Evans, *Fakten* (Frankfurt/M. 1998), p. 76; D. Fulda, *Wissenschaft aus Kunst. Die Entstehung der modernen deutschen Geschichtsschreibung 1760–1860* (Berlin and New York, 1996); Ricoeur, *Zeit*, vol. 1, pp. 89 and 344; D. Harth, 'Die Geschichte ist ein Text. Versuch über die Metamorphosen des historischen Diskurses', in R. Koselleck, H. Lutz and J. Rüsen (eds), *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung* (Munich, 1982), pp. 452–479, 478.

²⁴ Cf. T. Hertfelder, *Franz Schnabel und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft, Geschichtsschreibung zwischen Historismus und Kulturkritik (1910–1945)* (Göttingen, 1998), pp. 539–64; T. Etzemüller, *Sozialgeschichte als politische Geschichte. Werner Conze und die westdeutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (Munich, 2001), pp. 268–95; P. Nolte, 'Darstellungsweisen deutscher Geschichte. Erzählstrukturen und "master narratives" bei Nipperdey und Wehler', in C. Conrad and S. Conrad (eds), *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 236–68; J. Nordalm, *Historismus und moderne Welt. Erich Marcks (1861–1938) in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft* (Berlin, 2003).

in literature, is identical with the author. Depending on the form of the narrator's interventions, on his distance from the narrated events and on the perspective from which he tells them (focalization), historical accounts, and consequently the meaning of stories, may differ considerably. Compared to fictional literature, focalization in historiographical texts is limited, since historians hardly use the diverse techniques of presenting human consciousness that are common in literature. It would be unusual, for instance, for a historian to describe a character's stream of consciousness. Even so, historians can, and indeed do, make use of different degrees of empathy, particularly when reconstructing the intentions of historical actors.

The second dimension of analysis is the *configuration of time* – meaning concrete temporal elements within the text, not the philosophical implications that Ricoeur elaborated upon. In this sense, time refers to the order or succession of events (chronological vs. systematic order) and to the relation between time of narration and narrated time. The time of narration is tantamount to the textual space an author dedicates to the narration of events, whereas the narrated time refers to the 'real' time within which these events unfolded. Depending on the relation between both, texts may evoke the impression of acceleration or retardation and thereby provide differing accounts of the same sequence of events.

Third and finally, as has been mentioned, the analysis should focus on the plot structure of the text. Although in the wake of Hayden White's books most authors have dedicated their attention to the plot, the divergent and often vague uses of this concept have obfuscated the analytical value of their studies. For a thorough analysis, it seems to be advisable to subsume under plot all narrative patterns that are created by the configuration of events in the text.²⁵ Although this approach reflects an understanding of plot similar to that of Hayden White, his fourfold typology of tragedy, comedy, romance and satire appears to be overly rigid.²⁶ Most notably, there does not seem to be any reason to restrict the search for plots to literary models or genres.²⁷ Historical representations are constructed from a panoply of narrative patterns, not just from literature but also from mythology, religion and other sources. Moreover, historical accounts do not necessarily reproduce archetypal story patterns. They might use simpler models, such as stories of decay, success stories, and stories of a lost utopia or a mistaken path, a cyclical evolution or a development in stages.

²⁵In this respect, too, there is an important difference between historical texts and fictional literature, since historical texts are predicated on a pre-existing chronology, whereas fictional texts create their own chronology in the process of narrating.

²⁶See the convincing criticism by Hertfelder, *Schnabel*, pp. 539–64; H. J. Lüsebrink, 'Topologie, Narrativik, Diskurssemantik. H. White aus literaturwissenschaftlicher Sicht', in W. Küttler, J. Rüsen and E. Schulin (eds), *Geschichtssdiskurs*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M. 1993), pp. 355–361.

²⁷T. Etzemüller, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp. 268–95.

It should be noted that this three-dimensional model is fairly rough and that its categories could be elaborated further. To a certain extent, this reflects the general fact that studies of historiography have remained far behind when considering the comprehensiveness and complexity of many studies of literary texts. Especially in the past fifteen years or so, narratological theory in literature has seen a most dynamic development that has considerably changed and widened the understanding of textual structures in fictional works.²⁸ In view of the highly differentiated analyses of literature, a systematic exploration of how categories of literary narratology can be transferred to historiography would immensely refine the study of historical writing. In the absence of such attempts, however, the model outlined above can at least highlight some particularly important features of historical accounts and help analyse how they frame interpretations of the past.

The historiography on the Weimar Republic appears to be a suitable field to demonstrate the possible contributions of narrative analysis, especially as it has produced a multitude of studies, has a long tradition, and a special relevance to German historians. Historians began to deal with the Weimar Republic shortly after it had been destroyed. The earliest accounts came from exiled historians such as Arthur Rosenberg, whose book would have a belated influence in the 1950s and even more so in the 1960s.²⁹ In National Socialist Germany, Weimar was certainly not a very popular subject, although renowned historian Wilhelm Mommsen used the Republic as a kind of negative contrast to the 'Third Reich', symbolizing all the shortcomings of German political life supposedly overcome by National Socialism.³⁰ In the 1950s, a keen interest in the subject emerged among German historians, as was most clearly expressed in the publication in 1955 of Karl Dietrich Bracher's voluminous study, which concentrated on the final years of the Weimar Republic.³¹ At about the same time, Werner Conze and Karl Dietrich Erdmann published the first concise histories focusing on the basic political developments between 1918 and 1933.³² In the following two decades, historians mostly dedicated their research to specific aspects of

²⁸ Cf. A. Nünning and V. Nünning (eds), *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* (Trier, 2002).

²⁹ A. Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* [1935] (Frankfurt/M. 1961); F. Stampfer, *Die ersten 14 Jahre der Deutschen Republik* [written 1933–1936] (Offenbach, 1947); F. Friedensburg, *Die Weimarer Republik* [concluded 1934] (Berlin, 1946).

³⁰ W. Mommsen, *Politische Geschichte von Bismarck bis zur Gegenwart 1850–1933* (Frankfurt/M. 1935), pp. 190–252.

³¹ K. D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (Villingen, 1955).

³² W. Conze 'Die Weimarer Republik', in P. Rassow (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Überblick. Ein Handbuch* (Stuttgart, 1953), 616–66; K. D. Erdmann, 'Die Weimarer Republik', in H. Grundmann (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte*, vol. 4, 8th edn (Stuttgart, 1959), pp. 80–176. Cf. also E. Eyck, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*, 2 vols (Erlenbach and Zürich, 1954–56).

Weimar's political and economic history.³³ It was not until the mid-1980s that historians produced a number of broad historical syntheses in what appeared to be an upsurge of interest in Weimar around the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler's coming to power. Hagen Schulze, Eberhard Kolb, Horst Möller, Detlev Peukert and Hans Mommsen gave detailed accounts of the political, social and even cultural life of Germany's first democracy.³⁴ The wave of obvious fascination continued into the 1990s, when Heinrich August Winkler, Peter Longerich and Detlef Lehnert published comprehensive studies.³⁵

The three historical syntheses that I have selected for the following analysis are not intended to cover the whole spectrum of methodological perspectives, interpretative foci or narrative strategies used in the historiography on Weimar. Nonetheless, they span the period from the 1950s to the 1990s and display considerable diversity. Karl Dietrich Erdmann's early study, first published in 1958, is a very concise account of Weimar's political history. Detlev Peukert's (1987) and Heinrich August Winkler's books (1993) have both been published much more recently. Whereas Winkler's book can be considered a methodologically conventional account, Peukert's book has been widely regarded as innovative both in its methodological approach and in its interpretation.

The overall structure of Erdmann's book is chronological, although the chapters are divided by topics. There are, for instance, four chapters on the year 1923, dealing with topics such as the French occupation of the Ruhr district or Hitler's attempted coup. Mostly, the narrator recounts the events without making an overt appearance in the text. However, there are exceptions to his general restraint. First, the narrator often comments upon and assesses the events he describes. He draws conclusions such as: 'The historical significance of Hitler's attempted coup can be seen in [...]', or he stresses an interpretation by claiming: 'It would be quite erroneous to see the inflation as a result of the devilish machinations of interested people'.³⁶ In this way, the text acquires a manifestly didactic tone. Second, he makes statements concerning the reliability or uncertainty of the historical facts he mentions, for

³³H. Heiber, *Die Republik von Weimar* (Munich, 1966); G. Mann, *Deutsche Geschichte 1919–1945* (Frankfurt/M. 1961); T. Eschenburg, *Die improvisierte Demokratie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1963).

³⁴H. Schulze, *Weimar. Deutschland 1917–1933* (Berlin, 1982); E. Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1984); H. Möller, *Weimar. Die unvollendete Demokratie* (Munich, 1985); D. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt/M. 1987); H. Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit. Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918–1933* (Berlin, 1989).

³⁵H. A. Winkler, *Weimar 1918–1933. Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich, 1993); P. Longerich, *Deutschland 1918–1933. Die Weimarer Republik* (Hanover, 1995); D. Lehnert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Parteienstaat und Massengesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1999).

³⁶Erdmann, *Republik*, pp. 142, 130.

example: 'cannot be maintained', 'cannot be answered', 'there is debate on the question of [...]'. These expressions point to a narrator who is decidedly not omniscient.³⁷ On the whole, the narrator is present in the text to a moderate degree. His distance from the events is not clearly defined; he speaks from a vague *ex-post* perspective, which is typical of most historiographical works. In several passages, however, he narrates the events from the point of view of the historical protagonists, sometimes using a technique similar to what literary theorists call 'psycho-narration'. At one point, he comments on the German public's reaction to the signing of the Versailles treaty: 'Now it was clear that the *Reich* had been thrown down from its former heights into powerlessness and misery.' This sentence can be understood as reproducing a contemporary view; furthermore, it motivates the following historical judgment: 'A *Volk* full of vital strength could not but revolt against the treaty and the defeat. Thus, the revision of the treaty [...] was set as a logical objective for German foreign policy.'³⁸ Erdmann's use of indirect interrogative sentences produces the same effect. This technique indicates that the narrator empathizes with the feelings of contemporary actors. Recapitulating, as it were, Brüning's thoughts after the chancellor had dissolved the Parliament for the first time, the narrator wonders: 'It was new and against the sense of Article 48 to link the rule by emergency decree to the dissolution of the *Reichstag*. [...] But were there any alternatives?'³⁹ These narrative techniques clearly vindicate the perspective of the actors and contribute to making their views understandable.

As far as the plot structure of Erdman's book is concerned, Weimar's history proceeds in three stages. This stage model is an organizing structure underlying the text; it cannot be inferred from any explicit signals, such as the division of the book into parts or chapters. The initial stage until 1923 is marked by threats to the Republic's very existence. It is followed by a 'period of more steady development' from 1924 through to 1929, when 'the domestic and foreign policy and the economy of the new state appeared to consolidate'. The final phase from 1930 to 1933 is narrated as the failed attempt to solve the 'crisis' of the state without resorting to the National Socialist movement.⁴⁰ The sections on the Republic's initial phase repeatedly point to the precarious developments awaiting the Republic in the future. When Erdmann describes the deliberations on the new constitution in 1919, for instance, he points out that 'the authors of Article 48 did not foresee that one day this article could be used as an instrument of a presidential regime'.⁴¹ Likewise, when discussing right-wing extremism in Bavaria in 1920,

³⁷ Erdmann, *Republik*, pp. 99, 164, 174.

³⁸ Erdmann, *Republik*, p. 115.

³⁹ Erdmann, *Republik*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Erdmann, *Republik*, pp. 87, 144, 175.

⁴¹ Erdmann, *Republik*, p. 112.

Erdmann particularly comments upon the NSDAP and thus places an emphasis on the party that is not justified by its role in 1920 but only by the impact it had in the final years of the Republic.⁴² All these references to the future add up to a narrative structure of anticipation that projects the knowledge about the final breakdown of Weimar back into the description of its beginnings.

This narration makes Weimar's end the intellectual starting point of the historical account. Moreover, Erdman complements this strategy with a counterfactual perspective when referring to those aspects of Weimar's history that he perceives as essentially healthy and unaffected by crisis. He inscribes into the text a vision of a different course that Weimar's history could have taken, a vision that is the obverse of Erdmann's knowledge about the inevitable destruction of the Republic. He does not relate this vision to the years of relative stabilization, as could be expected, but rather to the era of Brüning. In a lengthy passage, further emphasized by the use of a mythological image, Erdmann evokes a possible change for the better. Thus, he generates a moment of hope in the midst of the implacable logic of Weimar's final crisis:

[After the presidential elections of 1932], a solid authority seemed to have been achieved above the political parties, in the close cooperation of president, chancellor and military, capable of leading the Reich until one day political radicalism would wane and it would be possible to establish a solid majority in the Reichstag. In the realm of foreign policy, the final liquidation of the reparations was imminent. Unemployment had peaked during the winter of 1931/32 and started to decrease with the abating world economic crisis. Thus, the moment after the re-election of Hindenburg seemed to harbour the promise that the ship of the German state could be safely steered past the Scylla of National Socialism and the Charybdis of Communism.⁴³

Finally, the configuration of time in the text runs counter to the narrative structure of anticipation. Almost two-thirds of the text is dedicated to the initial years between 1918 and 1923, which occupy three times as much space as the middle phase from 1924 to 1929. The last three years make up roughly a ninth of the book. Thus, the time of narration is considerably slowed down at the beginning and accelerates towards the end. Even though the structure of Erdmann's narration is dominated by Weimar's final phase, the events of this phase are largely omitted. Therefore, Weimar's beginnings appear to be all the more heavily charged with the responsibility for the Republic's collapse.

Detlev Peukert's synthesis of 1987 is also essentially chronological, although one of the four main chapters consists of a topical analysis. The inner structure

⁴²Erdmann, *Republik*, p. 126.

⁴³Erdmann, *Republik*, p. 170.

of the sub-chapters is not chronological, however.⁴⁴ They lack a continuous narration of events and instead systematically deal with different issues. On various occasions, Peukert goes so far as to enumerate factors without integrating them into a coherent text. To give but one example, he divides the final phase of Weimar's history into four processes and three stages, creating a passage more reminiscent of a diagram than of a narrative.⁴⁵

The most outstanding feature of his book, when compared to the other two, is the narrator's frequent interventions into the text. In numerous instances, he lets the reader know how he proceeds and explicitly draws attention to the fact that he is speaking from a retrospective point of view. Even more remarkable are the examples of narrative meta-reflection, in other words, the author's comments upon the process of narration itself. To begin with, Peukert does not regard the starting and end points of the Weimar Republic as given facts, but discusses different possibilities of periodization (which to a certain degree makes the dates appear contingent).⁴⁶ Moreover, he reflects on the narrative perspective: 'It would be anachronistic to project the experiences [of the post-Second World War era] back onto the deliberations on the constitution in 1919.'⁴⁷ And he comments on the evaluation of historical events: 'This process of dissolution of the political consensus, however, cannot adequately be described by the term "self-surrender of democracy". Especially if one rejects mono-causal explanations, the space left to the Republicans for political action can only be considered precarious.'⁴⁸ These self-reflections make the narrator noticeably present in the text and convey the impression that he is in full command of the narrative arrangement; whereas, at the same time, they relativize the reliability of his knowledge and also therefore his command of the history of Weimar. Moreover, these techniques provide a certain openness to the narrative perspective, an openness Peukert expressly aims to achieve at the factual level and in his methodology.⁴⁹ They enable the author to play through, as it were, different courses of action, allowing him to switch between numerous viewpoints and to continuously weigh alternatives against each other.

Whereas Peukert's narrator plays a clearly different role from Erdmann's, the plot structures within each text share an important feature: they both use the triadic stage model. Peukert's text is also divided into three phases: the emerging Republic, marked by a series of crises between 1918/19 and 1923, is followed by the 'Deceptive stabilization' of the late 1920s, before the 'Total crisis' of Weimar's

⁴⁴ Peukert, *Republik*, chs 11–14, pp. 204–66.

⁴⁵ Peukert, *Republik*, p. 260 f.

⁴⁶ Cf. Peukert, *Republik*, pp. 13–16.

⁴⁷ Peukert, *Republik*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Peukert, *Republik*, p. 218.

⁴⁹ Cf. Peukert, *Republik* Einleitung, pp. 9–12.

last three years begins.⁵⁰ Peukert differs from Erdmann, however, because he interprets the years between 1925 and 1929 as a fragile consolidation that failed to eliminate the serious flaws in the political process. In addition, he does not describe Weimar's dissolution as the failed attempt to defend the Republic against the assault of National Socialism. Rather, he focuses on the role of old political elites in deliberately destroying democracy.⁵¹

In Peukert's text, as well as in Erdmann's, references to the future abound. However, they are mostly found in his account of the middle phase. Peukert points out:

that the inner contradictions, which in the years between 1930 and 1933 doomed the Republic to failure, accumulated precisely during this phase of so-called stabilization. The course that would lead to the downfall of the Republic was set before the actual crisis of 1929/30 had erupted. Already in these years, then, everything had begun to push for the 'big bang'.

Again like in Erdmann's book, these narrative anticipations go hand in hand with a counterfactual narration. After the quoted passage, Peukert continues: 'Even so, there was no automatism leading to destruction. After all, it seemed almost miraculous how many crises the Republic had overcome since November 1918. Even in the most hopeless situation, escapes or at least "foul" compromises would have been possible; they could have delayed and – who knows? – maybe even avoided the collapse of the Republic.'⁵² Peukert's hypothetical statements are not limited to a single episode of Weimar's history, such as the Brüning era to which Erdmann attributes a kind of utopian value, but can be found at several turning points in Weimar's development.

Further parallels between Peukert and Erdmann concern the configuration of time. Peukert accelerates the time of narration in his description of Weimar's final phase, as he hardly elaborates on the events of the last three years. They make up 20 of a total of 260 pages, compared to 50 pages for each of the phases from 1918 to 1923 and from 1924 to 1929. In addition, the whole temporal structure of the text is broken up by the chapter 'Conflict Areas of Social Modernization', which occupies more than two-fifths of the text and does not give a chronological account at all. In so doing, it brings the narration to a halt and breaks up the linearity of the study. Thus, the temporal structure has a similar effect to the role of the narrator described above. Both stress Peukert's view that there was no fatal mechanism leading to Weimar's catastrophe⁵³ by creating a textual composition

⁵⁰These are the chapter titles.

⁵¹Cf. Peukert *Republik*, p. 256 f.

⁵²Peukert, *Republik*, p. 204 f.

⁵³Peukert, *Republik*, p. 243 f.

that reproduces a multi-causal dynamic. Peukert does not, however, actually elaborate on the possible alternative courses of events that he so often invokes.⁵⁴ Thus, his claim that Weimar's politicians had different options for action is part of the argument and not part of the narrative configuration.

Heinrich August Winkler's book on the Weimar Republic, published six years after Peukert's, is strictly chronological. The narrator is hardly present in the text and, in fact, is the least tangible when compared to the other two books. Various techniques work together in creating an impression of direct and unmediated representation. The narrator hardly comments on his narrative arrangements and largely refrains from explicit judgments or general conclusions. These features create a natural flow to the narrative.⁵⁵ In the same vein, he gives the historical actors a voice by quoting lengthy passages from newspapers and minutes of meetings. At some points, he interjects dramatic scenes and mini-stories, which make the text vivid and even give it a certain literary air:

Papen had been utterly surprised by the course of events. Neither had he expected the Communist Party's attack, nor the absence of protest and so he had come to the Reichstag without the order of dissolution, which Hindenburg had signed on the 30th of August in Neudeck – without date. Only in the session break did Brüning manage to get hold of his 'red folder' in order to ostentatiously present it when he re-entered the plenary hall. After re-opening the session, Göring said [...], we now proceed to vote on Torgler's motions. We will vote.⁵⁶

This passage is narrated from the perspective of a person who is present during the events, and, indeed, especially at the beginning, events are related almost from Papen's point of view. This presentation of characters is frequent throughout the text,⁵⁷ giving the reader the feeling that he or she is practically participating in the events.

Winkler's plot structure is predicated on the same threefold model as the other books; a conflict-ridden beginning, a flawed stabilization and a fundamental crisis leading to catastrophe. However, Winkler's study shows only the basic contours of this model. Only a few remarks point to the relative consolidation during the middle years;⁵⁸ for the most part, the author describes a series of crises.⁵⁹ Thus, Winkler narrates the history of Weimar as the story of permanent and cumulative crisis.

⁵⁴ An exception can be found in *Peukert, Republik*, p. 41.

⁵⁵ The only exception is: Winkler, *Weimar*, pp. 472–6.

⁵⁶ Winkler, *Weimar*, p. 523.

⁵⁷ Winkler, *Weimar*, pp. 230 f., 468 f.

⁵⁸ Winkler, *Weimar*, p. 305, 372.

⁵⁹ Winkler, *Weimar*, pp. 306–74.

As opposed to Erdmann's and Peukert's texts, the narrative structure in Winkler's text is open towards the future because it keeps within the strict boundaries of a chronological account. Despite a few scattered references to the future, the book has no overall structure of anticipation. Characteristically, the narrator adopts a strictly contemporaneous perspective that does not reach beyond what actors could have known or thought: 'The way things were in Germany, the elimination of the masses was sure to provoke massive protest. The only open question in the spring of 1930 was who would win the competition for the most effective way of articulating this protest.'⁶⁰ Corresponding to this narrative technique, there are no counterfactual reflections in the text.

Finally, the temporal structure of Winkler's text is also different. The same amount of narrative time is devoted to the years spanning from 1918 to 1923 and from 1930 to 1933 (roughly 210 pages each), whereas the middle phase occupies about half of that space (110 pages). Thus, the pace of narration slows down considerably during the final years; one-third of the text deals with the last three years.⁶¹ In the middle part, by contrast, narrative time accelerates. As the only book of the three devoid of structural anticipation, Winkler's description of Weimar's final phase is the most comprehensive.

The comparison between the three historical syntheses allows for some general conclusions. The triadic model, consisting of crisis, stabilization, and crisis, encapsulates the central plot of West German historiography on Weimar. It is not merely a form of periodization, but an inherent model of historical evolution. A look at Arthur Rosenberg's early account makes this observation even more compelling. In Rosenberg's text, the history of Weimar also evolves in three phases, although they are divided in a very different manner; 1918 through to 1923, 1924 through to 1928, and 1928 through to 1930.⁶² This three-stage model has a powerful cultural significance, being integral to occidental culture since its beginnings. In the historiography on Weimar, it can be read as an inversion of Christian eschatology with its succession of paradise, earthly existence and return to paradise, as well as of the Romantic view of the course of history, which secularized this Christian model. Against this backdrop, the books on Weimar, through their narrative composition, symbolize the 'unholy' character of the history of the first Republic and its irremediable doom.

The three texts frame this plot in different ways. The authors observe varying degrees of stabilization and attribute responsibility for the breakdown to different groups of people. Moreover, the perspective of the narrator contributes to divergent interpretations. In Erdmann's text, the erosion of democracy appears as an understandable failure. In Winkler's book, by contrast, it appears

⁶⁰ Winkler, *Weimar*, p. 374.

⁶¹ Winkler, *Weimar*, pp. 567–94.

⁶² Cf. Rosenberg, *Geschichte*.

as a natural course of events that are, nonetheless, brought about by identifiable actors. Peukert, for his part, suggests a possible openness of the course of events.

The predominance of the end of Weimar, which is intrinsically linked to the plot structure, characterizes all three texts, albeit in two different ways. Erdmann's and Peukert's books are based on a structure of anticipation that inscribes Weimar's end into its beginning and makes its collapse appear predetermined by its emergence. Winkler, in contrast, narrates the history of Weimar towards its end; not only in a linear sense, which applies to all narrations, but also structurally, by putting the main narrative emphasis on the final phase and relegating the previous events to the status of a preliminary story. This is particularly true for the middle phase and less so for the phase of the Revolution. In principle, a combination of both, the structure of anticipation and the structure of finality, does not seem unfeasible; even so, it is plausible to assume that these are the two basic narrative models of historical syntheses on the Weimar Republic.

Although few studies have dealt with the historiography of Weimar⁶³, it seems evident even without a closer look at the narrative structures that the reasons for Weimar's failure have always been the dominant concern for German historians. Despite the brief flurry of interest in the revolutionary beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s, the central focus for most historians, whether implicit or explicit, has been the dissolution of democracy. In addition to this, only the final years of the Republic have inspired important debates. Most notably, in the 1950s Werner Conze and Karl Dietrich Bracher clashed over Brüning's political strategy, and in the 1980s, Knut Borchardt's theses on the economic development sparked off heated controversy.

The narratological analysis, however, highlights an intellectual phenomenon that runs deeper, as it points to the difficulty historians have in *thinking* Weimar without making its final breakdown the pivotal point of its history. Analysis of the textual structures reveals an interpretative mechanism that goes far beyond the mere fact that historians usually know the final outcome of the developments that they describe. Moreover, thinking about Weimar's history has always had a strong undercurrent of self-reflection. Far from being an object of detached research, Weimar served historians and their readers as a historically disguised example of the inherent weaknesses of democracy and the potential threats to pluralist society. The Weimar Republic provided a negative contrast, allowing German post-war society to assess the current political and

⁶³E. Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik*, 6th edn (Munich, 2002), pp. 155–252; A. Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft* (Munich, 2000), pp. 121–46; H. A. Winkler (ed.), *Weimar im Widerstreit. Deutungen der ersten deutschen Republik im geteilten Deutschland* (Munich, 2002).

social conditions of the Federal Republic. In this respect, historiography was part of broader political mentalities and widespread popular uses of the past. As recent studies have argued⁶⁴, in the public debate after the Second World War, 'Weimar' generally served as a counter-image to the new democracy. For politicians, journalists and educators alike, Weimar symbolized the fatal trinity of political instability, economic disaster and fierce social conflict. Consequently, they used Weimar as a standard against which they measured the achievements of, and threats to, the new democracy. The narratives examined above indicate how deeply entrenched this perspective has been in historical research; and that it prevailed well into the 1990s. Thus, the reflection on Weimar had a stabilizing role, buttressing the new political and social order of the Federal Republic of Germany in the realm of historiography and historical thought. Simultaneously, by framing the history of the first Republic from the angle of its destruction, historians have confined Weimar to being the pre-history of the 'Third Reich'. After all, it was the experience of National Socialism that led historians to place Weimar's end at the centre of its history and thereby profoundly shaped historical thinking about Germany's first Republic.

Theoretically, there is no reason why it should not be possible to perceive and structure the history of Weimar in a different way. Some texts of the 1960s seem to suggest an alternative, focusing on the Revolution in 1918–19 and accentuating the missed chances for democratization.⁶⁵ However, an interpretation stressing Weimar's potential as a liberal order never emerged. Even so, it would be conceivable to tell the story of Weimar not by describing the tragic chain of political events, but by focusing on other developments: the jettisoning of authoritarian structures in a number of social domains, the plurality of lifestyles and forms of cultural expression, the level of social modernity, and the explosion of artistic energies. An interpretation along these lines would approximate Weimar to the West German society of the 1960s and 1970s, when many of these elements surfaced again. Detlev Peukert, at least, points to such a view, but it is not the basic structure of his narration. This absence is further evidence of the compelling intellectual force of the predominant narrative.

⁶⁴D. Schirmer, 'Ist Bonn Weimar ist Berlin? Die Weimarer Republik als symbolisches Dispositiv der deutschen Nachkriegsdemokratien', in F. Balke and B. Wagner (ed.), *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil historischer Vergleiche. Der Fall Bonn-Weimar* (Frankfurt/M. and New York, 1997), pp. 125–46; W. Pyta, "'Weimar' in der bundesdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft', in C. Gusy (ed.), *Weimars lange Schatten – 'Weimar' als Argument nach 1945* (Baden-Baden, 2003), pp. 21–62; S. Ullrich, 'Im Schatten einer gescheiterten Demokratie. Die Weimarer Republik und der demokratische Neubeginn in den Westzonen 1945–1949', in H. A. Winkler (ed.), *Griff nach der Deutungsmacht. Zur Geschichte der Geschichtspolitik in Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 185–208.

⁶⁵Pyta, 'Weimar', p. 36. However, this did not manifest itself in synthetical accounts.

One has to look beyond the confines of German historiography to find a historical account in which this force disappears or at least wanes. In the same year as Winkler, British historian Richard Bessel published his book on Germany's political and social transition from the First World War to the early Weimar Republic. Even though his book is not a historical synthesis but a more limited monographic study, a comparison with the three German books is illuminating. Bessel focuses the ways in which the consequences of the war shaped Weimar's political culture, examining the strains that the war effort, military defeat and demobilization put on the new Republic. Interestingly, he relates his study to the predominant concern of (German) research on Weimar. In the preface, Bessel characterizes his book as 'an attempt to understand why and how democracy failed in Germany after 1918'.⁶⁶

The text, however, runs counter to the avowed aim in important ways. It takes on a narrative life of its own, framing Weimar's history not as steadily moving towards catastrophe, but as the history of a 'post-war society', to use one of Bessel's central terms. The main part of the book, following two initial chapters on the war years, departs from a continuous narrative and engages in a series of analyses dealing with different aspects of the War's legacy. In fact, only the last chapter stretches out to the early 1930s. And it is only here that the author explicitly takes up the argument outlined in the preface, connecting the 'imprint' of war and defeat 'on [Germans'] lives, attitudes, and expectations' to the reasons for Weimar's failure,⁶⁷ namely to political discontent and radicalization. Each of the remaining chapters (Chapters 3–8) spans the period between roughly the end of the war and 1923–24. Thus, with every new chapter the reader is set on the same temporal course again. This arrangement takes the emphasis away from the final phase of Weimar and instead stresses the moment of 'new beginning' in the fluid and rapidly evolving situation of the immediate aftermath of war.

In addition to this temporal composition, the narrator often describes events from the point of view of contemporaries (even though not to the same degree as Winkler, since Bessel also discusses previous research and reflects on his own judgments):

In the wake of defeat and the fall of the old regime in November 1918, German officials could hope only that public order would not break down altogether [...]. Suddenly they were confronted with problems which had figured only in their worst nightmares [...]. If the German authorities could not manage the military demobilization within the coming weeks, the matter would be taken out of their hands – either by the Allies or by the soldiers themselves!⁶⁸

⁶⁶R. Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1993), p. vii.

⁶⁷Bessel, *Germany*, p. 255.

⁶⁸Bessel, *Germany*, p. 70.

Rather than attempting to justify the protagonists' actions, as Erdmann does, Bessel's emphasis on contemporaries' views offers a narrative equivalent to his methodological interest in historical experiences and perceptions. For this purpose, the book also makes frequent use of quotations. In the following passage, the narrator starts by inserting a political memorandum into the text before he puts himself in the place of its authors: "As a result of the uncertainty over the future and the fear of the heavy burdens which the lost war and the hard peace-treaty impose, everyone lives for the moment and unscrupulously grasps after whatever advantages present themselves". The world, it seemed, had been turned upside down.⁶⁹

Moreover, while the narrator often harks back to the past, that is, the wartime as well as the pre-war era, he hardly refers to future developments; the following remark is the one that comes closest to suggesting an inevitable mechanism leading to failure. 'The wish to resurrect a world in which moral standards and family and social relationships were intact was nevertheless profoundly misplaced and doomed to disappointment.'⁷⁰ Generally, Bessel's text evokes the impression that while Weimar did have to grapple with serious difficulties during the initial years, the future of Weimar had not yet been decided. In almost every respect, Weimar's end is absent from the text. If a shadow lies over the early years of the Republic, it is not cast by its collapse, as in Erdmann's book, but by the First World War. Thus, Bessel's account generates a markedly different image of Weimar when compared to the classic German plot. It creates an alternative version of Germany's first democracy, conceiving of its history not in terms of its eventual failure, but in terms of its strained past. While the actors are shown to have tremendous difficulties dealing with this past, the future does not appear to be pre-determined.

In conclusion, it is tempting to speculate if and how this remarkable narrative shift is a product of the parameters of British historiography or, for that matter, British historical experience. Quite obviously, Bessel possesses an intimate knowledge of German research on Weimar, and therefore is familiar with its fixation on National Socialism. Moreover, he admits to being influenced by a number of German studies. And yet, it might not be entirely implausible to see the role that the First World War has played in British history and political culture as an important intellectual influence shaping, to a certain degree, Bessel's perspective on the Weimar Republic. In fact, in British self-understanding, the 'Great War' constituted the 'seminal catastrophe' of the twentieth century, with strong reverberations in political consciousness and public memory, which lasted until long after even the Second World War.

⁶⁹ Bessel, *Germany*, p. 222.

⁷⁰ Bessel, *Germany*, p. 223.

In Germany, by contrast, the experience of the First World War has been overshadowed by National Socialism. If this is true, Bessel's account might indeed be regarded as resulting from a confluence of two national master narratives. They merge in the attempt to tell Weimar's history as the history of a post-war society pushed towards its collapse by the legacy of its past.

2

Double Trouble: A Comparison of the Politics of National History in Germany and in Quebec

Chris Lorenz

Ranke's description of the task of the 'scientific' historian in 1837 had sounded so simple: just describe the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen [ist],' or in plain English: just describe the past 'how it essentially was'. Ranke was no naïve empiricist, as many later took him to be, but an idealist who thought that God's 'ideas' (*Ideen*) were present in history and that history in its kernel was therefore a benign process, evident appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.¹ Given the emphasis Ranke simultaneously put on the critical method, the relationship between the 'scientific' or epistemological aspects of history and its political aspects have been problematic ever since the beginning of 'professional' history in Europe.

'The rise of professional scholarship and the new "scientific" history it generated were closely related to the strong currents of nationalism', as Georg Iggers recently observed – although this of course does not mean that Ranke was a straightforward German nationalist.² Similar observations are made by Daniel Woolf, who signals a broad consensus among both national historians and their (subaltern) critics about the crucial importance of the nation for 'scientific' history: 'History is the principal mode whereby non-nations were converted into nations' – declaims Prasenjit Duara. 'Nations emerge as the subjects of History just as History emerges as the ground, the mode of being, of the nation.' Others concur; 'There is no way', one scholar (this is a quote within a quote, therefore there is no name – CL) has asserted – without apparent awareness of his silent extrapolation beyond the West – 'to write a non-national history. The national framework is always present in the historiography of modern

¹ See G. Iggers and K. von Moltke's introduction to Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis and New York, 1973), p. xx.

² G. Iggers, 'The Professionalization of Historical Studies', in L. Kramer and S. Maza (eds), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford, 2002), p. 234. Further, see R. Thorstendahl and I. Veit-Bräuse (eds), *History-Making: The Intellectual and Social Formation of a Discipline* (Stockholm, 1996).

European societies.' Furthermore, Woolf adds 'The qualifier "European" may be unnecessary', quoting historians from outside Europe. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gérard Bouchard and Stefan Berger can be named as further support for Woolf's conclusion concerning both the omnipresence of the national framework in history writing outside Europe and of the 'dangerous liaison' between history and the nation-state.³

After the First World War had shown how easily 'scientific' national historians could transform themselves into overtly nationalist historians, the dangers of the unreflected political entanglements of national history were recognized by some of the more sensitive minds in the historical profession, like Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch.⁴ They sought the solution to the national and nationalistic myopia in *comparative* history, which they saw as the cure to both the epistemological and the political problems of 'single case' national history.⁵

This comparative strategy implied a change in both the spatial and in the temporal framing of history by the *Annalistes*. The nation, as history's central subject, was replaced by 'non-political' (non-state) central subjects, like sub- and supranational spatial entities, such as regions – Goubert's *Beauvaisis* and LeRoy Laduries *Languedoc* are famous examples – and territories adjoining seas or rivers – Braudel's *Mediterranean* and Febvre's *Rhine* being the prime examples. For most historians, however, the comparative method was a bridge too far – and it was frequently criticized as 'unhistorical'. This view remained a strong current in professional circles, which resurfaced again from the 1980s when

³D. Woolf, 'Of Nations, Nationalism, and National Identity. Reflections on the Historiographic Organization of the Past', in Q. Edward Wang and Franz Fillafer (eds), *The Many Faces of Clio: Cross-Cultural Approaches to Historiography. Essays in Honor of Georg. G. Iggers* (Oxford, 2007), p. 73; S. Berger, 'Towards a Global History of National Historiographies', in Berger (ed.), *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 1–30; G. Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World: An Essay in Comparative History* (Montreal, 2008). For the 'dangerous liaison', see C. Lorenz, 'Drawing the line: "Scientific" History between Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking', in S. Berger, L. Eriksonas and A. Mycock (eds), *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 35–55.

⁴See Peter Schöttlers contribution to this volume.

⁵See H. Pirenne, 'What are historians trying to do?', in H. Meyerhoff (ed.), *The Philosophy of History in Our Time: An Anthology* (New York, 1959), pp. 87–101 (originally published in 1931), see, especially, pp. 98–9: 'The comparative method alone can diminish racial, political, and national prejudices among historians', and: 'The comparative method permits history in its true perspective', For Bloch's collected essays on comparison, see P. Schöttler (ed.), *Marc Bloch. Aus der Werkstatt des Historikers. Zur Theorie und Praxis der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Frankfurt, 1995), pp. 113–87. In Oslo in 1928 Bloch refused to connect the comparative method to 'reconciliation' between different nationalities, but he expected to transform a dialogue between 'people of impaired hearing' into a 'real' dialogue. See *ibid.*, pp. 158–9.

Pierre Nora lamented the change from 'the nation' to 'society' as the central subject of history as the 'loss' of history's 'authentic' calling.⁶

This change of the spatial framework of history 'beyond the nation' corresponded to a change of the temporal framework 'beyond politics'. By distinguishing the famous three time layers of the short, the medium and the long term, Braudel only made explicit what other *Annalistes* had taken for granted. He identified political history with the short time frame – with the 'history of events' – and conceptualized the events as 'surface' phenomena; as being conditioned by the middle-term (economic) 'conjunctures' and by the (demographic, technological and biological) 'structures' underpinning them 'in depth'. Therefore 'new' political history could only regain a 'scientific' legitimacy when and where the academic hegemony of the *Annales* started to crumble.

After the Second World War comparative history was again forcefully advertised by a new generation of – usually 'social scientific' – historians, on the basis of the same arguments that had been put forward by Pirenne and Bloch in the 1920s.⁷ Now the *Annales* approach was widely and increasingly 'copied' outside France. And although comparison, for some time, became a growth industry in history – including specialist journals like *Comparative Studies in Society and History* and *Comparativ* – just like in the inter-war period, the comparative method failed to 'conquer' the fortresses of national history. Even much of what was presented as 'social scientific' history remained embedded in the framework of national history, as Lutz Raphael argued, for the German brand of 'history of society', the *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*.

After the 1980s 'social science history' was pushed into the defensive again by 'new cultural' and 'narrative' history, which usually focused on single cases again – something which is also true for the 'history of everyday life' and 'micro-history'.⁸ Many of the younger generation historians had become convinced by the 1980s that social-scientific comparative history had failed to deliver the promised goods. In their eyes, comparison had not turned history into a more 'scientific' discipline than before, nor had comparison solved the problem of 'the politics of history' – which was one of the two reasons why Pirenne and Bloch had put comparison on the historians' agenda. The project of comparative history therefore has lost some of its former 'scientific' attractions to

⁶ P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7–25, esp. 8–9.

⁷ See C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984); C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley, CA, 1987).

⁸ For an overview, see G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, 1997), pp. 97–134. Further, see S. Berger's 'Rising like a Phoenix', Chapter 20 in this volume.

history's new practitioners since 'identity' and the 'memory boom' took centre stage, although the situation varies from country to country.⁹

What I have argued for comparative history also stands for the comparative history of history writing, better known as comparative historiography – which is the topic I will be dealing with in this chapter. Like history, historiography has basically been practised from its very beginning predominantly *within* specific national frameworks.¹⁰ So, unsurprisingly, the two problems of national history – its unreflected *single case* character and its unreflected *political* character – have largely been reproduced in its historiography.

In historiography, however, we can expect 'double trouble'; both at the level of the individual national histories – of, for example, Winkler's Germany or of Braudel's France – *and* at the level of the history of national histories – of, for example, Iggers's history of German historiography or of Gildea's history of French historiography.¹¹ At both levels statements are usually made about particularity (of a national history respectively of a national historiography) without any explicit form of comparative argument.¹² Therefore, in historiography, comparison must be analysed in a *double* sense – and here I go beyond Marc Bloch's argument. Bloch's argument that the particularity of German or French *history* can only be established by means of – in this case: international – comparison, also holds for any individual *representation* of German or French history. Today we need to reflect on our historiographical predicament that every representation of German or French history is comparative because it is (implicitly or explicitly) international *and* on the fact that the particularities of each representation – of a nation and of a national historiography – can only be established by comparing these representations *with each other*.

⁹ See, for overviews, J. Kocka and G. Haupt (eds), *Geschichte und Vergleich* (Frankfurt/M., 1996); S. Berger, 'Comparative history', in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing History: Theory & Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 161–83. In Germany comparative history seems to be taken more seriously than in the UK or in France. Now that more research-funding is channelled through EU-institutions, probably comparative projects will profit from this trend because the EU is a supranational institution.

¹⁰ For the continuing dominance of the national framework in history, see S. Conrad and C. Conrad (eds), *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2002); and C. Lorenz, 'Unstuck in time, or: The sudden presence of the past', in F. van Vree, K. Tilmans and J. Winter (eds), *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity* (Amsterdam, 2010), 67–105.

¹¹ Georg Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, (Middletown, CT, 1968); Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven, CT, 1994).

¹² For the literature, see C. Lorenz, 'Comparative historiography: Problems and perspectives', *History and Theory* 38, 1 (1999), 25–39, and C. Lorenz, 'Towards a theoretical framework for comparing historiographies: Some preliminary considerations', in P. Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 25–48.

This is the inescapable and lasting consequence of the ‘linguistic turn’ in historiography: the movement from ‘epistemological naïvety’ – the ideal to ‘show the history of history writing as it essentially was’ – to self-reflexivity – the recognition that the study of history writing implies a *double* comparison of its representational forms – of different representations of the *same* nation and of representations of *different* nations.¹³ With the awareness of the problem of representation in general, and of the history of representation in particular, the borderlines between ‘plain’ history and historiography in principle vanish, because self-reflective history writing implies a positioning *vis à vis* preceding and competing representations – and therefore implies historiography. Below I will analyse this double comparison in national history writing – and thus ‘double trouble’ – on the basis of German and Quebec historiography.¹⁴

In this chapter I will revitalize the project of comparative history and of comparative historiography by arguing that, basically, there is no way to avoid it. The only choice historians are facing is that of being explicit about their comparative judgements in epistemic and political matters, or to leave them implicit. So, all in all, and contrary to Pirenne and Bloch, I will argue that comparison is not something to be ‘advertised’ to historians – including historians of historiography – but argue that since the ‘linguistic turn’ and the recognition of ‘representationalism’, it is the historians professional condition. And again, contrary to Bloch and Pirenne, I will argue that comparison cannot ‘cure’ historians from their national and political ‘embeddedness’, but can only make this ‘embeddedness’ more discursive, that is, by making their ‘politics of comparison’ transparent and open to criticism. In this sense, we have become ‘sadder and wiser’ than Pirenne and Bloch in their day. And what holds for historians in general also holds for historians of historiography.

The chapter is structured as follows: in the *first* part of my chapter I will give a short overview of two very different and unconnected traditions of national historiography in order to flesh out their inherent comparative and political aspects. I will argue that both temporal and spatial differentiations in history have a political dimension. First, I will deal with twentieth-century historiography of Germany and then I will deal with twentieth-century historiography of Quebec. I will present the argument for this tantalizing comparison below.

Within both German and Quebec historiography I will distinguish between two contrasting discourses or paradigms – one emphasizing Germany’s and

¹³ See Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, ‘Beyond comparison: Histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity’, *History and Theory* 45:1 (2006), 30–50; A. Dirlik, ‘Performing the world: Reality and representation in the making of world history(ies)’, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Washington D.C.*, 37 (2005), pp. 9–27.

¹⁴ Stefan Berger in Chapter 20 on a German and a British national history illustrates this ‘double trouble’ nicely.

Quebec's 'special path' into modernity and one, emphasizing Germany's and Quebec's essential 'normality' or generality.

In the *second* part of my chapter I will compare the two German and the two Quebec historiographical paradigms in order to identify some similarities and differences. On the basis of these comparisons I will analyse the comparative character of historiography in general, as well as its relationship to the past and to its political functions in the present.

My reason for the unlikely comparison of Germany – an independent state of some 80 million people in the middle of Europe – and Quebec – the second province of the Canadian federation containing fewer than 8 million people – is that these two cases are so different and unconnected that their historiographies can be regarded as unrelated, and thus as – relatively – 'independent' or 'isolated' cases *vis à vis* each other. This implies from a Millian point of view that *if* German and Quebec historiography show interesting similarities – and I will argue that this is the case – then these similarities *cannot* be explained as the result either of their particular causal interrelationship or as the result of some form of transfer because both have developed as relatively 'closed systems' in relation to each other.¹⁵ Instead, I will argue that these similarities in historiography can best be explained as products of two similar *discourses* which have resulted in similar narrative schemes of representing the nations' past. Moreover, I will argue that in both the German and the Quebec case the historical discourses are connected to similar ways of experiencing the nation's past.

Now, before I start to compare, I want to emphasize that comparison is never epistemologically 'innocent' because comparison is always based on theoretical assumptions – especially about which features in the cases compared have an explanatory relevance and which features are only 'background conditions'.¹⁶ Therefore, what happens in every comparison is basically that a specific hypothesis is 'tested' against selected evidence and eventually against other 'competing' hypotheses. This lack of 'epistemological innocence' also stands true for the comparisons I am offering concerning the particularity and normality of the national histories of Germany and Quebec.¹⁷

After my introductory clarifications regarding the concepts and purposes of my chapter I will start with the first part, the overview of two twentieth-century German and Quebec historiographical paradigms.

¹⁵ R. Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto, 1997), has argued that Quebec historiography also developed relatively independent of Anglo-Saxon Canadian historiography – which is remarkable given its spatial proximity.

¹⁶ See, especially, Ragin, *Comparative Method*.

¹⁷ See, for a broader, European-wide comparison: S. Berger and C. Lorenz, 'Conclusion: Picking up the Threads', in Berger and Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 531–52.

Let us first turn to German historiography. In *The Shattered Past*, their recent overview of German historiography, Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer observe that German historiography in the twentieth century has been dominated by two versions of the so-called *Sonderweg* grand narrative. The basic idea of all *Sonderweg* interpretations is that German history has been following a 'special path', or *Sonderweg*, into modernity in comparison to other European states.¹⁸ Whilst other great powers in Europe, such as England and France, developed strong forms of 'civil society and of representational democracy, Germany did this to a significant lesser extent – at least until 1945. Instead, Germany developed a remarkably powerful state, with a dominant position occupied by the aristocratic military and the executive. So *Sonderweg* historians posit that there is basically something very peculiar about modern German history – an idea that was rooted in the experience of the generations that lived during the first half of the twentieth century with its two world wars and the Holocaust.

As for the explanation of Germany's special characteristics, there are two versions of the *Sonderweg* interpretation that are diametrically opposed. The geopolitical version of the *Sonderweg* paradigm posits that Germany's geographical position in the centre of Europe – its *Mittellage* – made it extremely vulnerable to interventions from its mighty neighbours, as European history since the Thirty Years War had amply demonstrated. Therefore, Germans had learned the hard way that they needed a strong army and a strong state if they wanted to survive as an autonomous nation 'in the centre of Europe', and therefore that Germany could not afford the 'luxury' of democracy. Only Prussia had put this 'lesson' of history into practice, when it gradually united most of the German states into one German nation-state in the aftermath of the catastrophic defeats in the Napoleonic Wars. As long as Germany kept its status as great power – roughly between 1871 and 1945 – this special path of Germany was valued in a very positive way by most German historians.

Unsurprisingly after the end of the Second World War, the *Sonderweg* of Germany was seen a bit differently than before. Because Germany had lost the war, its eastern territories and its political autonomy, the German *Sonderweg* was increasingly represented as a catastrophic *cul-de-sac*. It was therefore subject to a serious revision by liberal and leftist historians, who harked back to the émigré-historians like Eckart Kehr and Hans Rosenberg. As the Bundesrepublik and its *Wirtschaftswunder* conquered the hearts and minds of most West German citizens, the lack of democracy and the dominant position

¹⁸ K. Jarausch and M. Geyer (eds), *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ, 2003); see also C. Lorenz, 'Beyond Good and Evil? The German Empire of 1871 and Modern German Historiography', *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995), 729–67.

of the state in the Second and the Third Reich were now reinterpreted as fatal and negative aspects of modern German history.¹⁹ Something had gone terribly wrong since German unification in 1871, resulting in two interrelated world wars and followed by Germany's dissolution as an autonomous state. Those aspects which had been valued as 'assets' to modern German history in the geopolitical *Sonderweg* paradigm, were now inverted in the 'critical' *Sonderweg* interpretation.

According to the 'critical' *Sonderweg*-paradigm, the catastrophes of the twentieth century could be explained by the fact that between 1871 and 1945 Germany had been combining a 'pre-modern' authoritarian, political system with a 'modern' economic system. Until 1945, Germany had thus been 'missing' a 'modern' democracy and was thus plagued by the problem of partial modernization. This was the new *Sonderweg* paradigm which became very influential between the late sixties and the early 1980s. Therefore, German 'national' history had been comparative all the time, although usually implicitly and therefore not argued.²⁰

From the 1980s onwards, the presupposition of a special German 'abnormality' came increasingly under attack.²¹ Historians like Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn began to argue that there is no such thing as 'normal' history and that German history was as 'normal' – or abnormal – as English, French or American history. This strand of representation got further tailwind after German reunification in 1990, interpreting this event as Germany's return to 'normal' Western statehood and democracy, and putting an end to the post-war era. Heinrich-August Winkler's magnum opus about Germany's 'long way towards the West' is a specimen of this new type of 'normalizing' history in which a unified Germany and a unified Europe are represented as the telos of catastrophic twentieth-century history.²² Contrary to the positive and the negative *Sonderweg* interpretations of

¹⁹ Here I will not go into the post-1945 versions of the geopolitical paradigm, represented by, e.g., Andreas Hillgruber and Klaus Hildebrand. According to this paradigm the major difference between Germany and the other states in Europe in the twentieth century had been the fact that Germany had ultimately failed as a 'great power' and thus was a *gescheiterte Grossmacht*. See A. Hillgruber, *Die gescheiterte Grossmacht. Eine Skizze des Deutschen Reiches 1871–1945* (Düsseldorf, 1980).

²⁰ See C. Lorenz, 'Won't you tell me where have all the good times gone? On the advantages and disadvantages of modernization theory for history', *Rethinking History* 10:2 (2006), 171–200.

²¹ See, for overviews: S. Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003) D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1984).

²² H.-A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen. Deutsche Geschichte 180–1990*, 2 vols (Munich, 2000). Basically Winkler's view represents the 'critical' *Sonderweg* interpretation with a 'happy ending'. See Berger's and Eckel's contributions to this volume. According to

German history, the new post-reunification orthodoxy is eager to emphasize the fundamental 'normality' of German's modern history – Germany being 'beyond' its twentieth-century catastrophes.²³

This normalizing, post-*Sonderweg* paradigm accomplishes this change of perspective by replacing a backward-looking perspective – focusing on the 'fall' of Germany in two world wars, including the Holocaust – to a presentist perspective – focusing on the rise of a reunified Germany as a strong and stable Western democracy. This change from a backward to a presentist temporal focus at the same time constitutes a change from a critical to a positive view on German history. The focus changes from Germany's catastrophes – two world wars, the Weimar crisis and the Holocaust – to present accomplishments – democracy, stability, welfare and a united Europe.

Let's now take a look at the paradigm of the 'special path' of Quebec. *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*, a recent historiographical overview by Ronald Rudin, starts from the observation that history occupies a privileged place in Quebec culture.²⁴ The official motto of the only province of Canada with a French-speaking majority – 'Je me souviens' ('I remember') – is but one indicator of its obsession with the past.

The special place of history in Quebec obviously is due to the fact that Quebec is the principal remnant of what used to be the French Empire in North America. As is well-known, France lost its continental American colonies of 'Nouvelle France' to England in 1759–60 during the Seven Years War. The British 'conquest' and the loss of political autonomy have been represented by most historians of Quebec before 1950 as the 'Urkatastrophe' in Quebec's past – as a kind of 'black hole', which absorbed the time after. Thereafter, Quebec historians just referred

Tony Judd, this 'normalizing' strategy was a general West-European post-war phenomenon which dominated until the 1970s. See his 'The past is another country: Myth and memory in post-war Europe', in J.-W. Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 168–9: 'From 1948 the Western states of Europe waved goodbye to the immediate past and embarked on the "European adventure" to which their national energies and prospects have been officially attached ever since. [...] [This Europe] was characterised by an obsession with productivity, modernity, youth, European unification and domestic political stability.'

²³ For the notion of 'consciousness of catastrophe' in twentieth-century history, see J. Torpey, "'Making whole what has been smashed": Reflections on reparations', *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001), 333–58; J. Torpey, 'The future of the past: A polemical perspective', in P. Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 240–55. I have argued the German case before in 'Der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg und die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung nach 1945', in F. Wielenga (ed.), *60 Jahre Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Deutschland und die Niederlande – Historiographie und Forschungsperspektiven* (Münster, 2006), pp. 159–71.

²⁴ Rudin, *Making History*. Cf. J. Iguarta, *That Other Silent Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945–71* (Vancouver, 2006).

to the 'survival' of the 'French nation' – *'la survivance'* – in North America. The French period before the conquest simultaneously acquired the position of being the 'golden period' in Quebec's past – and for some even a 'lost paradise' which had to be regained in the future.

By labelling the Quebecois as one 'nation' – or one 'race', as Groulx did – the Quebec historians staked out Quebec's claim to political autonomy. According to this view, Canada was a federal state containing two hierarchically positioned nations: the British and the French. From an ethnic nationalist perspective, Canada thus was a 'forced marriage' from its very beginning: an 'artificial' state doomed to fail – although the American Revolution had forced the British to accommodate 'the French fact' in the remaining part of 'British North America'. This view was still the dominant one when the French president, Charles de Gaulle, broke all the international diplomatic rules during his visit to Quebec in 1967, among other things by advocating a 'free Quebec'.²⁵

Until the early 1950s there was little doubt among the dominant Quebecois historians that Quebec had been following a 'special path' in North American history. Quebec was basically represented as a French island in the midst of an Anglo-Saxon ocean, under permanent threat of 'cultural extinction' if the Quebecois did not protect their 'national' culture in a vigilant and self-conscious way – not unlike those German historians which represented Germany as being 'encircled' and under a permanent external (Slav) 'threat' in the middle of Europe'.²⁶

This particularistic (victimization) view was by no means homogeneous. The interpretation of the British conquest especially differed between the so-called Montreal and Laval Schools. While the Montreal School tended to evaluate the conquest as pure tragedy for the Quebecois, the Laval School developed a more redemptive 'revision' of this key event. Instead of constituting a permanent threat to the 'cultural survival' of the French 'Quebec-nation', the British take-over was represented (by Groulx) as a 'blessing in disguise' because it had 'shielded' the Catholic 'New French' against the unholy consequences of the secular French Revolution.²⁷ Just like in other 'stateless nations' – for instance,

²⁵ See D. C. Thomson, *Vive le Québec libre* (Ottawa, 1988), p. 199. In his speech De Gaulle partially repeated the slogan of the Quebec sovereigntist and separatist party: 'Long live free Quebec! Long live French Canada!' In contrast, Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper clarified Canada's federal view in November 2006 in Parliament as follows: 'Our position is clear. Do the Québécois form a nation within Canada? The answer is yes. Do the Québécois form an independent nation? The answer is no and the answer will always be no.' See <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/11/22/harper-quebec.html> (accessed 07-04-09).

²⁶ See, for the relationship between history, memory and trauma: A. Phillips, 'Close-Ups', *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004), 142–5; and P. Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', *The History Teacher* 33:4 (2000), 533–48.

²⁷ There is an interesting parallel here with the Social Democratic interpretation of the failed socialist German Revolution in 1918. Although the German Social Democrats

Poland between the Third Polish Partition in 1795 and its 'resurrection' in 1918, or Greece between the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and its 'resurrection' in 1827²⁸ – the Church in Quebec was often represented as playing such a fundamental role in 'rescuing' the Nation, that the national and religious identities tended to overlap completely.

This historiographical state of affairs existed until revisionism began to make its way into Quebec historiography in the 1960s. Simultaneously with rapid industrialization and secularization of Quebec in the wake of the Second World War – during Quebec's 'Wirtschaftswunder' alias the 'Quiet Revolution' – quite a few Quebec historians began to turn their backs on Quebec's particularistic historiographical paradigm. Instead of emphasizing the continuing particularity of 'the French fact' in Anglo-Saxon North America, the revisionists started stressing Quebec's essential 'normality'. The revisionists started to represent Quebec as a 'normal' modern, industrial Western society, characterized by the unfolding process of industrialization, urbanization and economic rationalization since 1850 – and *not* by its French language or by its specific culture. The discourse of 'normality' and the discourse of 'modernity' actually went hand in hand, because being 'modern' simply meant being 'normal'. History writing thus reflected a fundamental change in the way Quebecois historians came to represent Quebec history from the 1960s onwards. They started to focus on present accomplishments instead of focusing on past problems; which is quite similar to what many historians of the 'Bundesrepublik' did from the 1960s onwards. Whatever 'modernization' meant, it certainly meant an orientation towards the future and a belief in 'progress'. So 'modernized' Quebec history was no longer history absorbed by a 'black hole' in the past.²⁹

Just like their colleagues in the 'Bundesrepublik', historians in Quebec started to explain past problems in terms of 'missing' something 'normal', in

regarded the German Imperial Army, like the German emperor himself, as a negative force in German politics, this negative force had 'shielded' Germany from the unholy consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution in Germany through the Groener-Ebert pact in 1918 which put down the German revolutionary movement by armed force. What looked like a catastrophe from a left-wing point of view – the German Social Democratic party cooperating with the German imperial army in order to put down a socialist revolution – was subsequently reinterpreted as – national – redemption.

²⁸ See Effi Gazi's contribution in Chapter 9 of this volume.

²⁹ This finding suggests that Chakrabarty's influential criticism of 'historicism' is only partially correct, i.e., only in so far as 'historicism' is based on ideas of modernity and on history as a process of 'modernization'. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), esp. p. 8: 'Historicism – and even the modern, European idea of history – one might say, came to the non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody's way of saying "not yet" to somebody else', thus turning history for them into a kind of 'waiting room'. Chakrabarty thus seems to miss the catastrophic versions of 'historicism'.

other words, in terms of a partial lack of modernity – especially the problem of Quebec’s relative poverty and its economic backwardness *vis à vis* the ‘Rest of Canada’. Some historians pointed at the Catholic Church as the stumbling block on Quebec’s path towards modernity (Marcel Trudel for instance), whilst others argued that the lack of economic rationality of Quebec’s bourgeoisie was the stumbling block, preventing this bourgeoisie from adapting to the modern economy (Fernand Ouellet, for instance). Still others – especially from the Montreal School – argued that because of the absence of France since the Conquest, Quebec was ‘missing’ a ‘normal’ break with colonialism.³⁰

From a comparative perspective, one can be struck by the similarity of the explanation of Quebec’s problem of economic ‘backwardness’ and the explanation of Germany’s problem of Nazism in terms of ‘stumbling blocks’ towards modernization – especially in its Bielefeld variety. In the case of Germany, however, the explanatory problem was not located in Germany’s lack of economic modernization, but in its ‘lack of political modernization’ – eventually leading to Nazism. Moreover, the critical *Sonderweg* historians of the ‘Bundesrepublik’ held the ‘feudal aristocracy’ responsible for Germany’s lack of ‘political modernity’ before 1945 and not primarily the Church, as their colleagues in Quebec did. And just as in the case of Quebec, the ‘feudalized’ German bourgeoisie was criticized for its lack of modernity – at least until 1945. Only during the ‘Bundesrepublik’, did Germany become truly ‘modern’ by ‘catching up with the West’.

Rudin interprets this paradigm shift both as a product and as a producer of a new collective identity of Quebec. ‘Particularistic’ Quebec history had had a clear backward-looking orientation, focusing on the French origins and the subsequent loss of seventeenth- to eighteenth-century ‘Nouvelle France’. Therefore it had been centred on the French period and on the consequential defeats against the British. History writing functioned as a kind of mental medicine helping the Quebecois to cope with their ‘phantom pain’ due to their ‘dismemberment’ from France, so to speak – while simultaneously infusing this idea of ‘dismemberment’ into every new generation. Simultaneously, this ‘particularistic’ paradigm was projecting the idealized origin of political autonomy of the French in North-America into the future – creating a continuity between Quebec’s origin in the past and its future – wishing for *telos*.³¹

³⁰ I owe this insight to Professor Thomas Wien (University of Montreal), who pointed this out to me.

³¹ J. Létourneau and S. Moisan, ‘Young People’s Assimilation of a Collective Historical Memory: A Case Study of Quebecers of French-Canadian Heritage’, in Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, pp. 109–28, esp. p. 110, signal huge differences between academic historiography and general ‘historical consciousness’ in Quebec, which is based on a catastrophic view of its history: ‘The amazing thing about this story is how nostalgic and melancholic those young people’s memory of the historic course of Quebec and its people is. Their representation of the past seems to be built around three

The revisionists replaced this backward-looking orientation by a presentist orientation that represented Quebec as a 'normal' and 'modern' nation situated amongst other 'normal' and 'modern' nations in North America. As in the German case, the change from a backward to a presentist perspective corresponds to a change in focus from past problems to present accomplishments. A tragic storyline and plot, focusing on lost glory and ensuing struggle, suffering and endurance – 'survival' – was replaced by a more epic and redemptive storyline, focusing on present 'successes' and future promises.³² This is my brief sketch of twentieth-century German and Quebec historiography so far.

Which analyses about historiography can be derived from the comparison of the German and Quebec historiographies? My first point is not very surprising, but needs to be stated in the context of historiography: although there is only one German and one Quebec past, there are multiple and competing narratives of German and Quebec history at the same time. Elsewhere I have argued that the multiplicity of historical narratives and the centrality of debate between them in history as a discipline can be accounted for in terms of 'internal realism'.³³

My second point is more surprising. This is the conclusion that although Germany and Quebec are literally worlds apart, their historians have developed two surprisingly similar narrative frameworks in which they represent their national histories. The first common narrative framework focuses on the 'special path' the nation has followed entering modernity. There are two varieties of this framework: one attributing the 'special character' to the nations special location in space – in the form of the permanent presence of 'external threats' to overcome from its early origins onwards – and the second variety attributing the 'special character' to the nations special location in time – in the form of a partial 'delay' in political development.³⁴ With Rudin, we could label this the

narrative clusters: "what unfortunately befell a community", "what that community might have become if only...", "what that community might yet become if only..." all of which point to an unhappy representation of Quebec's place in history.' Compare the representation of German Nazi history in the 'what if Hitler had been killed in 1938?...' mode, i.e., as a *Betriebsunfall*.

³² This observation suggests that Ankersmit's thesis, that *all* historical consciousness is built upon traumatic experience, is not correct. In contrast to Chakrabarty, Ankersmit seems to miss the 'modernizing' and 'normalizing' versions of 'historicism'. See F. Ankersmit, 'Trauma and Suffering: A Forgotten Source of Western Historical Consciousness', in J. Rüsen (ed.), *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate* (New York, 2002), pp. 72–85.

³³ See C. Lorenz, 'Historical knowledge and historical reality: A plea for "internal realism"', in B. Fay, P. Pomper and R. T. Vann (eds), *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 342–77.

³⁴ Compare James Wertsch analysis of the 'narrative template' of 'foreign threats' in Russian historiography in 'Specific Narratives and Schematic Narrative Templates', in Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, pp. 49–63.

discourse of difference. This framework focuses primarily on the politics and 'the' culture of 'the' nation. In the German case, this storyline usually begins with the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century, and in Quebec's case this storyline usually begins in the seventeenth century with the Iroquois Wars, followed by the consequential French defeat against the British in the Seven Years War.

The second common narrative framework focuses on the essential 'normality' of the nation's path to modernity, focusing on the processes of both economic growth and urbanization and on the welfare state. This framework focuses primarily on the economy and on the society of a nation-state. With Rudin, we could label this the discourse of normality. So both the national histories of Germany and of Quebec are based on judgements about particularity and normality – and that is to say: they are based on implicit comparisons of the nation's history to those of other nations.

My third point is that due to their choice of a narrative framework, both German and Quebec historians are making choices in relation to spatial frames of reference of other nations. At this point we can locate what we could call the 'politics of spatial comparison' of historians – and here we confront an inherently political dimension of writing history. Paradoxical as it may sound, historians have rarely recognized space as a political construction. As with the politics of time (see below), the politics of space was put on the agenda not by a historian, but by the literary scholar Edward Said with his path breaking book on *Orientalism*.³⁵

Within the spatial framework of Canada, for instance, Quebec historians have represented Quebec as the only French-speaking entity with formal status as a 'distinct society' and as a distinct 'nation' – next to the British nation. The idea that the native population of Quebec could qualify as its 'First Nation' has only been a very recent one – due to the rise of 'multiculturalism'.³⁶ This very 'late' discovery of the 'First Nations' seems to support Chakrabarty's view of 'historicism' being fundamentally a 'transition narrative' and his argument

³⁵ Reinhart Koselleck has observed that historians have not reflected on the notion of space and have traditionally taken it for granted. See his 'Raum und Geschichte', in Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt/M., 2003), pp. 78–97. For the politization of time and space in Asian historiography, see S. Conrad, 'What time is Japan? Problems of Comparative (Intercultural) Historiography', *History and Theory* 38:1 (1999), 67–83; and J.-H. Lim, 'The configuration of Orient and Occident in the global chain of national histories: writing national histories in Northeast Asia', in Berger, Eriksonas and Mycock (eds), *Narrating the Nation*, pp. 290–308.

³⁶ See Heidi Bohaker and France Iacovetta, 'Making Aboriginal People "Immigrants Too": A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s', *Canadian Historical Review* 90:3 (September 2009), 427–62.

that 'historical' claims to nationhood are inextricably linked to political claims to citizenship and to self-government.³⁷

Within the spatial framework of the 'New Nations', however, Quebec has been simultaneously represented as the only New Nation in the New World that did not attain political sovereignty, as Gérard Bouchard recently argued.³⁸ Bouchard has thus compared Quebec to the 'new nations' like New Zealand and Australia. By comparing Quebec with independent nations abroad he has 'severed', the 'Quebec nation' from the 'Rest Of Canada' – and thus brought the particularity paradigm of Quebec to its logical end.

Similar conclusions can be drawn concerning the spatial frameworks of the two *Sonderweg* paradigms in German historiography. The 'positive' *Sonderweg* paradigm compares Germany spatially with both Russia and France by representing Germany as 'the empire in the middle', whilst the 'negative' *Sonderweg* paradigm compares Germany exclusively with France, England and the United States. The past itself does not force historians to use one spatial framework or the other. It is rather the other way around. What the past of Quebec or Germany looks like is defined by the spatial frame of reference – although, of course, the past in turn restricts the range of plausible representations.³⁹

The spatial frame of reference in narrative representations always remains dependent on the choices of the historian in the present. Hayden White was right in this respect. This holds true even if we accept that these choices are conditioned by the past and thus are *not* just 'fictions of factual representation'. White was wrong in this respect.

Different narrative frameworks may imply different primary criteria of relevance. The representation of Germany as 'the empire in the middle' implies the primary relevance of spatial markers, whilst the representation of Germany as a 'belated democracy' implies the primary relevance of temporal markers – as does the representation of Germany as 'the Holocaust nation'.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 27–46. Charles Taylor has argued that this is the case because all collective identities are dependent on political recognition as such. See his *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ, 1992). In case this recognition is withheld, this situation can lead to 'historical wounds', as Dipesh Chakrabarty has recently argued. See D. Chakrabarty, 'History and the Politics of Recognition', in K. Jenkins, S. Morgan and A. Munslow (eds), *Manifestos for History* (New York, 2007), pp. 77–88.

³⁸ Bouchard, *Making of the Nations and Cultures*.

³⁹ The exemplary case is, of course, Holocaust history, which is hard to conceive of in other narrative terms than that of tragedy. See S. Friedlaender (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation*. See also J. L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford, 2002), p. 29: 'Our modes of representation determine whatever it is we are representing.'

⁴⁰ I have developed this argument at greater length in Lorenz, *Historical Knowledge*.

Time and space can also be interrelated – as is the case in all brands of modernization theory and in many brands of globalization theory – when ‘the West’ is represented as history’s telos and as the implicit destiny for the rest of the world.⁴¹ Sebastian Conrad has aptly coined this phenomenon the ‘spatialization of time’.⁴² This idea is also the basis of Chakrabarty’s critique of the presupposition of ‘historicism’ that the world is divided into both regions which are somehow ahead in time and regions which are somehow still in the ‘waiting room’ and in need of ‘catching up’.

My fourth point is that through their choice of a narrative framework, both German and Quebec historians are making choices as to their temporal frame of reference.

A strong emphasis on particularity seems to correspond with a temporal orientation which points back in time to a particular origin or identity-creating event and simultaneously points to a future telos. In historiography focusing on Quebec’s particularity, this correspondence manifests itself in the emphasis on the former political autonomy of the French nation *vis à vis* the British and simultaneously in its emphasis on the future telos of regaining this ‘lost’ political autonomy. In historiography focusing on Germany’s particularity, this correspondence is revealed in the centrality of the foundation of the Kaiserreich of 1871 and simultaneously in its emphasis on the future telos of safeguarding Germany’s hegemonic position in the middle of Europe – if necessary by striving for world power status. In the ‘positive’ German *Sonderweg* paradigm this telos was justified, whereas in the ‘negative’ *Sonderweg* paradigm it was criticized.

In contrast to this emphasis on particularity, an emphasis on normality seems to correspond with a temporal focus on the present, which points at a present state of normality and thus neither focuses explicitly on identity-creating events in the past nor on a future telos in the making. So the change from an emphasis on particularity to normality seems to imply a change of emphasis between the three dimensions of time: past, present and future. In both the German and the Quebec case, the ‘normalizing’ force is represented as economic rather than as political. In the German case, it is the ‘economic miracle’ and in the Quebec case it is the ‘Quiet Revolution’.

At this point, we can locate the ‘politics of temporal comparison’ of historians and here, too, we confront an inherently political dimension of writing history,

⁴¹ For the usually unobserved connections between modernization and globalization theories, see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), 91–153. Although modern physics since the adoption of relativity theory take time and space as interrelated dimensions (in time-spaces), historians usually presuppose time to be independent of space. See Stephen Hawking, ‘Space and Time’, in Hawkins, *A Brief History of Time* (London, 1988), pp. 15–37.

⁴² See Conrad, ‘What time is Japan?’

because the choice of a temporal frame of reference also conditions the outcome of the comparison. For example, whether an event is being described as 'belated' or 'backward', 'timely' or 'premature' is always judged against the notion of some 'normal' timeframe. The explanation of major problems in both German and Quebec history in terms of a partial lack of modernization or in terms of retarded modernization is a clear example of 'temporal comparison'. Therefore it is quite paradoxical that historians have only recently recognized that time – including the relationship between past, present and future – is not somehow 'given', but a construction.⁴³ Hence it is not accidental that the notion of the 'politics of time', alias chrono-politics, has been coined and developed in anthropology and not in history.⁴⁴

This 'blind spot' of history as a discipline is remarkable because the very distinction between the present and the past – the 'break-up' between them, so to say – has been a problem for contemporary history from the very start.⁴⁵ Although the origins of history as an academic discipline have usually been located in the experience of rupture caused by the French and the Industrial Revolutions, the differentiation between the past and the present as a general issue for historians has been remarkably under-theorized. Only a small number of historians and philosophers – like Michel de Certeau, Reinhart Koselleck, Hayden White, Francois Hartog, Frank Ankersmit and Eelco Runia – have presented systematic arguments on this topic.⁴⁶ And Berber Bevernage alone has recently presented an analysis in which the 'break-up' of the past and the present is formulated as a political issue, that is, in terms of performative speech acts, that determine which chunk of time is labelled as 'the present' and which chunk of time is labelled as 'the past'.⁴⁷ The past does not 'break

⁴³ See, e.g., Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History* (Budapest, 2008), p. 22: 'Historians of the West usually take the modern schema of time for granted because it provides the foundations of their discipline.' '[...] Historians of the non-West have played a key role in drawing the attention of historians to the conundrums of time.' Lucian Hölscher, *Semantik der Leere. Grenzfragen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, (Göttingen, 2009), pp. 13–81, argues that the notions of an 'empty' time and space were only developed in the early modern period.

⁴⁴ Of course Reinhart Koselleck and Francois Hartog have theorized the temporal relations of present, past and future, but *not* its political implications.

⁴⁵ See A. Nützenadel and W. Schieder (eds), *Zeitgeschichte als Problem. Nationale Traditionen und Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa* (Göttingen, 2004).

⁴⁶ M. de Certeau, *The Writing History of History* (New York, 1988); R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA, 1985); E. Runia, 'Burying the Dead, Creating the Past', *History and Theory*, 46, 3 (2007), 313–26; F. Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History: The Order of Time', in R. Thorstendahl and I. Veit-Brause (eds), *History – Making: The Intellectual and Social Formation of a Discipline* (Stockholm, 1996), pp. 85–113.

⁴⁷ Berber Bevernage, *'We the victims declare the past to be in the present'* (Ghent, 2009), has rightly criticized Runia for an 'agentistic' conception of the past, that is, the idea that the past itself can be an independent actor in the present.

off' automatically from the present – as Ankermit has argued – but only as the result of speech acts and as the result of 'breaking up'.⁴⁸

A clear example of the performative inclusion of the past into the present is represented by the official motto of Quebec: 'Je me souviens', ('I remember') because this motto transports an event of 1759–60 – the British Conquest – into the definition of the Quebec present. Another example is the representation of Germany as the 'Holocaust nation', because it transports events of 1940–45 into the present-day definition of Germany. By definitional inclusion these pasts become part of 'the present'.

Performative exclusion of the past basically works the same way as performative inclusion. The representation of the immediate post-1945 period of Germany as 'Stunde Null' – which boiled down to a sort of 'Je ne me souviens de rien', or at least an 'I don't remember very well' – was an active attempt to break off the Nazi past from the post-war present. Similar 'exclusionary' attempts are made in all situations where a present is defined as a 'post-situation' – post-Apartheid South Africa, post-communist Poland, post-Franco Spain and so on.

In both German and in Quebec historiography, I argued that the particularistic discourse of difference is both oriented towards the past (origins) and the future (as telos). The generalizing discourse of normality to the contrary is primarily oriented towards the present. Therefore there appears to be an elective affinity between the types of discourse and their dominant temporal orientation. This observation suggests that Hartog's view of 'regimes of historicity', each characterized by one dominant temporal orientation and simply *succeeding* each other, is in need of adjustment, because a temporal orientation towards the past/future and a temporal orientation towards the present may also *coexist*.⁴⁹

My fifth point is that in both German and Quebec historiographies, the discourse of particularity is linked to 'foundational' events in the nations' past. In Germany, the 'positive' *Sonderweg* interpretation was anchored in the positive experience of the German unification of 1871 – after Prussia's victory over France – as the basis for German political unity and the German state. The negative *Sonderweg* interpretation was basically an inversion of this

⁴⁸ For German contemporary history I have argued along similar lines in "'Hete geschiedenis". Over de temperatuur van de contemporaine Duitse geschiedenis', in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 120:1 (2007), 5–19. See F. Ankersmit, *The Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford, CA, 2006), pp. 208–10, 287.

⁴⁹ See Francois Hartog, *Régimes d'Historicité. Présentisme et Expériences du Temps* (Paris, 2002). Bevernage and Aerts have reached a similar a conclusion along a different route in Berber Bevernage and Koen Aerts, 'Haunting pasts: Time and historicity as constructed by the Argentine Madres de Plaza de Mayo and radical Flemish Nationalists', *Social History* 34:4 (2009), 391–408.

positive interpretation of the foundational event, because it was anchored in the experience of loss of political unity and autonomy after 1945 as a consequence of Germany's total defeat in the Second World War.

In Quebec, the lost war against the British and the subsequent loss of political autonomy has been the experiential foundation of the paradigm of particularity. So both the experience of catastrophe and of victory may foster a sense of historical particularity of a nation – against a background, of course, of the historians' claim to the particularity of every nation.⁵⁰ If one is looking for names, one could label the catastrophic sense of particularity the 'Jewish' sense of history, and the victorious sense of particularity the 'American' sense of history, because both appear to represent ideal typical cases.

Claims to 'normality', on the other hand, appear to be unconnected to 'foundational' – catastrophic or victorious – events of the nation. They just seem to feed on the 'positive' experience of the present. 'Historical missions', based on foundational events and origins – catastrophic or victorious – no longer form the temporal axes of normalizing narratives. The *status quo* basically structures the *status quo ante*. Moreover, the *status quo ante* is no longer represented as the *status quo ante bellum*.

In Germany, the economic miracle and the political reunification of 1990 have played this role. In Quebec, the *Quiet Revolution* since the 1960s and Quebec's semi-autonomy within the Canadian federation have played a similar 'normalizing' role. So, unsurprisingly maybe, there seems to be a connection between the change from the discourse of particularity to the discourse of normality about the past and changes in dominant modes of experiencing the present in national communities. Both changes condition each other – as the 'nation-building' role of historians exemplifies.

The sixth and last point, based on the comparison of Germany and Quebec, is that although the discourses of particularity and of normality of the past are rooted in the experience of the present, the historical discourses are also interconnected amongst each other. Both the German and Quebec historians have been discussing questions concerning their nations' 'special path' and 'normality', in the first place amongst each other. In other words, historians are not only referring to the past itself – which puts evidential limits to their representations⁵¹ – but simultaneously to each others' representations of the past. History writing is thus simultaneously conditioned by the past – both in the form of experience and of evidence – and by intertextuality.

⁵⁰ See S. Berger and C. Lorenz, 'National Narratives and their 'Others': Ethnicity, Class, Religion and the Gendering of National Histories', *Storia della Storiografia* 50 (2006), 59–98. Given their 'catastrophic character', the cases of Polish and Irish history also seem fit for a comparison with Quebec.

⁵¹ See J. Gorman, *Historical Judgement: The Limits of Historiographical Choice* (Montreal, 2008).

The negative or critical character of this intertextual relationship has been aptly phrased by Ann Rigney:

The starting point (of historiography) is not silence (by now irretrievable) but what has been said already [...]. Revisionist works are intertextually linked to alternative accounts they seek to displace [...]. Historians, contrary to what much theoretical reflection might lead us to believe, do write regularly in the negative mode. The assertion of what happened going hand in glove with the denial of what did not happen, what was certainly not the case or only partially so.⁵²

Therefore, in history writing there is a direct relationship between factual and counter-factual history. Historians that highlight directly what has not happened – thus what is lacking in their nations' factual history – usually find this 'negative property' of fundamental importance from a political point of view. So here we are also dealing with the politics of comparison as expressed in the choice of the 'contrast-class'.⁵³

This is what Rigney aptly calls the 'agonistic dimension' of history, and the change from the discourse of difference towards the discourse of normality in both German and Quebec historiography offers a clear example of this dimension.⁵³ Gerard Bouchard's narrative of Quebec as the only 'New Nation' that did not attain statehood, offers a clear illustration. This is because Quebec is primarily characterized by him in terms of a negative property, that is, in terms of what Quebec was lacking in comparison to other 'New Nations', namely political autonomy.⁵⁴ In German historiography there is a remarkable parallel in the 'negative' *Sonderweg* paradigm. This paradigm represents Germany as the only modern society in the West that did not develop some kind of parliamentary democracy on its own before 1945.

In both the Quebec and the German case, the 'missing' property is represented as a consequence of a 'false' development in time in comparison with 'good' developments elsewhere. In both cases, a national problem is represented as a 'failed' case of 'modernization'. Both cases illustrate that history

⁵² A. Rigney, 'Time for visions and revisions: Interpretative conflict from a communicative perspective', *Storia della Storiografia* 22 (1992), 85–92, here 86–9. For the role of inversion in history writing, see C. Lorenz, "'Won't you tell me, where have all the good times gone?'" On the advantages and disadvantages of modernization theory for historical study', in Wang and Fillafer (eds), *The Many Faces of Clio*, pp. 104–27.

⁵³ Also see Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*, p. 29: 'For the wartime and surely, for the post-war generation, the German past has come to function as a negative foil for current definitions of identity.'

⁵⁴ Bouchard, *Making of the Nations and Cultures*. Since November 2006 Quebec has been officially recognized as a 'nation' in Canada by the Canadian parliament.

writing is also comparative in its counterfactual modality, even when it claims to be simply 'factual' and only concerned with one particular case.⁵⁵

Both cases thus nicely illustrate the workings of the politics of comparison. They show how the construction of a historical narrative is simultaneously an attempt to provide an answer to a contemporary political question. In our two cases the questions are: 'Why is Quebec lacking political autonomy anno 2006?' and 'Why was Germany lacking parliamentary democracy before 1945?' respectively. This question was still an actual question in the early Federal Republic because of the utter failure of its 'predecessor', the Weimar Republic.⁵⁶

Concluding my analysis of the comparative and political character of historiography, I would like to lend some support to Hayden White's critique of the distinction between what Michael Oakeshott has called the 'historical' and the 'practical' past.⁵⁷ According to White, this distinction had been necessary for establishing history's status as an academic discipline; 'a discipline purified by the elimination of futuristic concerns on the one hand, and excluded from making moral and aesthetic, not to mention political and social judgements on the present on the other.' The 'historical' past – in contrast – was conceived as 'the preserve of professional historians interested in "disinterested" study of the past "as it really was" and "as an end in itself". The "historical past" thus was conceived as "split off" from the "practical past", that is, the past considered to be a storehouse of memory, ideals, and examples: events worthy of remembrance and repetition.'⁵⁸ During his long career, White has criticized the very idea of a purely 'historical past' – even at the expense of the idea of history as a discipline with epistemic credentials.⁵⁹ Against the academic current, he has

⁵⁵ 'Absences' and 'failures' of 'a history to keep an appointment with its destiny' therefore are *not* restricted to non-European histories, as Chakrabarty seems to suggest. See his *Provincializing Europe*, 31. Also see Eckel's and Berger's contributions to this volume.

⁵⁶ See Eckel's contribution, Chapter 1 in this volume. This also explains why the history of the Federal Republic is mainly written under titles such as 'the successful republic'. See E. Wolfrum, *Die geglü ckte Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 2006). This supports the recent views of A. Dirk Moses. Dirk Moses argues with R. G. Collingwood, Jörn Rüsen and Reinhart Koselleck that 'narratives pose historical questions, and therefore have a specific orientation towards understanding discrete phenomena [...]. Historians are not just telling a story for its own sake, it is argued: they pose and try to answer specific questions.'

⁵⁷ M. Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 86–169.

⁵⁸ H. White, 'The public relevance of historical studies: A reply to Dirk Moses', *History and Theory*, 44:3 (2005), 333–8, here 334. I have argued along similar lines against the splitting of the notions of historical identity and practical identity in C. Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit* (Cologne, 1997), pp. 400–36.

⁵⁹ For the – renewed – question whether the past is putting limits on its representation, see the forum 'Historical Representation and Historical Truth', *History and Theory* 48:2 (2009).

been stressing the inherent political character of 'doing history': 'In choosing our past, we choose a present; and vice versa. We use one to *justify* the other.'⁶⁰ In this respect White had a fundamental point – and the sheer amount of debate generated by *Metahistory* is a clear testimony thereof.

However, as I and others like Jörn Rüsen have emphasized, the acknowledgement of the fundamental political *aspects* of history as a discipline does not imply the *reduction* of history to politics, or the elimination of its epistemology.⁶¹ This acknowledgement only puts the location and the analysis of 'the politics of history' on the theoretical agenda. My analysis of the 'politics of comparison' is meant as a modest contribution to the elucidation of this issue.

⁶⁰ White cited in A. D. Moses, 'White, Traumatic Nationalism and the Public Role of History', *History and Theory* 44:3 (2005), 311–32, here 320. For White's position, see H. Paul, *Masks of Meaning: Existentialist Humanism in Hayden White's Philosophy of History* (Groningen, 2006), esp. ch. 2.

⁶¹ See my 'Can histories be true? Narrativism, positivism and the "metaphorical turn"', *History and Theory* 37:3 (1998), 309–29.

3

Setting the Scene for National History

Joep Leerssen

Introduction 1 Narrative and scene-setting

Narrative is an all-pervasive human activity; it far exceeds the genres of literary fiction (story, novella, folktale, novel, even myth and drama), since it is also the form in which real-life stories are often recounted – journalism, legend, autobiography, travel writing and, especially, certain traditions in history writing. Yet, despite this wide-spread fluidity of narrative as a discursive format or even a mode of our imagining things, not all texts are narrative. The literary specialism of narratology has been working for decades on the questions: What makes narratives special? Which features set narrative apart from other discursive formats such as inventory, prayer, instruction, disquisition or disputation? Among these narrative-specific features¹ is the fact that narratives usually describe the attempts of a protagonist to fulfil a certain agenda, in which they are helped or hindered by other secondary actors or elements. In addition, the events are often focused through a participant in the action and the narratives establish a predication of a particular type of action on a particular type of actor, for example a hero, coward, traitor, victim and so on. Furthermore, these actions are usually required to have a certain moral and logical plausibility often referred to as *motivation*. In establishing motivation, they often activate a set of stock motifs or stock characters.

¹ I am here indiscriminately conflating and eclectically garnering insights as propounded by A. J. Greimas, G. Genette, M. Bal, M. Fludernik and A. Rigney. These insights come from different approaches and ‘schools’ in literary studies, each with their own priorities, vocabularies and their own way of doing things; yet they are not mutually incompatible. For general introductory synopses, see J.-P. Dubost, ‘Erzählen/Beschreiben’, in B. Cassin (ed.), *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (Paris, 2004), pp. 377–83; G. Prince, ‘Narratology’, in M. Groden, M. Kreiswirth (eds), *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism* (Baltimore, MD, 1994), pp. 524–8; A. Rigney, ‘Verhalen’, in K. Brillenburg Wurth and A. Rigney (eds), *Het leven van teksten: Een inleiding tot de literatuurwetenschap* (Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 159–94.

All these elements and rhetorical strategies can be, and have been, encountered in historical writing. To some extent, these tropes of narrativity are merely the unavoidable concomitant of our way of ordering chronologically successive events, even historically factual ones, into cause and effect storylines. After all, a zero-degree mode of writing, bereft of all rhetorical or stylistic salience is inconceivable. To some extent, such tropes of narrativity can bespeak a *parti-pris* or even a manipulative intent on the part of the historian. The selection and ordering of the material (what in rhetoric is called the *dispositio*²); the choice on whom to focus the action; the strategies of characterization and motivation: all that is as much a part of the historian's toolkit as are the skills of archival research and source criticism.

Fundamental to all this are of course the questions what to foreground and what to marginalize, or even: what to leave in or leave out, and how to circumscribe the topic and ambit of a historical narrative. I would like to offer some reflections on that topic by looking at the narrative edges of a historical text. It would be possible to do so by concentrating on the economy of text-space distribution: how much space is there, what word count is devoted to which features, events or figures? Alternatively, there is the interesting possibility of tracing the elements that are enshrined in the main body of the text, as opposed to the marginal *obiter dicta* or footnotes. But most importantly, there is the question of where a historical text begins, and where it cuts off.

Narratives are characterized by having a beginning, a middle and an end; each of these having a specific function in the narrative arc. Usually, the story is set in the beginning, followed through in the middle, and rounded off at the conclusion. How important this emplotment's 'sense of an ending' (to recall the title of Frank Kermode's 1967 book) is, has been illustrated in recent years by the extraordinary measures taken to keep the reading public in ignorance of the ending of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. To some extent, the jealous guarding of the books' endings was part of a publicity hype; but that hype could not have worked so well if it did not play into a deep seated notion that the reader's trajectory along the narrative arc would be vitiated somehow, if the ending were to be given away in advance by what is significantly known as 'spoilers'.

Historical narrative has, it seems, only a middle.³ Beginnings and endings in history are anomalies, like trying to mark the beginning and the end of an ocean current with boundary posts. A history has to start somewhere, and

² This involves, centrally, also the way the underlying set of events (*fabula*) is arranged into a specific textual narration (*sjuzet*) – the central heuristic distinction identified by the Russian Formalist school.

³ I draw here on the historiographical narratology of A. Rigney, e.g., in her *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation* (Cambridge, 1990), or 'Narrativity and Historical Representation', *Poetics Today* 12:3 (1991), 591–605, which in turn draws on the work of L. O. Mink, P. Ricoeur and H. White.

at some point it has to stop; but these cut-off points do not in themselves constitute a narrative beginning or end. A history of the First World War cannot blithely begin at the opening of hostilities in 1914 and conclude with the moment of armistice in 1918. The story of that war has its run-up and its aftermath, and the historian is always in the awkward position of squaring his narrative's beginning with the events' run-up, and reconciling his textual cut-off point with the ongoing nature of historical impact. Causes are always, by nature, a receding perspective of prequels and effects are an indefinitely extending telescope of sequels.

How do historians begin and end their texts? A variety of textual strategies can be encountered. In many cases, the account of historical events is book-ended between an a-chronic and a non-narrative beginning and end. The end consists of moral conclusions or an ethical balancing-sheet weighing up the significance of the events described. The beginning consists of an almost chorographical survey of the setting in which the events will unroll. This structure reflects that of the neo-classical tragedy with its curtain-raising prologue and its concluding epilogue. It is on the beginnings of stories that I want to focus in the following pages, and I will take my examples mainly from Ireland and Belgium.

Introduction 2 Some European modalities of beginning a national history

A drama, literally an 'enactment of events', takes place in a theatre, on a stage. The opening consists of the first scene becoming visible to the audience: either as a result of the curtain being raised, or by means of lighting effects. Many other narrative forms echo this beginning by textually commencing the narrative with a landscape description or a set of spatial indicators as to the location of the action. Famously, many novels by Thomas Hardy begin with panoramic evocations of a landscape, zooming in on certain human characters in the scene, and then entering upon the narrative description of the actors, their hopes and fears, their deeds and their fate. Likewise, in film, the story often opens, not with a narrative or dramatic presentation of events, but with a spectacular tableau of the setting where the action will unroll.⁴

Similarly, many historical texts launch their narrative from a spectacle.⁵ They will present a geographical survey of the place, or a situational survey

⁴ This dramatic opening has its counterpart in the epic opening, which plunges the unprepared audience *in medias res* by immediately presenting dialogue or action and only subsequently 'zooming out' to explain the context or background. The opening of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (featuring conversation during a society *soirée* where people are gossiping about current affairs) is an example of such an epic opening *in medias res*.

⁵ The two-track approach of narrative and spectacular representation is to some extent typical of historical discourse; cf., again, A. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*.

of the moment: a survey presenting a static alignment of conditions, in what Lessing would call a *Nebeneinander*, before entering upon the relation of the events and their dynamic *Nacheinander*. The non-narrative *tour de force* of Michelet's 'Tableau de France' at the opening of his massive *Histoire de France* is well-known,⁶ and has been commented upon by historiographical narratologists like Hans Kellner. However, that tableau is only one example of a historiographical tradition that reaches at least from Gibbons's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to Braudel's *Méditerranée*.

The poetical, narratological and historiographical intricacies of the relationship between spectacular description and evenemential narrative, and of the question of beginnings, middles and endings, present a fascinating and challenging topic. It has a specific importance in the period and sub-genre of *national* history writing, since it plays into underlying uncertainties concerning the precise nature of nationality – that category which in the nineteenth century was canonized as the informing principle of history and the premier category of history writing.

National history writing, as it arose in the decades of Romanticism and the democratic revolutions, involved a shift of focus from polity to people, and from the realm to its constituent nation. Instead of a succession of rulers providing both the focus of the narrative and the organizing principle of chapter division, the cohesion and organization of the historical narrative was now the experience of that collective protagonist called 'the nation'. This also raises a number of historiographical problems.

The older history had dealt with realms and reigns; that is to say, with states whose institutions provided *a priori* the continuity of the historical events and narrative. The collapse of *ancien régime* realms, such as the monarchy in France or the Holy Roman Empire in Germany, may indeed have prompted historians to look for other, non-institutional continuities, and an idealized idea of 'the nation' may well have provided this. We can infer as much from the momentous occasion of the re-interment of Napoleon's corpse in the Invalides in 1840. When the coffin, with its attendant cortege, reached Paris after having been repatriated from St Helena and having moved across France in a triumphal procession, it was presented to Louis-Philippe. At that moment, two incompatible avatars of the French state, the Empire and the July Monarchy, came face to face. The possible tension in that moment was defused by a ceremonious exchange, when the officer in charge of the cortege addressed

⁶ Not, strictly speaking, at the opening, since the Tableau is presented in Book Three, following the sections on Roman Gaul and the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. By this arrangement, these earlier periods are reduced to the status of 'curtain-raisers', preliminaries before the commencement of the real history of France proper. Cf. H. Kellner, 'Narrating the "Tableau": Questions of narrativity in Michelet', in Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, WI, 1989), pp. 102–23.

the king with the words: 'Sire, I present to you the corpse of the Emperor Napoleon, whom I have brought here on your orders.' Thus, the simultaneous presence of a royal sire and his imperial predecessor, in the single scene and sentence, is being defused by the emphasis on the king's power and authority. Louis-Philippe's reply: 'I receive him in the name of France', implies that succeeding constitutions are each legitimate in that each of them acts, within its own generation, on behalf of a transcendent spiritual principle called 'France'.⁷ Thus the abstract, transcendent Nation, here as in the history-writing of the historians of the 1840s, can be invoked to represent continuity across institutional fault lines and revolutions. Similarly, in Germany, Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* had set out to demonstrate a grand trans-generational continuity across the institutional and constitutional disruptions of the moment. The very title of his lectures implied that, although the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation had been abolished in a millennial upheaval, a thousand years after the Roman coronation of Charlemagne, the Empire's constituent Nation was still an active and morally commanding presence.⁸

Yet, while the transcendent idea of nationality could be invoked to signal continuity amidst revolutionary disruptions, its own historical continuity was in many cases an open question. In many countries, class distinctions were explained from ethnic roots: the ancient nobility of France seeing themselves as being the heirs of the Frankish conquerors, much of the ancient nobility of England deriving its genealogy from the victorious invaders in the Norman Conquest, and the proudest boast of a Spanish 'hidalgo' lying in his Visigoth ancestry.⁹ Nationality, if taken to refer to an ethnic lineage, had itself been subject to disruptions, for example during conquests and migrations. Indeed, it was in Germany that the continuity of ethnicity became a proud boast with which that country's superiority to the rest of Europe was demonstrated. From the tribes described by Tacitus to the present day, Germany, so it was argued, had always been inhabited by Germans, and some tribes like Frisones and Catti were still resident in the lands (Friesland and Hessa respectively) where Tacitus had originally located them. Germans were autochthonous, native of the soil, aboriginal. The territorial and regional divisions of Germany still carried within their nomenclature the tribal appellations of the German

⁷ J. Tulard, 'Le retour des cendres', in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 2, new edn (Paris, 1997), pp. 1729–56.

⁸ Cf. J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006).

⁹ Cf. L. Poliakov, *Le mythe aryen. Essai sur les sources du racisme et des nationalismes*, new edn (Bruxelles, 1987). Generally, on older national origin-myths: A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*, 6 vols, new edn (Munich, 1995); and P. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Such Stuff as Peoples are Made on: Ethnogenesis and the Construction of Nationhood in Medieval Europe', *Medieval History Journal* 9:2 (2006), 195–42.

nations of antiquity: Alemanni, Suabii, Baiuvari, Saxones and Franci. What is more, they had stuck to their original language. Other Germanic tribes had conquered Europe at the moment of the Fall of the Western Roman Empire; but the Burgundi and Franci had adopted the Romance speech of conquered Gaul; the Visigoths and Vandals adopted that of Spain; and the Longobards and Ostrogoths that of Italy. This degeneration, as Jacob Grimm called it, had not tainted the Germans.¹⁰ And thus, German national chauvinism by the end of the nineteenth century invoked an aboriginal, unbroken continuity between ethnicity and place of settlement. 'No, we are not vagrant gypsies who wandered into this place; we are the indigenous aboriginal native folk of our homeland, issued from the harsh selection of the Ice Age.'¹¹

Ideally, then, national continuity could be traced back without disruption to the ultimate beginning of European history: the Ice Age, the 'dawn of history'. The default situation was already established when our earliest sources describe the tribal geography of primitive Europe: Gaulish France, Celtiberian Spain, Celtic Britain, Germanic Germany and Scandinavia. But most historians, in tracing the beginning of their nation and setting the scene in the geographical theatre of their National History, had to accommodate disruptions of settlement. They had to resort to a presentation that could accommodate a history of different populations, ethnic migrations and conquests. Nationality, in most European countries, does not provide an open-ended, static and undifferentiated beginning. How did historians cope with this difficulty?

The nettle was famously grasped by Henri Pirenne in his *History of Belgium*. He wrote at a time when the cult of tribal continuity had already begun to come under fire with Ernest Renan having famously dismissed the idea of unmixed ethnicity being a factor in national identity. When Pirenne wrote his *Histoire de la Belgique* (7 vols, 1899–1932), he was in no position to claim any form of national or ethnic cohesion for his country, but at the same time denied any charge that Belgium should as a result be considered hybrid or artificial. Instead, he defined the character and cohesion of Belgium as that of a natural crossroads and meeting place.

We can follow the steps of his argument in his Preface.¹² As he states at the outset, he wants to trace the medieval history of Belgium by highlighting its

¹⁰ J. Grimm, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, (1848; reprinted Cambridge, 2009), esp. the dedication to Gervinus.

¹¹ Thus F. Bley in 1897, as quoted by I. Shöffler, *Het nationaal-socialistisch beeld van de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1956), p. 129. In the original: 'Nein, nicht eingewanderte Zigeuner sind wir, sondern das aus der harten Auslese der Eiszeit hervorgegangene ureingeborene Stammvolk unserer Heimat.'

¹² The quotations that follow are my English translation from the Préface in vol. 1 of the *Histoire de la Belgique* (1899; frequently reprinted; the 1929 reprint also online at the

'unitary character', and in doing so he follows the paradigm of national history writing, but realized from the outside that this task 'presented quite grave difficulties'. After all, in Belgium

one would look in vain for a geographical unity, or a racial unity, or a political unity. Indeed Belgium is a land without natural frontiers, where two languages are spoken and which, ever since the Treaty of Verdun, has depended both on France (left of the Scheldt) and on Germany (to the right of that river).

As a result, Pirenne is aware of the danger of presenting, as a 'national history', something that has no substantial coherence but has only been thrown together phraseologically and annalistically. Yet, this fear is groundless, as Pirenne argues. There is an intrinsic, substantial unity in the history of the counties, duchies and principalities on the Belgian territory. When seen as a West European microcosm, Belgium's history is no longer

an accumulation of irrelevant incidents. Its unity derives, not from the community of race as in Germany, nor from the centralizing influence of a hereditary monarchy as in England or France, but from the unity of social life,

that is to say: an ongoing, geographically determined tradition of commerce, traffic and exchange. From this tradition, Pirenne can conclude that 'There is, then, really, and in spite of appearances, a history of Belgium.'

Following this preliminary vindication of his subject matter and enterprise, Pirenne's history opens, in time-honoured fashion, with a spectacular scene – describing the lands and the origins of history in Roman times. Pirenne surveys the territory between the Ardennes and the North Sea coast, and registers the 'va et vient' of prehistoric wandering tribes and the settlement of Germans and Celts, whom, characteristically for his vision, he sees as a mixed and not easily distinguished conglomerate. 'Many Celtic tribes were shot through with Germanic elements [...] Anyway the difference between Celts and Germans is not very great [...] the Belgae may be considered a transition between the two.' And so, from the Roman settlement, with its traffic artery of the Cologne-Boulogne road, to Frankish incursions and the crystallization of the language frontier between Dunkirk and Maastricht, the scene for Pirenne's history of Belgium is set, and the central theme is laid out.

Ireland: isle of conquests

The counterpart to Belgium, as a stage for national history writing, is Ireland: not a crossroads, but an island, set apart from the rest of Europe and from much of European history. The marginality of Ireland had been a commonplace among historians and antiquarians, who tended to echo and recycle the trope that Ireland had never been part of the Roman Empire. For a historian like Hume, this was a stigma, because it was from Rome that all of Europe derived its civility. For nationalist, nineteenth-century authors, it was a point of honour: Ireland had maintained its pristine, native authenticity; 'Ireland has long been desired by continental peoples [...] But the Romans stopped short of the conquest of Ireland.'¹³ That view we can trace back as far as Leibniz. In his *Collectanea etymologica*, Leibniz speculated on the, as yet unclarified, relations between the languages of Europe, and especially the Celtic ones. Ireland's marginality made that country and its language interesting because, so he argued, it had been unaffected by later migration waves which had perturbed the ethnic-linguistic landscape of Europe, and its language may safely be held to be more archaic and primitive than, for instance, Welsh. (This view is still dominant among Celtic philologists.¹⁴)

No crossroads, then; and in that particular situation, the very opposite of Belgium. Even so, Irish national historians found it difficult to argue Irish history in terms of pristine ethnic authenticity, German-style. Although they clearly followed a narrative line that vindicated the country's Gaelic population as the original, rightful nation, unjustly oppressed and dispossessed by the rule of the English Crown and by the settlement of an Anglo-Irish colonial class, the native tradition was itself very far from seeing the Gaelic Celts as the country's aboriginal inhabitants.

Native pseudo-historical mythography had seen Ireland as a country of which successive waves of immigrants had taken possession. The medieval compilation of 'origo' myths and bardic legends even carried the title *Lebor gabála Érenn* or 'the book of the takings of Ireland'. In this view, the Gaels had only been the last in a series of conquering populations, preceded as such by races such as the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha Dé Danann and others. This view had carried over into modern, printed history writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth

¹³ A. Stopford Green, *The Making of Ireland and its Undoing, 1200–1600*, 2nd edn (London, 1909). On Hume and eighteenth-century historiographical debates as to the antiquity and ancient civilization (or lack thereof), see C. O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate on the Celtic Past in Ireland, c.1750–1800* (Cork, 2004), also, for later repercussions in the historiographical tradition, her chapter 'Historical Writings, 1690–1890', in M. Kelleher and Ph. O'Leary (eds), *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 599–632.

¹⁴ T. Brown (ed.), *Celticism* (Amsterdam, 1995).

centuries, notably through the work of Geoffrey Keating (fl. 1620s).¹⁵ Ireland, in this view, was a land that was there 'for the taking'; as a medieval bardic poet expressed it, it was 'sword land', held, not by legal or feudal titles but by the martial prowess and cultural largesse and charisma of its rulers.¹⁶ English or English-oriented historians, for their part, dismissed the native tradition as the superstitious myths of benighted natives, and reduced all Irish history prior to the advent of English Crown forces, in the late twelfth century, to the status of legendary pre-history. The dominant historical argument was, rather, a church-historical one: whether the country's Christianization in the early Middle Ages had, or had not, been effected on the basis of papal authority. The question, whether or not St. Patrick's episcopal status had been subordinate to that of the Roman pontiff was an important point of contention between Catholic, High-Church Anglican and Presbyterian authors, respectively, from the mid-seventeenth until the mid-nineteenth century.

Irish national history writing in the nineteenth century then faced an awkward, threefold crux. To begin with, it could no longer naïvely recycle the medieval legendary pseudo-histories, and had to come to terms with the obvious advances in history writing that had taken place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example; source criticism and source editions following Mabillon and Muratori and the development of 'philosophical' history writing following Burnet, Clarendon and Hume. But, on the other hand, their sympathies lay with the Gaelic tradition which modern history writing tended to dismiss as fantastical and fanciful. Yet, even within the outlook of that tradition, the Irish Gaels were only a link in the chain of succeeding populations, preceded by Fir Bolg and Tuatha Dé Danann and themselves overtaken by Danes and English. How to disentangle this knotty problem?

The answer came with the advent of the Indo-European paradigm. Between 1780 and 1825, comparative linguistics established that the Gaels of Ireland formed part of the Celtic ethno-linguistic category. Previous Irish antiquaries and historians had considered the Gaels, known more widely as 'Milesians', that is, descendants of Míl, to be an orientally derived people, related to Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Etruscans, who had arrived in Ireland from the Mediterranean by way of Spain and the Atlantic coastal sea routes.¹⁷ That Orientalist view

¹⁵ On Keating, see B. Cunningham, 'Seventeenth-century interpretations of the past: The case of Geoffrey Keating', *Irish Historical Studies* 25:98 (1986), 116–28, and her *The World of Geoffrey Keating. History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000).

¹⁶ See my *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Cork, 1996), pp. 175–7.

¹⁷ O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*; N. Vance, 'Celts, Carthaginians and Constitutions: Anglo-Irish Literary Relations, 1780–1820', *Irish Historical Studies* 22:87 (1981), 216–38; my own 'On the Edge of Europe: Ireland in Search of Oriental Roots,

was cast aside, following tumultuous historical and archaeological debates dominating the 1820s and 1830s, in favour of an Indo-European pattern that saw the Gaelic Celts as family members of the Continental Gauls and the Britons, who had arrived from Europe's interior at the beginning of the Iron Age. The Gaelic 'Landnahme' of Ireland then became part of a historically and archaeologically established Europe-wide pattern, and consolidated the claim of Ireland's Gaelic population that they were the descendants of the country's senior historical population, native, indigenous and authentic. This reduced pre-Gaelic Fir Bolg and the like to the shadowy status of unknown, vanished and 'pre-historical' megalith-builders and fairytale figures, while it turned the Danes and English who had taken power since then into invading marauders, occupiers and colonists. Thus P. W. Joyce in his *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* argued:

The Institutions, Arts, and Customs of Ancient Ireland, with few exceptions, grew up from within, almost wholly unaffected by external influence [...] The Romans never set foot in Ireland; though their influence was felt to some slight extent, either by direct communication or indirectly through the Britons. The first foreigners to appear as invaders were the *Danes*, [...] next came the *Anglo-Normans* [...]. But one momentous effect of the Danish and Anglo-Norman invasions must here be noted: *they arrested the progress of native learning and art* [...] Ireland presents the spectacle of an arrested civilisation.¹⁸

We may safely call Thomas Moore's *History of Ireland* (4 vols, 1835–45) the country's first major, ambitious national history in the nineteenth century. Its first volume appeared in 1835. The author was famous as a friend, biographer and editor of Byron and as one of the foremost poets of his generation – largely on the strength of his dramatic poem *Lalla Rookh* and his patriotic *Irish Melodies*. When Moore accepted the commission of writing a *History of Ireland*, history writing was just emerging from its source traditions of controversialism, secular and religious, antiquarianism and 'belles lettres'. Secular controversialism was dwindling as the aftermath and recriminations of the 1798 rebellion and the 1800–01 Act of Union were receding into the past. Religious controversialism was on the wane following the 1828 Emancipation Act giving civil rights to Ireland's majority Catholic population. Moore had participated in both, with his *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824) and his *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in*

1650–1850', *Comparative Criticism* 8 (1986), 91–112; J. Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, NY, 2004).

¹⁸ Second edn in 2 vols (London, 1913, repr. New York, 1980), I, pp. 3–5. Emphasis in the original.

Search of Religion (1833). Antiquarianism was beginning to shed its genteel amateurism and its heedless Orientalist speculations, and began to rely on a more thorough acquaintance with data from native sources, which were beginning to be inventoried by scholars such as Charles O'Connor and Edward O'Reilly. The last starry-eyed proponents of the 'Phoenician' Orientalist school, such as Sir William Betham, were being increasingly marginalized and ridiculed, and accordingly, Moore's history opens confidently with a paragraph on the 'Celtic origin of the Irish'.¹⁹

Moore finds it difficult, however, to dismiss completely the source material, tenable or not, from the legendary and pseudo-historical native tradition.²⁰ The rehearsal of early mythical conquests was too ingrained, and there was no alternative information available. As a result, Moore, and indeed most nineteenth-century historians after him, opts for a Hegelian *Aufhebung*: he enshrines the discredited legends in his text by taking critical account of their legendary nature, and begins his historical narrative with a survey, not of the land and its tribes, but of the ancient sources and what they say. And so the historical narrative emerges almost seamlessly from a mythological and source-critical overture.

That, then, becomes the acceptable way of 'beginning' a history of Ireland; opening chapters describe and paraphrase, without actually endorsing, a set of myths and legends as they had been passed on from times immemorial. Following this ventriloquism, the text then moves to a description of the land and society which formulated those myths and legends – the first properly 'historical' layer in Ireland's population strata: the Gaels; then the history sets off properly, usually starting with the Christianization mission of St Patrick. Gaelic Ireland is thus highlighted as representing the country's true, principal identity even if it cannot quite furnish an obvious opening or scene-setting for the historical narrative.

The ending of the narrative is drawn up with a symmetrical technique. After the history has traced, in tragic heroic form, the ousting of the Gael by conquering English forces, and their doomed but never-abandoned resistance against the superior forces of the neighbouring hegemon, the ending of the narrative refuses to present itself as the closure of this development. Irish histories usually continue to the present day, and end with a more or less explicit call not to let matters rest there: that the future must work towards a recapturing of the golden ideal of Ireland's authentic identity and independence. Thus, much as the beginning of the narrative is not really the beginning of Ireland's proper history, the end of the line cannot be the end of the story.

¹⁹ Generally on these developments, my *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork, 1996).

²⁰ It should be mentioned that many authors since shared this difficulty.

This radical open-endedness of Irish histories is also reflected in their strong tendency towards intertextual recycling and updating. This is in itself worth emphasizing. As Ann Rigney has noted, history writing, unlike novel writing, is marked by an 'agonistic tendency'. Historians return again and again to times treated earlier, because they feel the task has not been definitively and satisfactorily done by their predecessors. All historians justify their return to established topics with reference to the insufficiency of their precursors – adducing newly discovered archival material, or setting right what they feels are skewed, partial or insufficient interpretations. The intertextuality between historians is by default an agonistic one. W. E. H. Lecky's attempt to set right the Anglo-centrism of J. A. Froude is an example of Irish academic history following this established mode. But popular narrative history writing in Ireland, to the extent that it is not merely partisan or controversialist in nature, is remarkably non-agonistic in its modifications of older versions. It digests and assimilates, rather than that it rejects its older precursors. Eighteenth-century authors like Sylvester O'Halloran or James Mageoghegan, who had themselves followed in the tradition of Keating and the *Lebor gabála Érenn*, are taken up, digested and recycled by nineteenth-century successors.²¹ Their works were reprinted and continued by modern, nationalistic authors such as A. M. Sullivan and John Mitchel. Thus, in 1865–68, appeared: *The history of Ireland, ancient and modern, taken from the most authentic records [...] by the abbé Mac-Geoghegan. With a continuation from the Treaty of Limerick to the present day by John Mitchel*, which moves without an obvious break, from medieval *origo* myths to contemporary separatist politics. Also, in 1884 there appeared a similarly constructed volume entitled *The pictorial history of Ireland, from the landing of the Milesians to the present time*, pieced together from an eighteenth-century history by Sylvester O'Halloran and a nineteenth-century history by A. M. O'Sullivan. Its subtitle constitutes almost a contents preview, moving, again, smoothly from legendary antiquity to historical politics

detailing, in chronological order, all the important events of the reigns of the kings and chieftains, and embracing authentic accounts of their several wars with the Romans, Britons, Danes and Normans; with graphic descriptions of the battle of Clontarf, Strongbow's invasion; the death of king Roderick O'Conor; crowning of Edward Bruce king of Ireland; war of the O'Neills and O'Donnells against England; confiscation of Ulster; Cromwell's invasion; persecution of the catholics;

²¹ I have elsewhere argued that this Irish avoidance of intertextual agonism reflects their social function. In the history of Irish reading in the nineteenth century, the genre of the narrative Gaelophile history writing follows and to some extent replaces, after c.1830, a previous fashion for 'national tales' and historical novels. Cf. my 'Het nationaal verhaal: nationaal-historisch besef en narratieve geschiedschrijving in Ierland', *Theoretische geschiedenis* 22 (1995), 459–71.

war between king James and William of Orange; siege of Derry and battle of the Boyne; siege of Athlone; battle of Aughrim; siege and treaty of Limerick; penal laws; the Volunteers; the United Irishmen; rebellion of '98; the Union; catholic emancipation and repeal; the Young Irelanders; the Fenian insurrection; the Land league, etc. etc.

Again, in 1875, Ulick Bourke published a philological-antiquarian treatise on Irish culture in the style of Max Müller, portentously entitled *The Aryan Origin of the Gaelic Race and Language*, which strenuously attempted to reconcile modern ethnic anthropology with native, bardic mythography, and addressing thorny issues such as 'Were the Etruscans Gaels? Were the Children of the Gael of Aryan origin, and not Cuthite or Phoenician?' (p. v-vi). Thus, even the fundamental, paradigmatic contradictions between the orientalist-antiquarian mode of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century vintage, and the scientific Indo-European mode of the nineteenth century, are deflected, and in a gesture totally unlike the historiographical 'agonistic principle', are reconciled in a Hegelian *Aufhebung*.

Histories like these were aimed at the broader market, often at Irish emigrants in America. But even the more serious histories that were undertaken by academics within Ireland itself showed a tendency to set the scene for historical disquisition by giving a mythological introduction, often disguised as a review of existing sources. The landmark volumes by Eugene O'Curry, *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, were given a lengthy introduction by their posthumous editor W. K. Sullivan (1873) setting forth the entire philological *status quaestionis* from Grimm to Max Müller in order to establish the racial make up of the country's Gaelic population. Sullivan takes from the native tradition the point that 'Great Britain and Ireland were successively peopled by different races', then rejects these selfsame traditions as nugatory and unscientific:

In any case the time has scarcely come for dissecting and analysing the curious tissue of legends of Umorians, Fomorians, Nemedians, Firbolgs, Tuataha De Danands, Milesians, and others, which constitutes the mythical part of Irish history.

(p. lxxi)

Ultimately, native *origo* myths are then reconciled with modern philological anthropology in order to advance the notion that invading Indo-European Celts, who were tall and fair-haired, had subdued the country's pre-Indo-European, small, brown-haired population. That model still dominates the important archaeological work, in the early twentieth century, of Eoin MacNeill. True, MacNeill is already showing some healthy scepticism as to the notion of 'race' in history, 'often used in a very loose and very misleading way in popular

writings and discussions',²² yet the popularizing series of lectures *Phases in Irish history* follows the established pattern in its structure (1: 'The ancient Irish a Celtic people', 2: 'The Celtic colonisation of Ireland and Britain', 3: 'The pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland'). Also, in his more thorough *Celtic Ireland* (1921), the opening chapter itself feels the need to pull the historical facts out of a mythical basin:

The common account of the early history of Ireland tells us that some sixteen centuries BC the island was occupied by the Gaelic race, that before them it was occupied by the Tuatha De Danann, and again before these by the Fir Bolg.²³

History writing on ancient Ireland may be said to have come of age with the work of Patrick Weston Joyce (1827–1914), author of the above quoted *Social History of Ancient Ireland*, but also of influential texts like *A Short History of Ireland* and *A Concise History of Ireland*. Joyce, too, opts for an *incipit* that is source-critical. He begins, as O'Curry had done before him, with a survey of the extant materials on early Irish history: native annals and medieval histories. After dutifully reviewing the legendary material contained in these sources, he then gradually moves towards the more reliably documented late-medieval period, starting with the conquest under Henry II and King John, and thus brings his narrative into factual historicity. It is only in the wake of Joyce's work that the modes of philological study of native tradition, the factual study of archaeological evidence, and the writing of history have meshed; but the older ambiguities of myth and fact, native tradition and source documentation, still reign in popularizing reprints. The complex transition zone between pre-history and history, and the question on how the former 'set the scene' for the latter, remained entangled in a native, pre-modern and semi-legendary source tradition. When archaeologists in the twentieth century attempted to establish prehistoric population patterns in Ireland, they fell back on the nomenclature of the ancient annals. The highly respected T. F. O'Rahilly saw the pre-historical settlement of Ireland as consisting of successive waves he identified as Pretanic, Bolgic, Luginian and Goidelic.²⁴ While the testimony of native mythography is imponderable and unreliable, it cannot be ignored or dismissed wholesale. From the nineteenth-century founder of Irish archaeology, George Petrie,

²² Eoin MacNeill, *Phases in Irish History* (Dublin, 1920), p. 1.

²³ New edn, ed. Donncha Ó Corráin (Dublin, 1981), p. 1.

²⁴ T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946). The names are an attempt to mediate between native mythographical nomenclature and the tribal names known from Latin sources as having been settled in or around the British Isles. Thus, 'Bolgic' combines the Fir Bolg with the Belgae.

to the present day, Irish archaeologists are trying to correlate the legendary statements of native annals with the international patterns that emerge from physical findings.²⁵

Irish historians have never found themselves in a position to start national histories with a 'grand tableau', Michelet-style, with an evocation of the unchanging pristine state of a Dawn of History, German-style, or with a sense of traffic, exchange and meeting, Belgian-style. This is due to a combination of three factors. To begin with, Ireland was largely beyond the purview of classical or post-classical historians, barring some references in Strabo, Solinus and Bede. Its proverbial position outside the Roman Empire also meant an absence of other than native legendary sources for its early history. Second, its conquest by English forces in the twelfth century prevented the emergence of anything like a home-grown humanist or academic preoccupation with the nation's past; instead, bardic literature retrenched into besieged traditionalism, recycling its pseudo-historical myths almost in a gesture of anti-English defiance.²⁶ Third, that notion of conquest became a nesting trope of pre-Gaelic, Gaelic and post-Gaelic settlements which signalled the very opposite of national continuity. Instead, in the rhetoric of Irish history writing, a non-evenemential exordium is sought, not in the landscape or the prehistoric situation of the country, but rather in the evocation of myths and legends. Unwittingly, Irish national historians of the nineteenth century have followed, and reinforced, the notion that Ireland is a country rooted in legend and timeless fantasy rather than in historical time.²⁷ Also, by always tracing their narrative time scale 'from the earliest times to the present day' (as the many subtitles all have it, in one form or another) they defer a sense of a historical closure and locate the proper *finale* of history in an always imminent, never realized future vision. Here, as in other respects, formal analysis of the narrative stratagems seem to throw into relief, and render textually specific, the political and ideological proclivities of the historical text. Conversely, it also suggests that these proclivities are communicated over the generations, and kept alive, often across considerable upheavals and discontinuities, by means of intertextual echoes and narrative conventions.

²⁵ On Petrie, see my *Remembrance and Imagination*; and G. Murray, *George Petrie (1790–1866): The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past* (Bandon, 2004). On the history of Irish archaeology, see M. Ní Cheallaigh, 'Perceptions of Archaeological Monuments in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' (doctoral thesis, University College Dublin, 2005); and J. Waddell, *Foundation Myths: The Beginnings of Irish Archaeology* (Bray, 2005).

²⁶ Cf. also my *The 'Contention of the Bards' (Iomarbhágh na bhFileadh) and its Place in Irish Political and Literary History* (London, 1994).

²⁷ A. Rigney, 'Immemorial Routines: The Celts and their Resistance to History', in Brown, *Celticism*, pp. 159–82.

4

A Strained Relationship: Epistemology and Historiography in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Germany and Britain

Angelika Epple

The concept of the nation and the epistemology of historical narrations

Writing national histories was presumably the most prominent issue for German and British historiography in the nineteenth century. Even though this statement might be a simplification, generally speaking, it is appropriate: that is, at least when we look only at academic historiography.¹ If, however, we turned our attention to so-called amateur history or the histories of academic outsiders, we would definitely find a more diverse result.² Bearing in mind the limitations of this approach, it still appears to me to be very promising indeed to examine the different concepts of the nation, and to look for invented national traditions that were legitimized by such histories. These questions normally accompany analyses of the professionalization of history as an academic discipline.

However, in this chapter, I shall address these problems from a somewhat different view. I shall scrutinize the relation between epistemology and writing national histories. My main question will be: How do varying epistemologies translate into different concepts of the nation?

My starting point is the observation that the concept of the nation had a two-fold function in German Historism:³ On the one hand, it helped to strengthen

¹ There are impressive exceptions such as Jakob Burckhardt or Karl Lamprecht. Even Leopold von Ranke did not write national histories in a narrow sense. I shall return to this later.

² Various recently published or forthcoming anthologies and monographs deal with different national traditions of amateur history in Europe and the United States. See, e.g., M. O'Dowd and I. Porciani (eds), 'History Women', *Storia della Storiografia* 46 (2004). S. Paletschek (ed.), *Popular Historiographies in the 19th and 20th Century* (Oxford, 2010).

³ With this translation of the German word 'Historismus', I am following S. Berger who suggests that the notion 'Historism' should be used for the epoch of German historiography that was dominant from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, whilst 'Historicism'

the contested identity of the nation-state that had not yet come into being.⁴ The mission of national historiography, and this also applies to British historiography, was mainly to invent a shared tradition and thus to legitimize nation building through history.⁵ On the other hand, the term 'nation' also had a narrative (narratological) function; it made it easier for historians to identify their definite subject. The concept of the nation helped them to sort out which events were relevant to a certain nation's history and which events apparently had nothing to do with it. German and British historians of that time usually tended to deduce the nation's present identity from its history. In his popular 'History of England', Thomas Babington Macaulay judges foregone events in direct relation to his concept of the nation. Regarding the Magna Carta, for example, he wrote: 'Here commences the history of the English nation.'⁶ T. B. Macaulay was no exception in that respect. His contemporary colleagues also applied their concept of the nation to their findings, and then composed a narration that supported this very concept. Did they not realize that this reasoning was circular? Did they not feel that the nation was a concept they had defined themselves? Did they really believe in the essentiality of their nations? Were they still naïve positivists?⁷

This short reflection leads us to a tricky theoretical problem: How does epistemology define the status of the nation? In the following pages, I shall take an empirical approach to this challenging question. To illustrate how the concept of the nation worked in nineteenth-century historiography, I shall first contrast it with its role in eighteenth-century histories in Germany and Britain. I shall do this by broaching the issue of different velocities of professionalization in

should be reserved for Popper's philosophy. See S. Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Oxford, 1997).

⁴ A helpful survey of the rapidly expanding research in this field during the last decade is given in S. Weichlein, 'Nationalismus und Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa. Ein Forschungsüberblick', *Neue Politische Literatur* 51 (2006), 265–351. Older research on the subject is summarized in D. Langewische, 'Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven', in *Neue Politische Literatur* 40 (1995), 190–236.

⁵ S. Berger, 'Geschichten von der Nation. Einige vergleichende Thesen zur deutschen, englischen, französischen und italienischen Nationalgeschichtsschreibung seit 1800', in C. Conrad and S. Conrad (eds), *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 49–77.

⁶ T. B. Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, vol. 1 (London and Bombay, 1906 [1848]), p. 8. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1468/1468-8.txt> (accessed 16 June 2009).

⁷ Ranke was also very frequently interpreted as an empiricist or even a positivist. John Warren also pinpoints this danger in 'The Rankean tradition in British historiography, 1840–1950', in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds), *History, Theory, and Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 23–41, here p. 24.

the two countries. Then, I shall take a closer look at the ‘Histories of England’ written by David Hume and Catharine Macaulay, before comparing them with August Schlözer’s and Johann Gatterer’s concepts of history. The main focus of this section will be on the enlightened epistemology in Britain and Germany and its effects on the concept of the nation and the respective modes of narrating the past. Subsequently, I shall relate my findings to the Historists’ epistemology, dealing mainly with Leopold von Ranke’s understanding of the English nation as he developed it in his *History of England*. I shall conclude by asking whether there was a particular Historist point of view that could explain why they understood historiography as writing the history of the nation. To round off my central question, I shall also ask whether there was an Enlightenment way of writing history that implied a different understanding of the nation.

Various velocities in the shaping of German and British historiography

In 1864, Leopold von Ranke characterized David Hume’s merits in the introduction of his lecture concerning the *Parlamentarische Geschichte von England in den beiden letzten Jahrhunderten* (*Parliamentary History of England over the Last Two Centuries*) as follows: ‘A subtle, acute, educated thinker, who seems to have been even more important in things he initiated than in what he realized himself.’⁸ Indeed, David Hume and some of his colleagues initiated something new in British historiography. Their predecessors, known as ‘antiquarians’, imparted knowledge in cumbersome texts that were difficult to read. The so-called ‘literary historians’⁹ like David Hume, Edward Gibbon or Catharine Macaulay, however, started to talk about history in an entertaining and amusing way. The change was so fundamental that one could speak of a ‘narrative turn’ in the British historiography of the Age of Enlightenment. The interest of the British public was tremendous. Publications focusing on British history alone soon accounted for more than a third of all literary publications.¹⁰ This enthusiasm encouraged famous writers, such as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding or Jonathan Swift to write historical narrations as well. For them, composing national history turned out to be a profitable way of making a living.

Nowadays, it is common knowledge that the emergence of a national literature deeply influences the writing of history. For the literacy of German historiography, this still took a long time to blossom. Even though David Hume

⁸L. von Ranke, ‘Parlamentarische Geschichte von England in den beiden letzten Jahrhunderten’, 28.4.1864, in Ranke: *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, Bd. IV: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, ed. V. Dotterweich and W. P. Fuchs (Munich and Vienna, 1975), p. 362.

⁹ See D. Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670–1820* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 2000), p. 12.

¹⁰ Looser, *Women Writers*, p. 10.

was widely read during the European Enlightenment, it was only 50 years later, under the impact of the classical literature in Weimar, that Friedrich Schiller, Johann Gottfried Herder and others transferred the new literary style into historiography. Historism accomplished the literacy of German historiography during the 'long nineteenth century'.

This may explain why Leopold von Ranke still recommended David Hume's *History of England* for his students more than a hundred years after it had first been published. In respect of its style, the science of history in Germany certainly was a latecomer. In respect to the issue of professionalization, in contrast, it was definitely at the cutting edge.

Already during the German 'Aufklärungshistorie', which means the academic historiography of the Enlightenment, scholarly historians such as Johann Christoph Gatterer, August Ludwig von Schlözer and many others were developing a clear definition of an academic subject.¹¹ They shaped what historians of the late twentieth century called a 'disciplinary matrix'.¹² This early appearance of a strong professional identity had some important implications. It defined the essential curriculum vitae for a scholarly historian and excluded every deviance. Thus, since the eighteenth century, it was unthinkable for a literary writer in Germany to switch to writing scholarly historiography. This early professionalization also led to a strict exclusion of all female authors in German historiography. Women were admitted to neither scholarly training nor meetings in the private rooms of academics like Leopold von Ranke. In an impressive monograph and several essays, Bonnie Smith, and other scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis or Billie Melman, have pointed out how deeply gendered the making of the academic discipline was.¹³ This gendered division

¹¹ Horst Walter Blanke and Dirk Fleischer list 69 universities in German-speaking countries (including Austria and Switzerland) with chairs of history in the eighteenth century – Church history not included! See Index of Chairs of History, in Blanke and Fleischer (eds), *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, vol. 1. *Die theoretische Begründung der Geschichte als Fachwissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 103–23.

¹² Pim den Boer's opinion is that neither in Germany nor in France had there been an influential proto-professionalization before 1900, see 'Vergleichende Historiographieggeschichte – einige Beobachtungen insbesondere zur Professionalisierung in Frankreich und Deutschland', in M. Middell, G. Lingelbach and F. Hadler (eds), *Historische Institute im internationalen Vergleich* (Leipzig, 2001), pp. 135–48.

¹³ B. Smith, 'Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century', *American Historical Review* 100 (1995), 1150–76, and B. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, 1998); N. Z. Davis, 'Gender and Genre: Women As Historical Writers, 1400–1820', in P. H. Labalme (ed.), *Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York and London, 1984), pp. 153–82; B. Melman, 'Gender, History and Memory: The Invention of Women's Past in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *History and Memory* 5 (1993), 5–41.

of academic and amateur history was simultaneously connected to specific patterns of narration.¹⁴

Narrativization and professionalization thus shaped German and British historiography in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with variable velocity. These developments coincided with another shift pointed out by many philosophers and historians. Michel Foucault was neither the first nor the last to mention this shift. However, his metaphorical wording became somehow paradigmatic for its occurrence, and it fits into the centre of my concern in this chapter: the new 'order of things', which emerged after the French classical age of the eighteenth century, was deeply structured by the centrality of the human being. Following Foucault, the historiography of the classical age was determined by common laws and constants. The World and Man together formed the body of history. Since the nineteenth century, Foucault continues, there has come a 'naked form of human historicity into being: the fact that the human as such is confronted with the event'.¹⁵

Epistemological break, narrativization and professionalization – how do these developments connect with one another? What do they mean to authors of historical narrations? And how can we distinguish different ways of historical thinking? How does narrativization connect to epistemology? In the following, I shall deal with these theoretical problems by analysing the question at issue in this volume: How does the concept of the nation work in historically and culturally, not to say nationally, different contexts? And how does epistemology shape the understanding of the nation at the same time?

By questioning the epistemology underlying both narrativization and professionalization, one can reveal a strained relationship between the 'order of things' and the mode of narration. A closer look at this relationship delivers an insight into the significant contradictions of historiography and epistemology in Germany and Britain during the long transition from early modern to modern times.

Hume, Macaulay and the unity of historical narration in the age of Enlightenment

When Hume published his three-volume study *A Treatise of Human Nature*,¹⁶ it did not gain the attention he had hoped for. Even though he wrote a revision and continued his work with *An Enquiry Concerning Human*

¹⁴ A. Epple, 'Questioning the Canon: Popular Historiography by Women in Britain and Germany (1750–1850)', in Paletschek (ed.), *Popular Historiographies*. A. Epple, *Empfindsame Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Geschlechtergeschichte der Historiographie zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003).

¹⁵ M. Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge* (Frankfurt/M., 1974), p. 443.

¹⁶ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1978 [1848]).

Understanding,¹⁷ this did not advance his academic career. The publications attracted little attention among his colleagues.¹⁸ Hume made the best of things, managing to get by as a secretary at the military embassies in Vienna and Turin. Eventually, he became the librarian of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. Hume's employment provided him with the resources to pursue his interest in history. At this time, he developed the plan of writing his highly successful six-volume *History of England*, which was published from 1754 to 1762.¹⁹ Financial needs were not the decisive factor. In his short autobiography, Hume mentions some additional reasons:

I thought that I was the only historian, that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices; and as the subject was suited to every capacity, I expected proportional applause.²⁰

Even though Hume had never written any historical works, he regarded himself as the only historian who was able to write an appropriate history of England. This self-appraisal underlines the fact that at that time, the people of Great Britain had no fixed scholarly training or given curriculum. Hume became a historian by writing history. The main concern of his *History of England* was to neglect 'present power' and the 'cry of popular prejudices'. If we follow Hume's argument that history writing should not depend on present power or political interests, we feel that he then had to present an alternative motivation for writing it. To comprehend his thoughts, it is helpful to take a closer look at what he says about narrations in general and, in particular, what he says about historical narrations.

Hume's starting point was the Aristotelian theory of the 'unity of action'. He was convinced that 'in all production, as well as in the epic and tragic, there was a certain unity required'.²¹ The concept of unity in a narrative composition leads us to the very centre of Hume's concept of history and, actually, to the centre of today's theory of history.²² What reasons can be given for the unity of a historical narration? Does the historian 'find' the unity in the historical events, or is it something the author of a historical narration has to add to historical events? And, last but not least, how do historical events connect to each other?

¹⁷ D. Hume, 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding', in *The philosophical Works of David Hume*, vol. IV (Edinburgh, 1826).

¹⁸ D. Hume, 'My own Life', in Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, vol. I (1789), p. v.

¹⁹ Hume, 'My own Life', pp. vi–xii.

²⁰ Hume, 'My own Life', p. xi.

²¹ Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 27.

²² Think, for example, of Reinhart Koselleck or Paul Ricoeur who are deeply concerned with the concept of unity in history, especially with the unity of a historical narration.

Let us have a look at Hume's justification for the unity of his *History of England*. Where and how did he find it? In his autobiography, he gives a retrospective answer: 'I commenced with the accession of the House of Stuart, an epoch when, I thought, the misrepresentations of faction began chiefly to take place.'²³ Surprisingly, he argues along neither historical nor philosophical lines, but in terms of the works of his predecessors. He starts his narration at the point where their 'misrepresentations of faction' had begun.²⁴ According to his self-description, it was not a certain political conviction that provoked his *History of England*, but his wish to correct the misrepresentations of his older colleagues. His longing for historical objectivity thus appears to have been very strong.

The reactions to his first volume strongly disappointed him: 'I was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation; English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and secretary, freethinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, unite in their rage against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I [...].'²⁵ The second volume, Hume continues, 'happened to give less displeasure to the Whigs, and was better received'.²⁶ This point marked the beginning of the success story of Hume's *History of England*. Most important in this respect is, however, that Hume did not base the unity of his *History of England* on either the Aristotelian unity of action or on historical causality; he derived it from former histories of England.²⁷ As we shall see, this seems to have been a clever decision as it released him from having to give an explanation for his choice.

The significance of the decision on how and when to let a history of England begin becomes more lucid when we take another look at Hume's theoretical concept of history. Hume describes his own studies as being opposed to popular prejudices. Both the concept of unity of action and the concept of impartiality rely on his theory of causality. Hume, who, being a historian, never used

²³ Hume, 'My own Life', p. ix.

²⁴ With his *History of England*, Hume turns on the so-called 'antiquarians'. They only compiled data. Hume, instead, knows about the importance of the presentation. The controversy between the scholars or antiquarians and literary historians like Hume is commonplace in the literature on the history of British historiography. (See, e.g., Looser, *Women Writers*, p. 12.)

²⁵ Hume, 'My own Life', pp. ix f.

²⁶ Hume, 'My own Life', p. xi.

²⁷ D. Hume, *History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688, in eight volumes*, new edn (Dublin, 1775). Here again, Hume limits his project to the material he found in the books of his colleagues: 'Neglecting the more early history of Britain, we shall only consider the state of the inhabitants, as it appeared to the Romans on their invasion of this country' (ibid., p. 4).

primary sources, tried to introduce some new claims into the writing of history; these were impartiality and causality.²⁸

How does Hume define the subject of historiography? How does his concept of unity connect with causality? And what has causality to do with impartiality? Hume answered these questions in his philosophical *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. When he addresses historiography and other narrative compositions for the first time, he highlights not only the above-mentioned unity of action but also the importance of a plan and the existence of a primary objective. Only a plan and an objective can generate, according to Hume, the unity of a narration. But where does the plan and the objective come from?

Hume enumerates three principles of the association of ideas: '*Resemblance, Contiguity* in time and space, and *Cause or Effect*.'²⁹ For Hume, the most important connection is the association by cause or effect. Subsequently, Hume composes the programme that will influence the European Enlightenment the most. It is worth quoting the central passage at some length:

But the most usual species of connexion among the different events, which enter into any narrative composition, is that of cause and effect; while the historian traces the series of actions according to their natural order, remounts to their secret springs and principles, and delineates their most remote consequences. He chooses for his subject a certain portion of that great chain of events, which compose the history of mankind: Each link in this chain he endeavours to touch in his narration: Sometimes unavoidable ignorance renders all his attempts fruitless: Sometimes he supplies by conjecture what is wanting in knowledge: And always, he is sensible that the more unbroken the chain is, which he presents to his readers, the more perfect is his production. He sees that the knowledge of causes is not only the most satisfactory, this relation or connexion being the strongest of all others, but also the most instructive; since it is by this knowledge alone we are enabled to control events and govern futurity.³⁰

For a better understanding of the Enlightenment concept of History, we have to clarify the metaphors used here. Hume speaks of a 'great chain of events, which compose the history of mankind'. The historian has to trace the series of actions according to their 'natural order'. The quoted passage implies that the natural order itself relies on the principle of cause and effect. One may conclude

²⁸ Ranke's opinion was that Hume had had access to original documents in the Advocates' library, but that he did not know how to treat them well. See Ranke, *Parlamentarische Geschichte* 28:4 (1864). See also Looser, *Women Writers*, p. 14.

²⁹ Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 25.

³⁰ Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 27.

that the most urgent concern of the historian is to reveal the interaction of cause and effect. In doing so, he has, according to Hume, always to bear in mind that 'the more unbroken the chain is [...] the more perfect is his production.' The perfection of production thus depends on the intactness of the chain of historical events. This is a very interesting statement. It expresses Hume's notion that historical events are connected by the principle of causality. It also means that the historian has to point out this causality in his narration. The truth of a historical narration then lies in the coherence of the historian's argumentation. Causality thus guarantees the unity and coherence of historical events.³¹

This point of view should not be confused with a so-called 'narratological position': *avant la lettre*. Instead, this statement harbours the conviction that every historian can have the same view of causal interactions of historical events and reveal the same connectivity of the same causes and the same effects. Objectivity, in this worldview, is derived from the natural order of cause and effect. It is not affected at all by the subjectivity of the historian.

We now understand far better what characterizes, according to Hume, the unity of a historical narration: the historian chooses a 'certain portion' of the 'great chain' of history. The unity or coherence of this portion relies on the causal interaction of causes and effects. I would like to stress the point that the historian in this theory does *not* somehow create or invent the unity of his narration. Instead, Hume is convinced that the historian finds unity in the 'natural order' of historical events.

If we apply Hume's theoretical concept to his own historiography, we find some striking inconsistencies. Earlier, I pointed out that he omitted isolating the object of his *History of England*. Instead of a convincing explanation of its unity and causal coherence, he only refers to the works of his predecessors. This 'strained relationship' between Hume's theory of causality and his own practice of writing history reveals a widespread difficulty in European Enlightenment epistemology: If we understand nature as an order of causal interactions, then every event must be effected by another one. Even though this relation has a time index, as the cause antecedes the effect, it is more of a logical relation than a temporal one. It helps to explain a system rather than a diachrony. The apple falls off the tree due to gravity. This epistemology creates significant problems when we turn to history and to historical narration. If this epistemology structures history, something strange happens; it transforms diachronic changes into a synchronic order of causality. As to the systematic relation (synchrony),

³¹J. Gillingham shows some striking similarities between the medieval historian William of Malmesbury and David Hume in terms of their themes and approaches. William wrote, e.g., that he wanted 'to mend the broken chain of our history'. See Gillingham, 'Civilizing the English? The English histories of William of Malmesbury and David Hume', *Historical Research* 74:183 (2001), 17–43, 22. There are also striking differences, however. The most important is the challenge of causality.

it is not difficult to identify cause and effect. Nobody would suggest that gravity is the result of an apple dropping off a tree. When it comes to diachrony, however, things are far more challenging. I have already said that every effect relies on a former cause. How can the historian find the very first event of a 'certain portion'? If every event is to be the effect of a former cause, how could he legitimize his starting or his ending point? Hume's imperative was 'the more unbroken the chain is, [...] the more perfect is his production'. In his *History of England*, Hume solves the problem by taking the given unity from his colleagues' works. He avoids a situation in which he has to give a coherent answer to the challenging question. Although he found a convincing approach in practice, he failed to give us a causal explanation in accordance with his theory. What does this mean with respect to the relation between epistemology and writing national historiographies? My main argument is that enlightened epistemology cannot motivate an inner coherence (unity) of a historical narration. Thus, enlightened epistemology does not translate into a concept of the nation that is determined by this very unity. Of course, Hume and his colleagues used the notion 'nation'. However, he never wrote national historiography.³² He did not use the concept of the nation in a way that helped him to arrange his history of England. This point becomes clearer when we take a look at Hume's colleagues.

Hume's epistemology was paradigmatic. At first sight, the difference between Hume and his most famous antagonist, Catharine Macaulay (1731–1791)³³ could not be more obvious. Macaulay attacked Hume very sharply, due to his misleading interpretations of the past.³⁴ She perceived Hume as politically fatuous – as did many of their contemporaries. In her *History of England*, she characterizes Hume's work, which had been published almost fifteen years earlier, as follows:

That the government of the greater number of our princes, particularly that of Henry the Eighth, and even many parts of Elizabeth's administration, was directly contrary to Magna Charta, and to the rule of all free governments, cannot be disputed with Mr. Hume.³⁵

³² Arnd Bauerkämper's opinion is that Hume wrote the first complete national history of Great Britain. See A. Bauerkämper, 'Geschichtsschreibung als Projektion. Die Revision der 'Whig Interpretation of History' und die Kritik am Paradigma vom 'deutschen Sonderweg' seit den 1970er Jahren', in S. Berger, P. Lambert and P. Schumann (eds), *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 383–438, p. 389.

³³ R. Ludwig, *Rezeption der Englischen Revolution* (Leipzig, 2003), p. 53.

³⁴ C. Brock, *The Feminization of Fame, 1750–1830* (New York, 2006), p. 52.

³⁵ C. Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Elevation of the House of Hanover*, vol. 6 (London, 1781), p. VIII.

Primarily, she reproaches Hume for his disdain of the Magna Carta. In the first volume, which was published in 1763, Macaulay defines the central duty and effect of historiography:

From my early youth I have read with delight those histories which exhibit Liberty in its most exalted state, the annals of the Roman and the Greek republics. Studies like these excite that natural love of freedom which lies latent in the breast of every rational being, till it is nipped by the frost of prejudice, or blasted by the influence of vice.³⁶

By telling us that she had read the annals of the Roman and Greek republics, Macaulay, of course, wants to qualify herself as an educated author. This strategy is even more common for a woman who wants to enter a 'male territory' than for male colleagues. In addition, she characterizes her own narrations as being modelled on ancient historiography. This can also be understood as a strategy to validate her professionalism. Moreover, she introduces a category she finds most important in history and in history writing: freedom. Macaulay attacks Hume for his real or assumed prejudices. And again, she points out that the truth of his historical writings has to be questioned due to Hume's misleading political opinion. Does this, then, imply that, following Macaulay, historical truth depends on the historian's subjectivity? Do Macaulay's thoughts emanate from different epistemological preconditions to those of Hume's philosophy? Does the controversy between the Tory-historian Hume and the Whig-historian Macaulay show that historical truth depends on political persuasion, or that historical objectivity is entangled with subjectivity? No, on the contrary, Macaulay and Hume share the same epistemology. By no means do they question that historical truth can be found directly in past events. Hume's concept of causal interaction has its equivalent in Macaulay's teleological concept of history. For her, historical events are causes for later effects on an already given path moving towards the growth of liberty. History and Liberty become cause and effect. Macaulay's concept of history has no space for any subjectivity.

In her essay on 'The two bodies of history', Natalie Zemon Davis mentions that Hume and Catherine Macaulay had a polite, but controversial exchange of letters. In this correspondence, Hume expressed his opinion that he and Catherine Macaulay were not having a dispute about facts but about interpretations.³⁷ This quote from Hume might lead to the impression that he distinguished between somewhat objective facts on the one side and somewhat subjective interpretations of these facts on the other. I have a different reading of this statement, however: It would fit far better into his philosophy to say

³⁶ C. Macaulay, *The History of England*, p. VII.

³⁷ N. Z. Davies, 'History's Two Bodies', *American Historical Review* (AHR) 93 (1988), 1–13.

that he was convinced that Catharine Macaulay arranged the correct historical events in a wrong order. In this sense, he could say there was no difference regarding the facts, but there were tremendous differences as to interpretations. In other words, even if Hume spoke of interpretations, this had nothing to do with subjectivity. The correct order of the chain of historical events in his view of the world did not depend on subjectivity but on causal explanation.

As to professionalism, there were also visible differences between the two historians. In contrast to Hume, Macaulay underlined her professionalism with details of her qualifications and a 'historical apparatus' (footnotes) in her books. Whereas Hume never used primary sources; Macaulay studied original documents and correspondence at the British Museum. Only in the sixth volume of her *History of England* does Macaulay announce that she will limit footnotes for the sake of readability.³⁸

As to epistemology, Hume and Macaulay shared the same 'order of the things'. Strictly speaking, justifying the unity of their historiography should have caused tremendous difficulties. In other words, neither Hume nor Macaulay had a clear concept of how they could sort out irrelevant historical events. Both historians succeeded, however, in dissolving the strained relationship between their epistemology and their narrations. Their German colleagues had more serious problems.³⁹

The Göttingen School and the narrative breakdown

In the German Enlightenment, Hume's publications received a lot of close attention.⁴⁰ According to Hanns Peter Reill, only the historians of the Göttingen historical school had some resentment.⁴¹ This is rather surprising because Schlözer's and Gatterer's definition of, what they called, 'pragmatic historiography' arose

³⁸ Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. VI.

³⁹ It is fascinating to see how very clearly Schlözer analysed the (narrative) difficulties of the English *Universal History* of the 1730s. He missed what he called the 'Allgemeine Blick' (general view point) that transformed the aggregate into a system. Johan van der Zande argues that Schlözer's concept of the synoptic view displaced the mechanistic method the *Universal History* had applied to historical explanation. See J. Van der Zande, 'August Ludwig Schlözer and the English *Universal History*', in S. Berger, P. Lambert and P. Schumann (eds), *Historikerdialoge*, pp. 135–56, p. 143. Even though the synoptic view does not introduce a subjective perspective into history (as Johan van de Zande might imply), Schlözer still stuck to the mechanistic method but elevated the demands: universal history should not just add together the histories of different parts, instead, it should explain how the parts were connected to each other. This could only be done with a synoptic view.

⁴⁰ J. Osterhammel, 'Nation und Zivilisation in der britischen Historiographie von Hume bis Macaulay', *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992), 281–340; G. Gawlick and L. Kriemendahl, *Hume in der deutschen Aufklärung. Umriss einer Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt, 1987).

⁴¹ Osterhammel, *Britische Historiographie*; P. H. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley, CA, and London 1975).

from the same epistemology. Their definition of pragmatism was very peculiar; thus Johann Christoph Gatterer argued:

The *highest level of pragmatism* in history would be the perception of a universal connection of all things in the world (*Nexus rerum universalis*). [...] Everything is connected with one another, causes one another, generates one another, is caused, is generated and causes and generates again.⁴²

The fact that Gatterer designates the general correlation of the world system as a '*nexus rerum universalis*' exaggerates this position even more and causes greater problems than Hume's theory of causality ever did. At first, his position sounds like a combination of Macaulay's and Hume's. Gatterer pointed out that different historians had different points of view; hence, for their history writing, they chose different events from the chain of history. Every historian, according to Gatterer, added another perspective. Even though Gatterer uses terms like 'point of view' and 'perspective', this does not imply that he combines historical objectivity with the subject of recognition, which would be, in this case, the historian. Yet, according to Gatterer, historical truth does depend on the perspective under which history is written. For him, it still remains an objective truth in the sense that every historian, by taking the same perspective, would see the very same past.

At least since Lorraine Daston's and Peter Galison's outstanding book on objectivity, we know about the historically and culturally changing meaning of objectivity. This term continues to generate controversial discussion on how to write history. These discussions tell us a lot about disciplinary power relations.⁴³ For me, it seems to be most interesting to investigate how a specific definition works. Of course, this causes semantic problems. Following Daston and Galison, the only semantic constant regarding objectivity over the last 500 years has been its dichotomous relation to the term 'subjectivity'. Immanuel Kant defined the term in a completely different way, as did philosophers following René Descartes. In the post-Kantian tradition, the definition basically changed again.⁴⁴ Nowadays, we are used to understanding 'objectivity' as a relative objectivity based on a competition between different interpretations. The difference between then and now becomes clearer when Gatterer continues: 'In spite of different perspectives, the

⁴² Johann Christoph Gatterer, 'Vom historischen Plan, und der darauf sich gründenden Zusammenfügung der Erzählungen' (1767), in H. W. Blanke and D. Fleischer (eds), *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungsgeschichte*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1990) pp. 621–62, here p. 658.

⁴³ A. Epple and A. Schaser, 'Multiple Histories? Changing Perspectives on Modern Historiographies', in A. Epple and A. Schaser (eds), *Gendering Historiography: Beyond National Canons* (Frankfurt/M., 2009).

⁴⁴ L. Daston and P. Galison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007), p. 34.

truth of history [...] mainly remains the same.⁴⁵ Gatterer's concept of historical truth is what I would like to call an essential truth concept. The historian's point of view does not, according to Gatterer, influence his or her interpretation of the past. If Gatterer had accepted that historical truth depended on the subjective interpretation of the historian, he would have anticipated Kant's critical philosophy and the above-mentioned epistemological break. It was only as an outcome of Historism that this critical position became influential in historiography.

According to Gatterer, the historian can choose only the peculiarities he wants to narrate.⁴⁶ Every historian chooses other peculiarities and thus sheds a new light on history. Like Catharine Macaulay, Gatterer did not tie up the selection of historical events studied by the historian with the subjective issue of the historian himself. Instead, he was convinced that the historian only has to discover (not construct) historical truth in past events.

From there, one can conclude that, according to Gatterer, historical truth would be discovered completely, if only all findings of all historians were put together. This would be the highest level of pragmatism – the *nexus rerum universalis*. Therefore Gatterer repeats Hume's imperative: 'the more unbroken the chain is [...] the more perfect is his production'. The German Enlightenment historians also looked at nature, at history and at the world as permanent causal interaction; both nature and history were ruled by common laws.

Just like Macaulay and Hume, Schlözer and Gatterer also wrote books that worked very well as historical narrations. However, none of them lived up to the utopia of recognizing the *rerum nexus causalis*. Instead of putting together *all* the links of the chain of history, they restricted their narrations to 'special histories'. Thus, they denied the universal challenge of their theoretical writings. They also tried to find presentations that would more closely match the idea of a *rerum nexus universalis*. As a result, they displayed historical events throughout the world in tables. In light of their universal claim, tables were indeed more suitable. In contrast to a narration, tables allow the user to understand synchronic interactions immediately at first sight. This advantage has its price, however. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce diachronic cause-effect relations.

Lawrence Sterne, best known for his novel *Tristram Shandy*, illustrated the strained relationship between Enlightenment epistemology and narration in an entertaining and thoughtful way.⁴⁷ The story of his seven-volume fictitious autobiography is difficult to describe. Whereas the narrator (Tristram Shandy) starts with his own conception, we do not reach his birth until the third

⁴⁵ J. C. Gatterer, 'Vom Standort und Gesichtspunct des Geschichtschreibers, 1768', in H. W. Blanke and D. Fleischer (eds), *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1990), p. 454.

⁴⁶ Gatterer, 'Vom Standort', in *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, p. 453.

⁴⁷ L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London, 1759–66).

volume. Tristram marks time in terms of action, because there is too much causality: He always fits in former causes of former effects, which lead him to former causes, and so on. In a certain sense, he realizes what Gatterer claimed. He tells what caused an event, how this event was generated, how it caused other events and how they were generated. What Sterne called 'progressive digression' eventually means that the story never comes to an end. In other words, the narration did not find its unity: a precondition of the theory of causality. Without its unity, a narration also loses its coherence. Consequently, *Tristram Shandy* was published as a fragment. It can be read as an ironical commentary on 'pragmatic historiography'. In contrast to the works of Gatterer and Schlözer, it was not only very influential, but also very entertaining. In this sense, German Enlightenment historiography was less successful.

Before continuing, I would like to summarize the merits of the Enlightenment historians. Notably Hume, but also Macaulay, Gatterer, Schlözer and others delivered important contributions to the professionalization of our discipline: they introduced the claim of explanation into historiography. They thought that every event relies on a former event, and thus integrated the causal explanation into history writing. Since then, the main question is 'why', or following discourse analysis: 'how did something happen?' and no longer 'what did happen?' At the same time, by using Catharine Macaulay as an example of the English Enlightenment historians, I have tried to prove that history for them was a chain of historical events. For some of them, such as Catharine Macaulay, this chain of historical events was based on teleology. They were convinced that history was marked by an inherent continuous improvement. For all of them, whether they were teleologists like Macaulay or sceptics like Hume, this chain was organized by a causal principle. It was the very causal principle that organized both nature and history. The study of original documents was central to their concept of historiography; in that respect, only Hume was an exception. Also, they did not reflect on the connection between the subject of recognition and the object of recognition, even though the vocabulary they used seemed to suggest this.⁴⁸ They still believed in an essential concept of historical truth.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Johann Martin Chladenius outlined a theory of the 'point of view' ('Sehepunkt'). It is often misunderstood as a critical theory of the condition of possibility of historical understanding. It is, however, nothing more (and nothing less) than a typical theory of the Enlightenment. Chladenius is convinced that four eyes see more than two do: the more eyes are looking, the 'more unbroken the chain' of recognition. See J. M. Chladenius, 'Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft' (1752), in *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, p. 226–74.

⁴⁹ There are some passages in Gatterer's texts that could be interpreted as small steps into a more constructive direction. See Gatterer, 'Abhandlung vom Standort und Gesichtspunkt des Geschichtschreibers oder der teutsche Livius', *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, p. 452–66, esp. p. 468.

The Enlightenment utopia was that the historian could reveal the *rerum nexus universalis*. They hoped that history in tables would both illustrate causal coherence in a universal perspective *and* make causal interaction recognizable at first sight. They transferred the synchronic interaction of cause and effect into the diachronic subsequence of historical events. The price was high; they lost the narrative power of historiography. Fortunately, Hume and Macaulay were less rigorous than their German colleagues. They stuck to writing history in an entertaining way and, as far as I know, never used tables.

Venture into a new understanding of historical truth: historicism and the emergence of the subject

This view of the world was to change. Kant takes leave of a view of history supported by the historians of the Enlightenment in his treatise *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*. He doubts the fact that the unity of history relies on the concept that people acted in accordance to natural laws:

Since men in their endeavours behave, on the whole, not just instinctively, like the brutes, nor yet like rational citizens of the world according to some agreed-on plan, no history of man conceived according to a plan seems to be possible, as it might be possible to have such a history of bees or beavers.⁵⁰

Here we can see that Kant argues against the perception that the unity of history is only given if man acts to 'some agreed-on plan'. For him, humans are 'no rational world citizens'. If history does not follow an agreed-on plan, how can a historian or a philosopher then systematize history?

Until now, this has been the basic problem of the theory of history.⁵¹ This problem includes both the systematization of historical events and the systematization of the narration of these events. If Kant denies a historical plan that could be understood by man, does he, then, also deny the unity of history? Far from it; the title of this treatise already mentions his main concern: *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*. As we know, Kant does not refute the existence of a natural plan in history. Hence, this plan remains secret.

⁵⁰ I. Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784), in H. S. Reiss (ed.), *Kant – Political Writing*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1991), p. 41 f.

⁵¹ Herbert Schnädelbach designates the problem of systematization as central problem of the philosophy of history. See H. Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie nach Hegel. Die Probleme des Historismus* (Munich, 1974), p. 11.

In the last theses of his treatise, Kant speaks about the importance of this *Idea*, which, of course, is the idea of a human subject:

It is strange and apparently silly to wish to write a history in accordance with an Idea of how the course of the world must be if it is to lead to certain rational ends. It seems that with such an Idea only a romance could be written. Nevertheless, if one may assume that Nature, even in the play of human freedom, works not without plan or purpose, this Idea could still be of use. Even if we are too blind to see the secret mechanism of its workings, this Idea may still serve as a guiding thread for presenting as a system, at least in broad outlines, what would otherwise be a plan-less conglomeration of human actions.⁵²

For Kant, the *Idea* serves as a guiding thread that helps to present history as a system. I would like to call to mind the metaphor used by both Hume and the German enlightened historians: They spoke of a chain of history. Kant's 'Thread' and Hume's 'Chain' seem to evoke a similar perception. However, they designate quite different concepts of history and historiography. Whereas Hume and his colleagues believe that history itself could reveal the plan, Kant underlines that without the *Idea*, the historian cannot present anything but a 'plan-less conglomeration of human actions'.

Catharine Macaulay thought that the purpose of history was liberty. She tried to prove her conviction with her empirical study. Gatterer and Schlözer also tried to verify their utopia with their historiography. Kant, by contrast, is convinced that nobody can reasonably hope for a better future if he looks at the empirical facts. The solution, he suggests, is the presupposition of a (secret) natural plan.⁵³ The natural plan cannot be derived empirically. The purpose of nature is an objective purpose. It is not intelligible but, nonetheless, a condition of the possibility for historical understanding. The purpose is not somehow found in nature, but it is posited to make history intelligible. That is why Kant does not write about 'Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' but about the *Idea for a Universal History*.

In this spirit, Ranke argues against the concept of a teleological progress as suggested by the historians of the Enlightenment. If there had been progress in history, then every past event would have been worth dealing with, thanks only to its effects. Every event then would have been only a preliminary stage of a better and later one. Neither Kant nor Ranke denied an objective purpose; Ranke found it in his understanding of God. The important differences compared to the Enlightenment are, first, that this objective purpose is not deducible by empiricism.

⁵² Kant, 'Idea', *Ninth Thesis*.

⁵³ Kant, 'Idea', *Ninth Thesis*.

A part of the whole thing is worth addressing not because of its effects, but because of its own individuality. Second, objectivity is always combined with subjectivity. We can recognize only the individuality of a part if we have an *Idea* of the whole. The part interests us only because of its contribution to the whole; not just as a cause of effects. The part has its effects, either for better or for worse; however; this does not affect its significance, which lies in its independent individuality. Every epoch is immediate to God, says Ranke.⁵⁴

I would like to emphasize here the simultaneity of developments in philosophy, poetics and the science of history. Schiller expressed this new understanding of historical development, and thus showed that his worldview was structured by a new epistemology. In his famous inaugural lecture, he underlines the causal relationships in history.⁵⁵ At first sight, this sounds like Hume's concept of history. Nonetheless, a closer reading of the lecture discloses the constructivist motive that Schiller posits between the historical movement and the narration of universal history. He is convinced that the historian (philosophical spirit) takes the harmony from himself and applies it to the order of things outside. There again, we could talk of a 'narrative turn' in historiography. The differences from Hume, however, could not be greater. Schiller finds the unity of the historical *narration* in the *subject* of the historian. Therefore historians no longer *repeat* past events, but *construct* historical narrations according to *human concepts*. The naïve objectivity of the Enlightenment was overcome, giving way to a new understanding of objectivity that was deeply based on subjectivity.

Historism after Kant defined the relation between the part and the whole in a new way. Since then, the part should refer only symbolically to the whole and thus help to understand it. That way, the part became very important and the very centre of our concern. The part itself became a relative whole, because since then, it could assert its intrinsic value. Since, then, the problem of the unity of history is solved; it is the relative whole of the part. It can be isolated thanks only to the *idea* of a universal history being a whole.

The devil is in the details, however. Historism's epistemology emphasizes the individuality of *every* part. Ranke expressed this very persuasively by saying '*every* part is immediate to God'.⁵⁶ A closer look at Historism's practice of

⁵⁴ L. von Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte* (Darmstadt, 1970), p. 7. This summary of Ranke's argument is dramatically condensed. Ranke believes that a divine idea is no precondition for the distillation of singular epochs or singular nations as objects of analysis out of the past. This provokes a severe inconsistency in its philosophy of history. See, for a more profound discussion on this subject, Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie*, pp. 34–48.

⁵⁵ F. von Schiller, 'Was heißt uns zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?' (1789), in *Nationalausgabe* (NA), vol. 17, pp. 359–76.

⁵⁶ Schnädelbach, too, is convinced that Ranke argues implicitly against the ethnocentrism of the philosophers of historical progress (especially Hegel). Ranke believed in the intrinsic value of all individualities. See Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie*, p. 46.

historiography, however, shows the narrow limits of their project. Its practitioners recognized only some selective parts as individual parts. Their criterion for exclusion was the historicity of things. Everything they defined as not being able to have a history was excluded from historiography. A part that, according to their understanding of historical development, had no history could not symbolize the universal history as a whole. They limited themselves to the history of states and nations.⁵⁷ Foreign or so-called 'traditional' cultures and nearly all women were denied a history. They were excluded from Historism's history and became a field of study in a new academic discipline: ethnology.

In the epistemology of the Enlightenment, the importance of a part depended on its effects. Theoretically, the historian could choose any 'portion of the chain'⁵⁸ of historical events for his narration. The part's dependency on its effects caused the problem of the unity of history. The part had no intrinsic value. After Kant's philosophy, a new understanding of the relation between the part and the whole came into being. In another context, Louis Althusser accurately referred to that relationship as a '*pars totalis*'.⁵⁹ The whole could no longer be deduced empirically, but was specified by the *Idea*. Thus, a subjective element (the *Idea* was something the historian had in his mind) in historiography became more important for the first time. It would still be a long time before historians would become aware of the fact that historical objectivity is entangled with subjectivity, however. At the end of the nineteenth century, the historians of German Historism dealt with the nation as the only historically relevant entity. This once again created a strained relationship between the practice of writing history and Historism's epistemology that only came to be solved a hundred years later.

Conclusion

The epistemology of the Enlightenment can be deduced paradigmatically from David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Historical objectivity and causal explanations of historical events are at the very centre of his thought. Even Hume's harshest contemporary critic, Catharine Macaulay,

⁵⁷ T. Mergel, 'Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (GG) 28 (2002), 574–606, 578.

⁵⁸ Hume, *Enquiry*.

⁵⁹ Althusser summarizes Cassirer's 'Philosophy of the Enlightenment' (1932) in relation to Montesquieu's concept of history. According to Cassirer, Montesquieu had a dialectical concept of history in which every part would also be the whole. Althusser designates this concept very strikingly as *pars totalis*. Althusser continues, however, that Cassirer's understanding was too modern, and that Montesquieu was more interested in the principles that dominated everything else. See L. Althusser, 'Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau', in *Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Peter Schöttler (Berlin, 1987), p. 72.

adhered to the same rules of thinking. Both their historical narrations were a great success – something that was only enabled by the ‘strained relationship’ to the pre-critical epistemology of the Enlightenment. Both Hume and Macaulay introduced literary elements into history, and, at the same time, accepted a logical inconsistency. As a result, they had problems in explaining the unity (inner coherence) of their histories. The difficulties in motivating the beginning of their histories were a consequence of the problem of unity. At first glance, Hume found a convincing way out: he started his first history of England at that point in time at which the misrepresentations of his predecessors had begun. On second thoughts, however, this was only a pragmatic solution and not a logical one. Even though this problem of how to begin seemed to be less prominent for Catherine Macaulay, she too had no convincing remedy that would give her a logical explanation of how to begin her *History of England*. She also lacked a concept that allowed her to see an inner coherence in her story.

Gatterer and Schlözer were more consistent with the Enlightenment epistemology of cause and effect. Their search for the *rerum nexus causalis* in history was more rigid. As an inevitable consequence, they suffered from a narrative collapse. The Enlightenment understanding of history can be expressed appropriately by the image they themselves favoured most: the chain of events. Every link of the chain becomes a cause of the following one. History thus becomes aligned teleologically.

What about the question I started out with; that is, ‘How were epistemology and the concept of the nation connected?’ As a result of my readings, I would like to add that if there is no concept which the historian applies to history, he or she has no effective instrument to sort out historical events. As long as a narration sticks to the concept of cause and effect, there will always be an open end. Every historical event asks for a former cause. Thus, enlightened epistemology does not translate into national historiography. It cannot solve the central problem of a nation’s limits and of its intrinsic value. In other words, only an invented concept, the nation, for instance, can help to overcome the problems of Enlightened historiography.

Thanks to the epistemological break and the reception of Kant’s philosophy, Historist historians, like Ranke and others, developed a new concept of history that was deeply influenced by Weimar’s classical epoch. Most important was the conceptual change regarding the relationship between the parts of history and the whole of history. Since then, the whole is understood as a set idea to which the parts can be related. The idea of the whole allows the historian to estimate the individuality of the part. The part then implies the unity of the historical narration. On the other hand, it is the part through which the historian can recognize the whole. This new epistemology allowed historians to apply a concept to their histories which helped to sort out relevant from

irrelevant historical events. This concept was not determined theoretically. However, the concept applied to the practice of nineteenth-century British and German historiography was the nation, and almost always nothing but the nation.

German national historiography, following Ranke, undermined Historism's epistemology with its historical writings. It was focused more and more on only one of, theoretically, countless parts: the nation. It started to deal with the privileged part as a somehow natural entity and as an effect of an inevitable historical development. Thus, teleology returned. This failing should not hide the fact that historians have to understand the whole as a set idea and the part as an invented unity in order to study the universal in the part and the part in the universal.

5

Wars of Religion in National History Writing at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: P. J. Blok, Karl Lamprecht, Ernest Lavissee and Henri Pirenne*

Geneviève Warland

The nominal Wars of Religion between Catholics and Lutheran or Calvinist Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took place in a European context of deep political, economic and social crisis. In the Holy Roman Empire, the peasants were in revolt as warring faiths divided the country by pitching the princes against one another. In the kingdom of France, the conflict led to the rise of two Leagues – the Catholics on one side and the Huguenots on the other. And in the Seventeen Provinces of the Low Countries, opposition to the Spanish Catholic king culminated in a scission between the north and south, leading to the creation of the Dutch Republic. Unsurprisingly, these awful collective experiences received special treatment in national historical writing. It is fascinating to compare the depiction of such controversial topics in four different national histories, mostly published before the First World War.

In this chapter, we will examine Petrus Johannes Blok's *History of the People of the Netherlands*, Karl Lamprecht's *History of Germany*, Ernest Lavissee's *History of France* and Henri Pirenne's *History of Belgium*, each a masterpiece of national history. We will focus on three central questions: To what extent do the histories treat religion as a fundamental element to define a nation? How do the religious matters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrate the 'national character' the four historians ascribe to their people? And, finally, what pictures do the historians paint of the national or religious 'other', that is, of opposing countries or faiths? We shall find the answer to these questions by placing the four narratives in their ideological and historiographical contexts.

* Thanks to Jessica Zimbalatti for some assistance with the language.

National histories written by academic historians

In 1889, Karl Lamprecht, a professor of history at the University of Leipzig, was approached by the publisher Perthes to take the helm of 'Heeren and Uckert's History of the European States' (*Geschichte der europäischen Staaten*). He accepted on the condition that he would be allowed to rejuvenate it and to emphasize cultural history. Lamprecht published his *History of Germany* (15 vols, 1891–1909) independently of the European project, as he had already begun writing it.¹ However, the *History of Germany* was written with the same new historical perspective that inspired two other major national histories² which Lamprecht subsequently included in the *History of the European States*.

One was from Blok, professor of national history at the University of Leyden, who provided his *History of the Netherlands* (6 vols, 1902–18), first published by Wolters in Dutch as *The History of the People of the Netherlands* (8 vols, 1892–1908). Belgium was handled by Pirenne, professor of national and medieval history at the University of Ghent. The first four volumes of Pirenne's German-language *History of Belgium* (1899–1913) were complemented by a French version for his fellow citizens, published by Lamertin (7 vols, 1900–32).

Lavissee's *Illustrated History of France from Its Origins to the Revolution* (18 vols, 1900–11) and *History of Contemporary France from the Revolution to the Peace of 1919* (9 vols, 1920–22) are collective works published by Hachette. Leading Republican historians collaborated in its creation – historians who had usually been trained by Lavissee himself, a professor at the Sorbonne and director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure. Lavissee's work was an example of a contemporary genre of French historical research called *école méthodique*³ that dealt mainly with political and diplomatic history.

These national histories were all considered popular works for educated citizens. Written by influential historians for well-known publishers, they were

¹The *Deutsche Geschichte* was first published by H. A. Gaertner in Berlin. References in this chapter are to the fourth edition published by the second editor of K. Lamprecht's work, Weidman, also in Berlin.

²On the relationship between Blok and Lamprecht, see P. B. M. Blaas, 'De prikkelbaarheid van een kleine natie met een groot verleden', in Blaas, *Geschiedenis en nostalgie. De historiografie van een kleine natie met een groot verleden. Verspreide historiografische opstellen* (Hilversum, 2000), pp. 30–1. On Pirenne and Lamprecht, see B. Lyon, 'The letters of Henri Pirenne to Karl Lamprecht (1894–1915)', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* CXXXII (1966), 161–231.

³In reference to Ch.-V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris, 1898), benchmarking what was a good method for practising 'scientific historians'.

successfully and repeatedly republished and translated.⁴ Blok, Lamprecht, Lavisse and Pirenne ranked among the best historians of their time.⁵ This is not only due to the excellence of their research, but also due to their impact as intellectuals who gave many influential speeches and wrote for many journals and newspapers. They saw their roles as both scientific and nationalistic. Whilst they were conscious of the construed and provisional character of history – ‘making history; it is a constraint impossible to escape’⁶ – they sought to bring a flair of truth and objectivity to their professional roles.

The historians’ positivistic approach, with their reliance on documentary evidence and rigorous critical methods, demonstrates an idealistic faith in putting forward the study of collective ideas and national spirit. They did not see a contradiction between being nationalists and being objective. Therefore, the impressive national histories of Blok, Lamprecht, Lavisse and Pirenne express two trends. They give an overview of each nation’s past based on scientific research, and interpret their research ideologically. These ideological tenets of liberal history writing before the First World War include a belief in modernization, secularization, and the authority and legitimacy of the state.

Even though politics and warfare are in the foreground of their narratives, they are also fruitful contributions to cultural history because they deal with the material and spiritual features of the four nations’ development. Blok, Lamprecht and Pirenne shared the same methodological principles concerning cultural history. They viewed it as mainly economic and social in nature. Lavisse’s focus fell more on traditional, political and diplomatic history.

⁴On the success of Lamprecht’s work, see R. Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German academic life (1856–1915)* (New Jersey, 1993), pp. 178, 321. A shortened English version of Blok’s work appeared as *A History of the People of the Netherlands*, trans. R. Putnam, vols I–III (New York, 1898–1900); and by O. A. Bierstadt, vols IV–V (New York and London, 1907–12). His work in Dutch was re-edited three times. On this success, see J. Tollebeek, *De toga van Fruin. Denken over Geschiedenis in Nederland sinds 1860* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 86 ff. For the many versions of the *Histoire de Belgique*, see B. Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: An Intellectual Biography* (Ghent, 1971). On the impact of Lavisse’s *Histoire de France*, see P. den Boer, *History as a Profession: The study of history in France, 1818–1914*, trans. A. J. Pomerans (Princeton, NJ, 1998).

⁵For a general overview of Blok’s life and work, see Tollebeek, *De toga van Fruin*; and H. Gosses, ‘Levensbericht van Petrus Johannes Blok (1855–1929)’, *Handelingen van de maatschappij der nederlandsche letterkunde te Leiden en levensberichten herer afgestorven medeleden 1929–1930* (Leiden, 1930), pp. 107–32. On Lavisse, see P. Nora, ‘Lavisse, instituteur national’ and ‘L’*Histoire de France* de Lavisse’, in Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. I (Paris, 1997 [1984]), pp. 239–75 and 851–902. See also den Boer, *History as a Profession*. On Lamprecht and Pirenne, see the above-mentioned intellectual biographies, by Chickering and Lyon respectively.

⁶H. Pirenne, ‘Une polémique historique en Allemagne’, *Revue Historique* LXIV (1897), 50 (This article is actually a plea for Lamprecht’s new historical standpoint).

Nevertheless, the *History of France* was intended to be a French Republican *lieu de mémoire* that could describe the past of the whole nation, paying some attention to the concrete conditions of the life of the populace.

In the belief that 'each individual, even the least significant, weaves on the machine woven not only by time, but also by eternity [...]',⁷ these four large-scale syntheses are not absolutely dedicated to the acts and intentions of rulers and elites, but also to economic, social, cultural and religious changes. 'The history of a nation means the development of the society as a whole', as Blok wrote in 1884.⁸ The often quoted sentence from the Dutch historian can be seen as the theme of our four narratives on Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

National histories written by liberal historians

Liberal historians did not choose to write national histories only because scientific historical syntheses were lacking in the discipline at the time.⁹ The master narratives of Blok, Lamprecht, Lavissee and Pirenne belong to the category of 'pragmatic historiography', which seeks to give a political sense to history. In recounting the past of a nation, they were guided by the wish to contribute to the formation of a national consciousness in their audience. Therefore, they tended to create representations of homogeneous cultures in which all forms of dissent, including religious ones, are downplayed. This meant that their accounts of religious matters pursued the same goal: they all tried to overcome the particular ideological opposition in each case, be it between Catholics and Republicans (France), Catholics and Liberals (Belgium and the Netherlands) or Catholics and Protestants (Germany).

The four historians shared a liberal understanding of religion, which showed in their support of the firm separation of State and Church, of public tolerance of private religious practice, and of the rejection of any religiously doctrinaire position. These fundamental beliefs underline the authors' interpretations of the Wars of Religion, and they also use religious tolerance in their narratives to de-emphasize confessional divisions.

⁷K. Lamprecht, *Deutsche Geschichte. Ergänzungsband I*, (1901), 141.

⁸P. J. Blok, *Het doel van de beoefening der geschiedenis. Rede uitgesproken op 26/09/1884 bij de aanvaarding van het hoogleeraarsamt an de rijksuniversiteit te Groningen* ('s Gravenhage, 1884), p. 21.

⁹These historians aimed at overcoming the romantic histories – e.g., that of Michelet for France or that of Nuyens for the Low Countries – or to fill a gap: large overviews with a unifying point of view on the national past were lacking in Belgium and in Germany.

The historians' liberal point of view was subject to the sometimes very sharp pens of contemporary critics. Many complaints were made, the harshest from Catholic historians, that Blok, Lamprecht, Lavissee and Pirenne's national histories pay insufficient attention to religion as a specific matter,¹⁰ or that they are biased.¹¹ Indeed, none of the historians saw religion as the main cultural factor in their countries' historical development. Rather, they saw it as a social or political phenomenon manifesting itself in the people and rulers and impacting on their behaviour. Such a non-dogmatic understanding of religion may be the price for creating a master narrative that the whole nation could underwrite.¹²

Religion as a cultural and political matter rather than a theological matter

Focusing on the narratives' interpretations of the sixteenth century Wars of Religion enables us to understand better their ideological implications, and to understand important aspects of nationalistic representations of the past. The expansion of the new Protestant faith, be it via Lutheran or Calvinist denominations, posed a real challenge to political power. The French kingdom, the Holy Roman Empire and the Low Countries were ravaged by civil wars. Nobles who had embraced the new faith led the revolts: the Prince of Condé and Admiral Coligny in France; electors or princes of Hesse, Saxony, Anhalt and Brunswick, and the representatives of free cities who built the Smalcaldic League (1531) in Germany as well as the counts of Egmont and Hornes and William I, Prince of Orange, who opposed Spanish authority in the Low Countries. The historians describe the fight of several Catholic kings against the rebels: Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire; his son, Philip II, in the Low Countries; and Henry II, Charles IX and Henry III of France. The Counter-Reformation, especially the foundation of groups like the Jesuits, is also taken into account.

¹⁰See L. van der Essen, 'Henri Pirenne et l'histoire ecclésiastique' (*Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique*, January 1936), in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1938), pp. 238–47; and also P. Fredericq reviewing Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique III*, *Revue Historique*, LXXXVII (1908), 412–18. For Blok, see H. Gosses, 'Levensbericht van Petrus Johannes Blok', p. 128. Concerning Lamprecht, see the critics of the Catholic historian H. Finke, *Die kirchenpolitischen und kirchlichen Verhältnisse zu Ende des Mittelalters nach der Darstellung Karl Lamprechts: eine Kritik seiner 'Deutschen Geschichte'* (Rome, 1896).

¹¹See the review of *Histoire de France* (vol. V and VI) by J. W. Thompson, *American Historical Review* 10 (1904–05), 387–90.

¹²See, further, J. Kennedy, 'Religion, Nation and European Representations of the Past', in S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008), 104–34.

However, as they wrote national histories rather than religious histories, Blok, Lamprecht, Lavissee and Pirenne highlighted actions of the State rather than of the Church. They focused on specific political acts in each country that were favourable to Protestantism or Calvinism, that either gave rise to moments of tolerance and peace or that triggered periods of civil war. They scrutinized the socio-political impact of religious movements, for example, the migrations that followed persecutions like that of the Huguenots from France to Germany or of the beggars in the south of the Low Countries to the north. As the main leaders of the Protestant movement provided assistance to one another and as, in many cases, foreign politics were significant in domestic events, all four narratives touched on events in neighbouring countries.

The historians explained the origins of disillusionment with the Catholic Church and described the rise of heretical movements that were confined, short-lived and popular, like the Anabaptists, and also the rise of more moderate, intellectual and ultimately successful ones, like Lutheranism and Calvinism. They explained the theological principles of the movements more or less extensively, describing their main representatives, and outlining their structures. They also followed the spread of the faiths in both the aristocratic and plebeian classes, and throughout urban and rural areas.

Beyond these common general lines, each national narrative bears the mark of each historian's interests and approach to historiography. Lamprecht, the most conceptual and philosophical of the four, raised the issue of the relationship between Protestantism and individualism, and thus of Protestantism paving the way to modernity. He also described the life and writings of Martin Luther in great detail. In contrast, Pirenne only wrote a few pages about theological or philosophical aspects of the Reformation. The main topics of his narrative are the social conditions and political aspects of the spread of the new faith. Similarly, Blok focused on the political and socio-economic factors that led to the independence of the United Provinces. Lemonnier and Mariéjol, who wrote the pertinent parts of Lavissee's *History of France*, examined every facet of the Religious Wars and the Reformation. However, they stressed the political aspects, and amassed details concerning actors and events all over France, including the religious Leagues and the many edicts that ended each conflict and aimed to establish peace between Catholics and Protestants.

The Wars of Religion in the national histories

Lamprecht's *History of Germany* (DG) is the most accomplished cultural history of the four examined here. He put the Reformation into the context of a new epoch in the evolution of the German nation, namely the emergence

of individualism between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries.¹³ A philosophical and psychological framework guided Lamprecht as he narrated political and socio-economic matters. This framework maps out five stages of civilization, and hence the evolution of the German spirit towards ever-greater rationality and self-consciousness.

Large parts of Volume V.1 (1486–1519) focus on Martin Luther's biography, his ideas and his relationship with Charles V and the Pope. The narrative also touches on numerous edicts, dissent among the princes about Lutheranism, the spread of the new faith, and coexisting heretical ideas such as Anabaptism. Volume V.2 (1519–1648) is concerned with the transformation of religious factors into political ones due to the princes' relationship with Protestantism. The empire was thus divided into two opposing factions: one 'Catholic-absolutist', obedient to the emperor, and the other, Protestant and revolutionary, dependent on alliances with France, England and the Netherlands. The struggle culminated in the Thirty Years War (1608–48), the 'great European war between Catholics and Protestants' (GNV IV, p. 235), described as a 'return to barbarity' (DG V.2, pp. 764–65).

The success of the new reformist world conception is, in Blok's *History of the Dutch People* (GNV), deeply connected with the Dutch revolt against the Spanish monarch, Philip II. The triumph of Calvinism and the Union of Utrecht (1579) belongs to what Dutch historiography calls the Eighty Years War (1559–1648). This period is decisive for the Netherlands because it sees the foundation of the Dutch Republic. It is why Volumes III (1559–1609) and IV (1609–48) of Blok's work deals principally with politics, but a form of politics in which religion played an important role. These volumes are dominated by the actions of the 'heroes of independence': William I, Prince of Orange, and Oldenbarnevelt.

Volume II (1300–1559) devotes a whole chapter to the religious transformations in the Low Countries. It illustrates the need for an internal reformation due to the sorry state of the Church's morality, and maps the rise of new religious movements, especially the dominant Calvinism, 'whose democratic spirit captured the population more than the bourgeoisie' (GNV II, pp. 478–9). Despite its dark side, the religious opposition to Philip II ended in the creation of the 'free Republic' (GNV III, IV). The history of this time, between the truce

¹³Lamprecht's five stages of German national history are: 'symbolism' (500–700), 'typism' (700–1100), 'conventionalism' (1100–1450), 'individualism' (1450–1700) and 'subjectivism' (from 1700), including Lamprecht's time named as the period of 'nervosity' (*Reizsamkeit*).

See Lamprecht, 'Was ist Kulturgeschichte? Beitrag zu einer empirischen Historik', in H. Schönebaum (ed.), *Karl Lamprecht. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte und zur Theorie des Geschichtswissenschaft* (Aalen, 1974), p. 310.

with Spain in 1609 and the Peace of Münster in 1648, is the success story of a new State, 'which rapidly found its place on the world scene as one of the great European powers, but also because in these days the character of the Dutch race reveals itself' (GNV III, I).

Volumes III (1477–1567) and IV (1567–1648) of Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* (HB) deal with the Wars of Religion. The first covers events from the crisis in the Burgundian state caused by the death of Charles the Bold to the beginning of the revolt against Spain. The second focuses on the region's religious and political revolution, notably the 1597 creation of the Protestant League of Utrecht and the reactionary Catholic one of Arras. Pirenne explains elements like the politics of William of Orange, the peace treaties and efforts, the reconciliation of the southern provinces with Spain, and the separation of the Low Countries. He makes a clear distinction between two periods in the Religious Wars, treating the first as a religious fight mostly against Lutheran heterodoxy led by Charles V, and the second as a political fight stemming from the revolutionary nature of Calvinism and the repressive policies of Philip II (HB III, pp. 320–1). He maps 'the end of the Burgundian State' (HB IV, p. 151) and the decline of the southern Low Countries, which suffered from Spain's reconquest and from the hegemonic position of the new Dutch Republic (HB IV, p. 417). For Pirenne, both are tragedies for Belgium: 'without its self-disposition, it [the country] is only a body without a soul, a subject for treaties, a border, and a battlefield' (HB IV, p. 289).

In Lavisse's *History of France* (HF), Lemonnier's contributions, Volume V.1 (1492–1547) and V.2 (1519–59), mostly deal with the domestic and foreign politics of the country. However, an important part of the first volume is dedicated to religious movements in France and neighbouring countries as well as to the contemporary intellectual and social evolution. Parts of the second volume deal with cultural history in terms of literature and the arts at the beginning of the classical epoch. The specificity of French Calvinism is analysed too.

The subsequent volumes, VI.1 (1559–98) and VI.2 (1598–1643), written by Mariéjol, outline the French Religious Wars and the recognition of Calvinism through the Edict of Nantes under Henry IV. The revival of war against the Protestants, the decomposition of the Protestant political league, and the Counter-Reformation under Richelieu are described next. Finally, the volumes by Lavisse touching on Louis XIV, who revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, contain an evaluation of the religious and social situation of the time (HF VII.2).

With the benefit of hindsight, the historians give a sense of the cultural, social, and political impact of the tremendous upheavals of the Religious Wars on their nation's history. For Blok, such upheavals were overcome by the inauguration of the constitution of the Dutch Republic. Conversely, Pirenne saw the Dutch constitution as a tragedy that cut off the Northern and the Southern Low Countries and caused the disintegration of the Burgundian State.

To Lamprecht, the Reformation was the beginning of intellectual modernity in Germany, though political divisions underlined by confessional divisions still persisted. In Lavissee's mind, the wars were a crisis moment in France that belonged to a backward period, and France missed an opportunity to join modernity with Louis XIV's Edict of Revocation.

The Wars of Religion and 'national distinctiveness'

The way the four historians treated the events of the Religious Wars, especially their resolutions, relates to the supposed national character of each of their countries. The characters ascribed to each nation are linked with the historians' moral judgements of political and social events. Looking retroactively from the Religious Wars, they conceived of a Belgian, Dutch, French or German nation that had existed for a long time and preserved a core identity through historical transformations. These identities were psychological and collective traits that the historians felt were shared by all members of the nation-state in question.

Their conception of this notion could be more 'static', insisting on the permanence of this or that trait, or more 'dynamic', in terms of seeing an evolution of the nation's character. These two conceptions are not mutually exclusive. For example, Pirenne's characterization of the Belgians as a fundamentally 'cosmopolitan people' admits some historical variations, like the 'backward period' of the seventeenth century. Lamprecht's argument that the German nation became ever more rational and self-conscious coexists with his argument that Germans are never cut from their ethnic roots.

In each case, culture and history are considered to be fundamental for the genesis of nationhood. Language and ethnic origin, though stressed by Lamprecht, are never the sole determinants of nationhood. The historians hypostatized their nations as metahistorical categories, understandable as collective personalities – *âme nationale* (Lavissee), *volkscharakter* (Blok), *Volksgeist* (Lamprecht), or as a combination of the *génies de deux races*, Flemish and Walloon (Pirenne) – that build national cultures. Examining this conception in the context of their accounts of the Wars of Religion leads to an ironic conclusion: what Blok, Lamprecht, Lavissee and Pirenne presented as the distinctive features of their own nations' personalities often applies equally well to neighbouring nations.

Belgium as a 'European Microcosm'¹⁴

The central position of Belgium in Europe accounts for its people being influenced by new religious trends from Germany (Lutheranism) in the first part of the sixteenth century and from France (Calvinism) in the second part. Thus,

¹⁴This expression is borrowed from Lamprecht (HB I, p. X).

'the history of the Reformation in the Low Countries also reveals, in a very spectacular way, the European character of their civilization' (HB III, p. 331). The idea that this position as a necessarily open nation has forged the fundamental pacific and cosmopolitan character of the Belgian people is recurrent in Pirenne's *History of Belgium*.¹⁵ This character is tolerant and reluctant to engage in any form of violence or to subscribe to strong orthodoxy; it shows itself in the effort of 'Belgians' to soften the 'unpitying edicts' (HB III, pp. 207 and 354) of the Catholic rulers. For Pirenne, the intransigent fight against 'heresies' by Charles V and Philip II went against the 'very nature of the country' (HB III, p. 366).

'La Hollande est de la religion d'Erasmus' (Descartes)¹⁶

Pirenne's characterization of the 'tolerant' people of the Low Countries is similar to Blok's description of the salient feature of the Dutch people: 'moderation' of feeling, as embodied by the great humanist Erasmus (GNV II, p. 461). Moreover, this sense of measure is the key to the economic and intellectual rise of the young Republic and to the establishment of a new order, which Blok claims to be the most liberal and tolerant in Europe. This liberty and tolerance also applied to matters of religion: 'No country in Europe had experienced so much liberty of consciousness, so much liberty of worship as in the united Low Countries also under the domination of the winners of 1618 and 1619 [...]' (GNV IV, p. 220). However, this liberty has to be understood in the context of the preservation of the unity of the Dutch Republic's seven provinces. To keep the country united, the Dutch state maintained control over the Church (GNV IV, p. 219), and freedom of worship was never bound to regional autonomy, though the idea was discussed (GNV III, p. 203).

The French people's desire for equality and liberty

In his account of the Wars of Religion, Mariéjol (in Lavissee) insists on a permanent trait of the French: their sense of equality. He points out the failure of Condé, one of the leaders of the Protestant League, to impose the new faith by referring implicitly to this value: 'here lay the great mistake of Condé: [...] Protestantism appeared to be embodied by a class, it was supposed to be the religion of the nobility; the conversions became less numerous; and the expanding force decreased' (HF VI.1, p. 75). For Lavissee, the incapacity of Condé's Protestantism to be open to the 'whole French nation' explains the disaffection with the new faith.

The sense of liberty, another characteristic of the French spirit, is expressed through the Edict of Nantes (1598). Because it established the liberty of religion

¹⁵ See, e.g., HB I, p. XI and HB VII, pp. 392–3.

¹⁶ GNV II, p. 461. See also GNV IV, p. 384.

and dissociated nationality from faith at a time when religion was bound to the state (HF VI.1, pp. 418–23), the Edict of Nantes appears very progressive. ‘To admit two religions in the Kingdom, as King Henry did, meant another conception of the State and of the homeland; a brighter one, a more human one, a freer one’ (HF VII.2, p. 80). Concomitantly, the Edict was seen as fragile because the era was not ready for that kind of liberty: ‘religious fervour was resistant to any tolerant system’ (HF VI.1, p. 79). In Lavissee’s mind, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time when neither institutions – like the Church and the monarchy – nor the populace was ready to accept freedom of thought and of faith. ‘Their minds were not ready to accept [a more tolerant view of State and society], [...] the decision was taken to restore things to what they had been before the revolt of the Reformation. As a result France fell back a century’ (HF VII.2, p. 80).

Lavissee links this lack of tolerance and the related need for authority with the weakness of the national consciousness: ‘In so far as the nations did not have the self-consciousness they would later have, religious unity appeared to the Protestants as well as the Catholics the prior condition of a national community’ (HF VII.2, p. 43). Given the fact that seventeenth-century France could not turn to Rousseau’s definition of the nation as self-government, the only way to ensure social stability was to allow external authority, like the king and strong religious dogma. This idea of national development as progress towards greater tolerance, linked with the consciousness of being a nation, is very similar to Lamprecht’s view.

‘An individualism still confined by authority’ (DG V.1, p. 370)

For Lamprecht, the Reformation was ‘the most important national event’ (DG V.1, p. 8) of the sixteenth century, and it had a deep impact on the evolution of Germany. As such, it cannot be understood only as a ‘matter of denomination and church history’ (DG I, p. 20). The new Protestant faith liberated the individual from his subordination to Church authorities; it placed a person directly before the divine principle. Thus, Protestantism created a break with the medieval past and contributed to the development of a new age of individualism (DG V.1, p. 23). It also contributed to cultural unity in Germany thanks to the wide distribution of Luther’s writings in German, which marked ‘huge progress for national thought’ (DG V.1, p. 310).

In Lamprecht’s view, the negative side of the Reformation was that the success of Protestantism was also the victory of the principalities over the monarchy. As a consequence, no unitary German State was created. Rather, the power of both the Catholic and Protestant princes was reinforced; they were able to exercise absolute authority over their subjects and indulge their eagerness to increase their territory (DG V.1, p. 347; DG V.2, pp. 382 and 525–6).

Thus Lutheranism led to a new form of national consciousness best represented by the educated people and not by the lower classes: ‘it was more a

ferment for a future religious attitude of the national unconscious than its inexpressible property' (DG V.1, p. 9).

* * *

Blok and Pirenne described the wars in the Low Countries from two different but complementary perspectives. They tend to attribute the same characteristics to the peoples that the 'revolution against Spain' divided: the Belgians and the Dutch are both profoundly moderate and open. Such traits are presented as a general, permanent truth of Belgianhood and Dutchness. This contrasts with Lamprecht's and Lavissee's conclusions on the evolution of national characters and the incapacity of sixteenth-century people to be free and tolerant in matters of faith. While Lamprecht explored the matter in philosophical terms, Lavissee used a political frame. Lavissee links religious intolerance or violence to what he called individualism, in which the individual consciousness is not mature and cannot be totally free. Lamprecht explored the need for authority in the sixteenth century in terms of the weakness of national consciousness, which makes the only freedoms feasible those of thought and of faith.

The Wars of Religion and the national or religious 'other'

Blok, Pirenne, Lavissee and Lamprecht linked national history with world history¹⁷. Hence the history of each of their nations was interrelated with the history of other nations, as illustrated in their accounts of the Wars of Religion. There are good reasons for this: faiths crossed borders, and the countries' legal framework was partly shared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, the Low Countries belonged to the Holy Roman Empire until the abdication of Charles V. As Pirenne mentioned in his review of the third volume of Blok's *History of the Dutch People*, 'in the sixteenth century, more than in the fifteenth, the history of the Low Countries is closely connected to the general history of Europe'.¹⁸

There is also a methodological and ideological motive why the historians concerned themselves with events in neighbouring countries: the desire to stress the distinctiveness of one's own nation while emphasizing positive characteristics and downplaying negative ones. Therefore, historians often use casual comparisons, and so insist on singularity. Such particularizing comparisons are one of the rhetorical tools occurring in national history

¹⁷P. J. Blok, *Het doel van de beoefening der geschiedenis*, p. 18; E. Lavissee, *Vue générale de l'histoire politique de l'Europe*, 3rd edn (Paris, 1890); H. Pirenne, *De la méthode comparative en histoire. Discours prononcé à la séance d'ouverture du V^e congrès international des sciences historiques le 9 avril 1923* (Brussels, 1923); K. Lamprecht, 'Zur universalgeschichtliche Methodenbildung', *Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Klasse der königlichen sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft XXVII* (1909), 35–63.

¹⁸See Pirenne's review of GNV III, *Revue Historique LXVII* (1898), 392–3.

writing. Another tool is the exploration of the 'import/export' of political, social and cultural ideas and goods. This not only shows the nations' participation in a common European culture, but also the competition amongst nations: it points to each nation's wish to appear the most progressive¹⁹.

Blok and the Dutch model

The country with which Blok makes the most comparisons, emphasizing the moderate politics of the Dutch Republic, which gave 'support as much to the Protestant as to the Catholics' (GNV IV, p. 56), is France. For example, his short portrait of Catherine of Medici is tied to the violence of the French Religious Wars. His 'cunning' Catherine, the 'nasty mind of the French royal family' (GNV III, p. 418) who is ready for the 'violent preservation of Catholicism' (GNV III, p. 28), contrasts with the more nuanced characterization by Mariéjol/Lavisse.²⁰ In another case, Blok's exploration of the bloody struggles between Catholics and Protestants in France (GNV III, pp. 412–13), that culminated in the massacre of Saint Bartholomew (GNV III, p. 108), is contrasted with the situation of the Low Countries, where the Inquisition was not very prominent despite the cruelty of Philip II (GNV II, p. 474).

But it is mainly through comparisons between the Southern Low Countries that he presented the Dutch model in all its glory: 'The North became a strong and blooming State, free and open, shining in the domain of civilization as well as of trade and the industry, a great power in Europe. The South became an appendix of the Spanish and later Austrian monarchy, dominated, paralysed, enslaved, neglected, the battlefield of Europe, a pale shadow of its brilliant past' (GNV I, p. 7).

With regard to 'importing and exporting', Blok described the expansion of Calvinism. This denomination, turned into a 'moderate spirit of Reformation' by the Dutch, was exported throughout northern Europe to England, Emden, Bremen and Prussia (GNV II, p. 477). Its spirit of tolerance and moderation was also the key to the expansion of the Dutch Republic, contrasting with the unending quarrels amongst Protestants in Germany (GNV II, p. 506 and also GNV III, pp. 462–3).

Pirenne and the relativization of the 'success story' of the Dutch Republic

Blok's gloomy depiction of the southern Catholic Low Countries does not actually contradict Pirenne's picture (HB IV, pp. 288–9). Nevertheless, the

¹⁹For example, this excerpt where Mariéjol/Lavisse speak of the Edict of Nantes: 'no other country in Europe in this time exhibits so much tolerance' (HF VI.1, p. 423).

²⁰Having first tried to '[...] heal the nation's offences [by] the remedy of tolerance' (HF VI.1, p. 42), Catherine became finally the 'heavy murderer who foments the Bartholomew's Night' (HF VI.1, p. 152).

latter adopted a strategy that downplays the success of the north – the Dutch Republic – and focused on signs in the south forecasting a better future, especially in economic terms. Pirenne explored the nuances of domination by Spanish rulers during the reign of Albert and Isabel and onwards. Whilst not denying the loss of ‘civic feeling, so deep in the sixteenth century’ (HB IV, p. 335) and the ‘subsidence of national vigour’ (HB IV, p. 336), he also described Wallonia’s economic vitality. It was a ‘breeding ground for artists and merchants during the worst days of the sixteenth century’ (HB IV, pp. 422–3), who spread out into Flanders, participating in the growth of its textile and metal industry.

Despite Pirenne’s moral rejection of Calvinism as intrinsically brutal (HB III, p. 427 and HB IV, p. 390), he linked its triumph in Holland and Zeeland to the Walloon and Flemish refugees driven there from the Catholic southern provinces (HB IV, p. 124). Similarly, he gives credit to the ‘brilliant pleiade of Belgian Calvinists’ (HB IV, p. 333) and craftsmen who emigrated to the north (HB IV, p. 417) for the economic expansion of the Dutch Republic into the ‘first harbour power and the first capitalist power in the world’ (HB IV, p. 333). Pirenne’s insistence on such ‘importing and exporting,’ reinforces his thesis that the scission was not a question of religion or language. This clearly contradicts Blok, who attributed the separation of the Low Countries to the division between Catholic Walloons and Flemish Calvinists (GNV III, pp. 206 and 220).

A final example illustrating Pirenne’s downplaying of the Dutch rise, is his portrayal of William of Orange. While Blok depicted the prince as the most prominent leader of the opposition to Philip II, the protector of the persecuted Protestants, and a national hero, (GNV III, p. 70), Pirenne considered him an opportunist who was less motivated by the defence of faith than by the power he gained in Holland and Zeeland (HB IV, pp. 34–9). Furthermore, Pirenne argued that the sovereignty of the General States was negated by the particularistic attitude of the provinces and the hegemonic position of Holland (HB IV, pp. 388–9).²¹ Pirenne implicitly showed that this lack of unity is why the Republic did not immediately constitute a nationality.

Lavissee and Germany as the hereditary enemy

As it was based on the methodological rules of the French historical school, the *History of France* aimed for impartiality. It was successful in that it included little commentary and a lot of facts. However, Lavissee, whose prejudices were driven in part by the French defeat of 1870, could not help depicting Germans as fundamentally warlike and inimical.²²

²¹Without being as negative as Pirenne, Blok is also aware of the fact that Holland and Zeeland constituted the core of the union (GNV III, p. 451).

²²Such a negative image of Germany is recurrent in Lavissee. See, e.g., *Histoire de France contemporaine*, III, pp. 168 and 394.

In the context of the Reformation, he wrote: 'sixteenth century's Germany is an individual, endowed with an almost violent sense of activism. Luther, Ulrich von Hutten, Franz von Sickingen, and Goetz von Berlichingen are men with extraordinarily strong personalities' (HF V.1, p. 18). Such violence also characterizes the transformation of the peaceful French Reformation under Lefèvre d'Étaples into a revolutionary, aggressive movement when influenced by Lutheranism (HF V.1, p. 350).

Lavissee's spirit of post-1870 rancour is best illustrated by his account of the massive emigration of Huguenots to Germany after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes: 'strengths taken away from France strengthened the foreigner, who would become our enemy [i.e., Germany]' (HF VII.2, p. 80). This is the importing and exporting crux for Lavissee: German power was partly due to a French contribution. According to Lavissee, the French king's authority could assuage France's religious turmoil through general edicts – like that of Nantes, and of its revocation – whilst keeping the country unified. In contrast, he sees the scission of the Low Countries as the 'normal' evolution of the Burgundian state, which was only an 'artificial creation' (HF VI.1, p. 202). Hence, religious matters did not solely account for the separation; it was also due to the lack of a cultural unity; 'the population was agrarian in the South and in the East, and made up of fishermen in the North' (HF VI.1, p. 201). This last motif is echoed in Lamprecht's characterization of the Low Countries.

Lamprecht and a German-centred perspective

In his description of the Holy Roman Empire, Lamprecht devoted a whole chapter to the 'Belgian-Dutch territories' (DG V.2, p. 431) at its periphery (DG V.2, p. 619). He pointed out two trends in German history: that of the Low Countries and its urban civilization (DG V.2, p. 558), and that of an 'all-German' tradition (DG V.2, p. 557). Lamprecht pointed to the German cultural roots of the Dutch people,²³ and his Low Countries chapter is written more in Blok's style, than Pirenne's.

Lamprecht pointed out deep differences between the northern and southern Low Countries using Blok's categories – language, culture and religion – and thereby illustrates the cultural community between the Dutch and the Germans: 'The South had already turned to the Walloon language, in the North the German language and habits were dominant; and the South was mainly Catholic, whereas the North was mostly Protestant in the most important cities and provinces. Therefore, it was difficult in the long term to avoid a separation' (DG V.2, p. 603). When writing about the foundation of the Dutch Republic,

²³ Blok condemned the way Lamprecht handled Dutch history, especially in the last volumes of the *Deutsche Geschichte*, as tending to German cultural imperialism. See P. J. Blok, 'Deutschland en Nederland', *Onze Eeuw* (1905), 418–37.

Lamprecht highlighted the originality and modernity of this ‘form of federal State unknown until that time’ (DG V.2, p. 619) and its implementation of ‘political liberty, liberty of consciousness and liberty of trade on the world market’ (DG V.2, p. 618).

Lamprecht did not speak much about French domestic matters. He briefly mentioned St Bartholomew’s Night – ‘the terrifying message’ (DG V.2, p. 591) and its impact on the fight against Protestants in the Low Countries. He also referred to France’s international policies, writing that ‘the heart of the nations of the civilized medieval Europe’ (DG V.2, p. 706) played a key role in continental events. Yet he had few good words for Calvinism and the French Reformation, which he described as ‘extreme fanaticism of religious action’. This is the opposite of Lutheran liberty of consciousness, as it points to the ‘absolute power of God’ (DG V.2, p. 562). The contrast attests not only to Lamprecht’s German-centred perspective, as he emphasized the superiority of the more rational German religion; it also attests to the conflict between Calvinism and Lutheranism, shedding light on Lamprecht’s own convictions.

* * *

Examining each historian’s comparison of his nation with its neighbours leads to the conclusion that the ‘other’ serves as a counterpoint to reinforce positive aspects of the historian’s own country. Blok’s contrast of the growing Dutch Republic with the declining Catholic Low Countries is the most striking example of this. The ‘religious other’, connected with the ‘national other’, is also depicted in ways that highlight the superior points of the dominant faith in each historian’s country. We see this in Lamprecht’s negative evaluation of Calvinism and Lavissee’s condemnation of Lutheranism.

The Wars of Religion from a liberal point of view

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Netherlands faced struggles for power between opposing groups: Liberals, Protestants, Catholics and socialists. The resulting fragmentation of civil society had implications for the country’s historical writing, especially in that historians who studied the foundation of the Dutch nation-state became deeply concerned with ideology. Protestant historians like Groen van Prinsterer interpreted the revolts of the sixteenth century as a fight for the Calvinist faith and the unification of the Dutch

²⁴ On Groen van Prinsterer as a politician and a publicist, trying to promote a ‘Christian State’ in the Netherlands (notably via education), see GNV VII, pp. 152–5.

²⁵ See W. Nuyens, *Algemeene geschiedenis des Nederlandschen volks, van de vroegste tijden tot op onze dagen*, 20 vols, 2nd edn. (Amsterdam, 1873–1882).

nation.²⁴ Catholic historians like Nuyens preferred to emphasize the link with Burgundian institutions and the unity of Catholic faith.²⁵

In the introduction to his volume on the Eighty Years War, Blok confessed that he scrambled to escape such ideological bias. He modelled his writing on the 'impartial' style of his master Robert Fruin, the founder of Dutch historical science.²⁶ How did he make his narrative impartial? First, he used a bundle of causes to explain the independence of the United Provinces: the political rigidity of Philip II and his governor Alva, competition between the great nobles, their reluctance to accept William of Orange, and, finally, the opposition of Catholics and Protestants. None of these causes is paramount for him. Second, Blok did not idealize the social and political situation of the seventeenth century, even though it was often presented as a Golden Age. In explaining the numerous religious and political conflicts, like the one between the Calvinists and the Arminians or between the monarchists and the federalists, he tried to take an Olympian position, considering the impact on the nation without editorializing. Such depiction of detail, whilst eschewing strong interpretative lines, has been negatively qualified as small-mindedness. It contrasts with Pirenne's *History of Belgium*, which distinguished only two major causes of the sixteenth-century Revolution: the opposition of the Spanish and Burgundian states, and the clash between the liberty of capitalism and the older corporative hierarchical structures.²⁷ Rather, Blok attempted to neutralize all sorts of oppositions in the reconstruction of the Dutch national past by attempting a political reconciliation between 'monarchical and State interest', showing his convictions as an 'old liberal'²⁸ who strives to respect existing institutions.

Blok and Pirenne shared ideas about throwing off the yoke of 'foreign tyranny' – this, indeed, is a typical nineteenth-century liberal interpretation of the sixteenth-century struggles in the Low Countries. As liberals, they both stressed the autonomy and independence characterizing the Burgundians who acted against Philip of Spain (GNV II, p. 436 and HB III, p. 217). However, Pirenne also stressed that the revolt was a national uprising before becoming a religious conflict (HB III, p. 375). Pirenne interpreted the uprising through his 'Burgundism'. He asserted that a national feeling existed in the Burgundian Low Countries in the sixteenth century, and that the conflict was thus the confrontation of two states. In 1572, 'the Burgundian State revolts a last time

²⁶GNV III, p. IV.

²⁷G. W. Kernkamp, 'Pirenne', in Kernkamp, *Van mensen en tijden. Studiën over geschiedschrijvers* (Haarlem, 1931), p. 222.

²⁸P. B. M. Blaas, 'De prikkelbaarheid van een kleine natie met een groot verleden', pp. 33–5.

against the Spanish State. But if the motives are purely political, the revolt borrows its weapons from religion' (HB IV, p. 46).

Moreover, for Pirenne, religion cannot be tied to language, which is what Blok did by describing opposing Catholic Walloons and Protestant Flemings. Pirenne felt that 'with the rallying cry "*vive le gueux*", [the provinces of the Low Countries] the Walloons and the Flemish would soon rise up together against Spain' (HB III, p. 330). The main thesis of Pirenne's *History of Belgium* is the rejection of the idea of the scission as antagonism between two linguistically distinct ethnic groups. A shared urban and cosmopolitan culture going back to the Middle Ages is stronger, for him, than the unity of language.

The opposition that Pirenne tried to transcend in his work concerns the ethnic issues of the Walloon and Flemish people, and not the religious and ideological conflict between the ultramontane Catholics and the Liberals, who were at their peak in the years 1850–80.²⁹ He did not even bother mentioning the controversial interpretation of the revolt favoured by Belgian romanticist historians of the mid-nineteenth century, when Catholic writers argued that the rigid policies of Philip II defended the 'true faith' of the nation, and Liberal writers sided with the princes of Egmont and Hornes: 'who led the opposition to this tyrannical king in the name of liberty'.³⁰ Like Lavissee, he condemned both religions for their narrowness and intolerance in the sixteenth century. For him, if the acts of the Protestants appeared less violent than of the Catholics, 'it is due to the fact that their Church was less developed, their dogma less rigorous and due to the numerous sects which made up the movement as a whole' (HB IV, p. 449). Pirenne's liberalism is very evident in his ideas on tolerance

²⁹The teaching of the *Syllabus errorum* by Pius IX provoked a radicalization of the Catholics, called ultramontanism, in Belgium, France, Germany and the Low Countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though appearing in different manifestations due to the cultural and political peculiarities of the various countries, this conservative Catholic movement fought rationalism, individualism, liberalism and democracy. See D. Mollenhauer, 'Symbolkämpfe um die Nation. Katholiken und Laizisten in Frankreich (1871–1914)', in H.-G. Haupt and D. Langewiesche (eds), *Nation und Religion in Europa: mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M., 2004), pp. 202–30. For the Pirennean view on the Belgian case, see HB VII, p. 226 ff.

³⁰J. Koll, 'Belgien. Geschichtskultur und nationale Identität', in M. Flacke (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen: ein europäisches Panorama; Begleitband zur Ausstellung des deutschen Historischen Museum vom 20. März 1998 bis 9. Juni 1998* (Munich, 1998), pp. 63–7, and *ibid.*, 'Die Reformation in der Kontroverse. Nation und Protestantismus bei belgischen Katholiken und Liberalen in 19. Jahrhundert', in H.-G. Haupt and D. Langewiesche, *Nation and Religion in Europe*, pp. 99–134.

³¹Love for the Catholic faith, devotion to the legitimate rulers and passion for liberty, are the main traits of Belgian 'national character'. See G. Kurth, *Manuel d'histoire de Belgique*, 3rd edn (Brussels and Namur, 1930), p. 238.

and on material civilization as the glue for national unity rather than religion or language. On this point, he was opposed to his master, Catholic historian Godefroid Kurth, founder of the scientific historical school of Belgium, who associated the essence of the Belgian nation with Catholicism.³¹

Whilst Catholic historians of Lavissee's time pointed to the Church and monarchy as having bound French citizens together, Republicans pointed to the Republic and laicism. They considered religion a private matter, a matter of conscience only, and they believed in civic education in the values inherited from the French revolution.³² Lavissee, born into a Protestant family, wanted to prevent the dangers of religious 'fanaticism',³³ and strove not to exacerbate tensions between Catholics and Republicans in the Third Republic. Thus, his narrative always maintains a balance between Catholics and Protestants, showing that they share the burden of history:

to appreciate and do justice to the error of that enthusiasm – in favour of the Revocation's Edict – it is necessary to remember first, that tolerance was an almost unknown virtue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that the persecutions by the Protestants were not less unbearable than the persecutions by the Catholics. What a Protestant majority would have done against a minority of Catholics in France, is told by the history of Geneva; and also that of Holland, and that of England.

(HF VII.2, p. 79)

For Lavissee, the struggle between Calvinism and Catholicism was not that of liberty against orthodoxy. Rather, it was the struggle between two dogmas, in which religion was intertwined with and subjugated to political aims (HF VII.2, p. 42). Thus, the Wars of Religion do not represent a watershed in the history of France. Lavissee argued that French Protestantism was not the equivalent of the German experience, because France was not converted through the Reformation (HF V.2, p. 374). His account of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was inspired by Michelet, Lavissee's *maître à penser*, who saw in it the opposite of the spirit of the French Revolution.³⁴ Lavissee's *History of France*

³²See, e.g., W. R. Keylor, *Academy and Community: The Foundation of the French Historical Profession* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), pp. 91–2. More specific and with paradigmatic examples, see the aforementioned contribution of Mollenhauer, 'Symbolkämpfen um die Nation. Katholiken und Laizisten in Frankreich (1871–1914)'.

³³P. Benedict, 'Introduction', in G. Marnef, H. van Neiroop and M. Venard, 'Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555–1585', *Proceedings of the Colloquium, Amsterdam, 29–31 October 1997* (Amsterdam, 1999), p. 2.

³⁴P. Joutard, 'Le musée du désert. La minorité réformée', in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. II, p. 2670.

devoted many pages to explaining in detail the stages of the decision by Louis XIV, who embodied 'the feelings, the opinions and the illusions of Catholic France' (HF VII.2, p. 45). Lavissee illustrated how unfair and reactionary this process of 'recatholicization of France' was in terms of the opportunistic way the articles of the Edict of Nantes were interpreted, modified and applied (HF VII.2, p. 46 ff). The preamble of the Edict of Revocation is explained as unfair and 'false' (HF VII.2, p. 78), and Lavissee put the blame for this much more on the monarchy than on the Catholic Church.

Lavissee's *History of France* appears very moderate as it struggles for an impartial view of the Religious Wars, and this must be understood as part of his liberal ideology.³⁵ This is related to the self-awareness of the Third Republic, in which there was an eagerness to build a strong French nation based on republican values like devotion to the state and patriotic love. The real enemy of that time was less internal and more external: for Lavissee, France's main goal was to be able to compete with Germany.

In the account of the Wars of Religion by Lamprecht, we can see a final echo of the Kulturkampf, of Bismarck's fight against the pretensions of ultramontane Catholics.³⁶ Lamprecht's German history associates Protestantism with modernity, whilst he refers to Catholicism, especially the Counter-Reformation, as a reactionary movement, an 'awakening of a medieval piety' (DG V.2, p. 642). Lamprecht, a pastor's son, saw the Reformation as a watershed, just as German Protestant nineteenth-century historiography had done since Ranke: 'It is the main question for understanding the time from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In the silence of the monastery cell of Erfurt and of Wittenberg, the final, exemplary distinction between the medieval and post-medieval spirit took place; it is for us still effective and was decisive for the past centuries' (DG V.2, pp. 245–6). However, Lamprecht tried to escape religious bias and traditional Borussian historiography, which sought to equate Protestantism, especially Protestant Prussia, with the unification of Germany and German national identity.³⁷ Lamprecht strove for reconciliation with Catholic historians on the terrain of cultural history.³⁸ Thus, Lamprecht's interpretation of religion is not so much combative as it is universalistic. He saw religious tolerance as progress, as, in his conclusions on the Peace of Münster: 'tolerance was recognized from all sides as really necessary [...] actually the most important

³⁵ P. Nora, 'Lavissee, instituteur national', in *Les lieux de mémoire*, pp. 265–6.

³⁶ See T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. II: *Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (Munich, 1998), p. 364 ff.

³⁷ The archetypal Borussian historian was Heinrich von Treitschke. See H. Lehmann, "'Er ist wir selber: der ewige Deutsch". Zur langanhaltenden Wirkung der Lutherdeutung von Heinrich von Treitschke', in G. Krumeich and H. Lehmann (eds), *'Gott mit uns'. Nation, Religion und Gewalt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 91–104.

³⁸ R. Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht*, p. 218.

aspect of the discussions' (DG V.2, p. 775). He highlighted the importance of freedom of worship for both Protestants and Catholics in all territories. Such arguments, as well as his rejection of all forms of Church power over politics, express Lamprecht's liberal convictions in the German context.

Conclusion

National liberal historians like Blok, Lamprecht, Lavissee and Pirenne put forward a secularized interpretation of religion as a tool to sustain patriotism. They saw the nation as a principal historical force that had to be supra-confessional. Moreover, their ideological backgrounds and their commitment to the discipline of scientific historiography deeply influenced their national histories, in as much as it can be said that 'religion fits within the long-term development of history, including the current culture that encapsulates the historian, and may provide his or her posture toward the past'.³⁹ For these historians, this meant striving for both tolerance and impartiality in writing on the Religious Wars and their consequences.

Therefore, they minimized the competition between religion and nationalism in the political and social realm, as both had 'a sacred dogma and a sacred object – God and the nation', 'sacred symbols' and 'a fixed calendar and fixed places for their rituals – the Churches and the national monuments'.⁴⁰ Instead of creating a dichotomy between state and religion, the national liberal narratives tried to reconcile them. Heroes of the Wars of Religion are used to illustrate combinations of nationalism and religion. Lamprecht's *History of Germany* presented Martin Luther as the founder of German national culture. Blok's *History of the Netherlands* depicted William of Orange as a national hero of Dutch independence. Lavissee's *History of France* praised Henry IV, compelled to embrace the Catholic faith to become King of France, for having imposed the Edict of Nantes.

Religion is thus integrated with and subordinated to nationality; it becomes a symbol of national conciliation that helps in the formation of a cultural synthesis. Such a synthesis was seen as the core of the national identity that the narratives applauded. The kind of collective identity explored here is summed up by a single trait of the national character: a natural drive for tolerance, which each people – Belgian, Dutch, French and German – is shown to have. In this respect, the nationalism we can see in the liberal master narratives functions as a secularized religion for each society as a whole.

³⁹D. G. Shaw, 'Modernity between us and them: The place of religion within history', *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 3.

⁴⁰C. Lorenz, 'Towards a theoretical framework for comparing historiographies: Some preliminary considerations', in P. C. Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto, 2004), p. 40.

6

Heretics into National Heroes: Jules Michelet's Joan of Arc and František Palacký's John Hus

Monika Baár

Prologue

Historians in the Romantic era frequently expressed fascination with unconventional heroes, an inclination which dovetailed with a striving to introduce new vistas into historical writing. They were no longer content to reiterate their predecessors' narratives about the histories of the royal court and the battlefield. Some scholars even viewed kings and military leaders, whose deeds old chronicles extolled, as 'agents of repression'. This old mould of heroes was increasingly being replaced by 'agents of freedom'; genuine great men, who rose to prominence, not because of their privileged background, but due to their contribution to the destiny of the nation or even to humanity.¹ As such personalities traditionally remained unacknowledged in historiography, it required a strenuous effort from scholars to unearth documents that offered at least some clues about their deeds. Moreover, even when such sources were readily available, they usually represented the viewpoint and interests of the ruling powers, and were thus deemed biased and inappropriate for constructing sympathetic portrayals.

In medieval and early modern times, religious symbolism, including extensive appeals to the saints, played a seminal role in the reinforcement of the legitimacy of the feudal-dynastic order. Whilst the veneration of saints continued to feature in the modern epoch, from the nineteenth century onwards, scholars came to evoke the memory of heretics and religious reformers in order to legitimize the most varied, and often opposing, ideologies. Like the symbolic power of saints, the nonchalance and martyrdom of heretics provided moral capital that could be eagerly exploited by adherents of nationalism and liberalism, and later even Marxism. Appeals to heretics could bolster not only partisan views, but occasionally also conciliatory approaches.

¹ L. Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), p. 90.

The backdrop for the transfiguration of heretics into national and international heroes, was provided by major transformations in the European political and cultural landscape. Fundamental to the evolution of this new scene was the process of secularization, which also entailed the secularization of the heretics' messages. For example, liberal scholars found valuable assets in the legacy of medieval religious dissent in support of their call for the abolition of the remnants of feudalism and the creation of a modern society. The propagation of the freedom of expression and freedom of conscience constituted more specific agendas, which could be promoted by evocations to a martyr who fell victim to the excesses of the Church. Secularization was accompanied by the intensification of national sentiment and the sacralization of the nation. Nationalism has often been considered a surrogate religion, extensively appropriating religious symbolism.² In that context, heretics could be removed from a primarily religious setting and transfigured into champions of national liberty, as well as bearers or purveyors of unique national values. Moreover, scholars often incorporated the legacy of religious dissent into their teleological reading of history. To that end, medieval heretics were typically presented as forerunners of the Reformation and antecedents of the nineteenth-century revolutions.

My chapter seeks to document these fundamental processes at the micro-level, by tracing the transformation of the 'careers' of two medieval heretics, Joan of Arc and John Hus, from a lowly, even ignoble status in public memory, into celebrated national heroes. This was a shift which was to a great extent attributable to two prominent historians of the Romantic epoch, the Frenchman Jules Michelet, and the Czech František Palacký. Although the two scholars did not devise the image of their protagonists *ex nihilo*, Michelet's input was indispensable in casting Joan of Arc as a symbol of France, whilst Palacký can take credit for rendering John Hus as the foremost representative of the Czech nation's quest for liberty. Moreover, the two scholars not only contributed to the fundamental redefinition of their protagonists' image, but also laid the foundations for their enduring legacies in national as well as European memory.

Far from being exceptional, Michelet's and Palacký's portrayals in fact exemplified a common trend in European historiography. Among other examples, their approach exhibited analogies with Italian proponents of the *Risorgimento* who venerated the memory of Arnold of Brescia, a twelfth-century heretic, and also with Spanish liberal scholars who evoked the martyrdom of Miguel Servet, an erudite scholar, who was sent to the pyre for his anti-Trinitarian views by the Council of Geneva with John Calvin's consent. The legacy of the Bogomil heresy profoundly shaped regional and national identities in the Balkans; whereas

² See C. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York, 1960).

on the other hand attempts to appropriate the memory of another Manichean sect, the Cathars, for the purposes of forging a separate southern regional identity in nineteenth-century France, ended in failure. Intriguingly, a powerful appeal to heretics was made by Marx and his adherents, who discerned in the deeds of some heretics the early manifestations of class consciousness and class struggle, as with the German peasant war of the sixteenth century. It was through this route that, in addition to Martin Luther, the Anabaptist Thomas Münzer entered the national pantheon (as well as appearing on the banknotes) of the atheist German Democratic Republic.

The phenomenon of the 'nationalization of religious heroes' has rarely been investigated in comparative perspective.³ My study seeks to contribute to redressing this oversight by undertaking a parallel examination of my two chosen authors' intellectual backgrounds, their ideological pretexts and above all, by a close reading and contextualization of their respective texts. Such an analysis may not only help to identify intriguing parallels and contrasts, but may also enrich our understanding of the strategies which informed the grand narratives of Romantic historiography.

Two heroes

At a superficial level, Joan of Arc and John Hus appear to be strikingly different characters. Joan rose to prominence as a young, simple, uneducated girl, noted for her visions and her peasant's wit, whilst Hus entered the limelight as an older, learned and influential scholar. More significant, however, is the fundamental quality that connects them: their extraordinary charisma. In addition, the historical circumstances that provided the background to their performances on the 'stage of history' also reveal conspicuous resemblances. Above all, they both lived in epochs characterized by profound crisis, both in the secular and the ecclesiastical realm.

In the last three decades of the fourteenth century, the Bohemian lands were ravaged by severe economic depression, epidemics and private wars. As elsewhere in Europe, the immense secular power and extensive property of the Church triggered considerable discontent. John Hus emerged as the greatest critic of its corrupt practices, demanding a return to the true sources of Christianity, which he believed to be the Bible and the example provided by Jesus and the apostles. Hus was born to a peasant family and went on to attend the University of Prague in 1400. He was then ordained as a priest, and two years later even rose to the position of Rector of the University. Hus delivered sermons in one of the most important sites of worship in Prague, the

³A notable exception is a magisterial book by F. Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit: Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1975).

Bethlehem Chapel. Under the influence of John Wyclif, he preached not in the customary Latin, but in the vernacular language. His phenomenal success upset his enemies, especially his German colleagues at the University, who were already struggling to come to terms with the increasing ascent to prominence of their Czech counterparts, at the expense of their own positions. Moreover, the clergy of Prague brought a complaint before the Pope, who subsequently declared an interdict on the city until Hus resided there.

In 1414 Hus attended the Council of Constance of his own volition, hoping to vindicate himself. He was famously assured of safe conduct by King Venceslas's brother, Emperor Sigismund, which should have enabled him to return freely to Bohemia. In spite of this, Hus was arrested in Constance and the Emperor did not intervene to save him, a treachery he himself admitted. Hus expressed willingness to withdraw his teachings, provided that their falsity was proven on the basis of scriptural evidence. Instead, the Synod deemed his writings heretical and condemned him to death by burning. He was executed on 6 July 1415 and his ashes were thrown into the Rhine. According to the tradition, John Wyclif's books (which the Council also condemned) were used to kindle the fire. Hus's execution triggered the Hussite wars, causing an international conflict which placed Bohemia at the centre of European developments. Hus's heritage was maintained in Bohemia by the adherents of the Bohemian Brethren; a community that often fell victim to persecution, following Bohemia's incorporation into the Habsburg dominions in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁴ Because of his intellectual connections to Wyclif, Hus was also assigned a place in the British Protestant tradition which stated that 'Wyclif begat Hus, Hus begat Luther and Luther begat the truth.'⁵ It was in the late eighteenth century that Hus's legacy first received serious *scholarly* attention, a process that paved the way for the 'canonization' undertaken by Palacký. So successful was his attempt, that Hus subsequently became a national hero of inter-war Czechoslovakia, and 6 July, the day of his execution at Constance, has been a national holiday ever since.

Joan of Arc's story constitutes the better known chapter of this parallel narrative, with episodes including the atrocities of the Hundred Years War, and opposing claims to the French throne pursued by King Henry VI of England and by Charles, the son of the late Valois king, Charles VI. Joan of Arc, daughter of a wealthy tenant farmer who was educated by her mother to be deeply religious, often claimed to have heard the voices of the saints. In 1429 St Catherine and St Margaret appeared in the visions of the adolescent girl and told her that God had chosen her to help the son of the late king of France, Charles VI, to

⁴ In order to weaken the Hussite legacy the Habsburgs even promoted the cult of a local saint, John of Nepomuk.

⁵ W. Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), p. 165.

repel the English from France. Consequently, she then left home dressed as a man and presented herself to the future king. Tradition has it that Charles disguised himself, but could not mislead Joan, who requested a command of troops. Once her wish was fulfilled, she led her army triumphantly to Rheims, which had been occupied by the king of England, and subsequently Charles was crowned King Charles VII at the cathedral.

Following this, Joan convinced the king that her army would be able to conquer Paris. However, although she continued to fight, her success gradually waned and in 1430 she was captured by the Burgundians, the king's enemies, who sold her to the English. Charles VII made no effort to rescue the Maid, and thus, in 1431 she was tried for witchcraft and burned at the stake before a large crowd in Rouen; thereafter, her ashes were thrown into the Seine. In 1455 Joan's family initiated the reconsideration of their daughter's case and the following year, she was declared innocent by papal decree. Several centuries later, in 1909, Joan of Arc was beatified and in 1920 even canonized by the Church. A year earlier the French government had designated the day of her death a national festival and she became not only France's greatest national heroine and patron saint, but also a symbol of French unity.

Two historians

Jules Michelet and František Palacký undoubtedly had a great deal in common. For one thing, they were contemporaries in the strict sense of the word: they were both born in 1798 and died two years apart from each other, in 1874 and 1876 respectively. They also shared a relatively humble background: Palacký was the second child of a Moravian Lutheran pastor-teacher and Michelet's father worked as a printer. Whilst this Protestant background played a seminal role in Czech scholars' views, for Michelet, his family's historical links with the Huguenots proved largely irrelevant. In his youth he displayed Catholic and even royalist tendencies. When he undertook the reshaping of Joan's image, he was already sceptical of orthodox Catholicism, which did not prevent him from identifying fully with his heroine's exemplification of the power of faith. From the 1840s onwards, he gradually came to reject the rigid authority of the Church, reserving his strongest condemnation, like Palacký, for the intrigues of the Jesuits. Had he embarked on Joan's portrayal at this later stage, he might have either despised Joan's 'superstition', or perhaps overemphasized her rebellion against the Church militants.⁶

Both scholars distinguished themselves as prolific authors and their magnum opus entailed a monumental national history. Michelet worked on his *Histoire de France* for more than 30 years and in 1867, the date of its completion, it

⁶A. Guérard, 'Introduction', in J. Michelet, *Joan of Arc* (Michigan, 1967), p. XII.

extended to over 19 volumes. The treatment of the medieval period constituted the highlight of this monumental study, an account that culminated in the tragic fate of Joan of Arc. The relevant chapters were also reprinted as the biography of the Maid of Orleans on numerous occasions and have sometimes been claimed to constitute the 'national Bible' of the French.

The revolution of 1830, which inaugurated the monarchy of Louis Phillippe, marked a watershed in Michelet's life and career. He was appointed as head of the historical section of the National Archives and started to deliver lectures at the Sorbonne, in which he touched upon Joan of Arc's place in French history. It dismayed Michelet that in 1789 France's revolutionary potential could not be fulfilled, a mission whose mantle was subsequently taken up by the generations of 1830 and 1848. Yet, in 1848 he once again had to suffer the betrayal of the revolution; a particularly shocking experience for him to witness which occurred in June, 1848, whereby the National Guard, who had joined the uprising only three months earlier, now turned against them and fired at the demonstrating workers.⁷ In 1853 Michelet's strong opposition to Napoleon cost him his professorship; under the second empire he was deprived of his official positions and lived in uncompromising opposition and moral exile. He remained a prolific author and, in addition to his fascination with the Maid of Orleans, his admiration for religious dissent found expression in his *Mémoires de Luther par lui-même*. He later entertained the idea of composing similar biographies of Wyclif and Hus; however, this plan never materialized.⁸

Palacký commenced his *Geschichte von Böhmen, grösstentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften* as the Historiographer of the Bohemian Estates, with its first volume appearing in 1838. Ten years later, the turbulent revolutionary days of 1848 caused him to reconsider his loyalties. Following an invitation to attend the Committee of Fifty preparing for the All-German Constituent Assembly in Frankfurt, claiming famously that he was not a German but a Czech of Slavic origin, he suffered vituperation from German scholars. As a reaction to this, he resolved to continue his history in the Czech language, which was now entitled *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě* (*The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia*). The complete 3000-page edition of *Dějiny* (which discussed the history of Czechs up until 1526) subsequently earned Palacký the title 'Father of the Nation'. The content of the Czech version did not differ significantly from the German, but the accents of the narrative were placed on different junctures, particularly because he shifted his focus away from the history of a territorial entity, Bohemia, and towards that of an ethnic group, the Czechs. Importantly, the Czech version placed significantly

⁷ L. Orr, *Jules Michelet: Nature, History and Language* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1976), p. 5.

⁸ I. Tieder, *Michelet et Luther, Histoire d'une rencontre* (Paris, 1976), p. 15.

greater emphasis on the magnitude of the Hussite movement, a topic which had already attracted Palacký's attention in his youth. This new perspective reflected the emerging need for an indigenous Czech historical tradition: with the intensification of the national sentiment after 1848 references to a common Slavonic heritage were no longer deemed adequate.

Both scholars undertook extensive archival research in order to redress prevailing views on their protagonists: they complained that Joan's and Hus's enemies enjoyed the privilege of recording the events for themselves and consequently, their views could not be accepted as reliable accounts. As Michelet noted on certain points: 'we cannot accept with implicit faith the biased testimony of the English. It would betray scant knowledge'.⁹ This raises the question of what records were then available to the two historians. Whilst Joan of Arc's memory was neglected until the eighteenth century and medieval chronicles revealed a disdainful attitude towards her, Enlightenment scholars, tending to identify the Middle Ages with barbarism and expressing contempt for the supernatural, likewise remained unimpressed by a deeply religious heroine. Voltaire parodied the Maid in a long poem, *La Pucelle*, and his entry on her in the *Dictionnaire philosophique* involved a fierce diatribe against the clergy:

Think of Joan not as an inspired innocent, but as a fearless idiot who believed herself to be inspired; a village heroine who had a great role thrust upon her; a hearty girl whom the inquisitors and the doctors sent to the stake with the most cowardly cruelty.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Voltaire did valuable service to Joan's reputation. By ridiculing her, he simultaneously *humanized* the Maid and thereby prepared the ground for her transformation from a patron of a royalist ideal of the state into the forerunner of republican patriotism.¹¹ Although the revolutionary period seemingly offered little scope for a heroine whose great achievement lay in restoring the monarchy, ultimately it proved possible to accommodate her within the revolutionary heritage. In fact, the interpretation of the royalist scholar Le Brun de Charmette (1817) had already paved the way for this 'tough peasant girl's' metamorphosis into a national hero, but it remained for Michelet to render the Maid the incarnation of French patriotism.

In medieval chronicles, the Hussites received a disparaging verdict and the Jesuit-dominated intellectual world of the seventeenth century reiterated that judgement. It was the critical spirit of Enlightenment scholarship that fostered

⁹ J. Michelet, *Joan of Arc* (Michigan, 1967), p. 118, and J. Michelet, *Jean d'Arc* (Paris, 1879), p. 147.

¹⁰ Quoted from M. Winock, 'Joan of Arc', in L. D. Kritzman (ed.), *Realms of Memory*, vol. 3 (New York, 1998), pp. 433–80, 439.

¹¹ D. Rieger, 'Jeanne d'Arc und Patriotismus. Zur Geschichte einer "belle image de livre de prix" von der Revolution zur Résistance', *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 36 (1985), 122–39, 124.

new attitudes, motivating Protestant historians in Bohemia and abroad, for example in Germany and France, to embark on the reinterpretation of some prevailing myths about the supposedly bloodthirsty and cruel qualities of the Hussites.¹² The breakthrough came from some of Palacký's predecessors, especially the historian František Martin Pelcl (Franz Martin Pelzel, 1734–18), whose *Kurzgefasste Geschichte Böhmens* (1774) condemned the Hussite wars for fanaticism and for inflicting suffering on the country, but presented Hus himself in a very sympathetic light. Simultaneously, the eminent philologist of the Enlightenment era, Josef Dobrovský contributed to further refinements of the picture by critically assessing the medieval chronicles and highlighting their numerous mistakes and distortions. Thus, although it was Palacký who elevated the Hussite movement into a development of world historical importance, some tenets of his theory had previously found expression in the works of earlier scholars.

Two narratives

As we have seen, the two historians sought to provide credible accounts of Joan's and Hus's lives, supported, whenever possible, by archival documents. Yet, their role was by no means reduced to that of detached narrators. On the contrary, their complete identification with their subject matter resulted in a highly subjective tone: they saw themselves not as cold commentators, but as apologists for their subjects. Furthermore, unlike their predecessors in the Enlightenment period, who retained a distance from their audience, the two historians also aligned themselves with the perspective of their audience, the national community. Adhering to their roles as educators, Michelet and Palacký combined scholarly content with popular appeal and engaging style: their intention was to edify not only the intellect of their readers but also their heart. Such an emphatic stance often included a rhetorical association with the unprivileged people's situation and in that context, Michelet frequently stressed that he was himself a son of the people. Indeed, his writings initially revealed little concern for great historical characters: in fact, it was precisely his encounter with Joan of Arc which helped him to overcome this aversion.¹³

Both scholars composed their national histories in a chronological sequence and cast the glorious death of Joan of Arc and Hus respectively as the apex of their narrative as well as that of national history. As we have seen, these two characters, although not entirely forgotten, occupied a modest

¹² F. G. Heymann, 'The Hussite Movement in the Historiography of the Czech Awakening', in P. Brock and H. G. Skilling (eds), *The Czech Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 224–38, here p. 227.

¹³ G. Krumreich, *Jeanne d'Arc in der Geschichte* (Paris, 1989), p. 64.

and inglorious role in collective memory until they found their historians. But the two scholars' interests were informed by more than a preoccupation with exceptional characters. A side-effect of this fascination lay in their contribution to the rehabilitation of the 'age of cathedrals', through which they mirrored a common trend of their age. As Michelet's contemporary, the French politician and scholar Saint-Marc Girardin declared in 1838:

For some years now, we have been caught up in a great revival of taste for the Middle Ages. We readily admire the fervour of their piety. In Voltaire's eyes, that piety was nothing but crude superstition. As far as religion was concerned, the Middle Ages were nothing but an age in which fools were duped by scoundrels. We are fond of the chivalrous rituals of the Middle Ages and the heroic adventures of medieval knights: Voltaire saw only the passion for battle and the legacy of the crude barbarian customs of the fifth and sixth centuries. Greedy, debauched monks, theological dispute, disputatious warriors, and pointless wars, including the Crusades: that, for Voltaire, was the spectacle of the Middle Ages.¹⁴

It was also in the nineteenth century that scholars started to recognize the impressive potential of the medieval era for the purposes of national history. Constantly finding themselves confronted with social turmoil and abrupt change, historians in this epoch were especially preoccupied with continuity. They were particularly inclined to discern a thread of continuity in the world of political ideals, tracing and connecting the birth, evolution, metamorphosis and survival of values and convictions into a coherent pattern. Naturally, this was not always a simple task. In particular, French republicans could encounter obstacles when trying to identify with the royalism and tyranny of the *ancien régime*. Uniquely, Joan of Arc became a figure who allowed for such an association. For Michelet, French history was viewed as a process that culminated in 1789, and in his lectures he established an explicit connection between Joan's army and the soldiers who stormed the Bastille.¹⁵ Palacký's account was likewise informed by his desire to detect continuities. For him, the Hussites were the inheritors of what he perceived as the unique democratic values of the early Slavs, simultaneously foreshadowing the liberal-national principles of the revolution of 1848.

'What the Church and religion meant to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is to our age, the idea of nationality', declared Palacký, expounding his views on the conflicting centrifugal and centripetal forces that he saw as

¹⁴ Winock, 'Joan of Arc', p. 439.

¹⁵ Krumerich, *Jeanne d'Arc in der Geschichte*, p. 65.

inherent in contemporary Europe.¹⁶ His statement bears witness to the emergence of a new, secular unifying myth which found a predominant form of continuity in the nation-state. Pursuit of unity encompassed complex and multifarious layers: social, geographical, ethnic-linguistic and sometimes religious aspects. As we shall see, both historians, to varying degrees, attempted to cast their protagonist as a symbol of national unity. Additionally, their narratives were embedded into a more encompassing ideological message about their nation's destiny. In that context, Joan of Arc's story exemplified the richness and superiority of French civilization. On the other hand, Hus's story symbolized a small nation's unique contribution to the cause of European liberty. Palacký saw in the Hussite movement the first attempt in history to undermine the two main pillars of the Middle Ages: the authority of the Church in the religious sphere and the decisive role of the Holy Roman Empire in the secular realm. According to the Czech scholar, Hus's desire for 'spiritual emancipation' was a manifestation of a collective ambition:

The beginning of the fifteenth century marks a watershed in the history of Christianity and especially of the Czech nation. The new current, which some people today call reform, others revolution, gained weight to a larger extent than ever before; Christians attempted, for the first time, collectively and purposefully, to break out of the frameworks of rigid authority and place themselves at the forefront of history.¹⁷

An appeal to the law of polarity (*lex contrariorum*) constitutes perhaps the most powerful organizing principle of the two scholars' narratives. Through evocations of this simple and perennially popular stylistic device, conflict and struggle become indispensable aspects in their understanding of history. The background to Palacký's account is provided by the antagonism between Czechs and Germans in Prague, whilst the clashes between the French and the English during the Hundred Years War constitute Michelet's fundamental landscape. Although it would be anachronistic to refer to such medieval instances as 'national conflict', there is no doubt that these hostilities were profoundly shaped by perceptions of the enemy's otherness not just in dynastic, political and economic terms, but also to some extent in ethnic terms. Furthermore, the Hussite wars came to be construed primarily as a battle between Czechs and Germans, due to Palacký's explicit tendency to perceive them in that way, and particularly due to the conflict, which was scholarly in form but political in content, which erupted between him and his Austrian and German

¹⁶ Palacký, *Spisy drobné*, vol. I (Prague, 1889), p. 113.

¹⁷ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III (Prague, 1939–40), p. 3.

colleagues who refuted his interpretation.¹⁸ Palacký, however, accommodates his story in the framework of not just a temporary, but perennial conflict between Czechs and Germans:

The principal concern and the fundamental feature of all Bohemian-Moravian history is continuous contact and conflict between the Slav, German and Roman characters. Because the Roman character does not exert a direct influence on the Czech, but does so indirectly through Germandom, it can be argued that Czech history is largely based on conflict with the German character, in other words, on the Czechs' acceptance or rejection of the German way of life [...]. [It is] a struggle carried out not only on the borders of the Bohemian lands but also within them, not only against foreigners but also against compatriots, not only with the shield and the sword but also with word and spirit, institutions and customs, openly and covertly, with great zeal and blind passion, and not only for victory or subjugation but also for reconciliation.¹⁹

For Palacký, such a dynamic rivalry was a useful, and even necessary, source of strength and vitality. Like his famous contemporary Ranke, he identified a further dichotomy, also between two religious denominations:

It is obvious that in this conflict (in the fifteenth century) the principles of Catholicism and Protestantism were directly opposed to each other, a clash which has not yet come to a standstill even after centuries; [...]. The former assigns authority to tradition and doctrine, the latter to independent learning. The former suits those who need guidance in matters of faith, the latter suits spirits who yearn for freedom and independence. [...] The impartial scholar detects God's hand in this debate. In order to maintain the balance of the universe, he has created two contrasting forces in every sphere, he contrasted standstill to dynamism, attraction and repulsion; he created men and women [...] and he even adjusted the human spirit to the principle of polarity.²⁰

A comparable friction prevailed in representations of the French and British past, a tendency which gained additional resonance in the Napoleonic era, as Britain evolved into France's chief rival. Whilst British historians were inclined to contrast a Protestant, robust Britain with an effete, Catholic

¹⁸ On the problem of the 'national element' in the Hussite movement, see F. Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských Čechách* (České Budějovice, 1971).

¹⁹ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. I, pp. 10–11.

²⁰ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. I, pp. 12–13.

France, their French counterparts often saw in Britain an unjust society with rigid structures. For Michelet, Britain epitomizes '*l'anti-France*', a feudal nation where the appearance of liberty was obtained at the expense of justice and equality. He goes so far as to proclaim that 'the war of all wars, the struggle of all struggles, is that between Britain and France, the rest are minor skirmishes'.²¹ Upon relating the atrocities that Joan of Arc had to suffer at the hands of the English, Michelet picks out what he considers their excessive pride and complete lack of grace, which contrasts sharply with his portrayal of the French as a graceful people:

These people of England, with their greatness and many good and solid virtues, suffer from a vice which spoils those very virtues. This vice, boundless and profound, is pride: a cruel disease, which is nevertheless the principle of their life, the key to their antinomies, the secret of their actions. [...] This ego worship, this inner cult of the creature for its own self, is the sin which caused the downfall of Satan, the supreme defiance of God. With so many virtues to their credit, with their high-mindedness, with their dignified bearing, with their biblical turn of mind, no people stand farther away from grace than the English. From Shakespeare to Milton, from Milton to Byron, their literature, in its sombre beauty, is sceptical, Judaic, and satanic. 'With regard to the law', a jurist rightly said, 'the English are Jews, the French are Christians'.²²

Michelet then strengthens his claim through evoking a metaphor: he asserts that the American Indians saw in Christ a Frenchman 'whom the English crucified in London; Pontius Pilate was an official in the service of Great Britain'. Reporting on the humiliation of the invincible English men-at-arms, who were compelled to flee before Joan's army, he finds that: 'Never were the Jews filled with such hatred against Jesus as the English against the Maid. She had, we must admit, wounded them at their most sensitive point, in the naïve and profound esteem they have of themselves.'²³

It is against their enemies' vices that the virtues of the two outstanding individuals can be properly appreciated. Whilst portraying Hus and Joan of Arc as supremely charismatic figures, the historians seek to avoid overtly hagiographic representations. Michelet warns that one should take care not to make a legend out of the Maid's story, because 'what legend is more beautiful than this incontestable history'? He repeatedly emphasizes that it was neither the visions

²¹ J. Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris, 1974), p. 224, quoted in H. Kohn, 'France between Britain and Germany', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17:3 (1956), 283–99, here 289.

²² Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 105, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 131.

²³ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 106, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 132.

of the Maid nor her fighting ability that made her unique. 'Who did not have visions in those ages?', he asks and also notes that it was not uncommon for women in that era to take up arms. His example may be especially illuminating for our purposes: 'in the lifetime of the Maid, in those very same years, the women of Bohemia were fighting by the side of their men *in the Hussite wars*.'²⁴ Accordingly, Michelet finds the unique virtue of this deeply religious girl, who never learned to read or write, in an entirely different domain:

Joan's eminent originality was her common sense. This sets her apart from the multitude of enthusiasts who, in ages of ignorance, have swayed the masses. In most cases, they derived their power from some dark contagious force of unreason. Her influence, on the contrary, was due to the clear light she was able to throw upon an obscure situation, through the unique virtue of her good sense and of her loving heart. The shrewd and the cautious, the men of little faith, could not unravel the knot: she cut it. She declared in the name of God that Charles VII was the rightful heir. He himself doubted his legitimacy, she reassured him. She secured for that legitimacy the sanction of Heaven by leading her king straight to Rheims; and through her swift action she won over the English, the decisive advantage of the coronation.²⁵

The emphasis on the illiterate girl's sharp wit, which turned out to be more powerful and convincing than the erudition of her judges, provides yet another instance of the contrasts and paradoxes in which the narratives of Romantic authors abounded. The ambiguous nature of such antipodes could further intensify that effect. As Michelet put it on one occasion: 'Everyone was anxious to see the witch, *or the inspired Maid*'.²⁶

Like Michelet, Palacký tried to downplay the legendary layer surrounding his protagonist. He discredited one of the prevailing legends about Hus's burning at the stake. According to this popular tradition, when an elderly woman made her way through the crowd and enthusiastically added a bundle of wood to the pyre, Hus reacted with the following words: '*O sancta simplicitas*'. Palacký's refutation is based on pragmatic grounds: he argues that under the circumstances, it would have been impossible for an old woman with a heavy load to break through the crowd and reach the pyre.²⁷ The Czech scholar also invalidates another powerful tradition which maintained that on the pyre, Hus prophesied the rise of a scholar a century later (i.e., Martin

²⁴ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, pp. 3–4, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 2.

²⁵ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 3, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 2.

²⁶ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 19, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 22.

²⁷ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III, p. 181.

Luther), whom his enemies would be unable to silence and burn and who thus would fulfil his mission.²⁸ Both authors juxtapose the common people's feelings of hatred towards their enemies with their two protagonists' generosity and altruism. According to Michelet, Joan showed her tenderness of heart to all men. After a victory she would weep, and would attend to the wounded English. In the same vein, Palacký recorded Hus's last act before advancing to the pyre: he turned to his guardians and expressed his gratitude for their attentive behaviour.²⁹

When addressing their protagonists' betrayal, a popular trope in historical writing, the historians based their accounts on historical evidence. As we have seen, Joan was the protégée of Charles VII, whilst Hus had received a guarantee of safe conduct from Emperor Sigismund. Yet, ultimately, these members of royalty withdrew their support: Charles did not intervene to save the Maid, and Sigismund's guarantee of safe conduct was an empty promise. Both authors note the respective rulers' false conscience in this context. According to Michelet, Joan could not imagine that she would be abandoned. She had faith in her king and expected to be freed. Michelet asks bitterly: 'While the English were making such efforts to destroy the Maid, was Charles VII doing anything to save her? Not a thing, it appears.'³⁰

Palacký likewise laments that Emperor Sigismund failed to save Hus and asserts that upon finding out about Hus's sentence, Sigismund blushed. He also adds that Sigismund's successor, Charles V, was informed about this episode and was asked, when at the Imperial Diet of 1521 in Worms, to arrest Luther in spite of his protection letter. However, he allegedly refused to do so with the following words: 'Unlike my predecessor Sigismund, I would like to avoid the need to blush.'³¹ Whilst in prison, both heroes became seriously ill and rumours started to circulate about their deaths. Joan repeatedly tried to escape from prison, and when questioned about this she would reply with the popular proverb: '*Aide-toi, dieu te aidera*'. Historical sources contained speculations about Hus's attempts to escape, but Palacký believed these to be untrue.

Michelet regretted that Joan's judges failed to understand the rational explanations behind some of her actions. Crucial to the accusations was her habit of wearing masculine garb: in fact, at this time, a woman wearing the garments of a man was considered to be the gravest sin. Nevertheless, Michelet reprimanded the judges for their 'blind attachment to the letter without any consideration for the spirit', which prevented them from realizing that,

²⁸ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III, p. 181.

²⁹ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III, p. 180.

³⁰ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 66, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 84.

³¹ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III, p. 179.

surrounded by men who believed that in her virginity lay her power, Joan's last protection was masculine garb.³²

Both historians commented on their heroes' exceptional wisdom which became even clearer in light of their enemies' unsuccessful attempts to cheat and mislead them: they never succumbed to such trials and wittily countered them. Michelet believed that it was precisely Joan's common sense, combined with exaltation that infuriated her judges:

The schoolmen, the logicians who hated her because she claimed inspiration, were all the more cruel because they could not despise her as a mere lunatic, because, more than once, she invoked a higher reason which silenced their reasoning.³³

Joan, ignorant in theological matters, often managed to shock her audience, composed of the most famous theology professors of the age. Michelet recounted his heroine's response when confronted with the following question: 'Joan do you believe that you are in a state of Grace?' Her judges expected that she would fail to find a way out of this trickery: if her reply is negative, she confesses herself undeserving to be God's instrument. On the other hand, a positive reply would indicate extreme insolence: only the most audacious people, the ones who are farthest from grace would claim that. But, contrary to her judges' expectations: 'She cut the knot, with heroic and Christian simplicity: "if I am not (in the state of Grace) may it please God to bring me into it; if I am, may He preserve me in it." The Pharisees were dumfounded.'³⁴ A comparable episode emerges in Hus's story when, in prison, he receives a visit from a Minorite monk. His visitor introduces himself as an unlearned and simple man who seeks Hus's opinion on some theological matters. Hus quickly discerns the vicious intention and replies with the following words: 'brother you call yourself stupid and simple, but instead I find you double-dealing, because you behave and speak differently.'³⁵

The two historians' messages about Hus's and Joan's nonchalance and determination were intensified by recourse to stylistic devices, above all, powerful dialogues. The tension created through the quick succession of questions and answers during the trials provided an excellent opportunity to display Joan's and Hus's wit, which was further accentuated by the fact that the questions were fired at them by a collective body of learned men, whist they could only rely on their own powers to respond. The more brilliant their performance, the clearer became the injustice inflicted on them: ultimately they were both

³² Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 92, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 113–14.

³³ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 53, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 65–6.

³⁴ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, pp. 76–7, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 96.

³⁵ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, p. 149.

rejected by the Church, in the words of the sermon: 'when one limb of the Church is sick, the whole Church is sick'.

Both Michelet and Palacký perceived their protagonists' unwillingness to succumb to the pressure exerted by their judges as a sign of their belief in the existence of a power, the 'invisible Church' that represented a higher authority than the 'visible' established Church. In Michelet's formulation it was 'invisible to the eyes of the vulgar, but the pious girl saw it plainly, contemplated it unceasingly, heard it within herself'. Thus, Joan declared that she believed that the Pope and the clergy ought to maintain the Christian faith and even punish those who lapse from it, however: 'As for my deeds, I shall submit myself only to the Church in heaven, to God, to the Virgin, to the saints in paradise.'³⁶ Hus's judges failed to prove the errors in his teaching on the basis of scriptural evidence. According to Palacký, in the absence of such proof, he had two choices: either spiritual or physical death. Hus refused to renounce his doctrine to save his life, because:

As the founder and initiator of Protestantism, as the representative of spiritual liberty and freedom to choose one's religion, he would have betrayed his own spirit and ideals by renouncing his principles. Only two options were available to him: physical death or spiritual death. He chose the former. His decision ushered in a new era in the history of Christianity, one which was no longer limited to rigid, hierarchical authority, but open to new ideas of spiritual freedom.³⁷

As this quotation indicates, Palacký elevated Hus from a mere forefather of the Reformation, to the founder of Protestantism and inventor of the doctrine of predestination, asserting that his doctrines fully captured the essence of the Protestant faith, long before the arrival of Luther and Calvin. In his spiritual freedom, he discerned a fundamental tenet of Protestantism, as opposed to the obedience required by the Catholic Church. Palacký's poignant portrayal of Hus's martyrdom became one of the most defining moments of Czech historiography. Hus's courage positioned him as morally superior to the members of the Synod who sentenced him to death on the pyre. This was confirmed by Hus's integrity, which was maintained even amidst profound suffering: when the fire was lit, Hus looked up to the sky and sang psalms until he was silenced by the flames. Palacký noted that Hus's courage and fearless spirit were admired even by his fiercest enemies.

Michelet's account of Joan of Arc is generally considered to be the climax of his medieval portraits, and the last scenes of his heroine's life form an

³⁶ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 90, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 112–13.

³⁷ Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, vol. III, pp. 177–8.

especially poignant part of his narrative.³⁸ Joan bravely faces her destiny: 'I come from God, I have nought to do here, dismiss me to God, from whom I come.' Michelet notes the cruelty of her judges who arranged the pyre in such a way that the fire could not simply devour her body: they literally wanted her to be burnt alive in the hope that this protracted burning would expose at last some disgraceful or humiliating act on the part of the girl demented with terror.³⁹ But these expectations failed: she behaved in a humble and graceful way, and according to tradition, moved the bishops, and even the English, to tears. She continued to invoke the saints, and before her head dropped, she uttered the last cry: 'Jesus.' By this time:

Ten thousand men were weeping [...] Only a few Englishmen laughed, or were trying to laugh. One of them, among the most furious, had sworn he would lay a faggot on the pyre; she was expiring at the time he put it down, and he swooned; his comrades took him to a tavern, to make him drink and revive his spirits; but he could not recover. 'I saw', he said, beside himself, 'I saw with her last breath a dove fly out of her mouth.' Others had read in the flames the name she was repeating: 'Jesus!' The executioner that evening sought Brother Isambart; he was terror-stricken; he made a confession, but he could not believe that God would ever forgive him. A secretary of the king of England, as he returned, said aloud, 'We are lost, we have burnt a saint.'⁴⁰

Hus's and Joan's sacrifice was far from futile: it accumulated moral credit and acquired meaning through their contribution to the cause of the national community as well as that of humanity. Romantic historiography often entailed a messianic aspect. Thus, for example, it sacralized the nation and gave national historical writing a religious tone. Romantic historians accommodated messianic claims within a universalist context. As we have seen, Michelet charted Joan of Arc as a forerunner of the Revolution. Further, he asserted that the godsend of the revolution was the dissolution of all differences among people: young and old, men and women, rich and poor. This condition of perfect integration was symbolized by the image of Joan of Arc.⁴¹ At the same time, Michelet's republican universalism connected Joan of Arc's martyrdom to more than the salvation of France alone: for him the love of the '*patrie*' and the love of humanity were identical. By the same token, Hus testified to the spiritual excellence of a small and physically inferior nation, but the relevance of his glorious death extended far beyond the

³⁸ E. Neff, *The Poetry of History: the Contribution of Literature and Literary Scholarship to the Writing of History Since Voltaire* (New York, 1947), pp. 142–3.

³⁹ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 116, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 145.

⁴⁰ Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. 122, and *Jeanne d'Arc*, p. 152.

⁴¹ H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1973), p. 157.

confines of Bohemia. It acquires universal significance, as Palacký cast his protagonist as the representative of spiritual liberty and freedom of thought and drew a direct parallel between his ideals and those of the European Reformation.

Neither the Czech nor the French historian terminated their narratives with the depiction of their protagonists' martyrdom. Palacký continued with an indulgent description of the Hussite wars, detailing the emerging rivalries between various factions. He believed that the antecedents of most modern political principles and philosophical systems, such as rationalism, socialism, communism, democracy, nationalism, pantheism and pan-Slavism, found some trace in Hussite doctrine.⁴² Michelet's narrative took a different turn following Joan's death, which did not trigger a movement comparable in significance to the Hussites: the French did not strive to liberate themselves in the spirit of the Maid. What followed instead was a slow and non-sensational recovery. On this point, Michelet's distinctive comprehension of time became manifest. Whilst by the nineteenth century historians' unflinching belief in progress generally no longer permitted a perception of history as cyclical or constant, Michelet's concept allowed for return and repetition and thus retained continuity with an earlier historiographical tradition. His perception was characterized not by progress, but by a seamless flow, which was occasionally broken in order to allow for a 'meteoric eruption' to take place, as with the spectacular story of Joan of Arc or the French Revolution.⁴³

As has been suggested, the emotional strength and evocative power of the two historians' narratives significantly contributed to their success. In that context Michelet famously defined the aim of his historical writing in terms of resurrection, an attempt to make the silences of history speak.⁴⁴ We have also seen that the two authors clearly identified with their protagonists, to the extent that they used them as mouthpieces rather than subjects: Michelet and Joan of Arc, Palacký and Hus were one.⁴⁵ Numerous analogies can be detected in Michelet's and Palacký's construction of narrative, appeals to stylistic devices, as well as in their ideological message. Some of these were undoubtedly due to the common agenda of liberal-national historians in the Romantic era and to the distinct strategies and topoi employed in national historiography in this epoch.

Both historians' writing internalized personal concerns. For Palacký these were primarily political: his interpretation of Hus's stance against the medieval Church provided an obvious symbol of the Czechs' historical conflict with

⁴² Palacký, *Die Geschichte des Hussitentums und Prof. Constantin Höfler: Kritische Studien* (Prague, 1868), p. 186.

⁴³ L. Orr makes this point in *Jules Michelet: Nature, History and Language*, p. 100, drawing on Roland Barthes.

⁴⁴ See the English excerpt from his *Le Peuple* (1846), in F. Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History, from Voltaire to the Present* (New York, 1973), p. 117.

⁴⁵ Guérard, 'Introduction', in Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. vii.

Catholic Austria. It is not surprising, therefore, that Palacký had to fight bitter struggles against the imperial Austrian censors over his interpretation. On the other hand, Michelet had a tendency to transform his characters in reaction to some crucial episodes in his own life; his later work, in particular, acquired an intensely personal, even hallucinatory tone. For example, it has been conjectured that Michelet's attitude towards women – his troubled relationship with his mother, his wife's death and, above all, in 1841 his visit from a friend's mother, Madame Dumesnil in Rouen – heavily influenced his representation of Joan of Arc. Immediately, he saw in Joan a heroine who incarnated in the late Middle Ages the beginning of French national consciousness, but initially he focused on her, and France's, quality as a virgin – that is a non-mother. In the 1830s he stated that the English, by burning the maid and attempting to violate her, thought that they were deflowering France.⁴⁶ Following a momentous visit to Rouen, where Madame Dumesnil's sacrifice for his son affected him deeply, and might have evoked a parallel with Joan of Arc's sacrifice for France, Michelet removed Joan from the symbolic realm of virginity and placed her in the context of the Renaissance epoch, one informed by 'fecundity and maternity'. He associated the Maid not with the ossified Christianity of the Middle Ages, but with the liberating force brought about by the Christian mysticism of St Francis, Dante and their followers.⁴⁷ It was in 1841, following his visit to Rouen, that Michelet declared: 'The saviour of France had to be a woman. France was a woman itself'.⁴⁸

Epilogue

Michelet's and Palacký's work contained several flaws and many of their arguments have been superseded. However, these blemishes are overshadowed by their remarkable success in resurrecting the past: their accounts have remained powerful, unique and alive.

Through their fervent and passionate portrayals, the two scholars evoked the hitherto neglected medieval era and launched Joan's and Hus's careers as purveyors of national identity. The Michelet-scholar, Gustave Rudler, said of the French historian what might equally apply to Palacký:

He was not mistaken when he claimed that he had done for Joan of Arc that which could never be done again. His book remains the only one by a gifted writer, the only one that possesses life, which combines rationalism

⁴⁶ Michelet, *Journal*, vol. I, ed. Paul Viallaneix (Paris, 1969), p. 247, quoted in A. Mitzman, *Michelet, Historian: Rebirth and Romanticism in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London, 1990), p. 38.

⁴⁷ Mitzman, *Michelet*, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Mitzman, *Michelet*, p. 39.

and tradition; more accurately, rationalism and fideism (which is faith in the potency of faith) [...] Michelet displays such tenderness, he gives evidence of such a moving sympathy for suffering, of such righteous faith in noble causes, that scholarly criticism, after the most searching discussion, must acknowledge its limitations and yield to emotion for a while.⁴⁹

Establishing an explicit link between the desires of their protagonists and those of the national community, the two historians accorded them an indelible place in the national pantheon. As the eminent scholar, František Graus stated in the case of Joan: 'historiography, in the person of Michelet, had canonized Joan nearly one century before the Church did so'.⁵⁰ The momentum and longevity of the two historians' representations became manifest in light of their subsequent enthusiastic reception within national as well as European memory. In turn, the patterns of reception serve as sensible indicators on the European political, intellectual and cultural scene.

As *sainte de la patrie* – the label attached to Joan – indicates, the persistence of a previously insurmountable dichotomy between royalists and republicans could now be overcome and Joan's message could resonate both with representatives of Catholics and with Protestants. It was precisely because of the Maid's powerful legacy that Catholics could not afford to relinquish her to the anticlerical Republicans, hence her canonization in 1920. Social fragmentation could also be reconciled through appeals to Joan of Arc, in which context Marxist scholars upheld her as a representative of the proletariat.

Joan's legacy acquired new resonance following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71, which resulted in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Because Joan's place of birth, Donremy, was located in Alsace, although not in the part lost to Germany, her figure could once again be harnessed as a mobilizing force. In the late nineteenth century, Joan of Arc was appropriated by representatives of anti-Semitic ideals who saw in her a member of a superior Gallic race. Her agrarian roots were contrasted with the urban orientation of the Jews.⁵¹ During the Second World War resistance fighters and ideologues of the Vichy regime alike appealed to her legacy. The unique story of the Maid inspired countless artistic creations in France and abroad. These include Schiller's play, Anatole France's biography, Bernard Shaw's play, Honegger's oratorio, and Carl Dreyer and Robert Bresson's film, to mention just a few.

Despite Palacký's tendency to envisage Hus in a close and direct connection with the European Reformation, he put forward a case less for a Protestant

⁴⁹ G. Rudler, *Michelet historien de Jeanne d'Arc*, vol. II (Paris, 1926), p. 17, quoted in Guérard 'Introduction', in Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, p. v.

⁵⁰ Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit*, p. 300.

⁵¹ Wynock, 'Joan of Arc', p. 463.

tradition than for an individually perceived religion, based on ethnic principles, instead of dogmas and the sacraments.⁵² Palacký's intention was not the mobilization of Protestants: rather, he sought to exclude Catholicism from a secularized understanding of the nation. It was in this spirit that in the late nineteenth century the Young Czech party appealed to Hus when advancing a case for the Czechs as a 'heretic' and anticlerical nation.⁵³ Hus's contribution to the promotion of the Czech language and literature, which Palacký admired, provided an aspect that might have been employed to promote the cultural unity of the Czechs, an especially significant factor in light of the religious disunity. It was in this vein that Czech patriots fighting for language rights under the Habsburg monarchy had extolled Hus's advocacy of the vernacular language in religious life.

In the inter-war period President Masaryk declared the separation of Church and State to constitute a fundamental principle of the Czechoslovak state, one which distinguished it from the legacy of the Habsburg Empire. Yet, paradoxically, religious symbolism continued to permeate political discourses in the new state.⁵⁴ In 1925, the anniversary of Hus's execution at Constance, 9 July was declared a state holiday and two years later the commemorations on that day triggered a serious conflict with the Catholic Church. As a result, the Pope withdrew his representative from Prague, creating an unprecedented situation for a European country with a majority Catholic population.⁵⁵ Thus, unlike Joan of Arc's legacy, Hus's memory did not easily lend itself to a unifying national ideology. Therefore, reconciliation could only be promoted through a parallel evocation of another national icon, King Wenceslas, whose image was acceptable to the Catholic population. In the post-1945 era, Hus, the symbol of a secular nation, became incorporated into the Marxist tradition. The Hussite proverb *Pravda vítězí* (Truth prevails) appeared on the coat of arms of Czechoslovakia and in 1948 the preamble to the constitution acquired a reference to the Hussite revolution as a progressive tradition.

⁵² M. Schulze Wessel, 'Die Konfessionalisierung der tschechischen Nation', in H.-G. Haupt and D. Langewiesche (eds), *Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M. and New York, 2004), pp. 135–49, here p. 139.

⁵³ Langewiesche, *Nation und Religion in Europa*, p. 141.

⁵⁴ C. J. Paces, 'Religious Heroes for a Secular State: Commemorating Jan Hus and St Wenceslas in 1920s Czechoslovakia', in M. Bucur and N. Wingfield (eds), *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette and Indiana, 2001), pp. 209–35, here p. 210.

⁵⁵ M. Bucur and N. Wingfield, *Staging the Past*, p. 209.

7

History and Politics: Interpretations of Early Modern Conquest and Reformation in Victorian Ireland

Marc Caball

Alice Stopford Green, nationally-minded historian of Ireland, commenting in 1912 on the writing of Irish history complained that ‘history is more backward in Ireland than in any other country’. Warming to her theme, she argued that ‘history may conceivably be treated as a science. Or it may be interpreted as a majestic natural drama or poem. Either way has much to be said for it. Both ways have been nobly attempted in other countries. But neither of these courses has been thought of in Ireland. Here history has a peculiar doom.’¹ In fact, the work of the historians discussed in this chapter manifestly contradicts Green’s generic characterization of the fatalistic nature of Irish historical writing. This chapter contrasts the writings of three nineteenth-century historians of Ireland – Standish James O’Grady (1846–1928), Richard Bagwell (1840–1918) and Alexander Martin Sullivan (1829–1884). Collectively, they offer a fascinating micro-picture of the intellectual and ideological aspirations of three historians in Victorian Ireland. By way of thematic focus, it is proposed to examine and compare how each of these historians assessed the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The designation of Henry VIII and his successors as kings of Ireland in 1541 is symbolic of a cumulative drive by the Tudor monarchs during the course of the sixteenth century to supplant with centralized state authority the high level of local autonomy enjoyed in the later medieval period by the island’s Gaelic and Anglo-Norman dynastic elites.² An often piecemeal and protracted government-directed process of political, legal, cultural and religious conformity to Crown sovereignty culminated with the defeat of the Ulster Gaelic lords at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, and the

¹A. Stopford Green, *The Old Irish World* (London, 1912), p. 9. Cf. R. F. Foster, ‘History and the Irish question’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 (5th Series) (1983), 169–92, here 169.

²S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland, 1460–1630* (Oxford, 2007), p. 74.

subsequent allocation of substantial tracts of land in the northern province to incoming settlers from Britain in the context of a state-sponsored process of plantation beginning in 1609. In contrast, the rise and consolidation of Irish Catholic nationalism during the nineteenth century, with its concomitant demands for political, economic and confessional autonomy, signalled the retreat and eventual dissolution of the Irish Protestant ascendancy, which traced its ideological lineage to the Tudor conquest of the island. The early modern political and cultural experience was not simply a matter of antiquarian interest in Victorian Ireland, for its resonances reflected and responded to highly controversial contemporary political, religious and cultural debates.

Although sharing an elite Protestant Anglo-Irish background and broadly Unionist, intellectually and emotionally, O'Grady and Bagwell each approached Irish history in a characteristically distinctive fashion with contrasting outcomes. O'Grady's determinedly populist and romantic reading of Ireland's history sought overtly to engage his readers in a rediscovery of the past, with a view to applying its lessons to contemporary Ireland. On the other hand, Bagwell, although active in Unionist politics, adhered to a historiographical approach which privileged factual accuracy and interpretative objectivity over overt ideological bias. O'Grady's work, in particular his two-volume *History of Ireland* published in 1878 and 1880, has been credited with a seminal influence on the writers of the Celtic Revival, whose cultural nationalism significantly informed the political separatism which culminated in the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922.³ Ironically, O'Grady's historiographical ambitions were partly realized in so far as his writings contributed to a broader cultural and political movement – yet, he was far from sympathetic to the resulting political settlement. Bagwell's influence, less immediate and more specialized in focus, largely mediated through his three-volume *Ireland under the Tudors* published in 1885 and 1890, was arguably manifest in the professionalization of research and teaching in Irish history from the 1930s onwards. Alexander Martin Sullivan, journalist and Irish Catholic nationalist, is possibly the most influential of all nineteenth-century historians of Ireland. His widely read *The Story of Ireland* (1867) was highly effective in its presentation of a dramatic and romantic depiction of Ireland's heroic struggle against the yoke of English domination.⁴ Ostensibly writing for a young readership, Sullivan disavowed any aspirations to

³A. T. Seaman, 'Celtic myth as perceived in eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature in English', in C. J. Byrne, M. Harry and P. Ó Siadhail (eds), *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the second North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, St Mary's University: Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1992), pp. 443–60, 456–9; E. A. Hagan, 'High Nonsensical Words': *A study of the works of Standish James O'Grady* (New York, 1986), p. 1.

⁴D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 2nd edn (London, 1991), pp. 247–9.

originality or depth of coverage in his history. Rather, he aimed in this work to interest his young readers in a 'pleasant talk', in a manner resembling a storyteller who does not confuse his listeners with complex, dull and disagreeable historical detail. No less ambitiously, Sullivan sought to interest his readers in their own country and to provide them with an enthralling narrative 'abounding with episodes thrilling, glorious, and beautiful'.⁵ Intending his history for both the amusement and instruction of young people, he was especially mindful that his young readers would become in due course 'the men on whom Ireland must depend'. Devoting his book to the 'Irish nation of the future', Sullivan expressed his confidence that 'my young friends will not fail to read aright the lesson which is taught by "The story of Ireland"'.⁶

Bagwell the conscientious scientific historian and O'Grady and Sullivan as populist historians share little in common in terms of methodology and literary style. Nonetheless, it is argued that both Bagwell and O'Grady, however different their interpretative focus, were similarly influenced in their respective historical careers by the attrition of the political profile of the Anglo-Irish elite in the nineteenth century, and by a consequent desire to reaffirm a communal sense of Anglo-Irish political integrity and purpose through the writing of history. On the other hand, Sullivan's historiographical and ideological objectives were equally politicized. In his case, however, he was writing for an emergent Irish Catholic middle class increasingly animated by ambitions for national political and economic autonomy facilitated by devolution from Westminster. It is proposed to contrast their readings of the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth century, especially in regard to its ancillary process of religious reformation, with a view to discerning approaches to presentation of evidence and the delineation and construction of interpretative frameworks. Notwithstanding differing historical styles and political objectives, it is remarkable how present-centred the three historians are in their analysis and evaluation of sixteenth-century Ireland. All three, to a lesser or greater extent, sought to draw lessons from historical experience to validate contemporary political ideologies.⁷

Standish O'Grady was born in 1846 in west Cork. His father was an evangelical Anglican clergyman of the established Church of Ireland and his mother was a member of a minor local landowning family.⁸ Brought up within a

⁵A. M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland* (Dublin, 1867), p. 7. Cf. A. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three narrative histories of the French revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 2.

⁶Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland*, pp. 7–8.

⁷For historical debates in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Ireland 'as politics by other means', see O. MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A study of Anglo-Irish conflict 1780–1980* (London, 1983), p. 6.

strict Protestant household closely informed by scripture and classical culture, O'Grady was initially educated at the local school and mixed freely with all classes of people on his father's estate.⁹ On leaving university in 1868, he briefly contemplated following in his father's steps as a clergyman and studied divinity for two years, but instead he opted to become a barrister and was called to the Irish Bar in 1872.¹⁰ O'Grady initially began to write for periodicals such as the conservative *Dublin Daily Express* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹¹ By his own account, O'Grady's interest in Irish history was prompted when, on a rainy day in the west of Ireland, he was confined to a country house library where he chanced on a history of Ireland.¹² Further reading in the library of the Royal Irish Academy resulted in the publication, at his own expense in 1878 and 1880, of his *History of Ireland: The heroic period*. Knowing no Irish, O'Grady's reconstruction of the history of Ireland centring on the legendary hero Cú Chulainn was largely a self-styled work of the imagination. In his introduction to Volume 1, O'Grady argued that history must be characterized by 'sympathy, imagination, creation'.¹³ Lauding what he termed 'the heroes and heroines' of early Ireland and reflecting Carlyle's concern with the heroic, he highlighted, from what in retrospect seems a distinctly Victorian perspective, their supposed sense of chivalry and honour and respect for bardic literature – a golden age which O'Grady considered to have been greatly diminished by the arrival of eirenic Christianity in Ireland.¹⁴ In an uncanny echo of the celebrated case of James Macpherson's collections of poems, published between 1760 and 1763 and which purported to be translations of a putative third-century Scottish bard, Ossian, O'Grady readily admitted that 'upon the realization of the bards

⁸H. A. O'Grady, *Standish James O'Grady: The man & the writer* (Dublin, 1929), p. 25.

⁹The poet Alfred Perceval Graves stressed the early influence of classical literature on O'Grady: 'Indeed there is no doubt that his interest in Homer and the Greek tragic and lyrical poets influenced him largely in the heroic direction which his literary genius was afterwards to take': H. A. O'Grady, *Standish James O'Grady*, p. 10.

¹⁰D. G. Boyce, 'O'Grady, Standish James (1846–1928)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹¹P. S. O'Hegarty, *A Bibliography of Books Written by Standish O'Grady* (Dublin, 1930), p. 1.

¹²H. A. O'Grady, *Standish James O'Grady*, p. 13.

¹³Standish O'Grady, *History of Ireland: The heroic period*, vol. I (London, Dublin, 1878), p. iv; G. Castle, 'Nobler forms: Standish James O'Grady's *History of Ireland* and the Irish Literary Revival', in L. W. McBride, *Reading Irish Histories* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 156–77.

¹⁴S. O'Grady, *History of Ireland*, p. vii. O'Grady appears to have been influenced in his negative reading of the advent of Christianity by the similar opinion of the eighteenth-century Limerick antiquarian and surgeon, Sylvester O'Halloran, 1728–1807. See, for instance, O'Halloran's *An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* (Dublin, 1772), p. 220. For O'Halloran, see J. B. Lyons, 'Sylvester O'Halloran, 1728–1807', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland Iris an dá chultúr* IV (1989), 65–74.

I have superadded a realization more intense, writing closer to those noble forms, whose outlines are more or less wavering and uncertain in the literature of the bards'.¹⁵ A key objective in presenting his reconstruction of early Irish kings and heroes was to illustrate the story of their heroic forebears to Irish people.¹⁶ In order to secure his audience, the ends justified the means; therefore, he had reworked original outlines to engage his intended readership who would surely be otherwise unreceptive to 'mere history'.¹⁷ Replicating an apologetic element in Irish historiography which traces its intellectual lineage back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, O'Grady's aim was to popularize knowledge of the supposed achievements of early Irish civilization to inform contemporary patriotic sensibility.¹⁸

O'Grady's anachronistic recreation of early Irish society heavily influenced by Victorian notions of feudalism and chivalry is complemented by his early political conservatism. He considered the landed elite in Ireland essential to the well-being and prosperity of the country. He served as honorary secretary to a landlords' meeting in Dublin in 1881 organized in opposition to the policies of the Land League and influenced by Lord Randolph Churchill's concept of Tory democracy, he published in 1886 *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* in which he made the case for landlords as leaders, active on their estates and in harmony with their tenants. O'Grady's vision of a revamped feudal relationship was finally to be undone by the attrition of Anglo-Irish influence and prestige through successive land acts which enabled tenants to purchase their holdings.¹⁹ Frustrated in his hopes for the landed class, he championed the

¹⁵S. O'Grady, *History of Ireland*, p. xi. For the impact of Macpherson's Ossian on Irish antiquarian debates and identities, see C. O'Halloran, 'Irish re-creations of the Gaelic past: The challenge of Macpherson's Ossian', *Past and Present* 124 (August, 1989), 69–95; C. Kidd, 'Gaelic antiquity and national identity in enlightenment Ireland and Scotland', *English Historical Review* 109:434 (November, 1994), 1197–214.

¹⁶'I desire to make this heroic period once again a portion of the imagination of the country and its chief characters as familiar in the minds of our people as they once were': S. O'Grady, *Early Bardic Literature, Ireland* (London, 1879), pp. 17–18.

¹⁷'That literature, however, so far from being printed and published, has not even been translated, but still moulders in the public libraries of Europe, those who, like myself, are not professed Irish scholars, being obliged to collect their information piece-meal from quotations and allusions of those who have written upon the subject in the English or Latin language': *Early Bardic Literature*, pp. 17–18, 43. For the question of O'Grady's sources in relation to early Irish literature, see V. H. S. Mercier, 'Don Quixote as scholar: The sources of Standish James O'Grady's "History of Ireland"', *Long Room* 22–23 (Spring–Autumn, 1981), 19–24; Hagan, 'High Nonsensical Words', ch. 2.

¹⁸Kidd, 'Gaelic antiquity and national identity in enlightenment Ireland and Scotland', 1198–1200; Hagan, 'High Nonsensical Words', p. 41.

cause of the urban poor, oppressed as he saw it by modern industrialism and he advocated the establishment of idyllic rural labour colonies.²⁰ In the 1880s O'Grady developed a strong interest in the history of Tudor Ireland which resulted in the publication of romantic literary histories such as *Red Hugh's Captivity* (1889), *Ulrick the Ready* (1896) and *The Flight of the Eagle* (1897).²¹ In 1894 he published *The Story of Ireland* which sought to present the island's history in an accessible and discursive fashion to a broad readership and by whose title he surely hoped to emulate the huge success of Sullivan's *Story of Ireland* (1867).²²

In order to situate O'Grady's treatment of the Tudor conquest, it is instructive to review his long and characteristically declamatory historiographical introduction to *Red Hugh's Captivity*, a novelistic historical account of the late sixteenth-century Ulster Gaelic lord, Red Hugh O'Donnell, (d.1602), a central figure in Gaelic resistance to the expansion of the Elizabethan state in Ireland during the Nine Years War (1594–1603).²³ O'Grady viewed the sixteenth century as pivotal in Irish history and maintained that it was a 'century which more than any other, seems to have determined the destiny of Ireland'.²⁴ In this introduction, O'Grady argues that the sixteenth century witnessed a revolution in so far as Irish society was radically reconfigured as it moved cumulatively from the grip of fragmented lordships to a centralized state subject to the authority of the Crown.²⁵ This revolution was comprehensive in its political and social impact. Hugely beneficial to Ireland, it linked the country firmly to the English

¹⁹E. A. Boyd, *Appreciations and Depreciations: Irish literary studies* (Dublin, 1917), pp. 4, 8; Boyce, 'O'Grady, Standish James (1846–1928)'.

²⁰Standish James O'Grady, *Sun and Wind*, ed. E. A. Hagan (Dublin, 2004), pp. xvi–xvii. Hagan argues that O'Grady's writing subsequent to 1900 reveals the influence of anarchist and socialist thinkers such as Charles Fourier, Prince Peter Alekseyevich Kropotkin and Henry George (*Sun and Wind*, p. vii).

²¹For a full listing of O'Grady's works, see O'Hegarty, *A Bibliography of Books Written by Standish O'Grady*.

²²Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, pp. 247–9; J. Waddell, *Foundation Myths: The beginnings of Irish archaeology* (Bray, 2005), p. 131.

²³Edward Hagan has remarked that O'Grady's works on Elizabethan Ireland in the 1890s and his stories for boys from the same period, 'may indeed represent O'Grady's best writings despite the fact that he is known primarily for his renditions of the bardic literature': 'High Nonsensical Words', p. 154.

²⁴S. O'Grady, *The Bog of Stars and Other Stories and Sketches of Elizabethan Ireland* (London, 1893), pp. 5–6.

²⁵'In the beginning of this century Ireland was medieval and feudal to the core. In the beginning of the seventeenth the rule of the chiefs was replaced by the absolute authority of the crown. The petty dynasts were gone; the supremacy of the universal law was established; peace reigned, and in peace all that we mean by modern civilisation began to germinate': S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity: A picture of Ireland, social and political in the reign of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1889), p. 1.

Crown and resulted in peace and stability. According to O'Grady, Ireland was now 'for the first time at peace with herself, was united with the Empire as an integral and loyal member of the same'.²⁶ In his opinion, the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland was inevitable and it was surely fated that the country should 'pass from barbarism to civilization, from the wild rule of the "monocracies" to the reign of universal law'. The conquest established an enduring link with England, and reflecting contemporary political tensions, O'Grady argues that the Irish 'are and will remain part of the vast world-subdividing race that speaks the English tongue' irrespective of whether Ireland's future 'be one of greater self-government, or of a closer and more vital union with England'.²⁷ Between Ireland and her lasting union with the 'mighty English-speaking race stood the Irish chiefs of the sixteenth century'. Therefore, the 'extermination or subjugation' of the Irish lords was both necessary and inevitable as they stood in the path of Ireland's move to modernity.²⁸ However, as individuals these rebellious men have some claim on the attentions of posterity, especially from the relatively safe distance of Victorian Ireland. Notwithstanding their wildness, their lives were not untouched 'with the mediaeval spirit of chivalry and romance'.²⁹ Indeed, it is the very violence and turmoil of the sixteenth century which makes for such interesting reading.³⁰

In dealing with a period whose history is 'profoundly tragic yet romantic', O'Grady advocated an historiographical approach which is 'biographical and anecdotal'. Such a method stands in contrast to 'philosophical history, which traces effects to their causes and shows how events that seem fortuitous group themselves under known laws of human nature'.³¹ Such history will not secure readers, for like philosophy, 'it appeals too much to the understanding, too little to the heart and the imagination'. In any case, a narrative must be established before a philosophy of history is possible. Therefore, O'Grady offers this work as an 'attempt to collect and present some of the facts' with a view to providing an interpretative foundation for a philosophically-minded historian.³² Remarking on the large quantity of source material for Tudor Ireland, particularly the work of contemporary historians and the testimony of state papers, O'Grady

²⁶S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 2.

²⁷S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 4. E. Hagan has argued that O'Grady was influenced by Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831) in his apparent commitment to an evolutionary paradigm of development from pre-history to history: *Sun and Wind*, p. xi.

²⁸S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 5; S. O'Grady (ed.), *Pacata Hibernia or a History of the Wars in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 2 vols (London, 1896), vol. I, p. xxi.

²⁹S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 5.

³⁰'It is the tragic in history which most affects. Peace, prosperity, and contentment are not so pleasant to read about'. S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 9.

³¹S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 12.

³²S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 12.

states that he had selected an aspect of the life of Red Hugh, his kidnapping, incarceration in Dublin Castle and subsequent travails, for development as a continuous narrative. While the tale has no 'large historical significance' in itself, he has interwoven within it the broader history of Ireland at the time.³³ Furthermore, excessive antiquarian detail is of little interest to the general reader. Mindful of what he perceives as the general reader's indifference to dull and laborious history, he has undertaken to approach sixteenth-century Ireland from a new perspective.³⁴ In particular, he has vowed not to confront unsuspecting readers with 'pages thickly strewn with names which in their Celtic uncouthness and bald unsuggestiveness could have no other effect than that of disgusting the reader'.³⁵ In a typically idiosyncratic rhetorical flourish, he dismisses historical writing to date on sixteenth-century Ireland as turgid and essentially subjective – more reflective of nineteenth-century consciousness than life in Tudor Ireland. In this regard, the evidence of the state papers could be manipulated to support a diverse range of contradictory interpretations.³⁶ Shorn of anecdotal and biographical colour, history is hard and uninviting. O'Grady now presents his account of O'Donnell as a window on aspects of the domestic and social life of Elizabethan Ireland to an Irish reading public largely unacquainted with the period.³⁷

In terms of personality and outlook, the sober and reflective Richard Bagwell is the antithesis of the quixotic and restless O'Grady. Bagwell was born in 1840 in Clonmel in county Tipperary. The Bagwells had effected a transition from the ranks of the Clonmel merchant class to landed status during the course of the eighteenth century. The eldest son of John Bagwell, MP for Clonmel (1857–74), Richard was educated at Harrow and Christ Church, Oxford. Although called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1866, he never practised law and returned to live on the family estate outside Clonmel, succeeding his father as master of Marlfield House in 1883.³⁸ Like O'Grady, Bagwell was committed to the beneficial contribution of the landlords to Irish society. Active in local government, he served as high sheriff of the county of

³³S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, pp. 15, 17.

³⁴S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, pp. 18–20.

³⁵S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 20.

³⁶'The state papers, so multifarious are they, and so representative of all sorts of minds, that from them quotations may be selected which will support any view which the historian may think true': S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, p. 23.

³⁷S. O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, pp. 24–5.

³⁸*Burke's genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 4th edn, 1958), p. 46; Mary O'Dowd, 'Bagwell, Richard (1840–1918)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. See also W. P. Burke, *History of Clonmel* (Waterford, 1907; reprinted Kilkenny, 1983), pp. 175, 325–6.

Tipperary in 1869 and subsequently served as justice of the peace, magistrate and foreman of the county grand jury. A confirmed Unionist, Bagwell was a founding member of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union, which was constituted by southern unionists in 1885 to oppose Home Rule for Ireland, and he was later a member of the Irish Unionist Alliance. In 1898 he was appointed to the Local Government Board to oversee the implementation of the Local Government Act of the same year and he subsequently served as a member of the National Board of Education.³⁹ Bagwell's wife, Harriet, in an unpublished manuscript history of her husband's family which dates to c.1930, describes how Richard was intended for public life, but the loss of his father's seat at Westminster in 1874 and emergent pro-Home Rule sentiment effectively truncated his political ambitions.⁴⁰

According to Harriet Bagwell, her husband had 'too active a nature to live without work' and that consequently he 'turned his mind to literature'. It was in the years prior to succeeding his father as master of the Marfield estate in 1883 that Bagwell undertook the bulk of the research for his magisterial three-volume *Ireland under the Tudors* (1885–90). He later followed up chronologically on his study of Tudor Ireland with *Ireland under the Stuarts* (3 vols, 1909–16). Aside from his six volumes on early modern Ireland, his only other significant historical work centred on his entries on seventeenth-century Irish figures in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.⁴¹ R. W. Dudley Edwards and Mary O'Dowd, in the first comprehensive review of sources for early modern Ireland published in 1985, acknowledge his considerable achievement in presenting a detailed narrative of the Tudor and Stuart periods which was largely based on the testimony of the state papers. However, they fault his excessive diffidence in coming to conclusions and suggest that perhaps he was unsure of his own ability to be objective.⁴² In stark contrast to the strident style of both O'Grady and Sullivan, Bagwell was decidedly more restrained in his approach to historical narrative and he was more cautious in terms of articulating contemporary lessons to be gleaned from the past. In an obscure pamphlet containing the

³⁹M. O'Dowd, 'Bagwell, Richard (1840–1918)'; R. Bagwell, 'The basis of Irish nationalism', *The Dublin University Magazine* XC:DXXXV (1877), 93–106.

⁴⁰'Richard was intended for public life, and had been brought up with the idea of representing Clonmel in Parliament, as his family had done for generations. He was a good speaker and a leader of men. But when the Home Rule question came to the fore in 1874 (the year his father lost his seat, which he had held for 18 years) he saw that this career was barred to him. I've often heard him say, "I could never be a Home Ruler, it would be a government by factions, and divide Ireland in two": National Library of Ireland (NLI) MS. 32, 617 ('History of the Bagwell Family by Harriet Bagwell'), unpaginated.

⁴¹Mary O'Dowd, 'Richard Bagwell (1840–1918)'.

⁴²R. W. Dudley Edwards and Mary O'Dowd, *Sources for Early Modern Irish History, 1534–1641* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 194.

text of a lecture he delivered on Irish history to a working-men's club in Clonmel in 1870, Bagwell provides an early and unique personal synthesis of modern Irish history. Even at this early stage of his historical career, Bagwell stresses that his reading is based on contemporary printed sources and his patrician sense of service prompted him to stipulate that any proceeds arising from the publication would be donated to the improvement of a country church in county Waterford.⁴³

Like O'Grady, Bagwell argues that the modern history of Ireland begins with the reign of Elizabeth I. It was then that for the first time the power of the Irish lords, both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman, was curbed and henceforth, the Crown emerged as the sole authority in Ireland, even if at times its reach was limited. He alludes to various Irish rebellions during Elizabeth's reign but also refers to what he calls her misgovernment. While the country may have been backward enough prior to Elizabeth, her suppression of the monasteries had sundered Ireland's connection with the rest of Europe.⁴⁴ By the beginning of the seventeenth century, contrary to O'Grady's notion of the dawn of a golden imperial age, Bagwell asserts that Ireland was in a greatly reduced state. While the difficulty of governing Ireland had always been a challenge given its powerful contending dynastic factions, Elizabeth's imposition of the Protestant reformation on what Bagwell terms an 'unwilling populace' was to prove a disastrous miscalculation. Neither people nor clergy accepted the new state religion. The Anglican church in Ireland was essentially an 'imported' phenomenon, the quality of whose personnel was often unsatisfactory, and as such it failed to elicit the allegiance of the Irish in any meaningful way. In a daring act of historical iconoclasm for an individual of his class and as a loyal member of the Anglican Church of Ireland, he dismissed out of hand its long-held claim of episcopal succession from the time of St Patrick. He argues that had Elizabeth been content to allow the two faiths to flourish side by side, most of Ireland's subsequent misfortunes might well have been avoided. Indeed, he laments that concepts of toleration were unheard of at the period, with the exception of 'some

⁴³R. Bagwell, *Modern Irish History: A lecture delivered in the Mechanics' Institute Clonmel Tuesday, 3rd May, 1870* (Clonmel, 1870), unpaginated preface. It appears that Bagwell's papers and library were destroyed when Marlfield House was burnt by Republican troops during the Irish Civil War in 1923. The mansion was attacked because Bagwell's son John had accepted a seat in the senate of the Irish Free State in 1922. However, a transcript of one of Bagwell's surviving, but now lost, working note books made by Canon J. B. Leslie for the Ecclesiastical Records Committee of the Church of Ireland in the 1930s indicates a meticulous approach to a wide range of source materials (Representative Church Body Library, Dublin, MS. GS.2/7/3/21).

⁴⁴Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, pp. 5–10.

oppressed sectarians who were generally quite ready to become oppressors in their turn'.⁴⁵

Moreover, the English had swept away the ancient indigenous laws and had not effectively replaced them with common law. In this regard, Bagwell observes that 'we are reaping the fruit of this policy in the present day'. The accession of James I to the throne exacerbated matters as he was a 'foolish and absurd prince'.⁴⁶ Bagwell proceeds to give a *tour d'horizon* of what he considers major events in Ireland's history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Along the way, he criticizes English penalization of agriculture and manufactures in southern Ireland, questions (downwards) the number of Protestants possibly slain in the 1641 rising, condemns Cromwell's actions at Drogheda, dismisses James II for his 'outrageous tyranny' which made every Irish Protestant his 'bitter enemy', laments injustices against Irish Catholics in the eighteenth century and what he considers as the grandiose extravagance of the Anglo-Irish in that century.⁴⁷ Ever the conscientious landowner, he singles out absenteeism for condemnation which was as much a 'great evil' in the eighteenth century as it was in his time.⁴⁸ Bagwell's concluding sentiments were apparently warmly received by his Clonmel audience when he presented the island's history as a potentially unifying force between Catholics and Protestants sharing a commitment to a common country.⁴⁹

In the introduction to the first volume of *Ireland under the Tudors* published in 1885, Bagwell is careful, almost circumspect, in his prefatory remarks to this the first comprehensive study of Tudor Ireland. History, if it is to be of service, should be written for instruction not merely to support prevailing prejudices. He maintains that the historian's true function is to act as judge, whose duty is to marshal the material facts 'with just so much of comment as may enable his hearers to give them their due weight. The reading public is the jury'.⁵⁰ He declares that he has not set out to please any particular party or school

⁴⁵ Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, p. 15.

⁴⁶ Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ 'If there had been fewer powdered footmen, and race-horses, and coaches-and-six then, we might have more railways, more trade and manufactures, and better agriculture now': Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, p. 32.

⁴⁸ Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, p. 32. Bagwell was active in the running of the Marlfield estate (see references to him in the 'Cashbook of the Bagwell estate, Marlfield, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, 1892-1904': National Library of Ireland (NLI) MS. 25,278). He was also involved in establishing the 'Marlfield Embroideries' in 1885, which was designed to give the women of his estate regular employment (see NLI MS. 32, 617, unpaginated).

⁴⁹ 'For us it may be sufficient to cultivate the charities of history, and to sink the minor differences of creed and party in the consciousness of a common country (applause)': Bagwell, *Modern Irish History*, 36.

⁵⁰ R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, 3 vols (London, 1885-1890), vol. I, p. v.

in writing this work and that he has been guided solely by a commitment to objectivity. Admittedly, the history of Ireland is a sad one, but its study in a truthful fashion can hardly fail to make men more tolerant. Ireland, like other countries initially peopled by a Celtic population, was unable to resist the superior power of 'Teutonic' invaders, namely the Vikings and the Anglo-Normans. However, in the case of the latter, the neglect of Ireland by the English monarchy weakened their long-term position. In short, the kings in question were absentees and rather like their modern landowning counterparts, they were 'generally content to look upon Ireland as a mere drawfarm'. The Anglo-Norman colony was further weakened during the Wars of the Roses and it appeared as if English language and power were on the verge of extinction in Ireland.

Finally, Henry VIII recognized his duties in Ireland and initially seemed on the point of winning the allegiance of the native Irish until the reformation changed everything fundamentally for the worse.⁵¹ Effectively, the dynamism of the Franciscans and the Jesuits ensured that the Crown's attempts to advance the established church in Ireland were greatly stymied. Soon a potent and lasting popular association of Protestantism with the Crown's claim to sovereignty in Ireland developed.⁵² Elizabeth inherited a pattern established in religious terms and her broader policy in relation to Ireland was vitiated by lack of resources and vacillation.⁵³ Bagwell, now turning to practical concerns, notes that he has modernized the spelling of Irish names and English documents, for 'Irish history is already sufficiently repulsive to the great unknown quantity the general reader, and it would be cruel to add to its horrors'.⁵⁴ Significantly, he places special emphasis on his extensive use of primary evidence garnered from the Public Record Office's state papers for Ireland. Likewise, he also drew on Gaelic source material, especially John O'Donovan's (1806–1861) edition of the 'Annals of the Four Masters' (compiled from original materials in the 1630s under the supervision of the Franciscan cleric Mícheál Ó Cléirigh) and the less comprehensive 'Annals of Loch Cé'. He expresses frustration with

⁵¹'The revolution in religion changed everything, and out of it grew what many regard as the insoluble Irish question': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, pp. vi–vii.

⁵²'And thus, as the hatred of England daily deepened, the attachment of the Irish to Rome became daily closer. Every effort of Henry to conciliate them was frustrated by their spiritual guides, who urged with perfect truth that he was an adulterer, a tyrant, and a man of blood. Holding such cards as these, the friars could hardly lose the game, and they had little difficulty in proving to willing ears that the King's ancestors received Ireland from the Pope, and that his apostasy had placed him in the position of defaulting vassal': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. viii.

⁵³'Ireland has always suffered, and still suffers sorely, from want of firmness': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. ix.

⁵⁴Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. x.

what he takes to be the genealogical focus of the Gaelic annals and their supposed failure to shed light on contemporary daily life. In the absence of evidence from the Gaelic viewpoint, Bagwell admits that historians are forced to rely on the testimony of English officials and travellers, which is often hostile and frequently ill-informed.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding his aversion (shared with O'Grady) to original names in the Irish language, Bagwell's exposition of the framework for his Tudor history is remarkably even-handed when considered by the standards of its time and free from contemporary sectarian and political rancour. However, his historiographical objectives are not simply antiquarian nor did they entail a reconstruction of historical narrative for its own self-contained sake. In the opening lines of his study, Bagwell's approving reference to Disraeli's dictum that Irish policy is Irish history affirms his belief in the didactic function of the study of history.⁵⁶

The second child of a house-painter and a schoolmistress, Alexander Martin Sullivan was born in west Cork in 1829. Educated locally, he worked as a relief officer in Bantry poor-law union before leaving for Dublin in 1853 to make a career in journalism. Having worked on a variety of papers, he joined a partnership which took over *The Nation* in 1855 and by 1858 he was the paper's sole proprietor and editor. He used *The Nation*, as well as other newspapers controlled by him, to promote a constitutional movement whose objective was to seek a degree of autonomy for Ireland. Although opposed to militant nationalism, his defence of the Fenians after their failed rising in 1867 enhanced his political profile. Active in the Home Government Association in the early 1870s and involved in the establishment of the Home Rule League in 1873, Sullivan was member of parliament for county Louth between 1874 and 1880 and for county Meath in the period 1880-82. As a moderate he was wary of the extremism of the land war (1879-82), however, the government's decision to introduce coercive measures resulted in him joining the ranks of the parliamentary obstructionists. Sullivan was one of 30 home-rulers suspended from parliament in early 1881. He resigned from parliament in 1882 as a result of poor health and a sense of political frustration. His historical significance lies not so much in his parliamentary career, but in his success as a skilled communicator who

⁵⁵'All the native annalists are jejune to an exasperating degree. Genealogy seems to have been the really important thing with them, and they throw extremely little light on the condition of the people': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. xii.

⁵⁶'Irish policy', said Mr. Disraeli in the House of Commons, 'is Irish history, and I have no faith in any statesman, who attempts to remedy the evils of Ireland, who is either ignorant of the past, or who will not take lessons from it': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. v. For the earlier lineage in nineteenth-century Ireland of the concept of history as a source of political enlightenment, see Donald MacCartney, 'The writing of history in Ireland, 1800-30', *Irish Historical Studies* X:40 (1957), pp. 347-62, here p. 352.

purveyed a populist cultural nationalism imbued with a feeling of Irish moral superiority in respect of the English.⁵⁷

Sullivan's national narrative is seamless in its presentation of an epic Irish struggle against foreign domination. From the earliest period, the Irish were manifestly superior in moral terms to the people of the neighbouring island. The civilization of early Ireland in particular is lauded and presented as a cultural high point in Irish history. The assembly of nobles held on the hill of Tara is somewhat implausibly depicted as a forerunner of the 'constitutional government of which the nineteenth century is so proud'.⁵⁸ The martial prowess of the ancient Irish was such that the Romans wisely decided to desist from invading the island. While Britain acquiesced in the Roman yoke, Ireland enjoyed a golden age of civility and as such the Irish were the best prepared in Europe to embrace the Christian faith. The Irish then and now were 'preeminently a reverential people, and thus were peculiarly susceptible of religious faith'.⁵⁹ The faith introduced by St Patrick to Ireland was that of the 'unchanged and unchangeable Catholic Church'.⁶⁰ However, the beginning of the end of what Sullivan characterizes as 'five hundred years of military fame and five hundred years of Christian glory' was signalled with the Viking incursions which began at the close of the eighth century and which continued into the ninth century. The arrival of these 'fierce and ruthless savages' inaugurated 'centuries of painful bondage'.⁶¹ More calamitously still, national disunity facilitated the establishment of Anglo-Norman ascendancy in Ireland in the twelfth century. The four centuries following the Anglo-Norman conquest are characterized by Sullivan as a 'period of wild, confused, and chaotic struggle' whose detail was best avoided in order not to confuse his young readers.⁶² Crucially, Sullivan reverts to a more elaborative narrative with the advent of the sixteenth century which he presents as a pivotal epoch in the island's history.

Sullivan's account of Ireland in the sixteenth century is presented through an interpretative framework predicated on English perfidy and greed for land. Reception of the reformation in both England and Ireland was markedly different in each country and these reactions underlined contrasting moral attitudes. Henry VIII was primarily motivated by political concerns in his break with

⁵⁷R. Moran, 'Sullivan, Alexander Martin (1829–1884)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; R. Moran, 'Alexander Martin Sullivan (1829–1884) and Irish cultural nationalism' (unpublished MA thesis, National University of Ireland, University College, Cork, 1993).

⁵⁸Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 20.

⁵⁹Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 25, 46–7.

⁶⁰Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 51.

⁶¹Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 75–7.

⁶²Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 114, 137.

Rome and he was especially animated by a desire to take possession of church property and to secure his own supremacy. Henry was apparently little concerned with doctrine or theology. Indeed, had there been no church property to seize, Sullivan claims there would have been no reformation. However, the Catholic Church stood firm against the depredations of Henry and his English and Anglo-Irish aristocratic collaborators who were 'a debased and cowardly pack'.⁶³ Their ethical exemplar was that of Judas Iscariot 'who sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver'.⁶⁴ Yet the Irish remained steadfast in their allegiance to Rome. Ironically so, in view of the papal bull *Laudabiliter*, proclaimed in 1155, which had authorized Henry II to conquer Ireland with the objective of reforming religion on the island. Indeed, had the Irish allowed themselves to 'become part and parcel of the English realm' at this stage, Ireland would have been lost to the old faith in due course. Ever loyal to the authority of the Holy See, the Irish lords received papal injunctions with 'reverence and respect', even when these were patently prejudicial to their interests. Now, however, Rome finally recognized the error of its ways in relation to Ireland and was henceforth 'for ever after nobly and unchangeably to stand by her side'.⁶⁵

Another critical assertion of renewed national consciousness also occurred during Henry VIII's reign. Following the proclamation of Henry as king of Ireland by the parliament in Dublin in 1541, Sullivan argues that the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic elites who had 'voted' him king of Ireland had effectively given up all political hope and had yielded totally to the English regime. However, many of the Gaelic septs moved to disassociate themselves from their leaders' acquiescence in Crown dominion and supposedly deposed and 'elected' new leaders.⁶⁶ Indeed, the ordinary people were apparently unbowed and committed to resisting the new dispensation.⁶⁷ This resilience and self-confidence in the face of adversity were replicated throughout this watershed century. Henry's successors, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, effectively continued and refined his programme in respect of Ireland. This policy was essentially one of subjugation, plunder and extirpation according to Sullivan.⁶⁸ The reign of Elizabeth, in particular, is interpreted by Sullivan as significant in the course of Irish history for it witnessed the development of a new and powerful sense of Irish national consciousness allied to Roman Catholicism. Sullivan describes Elizabeth as both 'one of the greatest of English sovereigns' as well as a 'freak of nature' and a 'monster' intent on the

⁶³ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 208–10.

⁶⁴ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 211.

⁶⁵ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 211–13.

⁶⁶ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 213.

⁶⁷ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 216.

⁶⁸ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 217.

destruction of the Irish people.⁶⁹ A new generation of Irish leaders, inspired by patriotic sentiment and loyalty to the Roman Church, emerged at this period in an extended struggle against the Crown's efforts to conquer Ireland. Sullivan introduces a series of such heroes in what is effectively an early modern nationalist pantheon. For example, James Fitzmaurice of Desmond, who landed on the west coast of Ireland in 1579 with an expeditionary force provided by Pope Gregory XIII, transcended narrow dynastic interests to advance 'the cause of Faith and Country'.⁷⁰ Likewise, Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne in the service of 'God and Ireland' defeated a force commanded by the newly appointed lord deputy, Baron Grey de Wilton, in the Wicklow mountains in 1580.⁷¹ Figures such as these were emblematic of a vibrant sense of nationality defined by patriotism and allegiance to Rome.

Sullivan presents Hugh O'Neill, sometime baron of Dungannon and earl of Tyrone, as the pre-eminent national leader in Elizabethan Ireland. Born around 1550, O'Neill was a member of a leading Ulster Gaelic dynasty who, initially supported by the Dublin authorities and on the basis of a strategic policy of political alliances and shrewd networking, notably with the O'Donnells of west Ulster, had established himself as a highly powerful regional magnate. O'Neill was a central figure in the events which resulted in the outbreak of the Nine Years War (1594–1603) and subsequently, in alliance with Red Hugh O'Donnell, was pivotal in the leadership of the Irish forces in what has been described as 'the most destructive military conflict in Tudor Ireland'.⁷² O'Neill, in Sullivan's estimation, was 'leader of one of the greatest struggles ever waged against the Anglo-Norman subjugation', whose name was destined 'to live in song and story as long as the Irish race survives'. The Ulster nobleman was 'to dedicate his life to one unalterable purpose, the overthrow of English rule and the liberation of his native land'.⁷³ Acknowledging his debt to the nationalist journalist and ideologue John Mitchel's biography of O'Neill, published in 1846, Sullivan crafts an account of the Ulster lord which emphasizes his role as national leader committed to his country and church.⁷⁴ O'Neill overcame factional and dynastic rivalries to advocate the 'common cause of national independence and freedom' during the Nine Years War. However, notwithstanding Spanish military intervention, the 'reconstructed Irish nation was overwhelmed' by superior English strength.⁷⁵ The rout of the Spanish expeditionary force at Kinsale in

⁶⁹Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 218.

⁷⁰Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 223.

⁷¹Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 233.

⁷²Connolly, *Contested Island*, p. 233.

⁷³Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 235–8.

⁷⁴J. Mitchel, *The Life and Times of Aodh O'Neill, Prince of Ulster* (Dublin, 1846).

⁷⁵Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 273–8.

1601 paved the way for a regime of unalloyed English military brutality as the island was pacified. This process of pacification was typical of English rule, according to Sullivan, being unparalleled in its cruelty and as such its 'infamy [...] amongst the nations of the world, pagan or Christian, is wholly monopolized by England'.⁷⁶ Indeed, Sullivan rhetorically demands of his readers, be they Irish or English, if on reading the archival material of the period would they not be forced to 'admit that it was not *war* in even its severest sense, but *murder* in its most hideous and heartless atrocity, that was waged upon the Irish people in the process of subjugating them'.⁷⁷ Although the Irish vainly placed their hope in James I on his accession to the English throne in 1603, the 'nation lay prostrate – fallen but unsubdued – unwilling to yield, but too weak to rise'.⁷⁸ The flight of the northern earls, Rory O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill, to the continent in 1607 marked the final act in the downfall of Gaelic Ireland. Sullivan stressed the importance of this period in Irish history as it witnessed '*the last struggle of the ancient native rule to sustain itself against the conquerors and the jurisdiction of their civil and religious code*'. Henceforth, Ireland was a conquered 'kingdom subject to the Scoto-English sovereign'.⁷⁹ More importantly, in keeping with Sullivan's use of history to articulate a contemporary political message, he dramatically proclaims that God had 'preserved the Irish nation in captivity and in exile'. In spite of all adversity and hostility, the Irish 'had not melted away, as the calculations of their evicters anticipated'. To this very day, he remarks that the Irish have retained their distinct identity 'as the children of Israel did theirs in Babylon or in Egypt'.⁸⁰ Indeed, Sullivan explicitly draws attention to what he sees as the primary lesson of Irish history. In tracing the trials and tribulations of what he terms the Irish people, he stresses his overwhelming conclusion that providence has destined the 'nation for a great purpose, for a glorious destiny'.⁸¹

All three historians are in agreement that the sixteenth century constituted a watershed in Ireland's history in which the medieval Gaelic world was comprehensively supplanted by the governance of the Tudor state. They differ, crucially, in their reading of the longer term historic implications of this fundamental political and cultural shift. In the view of Sullivan, the aggression of Elizabeth and her governors in Ireland precipitated a powerful and enduring sense of Irish Catholic national consciousness. He presents Irish resistance to English expansionism as a glorious interlude in the epic struggle of a nation for

⁷⁶ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 291.

⁷⁷ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 291.

⁷⁸ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 324.

⁷⁹ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 342.

⁸⁰ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, pp. 343–4.

⁸¹ Sullivan, *Story of Ireland*, p. 583.

self-determination. Sullivan consistently presents Irish national consciousness and Roman Catholicism as binary elements of his ideological template. As Protestants and advocates of Irish integration within the British state, the depiction of the Tudor conquest, especially in regard to reformation, presented complex historiographical and political challenges to O'Grady and Bagwell. The latter deals with the subject most fully and most successfully. Indeed, O'Grady's treatment of the subject in *The Story of Ireland* is little short of bizarre. R. F. Foster has suggested that this eccentric and episodic work was a deliberate, and surely rather unsuccessful, rejoinder from an anti-nationalist perspective to Sullivan's hugely popular nationalist history. Foster has compared the narrative structure of O'Grady's work, which consists of short, linked stories, often mythic, with the style of Italo Calvino.⁸² O'Grady concentrates on the legends, heroes and heroines of ancient Ireland and merely provides a schematic account of Irish history from the arrival of the Anglo-Normans down to the time of Parnell. Elaborating on a thesis of modernization presented earlier in *Red Hugh's Captivity* (1889), O'Grady argues that the Irish combined with Elizabeth to rid the country of anachronistic dynasts and local lords in order to inaugurate a new area of peace and prosperity.⁸³ The question of religious dissension is glossed over. The key to the queen's apparent popularity in Ireland was her flexibility in regard to observation of the new ecclesiastical legislation. Indeed, Irish Catholics effectively were allowed to continue undisturbed in their adherence to Rome and this *de facto* toleration underwrote Elizabeth's control of Ireland.⁸⁴ Henceforth, notwithstanding religious differences, the Irish proved greatly devoted to the Crown.⁸⁵ Having obfuscated the question of religious change, O'Grady moved at speed to rehabilitate Cromwell's Irish career to the unbridled fury of contemporary nationalists.⁸⁶ A distinctly cursory overview of the reformation suggests that O'Grady's contemporary unionist agenda determined his somewhat disingenuous presentation of early modern religious conflict in an effort to allay Irish Catholic concerns within a predominantly British Protestant state.

Bagwell's discussion of religious history in the three volumes of *Ireland under the Tudors* is dispassionate. He reconstructs a fairly detailed narrative of the state of Church affairs, both Catholic and Protestant, in Ireland in the sixteenth century. While refraining from extended analysis or interpretation, Bagwell's theory of the inevitable failure of the reformation in Ireland is further advanced. For instance, he argues that while the Gaelic elite may easily have

⁸²R. F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling tales and making it up in Ireland* (London, 2001), p. 14.

⁸³S. O'Grady, *The Story of Ireland* (London, 1894), p. 121.

⁸⁴O'Grady, *The Story of Ireland*, p. 121.

⁸⁵O'Grady, *The Story of Ireland*, p. 122.

⁸⁶O'Grady, *The Story of Ireland*, pp. 123–38; Foster, *The Irish Story*, p. 15.

been financially encouraged by Henry VIII to acquiesce in his ecclesiastical policy, the loyalty of the people was not so easily won. If the people were barbarous, they could, nonetheless, appreciate the virtue and example of the friars. Against the friars, Henry had no adequate redress. The writ of the reformed church barely extended beyond the precincts of Dublin Castle and its only 'sincere supporters were a few new comers from England'. The Franciscans were everywhere in the ascendant and 'every feeling, national and sentimental, predisposed the Irish to believe their statement of the case'. The established church was mainly animated by power and populated by a handful of English-speaking divines and by cynical self-seekers in pursuit of advancement.⁸⁷ The differences between the established churches in England and Ireland were oppositional: 'In England Anglicanism was the outcome of national independence; in Ireland it was the badge of conquest'.⁸⁸ Differences in language fundamentally constrained a church which was indifferent to Gaelic culture and as such Anglican clerics were largely unable to evangelise effectively among Irish-speakers.⁸⁹ In a brief introduction to volume three of his Tudor study, Bagwell depicts the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland as cruel because the crown was poor. Unpaid soldiers make for poor advocates of change and are necessarily cast in the guise of oppressors. He contends the history of Ireland would have been quite different had England governed the island as she governed India. In India, England ruled 'through scientific administrators, who tolerate all creeds and respect all prejudices'.⁹⁰ The contemporary implications of Bagwell's treatment of the reformation and his references to imperial tolerance in India further underscore his belief in the unifying capacity of history and how the lessons of the past may be applied to present and future policies. Indeed, Bagwell's allusions to tolerance are not simply aspirational. The critique of the Protestant reformation is remarkable in terms of frankness and candour.

Alvin Jackson has remarked that late nineteenth-century unionist historiography, as much as its nationalist counterpart, was in large measure a response to the political environment of the day, particularly in the context of the radicalization of Irish politics after the 1870s.⁹¹ Indeed, the attrition of the power and status of the Protestant elite in Ireland had begun much earlier through

⁸⁷ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. 311.

⁸⁸ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. I, p. 312.

⁸⁹ 'It was not possible to provide vehement, zealous, and persuasive preachers in Ireland as in Lancashire, for the Lancashire people could be addressed in their own tongue, and the Irish could not. In Ireland the forces of oratory were entirely on the side of Rome': Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. III, pp. 475–6.

⁹⁰ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. III, pp. vi–vii.

⁹¹ A. Jackson, 'Unionist history', in C. Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The debate on historical revisionism 1938–1994* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 253–68, here p. 256.

a series of legislative measures which extended greater civic rights to Roman Catholics. Such legislation included, for example, the Catholic Relief Act (1829), the Reform Act (1832) and the Municipal Reform Act (1840).⁹² Concurrently, the transmission of remnants of Gaelic culture and literature, largely in translation, to an urban, mainly middle-class Anglo-Irish environment was a crucial element in the development of nineteenth-century Irish nationalism.⁹³ While utilizing quite different historiographical methods, O'Grady and Bagwell shared a common commitment to affirming a sense of Anglo-Irish consciousness through collective participation in the Irish historical experience. As Joep Leerssen has demonstrated, the development of cultural nationalism in Ireland in the nineteenth century was part of a larger European pattern.⁹⁴ However, the rise of such cultural nationalism in Ireland presented a particular challenge to unionist-minded intellectuals who participated in the broader resurgence of interest in Irish antiquities and Gaelic literature. The boundaries between cultural and political nationalisms were ambiguous and shifting. With differing immediate ends in mind, certainly, both O'Grady and Bagwell sought to deploy history as a mechanism to influence contemporary political debates and policy. The outcomes in each case were as different as their objectives. O'Grady's presentation of an imaginative national epic released what AE (George Russell) called 'the submerged river of national culture' and once again made available to the Irish people 'the story of the national soul'.⁹⁵ O'Grady's programme to engender a vibrant sense of Irish cultural identity, effectively a form of transcendent patriotism which complemented the political framework of a unitary British state, was problematic in two crucial respects. In presenting the Tudor conquest as inaugurating a welcome transformation in Ireland's history, O'Grady was surely not unaware of the irony implicit in his argument. In fact, the definitive incorporation of Ireland within the Crown's jurisdiction entailed the effective destruction of the elite Gaelic civilization which formed a key element, admittedly in attenuated form, in O'Grady's cultural vision and the confessional alienation of the majority in Ireland from the Protestant British state. As a basis for advocating cultural patriotism within the union,

⁹²D. Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840–80* (Maynooth, 2000), p. 7.

⁹³J. Leerssen, 'Irish cultural nationalism and its European context', in B. Stewart (ed.), *Hearts and Minds: Irish culture and society under the act of union* (Gerrards Cross, Princess Grace Irish Library 13, 2002), pp. 170–87, here p. 170.

⁹⁴J. Leerssen, 'Irish cultural nationalism', p. 178.

⁹⁵'In O'Grady's writings the submerged river of national culture rose up again, a shining torrent, and I realized as I had basked in that stream, that the greatest spiritual evil one nation could inflict on another was to cut off from it the story of the national soul': H. A. O'Grady, *Standish James O'Grady: The man & the writer*, p. 64.

the example of sixteenth-century Ireland provided uncertain historical foundations. In contrast, a more mundane nineteenth-century unionist historian, Thomas Dunbar Ingram (1826–1901), who was indifferent if not hostile to Gaelic culture, simply dismissed as irredeemably barbarous Irish society before the Elizabethan conquest. Essentially, Ingram proposed that Ireland had been civilized by English intervention.⁹⁶ Clearly, O'Grady's politics greatly complicated his historiography. On the other hand, Bagwell's work, committed to objectivity and the provision of a detailed narrative based on primary sources, has remained to this day within the narrower confines of academic history. Sullivan's history was constrained by neither political nor religious ambiguity. His narrative consciously aimed to provide a popular and seamless epic for a political and religious majority. The elaboration by him of a supposedly-definitive and venerable national story both informed and validated populist ideas of Irish nationality and identity. By sketching a national epic which was accessible and ultimately forward-looking, Sullivan influenced successive generations of readers and found favour with the newly-established elites of independent Ireland in the twentieth century.⁹⁷ Collectively, these writers exemplify what has been discerned as a long established tension between popular and academic versions of Irish history and their histories are emblematic of the present-centred nature of Irish historical writing in the nineteenth century.⁹⁸

⁹⁶T. D. Ingram, *A Critical Examination of Irish History*, 2 vols (London: 1900), vol. I, pp. 13–14.

⁹⁷Moran, 'Alexander Martin Sullivan (1829–1884) and Irish cultural nationalism', p. 366.

⁹⁸'But the depressing lesson is probably that 'history' as conceived by scholars is a different concept to "history" as understood at large, where "myth" is probably the correct, if over-used, anthropological term. And historians may overrate their own importance in considering that their work is in any way relevant to these popular conceptions: especially in Ireland': Foster, 'History and the Irish question', p. 192.

8

Narrating the Building of a Small Nation: Divergence and Convergence in the Historiography of Estonian 'National Awakening', 1868–2005

Jörg Hackmann

Historians as Nation-Builders, the *Festschrift* dedicated to the late Hugh Seton-Watson in 1988,¹ did not only allude to a major research interest of the director of the School for Slavonic and East European Studies. It also recalled the political activities of his father, Robert William Seton-Watson,² who had founded SSEES in London in 1915, in cooperation with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who became the first president of Czechoslovakia some years later. With the collapse of Soviet hegemony and the emergence of old and new sovereign nation-states between Estonia and Albania, the role of historians once again has changed. Had they been engaged in nation and state building after 1918, the post-1945 era was, first and foremost, shaped by scholarly research on nation building. Since the late 1980s, however, many historians have been once again actively involved in re-establishing the new states and national societies. In North Eastern Europe, one representative of this species, to whom we shall pay closer attention, is Mart Laar, the first prime minister of independent Estonia in 1991, who received his PhD from the University of Tartu with a study on the Estonian national awakening in 2005.³ Generally speaking, one can hardly overlook the fact that despite all deconstructivist endeavours, the writing of the nation still appears to be an attractive undertaking, first of all with reference to a broader public, but also within scholarly historiography.

¹ D. Deletant and H. Hanak (eds), *Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe* (Basingstoke, 1988).

² On R. W. Seton-Watson's political activities concerning the break-up of the Habsburg monarchy, see the book by his sons: H. Seton-Watson and C. Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (Seattle, 1981).

³ M. Laar, *Äratajad. Rahvuslik ärkamisaeg Eestis 19. sajandil ja selle kandjad* [*The awakeners: The national awakening in nineteenth-century Estonia and its agents*] (Tartu, 2005).

Starting from this observation, this chapter will analyse the historical narratives of Estonian nation building. The transformation of the Estonians into a modern nation with autonomous cultural and political institutions, as well as a fixed ethno-linguistic collective national identity is a relatively recent development. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the Estonians referred to themselves not as an ethnic entity, but as ‘landed people’ – ‘maa-rahvas’ in Estonian.⁴ The self-perception of coming late and being weak is without any doubt a major aspect of a small nation’s historiography in a long-term perspective. What makes the Estonian case even more interesting, is the fact that the tensions between constructivist notions, and those based on the assumption of an ethnic fundament of modern nations, have attracted so much attention amongst scholars. Ernest Gellner saw the Estonian nation as an invented one par excellence, whereas Miroslav Hroch and others referred to the Estonian case as supporting the second assumption.⁵

This chapter will also look into the narratives on Estonian nation building from the perspectives of Estonia’s ‘others’, which in our case may be identified with German and Russian historiography. Today, we are used to identifying the Russians as the major Baltic ‘other’. From a historical perspective, however, this role had been played by the Baltic Germans at first. As will be briefly outlined, the German-Russian interactions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards have prepared the stage for debates on ethnicity and nation. Finally, this chapter will describe the relevance of the outlined historical narratives on current societal developments since the re-emergence of an independent Estonian state.

Such a focus on Estonia is based on the fact that there were intense interrelations between at least three national parties in the nation-building process until the formation of an Estonian state in 1918: first, the emerging ‘small’ nation of Estonians striving for recognition; second, dominant German groups trying to keep their elite positions; and finally, the Tsarist administration and Russians in the region, who were primarily interested in introducing Russian administrative practices and promoting the Russian language in the western ‘borderlands’. All these policies were accompanied by or reflected in historiographical narratives. Furthermore, the connection between historiography and nation

⁴ I’m not going into details of the almost endless debates on nations and nationalism, but just want to point out that ethnic and civic conceptions of nations cannot be clearly separated from each other. Here, I am influenced by A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). In the Estonian discourses, this connection is inscribed in the distinction between ‘rahvas’ (ethnic group or ‘Volk’ in German) and ‘rahvus’ (nation), which first appeared in the 1860s.

⁵ On Gellner, see T. U. Raun, ‘Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Estonian Nationalism Revisited’, *Nations and Nationalism* 9:1 (2003), 129–47, here 132.

building is still relevant today, at least for Estonians. Finally, we may notice a continuously high level of (self-)reflection on these issues in Estonia.⁶

The writings of three historians have been selected for closer analysis. First, Hans Kruus (1891–1976); the first Estonian historian, teaching Estonian history – within the frameworks of ‘Northern history’ – as a university professor. Second, Reinhard Wittram (1901–1973), who was the first among the Baltic German historians dealing with the issues of nation building. The third historian is Ea Jansen (1921–2005), the most important pupil of Hans Kruus, who continued the writing on Estonian nation building in Soviet times as well as in the era of the renewed Estonian state since 1991.

The Baltic region in nineteenth-century German, Russian and Estonian perspective

In order to frame the narratives of Estonian nation building, we have to start with a survey of the social and political debates in the region since the late eighteenth century, when ethnic Estonian and Latvian peasants became the object of enlightened discourses. Garlieb Merkel,⁷ Johann Petri⁸ and others, not least Lutheran pastors, demanded the abolition of servitude and the improvement of the peasants’ social situation.⁹ Others took care of their cultural situation, publishing books and newspapers in their languages and collecting songs and folk poetry in the Herderian tradition.

Since the 1830s, social unrest amongst the peasants – which had already occurred earlier – intermingled with Russian politics, as Estonian and Latvian peasants in Livonia started to convert to Orthodoxy, expecting support from the Tsar, who was believed to be providing them with land in the warm South.¹⁰ At this point, Russian publicists started to develop closer interest in the Baltic region, which had been named so far with the hybrid term ‘ostzeiskii’ – from

⁶ See, for instance: J. Kivimäe, ‘Re-Writing Estonian history?’, in M. Branch (ed.), *National History and Identity: Approaches to the Writing of National History in the North-East Baltic Region Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 205–12; J. Kivimäe and S. Kivimäe, ‘Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsforschung in Estland 1988–2001’, *Österreichische Osthefte* 44:1–2 (2002), 159–70; ‘Kuidaskirjutada Eestialalugu? [How to write Estonian history?]', *Vikerkaar* 8/9 (2000); K. Brüggemann, ‘Von der Renationalisierung zur Demontage nationaler Helden. Oder: “Wie schreibt man estnische Geschichte?”’, *Osteuropa* 51 (2001), 810–19.

⁷ G. H. Merkel, *Die Letten vorzüglich in Liefland am Ende des philosophischen Jahrhunderts* (Wedemark, 1998) – first published in 1796.

⁸ J. C. Petri, *Ehstland und die Ehsten oder historisch-geographisch-statistisches Gemälde von Ehstland. Ein Seitenstück zu Merkel über die Letten*, 3 vols (Gotha, 1802).

⁹ On the background to this, see I. Jürjo, *Aufklärung im Baltikum: Leben und Werk des livländischen Gelehrten August Wilhelm Hupel (1737 – 1819)* (Cologne, 2006).

¹⁰ The best overview in English is T. U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians* (Stanford, CA, 1991), pp. 37–95.

the German 'Ostsee' – Baltic Sea. The Slavophil Iurii Samarin, who served in Riga as a Tsarist official from 1847 to 1849, may be regarded as the first Russian historian focusing more closely on Baltic history. His idea was to transform the region from a land traditionally perceived as German, into the 'Baltic Borderlands of Russia'.¹¹ The main line of the Slavophil narrative of Baltic history, which Samarin had already developed, earlier in his 'Letters from Riga',¹² was based on a criticism of the Baltic Germans' negative role. They were perceived as usurpers and oppressors of the Estonian and Latvian population, who before the German conquest, allegedly had tended towards their Eastern neighbour. In the contemporary era, Samarin blamed the German elites for hampering the peaceful emancipation of the Latvians. From that perspective, the conversion movement amongst them towards Orthodoxy in the 1840s was regarded as a step in the right direction, underlining the natural 'striving for unification' between the Baltic borderlands and Russia, because there was no 'artificial agitation', but 'an absolutely free and spontaneous move of a whole nation towards Russia'.¹³ The Germans, on the contrary, were accused of fostering the Germanization of the Estonians and Latvians. Nevertheless, from the Slavophil perspective, Latvians and Estonians first of all appeared in this triangular relationship between Russians, Germans and regional ethnic groups as foes of the German foes, but not primarily as independent subjects.

Samarin's *Baltic Borderlands* provoked a sharp reaction by Carl Schirren, a professor of history at the University of Dorpat (Tartu), who quickly had to step down from his position, after he published his *Livonian Answer* in 1869.¹⁴ In Schirren's argumentation, the Latvians and Estonians played no major role either, although he was well aware of the emerging nation-building processes.

¹¹ J. Samarin, *Okrainy Rossii. Serii 1: Russkoe Baltiiskoe pomor'e* [Russia's borderlands. Series 1: The Russian Baltic littoral] (Prague, 1868), reprinted in *ibid.*, *Sochinieniia*, vol. 8 (Moscow, 1890), pp. 1–176. On Samarin, see E. C. Thaden, 'Iurii Fedorovich Samarin and Baltic History', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 17 (1986), 321–8; E. C. Thaden, 'Samarin's "Okrainy Rossii" and Official Policy in the Baltic Provinces', *Russian Review* 33 (1974), 405–15. Samarin's book was immediately translated into German by Julius Eckardt in 1869 as 'Juri Samarins Anklage gegen die Ostseeprovinzen Russlands', reprinted in Jurij Samarin, *Das russisch-baltische Küstenland im gegenwärtigen Augenblick* (Münster, 1996).

¹² Iurii F. Samarin, *Sochinieniia*, vol. 7: *Pis'ma iz Rigi i istoriia Rigi* [Letters from Riga and history of Riga] (Moscow, 1889).

¹³ Samarin, *Sochinieniia*, vol. 8, pp. 67, 121–2, 139, 155. Cf. K. Brüggemann, 'Das Baltikum im russischen Blick: Rußland und sein Anspruch auf die baltischen Staaten in der Perspektive des 19. Jahrhunderts', in J. Hackmann and R. Schweitzer (eds), *Nordosteuropa als Geschichtsregion* (Helsinki and Lübeck, 2006), pp. 392–411.

¹⁴ C. Schirren, *Livländische Antwort an Herrn Juri Samarin* (Leipzig, 1869). On Schirren, see G. von Pistohlkors, *Baltische Länder* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 3379–82; and R. Wittram, *Das Nationale als europäisches Problem: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalitätsprinzips vornehmlich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1954), pp. 161–82.

Schirren was the president of the Learned Estonian Society in Dorpat in the 1860s, which played a decisive role in the first phase of Estonian nation building. The debate about the region, according to Schirren, was only about its German or Russian character.¹⁵ The Estonians and Latvians, in such a reading, had the choice only of becoming Germans or Russians.¹⁶

This controversy between Samarin and Schirren shaped Russian and German perspectives for more than a century. Integration ('sliianie') was the main focus on the Russian side, 'holding out' ('Ausharren') against adversities from imperial power and national movements coined the Baltic German perception of the situation after Schirren. Though the transformation of the ethnic Estonian population into a modern nation (from 'maa-rahvas' to 'Eesti rahvus') was noticed, it was not perceived to change social, political and cultural hegemony in the region. Until 1918 German authors continued to call Estonians and Latvians 'our nationals', clearly denoting 'otherness' with regard to the allegedly non-national Baltic Germans.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the Estonian 'national awakening' stood in the centre of Estonian narratives of the region in the nineteenth century. The main issues of their nation building are the emergence of a socially and economically independent peasantry in the mid-nineteenth century, the formation of intellectual elites defining themselves as Estonian, and the articulation of political interests until 1917.¹⁷ These processes, including their description as 'awakening' ('ärkamisaeg' in Estonian), became the basis of the formation of a powerful historical narrative already at the beginning of the small nation's social formation. In other words, the social process received much of its dynamic from the accompanying historical narrative of the three ages of Estonian history – 'light' in prehistoric times, followed by seven centuries of 'darkness' under German rule, and the 'new dawn' from the 1860s onwards. In the Estonian context, this notion was formulated by Carl Robert Jakobson in 1869;¹⁸ the idea, however, was already popular before then.

¹⁵ Schirren, *Livländische Antwort*, p. 194.

¹⁶ J. Eckardt's comment in Samarin, *Das russisch-baltische Küstenland*, p. 260.

¹⁷ Good overviews in Western languages: Ü. Sihver, 'Konzeptionen des "Nationalen Erwachens". Der persönliche Beitrag von Johann Voldemar Jannsen, Johann Köhler, Carl Robert Jakobson und Jakob Hurt zur estnischen Bewegung in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts', in K. Garber and M. Klöker (eds), *Kulturgeschichte der baltischen Länder in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2003), pp. 463–82; E. Jansen, 'Esten im 19. Jahrhundert – Bauernstand, Volk oder Nation?', in J. E. Olsson, Y. Varpio and M. Zadencka (eds), *Literatur und nationale Identität I: Ausgangspunkte bei der Erforschung des literarischen Nationalismus und der nationalen Literaturen im Ostseeraum* (Tampere, 1997), pp. 50–70; Raun, *Estonia*; A. Loit, 'Nationale Bewegungen und regionale Identität im Baltikum', *Nordost-Archiv N.F.* 7:1 (1998), 219–33.

¹⁸ C. R. Jakobson, *Kolm isamaa kõnet. Kriitiline väljaanne käsikirjast kommentaaride ja järelsõnaga* [Three speeches about the fatherland. Critically edited from the manuscript with commentaries and afterword] (Tallinn, 1991).

Estonian publications have commemorated and celebrated the heroes of the 'awakening' since the early twentieth century.¹⁹

Hans Kruus – a civic notion of the Estonian nation

Hans Kruus was a historian as well as a politician, and he represents – at first glance – a surprising historiographical continuity from the 1920s to the 1950s, from the first independent Estonian republic of 1918 to Soviet Estonia since 1940 and 1944 respectively. Furthermore, a representative of left-wing nationalism, Kruus²⁰ does not fit into the frameworks of conservative, primordialist nationalism, which many assume to be prevailing in Eastern Europe. From September 1917, Kruus was the head of the Estonian branch of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which was the first to publicly demand an independent Estonian state in December 1917. In 1922, Kruus went back to Tartu University, and after having published his study on the conversion movement to Orthodoxy among Estonian peasants in the 1840s,²¹ he became a professor of the history of Estonia and the Nordic countries in Tartu in 1931. In June 1940, Kruus entered the first Soviet Estonian government led by Johannes Vares as minister of education and deputy prime minister. After the Second World War, Kruus became foreign minister of the ESSR and president of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. From October 1950 until January 1954, he was arrested for political reasons, and after his rehabilitation, he returned to scholarly work at the Academy of Sciences. Thus, his biography reveals a close relationship between his political and historical activities, which bridged major turning points in twentieth-century Estonian history.

In order to analyse the significance of the national awakening in Estonian historiography, we have to outline briefly the development of academic Estonian historical research in the inter-war period. The first generation of Estonian historians were anxious for a clear demarcation from Baltic German historiography. Kruus's colleague, Peeter Treiberg (later Tarvel), wrote in 1930 that before the foundation of the Estonian university in 1919, historical

¹⁹ H. Rosenthal, *Kulturbestrebungen des estnischen Volkes während eines Menschenalters (1869–1900). Erinnerungen* (Reval, 1912).

²⁰ On Kruus, see J. Kivimäe and S. Kivimäe, 'Hans Kruus und die deutsch-estnische Kontroverse', in M. Garleff (ed.), *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiß. Oldenburger Symposium: 'Interethnische Beziehungen in Ostmitteleuropa als historiographisches Problem der 1930er/1940er Jahre'* (Munich, 1995), pp. 155–70; and the introductory chapters by J. Kahk and V. Sirk in J. Kahk (ed.), *Studia historica in honorem Hans Kruus* (Tallinn, 1971), pp. 18–65. Bibliography: Hans Kruus. *Personaalnimestik* [Personal bibliography] (Tallinn, 1988). Kruus has also published memoirs of the era between the revolutions: H. Kruus, *Ajaratta uutes ringides. Mälestusi 1907–1917 [In new turns of the wheel of times. Memories 1907–1917]* (Tallinn, 1979), pp. 3–65.

²¹ H. Kruus, *Talurahva käärimine Lõuna-Eestis XIX sajandi 40-ndail aastail* [The peasants' movement in South Estonia in the 1840s] (Tartu, 1930).

research of Baltic and Estonian history had been solely in the hands of Baltic-German historians. Despite their valuable and respectful works, they could not meet the demands and interests of the Estonian people who had awoken to national self-consciousness. Furthermore, Treiberg accused the German historians of neglecting the historical share of the Estonians and Latvians and of glorifying the German element without justification.²² According to Kruus, the Estonian nation 'without history' had become a subject of history in political and historiographical terms since 1918. This reorientation thus led to discussions about the main periods and topics of a new Estonian historiography.

In contrast to conservative nation builders, Kruus was not convinced by an ageless ethnic unity of Estonians, but he underlined class differences. In his booklet *Town and Village in Estonia* of 1920,²³ he stressed – against the mainstream of the Estonian discussion up to that time – the impact of urbanization on Estonian history. There, he combined the rising number of mainly Estonian-speaking workers with the shifting social structure of those who actively supported Estonian language education and literature. In 1873 the Estonian patriots had still been dominated by landed schoolteachers, whereas in 1916 the majority were already living in towns.²⁴ In further chapters, Kruus was polemicizing with the newspaper editor and politician Jaan Tõnisson, the leading figure in a conservative, naturalist concept of the Estonian nation and one of the most important organizers of Estonian peasants' associations. Kruus's main point of reference amongst the Estonian patriots was the radical newspaper editor Carl Robert Jakobson, who, however, as Kruus admitted, could not yet develop a positive notion of the town as the centre of Estonian nation building.²⁵ Nevertheless, Kruus placed himself in Jakobson's tradition and tried to modernize the vision of an Estonian nation as a civic one. However, Kruus's civic nation still defined the Estonian nation primarily in linguistic and cultural terms.

Whereas the prehistoric 'age of light' ('valguse aeg') – according to Jakobson's scheme – attracted much attention amongst the Estonian public and many historians in the first half of the twentieth century,²⁶ the history of the national

²² P. Treiberg, 'Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Akademischen Historischen Gesellschaft in den Jahren 1920–1930', in *Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi Aastaraamat / Sitzungsberichte der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft* (1929 [1931]), pp. 200–8, P. Treiberg, 'Akadeemiline Ajaloo-Selts aastail 1920–1930 [The Academic Historical Society, 1920–1930]', *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 9: 1–2 (1930), 1–10.

²³ H. Kruus, *Linn ja küla Eestis* [Town and village in Estonia] (Tartu, 1920).

²⁴ Kruus, *Küla Eestis*, pp. 39–44.

²⁵ Kruus, *Küla Eestis*, pp. 53–64.

²⁶ R. Helme, 'Die estnische Historiographie', in Garleff (ed.), *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiß*, pp. 139–54; and also E. Laul, 'Eesti ajalooteaduse Leninliku etapi põhijooni

awakening (Jakobson's 'koiduaeg' – 'time of the dawn') occupied a major position in Kruus's historiographical writings. In 1927–28, he published an *Estonian History of the Latest Time*,²⁷ covering the periods from 1710 until 1920. Its second volume dealt exclusively with the national awakening and its development up until the formation of the Estonian state in 1920. This centre of gravity did not even change when Kruus reworked it into a German version entitled *Outline of the History of the Estonian People*.²⁸ There, he added two brief chapters on the periods before 1710, but proceeded in the following chapters directly to the national awakening. This focus of Kruus's contrasted with the master narrative of Estonian national historiography in the inter-war period, which started with a glorified pre-history.²⁹

In contrast to earlier narratives, which highlighted the foundation of the 'Vanemuine' choral society as the first national Estonian association, and the Estonian song festival in Tartu in 1869 as the first independent cultural manifestation and hence as birth of the Estonian nation, Kruus saw the beginning of Estonian nation building in the earlier peasants' unrest, although this did not yet lead to the expression of a national identification, but to a political distance from the German landed and Church elites.³⁰ The peasants' turn towards Orthodoxy, however, was not primarily motivated by a change in religious confession, and therefore did not provide positive results nor did it improve the peasants' situation. Only this finding, Kruus concluded, allows understanding of the relevance of Jakobson's ideas of promoting the education of the Estonian population in the 1860s.³¹ Looking at the crucial period of cultural and political nation building from the 1860s to the 1880s, Kruus ascribed the decisive role to the major associations concerned with education, like the Alexander School movement for a high school with instruction in the Estonian language and the Society of Learned Estonians (*Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*), in which schoolteachers as rural intelligentsia and peasants gathered. Besides this, Kruus pointed at the role of the shipping company, Linda, a stock company which ran a merchant vessel as a national undertaking. Further topics highlighted by Kruus were the emergence of a national ideology and an Estonian language press. In all

[Outlines of the Leninist stage in Estonian historiography]' in *ibid.* (ed.), *Leninlik etapp Eesti ajaloo teaduses. Historiograafilisi artikleid* (Tallinn, 1970), pp. 13–48; A. Baron Taube, 'Etnische Geschichtsforschung und Geschichtsschreibung', *Jomsburg* 2 (1938), 45–61. The focus on prehistoric time is visible in H. Kruus et al. (eds), *Eesti ajalugu [Estonian History]*, 3 vols (Tartu, 1935–1940); J. Libe et al. (eds), *Eesti rahva ajalugu [History of the Estonian people]*, 3 vols (Tallinn, 1932–1937); H. Moora, *Die Vorzeit Estlands* (Tartu, 1932).

²⁷ H. Kruus, *Eesti ajalugu kõige uuemal ajal [Estonian History of the Latest Time]*, 2 vols (Tartu, 1927–1928).

²⁸ H. Kruus, *Grundriss der Geschichte des estnischen Volkes* (Tartu, 1932).

²⁹ Kivimäe and Kivimäe, 'Hans Kruus', pp. 166, with reference to *Eesti rahva ajalugu*.

³⁰ Kruus, *Talurahva käärimine*.

³¹ Kruus, *Talurahva käärimine*, p. 410.

of these activities, Kruus stressed the impact of Carl Robert Jakobson's activities, who edited the newspaper *Sakala* and was the leading figure of the radical wing of the national movement. Kruus's sympathies were clearly with the positions held by the radical patriots led by Jakobson and the painter Johann Köler. Johann Woldemar Jannsen, however, the organizer of the Estonian song festival of 1869 and editor of the first newspaper *Eesti Postimees* ('Estonian postman') that addressed the Estonians as a nation, received less attention and was criticized because of his conciliatory attitude towards the Baltic German elites. Nevertheless, Kruus did not limit the national awakening to the radical patriots. He also provided a positive image of the Lutheran parish priest Jakob Hurt, who was the leading spirit of a cultural formation of the Estonian nation, despite Hurt's conflicts with Jakobson in 'Eesti Kirjameeste Selts' and the Alexander School movement. This is particularly important with regard to the fact that Hurt received significantly less attention in Soviet times. Kruus contrasted the positive image of Jakobson and Hurt and their activities until the early 1880s with a negative portrayal of Estonian publicists after Jakobson's death in 1882. According to Kruus, the latter were far too uncritical towards the Tsarist authorities. Hence, Kruus noted, the national movement experienced a rebirth only after the revolution of 1905 with the emergence of a broad range of Estonian educational and cultural associations, including the activities of his political opponent Jaan Tõnisson, whom he had widely criticized in his brochure on *Town and Village*.³²

In his conceptual writings Kruus also stressed the national awakening as the decisive period of Estonian history. In 1930, he demanded research on the 'awakening period' from political, cultural and economic perspectives and described a historiographical concentration on the Estonian nation and a commitment to nation building as a legacy of the leading figures of the national awakening.³³ All in all, he saw himself in a straight line of continuity from Jakobson and Hurt onwards. During the years of authoritarian rule in Estonia from 1934, Kruus's narrative emphasis shifted further towards to ideas of Jakob Hurt, especially regarding questions of cultural identity amongst small nations.³⁴

³² Kruus, *Eesti ajalugu kõige uuemal ajal*, vol. 2, pp. 100–33. On Tõnisson, see Kruus, *Linn ja küla* (cf. above), pp. 55–8, 67–70, 83–4; Kruus, *Jaan Tõnisson Eesti kodanluse juhina [Jaan Tõnisson as Leader of the Estonian Bourgeoisie]* (Tartu, 1921), and Hans Kruus, Juhan Köpp et al. (eds), *Jaan Tõnisson töös ja võitluses. Koguteos tema seitsmekümnenda sünnipäeva puhul [Jaan Tõnisson at work and in battle: A collection dedicated to his 70th birthday]* (Tartu, 1938).

³³ H. Kruus, 'Ärkimisaja pärandus Eesti ajaloo uurimisele' [The heritage of the awakening era for the researcher of Estonian history], *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 9:3 (1930), 124–38, here 133.

³⁴ H. Kruus, *Eesti Aleksandrikool [The Estonian Alexander School]* (Tartu, 1939), H. Kruus, 'Väikerahvalik tunnetus eesti ühiskondlikus mõttes. Jakob Hurda 100. sünnepäeva puhul' [The small nation consciousness in Estonian social thought. On the occasion of Jakob Hurt's 100th birthday], *Ajalooline Ajakiri* (1939), pp. 136–47. Cf. T. Karjahärm and

Leaving Kruus's wartime publications, such as the one on the Estonian uprising of 1343,³⁵ aside, one may conclude that he continued his former topics after his rehabilitation in 1957. Besides a new accent on the economic aspects of agricultural history, which gained importance within the frameworks of socialist historiography, we see a continuity of narratives, in particular with regard to the role of the radical patriots and their activities, from the inter-war period. In line with his early writings, Kruus argued against the notion that the national awakening should be seen as a form of bourgeois nationalism. The impact of this continuity will be discussed below in the writings of Ea Jansen, who defended her doctoral dissertation as a pupil of Hans Kruus in 1968.

Reinhard Wittram – the failure of German 'Volksgeschichte'

First, however, Reinhard Wittram, who may be regarded as the leading advocate of the concept of 'German Ostforschung'³⁶ amongst the Baltic German historians, will be addressed. Like the Estonian historians mentioned above, Wittram started off by criticising the anti-national traditions of Baltic-German historiography. He aimed to give Baltic-German history a new orientation by addressing issues of nation building from a German 'völkisch' perspective.

Having studied in Germany, Wittram,³⁷ who was born near Riga, taught history at the German Herder-Institute in Riga from 1928 onwards. He also wrote for a monthly journal published in Riga, which, since the early 1930s had introduced issues of the 'völkisch' discussions from Germany. Within the context of German 'Ostforschung', ethnic notions of German history

V. Sirk, *Vaim ja võim. Eesti haritlaskond 1917–1940 [Spirit and power: The Estonian intellectuals 1917–1940]* (Tallinn, 2001), pp. 259–61, 266–8.

³⁵ H. Kruus, *Jüriöö ülestõusu ajaloolised käsud tänapäevale [The historical instruction of St George's Night Uprising for today]* (Moscow, 1943).

³⁶ On the concept of Ostforschung, see E. Mühle, 'The European East on the Mental Map of German Ostforschung', in Mühle (ed.), *Germany and the European East in the Short Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York, 2003), pp. 107–30, E. Mühle, '"Ostforschung". Beobachtungen zu Aufstieg und Niedergang eines geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* 46:3 (1997), 317–50; J. Hackmann, '"Deutsche Ostforschung" und Geschichtswissenschaft', in J. M. Piskorski, J. Hackmann and R. Jaworski (eds), *'Deutsche Ostforschung' und 'polnische Westforschung' im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Politik. Disziplinen im Vergleich* (Osnabrück and Poznan, 2002), pp. 26–45; and on the Baltic German context, J. Hackmann, 'Contemporary Baltic History and German Ostforschung 1918–1945. Concepts, Images and Notions', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 30 (1999), 322–37.

³⁷ On Wittram until 1945, see G. von Pistohlkors, 'Ethnos und Geschichtsschreibung der dreißiger und vierziger Jahre in Deutschland und Ostmitteleuropa', in Garleff (ed.), *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiß*, pp. 11–24; and on the period after the Second World War, G. von Pistohlkors, 'Die Stellung der Deutschen in der Geschichte der Esten, Letten und Litauer', *Nordost-Archiv* 1:1 (1992), 89–122.

(‘Volksgeschichte’) were promoted by those historians, dealing with allegedly endangered German borderlands. Whereas Erich Keyer and Theodor Schieder, for instance, were applying such a notion to East and West Prussia, Wittram and also Hans Rothfels were the protagonists of ‘Ostforschung’ with regard to the Baltic region. In 1940, Wittram was appointed professor at the Reichsuniversität Posen. There, he delivered a series of lectures in 1942, under the title ‘Return to the Reich’, expressing the notion that the Baltic Germans, as the oldest German colony, had returned to the ‘greater mission of the German task in the East’ in order to fulfil their ‘historical task’ together with the German soldiers.³⁸ After the war, he became a professor at the University of Göttingen, where he escaped to public forms of Protestant penance, but without pointing too closely at his own aberrations.³⁹

What is important in Wittram’s writings is that he argued most resolutely amongst the Baltic German historians for a national reorientation of the German population after the First World War. Nationalism and nation building on ethnic or linguistic foundations, according to Wittram, permeated the Baltic region as a principle from the outside. Hence, these processes, so Wittram argued, did not emerge from the intentions of the single ethnic groups, but have to be seen either as influx from Russian nationalism as in Iurii Samarin’s *Russian Baltic Borderlands* or as a general signature of a new era.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Wittram did not repeat the position of Samarin’s opponent Carl Schirren, who had argued for standing firm against all nationalist challenges. Instead, Wittram argued that the Baltic Germans should transform themselves into a national community, similar to the striving of the national movements of the Estonians and Latvians since the 1960s. In terms of historiography, this implied a sharp criticism of those Baltic Germans who did not recognize the impact of nation building on the piecemeal dissolution of the Estates’ society during the nineteenth century. According to Wittram, they were composed of the conservative members among the nobility, who were aware of the dynamics of the small nations’ awakening and about its threat to traditional social structure. The liberals, by contrast, were convinced of their ability to overcome national differences.⁴¹ As the traditional relations between barons

³⁸ R. Wittram, *Rückkehr ins Reich. Vorträge und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1939/1940* (Posen, 1942).

³⁹ For details on Wittram’s coping with the past, see N. Berg, *Der Holocaust und die west-deutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 220–69.

⁴⁰ R. Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe im baltischen Deutschtum während der Reformepoche des 19. Jahrhunderts. Festschrift der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga zu ihrer Hundertjahrfeier am 6. Dezember 1934* (Riga, 1934), pp. 75, 110, and Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte. Die Ostseelände Livland, Estland, Kurland 1180–1918. Grundzüge und Durchblicke* (Munich, 1954), pp. 183–96.

⁴¹ Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe*, pp. 65–6, 74–5, 91–2, 102–5.

and peasants weakened, Wittram argued that there was only one solution for the German population: they had to look for a 'völkisch' framework, in which the Baltic Germans were only an inseparable part of the whole German 'people's body' ('Volkskörper').⁴² From the 1930s, this was the point of view, from which Wittram analysed the second half of the nineteenth century. He blamed Russian nationalism for negative influences in the region and demanded a turn towards German national identity among the Baltic Germans. The argument that the Baltic Germans had only the one option of integrating into the German nation also shaped the narrative of Wittram's *Baltic History*, which was published in three editions in 1939, 1945 (still before the end of the war) and 1954.⁴³ There, the first steps of nation building amongst the East European ethnic groups were ascribed to Johann Gottfried Herder's interest in fostering folk cultures and were thus interpreted as a German cultural transfer. The reluctance of Baltic Germans to develop a deliberate policy of Germanization, Wittram argued, paved the way for the national movements of Estonians and Latvians,⁴⁴ This development towards nation building, however, was not properly understood by the German elites. Wittram argued that they should have undertaken steps towards German nation building instead of insisting on the outdated structures of the Estates society. When this started 40 years later with the formation of German national associations, after the revolution of 1905, it was too late to compete with the Estonians and Latvians.⁴⁵ If nationalization was, as Wittram claimed, the appropriate development for the German population, this implied a clear distinction from the Latvians and Estonians. Until 1939, Wittram argued for the integration of the Baltic Germans into the 'völkisch' discussion of the German people: the Baltic Germans should focus on German issues, the Estonians and Latvians, however, should focus on their national groups. In a similar way to Hans Kruus, who saw his task in developing the Estonian nation, Wittram insisted on writing 'political historiography', which he claimed to be the major trend of German Baltic historiography.⁴⁶

In line with most German historians, Wittram was convinced that the Baltic Germans were in a position of cultural hegemony over their non-German surroundings. The national awakening of Estonians and Latvians was only due to the cultural and economic foundations, introduced by the German elites.

⁴² R. Wittram, 'Die Wendung zur Volksgeschichte', *Baltische Monatshefte* (1936), 566–71.

⁴³ R. Wittram, *Geschichte der baltischen Deutschen. Grundzüge und Durchblicke* (Stuttgart, 1939), R. Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte* (1954), and R. Wittram, *Geschichte der Ostseelände Livland, Estland, Kurland 1180–1918. Umriss und Querschnitte* (Munich, 1945).

⁴⁴ Wittram, *Geschichte der baltischen Deutschen*, pp. 161–2, Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, pp. 197–201.

⁴⁵ Wittram, *Geschichte der baltischen Deutschen*, pp. 168–9.

⁴⁶ Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe*, p. viii.

This attitude led Wittram, after the fundamental political change of 1941, to a new inclusion of the small nations into a regional framework, where they now appeared as 'dwarf peoples' that were unable to maintain their political independence.⁴⁷ This explains why Wittram discarded the idea of a separation of distinct national narratives, which he had expressed in 1939, and returned to a broader regional perspective, which included the Baltic nations as a substratum under German rule. Within this framework, however, there was more space for a closer description of the Estonian and Latvian national awakening, which once again appeared only slightly changed in the issue of his *Baltic History* in 1954.⁴⁸

After the war, Wittram modified this regional narrative and removed elements of 'Volksgeschichte'. Now, regional history was no longer perceived solely as a part of national historiography. It was, instead, regarded as an approach that provided a way out of the dilemma of 'Volksgeschichte' after 1945. However, some elements of the former narrative, such as the idea of German cultural hegemony and responsibility for the small nations, remained within the new frameworks.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Wittram – similar to Theodor Schieder – also started to see nation building as a general process of modern European history.⁵⁰ Although Wittram did only indirectly refer to Estonian historiography, there is no doubt that his attempts to create a 'völkisch' narrative of Baltic German history was a response to notions like those by Hans Kruus.⁵¹ Wittram's turn away from 'Volksgeschichte' towards a new 'Landesgeschichte' after 1945 did not lead, however, to a convergence with Estonian or Latvian narratives, but to a new West German approach to Baltic history, which now stressed the liberal tendencies amongst the Baltic German nobility.⁵²

⁴⁷ R. Wittram, 'Die deutsche Geschichtsforschung in den baltischen Landen. Wandlungen, Ergebnisse, Aufgaben', in H. Aubin et al. (eds), *Deutsche Ostforschung. Ergebnisse und Aufgaben seit dem ersten Weltkrieg*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1942), pp. 447–60, here p. 448.

⁴⁸ Wittram, *Geschichte der Ostseelände*, pp. 177–83, and Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, pp. 197–206.

⁴⁹ In R. Wittram, *Drei Generationen: Deutschland-Livland-Rußland 1830–1914. Erinnerungen und Lebensformen baltisch-deutscher Familien* (Göttingen, 1949), he switched to the seemingly non-political focus of family history, see for instance pp. 101–4.

⁵⁰ Wittram, *Das Nationale als europäisches Problem*.

⁵¹ This had been noticed already by Taube, 'Etnische Geschichtsforschung und Geschichtsschreibung'.

⁵² Here, Gert von Pistohlkors' writings have to be mentioned, first of all, for instance: G. von Pistohlkors, *Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik zwischen Russifizierung und Revolution. Historische Studien zum Problem der politischen Selbsteinschätzung der deutschen Oberschicht in den Ostseeprovinzen Rußlands im Krisenjahr 1905* (Göttingen, 1978), and Pistohlkors, 'Führende Schicht oder nationale Minderheit? Die Revolution von 1905/06 und die Kennzeichnung der politischen Situation der deutschen Balten zwischen 1840 und 1906 in der zeitgenössischen deutsch-baltischen Geschichtsforschung', *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 21:4 (1972), 601–18.

Russian perspectives on the small Baltic nations

As Wittram's narrative of the nation-building processes, particularly in his early writings, constructed the Estonian and Latvian movements as German others, one may ask whether there were similar tendencies in Russian historical narratives of the Baltic region. As has been pointed out above, the influential narrative by Iurii Samarin, depicted the region as an integral part of the Russian Empire in historical and geopolitical terms. In such a narrative, Baltic nation building could hardly take any important position. Instead, the issues connected to the peasants' liberation and the above-mentioned conversion movement towards Orthodoxy were first of all regarded as steps towards merging the region into the Russian realm. This image did not change when a specific Russian Baltic perspective emerged. Efgraf V. Cheshikhin, a publicist from Riga, was also convinced that the Baltic region's destiny would be to unite with the big Russian fatherland.⁵³ Thus, he repeatedly stressed the fact that there was no significant border that separated the Baltic borderlands from Russia. Nevertheless, tendencies of convergence between Russian and Estonian historians may be noticed, too. There were Russian historians who supported Jakobson's views of the Estonian nation, and special interest in the small nations could be found amongst orthodox priests writing in Russian, but coming from Estonian families.⁵⁴

After the First World War, when the striving towards autonomy amongst the Estonians and Latvians could no longer be ignored, some Russian scholars dealt more closely with Estonian – and Latvian – nation building. In a book edited by Mikhail Reisner in 1916, the Estonians were already presented as an independent cultural entity. Literature, theatre and associational life were highlighted as well as the social-political aspirations of the Estonian intelligentsia, but there was no specific mentioning of the national awakening as a notion comprising all the different strands.⁵⁵ The book was to show first of all, that separatism – from Russia – as well as Germanophilism was unthinkable for the Estonians and Latvians.⁵⁶ All in all, the motivation was similar to Reinhard Wittram's turn towards the small nations during the Second World War. Because they were addressed as possible allies against the war enemy, they were recognized as being

⁵³ E. V. Cheshikhin, *Kratkaia istoriia pribaltikskago kraia* [A short history of the Baltic land] (Riga, 1894), cf. T. Rosenberg, 'Die russische baltische Historiographie in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts' in O. Mertelsmann (ed.), *Estland und Russland. Aspekte der Beziehungen beider Länder* (Hamburg, 2005), pp. 77–108, here pp. 78–84, and Brüggemann, 'Das Baltikum im russischen Blick'.

⁵⁴ For more details, see Rosenberg, 'Die russische baltische Historiographie', pp. 100–6.

⁵⁵ P. Semenov, 'Ėsty. Kul'turno-istoricheskii ocherk [The Estonians. A cultural-historical sketch]', in M. A. Reisner (ed.), *Ėsty i Latyshi, ikh istoriia i byt* (Moskva, 1916), pp. 145–74; P. Ia. Rubel', 'O social'no-politicheskikh stremleniiakh ėstskoi intelligentsii' [On the socio-economic aspirations of the Estonian intellectuals], in Reisner (ed.), *Ėsty i Latyshi*, pp. 175–89.

⁵⁶ Reisner (ed.), *Ėsty i Latyshi*, p. xi.

their own national entities. Regarding the inter-war period, there was a tendency amongst the Russian minority to develop a deeper interest in Estonian culture and nation building, but this was hardly reflected in history writing. One can find indications of a substantial rapprochement between Estonian and Russian narratives in the writings of Sergei Isakov, a professor of Slavonic Philology at Tartu and a member of the Estonian parliament in the 1990s. In his book on the *Baltic Question in the Russian Press*, he closely analysed how the social, cultural and political issues of the small nations were reflected in Russia. He underlined that the Estonian patriots found 'objective' support from the nationalistic Russian press attacking the German barons. The union between the Estonian and Latvian national movements and the Russian press appeared for both sides to be mutually advantageous.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Isakov's focus on the Russian press also reveals that the issue of the Estonians and Latvians was only secondary in relation to the dominating conflict of the Russians with the 'ostzeitsy', the Baltic-German nobility.

Ea Jansen – from the small nation narrative under Soviet rule towards the notion of civil society

After 1945, narratives of Estonian nation building in Soviet Estonia were closely tied to general Soviet master narratives, whereas controversies with the Baltic German historiography had lost their former relevance and served now, above all, as a model for implementing the Soviet frameworks.⁵⁸ Besides the notorious emphasis on the October Revolution as the most decisive turning-point in history, there was a specific place for the Estonian national awakening in the Soviet narrative about the progressive traditions leading to the Great October. The close continuation of the national awakening narrative under socialist circumstances seems to be a peculiarity of the Estonian case. In some respects this was a surprising development, as the symbols of the national movement, like the anthem and the flag had been banned in Soviet times and replaced by new ones. Furthermore, historiography was subjugated to Soviet guidelines with regard to periodization and the structuring of contents.⁵⁹ The question of how the

⁵⁷ S. G. Isakov, *Ostzeiskii vopros v russkoi pečati 1860-kh godov* (Tartu, 1961), pp. 30, 42.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, M. M. Dukhanov, *Ostzeicy. Politika ostzeiskogo dvorianstva v 50–70-kh gg. XIX v. i kritika ee apologeticheskoj istoriografii* [The Baltic Sea people. The politics of the Baltic estate owners in the 1850s–1870s and criticism of their apologetic historiography] (Riga 1978).

⁵⁹ G. Naan, 'Eestlaste liitumine rahvuseks ja rahvusliku liikumise tekkimine [The Estonians' coalescence as a nation and the rise of the national movement]', *Eesti Bolševik* 18 (1946), 1310–42, and G. Naan, *Eesti kodanlike natsionalistide ideoloogia reaktsiooniline olemus* [The reactionary character of the Estonian bourgeois nationalists' ideology] (Tallinn, 1947). Cf. I. Kakhk, 'Razvitie istoricheskoi nauki v Sovetskoi Ėstonii', *Voprosy istorii* 8 (1965), 3–13.

narrative of national awakening was transformed under Soviet conditions will be discussed here with reference to the example of the writings of Ea Jansen.

Born in 1920 into a bourgeois Estonian family, Ea Jansen studied history at Tartu University from 1944 to 1949,⁶⁰ and from 1949 she worked at the Institute of History at the Academy of Sciences in Tallinn. In 1954, she finished her candidate dissertation on Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, the editor of the Estonian national epos *Kalevipoeg*, and edited his letters. Her doctoral dissertation on Carl Robert Jakobson's newspaper *Sakala* was defended in 1968.⁶¹ In the following years, Ea Jansen published a biography of Jakobson and several other books dealing with him and his environment.⁶²

Jansen's arguments for writing about Jakobson were similar to those given already by Hans Kruus in 1920. They referred to the political radicalism of Jakobson's attitude as well as to his controversies with the Baltic-German elites and contained a demarcation from the representatives of a 'nationalist-idealistic' attitude and a 'naïve nationalism'.⁶³ Not only did this differentiation follow Kruus's notion, it also matched with Gustav Naan's 1947 ideological guideline, which itself did not differ fundamentally from Kruus's point of view. Thus, Jansen was not forced into narrow ideological frameworks, but could extensively discuss aspects and notions of 'bourgeois' historiography and the conflicts of interpretation from the inter-war period.⁶⁴ The space given to discussion of the nineteenth century Estonian national movement in the official *History of the Estonian SSR*, to which Jansen contributed chapters on the national awakening, underlines the observation that there was no fundamental conflict on that issue in Soviet Estonia.⁶⁵ Here she gave a broad overview of the awakening, including its cultural aspects. However, amongst the mentioned organizations and activities, 'Eesti Üliõpilaste

⁶⁰ P. Raudkivi, 'Ajaloodoktor Ea Janseni juubelik' [Dr. Ea Jansen's anniversary], *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 5 (2001), pp. 5–6; A. Viires, 'Ühe tulemusrikka elu mälestuseks. E. Jansen 14. XI 1921–20. IV 2005 [In remembrance of a fruitful life. Ea Jansen 14.11. 1921–20.4.2005]', *Keel ja Kirjandus* 6 (2005), 512–14; E. Jansen, *Eestlane muutuv asjas. Seisusühiskonnast kodanikuihiskonda [The Estonian in a changing time: From the Estates society to civic society]* (Tartu, 2007), pp. 507–8.

⁶¹ E. Jansen, *C. R. Jakobsoni 'Sakala'* [C. R. Jakobson's 'Sakala'] (Tallinn, 1971).

⁶² E. Jansen and R. Pöldmäe, *Carl Robert Jakobson. Lühimonograafia [Carl Robert Jakobson: A short monography]* (Tallinn, 1968), and, for instance, E. Jansen and J. Peegel, *C.R. Jakobsoni 'Sakala' ja eesti ajakirjanduse teed. Artiklite kogumik [C. R. Jakobson's 'Sakala' and the paths of Estonian journalism. Collected articles]* (Tallinn, 1979).

⁶³ Kruus, *Linn ja küla*, pp. 40–53; Jansen, *C. R. Jakobsoni 'Sakala'*, pp. 7–8, 41.

⁶⁴ In Jansen's historiographical overview, Kruus was listed as representative of pre-Soviet materialist historiography, see Jansen, *C. R. Jakobsoni 'Sakala'*, pp. 47–54.

⁶⁵ See the various contributions by Jansen in J. Saat et al. (eds), *Eesti NSV ajalugu*, vol. 2: *XIX sajandi 50-ndaist aastaist kuni 1917. aasta märtsini [History of the Estonian SSR, vol 2: From the 1850s until March 1917]* (Tallinn, 1963); a Russian version was published in 1966, *Istoriia Ėstonskoi SSR vtrekhtomakh*, vol. 2: *S50-chgodov XIX veka pomart 1917 goda* (Tallin, 1966).

Selts' – the Estonian Students' Society – which first presented the Estonian flag, was missing, and there were the obligatory nods to Marxist-Leninist theory.⁶⁶

There was a significant difference between Kruus and those Soviet-time narratives, represented by Jansen in terms of their function. Whereas Kruus's focus was shaped by controversies within the Estonian political elite, after the integration of Estonia into the Soviet Union, it was impossible to choose between radical and conservative notions of nation building. What is, hence, important in our context is the question of how the master narrative of the radical patriotic Estonians as major protagonists of Estonian nation building was broadened towards the inclusion of further aspects aside from a narrow understanding of political and social nation building. In an article in 1977, Ea Jansen continued her work on the national movement with a study about the emergence of Estonian national consciousness.⁶⁷ This might sound not very revolutionary, but there she started with early (religious) forms of sociability amongst the rural population, based on Western research,⁶⁸ and thus separated issues of collective identity from Marxist materialist primordialism. Jansen presented the Moravian Brethrens' congregations of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century as one of the first associations amongst the Estonian population and argued that their social role subsequently was taken over by new, secular cultural associations in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Furthermore, she highlighted the role of ethnic cultural associations, such as choirs and singing associations. Thus, the narrative of Estonian nation building no longer concentrated only on Jakobson and his political activities, but included a broader set of regional cultural activities, which could hardly be described as pre-revolutionary. In a wider context, the text of 1977 displayed a perspective which transcended the Estonian as well as the Soviet horizon and placed the national awakening into frameworks suggested by Miroslav Hroch's seminal concept of small nation nationalism.⁷⁰ Even more important from today's perspective is the fact that this broadened perspective received increasing attention within the Estonian independence movement of the 1980s.

⁶⁶ *Istoriia Ëstonskoi SSR v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, pp. 144, 158.

⁶⁷ E. Jansen, 'Eesti talurahva rahvusliku teadvuse kujunemisest XIX sajandil [The development of national consciousness among the Estonian peasants' in the 19th century]', in J. Kahk, E. Jansen and A. Vassar (eds), *Eesti talurahva sotsiaalseid vaateid XIX sajandil* (Tallinn, 1977), pp. 67–123.

⁶⁸ First of all: G. Philipp, *Die Wirksamkeit der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine unter den Esten und Letten zur Zeit der Bauernbefreiung vom Ausgang des 18. bis über die Mitte des 19. Jhs.* (Cologne, 1974).

⁶⁹ Jansen, 'Eesti talurahva rahvusliku teadvuse kujunemisest', pp. 99–117.

⁷⁰ M. Hroch, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen* (Prague, 1968), see there, pp. 72–80 on Estonia.

The latter additionally incorporated German aspects of nineteenth-century Baltic history⁷¹ which went beyond the traditionally negative stereotypes.

In the period of restored Estonian independence since 1991, Ea Jansen continued and even intensified her work on the issues of nation building. Generally speaking, the new narrative of Estonian nation building cherished the traditions of earlier writings, but included German aspects of Estonian history to a larger extent than before, in particular, research on voluntary associations.⁷² Central categories of those texts were now the public sphere and civil society. German associations, which had hardly been addressed before, were now regarded as models, taken over and adapted by the Estonians.⁷³ On the other hand, Ea Jansen continued a functional perspective on Estonian nation building, which was oriented towards the vanishing point where Estonian national aspirations finally led to the contemporary nation-state, whereas relics of the German feudal or Estates society lost their importance.⁷⁴ The connection between her life-long research and historiography on the Estonian national awakening and the restitution in cultural and political terms of the Estonian nation since 1991, is present in particular in her last book, edited by Tõnu Tannberg in 2007, which was directed towards an Estonian audience.⁷⁵ Although her main focus is on the modernization of Estonian society, here Ea Jansen also launches the idea of two civil societies and three competing cultures – German, Estonian and Russian – in the region at the turn of the twentieth century. The focus on the Estonian nation building in that perspective is not primarily based on the historian's national bias, but is justified with reference to the successful emergence of a small nation.

⁷¹ E. Jansen, 'Ėstonskaja kul'tura XIX veka [19th century Estonian culture]', *Voprosy istorii* 2 (1984), 89–101. This is not an argument requesting historical justice for the former German population, it rather reveals how a political taboo could be used in the processes of deconstructing cold-war ideologies. Cf. the similar role of Jan Józef Lipski's writings in the Polish case, J. J. Lipski, *Powiedzieć sobie wszystko [...] : eseje o sąsiedztwie polsko-niemieckim. Wir müssen uns alles sagen [...] : Essays zur deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft* (Warsaw, 1998).

⁷² E. Jansen and J. Arukaevu (eds), *Seltsid ja ühiskonna muutumine. Talupojajühiskonnast rahvusriigini. Artiklite kogumik [Associations and change of society: From peasants' society to the national state. Collected articles]* (Tartu, Tallinn, 1995).

⁷³ E. Jansen, 'Voluntary associations in Estonia. The model of the 19th century', *Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised. Humanitaar- ja Sotsiaalteadused* 42:2 (1993), pp. 115–25, E. Jansen, 'Eestlaste rahvuslik ärkamisaeg [The Estonians' era of national awakening]' in A. Bertricaud [= Jean-Jacques Subrenat] (ed.), *Eesti identiteet ja iseseisvus* (Tallinn, 2001), pp. 89–135, published also in English as J.-J. Subrenat (ed.), *Estonia Identity and Independence* (Amsterdam; New York, 2004).

⁷⁴ E. Jansen, 'Tagasi ajalukku [Back to history]', *Tuna* 6:2 (2003), 131–6.

⁷⁵ Jansen, *Eestlane muutuv asjas*, p. 508.

Hans Kruus's and Ea Jansen's narrative depicted the Estonian nation building not as the awakening of a timeless, existing ethnic community, but first of all as a social, political and cultural process of emancipation from the traditional elites of the Estates society as well as from the late tsarist rule, which tended to Russify its subjects in order to rule them more easily and which was suspicious of all forms of unrest. Thus, German and Russian narratives dealing with social change since the mid-nineteenth century could only come close to the Estonian narratives if they criticized the position of the ruling elites. As shown above, this was partly the case with Wittram's writings, but he tried to implement a competing narrative that depicted the absence of a German nation-building effort as a major weakness of the German population. Thus, his notion of the formation of civil society remained firmly within ethnic borderlines. An opening towards multi-ethnic perspectives was only suggested by Ea Jansen in the 1990s.

Baltic historiography in exile

Estonian historiography in exile did not differ fundamentally from the narratives produced in Soviet Estonia. This becomes visible if one looks at Estonian critics of Miroslav Hroch's study of small-nation nationalism, which, regarding Estonia, referred, above all, to Ea Jansen's research. Although the critics noted an 'overemphasis on socio-economic factors' and a lack in considering religious aspects,⁷⁶ they generally agreed with Hroch's arguments. Toivo Raun, one of the most important exile historians of Estonia, focused his research on the era of nation building, too, and he also underlined its political implications.⁷⁷ If there was a major difference, it was the absence of the Soviet ideological frameworks, allowing people to address issues that were not, or only indirectly present, in Soviet Estonia, such as tsarist Russification policies as well as the revolution of 1905.⁷⁸ What is clearly visible, however, is the difference between Estonian and Latvian issues. Contrary to the Estonian case, issues of Latvian

⁷⁶ T. U. Raun and A. Plakans, 'The Estonian and Latvian National Movements. An Assessment of Miroslav Hroch's Model', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 21 (1990), 131–44, here 141.

⁷⁷ Based on his dissertation, Toivo Ülo Raun, *The Revolution of 1905 and the Movement for Estonian National Autonomy, 1896–1907*, PhD (Princeton, NJ, 1969), Raun has published many articles dealing with the Estonian national movement, for instance: 'The Revolution of 1905 in the Baltic provinces and Finland', *Slavic Review* 43:3 (1984), 453–67; '1905 As a Turning Point in Estonian History', *East European Quarterly* 14:3 (1980), 327–33; 'Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Estonian nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 9:1 (January 2003), 129–47.

⁷⁸ See E. C. Thaden (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); in Estonia, Russification as an issue of historiography appeared only in the 1990s, see T. Karjahärm, *Venestamine Eestis 1880–1917. Dokumente ja materjale*

national awakening were discussed in Soviet Latvia only in a highly segmented and politicized manner. Thus, the non-socialist traits of Latvian national awakening were only discussed in exile historiography.⁷⁹

Mart Laar and the second national awakening since the 1980s

Besides this broadening of the perspective on Estonian nation building, we may also see a reorientation towards a closer focus on the Estonian nation in cultural terms. Here, the historian and conservative politician Mart Laar must be mentioned first of all. Laar's narrative of national awakening is not only shaped by a political – anti-Soviet – attitude, but he may also be seen in a line of continuity that goes back to Hans Kruus and Ea Jansen. On the one hand, Laar promoted the rediscovery of Jakob Hurt, which he justified above all with the argument that Hurt had been neglected in the Soviet period. This turn towards Hurt was accompanied by the self-identification of a part of the Estonian independence movement of the 1980s as the 'new Tartu movement' or 'second awakening',⁸⁰ in which Laar had a major share. In that perspective, the cultural national awakening of the nineteenth century appeared as a direct pre-history of the 'singing revolution'. On the other hand, Mart Laar based his study of the Estonian 'awakeners' on Miroslav Hroch's theory of the formation of small nations, which had been introduced into Estonian discussion by Ea Jansen as early as the 1970s. Laar, however, did not provide further statistics to confirm Hroch's model, but instead aimed at a collection of all the available information about national activities, from the level of conscious national actions to membership in voluntary fire brigades, in order to preserve them in the collective memory of the Estonian nation.⁸¹ This coincides with Laar's obviously primordial view on nation building, which diverges from the path of Kruus and Jansen. According to Laar, the Estonians had been conquered in the thirteenth century, before they could build their own state. Thus, nation building could only start in the mid-nineteenth century. In addition to this notion, two further inventions can be derived from his narrative. First, Laar wants to modify the picture of the national development with the observation that

[*Russification in Estonia. 1880–1917: Documents and materials*] (Tallinn, 1997), and Karjahärm, *Ida ja lääne vahel. Eesti-vene suhted 1850–1917* [Between East and West: Estonian-Russian relations 1850–1917] (Tallinn, 1998).

⁷⁹ Most important is the dissertation by A. Plakans, *The National Awakening in Latvia*, PhD (Cambridge, MA, 1969).

⁸⁰ M. Laar, U. Ott and S. Endre (eds), *Teine Eesti. Eesti iseseisvuse taassünd 1986–1991* [The Other Estonia: The rebirth of Estonian independence 1986–1991] (Tallinn, 2000), pp. 135–8.

⁸¹ Laar, *Äratjad*, pp. 141–3.

national activities were even more widespread than depicted in historiography so far. Second, he clearly wants to depart from Marxist materialism; national activity, so Laar argues, cannot be derived from socio-economic or cultural preconditions alone – including the Moravian brethren's movement. With reference to one of his protagonists, he claims that people are more important than circumstances.⁸² The smaller group of 'awakeners' is proclaimed as the real foundation of nation building and, by the same token, as more important than the larger group of activists. Thus, it is not by accident that Laar turns Hroch's model upside down and proceeds from a larger group of activists towards a national elite of agents, which he calls 'awakeners'. According to Laar, the observation that these 'awakeners' are the most important agents of nation building is still valid in present times, presumably not least with regard to his own role in the renaissance of Estonian nation building.

Concluding remarks

What does this analysis of diverse narratives on Estonian nation building reveal? As Mart Laar's notion shows, issues of the national awakening are still the object of lively discussions in the Estonian public today, and form an important pillar of the collective national memory. Until 1940, political differences over the impact of modern socio-economic preconditions led to divergent primordialist and constructivist notions of the Estonian nation. As a leading historian of Estonian history in the inter-war period, Hans Kruus adhered to the second notion and created a master narrative of the national awakening, based on a leftist point of view. After 1945, this narrative could infiltrate the Soviet notion of Estonian history, albeit under radically different circumstances. Note also that, although bourgeois conceptions of the Estonian nation were officially discredited, primordialist views nevertheless survived in the popular idea that the Estonians have already been living in Estonia for 5000 years, whereas all surrounding ethnic groups immigrated significantly later.⁸³ Nevertheless, the self-interpretation of Laar and others, as leaders of the 'second national awakening' referred to the narrative shaped by Hans Kruus and Ea Jansen, and it partly applied limitations similar to those that shaped the historiography of the Soviet era. Johann Woldemar Jannsen and Jaan Tõnisson still do not appear as central figures of Estonian nation building, although their impact surely was significant.

All in all, the narratives of nation building since 1945 no longer refer to a national other; rather they are self-referential. This is not so much due to Estonian historians themselves, but to a retreat of German and Russian historians

⁸² Laar, *Äratajad*, p. 391: Villem Reiman.

⁸³ This was an issue the first Estonian president after 1991, Lennart Meri, often referred to.

from those topics, although debates concerning the influence of Russia or the Soviet Union respectively are still highly contested in Estonia as well as Russia. Furthermore, one may state that Mart Laar's notion aims less at a supra-national pattern of the formation of small nations in Europe, than he does at Estonian self-assurance of being a fully-fledged national entity. Thus, it remains to be discussed how relevant alternative narratives of Estonian nation building are when not exclusively based on ethno-linguistic and cultural premises. Although this text has argued that these ethnic issues cannot be excluded from the historiographical narratives of small nations – mainly – in Eastern Europe, Ea Jansen's approach indicates the direction towards a notion of Estonian society not only in ethnic, but also civic terms.

9

Theorizing and Practising 'Scientific' History in South-Eastern Europe (Nineteenth–Twentieth Century): Spyridon Lambros and Nicolae Jorga*

Effi Gazi

The emergence and crystallization of scientific order in historical writing is primarily related to profound changes to attitudes to knowledge in the course of the eighteenth century. The turn towards experiential knowledge contributed to the increase of interest in specific rules of method and research for history. Scientificity arose as a central goal for history at the turn of the eighteenth century. It became primarily associated with empirically grounded, critical research within the context of the professionalization and institutionalization of historical studies in the course of the nineteenth century.¹ The contribution of both professionalization and institutionalization of history to processes of naturalization of the nation in a variety of European contexts is probably one of the most important phenomena related to these developments. Hence, this process which involves the search for scientificity is not of a universal and uniform nature. On the contrary, each contextualization implies different strategies of relocation and reappropriation as well as different interpretative formulae which turn it into a form of 'situated knowledge' within indigenous traditions.² The Greek and Romanian cases provide important space for a study of the diffusion of scientificity and its relation to the naturalization of the nation in historical writing throughout the nineteenth as well as the first part of the twentieth century.

* This article draws upon my book: Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)* (Peter Lang, 2000), esp. pp. 75–85, 143–54.

¹ H. Feldner, 'The new scientificity in historical writing around 1800', in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 3–22.

² P. Lambert, 'The professionalization and institutionalization of history', in Berger, Feldner and Passmore, *Writing History*, p. 47.

'Scientific' history in context

In 1902, the Greek historian Spyridon Lambros (1851–1919) translated and edited *Introduction aux Etudes Historiques*³ by Charles Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos. The book was a series of lectures designed to provide history students with a concrete methodological guide. Its perspective was based on the assumption that 'historical research relies more or less on the organization of evidence'⁴ since 'in fact, each fact is unique',⁵ and 'the historian does not have to look at the causality of the phenomena he describes: history is an apparent and indisputable series of accidents.'⁶

Some of the particular characteristics of the Greek edition are worth noting. Lambros attempted to relate western European paradigms, which served as prototypes and as sources of legitimization within the cultural and political order of the time, to parallel orientations in Greece. With regard to the issue of research on original sources, Lambros inserted a footnote informing the reader that catalogues of manuscripts from the monasteries of Mount Athos, compiled by himself and Athanassios Papadopoulos, had also been published in Greece.⁷ In relation to libraries and bibliographical references, Lambros stressed his own efforts to compile a bibliography of works relevant to the Greek revolt in 1821.⁸ With reference to Langlois and Seignobos's interest in auxiliary sciences, Lambros emphasized that he had introduced the subject of palaeography at the University of Athens in 1878 and that he had suggested the introduction of other auxiliary subjects as well, but that his suggestions had been rejected as premature.⁹ Beyond Lambros's intention to establish his own position, this 'dialogue' between the original text and Lambros's footnotes and references contributes to the construction of an *autonomous text* which attempts to establish different forms of intellectual practice (in this case, the western European historiographical paradigm and Greek historical research) on a common pathway.

This attempt can be better understood if the historian's educational and academic background is taken into account. Lambros studied at the Faculty of Letters of the National University of Athens over the years 1867–71. He continued his studies in Berlin and Leipzig during the years 1872–75. He received his

³ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Εισαγωγή εις τας ιστορικός σπουδάς* [*Introduction to Historical Studies*], trans. Spyridon P. Lambros (Athens, 1902).

⁴ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux Etudes Historiques* (Paris, 1898), p. 275.

⁵ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux Etudes Historiques* p. 204.

⁶ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux Etudes Historiques* p. 253.

⁷ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Εισαγωγή εις τας ιστορικός σπουδάς*, p. 24.

⁸ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Εισαγωγή εις τας ιστορικός σπουδάς*, p. 46.

⁹ C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Εισαγωγή εις τας ιστορικός σπουδάς*, p. 63.

doctorate from the University of Leipzig in 1873.¹⁰ While in Berlin and Leipzig, Lambros attended the seminars of Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), Johan Gustav Droysen (1808–1884), Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1897), Wilhelm Wattenbach (1819–1897) and Ernst Curtius (1814–1896).¹¹ The interaction with fully-fledged German academic history is evident in Lambros's work. Hence, despite his training in German Universities, Lambros decided to translate a French methodological guide. In the work by Langlois and Seignobos, there is no reference to the methodological principles of the German historical school; even Ranke is not mentioned. However, the *Introduction* reflects, to a great extent, the intention of reorientating French historical studies after the French defeat in 1870. The 'German model' of writing history seemed to be the most appropriate at the time.

Lambros began his lectures in 1875 by arguing for the use of primary sources. The introduction of palaeography (Lambros first called it *graphognossia*) was directly related to a perception of historical research, principally concerned with primary sources as the way to achieve the clearest view of the past. In an early lecture, the historian pointed out that: 'although the historical horizon is wide, the historical method has become safer. We should not forget that we live in a distinctively empirical century which is marked by the significant progress of applied sciences and their emphasis on experiment and autopsy.'¹² His claim was for a 'science' of history more or less based upon the critical study of primary sources. This is nowhere more obvious than in Lambros's debate with the historian Pavlos Karolidis (1849–1930) over the canons of historical research. Lambros insisted that 'there was a time when, through the distinguished spirit of Vico, Herder and Hegel [...] the philosophical approach to history, what is called the philosophy of history [...] was introduced to science. [...] Currently, however, historical science has abandoned this direction and [...] has turned towards representing what is found after particular (specific) research [...]. The philosophical examination [...] obscures the simplicity and clarity of the narration instead of making it clearer.'¹³ He defined the

¹⁰ S. P. Lambros, *De conditorum coloniarum graecarum indole praemiisque et honoribus, Dissertatio inauguralis historica quam consensu et auctoritate Amplissimi Philosophorum Ordinis in Universitate Literarum Georgia Augusta Lipsiensi pro Summis in Philosophia Honoribus rite capessendis* (Lipsiae, 1873).

¹¹ S. P. Lambros, *De conditorum coloniarum graecarum*, p. 60. On Lambros's studies, see also Evangelos Fotiadis, *Σπυριδων Λάμπρος. Επικήδειοι Λόγοι* [Spyridon Lambros. Obituaries] (Athens, 1961); E. Stephanou, *Spyridon Lambros, 1851–1919* (Athens, 1930); D. Balanos, *Spyridon Lambros, 1851–1919* (Athens, 1929).

¹² S. P. Lambros, 'Λόγος εισιτήριος εις την διδασκαλίαν της Γενικής Ιστορίας [Inaugural Lecture to the Subject of General History], in *Λόγοι καί Άρθρα [Lectures and Articles]* (Athens, 1902), pp. 174–191, p. 175.

¹³ S. P. Lambros, *Καρολίδειοι Ανεπιστοασίαι* [Karolidis's Inattentions] (Athens, 1892), pp. 8–9.

practice of historical research as based on 'an energetic but still patient research in the archives [...] based on the critical method.'¹⁴

The principles that constituted the canon of 'scientific' history, such as the objectivity of historical truth, the priority of facts over concepts, and the uniqueness of all historical events became prominent in Lambros's methodological discourse. According to this argument, history was primarily defined by the reality indicated in the sources and by specific research techniques – which were, in fact, not new, but were, more or less, the application of the philological method to historical research – used to grasp reality through the sources.

This consistent interest in the canons of historical research, the distinction between primary and secondary sources, the introduction of critical methods for evaluating sources, and, in general, the critical examination of evidence in order to guarantee objectivity and truth, functioned within a conceptual framework marked by the concept of 'empirical reality.' From the very beginning, the concept of empirical reality became strongly associated with the process of moulding the discipline of history, especially because historical studies both in Greece and the rest of Europe became disciplined in an age characterized by strongly opposing ideological and political positions.¹⁵ Consequently, the claim for realism acquired particular importance since it became crucial to define those historical facts that would establish certain political programmes as realistic; in the case of Greece, primarily the attempt to naturalize the national locus of history and to promote the national political programme. In a sense, history was established as a discipline on the grounds of its disengagement from the philosophy of history. Disciplined history was perceived as realistic, and the philosophy of history was perceived as metaphysical and utopian. The study of history, as a result, became both a discipline and a profession – and even a subject worth being taught – only after it had been established as a cognitive field strongly associated with the concept of realism and as a companion to contemporary political thought and practice. In the case of Greece, the reality of the national historical past became the main issue. This coincided with political aims focusing on the realization of the Great Idea; the Greeks' programme for the expansion of the small national state.

In Lambros's work, this picture became somewhat obscure, however, mainly through the inclusion of 'art' as a component of 'science'. Lambros insisted that history was an art as well as a science and attributed aesthetic features to it. 'The historian's craft partakes of poetry', he said. 'Woe to the historian who cannot

¹⁴ S. P. Lambros, *Περί πηγών και ασκήσεων φροντιστηρίου* [Notes of the Seminars on Historical Sources], File no. 5, Lambros's Archive (Dept. of History and Archaeology, University of Athens).

¹⁵ See especially H. White, 'The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation', in White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1985), pp. 58–82.

vividly *imagine* the past, who cannot *reconstruct* the deserted cities and resurrect those who have been dead for ages in order to place them on the stage of history as living beings and not idols.¹⁶ If methodology was empirical, the writing of history itself remained poetic. The two conceptualizations should be regarded not as mutually exclusive, but as mutually inclusive. Lambros might very well have considered himself a 'scientific' historian primarily committed to exploring and critically evaluating primary sources, but there was a romantic foundation beneath his conceptualizations. For him, history and art were defined in a relationship to each other and not necessarily opposed to each other. Lambros's study of history was a romantic historical science claiming to be objective, but the claims were made so passionately that they contradicted themselves.¹⁷

The introduction of new methods and concepts of historical research mainly evolved around Lambros's teaching at the University of Athens. Since 1837, when the University of Athens was founded, long historical periods and general topics were at the centre of interest. Although history courses were attributed a specific importance and were compulsory for students in all departments, the teaching of history had no common aim or conceptual core. For example, Konstantinos Schinas (1801–1857) lectured on the history of the ancient world in general, whereas Theodoros Manoussis (1793–1858) taught a course he called the *politeiografia* of Europe, which constituted a study of different European regimes and political systems. He also taught other courses, such as general history and medieval history. In 1853, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815–1891) introduced a series of lectures on the 'History of the Greek nation'. This may be taken as the beginning of the teaching of national history at the University of Athens, since it emphasized the unity and continuity of the history of the Greek nation. Even this subject, however, was immensely broad in scope, stressing the overall design rather than specific points.¹⁸

Lambros began lecturing in 1878 with a course on the 'History of Pericles's century'.¹⁹ Although his own research interests concerned Byzantine and medieval history, most of his lectures focused on ancient Greece. This is not surprising if we take into account that Byzantium had not yet been integrated

¹⁶ *Περί πηγών και ασκήσεων φροντιστηρίου* [Notes of the Seminars on Historical Sources], my emphasis.

¹⁷ On 'romantic historical science', see L. Orr, *Headless History: Nineteenth-century French Historiography of the Revolution* (Cornell, NY, 1990). Also S. Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York, 1995).

¹⁸ For a conclusive analysis of history courses at the University of Athens, see V. Karamanolakis, *Η Συγκρότηση της Ιστορικής Επιστήμης και η Διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών (1837–1932)* [*The Formation of Historical Science and the Teaching of History at the University of Athens, 1837–1932*] (Athens 2006).

¹⁹ S. P. Lambros, 'Ο Αιών του Περικλέους [Pericles's century], in *Μικταί Σελίδες* [*Mixed Pages*], pp. 243–258, p. 243.

into the Greek national narrative, while classical antiquity was well established in that narrative.

Lambros's major contribution towards renovating the teaching of history concerned his seminars. Seminars had been part of the courses on ancient Greek and Latin literature, providing students with the opportunity to improve their analytical skills through a critical approach to Greek and Latin texts. Lambros, in contrast, provided seminars to historians so they could familiarize themselves with primary sources. Lambros began with a seminar on palaeography, a subject which – as mentioned above – he introduced to the university.²⁰ He added a seminar on epigraphy the following year.²¹ In these seminars, Lambros invested all his interest and knowledge of Byzantine history. He taught palaeography, introduced the students to different techniques for the critical analysis of documents, and supervised the compiling of manuscript catalogues belonging to different Athenian libraries.²² Lambros's seminars drew upon the methods practised in German universities;²³ in the nineteenth century, the historical seminar became the central institution for teaching history in Germany. Ranke is credited with having introduced this new method of historical training, for it was he who established the new historical seminars or 'exercises' as he called them, in which students practised the new critical history. In doing so, Ranke emulated how he had been taught in the philological seminar at the University of Leipzig. Although the first historical seminar was not established until 1832 (at Halle), the first philological seminar was held in 1764 by Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727–1799) at the University of Göttingen, founded in 1737. The Göttingen seminar was original in that its sole purpose was philological research, rather than philological research in the interests of pedagogy or theology. In any case, by 1858, most German universities had philology seminars.

The principles about the study of history, which Lambros expressed in his lectures and writings, reflected his sentiments about national politics, particularly his feelings about contemporary historical culture. In 1905, he pointed out that:

The (historian's) duty is both scientific and national. It is only the historian's pen that can compete with weapons. Therefore, those nations which have

²⁰ *Πρακτικά Συνεδριών της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής* [Proceedings of the Assemblies of the School of Philosophy], Assembly of 13 February 1878.

²¹ *Πρακτικά Συνεδριών της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής*, [Proceedings of the Assemblies of the School of Philosophy], Assembly of 29 October 1879.

²² S. P. Lambros, *Αι ιστορικά μελέται εν Ελλάδι από τον αγώνα της Παλιγγενεσίας μέχρι της σήμερον* [Historical Studies in Greece from the Resurrection Struggle up to the Present], unpublished manuscript, ch. 17, p. 6a, File H3, Lambros's Archive (Dept. of History and Archaeology, University of Athens).

²³ Peter Lambert, 'The professionalization and institutionalization of history', p. 47.

not yet accomplished their high mission and achieved national unification should tie their potential national grandeur to two anchors: military organization and the development of historical studies [...]. Indeed, there is no greater companionship than the one between the historian's desk and the military camp [...].²⁴

Lambros's persistent concern with the national orientation of historical studies did not seem, in his mind, to contradict his parallel claims for a scientific, historical discipline aiming to achieve the highest possible degree of objectivity and impartiality. As he pointed out, the notion of historical objectivity: 'does not exclude a certain warmth in historical judgement, especially with reference to the historian's nation, and does not contradict the national character of historical writing.'²⁵ Lambros spanned the gap between his methodological principles and his general perspective in a theoretical framework that focused on the junction rather than the disjunction between particular research and general coherence. The concept of *the national locus* of each historical study was of central importance in his theoretical framework. His strategy was to be particularistic or even individualistic in his method, but generalist in his object as long as the object was the history of the nation. More than his contribution to making the study of history a scientific discipline in Greece, his success in turning the concept of the *national locus* into a central methodological or even historiographical principle characterizes Lambros's reflections on the methodology and theory of history.

Lambros's initiatives and activities had an important equivalent in another newly incepted southeastern European nation-state. Indeed, Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940) soon became recognized and established as a prominent intellectual figure both within and outside Romania in the second half of the nineteenth century. A pupil of Alexander Xénopol (1847–1920), Iorga had studied history at the University of Jassy. He continued his studies in Paris with the noted medievalists Gabriel Monod (1844–1912) and Charles Langlois (1863–1929), then in Berlin and, finally, in Leipzig, where he completed his doctoral dissertation [*Thomas III, marquis de Saluces*] in 1893 with Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915). While he was abroad, Iorga, like Lambros, travelled to several European cities gathering historical sources that he would later publish. He started his academic career at the University of Bucharest. At the

²⁴ S. P. Lambros, *Νέοι ορίζοντες εν τη ιστορική ερεύνη. Λόγος απαγγελθείς εν τω Εθνικώ Πανεπιστημίω τη 15 Ιανουαρίου 1905 υπό Σπ. Λάμπρου αναλαμβάνοντος επισήμως την πρωτατειάν του ακαδημαϊκού έτους 1904–5* [*New Horizons in Historical Research. A lecture delivered at the National University on 15 January 1905 on the occasion of the inauguration of his Rectorship for the academic year 1904–5*] (Athens, 1905), p. 28.

²⁵ S. P. Lambros, *Αι ιστορικά μελέται εν Ελλάδι* [*Historical Studies in Greece*], File H3, ch. 1, p. 4, Lambros's Archive (Dept. of History and Archaeology, University of Athens).

time, the University of Bucharest was the main institutional framework for the development of a national historiography.

Having acquired a background similar to Lambros's, Iorga concentrated his efforts on three main issues. First, the introduction of new methods in historical research and the enrichment of historical studies in Romania; second, the institutionalization of a new conception of national history so it would better serve the national cause; and finally, the undertaking of political activities that would more effectively promote national interests. Indeed, next to his academic career, Iorga became involved in politics through the formation of a political party and his position as a Member of Parliament and prime minister in the early 1930s.²⁶

Similarly to Lambros, Iorga had become convinced that history would only acquire the status of a science if it was based on systematic analysis and elaboration of primary sources. His methodological principles were based on the assumption that only publication of a great number of sources could lead to a thorough knowledge of the past. Iorga's methodological discourse was dominated by the ideal of a scientific historical discipline. Nonetheless, his writing was blended with another concept of nineteenth-century romantic historical science; that of the poetics of history. Despite being a science, history required intuition, a deep artistic sympathy that enabled the historian to imagine and reconstruct the past. 'I wish I had more poetic talent in order to get closer to the truth', Iorga wrote²⁷ reminding one of Lambros's similar concerns.

In the beginning of his academic career, Iorga pointed out that history courses were primarily addressed to students who were not particularly interested in scholarly research and who would later teach in secondary schools. There were no bibliographies or seminars, while the students could earn their degrees without ever having seen a primary source. Students considered documents and chronicles as boring.²⁸ Iorga defined historical research as being primarily associated with the collection and analysis of sources. In his teaching, he focused on methodological issues and supported the auxiliary disciplines of history by examining their evolution and development.

Iorga travelled throughout Europe, conducting research in archives in Florence, Naples, Ferrara, Bologna, Dubrovnik, Vienna and Innsbruck. He published a vast collection of sources in Bucharest in 1895 under the title, *Actes et fragments concernant l'histoire des Roumains colligés dans les dépôts des manuscrits d'Occident*. Iorga dedicated this work to his teacher and mentor, A. D. Xénopol,

²⁶ Radu Ioanid, 'Nicolae Iorga and Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 27:1 (1992), 467–92.

²⁷ Cited in F. Kellogg, *A History of Romanian Historical Writing* (Bakersfield, 1990), p. 37.

²⁸ N. Iorga, *Opinions sincères. La vie intellectuelle des Roumains en 1899* (Bucharest, 1899), pp. 43–51. All translations into English are mine.

and wrote in the preface that inconsistencies in the writing of the Romanian history were largely caused by a lack of sources.²⁹

With his high capacity for work and exceptionally strong memory, Iorga continued publishing sources by focusing on the Hurmuzaki collection. Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki (1812–1874) was the first scholar who explored the Habsburg imperial archives in Vienna. With the aid of copyists, Hurmuzaki collected information about Moldavia and Wallachia from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. His entire corpus was subsequently expanded and unevenly edited by other scholars. It was published after Hurmuzaki's death in different editions between the years 1876 and 1946 under the general title, *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor* [*Documents on the History of the Romanians*]. Iorga edited nine volumes of more than 7000 pages. In addition to the Hurmuzaki collection, Iorga also published a large collection titled, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle* (1899). This work was recognized as being one of the most important contributions to the study of relations between the East and the West in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³⁰ Other collections edited by Iorga were published, mainly in the first decade of the twentieth century.³¹

Spyridon Lambros and Nicolae Iorga both became leading figures in the making of a scientific historical discipline in Greece and Romania. Their research, historical writing and academic teaching made a critical contribution to the search for scientificity within their particular contexts. Hence, the analysis of this endeavour would be partial unless it is complemented with an approach to its themes as well as to the relation of these themes with the wider frame of national history in both countries.

The Middle Ages and Byzantium at the core of 'scientific' history

The history of Byzantium and the Middle Ages was almost entirely rejected in Greece, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment's distaste for 'the authoritarian and politically corrupt' Byzantium had initially played a role. Later, emphasis was put on classical antiquity. Both attitudes are interlinked. They reflect the appropriation of western European ideas and the attempts made by the newly formed Greek state to gain recognition and approval of western European public opinion and governments.

²⁹ N. Iorga (ed.), *Actes et fragments concernant l'histoire des Roumains colligés dans les dépôts de manuscrits d'Occident* (Bucharest, 1894), p. 3.

³⁰ See the critique of the German historian R. Röhrich in I. Ionascu, 'N. Iorga, éditeur de sources historiques', in D. N. Pippidi (ed.), *Nicolas Iorga. L'Homme et l'Oeuvre, à l'occasion du centième anniversaire de sa naissance* (Bucharest, 1972), pp. 21–113, here p. 103.

³¹ For a detailed survey of Iorga's editions, see Ion Ionascu, 'N. Iorga, éditeur de sources historiques', in Pippidi, *Iorga*, pp. 21–113.

It soon became obvious, however, that the gap between ancient and modern Greece had to be bridged. This was even more so after 1830, when Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer published his *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*. Greek intellectuals turned to Byzantium in order to refute his argument about the Slavonization of the Greeks as a result of the Slavic occupation of the Peloponnese from the late sixth to the tenth century. Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881) published his *Byzantine Studies* in 1857, arguing that Byzantium provided the necessary link between ancient and modern times in terms of popular culture. Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos's *History of the Greek Nation from the Most Ancient Times until the Present*, published in five volumes between 1869 and 1874, claimed an unbroken continuity for the Greek nation. Paparrigopoulos's threefold scheme of 'ancient-medieval-modern' Greece made it possible for Byzantium to be integrated in the Greek national narrative, as the second link of the chain.³²

Spyridon Lambros was emphatically interested in the history of Byzantium. In line with his belief in the 'scientific' nature of historical research, Lambros concentrated his efforts on collecting and analysing Byzantine sources. The historian undertook research missions to Mount Athos in 1880, financed by the parliament of Greece. His reports were translated into German and published in Vienna and Bonn in 1881.³³ The results of his extensive research were published in two volumes under the title *A Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in the Libraries of Athos* in 1895 and 1900.

In addition to research and critical analysis of primary sources, Byzantine and Middle Ages studies also needed a specific point of reference. Lambros insisted that the academic community in Greece 'needed a specific tool for the study of the Byzantine world'.³⁴ To this end, in 1904, he introduced the journal *Neos Hellenomnemon*,³⁵ a historical review specializing in Byzantine and 'post-byzantine' studies. *Neos Hellenomnemon* was the first Greek historical journal with a strong scholarly profile and with a specific area of specialization. In this respect, it became instrumental in establishing disciplinary and professional standards in the study of history. For almost 13 years, until Lambros's death, *Neos Hellenomnemon* was one of the most influential Greek historical periodicals.

³² For a summary of Paparrigopoulos's views, see his *Histoire de la civilisation hellénique* (Paris, 1878).

³³ *Ein Besuch auf dem Berge Athos, Bericht des Dr. Sp. Lambros, an die griechische Kammer ueber seine Sendug nach den hl. Berge im Sommer 1880, aus dem neugriechischen, von dem Verfasser genehmigte und durchgesehene Uebersetzung v. P. Heinrich von Riechenbach O. S. B. Würzburg, Wien, 1881; Die Bibliotheken der Klöster des Athos, nach dem Rechenschaftsbericht des Prof. Sp. Lambros an die griechischen Kammern, deutsch von Prof. August Boltz* (Bonn, 1881).

³⁴ S. P. Lambros, 'Ἑλλάς και Βυζάντιον', [Greece and Byzantium] in *Λόγοι και Ἀρθρα* [Speeches and Articles] (Athens, 1902), pp. 384–387, p. 385.

³⁵ The periodical was named after Andreas Moustoxidis's periodical *Ἑλληνομνήμων*.

Most of its articles were written by Lambros himself, but the periodical also published catalogues of libraries and archives, book reviews and translations of distinguished historical essays, following the example of the first periodical on Byzantine studies, Krumbacher's *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*. Lambros produced an extensive number of publications – mainly monographs, articles in several periodicals, and collective volumes – on subjects related to Byzantine and medieval history.

The great bulk of his research concerned not only Byzantium *per se* but also the era of the Venetian and Frankish dominion in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is not surprising. Nineteenth-century Greek historiography did not employ a strong dividing line between Byzantine and the so called 'post-byzantine era' mainly because of its interest in the national continuum. Any classification of Lambros's wide-ranging work is restrictive. Yet, it is possible to identify general themes. First, many monographs and articles focus on Athens. Although Athens was immensely celebrated for its classical past (it was specifically because of its classical heritage that the small town became the capital of the Greek state), there was a noticeable lack of interest in later historical periods. The city's decline in the Middle Ages did not provoke interest. In his own research,³⁶ Lambros explored unknown aspects of the history of Athens in the medieval period. In his perspective, the history of Athens in the Middle Ages tied the city to its ancient past and re-established the historical continuum.

Second, Lambros turned to the history of the Peloponnese. Interest in the region that had been the initial core of the new nation-state was reinforced by Fallmerayer's theory about the racial non-purity of the Greeks. Lambros's perspective, however, was much broader. In his scheme, the Peloponnese constituted the primordial 'Greek entity' after the capture of Constantinople by

³⁶ See mainly *Ανέκδοτον Χρονικόν περί Αθηνών κατά τον 16^{ον} αιώνα* [An Unpublished Chronicle of Athens in the 16th c.] (Athens, 1877); *Αι Αθήναι κατά τα τέλη του 12^{ου} αιώνος κατά πηγάς ανεκδότους* [Athens at the end of the 12th C. A study based on unpublished sources], (Athens, 1878); *Σεισμοί εν Αθήναις προ του 1821* [Earthquakes in Athens before 1821], (Athens, 1881); *Πρόχειρα τινά περί της ιστορίας των Αθηνών κατά τους μέσους αιώνας και επί Τουρκοκρατίας* [Notes concerning the history of Athens in the Middle Ages and under Ottoman Rule], (Athens, 1881); *Αι Αθήναι προ της συστάσεως του βασιλείου* [Athens before the formation of the kingdom], (Athens, 1889); *Η ονοματολογία της Αττικής και η εις την χώραν εποικίσεις των Αλβανών* [Space-names in Athens and the Albanian Settlement] (Athens, 1896); *Ecthesis Chronica and Chronicon Athenarum; edited with critical notes and indices by Sp. Lambros* (London, 1902); *Αθηναίοι βιβλιογράφοι και κτίτορες κωδίκων κατά τους μέσους αιώνας και επί Τουρκοκρατίας* [Athenian bibliographers and owners of codes in the Middle Ages and under Ottoman rule] (Athens, 1902); 'Περί Αθηνών' [On Athens], *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 18 (1924), 254–275; 'Οι δούκες των Αθηνών' [The dukes of Athens], *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 19 (1925), 335–368; 'Αι Αθήναι υπό τους Φράγκους' [Athens under Frankish domination], *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 20 (1925), 67–103; 'Αι Αθήναι υπό τους Φλωρεντίνους' [Athens under the Florentines], *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 20 (1925), 244–72.

the Fourth Crusade in 1204. According to this argument, the gradual decline of Byzantium was unavoidable because of the continuous expansion of the Ottomans, and it was only in the Peloponnese, ruled by members of the Palaeologian dynasty, that a new Greek *polis* was reconstructed, offering adequate space for intellectual and cultural development. In 1912, the historian published two extensive volumes containing previously unknown material on the history of the Peloponnese.³⁷ The work was entitled *On the Palaeologian Dynasty and the Peloponnese*, indicating particular interest in establishing the Peloponnese as the centre of the last Byzantine dynasty after the fall of Constantinople and, therefore, as the legitimate successor of the Byzantine Empire. Lambros also researched the period of Venetian rule. He edited and published the reports of the Venetian *proveditori* which he found in the Venetian archives in 1900.³⁸

While Lambros and most Greek historians after him considered Byzantium as the defining link between ancient and modern Greece, Nicolae Iorga was convinced that Byzantine history was directly related to the history of the Romanians and the other South Eastern European peoples. He focused his attention on the medieval period. This interest had been reinforced while he was studying in France. Although other Romanian historians before him had expressed interest in the medieval period – Xénopol being the most significant – Iorga was the first to turn the study of the period into an autonomous domain within Romanian historiography.

Iorga was convinced that the medieval period was critical for the formation of the Romanian nation. Similarly to Lambros, Iorga focused on political history which was particularly influential at the time and which did not allow much space for the examination of class or gender issues, next to the nation. Nevertheless, Iorga paid attention to broader social issues in an attempt to

³⁷ Two more volumes were edited and published posthumously by Professor I. K. Vogiatzides and The Committee for the Posthumous Publication of S. Lambros's Unpublished Works.

³⁸ Sp. P. Lambros, *Εκθέσεις των Βενετών Γενικών Προνοητών της Πελοποννήσου, νυν το πρώτον εκ των αρχείων της Πελοποννήσου εκδιδόμεναι* [*Reports of the Venetian proveditori on the Peloponnese*] (Athens, Sakellariou, 1900). See also Sp. P. Lambros, 'Εκθέσεις των Βενετών Γενικών Προνοητών της Πελοποννήσου, νυν το πρώτον εκ των αρχείων της Πελοποννήσου εκδιδόμεναι' [*Reports of the Venetian Proveditori of the Peloponnese in the Venetian archives, first published*], *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος* [*Bulletin of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece*] 5 (1896–99), 425–567, and 605–823; 'Τα Βενετικά Αρχεία και η αναφορά περί Πελοποννήσου του Μ. Μικέλ' [*The Venetian Archives and the report on the Peloponnese of M. Mikel*], *Ιστορικά Μελέται* [*Historical Studies*] (Athens, 1884), 173–220 ; 'Η περί Πελοποννήσου 'Εκθεσις των Βενετών Προνοητών Κόρνερ και Γραδενίγου' [*The reports on the Peloponnese of the Venetian Proveditori Corner and Gradenigo*], *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος* [*Bulletin of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece*] 2 (1885), 282–317 and 5 (1896–9), 228–51.

investigate the formation of the Romanian community in the Middle Ages. In his frame, peasants were the core of the community. He argued that a primitive regime of free peasants existed in the Romanian lands. In Transylvania, these rural communities survived until the eighth century, when the Magyar feudal lords usurped the rights of the peasants. In Moldavia and Wallachia they survived until the fifteenth century. Invasions by foreign forces deprived Romanians, especially in Transylvania, of their rights, and the uprisings of the early modern era could only be explained as the reaction by the peasants to unjust, foreign regimes. The rural communities survived thanks to the development of domestic manual trades. The development of trade in the Romanian lands showed the constant interaction among the three regions long before their political unification. Iorga based his analysis on this conception of the Romanian lands, but also on his conception of the rest of southeastern Europe which consisted of agrarian societies, emphasizing their common heritage in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Iorga maintained, contrary to contemporary opinion, that Ottoman rule removed the abusive domination by local feudal lords and contributed to the independent identity of peasant societies and cultures.³⁹ He pointed to the flowering of cultural activities, the development of a new style of religious architecture and the appearance of the written form of the Romanian language, historical writings and remarkable works of art in the sixteenth century. Iorga defined the art of the period as a combination of Eastern and Western influences. He described the period as a 'new Byzantium,' implying that the Romanian lands safeguarded the Byzantine tradition, which for the southeastern European peoples was primarily experienced through the Christian Orthodox Church.

Most Romanian intellectuals of the period were hostile towards the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, associating them with Greek influence and authority in the Romanian lands; especially after the establishment of the Phanariot regimes in Wallachia and Moldavia. They resented the monopolization by the Greeks of the Christian Orthodox tradition. For Iorga, however, even the strengthening of Greek influence in the area after the sixteenth century through the establishment of a Greek-speaking community indicated the common heritage of the Greek and Romanian peoples. It also showed that not only Greeks but also Romanians safeguarded the Byzantine tradition and the Orthodox Christian faith. Iorga attempted to *redefine* the history of Byzantium by pointing out that 'Greek scholars usually make a mistake as bad as the one that considers the Byzantine Empire as a "Bas-Empire"'. By connecting classical Greece, a completely different world, to Byzantium – which was of Roman descent, both in its origins

³⁹ For the historian's interpretive schema, see N. Iorga, *Histoire des États balkaniques à l' époque moderne* (Bucharest, 1914). See also the study by M. M. Alexandrescu-Derska Bulgaru, *N. Iorga – A Romanian Historian of the Ottoman Empire* (Bucharest, 1972).

and principles – they attribute to what should only be considered as a stage in their national development; an exclusively national, unchangeable, nature that, despite instincts natural to most races, did not exist at all.' Iorga maintained that 'Byzantium did not only represent material power' and that although 'Romanians could not and did not have any relation to territorial Byzantium [...] *Byzantium was not just the Empire but also, and mostly, the Church.*'⁴⁰

His point was that all southeastern European peoples shared this Orthodox tradition, and that all southeastern European peoples, not only the Greeks, had the same rights to this Orthodox tradition.⁴¹ For Iorga, the dominance of the Greek language did not necessarily mean the dominance of Greek culture in Byzantium, since he thought that the use of the language was purely operational, 'for the empire, Greek was just another language [...] it was an operational language [...] the empire used several instruments, and the Greek language was nothing more than a useful at the time instrument and this is why it acquired such an importance.'⁴²

Since Iorga defined the Greek presence in this way, it is not surprising that he, in contrast to most of his predecessors and contemporaries, defined the Phanariot period as a significant time for the Romanians. He thought this because he took it as further evidence of a common heritage but also because Enlightenment ideas of social and political reforms were introduced and consolidated during that period. Iorga did not describe the Phanariot regime as favourable for the Romanians; he did not subscribe however, to a conceptualization of total destruction and decline.⁴³ Although Byzantium was a subject of controversy, interest in communication and cooperation emerged between the two historians. Lambros, for instance, became strongly interested in Iorga's work and planned to translate it into Greek. After his death, the *Committee for the Posthumous Publication of Spyridon P. Lambros's Unpublished Works* contacted Nicolae Iorga and attempted to raise the funds

⁴⁰ N. Iorga, *La Place des Roumains dans l' Histoire Universelle* (Bucharest, 1935), pp. 18–19, 21. His emphasis.

⁴¹ See, especially, the chapter, 'L' Etat Roumain Devant l' Empire Byzantin', in his *Place des Roumains*, pp. 18–25.

⁴² N. Iorga, *Formes Byzantines et réalités Balkaniques. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Bucharest and Paris 1922), pp. 33–4.

⁴³ See, especially, the chapters 'Développement de la civilisation roumaine au XVIe et XVIIe siècle', pp.164–99 and 'Décadence phanariote sur le Danube', in N. Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de leur Civilisation* (Paris, 1920), pp.199–235. On Iorga's perceptions of the medieval and the Byzantine era, see also S. Pascu, 'N. Iorga, Historien du Moyen Âge Roumain', in D. M. Pippidi (ed.), *Nicolas Iorga. L' Homme et l' Oeuvre. A l' occasion du centième anniversaire de sa naissance* (Bucharest, 1972), pp. 251–66; and D. A. Stamatopoulos, *To Βυζάντιο μετά το Έθνος. Το πρόβλημα της συνέχειας στις βαλκανικές ιστοριογραφίες (Byzantium after the Nation. The Question of Continuity in Balkan Historiographies)* (Athens, 2009), esp. pp. 348–53.

needed in order to publish a Greek translation of his work. Iorga promised that he would 'appeal to the Greek community in Bucharest' to finance the publication.⁴⁴

Iorga was the first southeastern European historian to develop such a deep interest in non-national history. He studied the history of the Middle Ages, Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, southeastern Europe, western Europe, and even 'the history of humanity'.⁴⁵ Today there are no areas of southeastern European history that do not bear his mark. Despite the vast range of his interests, however, his history very much remains a national history with a transcultural perspective. As a representative of the 'romantic historical science' of the second half of the nineteenth century, Iorga was convinced that only extensive research in different domains would make the writing of a reliable version of national history possible. He believed that the history of his own nation could be understood only in terms of its international and inter-European setting. He was driven by a strong desire to provide the 'forgotten Romanians' the opportunity to regain their place in international history. This is not surprising, for the 'scientific canon' he served had been formed within a western European community, which, of all southeastern European peoples, had primarily been to the advantage of the Greeks. Iorga's point in his *La Place des Roumains dans l' Histoire Universelle* (1935) is eloquently put:

Among the nations which have not yet been integrated within the human past [...] one has to take into account the group of fourteen million *Latins of the East* who still bear the name Romans, not as a result of subjugation as happened with the Byzantine and modern Greeks, but because they are descendants of the autonomous Romanian regions of the Middle Ages.⁴⁶

Iorga did not restrict himself to stressing the Latin origin of the Romanians. In an attempt to challenge the Greek claim of holding complete control over the transfer and diffusion of Enlightenment ideas, he also argued that:

This enterprise of making Western civilization known to Eastern Europe was unique and related to a group of Greek patriots, inspired by Rhigas, who were based in the vibrant capital of the Austrian Empire [...]. However, the merchants who financed the publication of works on philosophy were, to

⁴⁴ See the letters by G. Haritakis dated 22 September 1921 and by N. Iorga dated 10 November 1921, in File 10, *Επιτροπή Εκδόσεως Καταλοίπων* [Committee of Posthumous Publications], Lambros's Archive, Archive of the University of Athens.

⁴⁵ See, for example, N. Iorga, *Essai de synthèse de l' histoire de l' humanité* (Paris, 1926).

⁴⁶ N. Iorga, *La place des Roumains dans l' Histoire Universelle*, p. 1 of the preface. My emphasis.

a great extent, Macedonian Romanians while their readership was mostly composed of Romanian boyars.⁴⁷

In addition to his research and writings, Iorga was interested in the institutionalization and popularization of soundly researched historical knowledge. He established and actively participated in scholarly organizations, such as the *Institut de studii sud-est europene* [*Institute of Southeast European Studies*] (1914). He edited several historical journals such as the *Bulletin de la Section Historique* (1912–39); the *Bulletin de l'Institut pour l'étude de l'Europe sud-orientale* (1914–24), which was continued as *Revue historique du sud-est européen* (1924–40); and the *Revista istorica* (1918–40).

Juxtaposing cases

The development of scientific national history in Greece and Romania is strikingly similar, but there are also important differences. In both contexts, increasing national awareness developed in the eighteenth century through the impact of Enlightenment ideas, soon disrupting the collective identity of Orthodox Christians. Historical time was reconstituted according to new premises. The teleological, temporal dimension of religious chronicles was replaced by new narratives emphasizing the fortune and destiny of the ethnic community throughout the centuries. Of course, the Greeks and Romanians interpreted and appropriated Enlightenment ideas in many different ways, primarily because of the particular nature of their own relationships within the political and social context of the Ottoman Empire – especially after the establishment of the Phanariot regimes in the Danubian principalities – and also within Europe. The Greeks undertook a kind of cultural evangelism aiming to have their culture recognized as superior and distinct, but the recipients of this dogma – Romanians included – soon reacted against it. Putting the contested nature of these claims to one side, the results were similar. The national consciousness that emerged was primarily related to the rediscovery of the past. For Greece and Romania, the past was glorified through different, but parallel identifications with Byzantium, ancient Greece and ancient Rome. The past did not only constitute a cultural argument, but was soon articulated as a political doctrine seeking political independence and emancipation.

Both Greeks and Romanians first based their 'distinctiveness' on assumptions about their descent from glorious ancestors. Antiquity played an important role in both cases. The Greeks emphasized the glory of ancient Greece, the Romanians the glory of ancient Rome. In addition to the cultural dimensions,

⁴⁷ N. Iorga, *Les Latins d'Orient. Conférences données en janvier 1921 au Collège de France* (Paris, 1921), p. 48.

this was also a political argument through which the two peoples placed themselves within the Enlightenment discourses of European progress and civilization and viewed themselves as members of the civilized world.

The formation of nation-states reinforced the need for unity and continuity. The historical narratives emphasizing these concepts were soon institutionalized and promoted to support national integration and consolidation. By the middle of the nineteenth century, both countries had their own versions of national history itemizing historical time in ancient, medieval and modern periods and presenting them in a linear format.

The major turning point for both countries took place in the second half of the nineteenth century and had two prevailing features: first, the construction of a new paradigm with norms and canons of research that attempted to turn history into a science; and second, an interest in the Middle Ages and Byzantium which came to be conceptualized as the temporal centre of the 'national soul'. Both Spyridon Lambros in Greece and Nicolae Iorga in Romania undertook their missions to organize national history around single taxonomic systems and to promote the search for scientificity. Both of them adopted the methodological principles of an empirical conception of history that was primarily associated with extensive research in primary sources. Their versions of national history were produced within a theoretical framework establishing history as a 'scientific' discipline. Moreover, although the new discipline of history did not exclude other kinds of historical writing, it institutionalized this 'scientific' account and promoted it as the legitimate version of the history of the nation.

In both Lambros's and Iorga's cases, the new methodology was particularly developed within fields of knowledge primarily associated with the medieval period and the history of Byzantium. Despite similar methodological premises and the attempt to promote a strong sense of objectivity and ultimate truth through a new type of history, however, different accounts of Byzantine history were produced. While Lambros focused on a Greek Byzantium, Iorga portrayed the Orthodox tradition as a common cultural heritage. The cultural argument had a significant political dimension at a time when both national integration and irredentism were particularly strong and were expected to shape the future of nations. While the Greek 'Great Idea' was developed and legitimized within a conceptual framework that emphasized the Hellenic nature of Byzantium, the Romanians claimed their own share of Orthodox Christianity, proposing their religious identity as one of the primary elements of their national community.

Nineteenth-century romantic historical science, as practiced by Lambros and Iorga, came to support national aspirations in both countries. 'Scientific' truth was, of course, considered to be the organizing principle, but, clearly, there was not only one truth, for historical studies easily provided two different versions. Both, within their different contexts, became well established, accepted as convincing and legitimate.

10

Theatre Histories and the Construction of National Identity: The Cases of Norway and Finland

Ilona Pikkanen

In this chapter I discuss the histories of two national theatre institutions from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä's *Suomalaisen teatterin historia I–IV* (*The History of the Finnish Theatre, I–IV*), published in 1906–10, and Tharald Blanc's *Christiania Theaters Historie. Tidsrummet 1827–1877* (*The History of the Christiania Theatre*), published in 1899. Both histories were written when the vernacular, or semi-vernacular, theatre groups of the two capitals Christiania¹ and Helsinki acquired new, grand theatre buildings in the city centres and were consequently officially renamed as national theatres. It was no coincidence that the renaming of theatre enterprises and moving to the new premises happened simultaneously. Shabby, old, wooden theatre buildings in the outskirts of the town would have given a peculiar picture of the cultural maturity of the nation in question. Theatre was, after all, one of the central means to create, communicate and maintain the idea of the particularity and imagery of the national past, elemental in the establishment of the new nation-states in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe.

Nor was it a coincidence that the histories were published (in Norway) or commissioned (in Finland), right after the national theatres opened their doors. Institutions need histories; there has to be common agreement and understanding of the path travelled by, and the legitimacy of, their existence, especially at the moment of change. Bearing all this in mind, it is easy to make quite convincing statements about both histories without even looking at them; they are teleological, ideological, even anachronistic. Thus, it would not be a surprising conclusion for this chapter to state that Blanc's and Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre histories construct the continuous, coherent narration needed to argue

¹The name was changed from Oslo to Christiania in 1624, from Christiania to Kristiania in 1877, and thence back to Oslo in 1925.

for the national uniqueness and independence of given cultures in a changing historical situation, in which they faced much pressure from outside.

Nevertheless, I find it interesting to take a closer look at these narrations. In the first part of my actual analysis I will make a few remarks on the narratological strategies and rhetorical devices that the authors – especially Aspelin-Haapkylä – used to create these coherent stories. I will also ponder how they employed, or in some cases abandoned, the conventions of historiography to claim their authority. After that I will discuss the authors' views on the repertoire, and ask what kind of roles audience(s) and actors were allowed to play in the histories. The main questions are: What do the narrative strategies and pieces of repertoire that the authors emphasise reveal about their respective nationalisms? And how does the definition of national theatre reflect the politics of national citizenship?²

Comparing Norway and Finland

Norway and Finland are good to compare due to their similarity when it comes to the construction of nations and nation-states. In both countries nationalism arose in the wake of a shock caused by the changing political circumstances at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which made it possible to link cultural and political identity to the territorial framework of the newly defined, if not politically independent, nation-state.³ Thus, in both countries the local political and cultural elite had the task of constructing both the nation and the state, in which the vernacular languages played an important part.

The union between Denmark and Norway had begun in 1380 as a union of two separate kingdoms. In the sixteenth century Norway was reduced to a mere province of Denmark. Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden in 1814. Norwegian aspirations for independence resulted in the drawing up of a new Constitution amidst much political turmoil. This time Norway did not become a province, but was allowed to keep most of its constitution and its own independent parliament. Nevertheless, Norway remained a cultural province of Denmark until the latter part of the nineteenth century. At the other side of the Scandinavian Peninsula, the eight eastern provinces of the kingdom of Sweden – the area we nowadays know as Finland – were incorporated into Russia and reorganized as a Grand Duchy within the Russian

² L. Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and cultural legitimation in England, France and America* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 4–5.

³ However, it has to be mentioned that the idea of national peculiarity and difference in contrast to Sweden and Denmark had already received attention in academic circles in the late eighteenth century.

Empire in 1808/09. However, Finland had its own administrative structure and its own ecclesiastical and cultural institutions.⁴

Language and history were the key notions when Norwegian and Finnish cultural nations were defined after the Napoleonic wars had re-ordered the map of Europe. In both countries the local cultural and political elite used a different language from the majority of the people: Danish in Norway and Swedish in Finland. In the course of the century, part of the elite started to found its national identity on the vernacular language (although not yet a standard one) and promoted the development of the vernacular administrative and cultural language.⁵ In other words, both nations were constructing their identities not so much in relation to their contemporary political situations, as to the political entities they used to belong to.

However, there is a clear difference between these two countries. In Norway the sheer linguistic leap from the local rural Dano-Norwegian dialects to the Danish spoken by the elite was not very big; one could have used the Dano-Norwegian language in Copenhagen and be understood. This was quite problematic for the new nation in the epoch when vernacular languages had become symbols and safe havens of cultural distinctiveness which promised a place on the map of European nation-states. Thus, the discussion concerning a more Norwegian language went on during the whole of the nineteenth century and although the language issue remained unsolved,⁶ it contributed decisively to the definition of the Norwegian nation.

In Finland, the problem of identity arose within the Swedish-speaking upper class who were under the influence of the Romantic, Herderian imperative of language, political nation and people. Persistent efforts to find and create a Finnish identity followed. The group called Fennomans, that is, Finnish-language enthusiasts who came from the Swedish-speaking intelligentsia, abandoned the idea of a bilingual nation. They aimed at creating a Finnish-language high culture (written and spoken) and 'converted' themselves by

⁴ U. Østergård, 'The Geopolitics of Nordic Identity', in B. Stråth and Ø. Sørensen (eds), *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen, 1997), pp. 26, 48–62; T. M. S. Lehtonen, 'Suomi ennen Suomea. Raja-alueen kiinnittyminen eurooppalaiseen kulttuuripiiriin', in T. M. S. Lehtonen (ed.), *Suomi. Outo pohjoinen maa? Näkökulmia Euroopan äärien historiaan ja kulttuuriin* (Porvoo, 1999), pp. 20–47; T. K. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway 1814–1972* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 1–16.

⁵ L. S. Vikør, 'Northern Europe: Languages as Prime Markers of Ethnic and National Identity', in S. Barbour and C. Carmichael (eds), *Language and Nationalism in Europe* (Oxford, 2000), *passim*.

⁶ Landsmål (rural language) was a synthetic Norwegian language constructed in the 1840s and 1850s. However, the educated classes used an essentially Danish language known as riksmål (official language) throughout the nineteenth century. Bokmål (former riksmål) is even today characteristically Dano-Norwegian; the heir of landsmål is Nynorsk (New Norwegian).

adopting a new language in the course of the century. This was sometimes a troublesome mission since the two languages belong to different language families, and the Finnish language also had to be standardized in the process. The linguistic situation remained the dividing line in political and cultural life well into the twentieth century.⁷

Theatre and nationalism

Scholars studying nationalism are unanimous on the importance of culture in nationalism. It has actually been claimed that the connection that ethnic and national identities have with the field of culture makes them much stronger and much more constant than, for example, class-based or regional identities. This would explain the worldwide success and also the persistence of nationalism.⁸ Thus, theatre and also the historiography of theatre provide us with an interesting approach to the actual process of the construction of nations, an approach which is rarely applied in the studies on nationalism or national historiography.

The first theatres labelled as being 'national' emerged in the early eighteenth century. Staging the nation was one of the methods used to answer the question which all nationalists and modern scholars studying nationalism share: How old is our nation? The creation of national, vernacular theatres in the eastern and northern parts of Europe was a way of opposing the foreign cultural hegemony presented, for example, by the French-dominated neo-classical theatre tradition, and thus point at the national particularity of the nation in question.⁹ Romanticism spreading from English- and German-speaking areas cherished ancient national history and original playwrights such as Shakespeare.

In the process, theatre started to command serious attention as an artistic and cultural form. From being entertainment at court or in the market place, it became a political forum for the bourgeoisie, a focus for national identity and even for revolution. Opera, in particular, was political dynamite and was heavily censored throughout nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁰ Actors and

⁷ I. Sulkunen, *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 1831–1892* (Helsinki, 2004), pp. 121–37.

⁸ J. Remy, 'Onko modernisaatio vai etnisyys kansakunnan perusta?', in J. Pakkasvirta and P. Saukkonen (eds), *Nationalismit* (Porvoo, 2005), pp. 60–1.

⁹ T. Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 113–17; S. E. Wilmer, 'German Romanticism and its Influence on Finnish and Irish Theatre', in H. Mäkinen, S. E. Wilmer and W. B. Worthen (eds), *Theatre, History, and National Identities* (Helsinki, 2001), p. 25.

¹⁰ P. Holland and M. Patterson, 'Eighteenth-Century Theatre', in J. R. Brown (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre* (Oxford, 1995) (reissued 2001), pp. 261, 274–6, 298; H.-I. Lampila, 'Suomen musiikin hidas kasvukausi', in R. Knapas and N. E. Forsgård (eds), *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 2: tunne ja tieto* (Helsinki, 2002), pp. 382–3.

actresses started their slow rise from the social level of prostitutes and jugglers to distinguished members of society.

It seems to me that theatre histories often take the notion of national theatres and their indigenous national character as self-evident. And yet the establishment of national theatres was not a uniform phenomenon in different parts of Europe. It has indeed been emphasized that there were different ideologies and structures behind the seemingly unifying epithet of the national theatre. Much depended on the specific historical situations, especially the relationship between the powerful and the body politic.¹¹

The narrative skeleton of the histories

Nations were, and still are today, formed by their respective historical cultures; part of which is the constant writing and rewriting of the history. The new, professional historiography of the nineteenth century emphasized sobriety, neutrality and objectivity. However, even then, the authors of both fictional and nonfictional narratives tried to persuade their readers by using certain textual and narrative techniques, by their idiosyncratic art of writing.¹² Both pieces of historiographical writing that I am discussing are thus precariously located on the border between objectivity and subjectivity, factuality and plausible narrative strategies. Both were, at least partly, eyewitness accounts and, especially in Aspelin-Haapkylä's case, an important part of the intellectual autobiography of the author.

Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä¹³ (1847–1917) was a close friend to Karl (1843–1906) and Emilie Bergbom (1834–1905). They were siblings in charge of the Finnish Theatre Company from its establishment in 1872 until the beginning of the twentieth century. When the first part of the history was published, Aspelin-Haapkylä held the professorship of aesthetics and modern literature at the Imperial Alexander University of Helsinki. Besides his professional career he was a central figure in the most important institutions defining the cultural nation of Finland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was the vice-president of the Finnish Literature Society, a member of the board of the Finnish Theatre Company and later of the Finnish National Theatre, and

¹¹ Kruger, *The National Stage*, *passim*.

¹² M. Lehtimäki, 'The Rhetoric of Literary Nonfiction. The Example of Norman Mailer', in M. Lehtimäki, S. Leisti and M. Rytönen (eds), *Real Stories, Imagined Realities: Fictionality and non-fictionality in literary constructs and historical contexts* (Tampere, 2007), pp. 29–32; A. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three narrative histories of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1–16; J. Burrow, *A History of Histories. Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London, 2007), p. 455.

¹³ Aspelin-Haapkylä took his double surname with the Finnish-language annex in 1906.

vice-president of the National Board of Antiquities.¹⁴ He belonged to the Old Finnish Party, which had an accommodating view of the Russian authorities, although he also had close connections to the artists belonging to the Young Finnish movement.¹⁵

In Norway, on the other hand, Tharald Blanc (1838–1921) moved on the fringes of academic historiography. He had studied law and made his career as a secretary at the Supreme Court in Christiania. He wrote critiques of concerts and theatre performances for the *Intelligenssedlerne* and *Aftenposten*, but his main contribution to Norwegian national culture, and the reason for his presence in the *National Biography of Norway* (1925), are his three theatre histories: *Norges Første Nationale Scene* (1884), *Christiania Theaters Historie* (1899) and *Henrik Ibsen og Christiania Theater* (1906).¹⁶

In spite of the difference in the sheer proportions of the histories (Aspelin-Haapkylä's four volumes consisting of more than 1200 pages and Blanc's more moderate presentation of 308 pages) and in the prestige of their authors, both histories established some of the major paradigms in the research tradition of their national theatres, paradigms that historians reproduce even today. Blanc and Aspelin-Haapkylä were not writing in an interpretative void when it came to national theatre history. Newspaper critiques of single performances and polemical writings concerning theatre as an ideology started to appear in both countries right after the opening of the first permanent theatre houses and both authors had already contributed to this interpretative framework. However, these studies were the first historiographical works written about the theatre enterprises renamed as national theatres and as such formative narrations.

Both Aspelin-Haapkylä and Blanc present the opening of the first permanent theatre buildings in Christiania and Helsinki in 1827 as the starting points of their respective national theatres as institutions, regardless of the fact that a Swede, Johan Peter Strömberg, was the first to run the business in Christiania and that circling theatre groups from abroad occupied the stage in Helsinki. Both countries belonged to the wider framework of Northern European theatre culture with a strong German influence and with theatre troupes circling across the national borders on a regular basis.¹⁷

Blanc's aim is to show the slow process of Norwegianization of the Christiania Theatre. He starts with the so-called Theatre of Strömberg, established by a Swedish actor and director in Christiania in 1827 that was closed down the

¹⁴ H. Selkokari, *Kalleuksia isänmaalle. Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä taiteen kerääjänä ja taidehistorioitsijana* (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 48, 89–101.

¹⁵ The young Finns campaigned for passive resistance in defence of the constitution at the beginning of the twentieth century.

¹⁶ J. P. Bull, 'Tharald Blanc', in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon* (Oslo, 1925), pp. 5–6.

¹⁷ S. Hirn, *Alati kiertueella. Teatterimme varhaisvaiheita vuoteen 1870* (Helsinki, 1998), *passim*.

following year because of financial difficulties. Strömberg's enterprise was succeeded by the Christiania Public Theatre which burnt down in 1835 and was reopened as the Christiania Theatre in 1837. Later on, in 1863, the Christiania theatre was united with the Christiania Norwegian Theatre because of the bankruptcy of the latter, and was finally closed down in June 1899. Subsequently, the new building of the National Theatre, renamed as the National Theatre of Norway, came to occupy centre stage in the history. In other words, he binds together three sequential, independent theatre enterprises in his narrative framework and represents them as the pre-history of the Norwegian national theatre.

Blanc begins his history with a Nordic comparison. He contrasts the lack of professional theatres in Christiania to the flourishing cultural life of Copenhagen and Stockholm. After this, in the second part of his history, Blanc summarizes his storyline: the theatre of Strömberg would be an inspiration to create a truly national theatre (the ending point of his narration), although Strömberg 'did not belong to the Norwegian nation'.¹⁸ The international character of the former Northern European theatre culture is thus redefined as characteristically national and consequently, the core of the narration will be the development of the Norwegian theatre culture against the dominant non-Norwegian, that is, Danish, culture of the country.

Blanc's history was published in 1899 when the Christiania Theatre was renamed the National Theatre of Norway and the staff of the Christiania theatre moved to the building that was especially constructed for it. Seven years earlier he had expressed his scepticism towards the Norwegian character of Strömberg's theatre by addressing it as 'Norwegian', in quotation marks, in one of his articles.¹⁹ In his present history, however, Blanc used the nationalistic, retrospective gaze, detaching the theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century from its political and cultural background. Now Strömberg's enterprise was the beginning of the Norwegian theatre tradition; the closure of the Strömberg theatre meant that 'the era of the first Norwegian Stage had ended.'²⁰ Presenting Strömberg's theatre as the starting point is central for Blanc's storyline; this way the period of the following Danish Christiania Theatre can be referred to as an intermediate phase between two eras of the Norwegian theatre.²¹ Indeed, in the second chapter of his history Blanc states that 'from now on it was possible to consider the Danish element as a dominant [feature] of the public theatre of the Norwegian capital.'²²

¹⁸ T. Blanc, *Christiania Theaters Historie. Tidsrummet 1827–1877* (Christiania, 1899) pp. 3–4.

¹⁹ T. Berg, *Når, hvor og hvordan ble teater i Norge norsk teater?* (Skriftserie fra Institutt for drama, film og teater 3, 1996), p. 10.

²⁰ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 25.

²¹ Blanc himself uses the term *provisional* when dealing with the state of affairs of the Christiania Theatre in the 1830s. Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 41.

²² Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 57.

In the Finnish case, the theatre was in the same hands for the first 30 years of its existence and was identified strongly with Karl Bergbom and his sister. In his history Aspelin-Haapkylä is also writing their biography²³ and has two central tasks: to save the legacy of the Finnish Theatre Company directed and managed by Bergbom and to sustain the rhetoric of the unity of the Finnish people²⁴, thus preserving the powerful Christian-idealistic national ideology of the Old-Finnish Party. I will address these questions later.

Monotony and accentuation

Repetition or reiteration is one of the methods historians use to make coherent, continuous narrations.²⁵ Both theatre historians, Aspelin-Haapkylä and Blanc, return frequently to certain themes and use certain key concepts throughout the whole narration. This is a way of defining, discussing and developing their conceptual tool kit during the course of their study, but also of asserting the importance of the recurring themes.

In addition to this, there is something I would like to call compositional repetition, which is obvious especially in Aspelin-Haapkylä's history. Aspelin-Haapkylä has organized his study according to a strict chronology, that is, on a seasonal basis, repeating endlessly the routine of the annual occasions at the theatre. It is no surprise that his history has been described as a catalogue.²⁶ However, listing things has a meaning: it is a sign of abundance, and thus is an important method in the fulfilment of one of the tasks Aspelin-Haapkylä had taken upon himself: demonstrating the amount of work done and showing the burden the Bergbom siblings, and indirectly also other Fennomans, were forced to carry.²⁷ Moreover, repetition also indoctrinates the reader, little by little, with the conviction of the significance of each singular event, each starter of the season, each national commemoration celebrated at the theatre, each tribute an actor received from the audience, and makes them into a chain, a tradition. And the creation of the national traditions was one of

²³ Cf. E. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen teatterin historia III* (Helsinki, 1909), p. 201.

²⁴ *The people* was one of the key concepts of the latter part of nineteenth-century Finnish nationalism when the Fennoman elite began to make political demands in the name of the people. See J. Kurunmäki, 'A Parliament for the Unity of the People: On the Rhetoric of Legitimation in the Debate over Finnish Parliamentary Reform in 1906', in L.-F. Landgrén and P. Hautamäki (eds), *People, Citizen, Nation* (Helsinki, 2005), pp. 116–28; I. Liikanen, 'The Ironies of People's Power', in Landgrén and Hautamäki (eds), *People, Citizen*, p. 70.

²⁵ Rigney, *The Rhetoric*, pp. 81–90.

²⁶ H. K. Riikonen, 'Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä', in Oiva Kuisma and H. K. Riikonen (eds), *Estetiikan syntysanat. Suomalaisen estetiikan avainkirjoituksia valistusajalta 1970–luvun alkuun* (Helsinki, 2005), p. 106.

²⁷ E. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen teatterin historia IV* (Helsinki, 1910), pp. 303–4.

the tasks the Finnish Theatre Company strived for.²⁸ However, it might also be that listing events is a way of non-narrating, that is, giving an impression of not selecting and interpreting and thus offering the reader a more truthful account of the past.

In Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre history most of the single events disappear in the monotony of the seasonal description. Nevertheless, there are places where the author slows down the current of the narration, which extends the events in question, giving them a more decisive meaning in the entirety of the narration than their real temporal duration might imply.²⁹ Instead of just cataloguing, the author turns to a more emotional rhetoric and concentrates on the expectations and experiences of the protagonists. Therefore, the reader suddenly pays attention, and the incidents described receive symbolic meaning even without particular interpretative interventions by the author.

An important feature of Aspelin-Haapkylä's narration of these points is its strong visuality. He arranges certain key moments in his narration into a series of *tableaux vivants*. At these points, extensively or vividly described episodes come to the fore, describing the turning points or symbolizing the whole storyline and thereby pushing the more unpropitious interpretations to the background.³⁰

One of the most pronounced descriptions in Aspelin-Haapkylä's history is his representation of the first performance of Aleksis Kivi's³¹ play *Lea* in May 1869. Therefore, it is no wonder that this episode has an established place in Finnish theatre history. According to Aspelin-Haapkylä, the enthusiastic Finnish-language students, a group he also belonged to, and the gentry families, who were sympathetic to the students' nationalistic aspirations, decided to organize a Finnish-language theatre performance in May 1869. There were some difficulties in finding a suitable Finnish-language play, but then came *Lea* which, according to Aspelin-Haapkylä, was 'a play almost like it fell from Heaven'.³² The next problem was to find an actress who could perform the leading role of *Lea* professionally. The theatre goes among the young Fennomans had become friends with the star actress of the New Theatre,

²⁸ E. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 300.

²⁹ Rigney, *The Rhetoric*, p. 75.

³⁰ Living images or *tableaux vivants* often imitated paintings of national romantic subjects or scenes from popular plays, see A. Schmiesing, *Norway's Christiania Theatre, 1827–1867: From Danish Showhouse to National Stage* (Fairleigh Dickinson, NJ, 2006), pp. 99–103; M. Hatavara, *Historia ja poetiikka Fredrika Runebergin ja Zacharias Topeliuksen historiallisissa romaaneissa* (Helsinki, 2007), p. 276.

³¹ Aleksis Kivi (Stenvall) (1834–1872) has been described as the father of the Finnish-language literature, although his realistic plays dealing with the rural population were not generally accepted as sophisticated enough during his life time.

³² E. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen teatterin historia I* (Helsinki, 1906), p. 126.

Swedish Charlotta Raa. Raa did not know any Finnish at all, but nevertheless agreed to play the part and memorized it with the guidance of the mainly Swedish-speaking Fennomans.

Aspelin-Haapkylä describes briefly the reading practices and fervent arrangements during the spring and then pauses to describe the actual performance. Readers are given a description of the moment just before Charlotta Raa enters the stage: she was so nervous backstage that her friends were supporting her by the arms, but as she stepped in front of the audience, she 'felt like some higher power had taken the burden away – and she was relieved'. The main organizers of the event, the future leaders of the Finnish Theatre, Karl and Emilie Bergbom, took care of the arrangements and were 'awake while others were sleeping'. After the performance, during the ensuing celebrations where the event now received its historical meaning, 'everybody had the sense that the Finnish-language theatre was nearer than before.'³³ The author utilizes religious rhetoric and presents the Fennomans community almost as a revivalist movement living simultaneously in two realities: in the present and in the present-to-be, that is, in a new reality where the border between present, still filled with hardships, and the ideal has become transparent and permeable.

Aspelin-Haapkylä does not provide the reader with the sources of his account. In other words, he must have been confident that readers would accept his description. But there is also another possible explanation for the emotionally engaging, almost fictitious representation when it comes to Lea: the Bergboms were already in 1879, that is, ten years after the original performance, sceptical about restaging the play with Raa since her Finnish pronunciation was considered so bad.³⁴ Thus, Aspelin-Haapkylä is attempting to recononize the central event in Finnish-language theatre history.

Aspelin-Haapkylä used the methods and conventions of art and fiction – the *tableaux vivants* and the unauthorized dialogues³⁵ and descriptions of emotions of the protagonists – to emphasize the ideological atmosphere the author is describing, and to reinforce the nationalistic programme of the vernacular stage by claiming the collective nature of that programme by representing it polyphonically. The crossing of the border between nonfiction and fiction may also be used both for creating and maintaining the memory of the key moments of a certain narration and, paradoxically, for claiming the truth value of the statements of the author. In other words, I would like to argue that fictive

³³ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, pp. 138, 141.

³⁴ See, e.g., Emilie Bergbom to Kaarlo Bergbom 23.6.1879. Letter collection 45, The Literary Archive of the Finnish Literature Society.

³⁵ See, e.g., the dialogues that Aspelin-Haapkylä presents between actor Oskar Gröneqvist and Fredrik Cygnaeus and Gröneqvist and his Swedish colleague. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, pp. 16–17.

paragraphs in the middle of a nonfictive narration may establish a place of uttermost plausibility, since a reader of the fiction is supposed to be absorbed, that is, to abandon criticism and believe in the story.

Do we have a history?

Theatre historians cannot escape the question of repertoire; what was performed, when, by whom, and who was responsible for compiling the programme? Although Blanc had a reputation for being a careful collector of theatre-related material and a compiler of statistical calculations, he does not present the repertoire of the Christiania theatre in any methodological way, nor does he analyse it. Neither does Aspelin-Haapkylä, but the repertoire nevertheless receives quite a lot of attention in his study, including an appendix of all the plays performed by the Finnish Theatre during the first 30 years of its existence. Naturally these statistics could also be used to argue for more state subsidies for the theatre enterprise.

I will now discuss those genres, plays and performances that the historians gave particular attention to in their narrations, continuing thus from Aleksis Kivi's *Lea* which was one of the repeated key plays of nineteenth-century Finnish theatre, as was demonstrated earlier. Novels, national epics and historiography provided authors with characters, major turning points and stories, that is, national themes to deal with. National theatres all around Europe were establishing an imagery of their respective national pasts by visualizing these stories and educating or converting the audience into nation-ness. Our contemporary understanding of the cornerstones and central turning points of our respective national cultures, nevertheless, guides us to seek for the traces of these phenomena from the histories – for example, in the Finnish case the performances that were inspired by the national epos *Kalevala* (published in 1835 and 1849). However, this clear-cut and obvious picture becomes slightly blurred if one looks at the repertoire more closely and compares it with the rhetoric used in theatre histories.

In the last volume of his history in 1910, Aspelin-Haapkylä describes the theatrical festivities on 9 December 1894 that were part of the celebrations of the tercentenary of King Gustav II Adolph. The theatre performed Zachris Topelius's *Regina von Emmeritz*, situated in the time of the Thirty Years War. The occasion 'started with a tableau of the heroic king surrounded by his Swedish and Finnish soldiers during which the hymn *Jumala omni linnamme*³⁶ was played. [...] The play itself generated, as it always did, a patriotic atmosphere and enthusiasm among the audience.'³⁷

³⁶ Martin Luther's *Ein feste Burg*.

³⁷ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 37.

Topelius's *Regina von Emmeritz* reflects the worshipping attitude that Swedish, and also to some extent Finnish, nineteenth-century historiography had towards King Gustav II Adolph.³⁸ In the plays dealing with the wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Finland, as a part of Sweden, was facing enemies, usually the Russian Empire, and it was usually depicted as the moral winner even when defeated. The warrior discourse, so common to the Fennomans in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when the language issue divided the administrative and cultural elite into Swedish-speaking Svecomans and Finnish-speaking Fennomans, was even more topical in the years of the so-called Second Russification Period of the Grand Duchy of Finland starting in 1908.³⁹ At the same time, these plays often concentrated on the bravery, honesty and loyalty of the Finnish characters in contrast both to the Swedish and Russian ones.

On the whole, Aspelin-Haapkylä's interests seems to lie in the plays reflecting the time Finland was part of the realm of Sweden, and therefore he gives these a more prominent position than they actually had in the framework of the whole repertoire. There are, inevitably, descriptions of the plays depicting the Kalevalaic past with plays, *tableaux* and pageants inspired by the national epos, *Kalevala*, which had a prominent position in the field of national art, particularly from the 1890s onwards. This imagery was used especially on festive occasions. Aspelin-Haapkylä also refers to the famous peasant plays (e.g., Kivi's *Nummisuutarit*) as being part and parcel of different commemoration days, but he does not pay special attention to them in the course of his whole study. When it comes to modern Finnish drama, mainly presented by Minna Canth, the focus is on the disputes it caused, not on the description of the performances as such. Naturally it might be claimed that these canonical pieces have such a prominent status in the Finnish-language culture that the mere allusions were enough to summon them up. However, the Swedish era, when the area of contemporary Finland was attached to the Western Church and world, receives twice as much attention as other settings of Finnishness, and their depictions have outstanding emotional strength.

Thus, in his theatre history Aspelin-Haapkylä is still answering the question: *Does the Finnish folk have a history?* (*Äger Finska Folket en historie?*) which was asked by poet and novelist, and also future professor of the Finnish history, Zachris Topelius (1818–1898) in 1843.⁴⁰ At that point Topelius had argued that the Finnish history began in 1808/09, although he later stressed the Finnish

³⁸ See, e.g., M. Klinge, *Idylli ja uhka. Topeliuksen aatteita ja politiikkaa* (Helsinki, 1998), p. 302.

³⁹ The first Russification period lasted from 1899 until 1905, and the second from 1908 until 1917. During these periods Finland was brought closer to Russian legislation and state administration.

⁴⁰ See Klinge, *Idylli ja uhka*, pp. 26, 244, 273.

national genius that had existed throughout the centuries. Aspelin-Haapkylä can be linked to this search for primordial Finnishness, as he underscores the texts written by his generation of historians, novelists and playwrights, searching for characteristically Finnish themes from the history of Sweden. However, though this came from the politically moderate Aspelin-Haapkylä, it is also possible that emphasis on the Swedish past was a discreet way of criticizing the Russian present and perhaps even using the Topelian ideal of the sacred union between the king and his people⁴¹ as a parody in the new political situation where the emperor no longer kept his sacred word.⁴²

The national project of educating the audience by staging the classical works and creating and defining the national canon of literature was only a part of theatre's everyday life. In order to keep their theatres going, directors had to consider the opinion of the audience, who favoured light comedies and melodrama. Thus, the repertoires of the Christiania Theatre and the Finnish Theatre relied heavily on translated comedies, operettas and melodramas from mainly French, German, English and Danish literature. To take the example of Finland, there was only one play of Finnish origin (A. Kivi's *Nummisuutarit*) among the ten most popular plays during the first five years of the Finnish Theatre.⁴³

On the whole, the nineteenth-century national theatres were a truly transnational area of negotiations dealing with the domestication of the ideas, texts, dramaturgical innovations and new technologies which were moving around Europe, employed in the service of different nationalisms and garnished with national rhetoric. Difference and cohesion, national and international, were not opposite concepts but parts of the same process.⁴⁴ Regardless of this, the transnationality of the national theatres, for example, the importation of plays from

⁴¹ The ideal union between king and people in Z. Topelius's plays, novels and other writings has been interpreted as presenting and encouraging the loyalty Finns felt for their royal superior, thus in Topelius's time the Russian emperor before the first Russification efforts. See, e.g., Klinge, *Idylli ja uhka, passim*. However, in my interpretation Aspelin-Haapkylä refers to these plays to emphasize the long connection Finland had to the Western cultural tradition, giving them a new symbolic meaning in the new political situation.

⁴² Aspelin-Haapkylä describes the ascendancy of Nicholas II of Russia and the Finnish expectations of his confirmation of the Finnish constitution as a period when, 'In Finland we still did not doubt the sacred nature of the word of the emperor', Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 33. This seems to indicate a change in the attitudes and expectations in the course of the Second Russification Period.

⁴³ For the Finnish theatre, see, e.g., H. Suutela, *Impyyet. Näyttelijättäret Suomalaisen Teatterin palveluksessa* (Helsinki, 2005), p. 34; and Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, appendix.

⁴⁴ The intellectual background for this line of thinking may be found in Herder's definitions of nation-ness and the development of national cultures. See, e.g., H. Rantala, 'J.V. Snellmanin historiakäsityksen herderiläisistä piirteistä', in Sakari Ollitervo and Kari Immonen (eds), *Herder, Suomi, Eurooppa* (Helsinki 2006), pp. 399–400; P. Karkama, *Kansakunnan asialla. Elias Lönnrot ja ajan aatteet* (Helsinki, 2001), p. 386.

other countries (in the form of adaptations or translations) is often excluded from the histories of the national theatres.⁴⁵

But there were foreign masterpieces which were the touchstones of the cultural maturity of the emerging nation-states. The staging of Shakespeare was a European-wide sign of climbing a rung on the ladder in the development of national cultures⁴⁶ and this also features in Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre history. However, even when it came to these canonical plays, it was not just a question of following or copying from foreign dramatic traditions.

In the Herder-inspired 'national awakenings' in Central and Eastern Europe, language had a position as the creator, preserver and transmitter of the deep cultural essence of each nation.⁴⁷ In Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre history, Papageno, played by a Finnish actor, was essentially a Finnish peasant character.⁴⁸ Thus, the foreign cultural elements changed, one could say that they were renationalized, when they were translated to, and in the case of the theatre performed in, different languages. Texts and characters started to reflect the receiving culture in question.

On the other hand, the audience wanted to experience the 'original' performance, that is, see the play just as it appeared in Paris or London. Aspelin-Haapkylä describes the efforts made to create a French atmosphere when a French play was performed, to stage Ibsen exactly as it had been done in Norway, and to send photographs of the costumes when Hungarians were interested in taking on a Finnish play. However, the failure to become totally French seems to be as important as the aspirations for authenticity for Aspelin-Haapkylä.⁴⁹ This might be interpreted as a reverse strategy of accentuating one's own nation-ness; it is actually one's own nationality that is on stage, contrasted to the foreign, sometimes even exotic, cultural background of the play.⁵⁰

Thus, if the nation was reproduced on the stage all the time, with foreign drama in the dominant position, then the European repertoire was much more

⁴⁵ S. E. Wilmer, 'On Writing National Theatre Histories', in S. E. Wilmer (ed.), *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories* (Iowa, 2004), pp. 24–6.

⁴⁶ L. Senelick, 'General Introduction', in L. Senelick (ed.), *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 4.

⁴⁷ S. Ollitervo and K. Immonen, 'Johdanto', in Herder, *Suomi*, pp. 8, 22; M. Jalava, 'Hegeliläisyys 1800–luvun Suomessa', *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* 2, pp. 447–8.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., E. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen teatterin historia II* (Helsinki, 1907), pp. 149, 435.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, pp. 6, 17.

⁵⁰ The quotations Aspelin-Haapkylä uses not only juxtapose Finnishness to other nationalities; the collective Northern or Scandinavian identity is also highlighted, although Scandinavianism was, on the whole, mainly a Swedish and Danish project. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen II*, p. 107, *Suomalaisen III*, p. 335; N. Witoszek, 'Fugitives from Utopia', in *The Cultural Construction*, p. 82; B. Stråth, 'The Idea of a Scandinavian Nation', in Landgrén and Hautamäki *People, Citizen*, p. 210.

significant in the construction of the national peculiarity than the national canon these histories aim to produce.⁵¹ In this situation Aspelin-Haapkylä faced a double task: to underline the ability of the Finnish Theatre Company to stage these foreign plays authentically and yet to promote the idea of the national stage which existed to create an original national theatre culture.

* * *

When a reader who is familiar with the turn of things starts to read Blanc, the expectation is that the emphasis will be on the Old Norse identity and the ancient Viking past⁵² and that the works of Henrik Ibsen will receive attention as being the signs of the cultural maturity of the nation. And true, Norwegian playwrights did turn to Viking times and sagas, and, according to Blanc, the audience enjoyed these, but he does not seem to appreciate historical plays inspired by sagas or national-romantic plays depicting the rural population running around the fjords 'in their Sunday outfit'.⁵³

The flourishing of the modern Norwegian drama in the 1860s, with Ibsen and Bjørnson in particular, is the culmination point of the story, and something Blanc had anticipated in the whole course of his narration. However, Blanc does not actually discuss the significance of these authors for Norwegian cultural identity nor does he describe their – especially Ibsen's – international reputation and influence. The reader gets the impression that in spite of Blanc's efforts to construct the history of a slow Norwegianization of the Christiania Theatre and thus of the victory of Norwegian culture, the real Norwegian spirit – the main protagonist of his narration – was somewhere else than within the theatre the whole time. Perhaps, from Blanc's perspective, the modern Norwegian repertoire did not manage to create a truly Norwegian theatre, and in this framework even Ibsen, who changed European dramatic literature, deserves relatively little attention. On the whole, Bjørnson and Ibsen were not really appreciated in their home country. Ibsen spent long periods abroad, which did not enhance his popularity in the cultural climate of nineteenth-century Norway.⁵⁴

⁵¹ The Finnish intelligentsia began to dispute the foreign influences on Finnishness after the general strike of 1905. It was only then generally seen that the European or Western influences should be abandoned to create a stronger, more vital Finnish culture. See H. Kokko, 'Sivistyksen surkea tila', in P. Haapala et al. (eds), *Kansa kaikkivaltias. Suurlakko Suomessa 1905* (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 297–319.

⁵² According to the Danish Viking expert Else Roesdahl, the concept of a Viking Age may be traced back in Danish to the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, until well into the 1800s the so-called 'legendary age' as delivered in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* comprised a more important object of national identification than did the Viking Age of 800–1050 AD. Østergård, 'The Geopolitics', pp. 34–5.

⁵³ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, pp. 132–3.

⁵⁴ Schmiesing, *Norway's Christiania Theatre*, pp. 220–2.

All in all, in contrast to Aspelin-Haapkylä's descriptiveness, Blanc does not devote much time to creating an atmosphere in the performances, nor does he lift any single performance as a characteristic or central milestone in the development of the Norwegian dramatic art. His neutral and economical discussion of the repertory culminates in the performance of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* at the Christiania Theatre on 24 February 1876. Blanc describes how Ibsen had already discussed the play with director Josephson in 1874, Edward Grieg had composed the music, Norwegian artists had decorated the stage, and the audience followed the premiere from 7 pm until 11.45 pm with undivided attention. However, the description of the performance ends in flames; the theatre was burnt down in January 1877 after *Peer Gynt* had been performed 36 times (which was a huge amount of repetitions for the nineteenth-century theatre) and most of the set designed for the play was destroyed. Although theatre performance is always a unique experience, and never exactly repeatable, the flames destroying the building of the Christiania Theatre form a perfect background for Blanc's narration of Ibsen's play and the following phases of the theatre. The comprehensive staging of Norwegianness went up in smoke and what follows in Blanc's storyline – two short paragraphs summing up the next 20 years before the opening of the National Theatre – is a kind of anticlimax for the 'energetic and vigorous Norwegian drama in the bloom'⁵⁵ of the 1870s.

Theatre as nation

In the final section of my chapter I am asking: Who exactly was the active subject – the protagonist – in the narrations of Aspelin-Haapkylä and Blanc? I will approach this question by pondering how authors dealt with the inner dynamics of the theatre. I will also look into their discussion concerning the behaviour of the demonstrating, whistling, fighting and unsupportive audience. Were the audience spectators or participants; an undefined crowd or a mature nation? What was expected of the audience of the theatre institution that legitimized its existence with national rhetoric?

According to Aspelin-Haapkylä's aesthetic-political idealism, influenced by Herderian language-based ideas of nation-ness and the Finnish application of Hegelian etatism,⁵⁶ every 'theatrical community' is threatened by

⁵⁵ Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 268.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Ollitervo and Immonen, *Herder, Suomi*; Karkama, *Kansakunnan*; T. Pulkkinen, 'Kansalaisyhteiskunta ja valtio', in R. Alapuro, I. Liikanen, K. Smeds and H. Stenius (eds), *Kansa liikkeessä* (Helsinki, 1987), T. Pulkkinen, 'Kielen ja mielen ykseys. 1800-luvun suomalaisen nationalismin erityispiirteistä ja perinnöstä poliittisessa ajattelussa', in *Suomi. Outo*; M. Jalava, *Minä ja maailmanhenki. Moderni subjekti kristillis-idealisisessa kansallisajattelussa ja Rolf Lagerborgin kulttuuriradikalismissa n. 1800–1914* (Helsinki, 2005).

inner disagreements which prevent it from becoming 'the ideal state'.⁵⁷ The ideal company of the Finnish Theatre was led by 'extremely talented' Karl Bergbom, 'a leader of God's mercy, an imperative quality when it came to the creation of national theatre'.⁵⁸ This is not only eloquent rhetoric bound to all histories of great men; Aspelin-Haapkylä strived to establish the interpretative framework of Bergbom's theatre and his leadership in the post-Bergbomian time. He was also contesting the criticism Bergbom's theatre with its acting tradition and repertoire started to face in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Theatre presents 'society as a microcosm',⁵⁹ and it, like every society, was torn apart by conflicts of interest. The last part of the nineteenth century has been generally characterized as a director's theatre and the need for strong leadership is emphasized in both histories.⁶⁰ But it was not only the ensemble that was under guidance; by discussing the relationship that directors had with the audience and with authors contributing to the national literature, the historians reveal not only the power structures of their research objects but also comment on the ideal state of affairs in a contemporary political situation.

The desired casting of influence and power in Aspelin-Haapkylä's ideal company was the oligarchy of the few and the wise. Playwrights and translators are characterized according to their willingness to cooperate with the leader of the theatre. When it comes to actors, there were only a couple of trained ones at the Finnish Theatre, in contrast to the professional Danish actors at the Christiania Theatre. The actors also came mainly from the lower classes, though seldom directly from the working-class.⁶¹ Aspelin-Haapkylä's presentation of the inner relations of the theatre reproduces the social hierarchy between the leading stratum of the theatre and its staff in the nineteenth century. It reflects the attitudes the Finnish Party (the Old Finns) had towards the working class and the lower segments of the rural population at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Social Democratic Party had demonstrated its huge appeal in the first unicameral parliamentary elections of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1907.

The picture is at its most obvious when one compares Aspelin-Haapkylä's description of the Finnish opera department (working between 1873 and 1879)

⁵⁷ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen III*, pp. 329–30.

⁵⁸ Karl Bergbom was also described as an 'infallible' leader who 'loved the children as much as the people'. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, pp. 45–6, 60–1; *Suomalaisen III*, pp. 201, 331; *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 297.

⁵⁹ Aspelin-Haapkylä *Suomalaisen II*, p. 136.

⁶⁰ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen II*, p. 425; Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 214; M. R. Booth, 'Nineteenth-century theatre', in J. R. Brown (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre* (New York, 1995), pp. 299–340, here p. 331.

⁶¹ Suutela, *Impyät*, pp. 116–32.

with the drama department.⁶² Attending the opera became one of the most important cultural rituals of the bourgeoisie of Europe during the nineteenth century and both the Christiania Theatre and the Finnish Theatre established an opera department.⁶³ The official stage language of the opera department of the Finnish Theatre Company was Finnish, but as it was forced to hire singers from abroad, in the end it was ‘a polyglot’⁶⁴ using several languages during one performance, although Aspelin-Haapkylä is not especially explicit on this point. Nevertheless, that did not matter since the Helsinki-based opera department had a different task from the drama department which spent most of its time travelling around rural Finland. Before the actors of the drama department were experienced enough to perform the classical repertoire, the opera was there to allure the upper-class audience to the Finnish-language performances and to demonstrate the ability of the nation to educate artists and to participate in European high-culture. In essence, as Aspelin-Haapkylä put it, the Finnish Opera was ‘an exhibition’.⁶⁵

In contrast to the drama department, the Finnish singers came mainly from upper-class families. Therefore, in the case of the opera performances, both the performers and the audience shared the same cultural background. The most prominent feature in Aspelin-Haapkylä’s representation of the opera performances is the collective, unifying nature of those events; the audience and its responses are both in the spotlight. According to the author, there was a sense of unique interaction of ‘electrical wires between the stage and the audience that mystically inspired and touched’.⁶⁶ This special connection separated the experience of attending the Finnish Opera from seeing and hearing high-quality opera abroad. The opera established the benchmark for the experience the national theatre should offer.⁶⁷

Whereas the inner dynamics of the opera department are left alone, the reader is indirectly enlightened about the problems caused by the drama department. Aspelin-Haapkylä refers several times to the quarrels within the department between the directors and actors, although ‘they are not worth the historian’s attention’.⁶⁸ At the same time the theatre is depicted as ‘a family without any class boundaries’, but only on those occasions when ‘the family’

⁶² There was also a shortlived opera department in the Christiania Theatre, but Blanc describes this enterprise in only a couple of sentences in contrast to Aspelin-Haapkylä, who devotes the second part of his history to the opera.

⁶³ Suutela, *Impyät*, pp. 39–40.

⁶⁴ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen II*, pp. 219–34.

⁶⁵ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen II*, p. 257.

⁶⁶ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, p. 180; *Suomalaisen II*, pp. 111, 295.

⁶⁷ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen III*, p. 81.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, p. 134; *Suomalaisen III*, p. 329; *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 246.

gathered together in the benevolence of upper-class authority.⁶⁹ Apprentices were selected to the theatre according to strict criteria⁷⁰ and they were expected to live under the regulations and controls set by the directors, which Aspelin-Haapkylä accepts as an unquestionable, natural state of affairs in his history. His argument that the gathering of the personnel of the theatre was an occasion for the establishment of an egalitarian community only strengthens the importance of class as the ultimate definition of a person's place in society.

The repertoire and the actors were in the hands of the director, but the audience was more uncontrollable. This stands out in Aspelin-Haapkylä's, mostly negative, definitions of it.⁷¹ Aspelin-Haapkylä emphasizes participatory actions on the audience's part only when it fits into his narration of national Fennomaniac consensus,⁷² for example, when the audience unanimously celebrated the star actors and the prima donnas of the theatre and thus formed an expression of the living national community. Actual demonstrations, so common in nineteenth-century theatres, are mentioned only twice in the whole course of Aspelin-Haapkylä's narration, and these specific protests are directed towards the Swedish language in the New Theatre, and not against Bergbom and his theatre troupe.⁷³

In contrast to the effort Aspelin-Haapkylä dedicates to describing the atmosphere of the performances, the collective experience of the theatrical events as such or the national consensus does not feature in Blanc's history. Blanc describes his own bourgeois territory, an urban theatre, which reflects the social and cultural differences between the urban intelligentsia – even called by some modern historians the Mandarin class of the civil servants⁷⁴ – and the popular counter-culture, with its geographical centre of gravity in the countryside of southern and western Norway. In addition, there were strong anti-Danish currents among sections of the Norwegian elite.⁷⁵ The emphasis

⁶⁹ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen III*, pp. 28–9.

⁷⁰ Suutela, *Impyet*, p. 117.

⁷¹ Aspelin-Haapkylä *Suomalaisen II*, pp. 20, 102, *Suomalaisen III*, pp. 99, 333, 347, *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 294.

⁷² Whereas researchers have stressed the compromise nature of the Nordic political culture, Pauli Kettunen has argued for a specific Finnish ideology of consensus. Compromise indicates disagreement and negotiations, consensus the idea of pre-existing, collectively shared understanding of the imperative (national) interest. P. Kettunen, *Globalisaatio ja kansallinen me. Kansallisen katseen historiallinen kritiikki* (Tampere, 2008), pp. 86–7; B. Stråth and Ø. Sørensen, 'Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Norden', in *The Cultural Construction*, p. 20.

⁷³ Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen II*, p. 288, Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen IV*, p. 42 (footnote).

⁷⁴ Stråth and Sørensen, 'Introduction', p. 6.

⁷⁵ Ø. Sørensen, 'What's in a Name?', in *The Cultural Construction*, pp. 122–3; Østergård, *The Geopolitics*, p. 54.

of Blanc's narration is on the disputes and polemics created by the Danishness of the main stage of Christiania; the main storyline centres on the activities of the public sphere of discussion.⁷⁶

Thus, unlike in Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre history, the audience in Christiania had 'the right to express its particular likes or dislikes'.⁷⁷ Blanc carefully describes different polemics and turmoil aroused by theatre performances, which were often connected to the complex disputes between the proponents of Norwegianness (Patriots) and Danomanics. *The History of the Christiania Theaters* is as much the history of the nineteenth-century newspaper discussions concerning the theatre as it is that of the theatre itself. However, these disputes, battles and struggles⁷⁸, repeated in the later histories of the Norwegian theatre, are not actual retrospective turning points marking new eras. The Christiania Theatre was seen as a proponent of the Danish and, later on, of the Swedish theatrical influences throughout the period Blanc is describing, even though there were periods of a more pronounced Norwegian repertoire. Thus, the polemics and disputes mark the elemental undertone of Norwegianness during the nineteenth century, and the critical, independent and reflective nature of the Norwegian citizens questioning of the authorities. The Christiania Theatre was a catalyst of Norwegianness, fighting, above all, against foreign cultural elements, the foreignness of which had to be constantly emphasized precisely because of its cultural similarity.

The union between Sweden and Norway had been under severe dispute during the last decades of the nineteenth century and this also aroused more severe questioning of the cultural ties with Denmark.⁷⁹ A recurring term Blanc uses when he is dealing with the actors of the Christiania theatre – mainly Danish until the 1860s – is *assistance*.⁸⁰ Thus, the reader gets an impression of the professional Danish actors as merely assisting the Norwegian ones. The narrative thus admitted some Danish influence, but denied the Danishness of Norwegian theatrical life.

⁷⁶J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 94–7.

⁷⁷Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, p. 127–8.

⁷⁸In the table of contents there are the following titles, seven altogether, that emphasize theatre as an arena of demonstrations: 'Striden mellem Patrioten og Danomaner' (The Struggle between Patriots and Danomanics), 'Campbellerslaget' (The battle of the Campbell), 'Theaterslaget den 6. Maj 1856' (The Theatre battle of the 6th May 1856), 'Nye Stridspunkter' (New Struggles), 'Demonstrationer mod Direktionen' (Demonstrations against the Direction), 'Oppositionen mod same' (The opposition toward the same [Josephson]), 'Demonstrationerne i Theatret ved hans Tiltraedelse' (Demonstrations at the theatre during his appointment). Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, pp. VII–VIII.

⁷⁹Cf. Moi, *Henrik Ibsen*, p. 42.

⁸⁰'Fremmed assistance', see, e.g., Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, pp. 41, 65, 120, 149, 214.

In contrast to Aspelin-Haapkylä, the paternalistic tone is missing in Blanc's account of the staff and audience of the theatre. To slightly simplify the matter, the demonstrations were the Norwegian element in the history of the Christiania Theatre, whereas at the heart of Aspelin-Haapkylä's Finnishness was the unity of the theatre, that is, national community, a uniform understanding of the national culture and of the means and sacrifices demanded to create it.

In Aspelin-Haapkylä's discussion Finnishness is a linguistically and ethnically defined monolithic, unquestionable entity. In Blanc's history the concepts he uses seem to offer a more open and changeable definition of Norwegianness. He explains how directors and actors became 'Danish' or 'Norwegian' – sometimes even 'denationalized',⁸¹ when they were exposed to different cultural influences. If there is the possibility to become denationalized, perhaps, then, there is a chance of coming back, to be renationalized? Thus, it seems to me that there is more individual choice in Blanc's narrative than in Aspelin-Haapkylä's.

The difference between the political and intellectual culture of Finland with its exceptionally strong Hegelianism and the more liberal tendencies of the nationalistic movements of its western neighbours have been pointed out in previous studies, and my comparison of the theatre histories confirms these results.⁸² The outcome of the construction of Finnish-language culture and the power-political arguments attached to that process was an intellectual culture where the emphasis was on ethical life (in the sense of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*), national unity and national interest rising above all individual aspirations. Therefore, essentially Finnishness is a question of the relationship between individuals and the community; individualism (and thus the toleration of plurality) versus the compelling nature of collectivity.⁸³

Concluding remarks

In their narration historians can, and usually for the sake of accuracy must, bring up incongruities. Nevertheless, they are able to guide the reader in a certain direction with their narrative and rhetorical choices. Both historians, Blanc and Aspelin-Haapkylä, seize the opportunity to write a coherent, logical narration confirming the birth and maturation of their vernacular national theatre cultures. Aspelin-Haapkylä's task is to make the establishment of the National Theatre of Finland the endpoint of an inevitable process of nation

⁸¹ Terms in Blanc's history are *fornorskelsen*, *daniserede*, *denationalisered*. Blanc, *Christiania Theaters*, pp. 135–8, 229, 275.

⁸² Jalava, 'Hegeliläisyys', p. 301; Pulkkinen, 'Kansalaisyhteiskunta', pp. 54–68; Witoszek, 'Fugitives', *passim*; L. Trägårdh, 'Statist Individualism: On the Culturality of the Nordic Welfare State', in *The Cultural Construction*, *passim*.

⁸³ Jalava, *Minä ja maailmanhenki*, pp. 67, 172–83, 236–40, 432.

formation, and to convince readers of the worth of his Old-Fennoman opinions concerning the social relations and intellectual atmosphere in the new political and cultural situation, where the imaginary cohesion of the nation was under continuous threat caused by the more aggressive policies of the Russian Empire. According to his Christian-idealistic, aesthetic nationalism, art was to give form to the objective longings of the nation, and the artists' (and in this framework also the historians') highest mission was to be prophets of their own nation.⁸⁴

Blanc did not take, or perhaps was not given, the task of the prophet so self-evidently. On the whole, the narrative tension in his history is constructed around the question of how to make the Danishness of the Christiania Theatre both a prerequisite for the development of the independent Norwegian theatre and, simultaneously, something foreign and distinct from the cultural essence of Norwegianness. Blanc seems to be struggling with his storyline of the Norwegianization of the Christiania theatre occasionally and, as a reader, one cannot escape the author's feeling of disappointment about the last decades of the Christiania Theatre before the establishment of the National Theatre in 1899. Its heydays under Bjørstjerne Bjørnson were followed by a period of 'weak directors' working with a mixture of Dano-Norwegian dialects and Swedish. Its decline found a logical endpoint in Blanc's narrative in the flames that were to consume the theatre at the end of the nineteenth century.

Both histories have to be placed in the framework of the Nordic and Finnish and Norwegian historiographies. After the political changes at the beginning of the nineteenth century, historians and the wider cultural elites of the Nordic countries started to write either new ideal histories of their respective nation states (that is, the situation in Sweden and Denmark after the loss of their former geopolitical frontiers) or histories for the new, emerging nation-states (Norway, Finland). Thus, Sweden and Denmark were relying on notions of a long, unbroken history, whereas Finland and Norway needed to study and write the 'new past', thus stressing their differences to the neighbouring established nation-states, claiming their rights to exist as separate nations, if not yet independent, cultural and political entities.⁸⁵

However, there seems to be a difference between Norwegian and Finnish historiography, at least when it comes to the theatre histories of Aspelin-Haapkylä and Blanc. The latter writes within the paradigm of an isolationist historiography, stressing the pure Norwegian past without any cultural influences coming from the outside. The authentic, indigenous national identity is thus restored by diminishing the influence of foreign cultures. In Finland the historiography was divided roughly into two different factions following the

⁸⁴ Moi, *Henrik Ibsen*, p. 161.

⁸⁵ Stråth and Sørensen, 'Introduction', pp. 14–15; Østergård, *The Geopolitics*, pp. 46–59.

language barrier from the nineteenth century onwards.⁸⁶ Aspelin-Haapkylä's narrative is part and parcel of the Grand Narration of Finnish-language Finnishness, promoted by most Finnish-language historians and criticized by the Swedish-language ones. At the same time, however, he is connecting Finnishness to the cultural traditions of Western Europe. That was the cultural heritage both Aspelin-Haapkylä and Karl Bergbom knew and were attached to, ever since their grand tours as students. In comparison, the ancient past inspired by *Kalevala* remained mostly unfamiliar to their generation. However, it is possible that the plays inspired by the Swedish era had actually nothing to do with Sweden and Swedishness as such; their performances were already a part of the tradition of the theatre and bore connotations which the audience creatively re-evaluated in new situations.

Both histories also share the inclination of Nordic historiography to see greatness and dignity in poverty and defeat.⁸⁷ However, one of the most obvious differences between the two histories is caused by Aspelin-Haapkylä's task of writing a biography and also, partly, an autobiography. Therefore, he can use effective, emotionally engaging rhetorical devices, which offer points of identification for the reader.⁸⁸ On the whole, Aspelin-Haapkylä's main task is to construct and consolidate the memory of nineteenth-century Finnish Theatre – the memory of the ideal paternalistic community celebrating its achievements in theatrical performances.

In Aspelin-Haapkylä's theatre history the power of the rhetoric of the unity of the people is so overwhelming that it almost convinces the reader of Finnish theatre history of the existence of a theatre meant for the whole nation, including all segments of society. And perhaps the theatre even was there for the whole Finnish nation, but the dialogue between stage and spectators should, according to Aspelin-Haapkylä's views, be in one-direction only. In other words, theatre presented monologues of nation-ness, of the ideal Finnish standard language, national types and characteristic features, even of the ideal Finnish appearance. These monologues were so powerful that the counter-stories or disagreements were not even worth historians' or, for that matter, theatre directors' attention.

Blanc, in his history, emphasized the active role Norwegian public discussions had in defining the theatre, and hence, also the nation. Although the debates surrounding the Christiania Theatre naturally involved the urban population of the capital, Blanc does not bring the concept of the people into

⁸⁶ P. Tommila, 'Kansallisen historiankirjoituksen synty', in P. Tommila (ed.), *Suomen tieteen historia* (Porvoo 2000), pp. 69–71.

⁸⁷ Stråth and Sørensen, 'Introduction', pp. 14–16.

⁸⁸ For example, topos of the deathbed scenery in the first and last part of the history. Aspelin-Haapkylä, *Suomalaisen I*, p. 50; *Suomalaisen IV*, pp. 276–7.

his argumentation about the need for a national theatre and an independent national culture. The main protagonist of Blanc's narration is the public sphere, that is, the intelligentsia and wealthy bourgeoisie of the capital. Thus, it has to be pointed out that neither of the authors paid attention to or analysed the social composition of the audience. They also ignored questions of access to the theatre reflecting social hierarchies.

The huge emphasis on one's own cultural identity is quite clear in both histories, which is understandable for nations striving to institutionalize their place on the European map of nations.⁸⁹ However, it seems to me that it is even more so in the Norwegian case. Blanc begins his history by comparing the situation in Christiania to that in Copenhagen and Stockholm, but then abandons the comparative perspective. The history of Norwegian theatre is written strictly from the national perspective. The discussion of the influence that famous Norwegian playwrights had already had in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Europe is left out of the story. On the whole, the history of Norwegian theatre produced strong borders to Danish cultural influences, precisely because of the linguistic similarity between Danish and Norwegian. It constructed a rhetoric of exceptionalism, which was based on something other than language, whereas in Finland the Finnish language was at the heart of all formulations concerning not only the theatre, but also the people, nation and citizenship as a whole.

⁸⁹ See Østergård, 'The Geopolitics', pp. 47–8; Pulkkinen, 'Kielen ja mielen ykseys', p. 118; P. Saukkonen, 'Porvari ja talonpoika. Kansanluonteen 'kansa' Zachris Topeliuksella ja Robert Fruinilla', in Marja Keränen (ed.), *Kansallisvaltion kielioppi* (Jyväskylä 1998), *passim*,

11

Nation, State and Empire: The Historiography of 'High Imperialism' in the British and Russian Empires

Andrew Mycock with Marina Loskoutova

Introduction

In the age of 'high imperialism' during the late nineteenth century, the size of the imperial state and its population were increasingly perceived as complementary to economic and military power in asserting status in world power politics. This, however, stimulated a range of critical challenges to imperial legitimacy and cohesion for most European empires. The most pressing of these challenges was how to adapt to the spread of nationalist and democratic ideologies without dissolving their own territorial sovereignty. For a brief period during the late nineteenth century, elites in many European empires adopted similar approaches in an attempt to construct imperial states through the promotion of homogenous, though hierarchical and exclusory, national-imperial identities founded on shared racial or ethno-religious dynamics.

The commonality of such challenges was particularly apparent in the British and Russian Empires, though their responses differed significantly. In Britain, political elites encouraged a pragmatic and relatively peaceful democratization of the imperial core and eventual decolonization. The Russian experience proved far more traumatic, with a series of violent revolutions leading to the establishment of Communist rule and, for many, an extension of imperial rule which only came to an end in 1991. For Dominic Lieven, such variations reflect differences in the way imperial power was constituted, highlighting distinctive political cultures and economic circumstances between 'backward and peripheral Russia and mighty Britain'. Although the metropolitan core of both empires was situated on the periphery of Europe, Lieven suggests the British were 'maritime and insular' whilst Russia was 'a great continental land empire'.¹

It is noteworthy, then, that if such differences are acknowledged, the British and Russian Empires shared many facets in their expansion and composition

¹ D. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 120–7.

which encourage comparative study. Both empires were imperial states whose metropolitan *and* peripheral territories were explicitly and consciously multinational. This meant that there was considerable ambiguity between borders of imperial core and periphery, furthered through extensive migration from the core to colonial territories, thus expanding but also blurring the political, economic and cultural borders of nation, state and empire.

The challenges in constructing a coherent national-imperial narrative to engender a common identity and patriotism were therefore in many ways similar. Historiography could not and did not remain immune to these ideological currents and imperial narratives were reconstructed, with the cultural, religious and ethnic borders between core and periphery redrawn by some historians in order to promote greater commonality. This chapter first explores how the trichotomy of nation, state and empire influenced the development of imperial historiography in the late nineteenth century. It considers key texts of two influential historians of the period, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* by John Robert Seeley (1834–1895) and the *Course of Russian History* (Курс русской истории) by Vasily Osipovich Klyuchevsky (1841–1911). The chapter highlights common motives for both authors in reconceiving British and Russian national-imperial narratives to extend the boundaries of history writing, and the impact of other concepts, particularly race, ethnicity and religion on shaping narratives of exclusion and inclusion within the empire-nation. The chapter assesses the extent to which the authors succeeded in rearticulating the national histories of England and Russia within extended imperial contexts, and finally considers the legacy of their approaches on subsequent historiography.

Klyuchevsky, Seeley and the historiography of ‘High Imperialism’

The multinational and ethno-culturally plural composition of the British and Russian Empires encouraged the English and ethnic Russian *Staatsvolk* to reject particularistic national ideologies or identities of their respective ethno-national groups. This meant British and Russian national-imperial identities developed as a political extension of their dominant national groups, with little perceived difference between the two.² The growth of both empires was defined by two interconnected and overlapping phases. The first, that of the internal empire, saw the colonizing national group establish an imperial core whose historical past and accordant identity predominantly reflected their

² W. Connor, ‘A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group is a...’ in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1:4 (1978), 378–97.

own but within a broader multinational civic framework.³ The simultaneous expansion of an 'external' empire and settlement of some acquired territories proved key in creating a second parallel historical discourse founded on the 'Otherness' of imperial rivals and colonial peoples.⁴ The English and ethnic Russians were therefore conceived as dually imperial peoples, drawing on conflated (multi)national-imperial historiographies to promote and celebrate their political and ethno-cultural values and institutions.

This afforded some acknowledged commonality for certain other national groups, though the messianic qualities of the dominant ethno-national group were continually stressed.⁵ The national history of the imperial state was portrayed as one of continuous English and ethnic Russian progression through the 'civilizing' of other national or ethnic groups. Kumar suggests this can be understood as a form of 'missionary nationalism' which drew on key ethno-national attributes, such as language, history and culture, but sought expression within the broader national-imperial political state.⁶ However Kumar's thesis convenes the norms of nationalism theory, namely the centrality of a defined territory or 'national homeland', by suggesting its dilution within transnational contexts. It would therefore be more appropriate to describe approaches adopted as 'missionary imperialism' – nationalist chauvinism sporadically articulated in efforts to 'Anglicize' or 'Russify' imperial subjects whilst consciously avoiding sustained efforts to construct an imperial nation-state through the deliberate asymmetric differentiation of citizenship rights.⁷

³ The extent that this should be seen as part of the broader imperial project is a matter of some debate. On the development of an internal British and Russian Empires, see M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975); A. Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (Munich, 1992); G. Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire, 1552–1917* (London, 1997).

⁴ Pagden notes that whilst Spanish and French historians tended to consider colonies inseparable from the sovereign, the British increasingly saw them as distinct, voluntarily formed, internally autonomous societies, A. Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven, CT, 1995).

⁵ See L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London, 1992); Y. Slezkine, 'Naturalists versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity', in D. R. Brower and E. J. Lazzerini (eds), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington, IN, 1997).

⁶ The suppression of national 'euphoria' can be seen as a tacit awareness of the potential impact of self-aggrandizing nationalism on nation, state and empire building. See K. Kumar, 'Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative Perspective', *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 575–608.

⁷ See D. Yaroshevski, 'Empire and Citizenship', in D. R. Brower and E. J. Lazzerini (eds), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington, IN, 1997); K. McClelland and S. O. Rose, 'Citizenship and empire, 1867–1928', in C. Hall and S. O. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006).

The intensity of British and Russian national-imperial identities was therefore substantially defined by the degree of national, ethnic and religious commonality acknowledged and the perceived proximity of imperial subjects to the dominant colonizing group.⁸ Recognition of diversity and plurality, though often tacit, ensured that attempts to construct national-imperial identities founded on agreed historical narratives increasingly exacerbated self-determinist nationalist tensions across both empires as the nineteenth century progressed.⁹ It is in the light of such challenges that a historiography of 'High Imperialism' emerged in Britain and Russia in the late nineteenth century. Imperial expansion and colonization emerged as major historiographical themes which restructured national historical narratives as a key explanatory device to articulate the empire-nation's past. It was hoped that such efforts would strengthen ascription to a shared imperial purpose and identity through the projection of a common transnational historical narrative. Both Seeley and Klyuchevsky strove to redefine the histories of their respective nations in such a way as to bring the imperial dimension into the foreground. Their volumes were founded on common concerns of imperial overexpansion, the strains of which were apparent and had been compounded by the continued legacy of past political or religious schisms.

Seeley, who was Regius Professor of History at Cambridge from 1869 until his death in 1895, delivered his lecture course on the British Empire in 1881–82, it being subsequently published in 1883. *The Expansion of England* said little new on the motivations of imperialism and, though it professed to counter the amateurism of (nameless) populist historians who wrote like 'novelists' or a 'newspaper politician',¹⁰ Seeley himself rejected the practice of the 'scientificity' of history that he lauded within the text.¹¹ The book, however, had a significant influence on Anglo-British historiography and the public consciousness, and established imperialism as a central theme of modern British

⁸ See A. Stoler, 'On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty', *Public Culture* 18 (2006), pp. 125–46.

⁹ See, amongst others, T. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontiers, 1863–1914* (DeKalb, 1996); A. Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the 19th Century* (Budapest, 2003); R.G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (London, 1988); T. M Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1707–2000* (Harmondsworth, 1999); G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (London, 1991); R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* (London, 1988).

¹⁰ J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Course of Lectures* (London, 1883) (reprinted 1931), p. 166. K. Robbins notes that Seeley believed 'hard and dry facts were to be preferred to the writings of "charlatans" like Macaulay or Carlyle', K. Robbins, 'Ethnicity, Religion, Class and Gender and the "Island Story/ies": Great Britain and Ireland', in S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *Society and the Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender* (Basingstoke, 2008).

¹¹ D. Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History* (Cambridge, 1980).

history.¹² Although the concept promoted by Seeley of a 'Greater Britain' was not itself new,¹³ it suggested a reordering of the Empire to build a 'federal union' founded on common race and religion. He famously asserted that the English 'seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind', but 'did not reckon our colonies as really belonging to us'. Seeley was troubled that, although 'the growth of Greater Britain is an event of enormous magnitude', the English lacked pride in their empire and were uncertain as to 'whether our increase is a matter for exultation or for regret'.¹⁴

For Seeley, the tensions which had led to the 'Schism of Greater Britain', through American independence, were again threatening the community of Englishmen across the empire. He highlighted an intellectual crisis that challenged the central tenets of Victorian liberalism,¹⁵ meaning motivations for empire were partly 'out of empty ambition of conquest and partly out of a philanthropic desire to put an end to enormous evils'.¹⁶ The English were, according to Seeley, 'not merely of a ruling but of an educating and civilizing race',¹⁷ echoing a common-held justification forwarded by Victorian imperialists.¹⁸ Seeley was convinced that British imperial focus on the expansion of the Indian Empire was ill-judged, incurring 'vast responsibilities, which were compensated by no advantages'. As increased competition emerged from the United States and Russia – the latter viewed with 'perpetual dread'¹⁹ – challenged the economic and military primacy of the British Empire, Seeley argued for withdrawal from

¹² The resonance of the British Empire within the mindset of British society during the nineteenth century has stimulated intense academic debate. A number of historians have argued that press reportage, mass entertainment and other popular culture practices were strongly influenced by Britain's imperial pursuits, which had a significant influence on the attitudes of the masses in the late Victorian period. See, amongst others, J. M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (Manchester, 1984); A. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c.1880–1932* (Harlow, 2000); and E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993). However, Bernard Porter has argued that empire did not figure prominently in popular culture, particularly within the working classes, at least until the later years of the nineteenth century. See B. Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture* (Oxford, 2005).

¹³ The origins of the term 'Greater Britain' are credited to Sir Charles Dilke, who used the term in his travelogue of the Empire published in 1868 to describe his travels in the 'White Dominions'. See, C. W. Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in the English-Speaking Countries during 1866 and 1867*, 3 vols (London, 1868).

¹⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 10–14.

¹⁵ Burroughs, 'John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 1:2 (1973), 191–211, here p. 202.

¹⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 353.

¹⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 302.

¹⁸ K. Kumar, 'Empire and English Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 12:1 (2006), 1–13, esp. 2.

¹⁹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 353.

India and the building of a 'federal union' with the 'ten millions of Englishmen who live outside of the British Islands' founded on 'community of race, community of religion, community of interest'.²⁰ He asserted 'if Greater Britain in the full sense of the phrase really existed, Canada and Australia would be to us as Kent and Cornwall.'²¹

The 'dilemmas of empire' which faced Russia as the nineteenth century drew to a close centred on how to govern a huge and growing multi-ethnic population and territories with an archaic quasi-feudal autocratic political system which stunted the development of a coherent modern state-building programme.²² Efforts to construct a national consciousness were continually undermined by a largely illiterate peasant population, poor communication networks, and unparalleled ethnic and linguistic diversity (certainly within European contexts).²³ During the nineteenth century, Russian intellectuals engaged in debate over the composition of a Russian nationality, the extent of inclusion or exclusion of non-Russian ethnic groups, and the relativity of Russian nation-building approaches *vis-à-vis* those adopted by other states, particularly in Western Europe.²⁴ Russian nationalist historians, some in response to the military failure in Crimea and the Polish uprising of 1863 (and the Western criticism of Russian responses), sought to project a more generous conception of Russianness which was pan-Slavist in origin, but promoted a singular civic national-imperial community.²⁵

Klyuchevsky was one of a number of Russian nationalist historians who sought to promote an expansive and inclusive Russian nation and culture which assimilated various (but not all) minorities.²⁶ He believed that 'centuries of effort and self-sacrifice have been needed to form the Russian Empire; yet the people by which that State has been formed has not yet taken its place in the front rank of European nations to which it is entitled by its moral and material resources.'²⁷ Such assimilationist approaches emphasized perceived differences between Russian empire-state building and its Western

²⁰ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 13.

²¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 13.

²² D. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 265–7.

²³ See, amongst others, G. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians* (London, 2001), pp. 1–6; V. Tolz, *Inventing the Nation: Russia* (London, 2001), pp. 1–18.

²⁴ For an excellent overview of differing approaches to Russian nation building in the nineteenth century, particularly competing projections of the nation by 'Westernizer' and 'Slavophile' historians, see V. Tolz, 'Russia: Empire or a Nation-State-in-the-Making?', in T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds), *What is a Nation?* (Oxford, 2006).

²⁵ Tolz, *Russia*, pp. 301–3.

²⁶ R. F. Byrnes, 'Kliuchevskii's View of the Flow of Russian History', *The Review of Politics* 55:4 (1993), 565–91.

²⁷ V. O. Klyuchevsky, *A History of Russia*, vol. 1, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London, 1911), p. 1.

counterparts and became firmly associated with Klyuchevsky.²⁸ This view formed the conceptual foundation of his *opus magnum*, the multi-volume survey *Course* which he developed through his teaching career in the Moscow University, the Moscow Theological Academy and Moscow Higher Women's Courses from the 1870s, and which was eventually published between 1904 and 1910.²⁹ Klyuchevsky believed the 'moral wholeness' of the Russian national community had been shattered by the preparedness of imperial elites to embrace Western practices and culture, its 'ecclesiastical expression' reflected in the schism of the Russian Orthodox Church during the seventeenth century.³⁰

For both authors, the works selected proved their most recognized and important, being initially conceived from courses prepared for university audiences and also enjoying considerable public appeal. They firmly believed that their task as historians consisted in educating public opinion and, in a certain sense, rectifying national self-consciousness. Seeley believed the principal role of the historian was as an educator, particularly a political educator, for nation and empire, to ensure history should 'end with something that might be called a moral'.³¹ He emphasized the contribution of history in informing both the present and the future, arguing that 'we should all no doubt be wise after the event; we study history that we might be wise before the event'.³² Klyuchevsky similarly believed history should be used to learn from the past, and envisaged his role to be one of even greater importance,

²⁸ On Klyuchevsky, see V. A. Aleksandrov, 'Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii (1841–1911): The 150th centenary of his birth', *History of the USSR* 6 (1991), 57–69; M. V. Nevchika., *Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii: The History of his Life and Works* (Moscow, 1981); R. A. Kireeva., *Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii as a Historian of Russian Historical Science* (Moscow, 1968); A. A. Zimin, 'The formation of Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii's historical outlook in the 1860s', *Historical Notes* 69 (1961), 178–96; R. F. Byrnes, 'The Survey Course that became a Classic Set: Kliuchevskii's Course of Russian History', *The Journal of Modern History* 66:4 (1994), 737–54; G. Vernadsky, *Russian Historiography. A History* (Belmont, MA, 1978).

²⁹ Klyuchevsky began preparing his *Course* for publication in mid-1890s. Four volumes of his *Course* were published in Moscow in 1904–10 under his personal supervision. The last and fifth volume of the *Course* covering the period from the reign of Catherine the Great to the abolition of serfdom in 1861 was published posthumously in 1921 under the supervision of Yakov Barskov, a former student of Klyuchevsky and his assistant in preparing the first four volumes. Lithographs of the volumes were available for students before publication.

³⁰ V. O. Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London, 1913), p. 374.

³¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 1.

³² Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 169.

perceiving historians to be at least as important as rulers or critical events in shaping national consciousness.³³

Both historians sought explicitly to challenge established historiographical traditions in their respective countries, which had focused exclusively on the development of state institutions, law, and 'high' politics. Seeley sought to expand the remit of Anglo-British historiography through the rejection of enduring 'Whiggish' constitutional themes in favour of a history of imperial expansion; 'to look at things from a greater distance and more comprehensively [...] the extension of the English name into other countries in the globe'.³⁴ He was prepared to denigrate some of his contemporaries from the 'bombastic school of history' for their misguided historical focus, asserting that the 'sober view' of 'history is concerned, not mainly with the interesting things which may have been done by Englishmen or in England but England herself considered as a nation and a state'.³⁵ Through his academic and teaching career, Klyuchevsky emerged as a major rival and opponent of Sergei Solovyov, his mentor and predecessor as the Chair of Russian History at the Moscow University and the leader of the so-called 'state school' in Russian historiography. While the historians of the 'state school' were primarily concerned with the history of the Russian state, its institutions and forms of law, Klyuchevsky introduced a new dimension in the master-narrative of Russian history by focusing on the nation itself, its economic activities, popular beliefs, patterns of settlement and on its colonization drive across geographic space.³⁶

Within both Seeley's *Expansion* and Klyuchevsky's *Course*, their respective nations' history acquired a rather impersonal vein, dominated by processes rather than personalities and events. Although Seeley was critical of a number of political leaders and monarchs, particularly those associated with the loss of the American colonies, by his own admission he wrote 'not as a biographer'.³⁷ Klyuchevsky presented in detail powerful psychological portraits of such major figures in Russia's history as Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great or Catherine the Great and many other rulers, statesmen, church dignitaries, writers and thinkers. However, virtually all these portraits were the means to highlight and explore the moral and psychological outlook of Russian

³³ R. F. Byrnes, *V. O. Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), pp. 128–9.

³⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 9. See also M. Lee, 'The Story of Greater Britain: What Lessons does it Teach?', *National Identities* 6:2 (2004), 126.

³⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 341, 357. Seeley cites Thomas Babington Macaulay and G. M. Trevelyan as the main proponents. See J. Hamburger, *Macaulay and the Whig Tradition* (Chicago, 1976); J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian historians and the English past* (Cambridge, 1981).

³⁶ Byrnes, *Flow of Russian History*, pp. 586–9.

³⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 156.

society as a whole or its ruling class of a particular period. Significantly, both historians did not shun acknowledging the undistinguished character of the rulers at the crucial periods of their nations' territorial expansion. Seeley was scathing in his assessment of the Hanoverian monarchs, particularly the 'dim figures' of George I and George II.³⁸ In a similar vein, Klyuchevsky presented the grand dukes of Moscow of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as 'rather colourless figures', who possessed 'a remarkably steady mediocrity', and lacked moral courage, greatness of spirit or even pronounced vices and passions.³⁹ Both therefore sought to elevate the expansion of England or Russia to a level beyond the reach of the personal fortunes of individual rulers, military commanders or rival aristocratic factions.

Extending the boundaries of the national-imperial state

Seeley and Klyuchevsky sought to identify the origins and expansion of their respective empire-nation as organic. For Seeley, the expansion of England into 'Greater Britain' should be seen 'in a certain natural sense' to be a 'full-grown giant developed out of the sturdy boy'.⁴⁰ English history was 'pregnant with great results', and even the loss of the United States was seen as natural, colonies – like fruit – were likely to 'fall from the tree as soon as they ripen'.⁴¹ Klyuchevsky similarly viewed Russian imperial expansion through a 'natural and necessary' series of 'primary or natural unions'.⁴² However, he drew on the natural world to provide metaphors for the expansion of empire, describing the migration of Muscovite people in a series of 'short little bird flights from region to region, abandoning the places they had been into new ones'.⁴³ Moreover, concerns about pressures over the progress of 'modern Russia reminds one of the flight of a bird which, driven before the wind, cannot make full use of its wings'.⁴⁴

The role of war in empire building was relegated in both texts, as was the coercive or violent nature of continued colonization. In contrast with many nation-building narratives of the period, imperial expansion was portrayed as largely peaceful and non-violent. Seeley explained that English acquisition of largely unpopulated territories ensured that imperial expansion was peaceable – 'our Empire is not an empire at all in the ordinary sense

³⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 20.

³⁹ V. O. Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 2, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London, 1912), pp. 46–7.

⁴⁰ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 190.

⁴¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 359, 180–1.

⁴² Byrnes, *Flow of Russian History*, p. 572. See also Tolz, *Russia*, p. 303.

⁴³ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 50.

⁴⁴ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1911, p. 4.

of the word. It does not consist of a congeries of nations held together by force.⁴⁵ Klyuchevsky's selective accounts of Russia's past avoided much of the political discord and war associated with its imperial expansion. As Byrnes notes, Klyuchevsky's view of empire was 'an inexorable and peaceful process, with a few exceptions or casualties, except for the reign of Catherine the Great'.⁴⁶

Both authors adopt essentially teleological approaches, promoting a national-imperial history which was explicitly preordained. In both accounts territorial expansion of the empires was predetermined by the geographical position of the two nations. England's location – 'the fact that our island towards the West and North looks right out upon the Atlantic Ocean' – facilitated 'the maritime greatness of England', which Seeley viewed as key to British imperial success.⁴⁷ Acquisition of new territories was a logical and necessary reaction to the overcrowding of Britain, though Seeley sought to emphasize that colonialists only 'occupied parts of the globe which were so empty that they offered an unbounded scope for new settlement'.⁴⁸ England was merely expressing its moral right to 'unclaimed wealth' in 'boundless territories' where 'our language is spoken, our religion professed and our laws established'.⁴⁹

For Klyuchevsky, the expansion of the Russian nation and state was conditioned by the geography of the vast expansive plains of the Eastern part of Europe. Through his mentor Sergei Solovyov, Klyuchevsky adopted the vision of Russian history as shaped by its geographic environment.⁵⁰ He emphatically stressed in the introductory lectures of his *Course* that in the earliest history of the Russian Empire, the 'boundless and inhospitable' East European plain 'was not yet settled throughout by the people'.⁵¹ The East European plain posed no natural barriers to the emergence and expansion of the Russian Empire. The same was true for the southern steppes, which could be viewed as a direct extension of the East European plain. Explaining what led Moscow to become the 'true ethnographic centre of the Great Russian people' and 'collector of the Russian lands', Klyuchevsky elaborated the idea of

⁴⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ Byrnes, *Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia*, p. 140. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky notes that Klyuchevsky identified five main methods for obtaining territory; purchase, armed seizure, diplomatic seizure, service agreements with appanage princes, and settlement by the Muscovite population. See N. V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey* (New York, 2005).

⁴⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 94–5.

⁴⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 55.

⁴⁹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 55–70.

⁵⁰ See Mark Bassin, 'Turner, Solov'ev, and the "Frontier Hypothesis": The Nationalist Signification of Open Spaces', *The Journal of Modern History* 65:3 (1993), 473–511, esp. 491–4.

⁵¹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 2; vol. 5, 1931, p. 208.

'the advantageous geographic position' of the city. Moscow's location at the juncture of strategic roads and waterways, and its relative safety from Tatar raids, encouraged Klyushevsky to outline subsequent Russian colonization from the centre to peripheral areas of the plain along the rivers as a natural, inevitable process.⁵²

Territorial expansion was therefore conceived as legitimate and reflective of their nation's imperial qualities having been bestowed by history. By redefining the history of England and Russia as one of legitimate territorial expansion, both historians articulated the borders of the empire-nation as malleable and fluid; ill-defined but legitimized by the extensive settlement of sparsely or uninhabited territory. As such, the empire-nation was not defined by ancestral national homelands that had been settled by them at the moment of their 'origin'. For Seeley, this meant the territories of Greater Britain were 'a real enlargement of the English State', whilst Klyuchevsky saw that 'Russia's history, throughout, is the history of a country undergoing colonization and having the area of that colonization and the extension of its State keep pace with one another.'⁵³

By identifying that expansion was the key element in the history of their respective national-imperial states, both historians reconsidered the chronological divisions framing their narratives. Seeley concentrated on the eighteenth century, portraying it as a distinctive and privileged period in English history which saw the creation of 'Greater Britain' but 'has faded out of our imaginations'.⁵⁴ For Klyuchevsky, Russian history, and the very nature of the Muscovite state, corresponded to the trajectory of the colonization drive across the East European plain.⁵⁵ However, for both, it was the most recent stages in their respective histories that provided evidence of the success of nation-imperial expansion, though this was also problematic and created new threats to imperial cohesion.

For Seeley, the union of Great Britain under Queen Anne and settlement in North America as concurrent, with the secession of the United States as proof of the success of the first phase of English imperialism – a continuous

⁵² Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, pp. 272–6.

⁵³ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 51; Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 209.

⁵⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 26.

⁵⁵ Klyuchevsky, vol. 5, 1931, p. 210–12, outlined four periods of Russian colonization; 'the Dnieper Rus' of the eighth to twelfth centuries, the 'Upper Volga Rus' of the thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries, the 'Great Russia' of the Muscovite era from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, and the 'All-Russian' (всероссийский), or imperial period. In this last period, autocracy and nobility emerged as the major political forces, denoted by the ascension of the Romanovs to the Russian throne in 1613 through to the abolition of serfdom in the mid-nineteenth century.

transition which emphasized that 'liberty has of course been a leading characteristic of England as compared with continental countries'.⁵⁶ It was, however, the expansion of a second empire that confirmed the success of the English imperial model, particularly the settlement of the 'White Dominions'. Seeley's 'Greater Britain' incorporated 'the four great territories, the dominion of Canada, the mass of South African possessions, the Australian group (including New Zealand), and the West Indian islands 'inhabited either chiefly or to a large extent by Englishmen and subject to the crown'.⁵⁷ This noted, he was sensitive to the issues leading to American secession, most notably the over-taxing to make 'pecuniary profit', this being key to the 'schism'.⁵⁸ Concern over future schisms led Seeley to propose that 'the mother country' should cease 'to make unjust claims and impose annoying restrictions' on the colonies, and ensure 'there is risk, not to say also intellectual impoverishment, in independence'.⁵⁹

Klyuchevsky identified a distinct and different stage of the colonization process after the end of 'the Time of 'Troubles' and the accession of the Romanov dynasty that underlined the legitimacy of Russian imperialism. Russia had transcended the territory of the Great Russian core and transformed itself from a nation-state to the Empire by the 'joining' of Little Russia (the Ukraine) and other lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the opening of Siberia and the acquisition of the Baltic and the Black Sea coastal areas. By merging the seventeenth, eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries into a single period, Klyuchevsky implicitly broke from an established tradition to portray the era of the Petrine epoch as the major watershed in Russian history, dividing 'the old' and 'the new' Russia.⁶⁰ Klyuchevsky repeatedly stressed that the internal 'split' in Russian society, the loss of a common moral and intellectual background between the common folk and the upper classes, caused by Western influences, had emerged well before Peter the Great, and was partially conditioned by the expansion of the Muscovite state in the seventeenth century. For Klyuchevsky, 'Moscow's external policy had the effect of inspiring a theory of a common nationality, of a common state'.⁶¹ However, imperial expansion beyond the Great Russian core in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries subjected Russia to European influences and brought the country into the foreground of European politics. This estranged the mental and moral outlook of the Russian elites from the mass

⁵⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 176.

⁵⁹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 346.

⁶⁰ V. O. Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 4, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London, 1926), pp. 345–51.

⁶¹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 2, 1912, p. 13.

of the Russian people thus diluting the national self-consciousness of the Russian people.⁶² The expansion of Russia on the fringe of Europe, for Klyuchevsky, was not an advantage but a security problem, almost a curse, and further incursions into the Asian steppes were 'increasingly complicated and onerous'.⁶³

Inclusion and exclusion of the empire-nation

The expansion of the historical boundaries of the English and Russian empire-nations were, however, founded on a selective approach which involved the deliberate exclusion of some territories, particularly those which were considered to be already populated. Seeley projected 'Greater Britain' as modern 'in the main and broadly English' throughout. Conversely, colonial India highlighted the potential problems of over-expansion, being a 'crowded territory with an ancient civilization, with languages, religions, philosophies and literatures of its own'.⁶⁴ It was 'both constitutionally and financially an independent Empire'⁶⁵ where a different 'colonial' approach to empire had been adopted 'blindly' which 'profoundly altered our state'.⁶⁶ India was distinct and uniquely problematic – 'only bound to us by the tie of conquest' and possessing an 'enormous native population', the colony 'least capable of evolving out of itself a stable government'. Conquest and colonization had been undertaken not by England but by the East India Company for commercial reasons, inducing unnecessary wars and creating 'almost intolerable responsibilities' which overburdened parliament and challenged the progress of liberty.⁶⁷ Seeley therefore questioned the ability to maintain and govern an empire in India *and* the frontier settler territories in the 'White Dominions', noting it was only a matter of time before India would 'violently reject' England.⁶⁸

Klyuchevsky's thesis focused on the absorption of the 'Russian plain', extending geographical boundaries and the limits of popular migration to unify 'all portions of the Russian land' including Little Russia, White Russia and New Russia. This he saw as 'an All-Russian Empire'.⁶⁹ However, whilst territory, culture and race appeared to combine in legitimizing Russian expansion to the west and south, it is significant that the growth of the Russian Empire to the east did not fit into his view of the Russian empire-nation. Klyuchevsky saw the expansion of empire, particularly into the Caucasus under Catherine

⁶² Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1913, pp. 374–6.

⁶³ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia* vol. 3, 1913, p. 129.

⁶⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 217.

⁶⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 295.

⁶⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 206–7.

⁶⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 212, 296.

⁶⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 204–20.

⁶⁹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, pp. 211–12.

the Great, as 'placing an immense strain and drain upon popular resources'.⁷⁰ Little mention was made of expansion into Central Asia or the Far East other than to discuss the achievement of the Siberian railway; his Russia was mainly European Russia. Though he did acknowledge the acquisition of territory beyond the Urals and the migration of some Russians, he argued that 'Russia is in no way Asia historically'.⁷¹

Both authors highlighted the centrality of race and ethnicity in projecting a sense of national-imperial community. Although some have denied that Seeley was a racist or jingoistic,⁷² the structure of the book promotes race as a key category, leading some to suggest he was motivated by 'ethnic bombast and smug belief'.⁷³ Indeed, the very distinction between 'settler' and 'colonial' empires reflected the growing importance of race in conceptions of empire, particularly in the period immediately before Seeley began his lecture series.⁷⁴ Like many English historians of the period, he seamlessly conflated 'English' and 'British';⁷⁵ England was the core of 'Greater Britain', providing a 'common nationality, common religion and common interest',⁷⁶ built by 'tens of millions of Englishmen'.⁷⁷ The projection of England as the core of imperial Britishness was, however, tempered by some recognition of the multi-nationality of Britain. The presence of 'Celtic blood and Celtic languages utterly unintelligible' in Scotland, Wales and Ireland alluded to the possibility of non-English national characteristics, though this did not undermine the 'ethnological unity of the whole'.⁷⁸

For Seeley, racial diversity could not be allowed to undermine or qualify his idealistic conception of 'Greater Britain'.⁷⁹ As he noted, 'Greater Britain is not a mere empire, though we often call it so. Its union is of the more vital kind. It is united by blood and religion.'⁸⁰ He believed the 'English Empire was throughout of civilized blood', including the West Indies 'so far as it had a slave population'. Seeley's concerns centred on the possible dilution of the English race, as the 'deterioration of the national type by barbaric inter-mixture' had

⁷⁰ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1913, p. 8.

⁷¹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 225.

⁷² O. Chadwick, 'Historian of Empire', *Modern Asian Studies* 15:4 (1981), 879.

⁷³ E. H. Gould, 'A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution', *American Historical Review* 104:2 (1999), 476–89, esp. 486.

⁷⁴ C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002).

⁷⁵ H. Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 2–5.

⁷⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 59.

⁷⁹ Burroughs, 'John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History', pp. 199, 206–7.

⁸⁰ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 60.

proven the unbounding of the Spanish and French Empires.⁸¹ He noted that, though the English Empire was virtually free from the 'forced union of alien nationalities', four 'great groups' were 'considerable abatements'. Of those groups, the native Australian race were 'so low in the ethnological scale that it can never give the least trouble', whilst West Indian slaves, though 'stamped so visibly in colour and physical type', were seen to have 'no community of feeling'. In South Africa, 'an indefinite native population' were seen as showing 'a power of combination and progress such as the Red Indian never showed'. Dutch settlers had proven resistant to English colonization, unlike their French counterparts in Canada who were 'likely to be lost in the English immigration'. Seeley was, however, pragmatic about the presence of such groups within Greater Britain, noting that as the English nation had accommodated the Welsh, Scots and Irish, 'in the Empire a good many French and Dutch and a good many Caffres and Maories may be admitted without marring the ethnological unity of the whole'.⁸²

However, differentiation of those within the Indian empire was more sustained. Seeley was clear that there was 'no question about the general fact that the ruling race in British India has a higher more vigorous civilization than the native races'. Two distinct layers of population were seen to exist, 'a fair-skinned and a dark-skinned race', the latter of which 'is in many parts not civilized and ought to be classed as barbarous'.⁸³ India was seen to possess 'no community of race or religion', and 'has no tie of blood whatever with the population of England'.⁸⁴ Moreover, 'the idea of nationality seems in India to be thoroughly confused' due to 'a mixture of races, a domination of race by race'.⁸⁵ This meant a 'homogeneous community does not exist there' but, instead, 'two or three races hating each other'. Such weakness in Seeley's view was core to India's colonization as 'they have no patriotism but village-patriotism'.⁸⁶ India therefore 'ought not to be classed with such names as England or France' as it was not a nation or a state but, instead, 'a geographical expression' with 'the territory of many nations and many languages'.⁸⁷

The articulation of the centrality of Russian 'blood' was not as explicit or central to Klyuchevsky's thesis; indeed, he openly acknowledged 'the multi-racial and scattered elements of the population became compounded into a whole and therefrom there rose the Great Russian nationality'.⁸⁸ However, he

⁸¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 161.

⁸² Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 59.

⁸³ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 277–80.

⁸⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 204, 214.

⁸⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 237.

⁸⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 237–8.

⁸⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 256–7.

⁸⁸ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1913, p. 9.

made clear distinctions between Westernized 'Germanic Slavs' and 'Eastern Slavs', the latter being the 'original progenitors of the Russian nation' who became 'fixed in a geographical and ethnographical setting'.⁸⁹ Sanders suggests Klyuchevsky saw the history of Russia as that of a nation colonizing itself,⁹⁰ with the action of two factors, 'racial fusion and natural environment' producing a 'special national character', leading to a distinctive 'branch' of the Russian nation – the Great Russians.⁹¹ Klyuchevsky saw a direct link between family, tribe and nation founded on religious, juridical, linguistic and cultural commonalities tied by 'stock', 'spiritual unity' and 'oneness in historical fortunes and interests'.⁹² He believed such attributes were inherent amongst a 'Great Russian stock' resulting from the merging of Russian migrants from the Kievan Rus' and Finnish aborigines, who then expanded outwards from their Muscovite heartlands to integrate the Little, White and 'New' Russias of the southern steppes.⁹³ This merging meant 'the three main branches of our race, the Great Russian stock stands to the Little Russian in the proportion of three to one, and the Little Russian to the White Russian in a similar ratio'.⁹⁴

As the focus of the *Course* was to extend and legitimize the boundaries of the Russian nation-empire, national minorities were only considered in opposition to the Russian nation. The Tartars were therefore viewed as 'the blind instrument which created the Russian political and popular forces', meaning that Russian imperial expansion was 'the advance guard and the rearguard of European civilization'.⁹⁵ Caucasian tribes were 'warlike', whilst the Khans of Central Asia were accused of 'adopting a hostile attitude'.⁹⁶ Central to the emergence of a Great Russian stock was the emancipation from 'national enslavers'; the 'ever-increasing shower of blows from Tartar and Lithuanian quarters' have the effect of 'inspiring the theory of a common nationality'.⁹⁷ Klyuchevsky remained firmly within an established Russian historiographical tradition by refusing to acknowledge any positive cultural or political impact of the Golden Horde, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth upon the population of the Kievan Rus' after its dissolution. The 'raw-flesh-eating' Tatars, the 'treacherous' Lithuanians, and the Polish

⁸⁹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 2.

⁹⁰ T. Sanders, 'Introduction', in T. Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (Armonk, NY, 1999), p. 8.

⁹¹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, pp. 295–316, esp. pp. 295–6.

⁹² Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 200.

⁹³ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1913, pp. 2–3; and vol. 1, 1911, pp. 209–13.

⁹⁴ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 203.

⁹⁵ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 288; vol. 2, 1912, p. 321.

⁹⁶ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 263.

⁹⁷ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 2, 1912, pp. 13, 319.

were treated by Klyuchevsky as purely external factors in Russian history, the Poles were seen as an 'unwanted friendship' and a threat to the continued aggregation of Russian lands and people, and survival of the nation.⁹⁸

Religion also played a key role in establishing commonality and difference across the English and Russian Empire-nations. Seeley noted that, although religion had divided Europe, the building of Empire meant 'the religious question with all its grandeur has sunk to rest'.⁹⁹ He believed that 'religion seems to me to be the strongest and most important of all the elements which go to constitute nationality', with Christianity in general, and Protestantism in particular, promoting 'a certain unity'.¹⁰⁰ Seeley also noted the English 'have always declared that we held sacred the principle of religious toleration', though this was qualified on the 'understanding we are obeyed'.¹⁰¹ This noted, he saw religious diversity in India as providing another motivation for British withdrawal. The multi-religious composition of India meant that 'we come as Christians into a population divided between Brahminism and Mohammedism'.¹⁰² India's religious plurality was seen to continually undermine the emergence of an Indian nationality, though Seeley noted that 'in Brahminism India had a germ out of which sooner or later an Indian nationality might spring'.¹⁰³

Klyuchevsky's projection of Russian Orthodoxy belied a surety in the position of the Church *vis-à-vis* the state and its role in creating an inclusive Russian national consciousness and culture as the empire expanded. One could not be Russian without being an Orthodox Christian.¹⁰⁴ He viewed the schism of the Russian Church as 'an ecclesiastical expression of the moral cleavage of the Russian public which arose from Western culture'.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, he articulated a common ascription to Russian Orthodoxy for Eastern Slavs, noting 'an educated Russian man cannot be an unbeliever'. However, for the most part, Klyuchevsky assigned the Church and religion a modest role in Russian history and where it conflicted with his own view of the past, he simply omitted it from the *Course*.¹⁰⁶

Both authors sought to use race, ethnicity and religion to promote cohesive narratives to inculcate a revived sense of national-imperial community. Where the influence of such themes compromised the unity of such narratives,

⁹⁸ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 293; vol. 5, 1931, pp. 255–6.

⁹⁹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁰ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 261.

¹⁰¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 322.

¹⁰² Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 215.

¹⁰³ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 261.

¹⁰⁴ Byrnes, *Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁵ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 3, 1913, p. 374.

¹⁰⁶ Byrnes notes that Klyuchevsky consciously avoids the term 'Holy Russia'. See Byrnes, *Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia*, ch. 11.

particularly religion, they were often overlooked. Seeley and Klyuchevsky deliberately constructed histories which justified expansion through the migration or liberation of the imperial ethno-national groups who remained tied by blood, religion and common culture. This unity was tied to expressions of spatial togetherness; an imperial community defined by the territory which they populated. Such frameworks were equally as important in defining who was to be excluded from the national-imperial community. Of more importance than historical or narratological consistency was the utilization of signifiers of inclusion and exclusion to provide the parameters of commonality which conflated and overrode the norms of nation, state and empire. This meant, however, that their respective national-imperial narratives were both crucial in establishing a sense of historical commonality but also provided an 'otherness' which defined historiographies which challenged the legitimacy of Empire.

Limitations in the historiography of 'High Imperialism'

Seeley and Klyuchevsky encouraged the development of an explicitly national-imperial historiography whereby empire and nation were conceived within a symbiotic relationship founded on a shared citizenship, defined by key institutions which refuted mono-dimensional hierarchical conceptions founded on metropolitan power and subservient colonies alone. Since Seeley was writing the history of an oceanic empire, the basic distinction between the metropole and overseas colonies seemed somewhat self-evident. His task consisted precisely in proving the unity of the nation across the ocean, to prove England was 'not an empire but only a very large state, this is because the population is English throughout and the institutions are of the same kind'.¹⁰⁷ For Klyuchevsky also, it was self-evident that Russian migrants retained their national identity through the process of colonization, no matter how far they spread across the East European plain and beyond. Territorial expansion of the Russian nation-state might have stimulated some tensions between and within the state and society, but not the centre-periphery of the Russian Empire-nation.

However, the extent to which either author succeeded in rejecting established nationalist approaches and the creation of a distinct national-imperial history writing in articulating British or Russian Empire-nations must be questioned. The retrospective re-articulation of the national-imperial narratives are indicative of a defensive imperialism in the late nineteenth century which sought to legitimate each empire-nation, but also highlighted uncertainties about their missionary imperialist motivations. For Seeley, questions arose as to the morality of the empire in India which suggests 'our Western civilization

¹⁰⁷ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 350.

is perhaps not absolutely the glorious thing we like to imagine'. In rhetorically querying whether India has gained from English colonization, he notes 'they see much destroyed, bad things'.¹⁰⁸ Though Klyuchevsky did not question the imperial mission, he is critical of the reserved character of the Great Russians, which made them insensitive to issues of community or relationships with their 'fellow men'. Great Russians were inured to disappointment, also lacking in qualities that facilitated long-sustained, systematic toil.¹⁰⁹

More significantly, neither author managed to suppress their ethno-national origins and project a more inclusive narrative of the empire-nation. Therefore the 'historiographies of High Imperialism' considered in this chapter were founded on a linear, continuous progression, which drew on messianic themes more akin to established nationalist approaches to history writing, but within broader imperial contexts. Neither text provided a wholesale rejection of the notion that the English or Great Russians were dually imperial peoples nor did the authors seek to acknowledge cultural or political plurality across the British or Russian Empires. Although the boundaries of the historical narrative may have been extended, there was no suggestion that the experience of imperial expansion had contributed positively or reshaped the history or identity of the empire-nation. Therefore, the central purpose of English and Russian historiography continued to project outwards a narrative that was chauvinistic, being both self-sustaining and self-justifying.

The narrative approaches adopted to induce a sense of commonality held inherent contradictions which highlighted the challenges of articulating an organic and inclusive national-imperial historiography. Within both texts, there is a deliberate distinction between peaceful incorporation of territory within 'Greater Britain', the All-Russian Empire and the respective colonial territories which are conquered through more aggressive means. However, this projection of the peaceful settlement of territories is open to question. British settlements in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa were all shaped by violent exchanges, either with indigenous peoples or other imperial competitors.¹¹⁰ Equally, Russian expansion across Little and White

¹⁰⁸ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 354–5.

¹⁰⁹ Klyuchevsky attributed the failure of Russia to industrialize as their Western European counterparts had to this weakness in the Great Russian racial character. See Kluchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, pp. 218–20.

¹¹⁰ See D. K. Richter, 'Native Peoples of North America and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire', in P. J. Marshall, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998); C. A. Bayly, 'Encounters between British and "indigenous" peoples, c.1500–c.1800', in M. Daunton and R. Halpern (eds), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850* (Philadelphia, 1999).

Russia was shaped by conflict as much as by peaceful settlement.¹¹¹ Though no primordial territorial claims were made by either author, uncertainty prevailed as to the exact boundaries of the empire-nation. Seeley overlooked formal and informal imperial colonization elsewhere when articulating the composition of 'Greater Britain', or the uncertainty of the boundaries of the four dominions themselves. The borders between Klyuchevsky's Great Russia and its colonial empire as a whole were never defined. Though he noted that Russia's Central Asiatic dominions 'lay reaching right to the borders of Afghanistan', the pervading idea of Russia as 'summoner of the Eastern European Orthodox-Slavonic populations' gave rise to further expansion southwards and westwards to 'combine into a single great Orthodox-Slavonic Empire'.¹¹²

Though Seeley promoted the idea of federation, there was little evidence that the expansion of the empire-nation was considered either multi- or trans-nationally British, as opposed to English, in origin. The centrality of the 'genius of the Anglo-Saxon race' was paramount, sustaining many of the familiar themes of English Whig history, particularly the concept of the expansion of liberty, within a broader imperial framework.¹¹³ Scotland's contribution to Empire was seen as an act of English altruism, affording relief from 'the poverty of the country' meaning 'no nation has since, in proportion to its numbers, reaped so much profit from the New World as the Scotch'.¹¹⁴ Seeley of course overlooked that, by ratio, more Scots than English had volunteered to expand the empire.¹¹⁵ Indeed, by proposing that 'Greater Britain is homogenous in nationality', no reference was made to competing nationalist movements or religious schisms across the British Isles, most particularly in Ireland.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Seeley overlooked the possibility that settler communities were also capable and willing to construct competing national ideologies that challenged the legitimacy of his 'Greater Britain'.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ M. Raeff, 'Patterns of Russian Imperial Policy Toward the Nationalities', in E. Allworth (ed.), *Soviet Nationalities Problems* (New York, 1971).

¹¹² Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 129.

¹¹³ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 94.

¹¹⁴ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 152–3.

¹¹⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 152. For discussion of Scotland's extensive contribution to the growth and governance of the British Empire, see M. Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2002); T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire: 1600–1815* (London, 2004).

¹¹⁶ See S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2002).

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., edited volumes on the growth of a distinctive national culture and identity in Australia and Canada within the *Oxford History of the British Empire* companion series, D. M. Schreuder and S. Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford, 2008); P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008).

Klyuchevsky's elaborate theory of the making of the Russian nation and stock through colonization contained a number of potentially dangerous implications for the common national-imperial identity of all Eastern Slavs. Precisely because his concept of empire placed a heavy emphasis on the imperial nation, and its material culture, language, memory and 'self-consciousness', he was able to produce a powerful account of the colonization of the north-east and the emergence there of a distinctive 'branch' of Russian people – the Great Russians. The assertion that Ukrainians were direct descendants of the population of the ancient Kievan Rus', and thus essentially belonged to a 'larger Russian nation',¹¹⁸ strengthened the latter concept and worked against Polish claims to the lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Kiev should therefore be viewed as 'the cradle of Russian nationality', 'the mother of the other cities of Russia', indeed where the 'idea of the Russian land' first emerged.¹¹⁹

However, the historical disjuncture created by the 'scattering' of the Great Russian peoples during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries meant that no coherent narrative for the 'southwestern Rus' could be produced. This highlights an obvious disparity between the accounts concerning the fate of the two 'branches' of the Russian nation after the tragic 'rupture of the nationality', signposting a curious implication that the Ukrainians had much stronger claims to the Kievan Rus' patrimony than the Russians proper. Klyuchevsky of course was firmly against such a supposition. But his concept required just a small step further to claim that the Ukrainians constituted not a 'branch', but a nation with its own distinctive history and character – and it was this nation which was the only true heir of the ancient Kievan Rus'.¹²⁰ Similarly, the long history of a distinct nationality of the Lithuanians was ignored,¹²¹ as was the fragmented nature of Eastern Orthodoxy or the role of other faiths in the construction of competing non-Russian identities in western and central parts of the empire, particularly Catholicism and Islam.¹²²

¹¹⁸ On the history of this concept in nineteenth-century Russia, see A. Miller, *Imperial Authorities, Russian Public Opinion and Ukrainian Nationalism in the Second Half of the 19th Century* (St. Petersburg, 2000).

¹¹⁹ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, pp. 94, 284, 291.

¹²⁰ Ukrainian historian Mykhaylo Hrushevsky in his *Essay on the History of the Ukrainian People* (1906) and multi-volume *History of the Ukraine – Rus* (1913) develops these themes. See A. Miller, 'The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian Nationalism', in A. Miller and A. Rieber (eds), *Imperial Rule* (Budapest, 2004).

¹²¹ Byrnes, *Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia*, pp. 144–5.

¹²² See R. P. Geraci and M. Khordarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversions and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 2001); P. W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, governance and confessional politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Regions, 1827–1905* (Ithaca, NY, 2001).

Neither author sought to inculcate an egalitarian sense of national-imperial citizenship; class and gender were not utilized to enhance a sense of commonality. Though Klyuchevsky was more prepared to acknowledge the centrality of the 'people', particularly the Russian peasantry, across the empire, unlike some of his counterparts, he did not venerate them.¹²³ He saw servility and serfdom as a necessary sacrifice that the Russian people 'was forced to make in the seventeenth century in its struggle for safety and external security'.¹²⁴ Whilst Seeley was prepared to acknowledge a growing influence of middle- and lower-class subjects in public affairs, there was no acknowledgement of the asymmetry of political rights amongst settler communities.¹²⁵ Both authors provided gendered national stereotypes of their states but gender was not central to their theses. Seeley projected a matriarchal English imperial nation who was morally distinct and more caring than 'her' less successful European rivals.¹²⁶ Klyuchevsky saw the expanding Russian lands as a 'common fatherland' rather than the more benevolent, peaceful and long-suffering peasant woman, but also more ethnically exclusive, 'Mother Russia'.¹²⁷

There were major differences between Seeley and Klyuchevsky which stem from the way they conceived nation, state and empire, and how they perceived the essence of major challenges to their respective imperial states. For Klyuchevsky, Russia was seen as one and indivisible – a 'nation-state seeking to become top ranking';¹²⁸ though the inefficiencies of the bureaucratic absolutist Tsarist state were manifold, thus limiting the potential to inculcate a common sense of imperial nationality,¹²⁹ He did not, however, consider necessary any limiting of autocracy or the encouragement of a political system that allowed for greater participation and could facilitate the emergence of a non-Russian separatist nationalism. The major challenges for the Russian Empire in Klyuchevsky's view were predominantly social; that is, a lack of unity between the government and educated society, and between educated society and the mass of population within the Russian core. He foresaw the collapse of social cohesion within the imperial core as imminent – but not the dissolution of the empire's periphery. And yet in his explanatory framework, the issue of social

¹²³ R. F. Byrnes, 'Kliuchevskii's View of the Flow of Russian History', in T. Sanders (ed.), *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (Armonk, NY, 1999), p. 254.

¹²⁴ V. O. Klyuchevsky, *The Good People of old Russia: Essays and Speeches, The second collection of articles* (Moscow, 1913), p. 157, cited in Byrnes and Kliuchevskii, *Historian of Russia*, p. 151.

¹²⁵ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 112–13.

¹²⁷ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 5, 1931, p. 220.

¹²⁸ Klyuchevsky, *History of Russia*, vol. 1, 1911, p. 1.

¹²⁹ Byrnes, *Kliuchevskii, Historian of Russia*, pp. 190–5.

stability within the Russian core was directly linked to the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire.

Though Seeley was keen to promote a federalized 'Greater Britain', there was little recognition of the possibility that such a political system could provide alternative civic centres which would dilute or distort his Anglocentric conception of history and identity. It is unclear whether this oversight was deliberate or indicated a lack of understanding of the rising national consciousness across Britain and its empire. Seeley noted that whilst English migrants carried their nationality and the *imperium* of her majesty with them,¹³⁰ 'the Canadian and the Victorian are not quite like the Englishman'.¹³¹ The federation that he sought would have attempted to codify a series of delicate relationships, projecting an egalitarian conception of Britishness which would have proven unpalatable to most of his fellow Englishmen.¹³² Indeed, the example of American federalism so ardently purported by Seeley also highlighted the failings of his 'Greater Britain' thesis, suggesting a preparedness to accept a revised federated British identity which undermined the saliency of the established Anglo-Britishness he sought to promote.

Such differences were fundamental in explaining distinct conceptions of the English and Russian Empire-nation. Kluchevsky's nationalism was more founded on the Russian colonizing of territory accumulated through imperial expansion, whilst Seeley sought to appeal to an existing ethnographic community across 'Greater Britain'. Therefore, whilst Seeley articulated the imperial and colonial aspect of British history very clearly, Kluchevsky provided a Russian historiography in which the imperial dimension was conceived as part of a broader narrative of the Russian people. Even if the structuring idea of colonization and expansion did expand the parameters of Russian historiography, his intention was to write national not imperial history.

Concluding thoughts – the enduring legacy of the historiography of High Imperialism

The importance of Kluchevsky and Seeley should be viewed through their success in reconceptualizing the narratives of the British and Russian Empires beyond established or orthodox national parameters to encourage a trans-national historiography and shared identity. In this, they can be seen to have had both short-term and long-term success. Each author not only influenced public perceptions of empire and also significantly altered the content of

¹³⁰ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley*, p. 96.

¹³¹ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 15.

¹³² A. Pagden, 'The Empire's New Clothes: From Empire to Federation, yesterday and today', *Common Knowledge* 12:1 (2006), 36–46, 40.

classroom instruction of national history in their respective fledgling state education systems. Seeley's volume was widely used in schools and continued to influence strongly the writing of history textbooks until at least the 1930s,¹³³ and resonated in classrooms, particularly across the empire, into the early 1960s.¹³⁴ In 1899, still preparing his *Course* for publication, Klyuchevsky produced a simplified version as a textbook for Russian secondary schools. By 1917 it had been published eight times and translated into a number of other languages, and continued to be used in some schools in the post-revolutionary period.¹³⁵

However, in a period of rising national self-consciousness, it is unsurprising that many imperial subjects did not wholly subscribe to the authors calls to induce a renewed sense of national-imperial patriotism. In practical terms, the aspirations of both authors were soon undermined by events of the early twentieth century and the ultimate failure of imperial systems to develop common identities and policies which could neutralize and counteract secessionist nationalist claims.¹³⁶ Klyuchevsky's view of the Russian past was quickly undermined as the Russian Revolution curtailed the Tsarist Empire-nation whose history he had painstakingly charted.¹³⁷ His Russophile narrative was quickly discredited through the pursuit of Leninist Soviet nationalities policies which encouraged the propagation of non-Russian national discourses (*korenizatsiya*) and the rejection of Russian chauvinism.¹³⁸

Stalin's promotion of Russified Soviet history, pragmatically initiated in the 1930s and intensified during the Great Fatherland War, ensured that

¹³³ *The Expansion of England* was in continuous publication until 1956, and was republished again in 1971. See also P. Horn, 'English Elementary Education and the Growth of the Imperial Ideal 1880–1914', in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Benefits Bestowed: Education and British Imperialism* (London, 1988), p. 39. See also P. Yeandle, 'Englishness in Retrospect: Rewriting the National Past for the Children of the English Working Classes, c.1880–1919', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 6:2 (2006), 9–26.

¹³⁴ D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London, 2001).

¹³⁵ On Klyuchevsky's and other secondary school history textbooks, see A. N. Fuchs, *School Textbooks on Russian History (1861–1917)* (Moscow, 1985). Fuks has counted 22 secondary school history textbooks of 'a liberal trend' that were in use in the Russian Empire in the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which could be associated with 'Klyuchevsky's school' (pp. 43–6).

¹³⁶ For an excellent analysis of the failure of imperial systems to address the rise of secessionist nationalism across Europe, see T. Rakowska-Harmstone, 'Main Themes – A Commentary', pp. 295–304, in R. L. Rudolph and D. F. Good (eds), *Nationalism and Empire: The Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Empire* (New York, 1992).

¹³⁷ D. G. Rowley, 'Imperial versus national discourse: The case of Russia', *Nations and Nationalism* 6:2 (2000), 23–42.

¹³⁸ The first generation of Soviet Marxist historians, particularly M. N. Pokrovsky, were highly critical of the lack of a monist theoretical understanding of history. See T. Emmons, 'Kliuchevskii's Pupils', in Sanders, *Historiography of Imperial Russia*, p. 134.

Klyuchevsky's influence endured.¹³⁹ Soviet historians therefore mirrored their pre-revolutionary counterparts by encouraging Russians to equate their national homeland with that of the Soviet Empire.¹⁴⁰ The view of Russian liberal historians, such as Solovev and Klyuchevsky, that the Russian Empire was a Russian nation-state endured for much of the Soviet period. This drew on common imperial myths concerning the organic territorial and cultural expansion of the imperial ethnies.¹⁴¹ Indeed, as the Soviet system stagnated, and emergent non-Russian nationalist discourses increasingly challenged established Soviet narratives in the separatist republics,¹⁴² Klyuchevsky's thesis once again rose to prominence, with some Russian nationalist movements facilitating the re-publication of the *Course* in 1987 which, within two years, sold 250,000 copies.¹⁴³ Its continues to influence history textbooks of Russian in schools in the post-Soviet period which draw on many of the historical themes promoted by Klyuchevsky, the most important being the 'manifest destiny' of Russia which continues to define ethno-national consciousness and identity. Therefore, for many, the question of 'what is Russia' continues to extend beyond its cauterized borders and remains defined by an enduring missionary imperialism which conflates nation, state and (former) empire.

For Seeley, the duality of English nationalism ensured that his conception of imperial Anglo-Britishness was never fully accepted. The penetration of an imperial identity was questionable, and pervading 'Little Englander' sentiment ensured federation was never accepted politically or emotionally by many.¹⁴⁴ Questioning of the morality of British imperialism, combined with the failure to mollify nationalist aspirations across the empire and within the imperial core of the British Isles, ensured a slow and protracted imperial withdrawal.¹⁴⁵ Seeley's desire to see a 'Greater Britain' emerge was undermined by the impact

¹³⁹ Views on the influence of Klyuchevsky, and the emergence of a 'Moscow School' of Russian historians under his tutelage, vary. Byrnes views Klyuchevsky as 'the greatest historian of Russia', whose students shaped the writing of history across the Soviet Union and the United States, see Byrnes, 'Flow of Russian History', p. 565–7. Emmons provides a more balanced overview of his contribution to imperial Russian and Soviet historiography, see T. Emmons, 'Kliuchevskii's Pupils', in T. Sanders, *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (Armonk, N.Y., 1999), pp. 118–145, esp. pp. 134–140.

¹⁴⁰ Tolz, *Russia*, p. 184.

¹⁴¹ Tolz, *Russia*, p. 172.

¹⁴² See R. G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA, 1993), esp. ch. 4.

¹⁴³ Byrnes, 'Flow of Russian History', p. 566.

¹⁴⁴ See B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850–1983* (London, 1984).

¹⁴⁵ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York, 1902), pp. 2–5; R. Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006).

of the First World War and the refusal of the British parliament to countenance suggestions of compromise over sovereignty and power.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, doubts emerged regarding the longevity of Seeley's synthesis of national and imperial history, which instead created a new distinct and separate subfield of imperial history.¹⁴⁷ Significantly, it also failed to stem the production of Whiggish and national (rather than national-imperial) English historians and history.¹⁴⁸

However, the establishment of British imperial history as a defined, recognized field of historical inquiry, be it one largely pursued by historians outside of Britain, had a profound impact on Seeley's own and later generations.¹⁴⁹ The post-imperial amnesia within British historiography, alluded to by Aldrich and Ward in this volume, has begun to be redressed in the past twenty-five years or so.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, the exploration of Russian imperialism, both Tsarist and Soviet, has also intensified in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹⁵¹ The historical relationship between empires and states is attracting renewed interest, particularly transnational histories, and is most obviously located in debates about identity and culture. Although there has been growing diversity in the understanding of empire, and a greater preparedness to question the morality of British and Russian colonial policies,¹⁵² overarching themes of missionary imperialism continue to influence some accounts of empire, meaning some of the core themes of the historiography of 'High Imperialism' endure.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ J. A. Pocock, 'The New British History in Atlantic Perspective: An Antipodean Commentary', *American Historical Review* 104:2 (1999), 490–500, here 491.

¹⁴⁷ J. R. Tanner, 'John Robert Seeley', *The English Historical Review* 10:39 (1895), 514–517, 514; D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 17.

¹⁴⁸ See P. B. M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and constitutional development in Whig historiography and in the anti-Whig reaction between 1890 and 1930* (The Hague, 1978); N. Jardine, 'Whigs and Stories: Herbert Butterfield and the Historiography of Science', *History of Science* 41 (2003), 125–40.

¹⁴⁹ Burroughs, 'John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History', p. 192.

¹⁵⁰ See also J. Gascoigne, 'The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism', *The Historical Journal* 49:2 (2006), 577–92.

¹⁵¹ For an excellent overview of the conceptual challenges of the new imperial history in Russia, see I. Gerasimov, S. Glebov, A. Kaplunovski, M. Mogilner and A. Semyonov, 'In Search of a New Imperial History', *Ab Imperio* 6:1 (2005), 33–56.

¹⁵² See, e.g., C. Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London, 2005); A. Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (New York, 2004).

¹⁵³ N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (London, 2004); Y. Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia*, trans. Antonia W. Bouis (Washington, 2007).

12

Ends of Empire: Decolonizing the Nation in British and French Historiography

Robert Aldrich and Stuart Ward

This chapter offers a comparison of the impact of decolonization on national historiography in Britain and France. It is concerned, first, to map out the broader interpretative trends within the subdiscipline of imperial history in the decades since the 1960s. Here we will suggest that British and French historiographies have followed remarkably similar trajectories, where an initial period of 'empire neglect' gave way, in the 1980s, to a renewed interest in the relationship between empire and metropolitan culture that continues to this day. Further, we will explore the extent to which decolonization might have influenced the very conception of 'national' history in the two countries. It has been a common axiom among generations of British scholars that the end of empire brought greater political and social upheaval in France than in the United Kingdom. Yet in the longer term, it can be argued that 'France' has proven more stable and resilient as the core ontological subject of historical enquiry.

An examination of these wider problems and trends will be interspersed with a discussion of how decolonizing processes influenced specific historical works at different times. This is, however, an exercise fraught with difficulty. It is one thing to establish the influence of political and social contexts on the broader patterns of history writing in any given field or time frame. It is quite another to ascribe these influences to a specific author or text in a non-reductive way. As Frederick Cooper recently reflected in *Colonialism in Question*: 'What makes intellectuals think what they think is always elusive – the intellectual in question may be the last to know – and figuring out what resonates with a larger public is more elusive still.'¹ We will therefore endeavour to locate our analysis of specific texts within the broader corpus of British and French historiography.

Specifically we will examine the recent revival of interest in the colonial wars that occasioned decolonization, referring to the work of Benjamin Stora on Algeria, and Caroline Elkins on Kenya. Both writers, stylistically and

¹ F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Berkeley, CA, 2006), p. 35.

methodologically, approached their subject with the intention of 'breaking the silence' – of laying bare the full extent of the horrors and abuses that were inflicted in the name of preserving the last bastions of empire. This technique not only invested their work with a heightened degree of critical engagement, but also resonated with wider debates about the ethical underpinnings of the post-imperial nation.

Post-imperial amnesia

Perhaps the most immediate effect of decolonization – in Britain and France alike – was the virtual banishment of imperial history to the margins of national historiography. The end of empire brought a decoupling of national and imperial history – a pronounced hesitancy to incorporate empire into the narration of the national story. While there had long been a tacit division of labour between national and imperial historians, the gap seemed to widen with the pace of decolonization from the 1950s to the early 1980s. In the case of Britain, this was partly due to the proliferation of new national histories throughout the former colonial world. The fledgling new nation-states were sustained by new histories, new journals, and new careers for historians who no longer placed Britain in centre frame. While Oxford luminaries like Hugh Trevor-Roper continued to debate whether Africa had a 'history' (or merely the 'unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes' as he infamously put it in 1968), that new history was being written elsewhere. The *Journal of African History*, founded in 1960, was soon followed by the *Journal of Southeast Asian History* and the *Journal of Pacific History* – at the very time that Manning Clark had set out on what he termed 'the discovery of Australian history'.² This fragmentation of focus and expertise, while an understandable and perhaps even necessary corollary to the wider process of decolonization, was ill-suited to preserving a sense of the imperial dimensions of 'British History'. John Seeley's 1880 classic *The Expansion of England* went out of print in 1956 – the same year that Britain's imperial pretensions were punctured at Suez. While imperial history continued to be written and taught, it became more an enclave on its own than a sub-specialization of national history. Many of its practitioners felt this keenly, and resented the stigma of imperial nostalgia that had become attached to the subject.

France shared in the post-imperial amnesia, as post-1945 scholars championed different historiographical priorities. The revolution and social movements, as well as republicanism and its opponents, and especially the *Annales*-style social history 'from the bottom up' and in the '*longue durée*', commanded attention, and few of the well-known practitioners in these

² See, e.g., Clark's 1976 Boyer Lectures, *A Discovery of Australia* (Sydney, 1976).

areas – from Lefèbve and Soboul to Furet in studies of the Revolution, *Annales* historians from the founders of the ‘school’ through Braudel and Le Roy Ladurie – had much to say about colonialism. Debates on the Marxist versus non-Marxist, and social versus political dynamics to 1789 and its aftermath revealed a *franco-français* preoccupation with metropolitan France, despite the impact of revolutionary changes and the contest of ideologies in the colonial world. Braudel did not extend his pioneering study of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* to the late modern period, when France became ever more closely invested in North Africa and the Middle East; Le Roy Ladurie’s landmark studies took early modern provincial France as their domain. The former colonies continued to be studied – with notable works, for instance, by Charles-André Julien and Charles-Robert Ageron on North Africa, and Henri Brunschwig, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Marc Michel on sub-Saharan Africa – but much of the focus was on the rise of nationalism in the ex-colonies.

As Jean-Louis Triaud has pertinently remarked, the distancing from traditional colonial history that the new historians of Africa established was intentional. ‘Colonial history’ was often seen to have compromised itself through its association with colonialism, even judged (not entirely accurately) as having been one of the academic arms of colonialism itself. The new historians wanted to focus on the history of African peoples rather than solely on the French in Africa; they were as much interested in pre-colonial Africa as the colonial era. They were more concerned about the effects of colonialism than the articulation of colonial policy; they chronicled the resistance to colonialism and the birth of anti-colonial nationalism. Such history writing thus often tried to divorce itself from colonialism to become region- or country-centred rather than empire-centred.³ When Charles-André Julien (an eminent and anti-colonialist specialist on Africa) retired as Professor of Colonial History at the Sorbonne in the 1960s, his chair, the only one specifically in ‘colonial history’, was not filled, yet just a few years later, French universities began establishing chairs in African history. The word ‘colonial’, or the 1930s euphemism of ‘overseas’ (*outre-mer*) that had largely replaced it, now seemed suspect as a name for areas of study and institutions that were effaced just as surely as were other material traces of colonialism in the public sphere.

As Frederick Cooper has remarked, ‘the study of colonial empires had by the 1970s become one of the deadest of dead fields within history.’⁴ Some specialists of colonized areas might disagree with that sweeping assertion, citing the long and praiseworthy list of theses produced in France from the 1960s to the early 1980s; nevertheless the point is well taken. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, one

³ J.-L. Triaud, ‘Histoire coloniale: le retour’, *Afrique et histoire* 6:2 (2006), 237–47.

⁴ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 13.

of the leading historians of Africa and of colonialism, has noted the relative absence of major works on French colonial ideology and policy (looking at the empire as a whole) in the 12 years between Raoul Girardet's 1972 volume on the colonial idea in France and Jacques Marseille's 1984 study of the economics of the French Empire. Even when new historiographical strategies emerged, the silence on colonial issues was evident. Pierre Nora, for instance, introduced the study of 'lieux de mémoire' in a magisterial and multi-volume collection published in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but only a single chapter, on the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris, was devoted to empire. Coquery-Vidrovitch, however, sees the lack of attention to 'colonial' history not so much as a voluntary effort to forget or hide the colonial past, as some recent critics have alleged, so much as the relative indifference of a generation of historians, and the general public, to the theme, and the diversion of attention to other areas including the African-centred concentration of many 'third world' specialists.⁵ France, meanwhile, as a country with no major colonies after 1962 had to redefine itself for a post-colonial history – yet colonial history was deemed to offer little to that project.

This is not to say that decolonization left no imprint whatsoever on national historiography in this era. But its effects were to be subtle and implicit, as new histories redrew the boundaries of the national subject. Just as the new post-colonial nation-states of Asia and Africa sought new historiographical underpinnings for their national existence, so too the former imperial metropolises had to be recast in a post-imperial mould. Of particular significance here is J. G. A. Pocock's highly influential 1973 lecture on the nature and dimensions of British history.⁶ Speaking from his native Christchurch under the evocative title 'British history: A Plea for a New Subject', Pocock called for a decisive shift in the contours and nomenclature of British national historiography.⁷

⁵ C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Histoire de la colonisation et anti-colonialisme: Souvenirs des Années 1960–80', *Afrique et histoire* 6:2 (2006), 247–61. (The references are to R. Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France* (Paris, 1972); J. Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: histoire d'un divorce* (Paris, 1984) and P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1984–92).)

⁶ First published in 1974 by the *New Zealand Journal of History*, and republished the following year in the *Journal of Modern History*. J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *New Zealand Journal of History* 8 (1974), 3–21 and *The Journal of Modern History* 47:4 (Dec 1975), 626–8.

⁷ Pocock's influence can be traced, directly or indirectly, to the following prominent works, among many: H. Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge, 1989); L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992); S. Ellis and S. Barber (eds), *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485–1735* (London, 1995); A. Grant and K. J. Stringer (eds), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995); B. Bradshaw and J. S. Morrill (eds), *The British Problem 1534–1707* (Basingstoke, 1996); B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts (eds), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); A. Murdoch, *British History,*

According to Pocock, it was A. J. P. Taylor's flat denial of the possibility of 'British' history (as opposed to 'English' history) that turned his mind to the idea of finding new ways of conceiving his subject.⁸ Taylor's comments had appeared in the final volume of the *Oxford History of England* (1965), which was itself an attempt to redefine the subject of national history. Taylor freely acknowledged that he was writing about a different entity than that of his predecessors in the earlier volumes. At the time the series was originally commissioned in the 1930s, he remarked, "England" was still an all-embracing word. It meant indiscriminately England and Wales; Great Britain; the United Kingdom; and even the British Empire.⁹ But Taylor deliberately eschewed this approach, incorporating the peoples of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the Empire only to the extent that they shared a history with England.

In this, Taylor shared an unlikely affinity with his contemporary Enoch Powell, who had embarked on a series of public lectures on the nature of 'Englishness' which resonated throughout the 1960s. Powell's England was unambiguously framed within the context of a declining Empire: 'We today at the heart of a vanished empire, amid the fragments of demolished glory, seem to find, like one of her own oak trees, standing and growing, the sap still rising from her ancient roots to meet the spring, England herself.'¹⁰ Powell's England transcended the dubious legacies of empire, for it had deeper roots in the pre-imperial soil, 'beyond the grenadiers and the philosophers of the eighteenth century, beyond the pikemen and the preachers of the seventeenth, back through the brash adventurous days of the first Elizabeth and the hard materialism of the Tudors'. It was emphatically 'England', rather than 'Britain' that Powell saw rising from the ashes.¹¹ Much the same could be said of Taylor – although writing from the opposite end of the political spectrum, he too found comfort in the notion of a stable 'English' history – one that might withstand the external shocks of imperial decline.

Pocock's response was more inventive, and ultimately more far reaching. While conceding that England would inevitably loom large in any history of

1660–1832: *National Identity and Local Culture* (Basingstoke, 1998); S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500: Integration and Diversity* (Dublin, 1998); L. W. B. Brockliss and D. Eastwood (eds), *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, 1750–1850* (Manchester, 1997); R. Phillips and H. Brocklehurst (eds), *History, Nationhood, and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke, 2004).

⁸ As Pocock put it incredulously, 'A. J. P. Taylor's volume of the *Oxford History of England* opens with a flat and express denial that the term "Britain" has any meaning'. J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *New Zealand Journal of History* 8 (1974), 3–21, here 3.

⁹ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Oxford History of England*, vol XV: *English History, 1914–1945* (Oxford, 1965), p. v.

¹⁰ Cited in S. Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London, 1998), pp. 335–6.

¹¹ See Heffer, *Roman*, pp. 334–40.

Britain, he nonetheless proposed a more pluralist and integrated British history structured around the grand theme of the 'conflict between and creation of societies and cultures' in what he termed the 'North Atlantic Archipelago'. This paradigm, he argued, would not only provide a more useful way of understanding the historical experience of the British Isles, it could equally trace out the history of the expansion of British communities abroad from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries – reaching first across the Atlantic to the settlements of North American colonists, and then extending its analytical range to include the colonies of settlement in the southern hemisphere. While these ideas have only latterly been taken up in relation to the wider British and Atlantic world (and only tentatively), Pocock's legacy of a less unitary, less 'national' British history – the sum of its varyingly integrated parts – has proven more durable than the Anglo-centrism of Taylor.

What has been overlooked in Pocock's work is the decolonizing processes that invested his plea with a sense of urgency.¹² Despite his impatience with 'little-Englanders' like Taylor, Pocock too was writing from a perspective of post-imperial disorientation – quite literally so given his New Zealand origins and location at the time of his lecture. Only months earlier, Britain had finally entered the European Economic Community – a process that had been drawn out over 13 years and which, above all else, symbolized the transition from global, maritime and imperial power to European state. Close examination of his prose reveals the subjectivity of a self-styled 'British' New Zealander who saw the material and political foundations of his world – and hence his subject as a historian – slowly eroding away. To quote only the most telling example from his 1973 lecture:

Within the memory of everyone here, the English have been increasingly willing to declare that neither empire nor commonwealth ever meant much in their consciousness, and that they were at heart Europeans all the time [...]. I doubt if the most resolutely nationalist among us could say that the disappearance of all meaning from the term 'Britain' would do nothing at all to his sense of identity. I am going to advance the claim that there is a need for us to revive the term 'British history', and re-invest it with meaning, for reasons relative to the maintenance of a number of historically-based identities.¹³

In contrast to much of the contemporary debate surrounding Britain's entry into the EEC, it was not the potentially disastrous economic impact on

¹² D. Armitage is an exception here, who noted how 'The long, withdrawing roar of empire could be heard behind [Pocock's] plea'. See D. Armitage, 'Greater Britain: A useful category of historical analysis?', *American Historical Review* 104:2 (April 1999), 427–45.

¹³ Pocock, 'British History', pp. 4–5.

New Zealand's status as a tangential economy of Britain that concerned Pocock, so much as the implications for New Zealand as a 'tangential culture'.¹⁴ It was ultimately this that gave his lecture in its time and place a particular sense of urgency. For Pocock, the end of empire threw an entire world of Britishness into a 'condition of contingency',¹⁵ requiring nothing less than the complete reconstitution of the subject of British history. That this formative context has been lost in the ensuing historiography – among Pocock's adherents and adversaries alike – is in itself an intriguing question that would merit further study.

No precise counterpart to Taylor or Pocock emerged in French historiography in these years, and the unitary nature of French history was not subjected to anywhere near the same scrutiny. At first glance this seems paradoxical. France, far more than Britain, had constitutionally assimilated parts of its overseas empire (making Algeria into three integrated *départements* and then in 1946 transforming the *vieilles colonies* of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane and La Réunion into *départements*), it rejected notions of devolution and self-government, by the 1950s it had extended full citizenship to inhabitants of the colonies, and colonialists had argued that 'natives' could indeed be made into 'black Frenchmen' (or fully-fledged French men and women of another colour). As Cooper points out, a nation which ought properly to be considered as an 'empire-state' over the three centuries after the mid-1600s, now had to re-establish itself as a 'nation-state'. And yet the idea of France seemed somehow more resilient than Britain in the face of imperial decline.

This is obviously due in considerable measure to the composition of metropolitan Britain as a 'United' Kingdom, whose Queen continued to rule, at least nominally, over assorted realms and territories in the wake of Empire. Yet while the influence of decolonization on French historians was by no means the same as in Britain, it is nonetheless possible to identify equally significant, if more subtle shifts in the conceptual outlines of the French nation that were occasioned by the end of Empire, and the Algerian War in particular. One illustration is the emergence of the iconography of the hexagon as a visual shorthand for the French nation. The precise origins of this image remain obscure, but it is often noted that it only came fully into vogue in the 1960s. The timing is significant, as Avieli Roshwald elaborates:

The embrace of the hexagon was a virtue born of necessity. Having finally abandoned Algeria along with the bulk of France's other overseas colonies by the early 1960s, President de Gaulle adopted the hexagon as an emblem of the nation's unity and harmony in the wake of the bitter divisions of the

¹⁴ Pocock, 'British History', p. 17.

¹⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Conclusion: Contingency, Identity, Sovereignty', in A. Grant and K. Stringer (eds), *Uniting the Kingdom* (London, 1995), pp. 292–302.

mid-twentieth century. He used the geometrical/geographical emblem as a way of reconciling the country to the loss of its imperial status by trying to convince it that its newly circumscribed form was the embodiment of a uniquely French rationalist-universalist mystique.¹⁶

The same might be said of the more circumscribed conception of France that emerged in the historiography of this era. French political leaders, led by President de Gaulle, invented a new orthodoxy of France as the great decolonizer, the upholder of emancipatory values, and a privileged intercessor for the needs of the Third World. Moreover, as Todd Shepard argues, the idea of 'decolonization' itself was deployed – belatedly – as a means of emphasizing the historical inevitability of the loss of Algeria, thereby underlining the historical integrity of metropolitan France shorn of its colonial possessions. Or as Sheperd himself puts it, 'there emerged the fiction that the "Algerian experience" had been an unfortunate colonial detour, from which the French Republic had now escaped'. He further suggests that the ensuing silences in the French historiographical record of colonialism were an important means of recalibrating popular historical consciousness towards a narrower horizon.¹⁷

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, three encyclopaedic histories of the French Empire were published in France, the editors and contributors a roll call of those who had pursued the subject (even if, largely, in terms of regionalist approaches) over the generation after 1962 despite its somewhat marginal status. The volumes varied in the intended audience and in the implicit ideological stance. Denoël's multi-volume *L'aventure coloniale de la France* included chronological surveys of French imperialism since the old regime, directed towards the educated public more than academic readers, while a companion thematic series explored topics ranging from the role of missionaries and the navy to the place of *métis* in the empire.¹⁸ Fayard's and Armand Colin's multi-volume approaches – each a set of two formidably dense, rather dry but magisterial works – attempted syntheses of research on colonial history, with

¹⁶ A. Rothswald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 222; See also N. B. Smith, 'The Idea of the French Hexagon', *French Historical Studies* 6:2 (Autumn 1969), 139–55; E. Weber, 'L'Hexagone', in P. Nora, (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, vol. II, *La Nation* (Paris, 1984).

¹⁷ T. Sheperd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), p. 11.

¹⁸ The chronological series consisted of J. Martin, *L'Empire renaissant, 1789/1871* (Paris, 1987); G. Comte, *L'Empire triomphant, 1871/1936*, vol. 1. *Afrique occidentale et équatoriale* (Paris, 1988); J. Martin, *L'Empire triomphant, 1871/1936*, vol. 2. *Maghreb, Indochine, Madagascar, Iles et comptoirs* (Paris, 1990); P.-M. de la Gorce, *L'Empire écartelé, 1936/1946* (Paris, 1987); and J. Planchais, *L'Empire embrasé, 1946/1962* (Paris, 1990).

Armand Colin's the more rigorously critical of the imperial record.¹⁹ Though each provided a *summum* of knowledge about the colonial past, in retrospect the traditional nature of the works is apparent – a chronological approach emphasizing political and economic history with organization of large sections of the texts around specific colonies. Colonialism was seen not so much as an integral part of French national history as a French undertaking overseas that only irregularly – for instance, during debates on expansion that brought down the Ferry government in the 1880s or the internecine strife produced by the Algerian War – had major repercussions in France itself. These works, in bringing together the research on colonialism carried out from the 1960s through the 1980s, illustrate the subtle changes in national historical awareness that the end of Empire brought in its train.

Imperial revival: the boom in 'empire and metropolitan culture'

By the 1980s, empire once again galvanized academia, prompted partly by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and the critiques it provoked. Where economics had once been argued to be the taproots of imperialism, the focus now shifted to culture – ideologies of the 'other', representations of imperialism in a variety of genres, the permeation of metropolitan life by colonial material and cultural imports. Though not all of the new colonial historians followed Said's arguments (or necessarily adopted a culturalist perspective on empire), the work of Said and Michel Foucault, the ideas of post-modernism and post-structuralism, and the 'cultural turn' in historiography played a contributing role in the historiographical return to empire. Having neglected the imperial dimensions of national history for decades, historians from the mid-1980s, and with greater force since the 1990s, rediscovered their overseas empire.

One current in the new imperial history came with the advent of interest in the culture of imperialism, influenced by the general 'cultural turn' in historical methodology and, at least indirectly, by the ideas associated with colonial studies, subaltern studies and post-colonialism.²⁰ Although earlier authors had not ignored the role of culture (especially the place of the colonial world in literature), an emergent group of historians, including such scholars as Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, focused particularly on the iconography of

¹⁹ Armand Colin's series is J. Meyer, J. Tarrade, A. Rey-Goldzeiguer and J. Thobie, *Histoire de la France coloniale: des origines à 1914* (Paris, 1991); and J. Thobie, G. Meynier, C. Coquery-Vidrovitch and C.-R. Ageron, *Histoire de la France coloniale, 1914–1990* (Paris, 1990); Fayard's is P. Pluchon, *L'Histoire de la colonisation française*, vol. I, *Le Premier empire colonial: des origines à la Restauration* (Paris, 1991), and D. Bouche, vol. II, *Flux et reflux (1815–1962)* (Paris, 1991).

²⁰ See J.-L. Triaud, 'Histoire coloniale: le retour', *Afrique et histoire* 6:2 (2006), 237–47.

empire – paintings, photographs, postcards, the cinema – in a series of books and albums published since the early 1990s.²¹ They argued that visual representations of the colonized ‘other’ revealed the underlying cultural and racial stereotyping of non-European peoples, and the ideological and political policies based on such ‘cultural taproots’ of empire. Such stereotypes were widely disseminated through illustrated periodicals, posters and, especially, in colonial exhibitions held in France from the 1850s through the 1940s.

Blanchard, Bancel and other historians also criticized their predecessors and many colleagues in the historical profession for general lack of attention to empire, charging that academia, the institutions of the state and the general public had wilfully ignored or forgotten the colonial aspects of French history and especially the misdeeds of colonialism. In sometimes provocative ways, they drew attention to ‘zoos humains’ – displays of colonized peoples brought to France and set up in reconstructed ‘typical’ habitats performing ‘traditional’ entertainments or displaying ‘native’ artisanal skills. Not only did such performances bring the empire home to provincials, but also evidenced the subjection of non-European peoples to European domination that formed the basis of the imperial project.²² The approach of these historians shifted attention to cultural artefacts of colonialism and the attitudes they bespoke, but also suggested that colonialism was not a niche interest of a restricted ‘colonial lobby’ in France during the colonial period, as historians had earlier agreed. In reality, the imaginary of the exotic suffused French life, down to the advertising images and slogans used to market the commodities of daily life. The picture of an Arab on a cigarette packet, of an Indochinese on a box of rice or tea, of a West Indian on a bottle of rum underlined the objectification of colonized peoples and cultures alongside the commodification of colonial products, all to the greater benefit of the metropole.

In Britain, too, imperial history made a comeback in the 1980s by turning the subject inwards on the culture of the imperial metropole. John MacKenzie’s *Propaganda and Empire* (1984) was a landmark study, challenging the entrenched view that ‘the British people [...] were indifferent to imperialism’. MacKenzie turned his attention to the ‘vehicles of imperial propaganda’, from the theatre to cinema, radio, exhibitions, school textbooks and juvenile literature, demonstrating how these collectively projected an ‘imperial nationalism, compounded of Monarchy, militarism and Social Darwinism, through which the British defined their unique superiority *vis-à-vis* the rest

²¹ P. Blanchard and A. Chatelier (eds), *Images et colonies* (Paris, 1993); P. Blanchard et al., *L’Autre et Nous: ‘Scènes et types’* (Paris, 1995); N. Bancel, P. Blanchard and F. Delabarre (eds), *Images d’Empire, 1930–1960: Trente ans de photographies officielles sur l’Afrique française* (Paris, 1997).

²² N. Bancel et. Al., *Zoos humains: De la Vénus hottentote aux Reality Shows* (Paris, 2002).

of the world'.²³ MacKenzie's early foray was soon followed by a string of titles from a range of authors with a similar emphasis: *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, *Britannia's Children*, *Imperial Eyes*, and *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* to name but a few.²⁴ Such was the interest in this burgeoning field that Manchester University Press launched its highly successful and prolific series 'Studies in Imperialism', with MacKenzie at the helm. The series masthead which, to this day, adorns each new release proclaims 'the belief that imperialism as a cultural phenomenon had as significant an effect on the dominant as on the subordinate societies'.

This 'maximalist' interpretation about the omnipresence of colonies in national life has not won unanimous accord among historians, however. In both France and Britain, prominent scholars have spoken out against what they see as a selective marshalling of evidence, painting an exaggerated picture of the popular resonance of empire. Bernard Porter's *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* offers the most sustained and empirically based critique, concluding that the combined influence of post-colonial theory, on the one hand, and the MacKenzie school on the other, had merely replaced an old orthodoxy with a new, and equally rigid one.²⁵ Porter's response was warmly endorsed in influential places. It was lauded in the *English Historical Review* by Ian Phimister as 'a formidable obstacle to any further attempts to easy generalization by the politically correct', while Ronald Hyam has roundly declared 'that Porter has enabled those who believe that the impact was minimal to win the argument' (while dismissing MacKenzie's entire contribution with a single adjective – 'euphoric').²⁶ Similarly in France, concerns have been raised against the over-emphasis on the colonial imaginary rather than on political, social and economic aspects of empire.²⁷ The emphasis on the largely demeaning portrayal of indigenous people has also attracted dissenting voices. A contrary interpretation about the 'zoos humains' to that of Bancel and his colleagues was posited by Jean-Michel Bergougnou, Rémi Clignet and Philippe David,

²³ J. M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 1, 253.

²⁴ See J. M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth, 1986); M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992); K. Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through Children's Books and Magazines* (Manchester, 1996). This is merely an indicative sample.

²⁵ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2004).

²⁶ See I. Phimister in *English Historical Review* 120 (2005), 1061–3; R. Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 2.

²⁷ Historians of Marseille and Lyon, for instance, have argued that support for colonialism in those cities – where trade with the Empire was particularly important – was more a matter of commercial opportunism than imperial fervour, and that support for French expansionism in these two cities was far from universal.

who suggested that the presence of Africans, even in demeaning circumstances, had offered possibilities for increased knowledge about and empathy with the colonized.²⁸ Other historians refuted what was implicitly an argument about scholarly silence on imperial misdemeanours and crime, and a dismissal of much earlier research. Yet others condemned what they saw as a 'politically correct' approach that reduced colonialism to a litany of crimes.²⁹

The language, rhetoric and temper of these debates strongly suggest that present-day political issues about race, multiculturalism and the legacies of empire have become enmeshed in discussion of the imperial past; in both Britain and France, commemoration, legislation and litigation have been marshalled alongside historical research and writing in the process of a colonial *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. As such, there is far more at stake than some minor academic dispute. The imperial revival, and the debates that this has set in train, are fundamentally debates about the extent, nature, and above all the character of the nation. In that sense, the historiography of empire has become, itself, part and parcel of the processes of decolonization.

Indicting the state, impugning the nation?

This point can be examined more closely by comparing two prominent historians – of British and French decolonization respectively – whose work has revived unpleasant memories from the colonial past; namely Benjamin Stora on Algeria, and Caroline Elkins on Kenya. In focusing on the protracted conflicts that occasioned the decline of empire, both authors have confronted readers with the unseemly side of the end-game of empire. Both are based at leading academic institutions, and both have succeeded in projecting their findings beyond the walls of academia. Their works have each become the subjects of highly publicized television documentary programmes – 'Les Années algériennes' (1991) and 'Kenya: White Terror' (2002). And above all the issues they examine – the Algerian war and the Mau Mau 'insurgency' – occurred almost simultaneously, and were influenced by the same external ideological pressures and internal ethical debates. Thus they provide an ideal point of comparison.

In France, the revival of interest in the Algerian War was the primary means whereby historical research became entwined in contemporary political debates. As Algeria became embroiled in a decade-long virtual civil war in the 1990s, France began to rediscover its 132-year long involvement in Algeria's history. The work of Benjamin Stora has been vital not only in the

²⁸ J.-M. Bergougniou, R. Clignet and P. David, *Villages noirs' et autres visiteurs africains et malgaches en France et en Europe 1870–1940* (Paris, 2001).

²⁹ See, e.g., passing comments in J. Frémigacci, 'Du Passé faisons table rase, un avatar inattendu', *Afrique et histoire* 6:2 (2006), 262–8.

reassessment of this conflict, but in the revival of colonial history in general. Stora is the leading contemporary historian of colonial Algeria and the war, himself a *pied-noir*, born to a Jewish family in Constantine in 1950. His works include a thesis on Messali Hadj, overviews of Algerian history, a comparative study of the perception of the Algerian War in France and the Vietnam War in the United States, a comparative history of Algeria and Morocco, and a volume on the 'three exiles' of Algerian Jews.³⁰ Stora came to public attention with a 1991 series of three television programmes, 'Les Années algériennes', interviews with French soldiers who fought in the conflict, as well as several politicians and activists. The documentary represented the equivalent of Marcel Ophuls's 1971 'Le Chagrin et la pitié', which inaugurated a great debate on the Vichy era in France. Stora incorporated material from the programmes into *La Gangrène et l'oubli*, a study of the memory of the Algerian war, which remains a key text on the war and its legacy.³¹

Stora's work has wide-ranging importance with direct relevance for the writing of national history in France (and Algeria). First, he argued that from the 1960s through the 1970s, and even later, *both* the French and the Algerians had only a partial recollection of the war. Despite a vast number of books – Stora counted over a thousand in France since 1962 – for decades much remained in the realm of (in his words) 'secrets', 'silence', 'the unsaid' and intentional 'forgetting' (*oubli*). The war years were 'buried' or 'placed in brackets'; the desire to avoid the troubling record of the war amounted to a 'loss of consciousness'. De Gaulle and the French constructed an identity based on the 'Resistance myth', successful decolonization, the rush towards modernization and consumerism: the regime of the Fifth Republic 'indeed was ashamed of its birth' during the events of the war. The war was not the subject so much

³⁰ Stora is the author of *Dictionnaire biographique de militants nationalistes algériens* (Paris, 1985), *Messali Hadj* (Paris, 1986), *Nationalistes algériens et révolutionnaires français au temps du Front populaire* (Paris, 1987), *Les Sources du nationalisme algérien* (Paris, 1989), *Histoire de l'Algérie coloniale (1830–1954)* (Paris, 1991), *La Gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris, 1991), *Ils venaient d'Algérie: L'immigration algérienne en France* (Paris, 1992), *Aide-mémoire de l'immigration algérienne (1922–1962)* (Paris, 1992), *Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie (1954–1962)* (Paris, 1993), *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance (1962–1994)* (Paris, 1994), *Imaginaires de guerre: Les images dans les guerres d'Algérie et du Viêt-nam* (Paris, 1997), *Le Transfert d'une mémoire: de l'Algérie française au racisme anti-arabe* (Paris, 1999), *La Guerre invisible: Algérie 1999* (Paris, 2001), *Algérie, Maroc: histoires parallèles, destines croisées* (Paris, 2002), *La Dernière Génération d'octobre* (Paris, 2003), *Les trois exils juifs d'Algérie* (Paris, 2006), *Le Mystère de Gaulle: Son choix pour l'Algérie* (Paris, 2009) and *Le Nationalisme algérien* (Paris, 2010), as well as the co-author and editor of various other works.

³¹ *La Gangrène et l'oubli* took its name from a metaphor used by several writers, including Frantz Fanon, who referred to politicized Algerian peasants who would 'become the gangrene forever present in the heart of colonial domination', and a book, *La Gangrène*, by Benoist Rey which was censored by French authorities.

of 'amnesia'³² as of an occluded memory preserved by partisan participants: the *pieds-noirs* and *harkis* (who fought with the French), old soldiers and FLN activists. Works on the war comprised largely memoirs, autobiographies and uncritical apologias rather than historically based analysis. Algeria displayed similar half-remembering and half-forgetting, especially given the policies of an authoritarian regime there. Stora suggested that the French and the Algerians avoided the darker side of the war, this hiding of skeletons already prepared by propaganda and censorship in the war years. The French refused even to acknowledge the 'operations for the maintenance of order' as a 'war', soldiers were denied full pensions and their service was never celebrated and often disavowed, amnesties in 1962 and 1968 exempted those who committed wartime offences from trial, the torture practised by the French was treated as a taboo subject, and the French abandonment of Muslims who supported their side was ignored.

Stora then discussed the steps by which the 'silence' was gradually broken in France (but only negligibly in Algeria) by journalists and historians from the mid- to late 1980s, then with increasing force since that time. 'Between 1982, the date of the final amnesty of the generals who took part in the putsch [of 1961 against negotiation with the nationalists], and 1991, the year of the Gulf War, discussion and mobilization occurred around the subjects of racism, the law on citizenship and the place of Islam in France [...] The time of silence had ended.'³³ More recently, Stora has chronicled this rediscovery of the war and the 'acceleration of memory' since the end of the 1990s, linking it to such factors as the desire of aging participants to record their memories, the opening of archives, the 1998 trial of Maurice Papon, revelations in 2000 about torture by the French army in Algeria, and present-day grievances of Algerian immigrants in France. Accompanying this discussion, seen in an outpouring of historical work, have gone public gestures – recognition by parliament in 1999 that the conflict was indeed a 'war', the controversial erection in 2001 by the socialist city government in Paris of a plaque to anti-war demonstrators killed in October 1961, inauguration of a national memorial to the French war dead in 2002. All of this, for Stora, indicated the 'end of the amnesia'.³⁴

³² 'Why does one speak of "amnesia" when this period is evoked? Because of the confusion between the written word and the visual image that was established' (p. 248). If there was amnesia, it is to be found above all in the refusal of the [cinematic] *mise en scène*' (p. 255).

³³ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 280.

³⁴ B. Stora, '1999–2003, guerre d'Algérie, les accélérations de la mémoire', in B. Stora and M. Harbi, *La Guerre d'Algérie: 1954–2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris, 2004), pp. 501–14; see also the introduction to the volume by Harbi and Stora, 'La guerre d'Algérie: de la mémoire à l'Histoire', pp. 9–13.

Stora's writings have analysed and contributed to a historical and public rediscovery of colonialism. However, *La Gangrène et l'oubli* also underscored the impact of 'oubli' on the French identity: 'this denial [*dénégation*] continues to eat away, like a cancer, like gangrene, the foundations of French society'.³⁵ The war and the political defeat that France suffered produced a 'crisis of consciousness': 'The Algerian war indeed engendered a crisis in French nationalism, in a certain concept of France, its role, its "civilizing mission" in the colonies. It introduced a paradox: if this period provoked the construction of a strong state in 1958 [with de Gaulle's establishment of the Fifth Republic], it eventually led to the crisis of French nationalism and its centralizing, Jacobin tradition.'³⁶

The narrative of the late nineteenth and twentieth century had envisaged France extending beyond the European 'hexagon' to the colonial world, where the French carried ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, economic development and law. The war questioned certainties about democracy in France, the obedience of the military to civilian authority, the unity of the French people, the possibility of non-Europeans becoming full citizens. In response, for a generation empire was largely effaced in the national self-perception. Yet writing the empire out of the past, Stora reflected, left a fragmented and distorted account of France's heritage. The task now was to work through the colonial past, and use that process to recast French nationalism and identity taking imperialism into account. Stora connected that necessity not only with historiographical duty, but also France's need to face new circumstances, particularly the presence of non-European migrants (and their French-born progeny) inside the body politic. After all, reaction against migrants drew upon colonial memories; the leader of the anti-migrant Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, 'pursues the Algerian War and continues, with impunity, to inflict repeated electroshocks on a torn and painful memory'.³⁷ Furthermore, 'The Algerian War continues through the struggle against Islam (which today takes on the mask of a struggle against Islamic fundamentalism)'.³⁸ As Stora suggests, 'The Maghrebins [...] could become even more the objects of repulsion in that their presence recalls the last war that France fought (and lost), the cause of a national wound that has never healed.'³⁹ France was no longer imperial France, but could not survive in denial about the colonial past and its legacy.

Stora's work offers an instructive example of how the personal, political and historiographical have combined to turn the focus inwards on the imperial metropole, and thereby bring imperial history back into national historical

³⁵ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 8.

³⁶ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 113.

³⁷ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 290.

³⁸ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 291.

³⁹ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 289.

debates. In an autobiographical volume published in 2003, Stora traces his professional interest in colonial Algeria and the war of independence both to his family background and to his militancy in Trotskyist politics, from his student days in Paris in 1968 until he resigned from a small Trotskyist group, the *Parti Communiste Internationaliste*, in 1986. Some of his observations are telling. He dwells, for example, on the trauma of leaving Algeria at the age of 12, in June 1962, knowing that he would never be able to return to his old home in the same conditions: 'I no longer belonged to that category of persons for whom the family home is the symbol of a happy and secure life. There was now nothing behind me, no possibility of a return to the site of my childhood.'⁴⁰ Later he reflects on how his experience as a student in the Paris spring of 1968 was little less than a revelation: 'This crucial month of May let me see again the light of Algeria, took me out of my *lycée* and propelled me away from my suburb.'⁴¹ The events of 1968, Stora says, almost literally helped him find his voice, drawing a parallel between his own experience and that of a French society marked by the painful defeat in Algeria: '68, for me, was a way out of silence. In the preceding years, we had borne the burden of being defeated, charged too with the heavy responsibilities of the Algerian tragedy. This double shame forced us, faced with the impossibility of speech in exile, into mutism.'⁴² The ideas of 1968 provided a personal emancipation and, in their Trotskyist formulation, a grid through which he could begin to read the history of colonialism.

Given his background and interests, therefore, it is hardly surprising that Stora's key academic speciality has been the history of Algerian nationalism, the war of independence, and the way in which war is remembered, forgotten and masked in French views. Though too astute a historian for his personal reminiscences to direct his work, or for his Trotskyist participation to have dominated his analysis, Stora provides a particularly clear case of the links between a historian and his academic project, the conjuncture of his early life in Algeria, his politicization in the heady days of 1968 in the fever of Trotskyist ideology, and his efforts to end the amnesia that reduced the French to silence on the history of colonial Algeria. Stora continues to monitor, analyse and comment on the Franco-Algerian relationship, now looking at the 'guerre des mémoires' and at France's continuing efforts to come to terms with the Algerian war and with the post-colonial presence of large numbers of Algerians as migrants to France.⁴³

⁴⁰ B. Stora, *La dernière génération d'Octobre* (Paris, 2008 [2003]), p. 18.

⁴¹ Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 20.

⁴² Stora, *La Gangrène*, p. 35.

⁴³ See B. Stora, *La Guerre des mémoires: La France face à son passé colonial – Entretiens avec Thierry Leclère* (Paris, 2007), interviews in which Stora speaks about the need for both historical research and the preservation of the collective memories of those touched

Stora's frank admission that it was 'directly through political engagement that I "returned" to Algeria'⁴⁴ could apply equally to many historians working on 'empire and metropolitan culture' in recent decades. This would certainly explain why the field has been so hotly contested. Stora's own positions have incurred hatred from those nostalgic for *Algérie française* – including death threats that forced him to live overseas for several years. He was criticized for reopening painful wounds, emphasizing the deleterious side of colonialism, and impugning national integrity and the honour of the military. The debate about Algeria (and colonialism in general) continues in France, with Stora as a major *engagé* participant, the discussion enmeshed in contemporary political problems, the collective memory gradually being recovered through the work of historians and the belated willingness to write empire back into French national history.

Caroline Elkins's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Britain's Gulag* raised similar questions about the politics of memory and forgetting. It has, of course, long been established that British authority in Kenya was challenged in the 1950s by the Mau Mau uprising, and that this culminated in a vengeful and brutal struggle between the British security forces and the Kikuyu 'insurgents'. What Elkins brought to light, however, was the hidden story of how the colonial administration directed its reprisals, not merely at the armed rebels, but at the Kikuyu people as a whole. She assembled an impressive array of archival evidence and oral testimony to demonstrate the hitherto unimagined scope of the torture, displacement, injustice and internment inflicted on virtually the entire Kikuyu population. What had once seemed an unfortunate blemish on an otherwise liberal and orderly transition of power, now emerged in her rendition as an indictment of the British colonial state at empire's end.

From the outset, Elkins questioned the reliability of the British archival record, which had been the indispensable guide to most previous treatments of the subject. She pointed to the enormous gaps and silences left in the wake of a wholesale sanitization of the colonial archives on the eve of Kenyan independence. This she sought to rectify by drawing not only on Kenyan archival sources, but more importantly on the oral testimonies of the present-day survivors of the detention system. This reliance on Kikuyu sources, and her innate caution towards the official record, served the overriding purpose of providing both historian and reader with a different perspective – namely

by the Algerian war, but in which he also warns against the dangers of communitarianism, 'perpetual resentment' among both those who were the colonizers and those who were colonized, and the manipulation of colonial memories for present-day political gain. For Stora's point of view on recent developments in France, see his 'Le poids de la guerre d'Algérie dans les représentations mémorielles du temps colonial. Les années 2006 et 2007', *Cultures Sud* 165 (April–June 2007), 71–6.

⁴⁴ Stora, *La dernière génération d'Octobre*, p. 207.

that of the countless African victims of terror and abuse. Elkins described this method as 'getting behind the wire' – a technique that has been deployed by historians working in a variety of post-colonial contexts in recent decades.⁴⁵ Additionally, Elkins subtly wove her own subjectivity into the text as a means of informing reader responses to her material. She recorded how, in the early stages of her project with only British sources at her disposal, 'I was intending to write a history of the success of Britain's civilizing mission in the detention camps of Kenya.'⁴⁶ Thus she set the scene for a journey in which author and reader are progressively disabused of time-honoured memories about the relatively benign course of British decolonization. It was the interplay between conventional memory and the revelations of Elkins's unconventional sources that provided the internal dynamic of her historical narrative.

Yet it was not merely her source material that situated Elkins's work 'behind the wire'. Of equal importance was the language and imagery she drew upon to depict the character and motivations of the many individuals and groups who figured in her story. Where many previous works were ambivalent about the status and legitimacy of Mau Mau as a national liberation struggle, Elkins emphasized the 'political sophistication' and 'grassroots depth' of the movement.⁴⁷ An even more significant departure was her depiction of Mau Mau oath-taking practices – traditionally regarded as the touchstone of Mau Mau savagery and brutality. Elkins placed this in the context of the socio-economic hardships suffered by generations of displaced Kikuyu, which, she argued, invested oath-taking ceremonies with 'logic and purpose'. Looked at from the perspective of legitimate Kikuyu grievances, the uprising appeared as 'the rational response of a rural people [...] attempting to respond collectively to new and unjust realities'.⁴⁸

Conversely, Elkins rejected the conventional image of misguided altruism in characterizing the leading figures in the colonial administration, preferring to zero in on the moral bankruptcy of the imperial project. This intention is signalled early in the narrative by way of pejorative references to the physical attributes and social habits of the dramatis personae. Thus Jomo Kenyatta's trial judge was 'the aging, potbellied, and bespectacled Thacker'; Governor Philip Mitchell 'a short, pudgy and by all accounts rather dislikeable man'; his successor Evelyn Baring's mind was 'better suited to his favourite pursuits of wildflower collecting and bird-watching'; while Colonial Secretary Alex Lennox-Boyd was

⁴⁵ Elkins, *Frontier*, p. 371. A similar optic is deployed in the title of Henry Reynolds's path-breaking work on the dispossession of the Australian Aborigines, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood, Vic., 1982).

⁴⁶ Elkins, *Frontier*, p. x.

⁴⁷ Elkins, *Frontier*, pp. 36, 58.

⁴⁸ Elkins, *Frontier*, pp. 27–8.

afflicted by 'a penchant for fastidious self-grooming'.⁴⁹ While unremarkable in themselves, these passages play a key structural role in orienting the reader in the subject, and provide a prelude to the shocking recollections of former Kikuyu detainees in describing the behaviour of their captors. This is not to say that Elkins is not attentive to those settlers and metropolitan whistle blowers who expressed deep concern about the Kenyan atrocities. But figures like Barbara Castle and Fenner Brockway in Britain, and the would-be reformer Thomas Askwith in Kenya, appear not as the liberal side of a morally complex imperial equation so much as the ethical upshot of empire. On this point Elkins's use of Kenyan oral testimony resonates clearly in her assessment: 'It was Askwith who was wrong about the character of British colonial rule in Kenya.'⁵⁰

This suggests that there was more to 'getting behind the wire' than documenting the hitherto obscured experiences of marginalized peoples. For Elkins, it also provided an entirely new optics for interpreting the meaning and significance of the imperial past for metropolitan Britons. Elkins's identification with the internees, her use of empathy, her inside-out perspective, inevitably serves to prompt a reader response, invoking a sense of dismay that the British could have behaved in such a depraved manner (and as documented in later chapters, so wittingly covered it up). In this sense, the British and their settler offspring remained the enduring subjects of Elkins's book. This is borne out, for example, by the concluding lines of Chapter 5, which details the appalling brutality meted out to tens of thousands of Kikuyu in the 'Pipeline' system of detention:

The Pipeline was a microcosm [...] where the world behind the barbed wire rendered utterly transparent, for the first time, the dark side of Britain's colonial project. The hypocrisies, the exploitations, the violence, and the suffering were all laid bare in the Pipeline. It was there that Britain finally revealed the true nature of its civilizing mission.

(*Frontier*, 153)

Writing history from 'behind the wire' provided Elkins with a means of turning the lens back on the British, thereby depicting them in a radically different light. The same tendencies are evident in the overall structure of the book, where the meticulous detailing of Kikuyu subjectivities in Chapters 5 to 8 are followed by two concluding chapters which return the focus to metropolitan Britain and the lengths to which the colonial bureaucracy was prepared to go to silence the unsavoury stories that were emerging from the pipeline. Neither side of the story or selection of sources, alone, would have carried the

⁴⁹ Elkins, *Frontier*, pp. 29, 40, 34, 138.

⁵⁰ Elkins, *Frontier*, p. 328.

same effect. It is the combination of the two that invests the narrative with an unnerving quality, relying as it does on the readers' unexamined assumptions about the peculiarly benign nature of British decolonization. Without this crucial element, Elkins's sources may have addressed an entirely different, perhaps more local agenda. But as her use of the possessive tense in the title – *Britain's Gulag*⁵¹ – made clear, this was very much Britain's story.

Historians will always have their stories to tell, and will properly reserve the right to select their subject and emphasis. What is interesting for our purposes is the way that a research problem and methodology that self-consciously transcended the European optics of colonial historiography could ultimately say as much – if not more – about the legacies of empire in the West. Viewed in the light of Stora's impact in France, it may be that the recent boom in imperial history – and particularly the history of decolonization – has been sustained by unresolved ethical questions about the culpability of the empire builders themselves. Stora located the origins of his work in his own personal political engagement in the 1960s, and it is conceivable that *Britain's Gulag* had a similar genesis in the political culture of North American academia in the 1990s. The politics of race have always resonated in different ways in the United States, and it is significant that a British counterpart to Stora's Algeria should have emerged in that context. Equally, it may be that in both cases the perspective of the outsider has been crucial in critiquing British and French propensities to 'draw a veil over the past'.⁵²

The issue of political engagement is perhaps most vividly conveyed by the critical response to Elkins's book. As with Stora's work, Elkins's findings raised any number of objections – not least in Britain – and it seems clear that for many, the mere suggestion that the British could have devised their own 'Gulag' was inconceivable. Several critics attacked Elkins's method of calculating the number of victims – an issue that has stirred emotional debates in other corners of the former empire like Australia.⁵³ David Elstein argued that Elkins's estimate of some 300,000 deaths and 320,000 detentions was way off the mark: 'A scholar who inflates the scale and significance of her research undermines her own case.'⁵⁴ Questions were also raised about the historical parallels Elkins

⁵¹ Subtitle in the original US release and main title in the UK.

⁵² C. Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, quoting Iain Macleod, p. 363.

⁵³ See, e.g., the bitter debate over numbers that occasioned the publication of K. Windschuttle's *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Sydney, 2002).

⁵⁴ D. Elstein, 'The End of the Mau Mau', *New York Review of Books* 52:11 (June 2005). Interestingly, Elkins's method in estimating Kenyan losses has loomed larger in the critical reaction than in the book itself, where it appears almost in passing as an 'informed evaluation' occupying two paragraphs on the penultimate page of the epilogue. Elkins concedes that a definitive figure is impossible to know exactly, but suggests that this is somewhat beside the point.

drew from her figures. Niall Ferguson was by no means alone in charging: 'It is egregious to compare the suppression of Mau Mau with Stalin's Terror.' He compared Elkins's numbers with the victims of Stalin and Mao, concluding that 'even if [Elkins's] figures for Mau Mau dead were not inflated, they would still be around three orders of magnitude smaller. Britain's Gulag? Read some Solzhenitsyn if you still don't get the difference.'⁵⁵ Others turned their attention to what they saw as the loaded language and rhetoric of Elkins's historical prose. Richard Dowden was typical: 'The interviews with the detainees – especially women – will tear your soul but Elkins does their cause no favours by drenching her writing in heavy sarcasm.'⁵⁶ Most significant for our purposes was the comment of Nicholas Best, who protested that Elkins had presented 'an image of the British that will be unrecognisable to the many thousands of doctors, vets, nurses, teachers, farmers, engineers, district and administrative officers who gave their lives to that country without ever torturing, raping or murdering anyone.'⁵⁷ That Elkins's work should be tested against the self-image of her subjects is indicative of the very problem that she (and Stora) set out to probe. Even a sympathetic reviewer like Neal Ascherson, in quoting one of Elkins's more damning passages, conceded: 'those words hurt'. He underlined what was at stake in his concluding lines: 'Until they understand why, and digest what [this book is] saying, the British will not understand themselves.'⁵⁸ Here we see a direct correlation with Stora's emphasis on *la gangrène* that continues to eat away at the fabric of metropolitan France. Behind the criticisms of both – valid or otherwise – lay the suggestion that by indicting the colonial state, Elkins and Stora had impugned the national character. Their works thus represented a major contribution to a debate that, quite literally, hit home.

Conclusion

Clearly, then, colonial history has witnessed a revival, and – perhaps as significantly – comparative colonial history is making headway in France and Britain alike. It is worth noting, too, that various anniversaries – the 150th anniversary of the definitive abolition of slavery in the French Empire in 1998, the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Britain in 2007, the 50th

⁵⁵ *The Independent*, 14 June 2006. Others objected to passing references to the Nazis, many of them in the sources themselves. Elkins was, however, equivocal about the holocaust analogy. See C. Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, pp. 49, 60–1 ('There is nothing in the historical record to indicate that Kenya suffered from its own version of Adolf Hitler'), 89, 90, 147, 153 ('The British colonial government's work camps in Kenya were not wholly different from those in Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia'), 372.

⁵⁶ *The Guardian*, 5 February 2005.

⁵⁷ *The Telegraph*, 16 January 2005.

⁵⁸ *New York Review of Books* 52:6 (April 2005).

anniversary of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and the French withdrawal from Indochina in 2004, and the 60th anniversary of British withdrawal from India in 2007 – have also prompted works on the empire, in Europe and elsewhere. The debates about slavery and the history of the West Indies have been particularly animated – with dynamic participation by Caribbean scholars – and the histories of colonial India, Africa and Indochina have grown dramatically in recent years.

Many of these studies have not only deepened understanding of colonialism but have also asked major questions about the narrative of national history itself. The debate on the place of the empire in national life – the centrality or marginality of overseas expansion, the role of imperialism in politics, culture and identity, the legacy of colonialism in metropolitan Britain and France, the connection between present-day problems and the imperial inheritance, the need to work through or come to terms with the imperial past – now takes place in the public forum as well as in academic circles.

The most obvious manifestation of the politicization of discussion about colonialism came in 2005 when the French parliament adopted a provision mandating the teaching in schools of the ‘positive’ aspects of colonial history, particularly of the French record in North Africa. The legislation, sponsored by conservative members of Jacques Chirac’s ruling party, provoked an outcry among historians (and others), who objected to the interference of politicians in the research and teaching of history and who argued that the legislation provided a partisan, even revisionist, view of colonial history. In the face of the protests, President Chirac used an administrative technicality to abrogate the clause concerning teaching, though the remainder of the law, which pays homage to the French in North Africa, controversially remains in place.⁵⁹ While Britain has not witnessed the same direct political interference, there have nonetheless been shades of a similar debate. In July 2003, for example, leading scholars at a Prince of Wales Summer School in English and History proclaimed that ‘Britain’s imperial past has been ignored for too long, and should be reinstated at the core of the secondary school curriculum.’ The entire event aroused deep suspicions in the press – so much so that St James’s Palace issued a denial of reports that Prince Charles had launched a personal campaign for the return of imperial history.⁶⁰

Yet this example also points to some of the subtle differences between our two case studies. Far more so than Britain, the historiography in France is inevitably inflected by the fratricidal violence of the imperial retreat. Despite Britain’s wars of decolonization – and Elkins notwithstanding – there was no

⁵⁹ See R. Aldrich, ‘Colonial Past, Post-Colonial Present: History Wars French-Style’, *History Australia* 3:1 (June 2006).

⁶⁰ See *The Guardian*, 5 July 2003.

exact equivalent to the Algerian War. The 'troubles' over Northern Ireland and the pressures of devolution are perhaps the closest Britain has had to a metropolitan crisis of decolonization. Yet these issues have remained difficult to classify because of the ongoing historical debates about Ireland's status within the British Empire. For all the passionate argument over Britain's historical record in Northern Ireland, it provides only a partial analogy to the still inflammable nature of the imperial record among *pieds-noirs*, migrants and their respective supporters in France. Colonialism remains a highly politicized topic in French public opinion and in academic circles, and an action such as the 2005 law in France is hardly imaginable in Britain. But the debates have also shown, definitively if tardily, that neither France nor Britain can be separated from their imperial pasts, and that the colonies must be written back into the national narrative.

Debate may continue about the extent of imperial influence in domestic affairs, the breadth of colonial culture in metropolitan society, or the exact links between colonial and post-colonial phenomena, but it is increasingly difficult for historians to avoid substantial discussion of colonial history in their national narratives. The British and the French are also faced with the seeming need – ironically, a generation after the end of Empire appeared to sever formal ties with the colonial world – to redefine their sense of nationhood in light of the enduring legacy of the empire in their culture and society. History is at the forefront of this process – a process that is not entirely dissimilar to the forging of new national histories in the former colonies and dominions of Britain and France in the post-Second World War era. In working towards a new, post-imperial footing for the national-historical subject, historians are playing an active role in decolonizing the nation-states of contemporary Europe.

13

Inside-Out: The Purposes of Form in Friedrich Meinecke's and Robert Aron's Explanations of National Disaster

Hugo Frey and Stefan Jordan

This chapter compares how a German and a French historian wrote instant contemporary histories of their times; Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954) in his *Die deutsche Katastrophe. Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (1946) and Robert Aron (1898–1975) in *Le Piège où nous a pris l'histoire* (1950).¹ Our focus will be on the forms of argument the historians used to frame their works and how this shaped their communication of ideological assumptions. Meinecke subtitled his work 'Reflections and Memories'; however, his short essay is not very autobiographical. The only trait of this in the book is his attempt to revise his own historical thinking, his belief in an elite German culture in the light of National Socialist barbarities. Generally speaking, his argumentation is abstract and he frames *Die deutsche Katastrophe* as a comparison of a variety of international and national trends and social patterns to develop a series of theses as to why Germany had fallen to Hitler. Conversely, Robert Aron portrayed the Vichy regime through autobiographical information about his flight from France to freedom in Algiers and he also intermingles pen portraits of leading collaborators. Thus the two forms of writing contemporary history are seemingly antithetical.

In fact, the historians' discourses have far more in common than appears to be the case. Both of them essentially used a taxonomic mode to write about the past, with the German historian building a system of ideas and concepts to explain history and the Frenchman listing and implicitly classifying people, places and experiences. Both historians avoided deploying a conventional

¹ F. Meinecke, *Die deutsche Katastrophe. Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden, 1947), citations herein are from the English translation by Sidney B. Fay. Robert Aron, *Le Piège où nous a pris l'histoire* (Paris, 1950). Substantial sections from this work were previously published in the journal he co-edited, *La Nef* (1944–45), issues 1–3. Large edited sections of *Le Piège* are also reprinted in Aron's posthumous *Fragments d'une vie*, preface by D. de Rougemont (Paris, 1981). None of these publications have been translated and all citations are translated by the authors.

narrative-cum-descriptive approach. The dense taxonomic modes they used assisted them to imply powerful political meanings. Smuggled in between loose classification and analysis, Meinecke and Aron assert their versions of national perspectives. In addition, their attempts to explain, or at least to describe, the Holocaust proves the suggestion that historians were unable to integrate the Holocaust into their work in the years immediately after the end of the war.² For Meinecke and Aron other considerations were of higher status than that subject in their complex systems of argumentation.

The two writers held comparable political-biographical credentials which legitimated their works and partly explains why they were able to publish what they did, when they did. Importantly, they had remained distanced from National Socialism and French fascism. Therefore, neither man was tainted by direct collaboration with the former regimes. The different scale of suffering they had endured in the 1930s and during the war made them important spokespeople from pre-Nazi/fascist national traditions.

In 1918, Meinecke, a founding member of the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP), had argued for the installation of a presidential republic, following the example of the political system of the United States. He saw himself as a 'Vernunftrepublikaner' and, because of public pressure put on him by the National Socialists, he gave up his leading position in German historical studies (editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1893–1935, and member of the *Historische Reichskommission*, 1928–34). As is also often noted by his biographers, Meinecke lived through the National Socialist-period in a state of 'inner exile' in Berlin and saw himself as being one 'of the most private of private individuals' during the Third Reich.³ When he visited Harvard University in 1936 to receive his honorary doctorate, this act was an implicit demonstration of his critical thinking towards the German regime. It is because of these actions that many contemporary observers identified Meinecke as an exponent of the liberal-national German mind-set that had managed to survive National Socialism without any moral damage. For them, he was the personification of an acceptable current of German intellectual culture. Even in Paris, where some thinkers continued to fear Germany in the years immediately after 1945, Meinecke's work attracted admirers. For instance, the prominent sociologist Henri Berr highlighted how Meinecke represented a positive German vision in his works.⁴ Similarly, a number of Meinecke's former students had gone into

² See, among others, Z. Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2006).

³ Meinecke's self-definition, cited in J. B. Knudsen, 'Friedrich Meinecke', in H. Lehmann and J. Van Horn Melton (eds), *Paths of Continuity: Central and East European Historiography from the 1930s through the 1950s* (Washington, DC, 1994), p. 49.

⁴ H. Berr, *Le Mal de la jeunesse allemande* (Paris, 1946), p. 75. For continued hostility to Germany in Paris after the war, see H. Massis, *Allemagne d'hier et d'après-demain* (Paris, 1949).

exile in the United States and he had maintained good contacts with them.⁵ In short, Meinecke was considered a spotless representative of the German conscience who was welcomed by US forces as an exemplar of moral integrity after the war.

Robert Aron wrote his accounts of Vichy after having been a victim of its anti-Semitic laws. In 1941 Aron was rounded-up in one of the first of Vichy's anti-Semitic attacks and was imprisoned in the Mérignac-Beau-Désert camp, near Bordeaux.⁶ Following his escape from that place, and prior to an arduous clandestine journey from France to Algiers, the high-ranking Vichy official Jean Jardin hid him in his home, close to the town of Vichy.⁷ Subsequently, Aron served in the French administration in exile, working with General Giraud and subsequently General de Gaulle. It was there in Algiers that he relaunched his intellectual activities, being a founding member of the periodical, *La Nef*. After the liberation his unique experiences gave Aron's name plausibility among the various factions of the centre-right intelligentsia. He was neither a conventional Pétainist nor a pure Gaullist, and he was certainly not aligned with communism. Thus, just like Meinecke, he was well placed to discuss recent history. Each of the historians was sufficiently close to their subject matter to have a sense of authority to write about it, yet each of them was also distant from it, and so they avoided being tarred with political misjudgement or ideological extremism.

In the period 1945 to 1950 sympathetic observers would not have perceived either Meinecke or Aron as having been complicit with fascism. Indeed, the tradition they were both associated with in these critical years after the war was European federalism. Quite explicitly, Meinecke used *Die deutsche Katastrophe* not only for historical explanation, but to advocate German integration into a new Western European alliance. Aron was also an enthusiastic supporter of Europeanism. At the same time as publishing *Le Piège*, he wrote extensively in favour of federal government for post-war Germany, and throughout the 1950s he edited and published French European-federalist books and periodicals.⁸

⁵ F. Meinecke, *Akademischer Lehrer und emigrierte Schüler. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen 1910–1977*, ed. G. A. Ritter (Munich, 2006).

⁶ See R. Aron, *Fragments d'une vie* (Paris, 1981); R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (London, 2001), p. 64.

⁷ The episode is dealt with in both *Le Piège* and *Fragments d'une vie*. The former work being cited as an accurate source of evidence in P. Assouline, *Une éminence grise – Jean Jardin, 1904–1976* (Paris, 1988), pp. 141–6.

⁸ See R. Aron, *Le Fédéralisme* (Paris, 1955). For Aron's discussion of a federal solution for Germany see his 'Avenir de l'Allemagne? Unité allemande ou fédéralisme', *La Nef* 22 (September 1946), 46–56. For a good general contextual survey, see W. Lipgens, *Die Anfänge der europäischen Einigungspolitik* (Stuttgart, 1977). For the theme of 'Occident' in post-war German culture and society, see the excellent Stephen Brockmann, 'Germany as Occident at the Zero Hour', *German Studies Review* 25:3 (2002), 477–96.

From the 1960s onwards, scholars have been more critical of the historians' reputations. Immanuel Geiss's attack on Meinecke repositioned him as a conservative historicist and a nationalist.⁹ Younger left-leaning German historians repeated these criticisms, although, more recently, several other historians have portrayed him as a liberal thinker who held democratic ideas and who had tried to bring the legacy of nineteenth-century protestant 'Bildungsideal' into a new republican political system.¹⁰ The issues around posthumous reputation are no less acute in France. Throughout the last 30 years Aron's work and politics have been deeply maligned by younger historians as well. Robert Paxton's major study of the Vichy regime overshadowed and revised Aron's earlier contribution.¹¹ In addition, Aron has been criticized by several important contemporary historians of intellectual life for his philosophical commitments of the 1930s and their proximity to fascism and Nazism. In 1931, Aron had been a founding member of the personalist intellectual review, *Ordre nouveau*. Working with Arnaud Dandieu, he had authored a number of anti-rationalist essays, including a notorious attack on the United States, *Le Cancer américain* (1931).¹² Members of this circle, such as the Swiss intellectual Denis de Rougemont, had made links between the French intelligentsia and National Socialist Germany via the offices of Otto Abetz, the future German ambassador to occupied Paris.¹³ Aron had attended scholarly conferences in Mussolini's Italy and the historians Zeev Sternhell, John Hellman and Paul Mazgaj take him up on these interventions, as well as other *Ordre nouveau* actions and doctrinal inflections, in their influential studies.¹⁴ Aron's work and reputation, unlike that of Meinecke, has not attracted any re-evaluation. Although his personal papers are archived in Paris, he has yet to attract an intellectual biographer, which is all the more surprising given that

⁹ I. Geiss, 'Kritischer Rückblick auf Friedrich Meinecke', in I. Geiss (ed.), *Studien über Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft* (Frankfurt/M., 1972), 89–107.

¹⁰ For another critical interpretation, see B. Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges. Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1980). For the growing field of scholars more sympathetic to Meinecke, see: G. A. Ritter's Introduction to *Meinecke: Akademischer Lehrer*; G. A. Ritter, 'Meinecke's Protégés: German Émigré Historians between two worlds', in *German Historical Institute Bulletin* 39 (2006), 23–43; G. Bock and D. Schönplüg (eds), *Friedrich Meinecke in seiner Zeit. Studien zu Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart, 2006); N. Wehrs, 'Von den Schwierigkeiten einer Geschichtsrevision. Friedrich Meineckes Rückblick auf die "deutsche Katastrophe"', in J. Danyel, J.-H. Kirsch and M. Sabrow (eds), *50 Klassiker der Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen, 2007).

¹¹ R. Paxton, *Vichy France* (New York, 1972).

¹² R. Aron and A. Dandieu, *Le Cancer américain* (Paris, 1931).

¹³ B. Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les Français* (Paris, 2001).

¹⁴ J. Hellman, *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexander Marc and Ordre Nouveau 1930–2000* (Montreal, 2002); Z. Sternhell, *Neither Right Nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), pp. 282–3; and P. Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism: The Cultural Politics of the French Young Right, 1930–1945* (Newark, NJ, 2007), pp. 65–6, 81.

he published widely on theology as well as history, and that he had been quite central to the young conservative-personalist movement of the 1930s. It is still quite common for him to be confused with the liberal philosopher, Raymond Aron, although the two men were not even related.

Contextual comparisons must not be pushed too far. Much about the historians, their distinct forms of political philosophy and their career paths were different from each other. We must highlight that Aron was much younger than Meinecke. At the time of writing *Le Piège*, he was much less qualified as a professional historian than his German contemporary. Whereas Meinecke had led a long and successful academic career within the German university system, Aron had worked in journalism and publishing, notably serving as secretary to the prestigious publisher Gaston Gallimard.¹⁵ In 1950 Aron was an important right-wing non-conformist thinker who had survived the war years and was continuing to publish, edit and write. However, he and his circle were a shadow of their former selves and marginalized by the dominant left-wing parties of the Resistance. Meinecke's status in Germany in the same period was far greater, as indicated by his appointment as the Founding-Rector of the new Free University of (West-) Berlin in 1948.

Aron and Meinecke each believed in and greatly admired their homelands. In publishing *Le Piège* and *Die deutsche Katastrophe* so soon after 1945, they embarked on a parallel intellectual endeavour to rescue the reputations of their nation-states after National Socialism and Vichy. It was a position they adopted in harmony with their Europeanism because for continental peace to be achieved, their two nations had to exist and be at ease with themselves and their respective pasts. Although their versions of conservatism differed, they both reviewed twentieth-century history and regretted the rise of modernity. Meinecke identified the rise of 'Massenmachiavellismus' – the politics of an anonymizing mass society, characterized by the 'blood and soil' ideology of Nazism, Prussian militarism and the loss of tolerance amongst the younger generation who were radicalized by the experience of the First World War – as a fundamental factor in the descent to 1933 and 1945. Aron also, although more obliquely, questioned how inter-war France had lost traditional spiritual values and hence was susceptible to defeat and collaboration in 1940. These projects stand out from the many other treatments being published on comparable themes in France and Germany. Other intellectuals and historians used recent French history of the Resistance to bolster the nation-state. Jean-Paul Sartre provided more abstract philosophical discussions on the meaning of collaboration and anti-Semitism.¹⁶ Aron was alone in investigating recent history

¹⁵ P. Assouline, *Gaston Gallimard* (Paris, 1997).

¹⁶ J.-P. Sartre, *Situations II* (Paris, 1948); and *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris, 1948); these are severely criticized by J. Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question* (Lincoln, 2006).

to try to integrate the story of Vichy into the longer history of twentieth century France. He was also the only historian to continue to work in this field for several decades, publishing extended treatments throughout the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷ Similarly, Meinecke's project was distinctive among several other early interpretations of the National Socialist period being published in Germany in the 1950s. He did not wish to use history to blame the Germans or parts of German society in the manner in which Karl Jaspers had suggested in *Die Schuldfrage*.¹⁸ Meinecke's vision of a quasi-abstract analytical discussion of modernity was also different from the work of Hans Erich Stier, who had turned to a more apolitical notion of 'Abendland' traditions.¹⁹ Meinecke was the only one who tried to give a historical philosophical analysis of the reasons for National Socialism and the decline of a special German humanism that culminates in his concept of 'Bildung'.

To summarize, the writers were both examples of the respectable face of their nations' patriotic non-communist intelligentsia. Their motivation for writing history was to confront their respective nation's horrendous contemporary record. They had been sufficiently distant from National Socialism and Vichy to publish on these subjects, whilst implicitly also maintaining a national viewpoint. The content and style of their essays are quite different. Nonetheless, we will suggest certain similarities in their strategies to find a positive national history, whilst at the same time acknowledging terrible barbarity and evil.

Differences in the forms of the arguments

Meinecke uses almost all of the common tropes of historical argumentation from the liberal tradition in *Die deutsche Katastrophe*. Dealing with the idea of a German 'Sonderweg', which had seemed to be invalid after 1945, he makes comparative judgements based on European and German conditions, and articulates a relationship between the two. He tracks the changing socio-political developments, from approximately the 1880s to the 1930s, accounting for the impact of the First World War and also offering a differentiated interpretation of German society, highlighting groups that, he suggests, supported Nazism: the Prussian militarists, the younger generation and, not least, the bourgeoisie. He also highlights those that did not: the true Christians and the ones who believed in the traditional German values of culture and 'Bildung'.

Meinecke also provides a theory of 'contingency' to explain Hitler's accession to the Chancellorship in 1933. Similarly, he discusses what might have been, if the political ambitions of other German politicians had been more

¹⁷ R. Aron and G. Elgey, *Histoire de Vichy* (Paris, 1954).

¹⁸ K. Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage* (Heidelberg, 1946).

¹⁹ H. E. Stier, *Die geistigen Grundlagen der abendländischen Kultur* (Gütersloh, 1947).

successful than Hitler's. Thrown into the analytical framework is also quite a sophisticated psycho-historical discussion of the impact of rationalism on the youth of Weimar Germany. Using paradox to explain sharp contradiction, Meinecke suggests that an over-rational obsession with technology – the coming-up of a *homo faber* as a new kind of man at the end of the nineteenth century – made a generation of Germans vulnerable to its very opposite disposition: irrationalism. All of Meinecke's argumentation is densely presented, leaving little room for description or substantial analysis of primary evidence. Only limited reference is made to Meinecke's own experiences or interviews with friends or associates. Nonetheless, he pursues some central threads of his thinking more systematically than many of the other aspects. The concentration on the German roots of National Socialism is misleading, according to Meinecke, who attributes its success, instead, to a fundamental tension between two waves in European history: the Nationalist and the Socialist movements. According to Meinecke, Germany was uniquely unable to combine nationalism and socialism in a positive way like his political ally Friedrich Naumann had sketched it. Apart from pointing to these essentially interlocking causal explanations, Meinecke draws on traditional Protestant and cultural values to juxtapose a tradition of German humanism with National Socialist inhumanity. He repeats how the rise of the National Socialist mass-movement is a direct replacement of liberal Christian individualism. He implies that this is the deepest negative consequence of Hitler's regime. The Führer had been at the forefront of a replacement of liberal-Christian values of the dignity of the individual with totalitarianism. For Meinecke, philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche had pointed the way to disaster.

The reason for this lengthy summary of Meinecke's many arguments is to offer a better flavour of the form and tone of the writing, rather than to debate any specific contention. As the above descriptions indicate, his general rhetorical system is elaborate and is founded on the desire to offer numerous multiple explanations. These are offered as a quasi-systematic evaluation of Germany since the Goethe era. In 1958, the Meinecke scholar Richard Sterling used the words 'piecemeal and contradictory reflections' to describe Meinecke's work.²⁰ However, it is more accurate to describe *Die deutsche Katastrophe* as a highly ambitious, multi-causal work, varying the antique form of the tragedy that has no peripeteia for Meinecke and no ability for catharsis, besides realignment of Germany with other German-speaking European neighbours: Switzerland and Holland.

Robert Aron's essay relies on an antithetical set of devices to those which Meinecke deployed. He focuses on individuals and their attitudes, often drawn

²⁰ R. Sterling, *Ethics in a World Power. The Political Ideas of Friedrich Meinecke* (Princeton, NJ, 1958), p. 275.

from his memory of first-hand meetings with the people he describes. His historical mode is the creation of a series of telling vignettes, and his ability to capture the essence of a historical figure in three or four sentences so as to imply an explanation for their role under Vichy.²¹ Aron presents his perceptions of intellectual collaborators and Vichy politicians to the reader. These include his opinion on Pierre Laval, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, Hubert Lagardelle, Charles Maurras, Jean Jardin and Ramon Fernandez. In each case, Aron writes quick amateur psychological explanations as to why the individual made the error of joining the forces of collaboration. According to Aron, all of them seem to have lacked belief in a French national recovery, but many were simply selfish. For instance, Ramon Fernandez is charged with egotism, and Brasillach is charged with the vice of excessive intellectualism. Furthermore, Lagardelle is said to have confused a part of the Vichy regime's ideology for its whole purpose. It is only when Aron has developed a number of these biographical portraits that he starts to make the occasional more general proposition as to why Vichy had been formed and why it was doomed to fail. For Aron, the common problem, a root explanation behind the many individual erroneous responses to the defeat of 1940, is a decline in spirit. Thus, he suggests that France was already decomposing in its inner self, if not in literal territorial integrity, before 1940. For him, all of the individuals' errors of 1940 until 1944 emerged because too many politicians and intellectuals held the mistaken belief that Vichy could implement the reforms that the country so desperately needed at this time.

Aron relied on persuading his readers to trust his commentaries, based on his first-hand knowledge of the collaboration milieu and his intellectual ability to see psychological failings among the group, and then to reach his wider conclusions on the meaning of national history. His thoughtful and insightful style of writing mostly carries it off. Frequently, he notes a pertinent feature of the mindset of one of the collaborators he describes and then develops that further to explain the person's fundamental failing. *Le Piège* is not a bitter set of character assassinations, but rather a series of informal psychological profiles which, when read together, confirm Aron's wider thesis on a generation of leaders who did not understand that Vichy was the wrong way to make the necessary reforms.

To bring the comparison together, Meinecke developed general and quite complex social-historical explanations for National Socialism before mentioning specific individual cases, often very briefly. Aron wrote history in a very different manner – by describing people and events in detail before coming to a definitive theoretical explanation on why something had happened. For Aron, the truth of his biographical detail is enough evidence for him to make a more

²¹ A style that can still be seen in the far more formal *Histoire de Vichy* (Paris, 1954).

general rather simplistic conclusion. For Meinecke, the elaborate sophistication of his arguments makes detailed descriptions of individuals seem superfluous.

Asserting a moderate national view despite the descent to catastrophe

By using two quite different comparative approaches, the historians found space within their texts to offer positive national exemplars. They did this without writing accounts that were too black and white, and they did not situate these positive elements of national history as the only or even completely dominant trends. Yet these aspects stand out as the key ideological subtext for the imagined reader to understand and identify with. That is to say that Meinecke's and Aron's works display very similar valorizations inside their superficially neutral comparative modes. In each case, the author includes a conceptual commentary or assertions that clearly indicate sadness at the horrors of contemporary history. Similarly, each of them highlighted the fact that many social groups or individuals have brought shame on the national records. However, alongside these statements are also repeated representations of German and French people who did not fall into making wrong judgements and did not contribute to National Socialism and Vichy.

Turning to Meinecke first, his multiple argumentation approach was an especially helpful device through which to imply that not all Germany could be equated with Hitler and 'Hitlerism'. For instance, in his preface he highlights the negative elements in German life, apologetically noting how National Socialism can be linked to the bourgeoisie's role and to Prussian-German militarism. Later, that interpretation is developed, so in Chapter 6 he strongly criticizes Prussian militarism. Woven alongside these criticisms are positive themes in German history. According to Meinecke, important features of national life in Germany had no connection to National Socialism and were not tainted by the National Socialist regime. These included Friedrich Naumann's national-social movement and its periodical, *Die Hilfe*. For Meinecke, here was a noble attempt to merge the forces of bourgeois nationalism and proletarian socialism into a positive social-national political formation. Timing alone is attributed as the cause of Naumann's failure. Similarly, when Meinecke attacks the German *homo faber* he also highlights how the tradition of cultural Protestantism was not so vulnerable to seduction by the NSDAP. Next, within the critical discussion of Prussianism, Meinecke asserts that some members of this milieu were not a part of the creation of National Socialist power. He suggests that 'some freer characters with finer political feelings' did exist – having people like himself and his friends in mind when explaining this. In discussing his personal conversations with similar men, such as the former War Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs Wilhelm Groener and Hans von Haeften,

Meinecke asserts, almost in passing: 'I had long recognized the depth of the abyss between Hitler and the sound German spirit.'

We can find a similar argumentation where Meinecke describes the 'Stauffenberg' conspiracy of 20 July 1944 against Hitler. The conspirators were driven by 'noble motives' and as Meinecke continues to explain: 'I can only hold that their motives were pure and high-minded. They proved to the world that in the German army and in the German people there were still men who were not willing to subject themselves as dumb dogs, but who had the courage of martyrdom' (p. 102).

Whilst Meinecke created a spectrum of conceptual explanations for National Socialism to include positive national elements, Aron suggested a spectrum of psychological motivations for collaboration. Vichy and its supporters collaborated out of a sense of positive patriotic sentiment. Thus Aron speaks highly of Jean Jardin; the man who helped save his life, and of Robert Lousteau and Jacques Le Roy Ladurie. For Aron, these were good examples of men who had genuinely believed that the regime might prove beneficial to the nation. They had wrongly interpreted it as a potential means to drag France from the spiritual doldrums of the 1930s. Others, too, are mentioned in this light, including, René Gilson, Robert Gibrat and Gaston Begery. According to Aron, they had entered into the Vichy state quite honestly and with patriotism, hoping to achieve good results for the country. Continuing to describe further noble misinterpretations of 1940, Aron discusses an anonymous military figure he names as 'Louis'. Aron explains that this 'grand militaire' had been completely sincere and authentic in his hopes for a national recovery. Aron asks his readers to interpret such interventions with charity. He declares: 'If he was ever guilty he was so in an innocent way' (p. 99). Generalizing more fully, in anticipation of the detailed case studies, he suggests in his introduction that:

One could have believed first in Pétain, and subsequently de Gaulle, without having to burn what one had once loved. One could be a patriot at Vichy, in weather conditions which were murky, one could be an opportunist in Algiers or even in London, under a bright clear and free sky, without forgetting the counter-examples. One could in this inhumane period involuntarily fail our nation in one or the other camp.

(pp. 16–17)

The reportage-taxonomy approach adopted by Aron allowed him to make these kinds of fleeting judgements without ever pursuing a directly anti-Resistance or exclusively pro-Pétain commentary. It was the means through which the historian could mete out positive and critical judgements that included a positive valorization of some selected Vichyites. In addition, since his main narrative line was that of his own story, and of his journey to freedom in Algiers, there was

little space to add more than a few recommendations. Aron therefore used a discursive form in which a discourse of national honour could be located inside and alongside acknowledgement of the most shameful political actions and institutions, without opening a polemical revisionism.²² He did not trumpet national glory; rather he invited his readers to carefully consider that not all of France that had supported collaboration had been corrupt or even unpatriotic. The technique is even deployed in Aron's discussion of Pierre Laval. In this passage of writing, Aron does not seek to mount a full defence. However, he does recall that Laval's intentions had been patriotic on one occasion, when he had attempted to prevent German and Italian influence in France.

With hindsight, it is evident that there are similar rhetorical effects in Meinecke's and Aron's post-war writings. Their stylistic choices were very different (comparative analysis and biographical surveying), yet in both texts the taxonomic mode of writing created a discursive space that was subtly patriotic. Whilst creating a series of arguments that were critical of the actions of the German bourgeoisie, Meinecke found space to focus on neutral or anti-Nazi German traditions. Very similarly, Aron's thoughts were rooted in the belief that motivations for Vichy were plural. He reminded his readers of the innocent collaborator, or at least of the honourably motivated, if misguided, Vichyite. Both writers were sophisticated patriots. The positive elements of the national record are not boldly juxtaposed with the more critical interpretations of the national past in their works. Instead, they are located subtly alongside many other arguments or auto/biographical sketches. The passages that are favourable to Germanness and Frenchness always nestle beside the paragraphs of rhetorical bemoaning of national error and disgrace.

The historians' limited treatment of the Holocaust

Compared to Meinecke's and Aron's recurrent inclusion of positive German and French elements of the past, the Holocaust was only mentioned in a relatively restricted and contradictory fashion. Meinecke mentions National Socialist barbarism, anti-Semitism and gas chambers. In particular, he regrets the utter barbarism of National Socialist power. He also asserts that anti-Semitism was the raw-material of National Socialist ideology (p. 135). But,

²² Historical essay writing which was openly Pétainist was relatively common in France after 1945. Early examples of extreme right-wing interpretation include, M. Bardèche, *Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise* (Paris, 1948); Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Au nom des silencieux* (Paris, 1945); J. Isorni, *Documents pour la révision* (Paris, 1948); and L. Rougier, *Mission secrète à Londres* (Geneva and Paris, 1948). For discussion and refutation of these authors' theses, see among now many other scholarly works, R. Frank, 'Vichy et les Britanniques 1940–1941: double jeu ou double langage?', in J. P. Azéma and F. Bédarida (eds), *Le Régime de Vichy et les Français* (Paris, 1992), pp. 144–63.

there are no detailed descriptions of the National Socialist race laws, and no descriptions of the material conditions of the Holocaust. Meinecke rather links the Holocaust to a concern for the loss of Christian and humanist ideals.²³ He asserts:

With regard to all others, especially the Jews, there were no longer any moral restraints or a recognition of the rights of man and of human dignity. This was not said openly, and for tactical reasons a different tone might now and then be sounded. But in the gas chambers of the concentration camps the last breath of Christian feeling for humanity and of the Christian culture of the West was finally extinguished.

(125)

For Meinecke, the Holocaust is not a subject on its own; it is only one part of the misdirected path that the leading classes in German society had chosen. Not free of anti-Jewish stereotypes, as well as a strong anti-Bolshevik subtext, he functionalizes the Holocaust to show the degeneration ('Entartung') of German traditional humanism into a fanatic National Socialist-barbarism: the shift from cultural pride into political chauvinism ('Herrengeist') (pp. 28/39), from Metaphysics to Materialism (p. 83), from Herder's idea of a peaceful relationship between all 'Völker' to a hypertrophic *völkisch* movement (p. 111).

Unlike Meinecke, Robert Aron experienced anti-Semitic violence and came close to being murdered by his persecutors. In *Le Piège*, he offers a more sophisticated treatment on the subject than one finds in Meinecke. Some details on the Vichyite persecution of Jewish people is included. For example, he writes about the fears and suffering which was integral to the French-Jewish experience in 1940 to 1941. He makes it quite clear that not only the National Socialists were to blame for persecution and that Vichy had developed an anti-Semitic policy of its own. He recounts how Vichyite policy forced him and others into hiding in Lyon in 1941. In Chapter 2 of his work, he explains in detail this terrifying experience. He describes how it felt to be a victim of Vichy's anti-Semitic legislation, which withdrew his civil rights of employment and full citizenship. In a particularly important and moving passage, he equates the Jewish experience in the following words: 'excommunicated by Vichy, citizens of a second class, living like the dead, because the most simple and banal rights had been withdrawn' (pp. 44–5). This is a powerful piece of eyewitness testimony, and moreover, Aron continues to explain how the victims always thought they could find rational reasons to

²³ A common theme identified in other early German writings by M. Bodemann, 'Eclipse of Memory: German Representations of Auschwitz in the Early Postwar Period', *New German Critique* 75 (1998), 57–89.

escape persecution, but that on each occasion a new arbitrary sanction would be introduced against them. Such moments were horrific, and Aron captures this aspect very well. Nonetheless, the material on the Holocaust issues which Aron includes in *Le Piège* is not given a significant space when compared to his commentaries on Vichy officials or his arguments on the decline of the national spirit. Precisely like Meinecke, he situates his writings on Jewish persecution as being of lesser textual-rhetorical importance within his main discursive framework. He treats it as a sub-thematic area distant from the main treatment of Vichy. The passages on anti-Semitism are not directly linked to any specifically named French anti-Semites. When collaborators are discussed as individuals they are never analysed for their anti-Jewish hatreds. When Drieu La Rochelle is described, it is to show that he is rather confused about National Socialist attitudes to Jewish people in public life. The Vichy regime's policies are mentioned but not accounted for in any detail at all. Furthermore, the passages where Aron recounts his clandestine life in Lyons, and the Jewish people he meets there, are not linked to specific Vichyite policies. Here Aron contends:

All excommunication is a totalitarian practice, where there is an element of fanaticism and where reason is not accepted as an argument. Are we free now that the regime that inspired this practice is no more? Without doubt the first victims are now freed from the threat that held them as living dead. But are we sure that the victims have not changed, are we sure that analogous tactics of fear are not being perpetuated? Are we sure that there are no longer people in our country, among our compatriots, people who are excommunicated not because of an evil that they themselves committed but because a totalitarian judgement is hitting the category or the group they had signed into. Everyone knows a forcibly retired functionary because they had participated in the Vichy government, where maybe they had succeeded in maintaining a French attitude, one could also cite figures among the former parliamentarians.

(pp. 45–6)

Thus, Aron relativized his own experience of suffering so as to reach out to protect former Vichy officials from the post-war trials, and indict the new Republican legislation made against former collaborators. He presents Vichy's anti-Semitism as a lesson for the Resistance and the post-war government to learn from so as not to start similar practices. Therefore, Aron includes the story of anti-Semitism in Vichy France to try to bring unity between resisters and collaborators after the war. His emphasis implies that, for him, new national political unity overrides a historical thinking-through of Vichy's murderous racism. For him, one kind of totalitarianism is like another.

Aron did not include any material in *Le Piège* on his own imprisonment and escape from the Mérignac concentration camp. A reader without the knowledge of that event would not gain any sense of it ever having taken place from a reading of the book. Brief notes on this experience, perhaps written in 1945–50, were in fact published in Aron's posthumous memoirs of 1981. It seems that this topic was too painful or too disturbing to his case for national unity to include in *Le Piège*.²⁴ Aron's reticence was common. As Joan Wolf suggests, the French-Jewish community did not wish to draw attention to their unique and horrifying experiences.²⁵ For reasons of fear of renewed persecution, social pressure and patriotism, they preferred to reintegrate themselves into the national community, fearing that mentioning the history of persecution would set them apart again from other citizens. Thus, Aron's decision not to detail everything about his story of persecution fits in with this trend. Equally, we can infer that Aron omitted details of the harshest aspects of his experience of anti-Semitism because he wanted to use *Le Piège* to try to recall the late 1930s spiritual crisis and to try to reintegrate some selected Vichyites and Resistance fighters into a new political national unity. For him, these themes and arguments were of greater significance than a thorough public airing of the Holocaust.

To repeat, the historians did include some material related to the Holocaust. However, the numerous other sub-aspects that they accounted for displaced the subject to a marginal position within their works. In the case of Meinecke, the quality of his argument was especially polarized. When he wrote about German history, he found important and still intriguing explanations for the rise of National Socialism. However, when he wrote about the 'Jews' and the 'Jewish question', he slipped into recycling stereotypes.²⁶ However, he and Aron considered that they needed to include some treatment of the Holocaust so as to make their works appear plausible. It is also important to underline that they each perhaps assumed that their readers would know about the details of the barbarism which had taken place because, as contemporaries, they had witnessed aspects of it themselves or had had public access to images of National Socialist concentration camps being opened up in newsreels or in de-Nazification films. The historians were in tune with their times and added to the cultural mood. Again we reiterate, Aron's piecemeal approach exemplifies the wider pattern of early Holocaust discussion in France. Meinecke's approach, too, was typical for the whole of German society, including once more the victims.

²⁴ An interpretation that is developed by P. Birnbaum in his reading of Aron's subsequent work, *Histoire de Vichy* (1954). See P. Birnbaum, *'La France aux Français': Histoire des Haines Nationalistes* (Paris, 2006), pp. 167–70.

²⁵ J. B. Wolf. *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, CA, 2004).

²⁶ A subtext that is identified by R. Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke and German Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA, 1972).

Conclusion

We have discussed how two different forms of historical writing relied on a similar taxonomic approach. In each case, this approach let the national historians tell a complex story about their homelands and their recent history. Meinecke's more abstract catalogue of explanations for National Socialism included within it a number of sections that demonstrated an honourable German history. Similarly, Aron found Vichy figures that were less corrupt than others, and in the figures of Bergery, Jardin and Le Roy Ladurie he presented 'honest', if misguided, patriotic men. Simultaneously, he attributed the cause of the nation's troubles, including Vichy, to the decadence of the 1930s and therefore they were not exclusive to the regime.

The historians did not ignore the subjects of the Holocaust or anti-Semitism. They did, however, limit their discussion and clearly devalue the topic in comparison to their other concerns. The multi-aspect (taxonomy) approach facilitated this discourse. It also meant that each historian could openly claim that they had confronted the most difficult and horrendous topic of the period, even while not fully prioritizing it in their texts. The taxonomic approach we identify allowed such complex positions to be mapped together, alongside numerous other subjects. Certainly, elements of both books remain historically interesting, too, and not 'in themselves' ideologically coloured. Meinecke's focus on Prussian militarism and the scientific-rationalist/irrationalist break offers a still intriguing explanation for the dissemination of National Socialist ideology in the 1920s and 1930s. Aron's quite extensive discussion of his experiences in Algiers, not touched on above, is a fascinating and helpful reminder of this critical place and its role both in wartime France and in colonial history. It is a subject that must surely soon be reinscribed into histories of 1940s France. One might also add that Aron's assertions that one should read Vichy as an ambiguous subject chime almost precisely with the starting point of the latest approaches in this field.²⁷ Contemporary historian Julian Jackson does not make this argument for the same political motivations that once shaped Aron's thinking, but he does request that students of the period read his work once more under the sign of ambiguity.

The discourse Meinecke and Aron developed is not as persuasive as a traditional narrative history. The price of the taxonomic approach they developed is that the argumentation is fragmented and contradictory. There is an unusual hollowness about the works. They have many interesting sub-parts, but at the

²⁷ See J. Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–44* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 3–4. Jackson remarks, 'A pro-Pétainist resister; a pro-British and anti-German Pétainist; a pro-Jewish Pétainist; two anti-Semitic resisters: these are not categories we might expect. They reveal the complexity of reactions to the Occupation [...].'

centre there is a lack of coherence. They are less persuasive for this. Finally, it is important to reiterate that on a level of form and argument, the two historians offered comparable writings. Almost all of the surface level content of the texts is different, just like National Socialist Germany was not Vichy France, and vice versa. Yet, when one rereads and compares these works for the manner in which they were written; how two historians first understood national histories after profound and terrible crises, after the Holocaust that one nation had instigated and the other collaborated in, they are remarkably alike.

14

Clio and Class Struggle in Socialist Histories of the Nation: A Comparison of Robert Grimm's and Eduard Bernstein's Writings, 1910–1920

Thomas Welskopp

Why was there no socialism in the national histories of German-speaking countries? The ruling paradigm of 'scientific' history writing in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany remained exclusively focused on nation building 'from above' and featured a narrow statesman- and state-centred spectrum of narratives. The methodological layout of German history, called *'Historik'*, moreover, proved ignorant of the social transformations that had accompanied the belated, but swift process of industrialization. Furthermore, its hegemony in the discipline prevented some form of positivism striking roots in the field, which would have allowed for the formation of a genuine 'social history' by way of specialization. Instead, social issues and the big theme of 'class conflict' were crowded out into the adjoining fields of sociology and 'political economics'.¹ The isolation of the Social Democratic 'milieu' added its weight as socialist intellectuals suffered persisting exclusion from the German academic establishment. There was neither an equivalent to the British *Fabians* who had infused a socialist tradition of social history into the national narrative of the United Kingdom, nor a counterpart for the American 'New Historians', most notably Charles A. Beard.

Therefore, if labour movements in Germany, Switzerland and Austria aspired to a historical record of their own ascendancy or only to an interpretation of the 'class struggles' from a socialist angle, they were thrown back on their own resources. This does not mean that their professional personnel, 'organic intellectuals' in the Gramscian sense, lacked the talents necessary for turning out historical writings on an equal footing with contemporary scholarly standards.² Potential writers had distinguished themselves as journalists in the

¹ T. Welskopp, 'Social history', in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing History. Theory and Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 203–222, esp. p. 205.

² T. Welskopp, "Arbeiterintellektuelle", "sozialdemokratische Bohemiens" und "Chefideologen": Der Wandel der Intellektuellen in der frühen deutschen Sozialdemokratie.

thriving Party press. As professional editors of Party journals or as freelance contributors trying to seek out a living from the Party by working for it, they were well versed in pointed editorials and rousing pamphlets, rather than the solemn tone of epic history writing. Yet as autodidacts, they had painstakingly acquainted themselves with the whole realm of *mainstream* historiography. Some had incorporated an expertise in literature and history as part of their emulation of an educated 'bourgeois' lifestyle.³

This chapter will show that some historians from the labour movement were so well read in their works on the nation's history that they had acquired a thorough knowledge of their underlying hegemonic 'master narratives'. Thus they not only knew the 'tools of the trade' when they set about penning their own socialist histories, they also demonstrated a keen sense of the constructive nature of any history writing in general. Furthermore, they did not only use this insight in order to defame 'bourgeois' *mainstream* historiography as biased and ideologically flawed. They understood their own venture into the field of history writing as efforts in historical constructivism and they reflected on that fact.

This brings us to the questions which the following comparative micro-study raises. What were the exact circumstances under which labour movements around the turn to the twentieth century felt obliged to make their voices heard in historiography? Did these circumstances shape the historical narratives in a specific way? How did the writers manage the transition from polemic journalism to heavy-handed scholarly work? How did they choose their own 'master narrative' and how did they justify their choice? What rhetorical and narrative means did they employ? What was, in their eyes, the purpose of such an unusual enterprise?

My hypothesis is that history works from the ranks of the labour movement were attempts to overcome pressing crises of legitimacy. To achieve this end, they aimed at writing the 'working class' and the labour movement into the national tradition, in order to prove that they did belong to a specific national community, whether the latter accepted them or not. For that purpose, socialist writers reflected on the *mainstream* 'master narratives' and simulated them consciously, even if they inverted them ideologically. In this effort, they utilized historical constructivism in a more instrumental sense than their 'bourgeois' adversaries. This means that socialist histories from the era under consideration were more tactical than strategic in nature. They did not aspire to bequeath society with the eternal building blocks of an encompassing national identity like the great established

Ein Fallbeispiel', in U. von Alemann, G. Ceppl-Kaufmann, H. Hecker and B. Witte (eds), *Intellektuelle und Sozialdemokratie* (Opladen, 2000), pp. 43–58.

³ A. Laschitzka, *Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem. Rosa Luxemburg. Eine Biographie* (Berlin, 1996).

historiographers of their time. They wrote for the political needs of the day and, in that sense, remained amateur historians and political journalists.

The two works to be compared in this chapter are excellent examples of such autodidactic socialist histories. The following sections will portray and analyse Eduard Bernstein's three-volume study *Die Geschichte der Berliner Arbeiter-Bewegung*, published between 1907 and 1910.⁴ The second part will introduce and scrutinize Robert Grimm's *Geschichte der Schweiz in ihren Klassenkämpfen* from 1920.⁵ These works from countries sharing the same language are, on the one hand, similar enough for comparison. Both represent the rare species of 'national' histories authored by representatives of the labour movement outside the academy. The goal of both of them was to inscribe the socialist labour movement into the larger national tradition. Written shortly before and after the First World War, a major turning point for the labour movements throughout Europe, they dealt with roughly the same topical political problem; what role could the labour movements of this time realistically aspire to? When doing this, both works originated from isolated niches in their societies and political systems.

On the other hand, these socialist histories are different enough to reveal interesting contrasts which may allow us some general insights into the conditions and workings of this historiography written by outsiders. First of all, they are placed in two distinguished national contexts. These contexts had produced, over the course of almost a century, strong public images of the respective nation's past. Thus, in order to inscribe the history of the labour movement into these existing national 'master narratives', the authors under consideration had to follow rather distinct narrative strategies.

Eduard Bernstein faced a hegemonic reading of German history as a success story of the autocratic nation-state as embodied by the *Hohenzollern* monarchy of the *German Empire*. Allegedly, Prussia had led the way, in a sequence of 'revolutions from above', to German unification in 1871. In the *Wilhelminian* era, this national success story had exploded into a boastful German nationalism which, by 1910, bordered on hysterical national exuberance. Despite Germany's colonial ambitions and her naval challenge to the United Kingdom, her alleged historical *telos* had somehow been lost on the way. Bernstein pitted his record of the labour movement's organizational achievements against this established image of Germany as a thriving, but somewhat 'childish' and restless would-be world power. His storyline rests on the notion that the accomplishments of Social Democracy had contributed substantially to the

⁴ E. Bernstein, *Die Geschichte der Berliner Arbeiter-Bewegung. Ein Kapitel zur Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Erster Teil: Vom Jahre 1848 bis zum Erlass des Sozialistengesetzes* (Berlin, 1907); *Zweiter Teil: Die Geschichte des Sozialistengesetzes in Berlin* (Berlin, 1907); *Dritter Teil: Fünfzehn Jahre Berliner Arbeiterbewegung unter dem gemeinen Recht* (Berlin, 1910); reprints of the original edition (Glashütten and Taunus, 1972).

⁵ R. Grimm, *Geschichte der Schweiz in ihren Klassenkämpfen* (Bern, 1920).

nation's glorious ascent. Indeed, he portrays the working class and its socialist representatives as the truly responsible forces in society, ready and entitled to take over and run the country instead of the irresponsible monarch, the ruthless capitalists and the war-mongering military. This was no revolutionary tale, however; as the labour movement had organized itself skilfully, it had pervaded society in a piecemeal and peaceful manner. It was precisely this solemn responsibility that both distinguished the German labour movement from the undisciplined rulers of the time and qualified it for government.

Robert Grimm, in contrast, penned his compact overview of Swiss history in the solitary confinement of a six months military prison term. His book appeared two years after a disastrous aborted general strike – the *Landesstreik* from 11–14 November 1918 – in which Grimm had acted as one of the organizational leaders. The strike had been crushed by military forces in cities like Zurich as a consequence of anti-socialist propaganda by the Swiss liberal establishment, which had brandished the uprising as a communist conspiracy directed from the Soviet embassy.⁶ Ideologically, the strike had become a national trauma which, in the following years, led to an 'othering' of parts of the Swiss labour movement as 'un-Swiss' agents of a hostile foreign power. The Swiss Social Democrats felt themselves being 'thrown out of history' by these machinations. Leaders like Grimm argued that the labour movement had never been part of the nation's 'official' historical legacy in the first place. On the contrary, the harmonious public image of Swiss history as a half-mythical story of progressive liberty, culminating in the figure of the comrades in oath (*Eidgenossen*), had ignored the struggles of the working class altogether. This hegemonic view on the history of Switzerland as a nation of steadfast libertarians had long taken a firm grip on massive elements of the Swiss labour movement, which had been organized in the patriotic *Grütli* workers' educational associations since 1838. It hesitantly went on to join ranks with other workers' groupings and unions to form the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland in 1888. In a situation of utter defeat, which at the same time marked the beginning of co-optation into the system, Grimm rewrote Swiss national history as a history of class struggles. It was not the belligerent acts of 'liberation' from diverse foreign oppressors which the official national tradition heralded as acts of violence against the oppressed Swiss people aspiring to power, that were the focus of his narrative, but the internal class cleavages within the Swiss nation.⁷

⁶ W. Gautschi, *Der Landesstreik 1918* (Zurich, 1968); B. Degen, 'Arbeiterbewegung und Politik in der Geschichtsschreibung', in B. Studer and F. Vallotton (eds), *Histoire sociale et mouvement ouvrier: un bilan historiographique 1848–1998/Sozialgeschichte und Arbeiterbewegung: eine historiographische Bilanz 1848–1998* (Zurich, 1997), pp. 33–60.

⁷ G. Marchal, 'Les Traditions nationales dans l'historiographie de la Suisse', in W. Blockmans and J. P. Genet (eds), *Visions sur le développement des états européens: théories et historiographies de l'état moderne* (Rome, 1993), pp. 271–96, esp. p. 276 ff.

Protagonists: Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) and Robert Grimm (1881–1958)

Although coming from rather different social backgrounds and generations, both authors served in almost identical functions in their Social Democratic Parties around the time they penned their histories. Both were members of the professional Party apparatus but not officials in the strict sense. Both earned their living by writing for the Party press with its widely circulated newspapers. They served as responsible editors of Party newspapers and journals. In 1906 Bernstein became a member of the faculty of the new trade union school in Berlin where the *General Commission*, the leading committee of the Social Democratic federation of trade unions, trained the coming generation of leaders. Bernstein and Grimm were thus socialized within the intellectual wing of their Parties. Both were prolific writers and well known as seasoned journalists. Finally, both shared the experience of a long-standing persecution by the state, which resulted in two decades of exile for Bernstein in Zurich and London, and culminated in Grimm's prison sentence after the *Landesstreik* of 1918. Complete absorption into the 'Party milieus' as centres of their life-world was thus supplemented by a feeling of social isolation and political discrimination which added a touch of 'martyrdom' to their self-perception and political outlook.⁸

Bernstein was born into a large family in Berlin. His father, a reformed Jew and small master plumber who advanced to the position of railroad engineer during the 1860s, held high the democratic traditions of the revolution of 1848, but utterly disliked the Social Democratic circle of friends Eduard began to assemble after 1871. Although the huge family had to go through dire straits more than once, Bernstein's father enrolled Eduard in a private school and later went on to enrol him in an elite Berlin *Gymnasium* until resources ran out. From 1866 on, Bernstein began an apprenticeship as a salesman and was hired as a bank clerk by the Berlin branch of S. & L. Rothschild in 1870.⁹ Bernstein's career, as well as his political affiliation, reflects the tension between ambition and obvious talent on the one hand, and scarcity and discrimination (to which his Jewish origins added weight) on the other. Bernstein attended lectures held by the socialist philosopher Eugen Dühring at the University of Berlin and became a member of the intellectual

⁸T. Welskopp, 'Existenzkampf um Abkömmllichkeit. "Berufspolitiker" in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie bis zum Sozialistengesetz', in L. Gall (ed.), *Regierung, Parlament und Öffentlichkeit im Zeitalter Bismarcks. Politikstile im Wandel* (Paderborn, 2003), pp. 185–222.

⁹F. L. Carsten, *Eduard Bernstein 1850–1932. Eine politische Biographie* (Munich, 1993), pp. 9–17; E. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre. Autobiographien* (Berlin, 1991 [1928]), p. 8 f.; E. Bernstein, *Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten* (Leipzig, 1930), pp. 2, 6.

Mohrenclub; an association of young, ambitious artisans, students and other left-leaning academics.¹⁰

As a club member, Bernstein taught courses in accounting and economics at the *Workers' Educational School* which had been founded by his close friend Karl Höchberg, the son of a wealthy entrepreneur who sponsored many activities of the infant Social Democratic Party in Berlin before 1878. When Höchberg was forced into exile by the *Anti-Socialist Law* in 1878, Bernstein accompanied him to Zurich as his private secretary. There he co-authored programmatic articles which advocated the transformation of German Social Democracy from a revolutionary into a reformist party. From 1881 to 1890 Bernstein served as one of the organizers of the illegal distribution of the Party newspaper, *Der Sozialdemokrat*, throughout Germany.¹¹ Expelled from Switzerland in 1888, he continued his activities as a Party press editor from London, where he corresponded with Friedrich Engels and frequented meetings of the Fabian Society.

Banished from Germany until 1901 because of a pending indictment, Bernstein engaged in multiple publishing enterprises from his London headquarters. He became editor of the theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit*, where he repeatedly placed reformist editorials that he condensed into a book-length pamphlet titled *The Preconditions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, published in 1899.¹² Upon his return to Germany after 22 years of exile, Bernstein became a permanent contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* and founded the monthly journal *Documents of Socialism*, where his interest in the history of the labour movement found its first public expression. The long exile and his isolation from the German Party scene left Bernstein as a 'free-floating' Party intellectual who lacked a power base of his own in the Party leadership network.¹³ Nonetheless, his programmatic agenda polarized the Social Democratic spectrum into a reformist and radical wing, because Bernstein was one of very few protagonists who were capable of bolstering reformist positions with theoretically eloquent arguments.

Grimm, born in Wald (canton Zurich) in 1881 as the son of a labourer, began his career as a printer and typographer who spent several years on his journeyman's tour in France, Germany and Austria. In 1909 he was appointed chief editor of the Social Democratic Party newspaper *Berner Tagwacht*, which, under his influence, developed into a programmatic organ for Swiss Social Democracy, advocating a moderately Marxist course. Advancement from printer or typesetter into journalism was one of the typical upward mobility channels for

¹⁰ T. Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn, 2000), pp. 176 f., 217.

¹¹ V. L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1966).

¹² E. Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Reinbek, 1969 [1899]).

¹³ E. Bernstein, *Aus den Jahren meines Exils (Völker zu Hause)*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1918).

genuine workers into the professional 'Party milieu'. During the final year of the Great War, the 'excellent orator' Grimm led the initiative to form the *Olten action committee*, which organized the general strike in November 1918.¹⁴ As president, Grimm and two close affiliates of the *Olten committee*, were sentenced to six months imprisonment for, as Grimm himself phrased it, 'mutiny, committed by publishing a call to arms against the political and military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie', although the authorities, after a trial that had taken almost two years to be completed, failed to prove either ties to an alleged Soviet conspiracy or plans for an armed uprising.¹⁵

Circumstances

Grimm wrote his *History of Switzerland in Her Class Struggles* at a vital juncture in his life. The defeat of the *Landesstreik* had also been his personal defeat, amplified by the prolonged state persecution and his eventual incarceration almost two years after the incident. The strike had been initiated after a four-year period during the war, in which the cost of living had exploded and brought many Swiss working-class families close to the brink of poverty. From early 1918 onwards, representatives of the labour movement had sought negotiations with the *Federal Council (Bundesrat)*, the highest executive branch of the Swiss government, in order to get prices down. Yet the Swiss government remained not only intransigent, it also met local protest marches in Zurich with charging cavalry. The commander-in-chief called for troop concentrations in Zurich and Bern, the centres of the expected mass uprising.

The *Olten committee's* strike proclamation, therefore, was a reaction to a perceived provocation by the government and the military. It did not entail an appeal to violent means, but centred around pragmatic demands like the 48-hour working week, proportional representation, female suffrage and an old-age and disabled pension system. The strike thus was not a revolutionary act, but a political weapon to put through radical reformist demands within the limits of the established (if modified) political system. Grimm's moderately Marxist course had long featured the idea that 'mass strikes' were a suitable instrument to bring about fundamental changes in society without recourse to violence. He had advocated this position as early as 1904, when the then 25-year-old typographer had published the pamphlet *Der politische Massenstreik*.

¹⁴ A. McCarthy, *Robert Grimm: der schweizerische Revolutionär* (Bern and Stuttgart, 1989), p. 40 f.; C. Voigt and R. Grimm, *Kämpfer, Arbeiterführer, Parlamentarier. Eine politische Biographie* (Bern, 1980); Schweizerischer Verband des Personals öffentlicher Dienste (ed.), *Robert Grimm. Revolutionär und Staatsmann* (Zurich, 1958).

¹⁵ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. viii. All translations of quotes from the original works are mine – Thomas Welskopp.

The Swiss government and liberal bourgeois society, however, perceived this strike call as the overture to civil war. Public propaganda circulated fears of a traumatic schism in the Swiss federal state along class lines and proclaimed the most severe crisis in its history. Massive troop concentrations threatened to turn the peaceful strike into a bloodbath. The *Federal Council* demanded that the workers unconditionally resume work. Confronted with the alternative 'surrender or civil war' option, the *Olten committee* called off the strike.¹⁶

Despite the obvious fact that violence had been invoked by the government in a 'class struggle from above', Grimm and his comrades faced indictment because of an alleged conspiracy to an armed uprising. His incarceration isolated him in a moment of great significance for the Swiss labour movement. The state quietly granted the 48-hour working week and installed, before the national elections of 1919, a system of proportional representation which helped to double the seats of the Social Democrats in the Swiss national parliament (Nationalrat) from 20 to 41. Grimm himself, a member of the Nationalrat for canton Zurich since 1911, was re-elected for canton Bern and served as a deputy until 1955.

This paved the way for the eventual co-optation of the Social Democratic labour movement into the established Swiss system of government. Grimm would later contribute to this process by composing a Party programme that jettisoned the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and embraced the military defence of the country (*Landesverteidigung*). Yet in 1920, the quiet concessions to the labour movement, accompanied by the open threat to violently crush any further mass protests, had rendered Grimm's idea to use the 'mass strike' as a political weapon obsolete. His Party, furthermore, faced a schism when its refusal to join the *Third International* (a decision which Grimm supported) caused the radical wing to defect and found the Communist Party of Switzerland.

In his *History*, Grimm did not mention the *Landesstreik* with a single word. The term 'strike' does not even appear in the index. Yet his book must be interpreted as his personal way to overcome this setback by inciting a new fighting spirit in a Swiss labour movement that was hovering between the Scylla of a harmonistic *Burgfrieden*, cushioned by state concessions and sweetened by Swiss patriotism, and the Charybdis of a separation into a Social Democrat and a Communist wing.

Bernstein's long years of exile in London coloured his reformist perspective on Marxist doctrine. Living in the world capital of capitalism, he saw no sign of an imminent collapse of the economic system or of a faltering of state institutions under the onslaught of revolutionary masses. On the contrary, he was observing a self-conscious trade union movement capable of winning substantial concessions from employers and politicians. From afar, the rise of the German labour movement looked even more impressive, since it had, in the shape of

¹⁶ McCarthy, *Robert Grimm*, p. 210.

the Social Democratic Party, a genuine political representation at its disposal which was winning ever-more seats in the national parliament (Reichstag). The British Labour Party only came into being in 1900. Furthermore, after 1900 the German trade unions were about to surpass their British model pioneers in membership and degree of centralization (if not bargaining power).

It is too simple, however, to see, in Bernstein, the leader of a united reformist wing in German Social Democracy that confronted an equally unanimous radical revolutionary wing around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and was eventually pacified by the 'centrist' Party leadership of August Bebel and Karl Kautsky.¹⁷ Bernstein differed from the trade unionists, labour secretaries, communal politicians and state deputies with whom he was lumped together under the label of 'reformism' in that 'reformism', for him, meant 'gradualism' rather than 'pragmatism'. Bernstein formulated a theoretical position for 'reformism' which his pragmatic colleagues could probably have done without.

Bernstein's position was to reconcile a Marxist model of the transformation of society to socialism with party politics primarily concerned with gaining organizational strength and practical political clout. He explicitly kept up Marx's critique of capitalism, yet with an emphasis on moral issues rather than dialectics, and discarding its deterministic theory of economic collapse. He envisioned that the labour movement, by virtue of organizational activism and political discipline, would gradually transform capitalist society. His theory was popularly simplified in the slogan: 'The movement is everything – the final goal nothing.'

After his return to Germany, Bernstein intermittently served as a deputy to the *Reichstag* (1902–08, 1912–18, 1920–28) and attended several Party congresses. Here he faced sharp criticism of the radical wing and a rather reserved reception by the 'centrist' leadership around Bebel and Kautsky. Militant speakers and parts of the Party press defamed him as a 'traitor' of the cause.¹⁸ Especially the Erfurt congress of 1906 provoked a harsh repudiation of Bernsteinian 'reformism' in favour of a dogmatic Marxist 'revolutionary attentism', while the Party's everyday politics told a completely different story.¹⁹

When Marxist dialectical determinism is lost, history as a contingent but morally encouraging process gains paramount meaning. This may be the motivation behind Bernstein's multi-volume effort to write the history of the Berlin labour movement. It was not a book about the German capital, but *a metonymy for a national history* increasingly dominated and eventually shaped by the German working class.

¹⁷ Cf. H. Grebing, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung. Von der Revolution 1848 bis ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2007), p. 39 f.

¹⁸ Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, p. 246.

¹⁹ D. Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt /M., 1973).

The movement is everything: Bernstein's *History of the Berlin Labour Movement*

Bernstein's history of the Berlin labour movement was an enormous undertaking, eventually filling 1202 pages. Its dramaturgical composition and narrative modelling had required a knowledgeable and skilful writer. Only a seasoned author with experienced judgment could have sculptured this overwhelming mass of data, this stupefying plethora of names, dates and figures, and these numerous character sketches into a coherent narrative shape. Yet it is significant that Bernstein took great pains to minimize the meaning of his authorship. He repeatedly pointed to the fact that the plan to assemble a history of the Berlin labour movement had originated in the movement itself and that his authorship could point to an explicit mandate by the local Party authorities.²⁰ In every volume, the titles present Bernstein as 'editor' and not 'author' of the work. In the third volume, Bernstein claimed that he had preferred his work to be published anonymously, although this gesture of humility towards the Party rather appears as an attempt at fishing for compliments for a good job at authorship.²¹

Following Leopold von Ranke's ideal, who had expressed his wish 'to extinguish my persona' from the interpretation of sources, Bernstein played down the creative aspects of his narrative endeavour and claimed a low profile as a mere chronicler of events:

Without somehow violating the historical truth, without forgetting that the working class has no need for a hagiography but has the right to see the things presented as they had been in reality, I nevertheless felt myself primarily as the confidant of those who had initiated [this work]. Therefore I have left all literary-subjective ornaments aside and recognized the essential task of bringing to light as many facts from the movement as possible and let these facts speak for themselves as much as possible by contextualizing them properly.²²

With this, Bernstein paid homage to the self-sacrificial nature of the movement in times of persecution and crisis. His authorship was supposed to be absorbed by service to the Party.

Bernstein knew enough, however, about the constructed nature of history to acknowledge that an inanimate chronicling would not produce the kind of historical truth he had in mind:

If, in general, the personal note in this book has been pushed to the background, I nevertheless believe that I was not entitled to suppress my personal judgment

²⁰ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. I, p. iv.

²¹ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. III, p. v.

²² Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. I, p. iv.

in particular cases. There are occurrences in the movement one cannot simply register as a chronicler without divesting them of their true nature, and by necessity it belongs to the [truthful] honouring of the accomplishments of leading personalities to criticize their mistakes and mishaps. Of course, the critic is not infallible, as is the person to be censured, and he can claim recognition for his judgment only with this proviso. That [this judgment] in each case has been reached only after the strict consideration of all circumstances the name of the author may warrant to the reader.²³

The author thus came back through the rear door not as the vain publicist proud of his artful prose, but as the authoritative interpreter of the past whose truth claims were based on honesty and responsibility. The author, in other words, had gone through a moral ordeal when evaluating the movement's past, virtually reliving its ups and downs, and in doing this he had rightfully earned his prominence as the movement's custodian of the past.

In his forewords, Bernstein took pride in the abundance of sources on which he had based his account. He actually paralleled his labours in collecting these documents with the painstaking activities to which the labour movement owed its overall success. Furthermore, he took great pains to demonstrate to the prospective reader that he could not have achieved this richness of documentation were it not for the help of innumerable comrades from the ranks of the movement who had provided him with a cornucopia of written material: 'Finally, what has been said of the preceding volumes can rightfully be stressed for the present one: In terms of the compilation of firsthand data, this book is a *collective work* [his emphasis]. A vast number of comrades have supported the author with material for this part of the Berlin history – partly on request, in part voluntarily.'²⁴ With this, Bernstein made both himself and his historiographical work part of the giant collective project represented by the successful mass movement of Berlin workers. His contribution was only to see that their perennial achievements were truthfully inscribed into the historical record.

Bernstein received his recognition as a writer from his personal involvement in the local labour movement of which his historical work formed a part. He felt a certain satisfaction in being acknowledged as an honourable Party representative: 'Both the circumstances under which the mandate to author this book had come to me as well as the fact that I had been allowed to be engaged personally in the movement that it deals with have contributed to a feeling of exaltation which has, the consciousness of my historical responsibility aside, never left me.'²⁵ The movement was everything, and Bernstein, as a person and as an author, was nothing.

²³ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. I, p. v.

²⁴ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. III, p. v.

²⁵ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. I, p. v.

It is neither by chance, nor due to the abundance of material that Bernstein organized his history of the Berlin labour movement in three volumes. This arrangement reminds us of a triptych, and this analogy holds in so far that each volume tells a slightly different story but the complete meaning of the underlying 'master narrative' is unveiled only after seeing them as a coherent whole. One could also draw the analogy of a drama unfolding in three acts: The first volume deals with the birth of the Berlin labour movement out of the bloody revolution of 1848 and the sometimes folly of its adolescent years until the passing of the *Anti-Socialist Law* in 1878. The second volume concentrates on the 12 years during which the party was outlawed, and despite its sarcastic tone, it primarily presents a story of catharsis through martyrdom. The third volume chronicles the triumphant ascent of the Berlin labour movement as the disciplined uphill struggle of a steadily growing working-class army that had expanded into an irresistible historical force ready to take over responsibility for society as a whole.

The first volume sets the stage. To trace back the roots of the labour movement to the revolution of 1848 it establishes that it was indeed a revolutionary movement, but one that would not *make* a revolution frivolously. On the contrary, Bernstein carefully distinguishes between the (mostly skilled artisan) workers who formed the nucleus of infant Social Democracy and the riotous *Lumpenproletariat* crowding the streets. More importantly, it was the intransigence of the monarch and his government that had virtually forced the revolution onto the workers. The revolution was presented as the working people's last resort to defend themselves against irresponsible elites. Although Bernstein goes into great detail to demonstrate that workers had defended the barricades heroically, he takes equal pains to point out that the 'real' workers always acted as the voice of reason during the conflicts and that they were occupied with organizing themselves rather than with hopeless street fighting.

This story paves the rocky way through the following three decades of the labour movement's development. Despite his claims to a prudent, reserved authorship, Bernstein here displays a pedantic historical censoriousness, sorting out those events and persons who had contributed to the survival of the movement and those who had become aberrant or had betrayed it. The voice of reason, self-sacrificing discipline and an ascetic devotion to the cause of the movement are the recurrent themes throughout the volume, all in the face of continued state persecution that still claimed numerous careers and lives. Bernstein does not bypass the conflicts and rivalries that had brought Social Democracy to the brink of extinction more than once. Yet he goes to great lengths in order to prove that there was a positive tradition of the modern labour movement of his days that ran through this sometimes chaotic history like a red thread.

Whereas the first volume reads like a psychological novel, the second appears as a satire. The hardships of the outlawed party members and their affiliates are detailed in all their bitterness, including the full list of expellees from Berlin during the years of the local 'martial law'. Yet Bernstein's underlying message is that the full-scale discrimination actually had the adverse effect of uniting and strengthening the labour movement. He exalts with malicious glee in demonstrating that the more unjust the harassments by the state, the more positive were the unintended consequences of such actions for the movement. The acts of the authorities appear utterly cumbersome and folly in this light. Chapter titles like 'Everything has to be oppressed', 'Frustrating spy stories and the revival of the party', 'Rough winds here and there', 'The ground is shaking', or 'The obliteration of the exceptional law' could as well serve as trailers for farces on a second-class provincial stage.

The triumph of the Party over the misdoings of the state appeared as a purifying fire which had extinguished all former fault lines in the movement and forged it into a legitimate, united force in history. Furthermore, the 'martial law' lifted Berlin into the centre of the movement's history. Nowhere had the law been executed with more cruelty. Nowhere had the subversive practices been more creative, diversified and widespread.²⁶ The *Anti-Socialist Law* was, therefore, the accolade of the Berlin labour movement. The Berlin Social Democrats and trade unionists from now on would be the leaders of the movement throughout all Germany. The catharsis of the Social Democrats had turned the local history into a metonymical *national* history of the labour movement.

The third volume aspires to expand the history of the labour movement to a metonymical *general* history of Germany and Berlin during the 15 years after the repeal of the *Anti-Socialist Law* in 1890. The introductory chapter on 'The development of the domestic affairs of Germany since 1890' is more or less a constructive critique of domestic policies and German colonialism through the looking-glass of the Social Democratic Reichstag faction. This was, in the end, a display of the economic and political knowledge the Social Democrats had accumulated during their parliamentary activities, and a demonstration of the parliamentary skills they had developed. In fact, the chapter insinuates that the movement had grown into a responsible, statesmanlike maturity and that it could be entrusted to a share of political power for itself.

The second chapter about 'The social development of Berlin from 1890 to 1905' combines a record of the miserable living standards in the Berlin working-class quarters with a display of modern social technological expertise, as had been accumulated by the Social Democratic communal politicians and health board members. Again, Bernstein presents the movement as an administration-in-waiting that acknowledged the social needs where they

²⁶ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. II, p. iii.

were most pressing and had the suitable solutions in stack. The third chapter registers the development of the party organization against the continuing harassment by state authorities. Prosecution and discrimination, central themes in Volume II, now appear as the background to the monumental epic of the rise of Social Democracy.

This epic unfolds in 17 thematically organized chapters. Each deals with a specific branch of the Social Democratic labour movement or with a special form of activity, covering the ground from demonstrations like the 'beer boycott of 1894' to the 'creations of the Berlin Social Democracy on behalf of education and art', the electoral results during this era, and the development of the May Day celebrations. The narrative flow gives way to an impressive, but eventually tiring compilation of data and figures. Bernstein wanted to drive his point home that Social Democracy had grown into an irresistible mass movement knocking on the door of political statesmanship. The expansion into a mass movement was, for him, *the* historical achievement of Social Democracy:

Therefore the historian of the labour movement sees himself tempted again and again, yes, exposed to the necessity to report statistics; for the history of the masses is statistics. The suffering and the achievements, the struggles and the victories of the masses – everything is expressed adequately only in numbers [...] A different treatment would have made it unavoidable to bring into play the author's personal judgment in a more prominent way than would have been compatible with the fact that this book itself in its initiation and completion is a collective enterprise of the Social Democracy of Berlin.²⁷

The third volume ends with a note on the spectacular Social Democratic funeral marches by which the movement honoured their deceased leaders, often martyrs to the cause. This was not by chance, since the connection between self-sacrifice and success, a success hard won by risking personal lives and careers, was expressed *in nuce* on these occasions. Furthermore, the accomplishments of a disciplined, devoted mass movement appearing in public space, in open but peaceful defiance of the authorities (it was prohibited to display Social Democratic banners on these marches) were well represented by the solemn, silent columns of grey-clad workers with mourning crepes on their sleeves carrying wreaths adorned with red carnations.²⁸ Finally, the dialectic between personal engagement in the movement and its sheer numbers is played out by Bernstein once more: 'It seems appropriate, with the exception of those named

²⁷ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. III, p. iv f.

²⁸ On Social Democratic funerals, see Welskopp, *Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, p. 379 ff.

above, to make no exception in case of the dead but to let democratic equality rule this army as well, for it warrants greater justice. Our movement is huge through the labour of the unnamed.' The movement *was* everything.²⁹

Liberty is class struggle, class struggle is liberty: Grimm's *History of Switzerland*

If Bernstein needed an abundance of first-hand data for assembling his history of the Berlin labour movement, Grimm could do without primary sources altogether.³⁰ Grimm did not need original documents in order to construct a new factual history; those facts were all well known. It was not on the factual level that Grimm disputed the hegemonic 'master narrative' of Swiss liberal historiography: 'It was important for me to demonstrate the mechanisms of society, to lay bare the causes of the historical phenomena. Therefore, I barely touch upon the actual phenomena, they rather serve as controls of the insights I had won, yet since these insights, in turn, revealed a continuous logical path of development of the historical forces, a coherent treatise of the general history of our country grew underhand.'³¹ Grimm was not concerned with the past as such but with *history*, the modes of moulding this past into a coherent historiographical rendition.

What Grimm attacked was the way in which the historical events were interwoven into the almost mythical public image of Swiss history as a continuous ascent of a steadfast people to liberty as embodied in the current system of direct democracy. Liberal historian Carl Hilty had delivered the philosophical blueprint to this hermetic and teleological 'master narrative' that drew a line from the *Rütli* comrades in oath to the federal state of the early twentieth century.³² Grimm, therefore, did not set out to retrieve an unknown history. He had to fight the fact that the nation's history as shaped by liberal historians *was all too present* in the minds of the population.

The hegemonic 'master narrative' of liberal historiography had almost 'brainwashed' the Swiss people: 'There is no lack of special and general studies of Swiss history. Fat tombs adorn private and public libraries, diverse textbooks differing from canton to canton compressing the Swiss history through centuries onto a couple of dozen pages; local historical essays shed light on narrower sets of facts, dispersed treatises and supplements sketch the image of single episodes; political and confessional lecture books try to do justice to party and

²⁹ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, vol. III, pp. 438, 439.

³⁰ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. x.

³¹ Bernstein, *Geschichte*, p. vii.

³² Marchal, 'Traditions', p. 276 ff.; S. Buchbinder, *Der Wille zur Geschichte. Schweizergeschichte um 1900: die Werke von Wilhelm Oechsli, Johannes Dierauer und Karl Dändliker* (Zurich, 2002), p. 232.

worldview.' As diverse as this literature was, the more consensual appeared its method of presentation, Grimm claimed:

Written by conscious or subconscious representatives of the ruling society, class and morals, their depictions carry the poetic traits of naïve hero worship and exuberant battle-scene painting. The main stress is placed on the description of the external phenomena, of dates and persons, not on the internal cohesion and the underlying driving forces of the historical development. This method serves the purpose, yet this purpose derives from the quest to let Swiss history appear as the history of the chosen people.³³

In a few sentences, Grimm sketched the ingredients of this almost mythical storyline:

The people's liberty [*Volksfreiheit*] based on tyrannicide and rebellion, stood at the cradle of the comradeship in oath [*Eidgenossenschaft*]; in its ascent to the apex of power, the union, allegedly initiated on idyllic *Rütli*, shakes off each and every frivolous attempt to establish foreign rule. The comrades, in oath, keep up their political independence over the centuries, whereas other states exchange their ruler, are shattered, remoulded, and rebuilt. Put in this frame, the canvas presents the harmonious image of a linear development, which hurries from step to step in heroic struggles, spreads liberty constantly, and cultivates democracy systematically, until its glorious completion today.³⁴

This harmonious tale was the product of a 'freezing in time', as Sascha Buchbinder has termed it, of the middle period in Swiss history.³⁵ After the mythical origins on the *Rütli*, 'the historical horizon darkens. It is getting ever quieter with the old Swiss liberty. [...] They pass swiftly over the shameless raids, the cruel oppression of the vassals, the horrendous battles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which contrast so starkly with the idealized monument of the forefathers. Instead they draw a straight line [...] between the original liberty of the inner cantons to the modern democracy of the bourgeoisie.'³⁶ In the elementary schools, Grimm contends, 'where the nascent citizen acquires his first historical notions', history ends with the end of the medieval age: no mentioning of the peasant war, of the rebellions against

³³ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. iii.

³⁴ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. iii.

³⁵ Buchbinder, *Wille zur Geschichte*, p. 232.

³⁶ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. iv.

aristocracy and oligarchy, or of the revolution that brought the 'bourgeoisie' to power.³⁷

It is significant that Grimm did not defame this 'conjuring trick' as an illegitimate misconstruction of history which he could have countered with a 'pure' alternative record of events as hidden in the sources. He rather wanted to challenge the hegemonic public image which had forced the Swiss people of all classes into a false harmonious consensus. The central requirement for this enterprise was not methodological diligence or 'objective' asceticism but ideological steadfastness: 'It could not be my objective to add just another piece to this kind of [conventional] historiography. The external circumstances alone in which I finished the present work would have prevented me from even trying if the outlook on life, acquired in the hard fight for survival, had not purified my philosophy of history from the traditional canon of concepts.'³⁸ The physical distancing from life as a free man and citizen in his prison confinement thus became a metaphor for the superiority of a philosophical standpoint high above the swamps of historical evidence and the treacherous bridges liberal historiography had erected in order to lure the Swiss people into a patriotic delirium. Whereas Bernstein had denied his authorship in order to let 'history' speak for itself, Grimm claimed a solipsistic authorship which defined its task as a conscious act of construction. Grimm aspired to be a 'truthful' historian not by virtue of some naïve 'objectivism', but by virtue of his strict adherence to Marxist historical dialectics.

Grimm argues that the whole image of Swiss history changes if one only applies a conceptual filter to the usual harmonious rendition of the past, in this case 'violence'. This was a projection of Grimm's bitter *Landesstreik* experiences. Grimm thus contextualizes the violence committed by the military during the strike. This lets this episode appear as just another expression of class struggles that allegedly had marked Swiss history in a more sustained way than its recurrent theme of progressive liberty:

Since its foundation, the societal classes in the *Eidgenossenschaft* confront each other directly, without mediation. The battles for political rule are not clouded by the might of noble princes who, at the helm of the state, play off one class against the other. The classes fight face to face, carry out their feuds without interference of a central state hovering above them, and the conquests they make in order to expand their power bases occur at their own risk and danger. The image of all these struggles is, therefore, purer and more unadulterated than in monarchical states even if religious strife overshadows them from time to time.

³⁷ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. iv.

³⁸ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. vi.

Grimm then alludes to the recent strike violence by insisting that 'the representatives from those class [that reject] violence most stubbornly, take practical recourse [to violence] most recklessly.'³⁹

Why not use violence, the alternative leitmotif of Swiss history, for the purposes of the Swiss working class? If all other groups had succeeded in extracting from the sources a history most suitable to themselves (and alluring to others), the Swiss working class had a right to construct a history of its own that served its genuine needs: 'Not in the sense of exalting hero worship in the style of slimy shooting-match patriots, not in the sense of a chosen people destined for liberty and democracy, but because of the robust, direct determination of class warfare, of the uninterrupted chain of passionate class struggles, sometimes reaching dramatic climaxes, Swiss history must ingratiate itself to the thinking workman and socialist.'⁴⁰

For Grimm, this voluntary switch of the current in the workers' historical consciousness was necessary at a moment when parts of the labour movement remained mesmerized by Swiss patriotism and the socialists were ostracized as 'un-Swiss' agents of a foreign power. Socialism could, Grimm believed, only gain a firm foothold in the Swiss working class if it could be embedded in the historical tradition of the country: 'Socialist propaganda does explain the class struggle of the proletariat as an inevitable phenomenon which results from the development of the forces of production and the relations in society, from capitalistic exploitation; yet this happens in a form so abstract and on such a primarily economic basis that its reasoning covers any other country as well so that socialism in Switzerland appears as an alien body rather than as a logical consequence of the development of Swiss history.'⁴¹

Grimm wanted to counter the menace of bourgeois patriotism allegedly mesmerizing the working class. His alternative construction, therefore, was an attempt to reconcile 'Swiss-ness' and socialism on the background of an historical class struggle raging for centuries and lasting to the present. A successful portrayal of the violent past as a sequence of class antagonisms would furnish the labour movement with a perfect legitimacy and thus help Grimm to instil a fighting spirit into the Swiss workers. This fighting spirit would allow the workers to re-evaluate the role of the liberals and recognize the bourgeoisie as the class opponent it truly was: 'On the one hand, the cultural aspirations and the gigantic wrestling of the workers for political power find their most glorious, since indisputable, justification in the early class struggles of the peasants, not yet infected with communism, the urban artisanship as well as the capitalist bourgeoisie, and on the other hand only historical knowledge allows a reliable

³⁹ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. vii.

⁴⁰ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. ix.

⁴¹ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. x.

judgment of the bourgeois democracy of present times, whose false assessment, both in negative and positive terms, has caused a lot of confusion amongst the ranks of the workers.⁴²

Grimm admittedly based his historical account on the works of Karl Dändliker, Curti, Stricker and Oechsli. Although Carl Hilty's image of history as a progression of 'leading ideas' towards the *federal state* was clearly present when Grimm formulated his dialectical variation of this progressive history, he actually focused on Dändliker and nobody else, for several reasons. First of all, out of the four most popular national historians writing around 1900, only Dändliker dealt with social issues and, therefore, provided much needed data for Grimm's account. Second, Dändliker explicitly included the 'proletariat' in his patriotic definition of the 'Swiss people' (*das Schweizervolk*). He presented their socialism as being of a recognizably Swiss variety: '[T]he doctrines of economic equality and revolution [...] do not appeal to and in fact contradict the practical sense of the Swiss population', Dändliker argued.⁴³ This position was a mixed blessing for Grimm. On the one hand, Dändliker did integrate even the Swiss socialists into the national tradition of the country. Yet on the other hand, he did it under the premise that Swiss workers were Swiss patriots first and were only socialists in a subordinate sense. Grimm took great pains in his book to reverse this interpretation, trying to rescue a residue of internationalism even when inscribing socialism into a modified Swiss past.

Third, Dändliker had rehabilitated the revolutionary episode of the peasant wars which most other national historians condemned as an aberration retarding national unity. He portrayed them as a part of the underprivileged majority's struggle for independence. He thereby established that economic conflict and patriotic solidarity were not mutually exclusive. Grimm simply inserted into this story an ardent critique of the fifteenth-century vassal dependencies which some cities had established in their rural territories. These relations and conflicts were for him, early manifestations of a class struggle rather than a fight for political liberty. Grimm thus drew a line from the fifteenth century to the present-day situation and depicted violence and class struggle as the red thread running through Swiss history.

Grimm used Hilty's model of a linear development of progress from the comrades in oath and the bourgeois revolution to present-day liberal democracy as a scaffold and filled it in with the social and economic material that Dändliker had presented: 'Historical progress, as the result of a continuous development, is undeniable. Despite all abysses and valleys it equals the sunrise at the origin of each epoch, which bestows upon mankind the power of belief in its gradual ascent. It is the prize of unending toil and sorrows, grandiose battles and count-

⁴² Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. x.

⁴³ Quoted in Buchbinder, *Wille zur Geschichte*, p. 223.

less victims.⁴⁴ Grimm merely accentuated the 'retarding elements' in Hilty's modernization model into dialectical phases. He thus suggested an image of Swiss history which remained recognizable, but differed from conventional historiography in the decisive emphasis on the bloody struggles that had marked the Swiss past. For Grimm, they had been fights initiated by the respective ruling classes to defend their power against contentious ascending classes. Grimm's central message was that the Swiss were not so much characterized by their willingness to fight for liberty in unity, but by their class struggle that polarized Swiss society into antagonistic classes. He wanted to change the public image of Swiss history, not history itself. A changed historical consciousness was the prerequisite, Grimm contended, to bring the labour movement to political power.

Socialist national histories as 'Threepenny Operas'?

Guy Marchal has termed Grimm's work a 'Marxist paraphrase' of liberal historiography, and indeed it was not much more.⁴⁵ It is doubtful, therefore, whether his 'history' fulfilled its political purpose. Behind the Marxist façade there was enough of the more traditional, patriotic view of Swiss history in order to keep even working-class readers in Dändliker's integrationist camp. At least Dändliker's work remained one of the most popular books in Swiss history until the 1980s.⁴⁶ Grimm himself jettisoned his internationalist convictions and drew up the Party programme of 1935 which made the Social Democratic Party eligible for governmental responsibility.

The reception of Eduard Bernstein's 'history of the Berlin labour movement' is not well documented. Both works derived their conception from pressing political needs rather than pervasive visions of history. Their authors did not develop the contemporary liberal historians' *habitus* of lifting politics onto a historical plain. Unlike Droysen or Ranke, Bernstein and Grimm did not make politics by writing compelling histories; they used their histories as just another tool in their day-to-day political discourse.

It may be a general trait of such histories of the nation from within the labour movement, and a reason why they are rarely of lasting fame, that they are works written for a particular occasion and under specific circumstances. They are designed for short-term propagandistic effects and not for the literary hall of fame. This chapter has shown, however, that this does not mean by definition that works like these have no intrinsic value. Both works display a surprising degree of insight into the constructed nature of all written

⁴⁴ Grimm, *Geschichte*, p. 406.

⁴⁵ Marchal, 'Traditions', p. 279 f.

⁴⁶ Buchbinder, *Wille zur Geschichte*, p. 202.

'history', an awareness they certainly did not share with too many professional historians of their time. Yet they did not draw the conclusion from this insight of striving for a theoretically more advanced, methodologically more critical, alternative history. On the contrary, their 'party bias' manifested itself in the idea, present in both works, that constructivism allowed for an even more solipsistic composition of a narrative alternative to the hegemonic interpretations of their nations' past. The deconstruction of constructivism confirmed an even more instrumental approach to history towards didactic, sometimes manipulative ends.

Bernstein and Grimm wrote works of political pedagogy similar to Bertolt Brecht's dramas, which also laid bare the principles of their construction to the viewer. The performance carried the message. Neither ideologically nor aesthetically could this form of history writing from the ranks of the labour movement aspire to lasting value. The works were, after all, by-products of political journalism.

15

Rewriting National History in Post-War Central Europe: Marxist Syntheses of Austrian and Czechoslovak History as New National Master Narratives

Pavel Kolář

Introduction

Since the nineteenth century, historical master narratives of central European nations have formed a close network of representations based both on common reference to the Habsburg Empire as well as on numerous bilateral relations such as those between Czechs and German-Austrians or between Hungarians and Slovaks.¹ This fate of national-historical cultures proved rather robust, for even after 1918, as the individual historical cultures were underpinned by the formation of independent nation-states, the system of both multilateral and bilateral intersections by no means perished. New national histories, designed, as they were, to bolster the identity of the new nation-states, could not simply jettison the ties with the broader context of central Europe and its Habsburg legacy. Neither could these connections be broken after the Second World War, when the larger part of the former Habsburg territory came under the Soviet sphere of influence and new modes of national-historical writing were imposed from above. Undoubtedly new narrative elements appeared, developing or challenging the previous ones, such as the concept of class and the periodization scheme of historical materialism. And yet, even the Marxist histories could not escape the central European interdependence. Marxist national histories, if they were to obtain validity, also had to take up certain elements of existing narrative frameworks in order to appear as a meaningful substitute for the established histories. For this reason, they had to cope with a tension between continuity and rupture.

¹ See G. Heiss, Á. von Klimó, P. Kolář and D. Kováč, 'Habsburg's Difficult Legacy: Comparing and Relating Austrian, Czech, Magyar, and Slovak National Historical Master Narratives', in S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 367–404.

Drawing on the master-narrative concept as discussed by recent studies on historiography,² this chapter is concerned with the Marxist attempts to 'rewrite' national history in Czechoslovakia and Austria after 1945 as specific historiographical strategies in two different political contexts of post-war central Europe. As representative case studies, I examine comparatively two synthesis of national history that were designed as alternative narratives openly directed against previous ones that were depicted as bourgeois, fascist, nationalist and imperialist. The first text is the *Short History of Austria* by the communist journalist Eva Priester – *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, 2 volumes, 1946 and 1949 – and the second text is the *Outline of Czechoslovak History – Přehled československých dějin*, 3 volumes, 1958–1960 – a collective volume created under the guidance of the Marxist medievalist František Graus. Both are approached here as 'master narratives' since they were written as 'model histories', with the purpose of reshaping collective identity building. Though often regarded as 'blind alleys' in the long-term development of history, these Marxist histories – though largely different in terms of formative contexts, purpose and authorship – can give us fresh insights into the historical practice of 'rewriting', while facing the inevitability of respecting established patterns of historical representation. The contribution of this study should be seen as paralleling and contrasting the Marxist versions of two national histories which, though tightly interconnected before 1918 and dealing with closely related historical matters even afterwards, have until now been treated as separate from each other. Taking into account commonalities and differences in historical writing across the Iron Curtain, such a comparative and historicizing exploration may bring us towards a more complete understanding of central European historical cultures in the Cold War period.

The chapter starts by outlining the broader historiographical contexts in Czechoslovakia and Austria after 1945 in which Marxist 'revisions'³ of national history developed. After having recollected the 'Stalinist' pattern of history as a dominant mode of Marxist historical discourse after 1945, I turn

² K. Thijs, 'The Metaphor of the Master Narrative Hierarchy in National Historical Cultures of Europe', in S. Berger, and C. Lorenz, *Contested Nation*, pp. 60–74.

³ Although usage of the notion of historical revisionism has narrowed in recent years to historical writing connected with the relativization of the Holocaust, I understand it in a broader sense as any attempt at reshaping existing historical narratives with the purpose of establishing new authoritative representations of the past. On historical revisionism in various contexts, see M. Kopeček (ed.), *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989* (Budapest and New York, 2008); R. D. Marwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography 1956–1957* (Basingstoke, 2001); F. Fernandez-Armesto, 'Rewriting History: Revisionism', *Index of Censorship* 24 (1995), 25–32; E. MacClarnand, 'The Politics of History and Historical Revisionism: De-Stalinization and the Search for Identity in Gorbachev's Russia', 1985–1991, *The History Teacher* 31 (1998), 153–81.

to a description of biographical backgrounds and institutional settings that mattered in the process of history rewriting, asking how the authors' previous life experiences influenced their determination to write national history in the Marxist vein. The main concern of the study is, however, to examine closely the narrative structure of the new histories. How did the 'Marxist rewriters' cope with their task of tailoring national histories to the Marxist conception within two radically different post-war situations in central Europe? In particular, I concentrate on the questions of emplotment, the composition of subjects in terms of friends and enemies, and temporal conceptions.

Marxism in Austrian and Czechoslovak historiographies after 1945

After the Second World War, the two national societies as well as their historical cultures faced fundamentally different challenges. The re-established Czechoslovakia joined the victorious nations after the war. The overall political and cultural atmosphere tended increasingly to favour a kind of 'special relationship' with Stalin's Soviet Union, while, at the same time, loosening ties with the West.⁴ The society's overall orientation was not only radically anti-German – as expressed in the 'transfer' of the German population after 1945 – but increasingly anti-Western too, heavily relying on the notion of 'Munich' – the Munich Agreement of 1938 – as a 'treason of the West'. Though this turn away from the West and the strong revival of pan-Slavic tendencies encompassed Czech society as a whole, it was the mighty Czechoslovak Communist Party, by far the strongest Communist Party in post-war Europe – in the Czech Lands, it held about 40 per cent of the vote in 1946 – that played a crucial role in shaping the new historical culture. The chief Party ideologist, Zdeněk Nejedlý, articulated this new outlook in a particularly comprehensive way, stressing the pan-Slavic, anti-German and plebeian character of Czechoslovak history.⁵ In several respects, this new form of national history represented a radicalized version of the national-historical narrative as formulated within the Czech national-liberal movement of the nineteenth century. New, above all, was the effort to implant the notions of class struggle and revolution into the narrative.⁶ After the communist seizure of power in 1948, the Marxist worldview was declared the only permitted approach in historical scholarship. Hence, national history had to be

⁴ See C. Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2007); B. Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2005); B. F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham, MD, 2004).

⁵ On Nejedlý, see A. Klusák, *Kultura a politika v Československu 1945–1956* (Prague, 1998).

⁶ See M. Górný, *Między Marksem a Pałackým: Historiografia w komunistycznej Czechosłowacji* (Warsaw, 2001).

written exclusively along the lines of historical materialism, while other forms of historical writing were to be repudiated.

In contrast to post-war Czechoslovakia, Austria was an occupied country after 1945, striving to constitute a completely new identity as an autonomous nation, fully independent of Germany.⁷ Yet, unlike Czechoslovakia after 1948, Austria did not follow the 'socialist path'. In the course of the 1950s, Austrian public discourse showed an overall commitment to the notion of Austria as the first victim of Hitler's Germany – forcefully denying any complicity in the crimes of National Socialism. State ideology, following the State Treaty of 1955, combined internal political consensus – the so called *Proporz* system – with external neutrality.⁸ In terms of historical debates, the most recent history, that is, the period of National Socialism, was banned from public discourse, while a restorative, consensus-oriented historiography took the lead, resuming some older traditions of Austrian historiography.

Although the political environments of Austria and Czechoslovakia differed substantially, 'revisionist' histories drawing on the Marxist model were produced in both national contexts after the Second World War. In Czechoslovakia, a crude Stalinist version of national history was implemented after 1948 under the direct supervision of the Communist Party. This new form of history did not completely abandon the older traditions of Czech historiography. Consequently, a radically nation-centred skeleton narrative merged with a materialist-deterministic conception of history as epitomized in Stalin's notorious *Short Course of the History of CPSU* from 1938. Most recent studies on Czech communist historiography of this period emphasized continuity over ruptures.⁹ Yet this understanding of Czech communist historiography as a mere prolongation of the already established national tradition seems to underestimate not only the general consciousness of radical renewal of the late 1940s and early 1950s, but also the changes the composition of the Czech historical narrative underwent in the course of the Stalinist 'revision'. Though resting on the same cultural bedrock as older narratives, the new revised narratives, far from being a mere throwback to conventional nationalist historiography, sought to establish a radically optimistic and future-oriented vision of history. As a result, a particular melange of radical modernity, with its optimistic belief in the utopian project of communism, and the monumentality typical of Stalinist aesthetics emerged. The *Outline of Czechoslovak*

⁷ On post-war Austria, see P. Thaler, *The Ambivalence of Identity: The Austrian experience of nation-building in a modern society* (West Lafayette, IN, 2001).

⁸ See G. Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit. Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945–1955* (Vienna, 1998).

⁹ For this view, see M. Górný, 'Past in Future: National Tradition and Czechoslovak Marxist Historiography', *European Review of History* 10 (2003), 103–14.

History is its most significant expression, echoing both the late Stalinist and the post-Stalinist ideological context.

With the de-Stalinization that followed after 1956, 'dogmatism' came under fierce criticism in the Eastern bloc, especially in Poland and Hungary, where, unlike in Czechoslovakia, Marxism had never acquired a broader recognition among intellectuals. With considerable delay, new critical views on national history gained currency in Czechoslovakia too, relying upon an unorthodox Marxist scholarship and stressing aspects of social history. This new phase of 'revision' implied a radical farewell to the monumentalized Stalinist grand narrative as embodied in the *Outline*. Paradoxically, as well as typical enough, it was some of those historians engaged in the production of the *Outline* that were preoccupied with unorthodox historical writing during the 1960s.

In Austria, Marxist historical writing was considerably less developed than in Czechoslovakia after 1945.¹⁰ Although there was an intense intellectual debate on the reconceptualizing of Austrian history in the left-wing milieu, it was in fact only Eva Priester's *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs* which brought a new synthesis of national history, drawing on the Marxist conception of history and condemning the imperial traditions of Austrian historiography. With Marxist culture in Austria paling into insignificance,¹¹ Priester's book and Marxist conception of history in general had rather limited repercussions on Austrian professional historiography and the public history debate. Instead, a conservative form of Austrian national history became dominant that rested on narrative and, to a certain extent, ideological foundations of the First Republic's historiography. Although mainstream historiography abandoned Pan-German ideas, it stuck to the conservative *Abendland* ideology, carrying on the notion of Austria's 'civilization mission' in central and south-eastern Europe.¹²

It was only in the late 1960s that a new generation of historians articulated a critical outlook on Austrian history. These left-wing historians distanced themselves from the dominant consensus-oriented 'coalition historiography' (*Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*) which stuck to the notorious 'victim's theory' (*Opferthese*) and reproduced some older conservative views on the Habsburg Empire. These new trends, however, were by no means indicating a return to

¹⁰ On Austrian historiography in the twentieth century, see F. Fellner, *Geschichtsschreibung und nationale Identität. Probleme und Leistungen der österreichischen Geschichtswissenschaft* (Vienna, 2002).

¹¹ On communist intellectuals in Austria after 1945, see T. Kroll, *Kommunistische Intellektuelle in Westeuropa. Frankreich, Österreich, Italien und Großbritannien im Vergleich (1945–1956)* (Cologne, 2007), pp. 293–356.

¹² E. Hanisch, 'Die Dominanz des Staates. Österreichische Zeitgeschichte im Drehkreuz von Politik und Wissenschaft', in A. Nützenadel and W. Schieder (eds), *Zeitgeschichte als Problem. Nationale Traditionen und Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa* (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 54–77.

political Marxist historiography as designed by Priester, but favoured a modern version of social history without any reference to the communist project.¹³

Biographical backgrounds and institutional settings

Both Priester's *Austrian History* and the *Outline of Czechoslovak History* had in one way or another to come to terms with the then-dominant Stalinist narrative pattern of history which distinguished itself from the older Marxist tradition by taking into account superstructure phenomena such as Nation, State and great personalities, by radical acceleration of history, the five-stage periodization scheme (*pyatitchlenka*) and the Manichean worldview.¹⁴ Especially in communist countries, this model was dominant, though never hegemonic. There was always enough space for various 'deviations', even within the official historiographies, as the Stalinist pattern could not be simply 'transferred' or 'copied' from one national context to another. Yet, the model demarcated the discursive field on which all historians had to act and it created the rules all histories had to accept. It is not my purpose here to show explicit references to and receptions of the 'Soviet model' in the two histories under scrutiny. Rather, it is the concordances in the narrative structure of historical representation which matter here and take first place, regardless of whether they were directly adopted or not.

Although institutional and political contexts were of decisive significance for the shaping of these new histories, in both cases the authors' determination to 'rewrite' national history according to the Marxist pattern cannot be considered only as imposed 'from outside'. It also arose from their biographical experiences. The parallels between both communist biographies, Priester and Graus, are obvious. Both represent classic examples of central European intellectual destinies in the twentieth century, showing remarkable shifts in national identity as well as changes in political outlook. They are representative for the 'multiple' identities of central and eastern Europe including Jewish, Russian, German and Austrian, in the one case and Jewish, Czech and German identities, in the other.

Comparing the two, the life of communist journalist, writer and historian Eva Priester is perhaps less typical. Eva Feinstein was born into a well-to-do

¹³J. Ehmer and A. Müller, 'Sozialgeschichte Österreichs. Traditionen, Entwicklungsstränge und Innovationspotential', in J. Kocka (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte im internationalen Überblick. Ergebnisse und Tendenzen der Forschung* (Darmstadt, 1989), pp. 113 ff.

¹⁴See Á. von Klimó, 'Helden, Völker, Freiheitskämpfe. Zur Ästhetik stalinistischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Sowjetunion, der Volksrepublik Ungarn und der DDR', *Storia della Storiografia* 52 (2007), 83–112; K. Mehnert, *Weltrevolution durch Weltgeschichte. Die Geschichtslehre des Stalinismus* (Stuttgart, 1953).

secularized Jewish family in St Petersburg in 1910;¹⁵ she was raised in the atmosphere of the Russian educated middle class, also speaking, besides her mother tongue Russian, French and German fluently. Having rejected the October Revolution, the family fled to Berlin in 1921, where the young Eva stuck to German language and culture and later started her career as a left-wing journalist. After a very short period of membership in the Social Democratic Party, she moved to the more left-wing *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* and finally entered the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1933. She was arrested shortly after the Nazi seizure of power and imprisoned for several months. In 1935, Priester emigrated to Prague where many German and Austrian anti-fascists found refuge. Curiously enough, it was the capital of Czechoslovakia where she turned into a *Wahlösterreicherin*, an Austrian by choice, after joining a group of Austrian exile communists. In 1936 she moved to Vienna, continuing to write for *Sonntag*, a left-wing Austrian journal published in Czechoslovakia. She experienced the *Anschluss* when she was on a short visit to Prague, without the possibility of returning to Austria. After having witnessed the destruction of Czechoslovakia through the Munich Agreement in 1938, Priester fled to England where she joined the Austrian communist exile resistance. It was in British exile that she and her fellow communists developed the image of post-war Austria as a free, socialist country.

In her manifold contributions to *Zeitspiegel*, the organ of Austrian emigration, Priester promoted an eager pro-Austrian and anti-German propaganda, overemphasizing the importance of Austrian internal resistance and widely ignoring the real conformity of the majority of the Austrian population.¹⁶ Her articles from this time show a strong apologetic tendency, presenting Austria as an occupied, subjugated country. The *Opferthese* was supported by the entire Austrian exile community, including the communists. It maintained that Austrians had the right to be ranked with Germany's other victims such as Russians, French, Poles, Czechs or Yugoslavians. To underpin this claim, the communist exiles developed a zealous activity to redefine Austrian culture in exclusively autonomous terms, erasing any commonalities with German culture.

As one of the most important components of this process of Austria's emancipation, a new conception of Austrian history was to be elaborated and considered as an independent national development. After having published several articles

¹⁵ On Priester's biography, see C. Trost, 'E. Priester, Ein biographischer Abriss', *Quellen & Studien. Alfred-Klahr-Gesellschaft und ihr Archiv, Sonderband* (2000), 347–70; C. Brinson, "'Schlaf ruhig. Die Erde ist dein.'" Eva Priester, a political poet in exile', *Austrian Studies* 12 (2004), 116–33; C. Brinson, "'Immortal Austria'". Eva Priester as a Propagandist for Austria in British Exile', in C. Brinson, R. Dove and J. Taylor (eds), *Immortal Austria? Austrians in Exile in Britain* (Amsterdam and New York, 2007), pp. 93–103.

¹⁶ Kroll, *Kommunistische Intellektuelle*, pp. 279–93.

concerned with this question, towards the end of the war Priester assumed the task of composing a new synthesis of Austrian history. Only a new synthesis was considered an effective tool in constituting the particular Austrian identity as juxtaposed to the Pan-German and imperial traditions of Austrian history writing. This 'other Austrian history' was designed to amalgamate the notion of Austrian history as an autonomous national development with the idea of its principally democratic or even socialist nature, stressing progressive elements such as religious and ethnic tolerance, peasant emancipation and the traditions of the Austrian labour movement. After her return to Austria in 1945, Priester was soon to discover the real extent of Austrian collaboration with the Nazis and the relative insignificance of home resistance. Although disillusioned by her discovery, she carried on her propaganda struggle for the new Austria.

Kurze Geschichte Österreichs was designed as a radical break with the tradition of Austrian historical writing from before 1945, which rested on Pan-German and imperialist conceptions of Austrian history. At the same time, it was intended to be *the first Marxist history* of Austria. The first volume, as Priester acknowledges in the preface, was written without access to the relevant Austrian literature and sources. She did not claim to have written a new authoritative, nor to say a 'definitive' version of national history. Rather, she characterized her venture as a starting point for 'further discussions'. Yet she did not put out of sight her strong commitment to a certain concept of Austrian history. In her view, it was absolutely crucial to create a new narrative of Austrian history that would be an alternative to the greater German (*großdeutsch*), 'anti-Austrian' and 'anti-Slavonic' mainstream of Austrian historiography at the time. This outlook was even reinforced after Priester's return to Austria when she started to work on the second volume. Under the shadow of the commencing Cold War, Priester perceived Austria's Western integration as a mere continuation of the 'anti-Austrian' conception of Austrian history.¹⁷

The biographical background of the chief promoter of *a new national history* in Czechoslovakia after 1945, František Graus, shows some significant similarities with that of Eva Priester. Graus, too, grew up in a middle-class, secularized German-speaking Jewish family. However, the surroundings of the Moravian capital Brno/Brünn, where he was born in 1921, was affected by growing nationalist tensions rather than by the 'red threat'.¹⁸ Frightened by the growing Nazi tendencies at the German *Gymnasium*, Graus's mother sent her 14-year-old son to the Czech Jewish school. Here, Graus turned to Judaism and began to study Latin, Greek and Hebrew. In 1941 he was deported together with his mother and his younger brother to Theresienstadt, where he worked in the ghetto's library, registering

¹⁷ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 2, p. 5.

¹⁸ See articles in Z. Beneš, B. Jiroušek and A. Kostlán (eds), *František Graus – člověk a historik* (Prague, 2004).

Jewish books confiscated all over Europe. It was thanks to this position that he was excluded from deportation to Auschwitz until autumn 1944. In Theresienstadt, Graus met another Brünn-born German-speaking Jew, the Marxist sociologist Bruno Zwicker (1907–1944),¹⁹ who introduced him to the basics of Marxism. Inspired by Zwicker, Graus collected a decent Marxist library from the confiscated Jewish books and acquired a solid knowledge of Marxist theory. Subsequently, he became a member of the triumvirate leadership of a Theresienstadt Communist Party organization. After a short time in Auschwitz he was sent to work in a munitions factory in Leipzig, where he experienced the end of the war.

After his return to Czechoslovakia in 1945, Graus planned a career as a communist apparatchik, but he soon became disillusioned with communist politics and instead enrolled at Charles University to study history and philosophy. He showed particular skills in history and subsequently launched a career as a professional historian. After his *Habilitation* in the general history of the Middle Ages in 1951, he taught for a brief period as a lecturer at the Philosophical Faculty and became a researcher at the newly established Institute of History at the Academy of Sciences in 1953. It was this institute that was designed by the Communist Party leaders to initiate the new Marxist synthesis of Czechoslovak history. Graus found his feet quickly in the new institution and became a shooting star of new Marxist Czechoslovak historiography, being appointed the vice-director of the Historical Institute and the chief-editor of the Czechoslovak Historical Review (*Československý časopis historický*). It was easy to assume that Graus would play a crucial role in the creation of a 'new Czechoslovak history' on the lines of historical materialism.

While Priester's *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs* could, despite its enormous ambition, hardly win broad scholarly acclaim in Austria being the work of an amateur, solitary historian and, even more important, a communist; the three-volume *Přehled československých dějin* (*Outline of Czechoslovak History*), in contrast, was conceived from the very beginning as an authoritative model of national history. It was widely regarded as a kind of prescriptive pattern for all individual historical accounts to come, which would provide the basis for a new historical self-understanding of the Czech and Slovak nations. Composed along the lines of dogmatic historical materialism, it amalgamated past, present and future into a homogenous flow of events advancing irreversibly towards the very end of history – the formation of a classless society. Given its significance, it was clear that an enterprise carrying such responsibility must be a collective work. It was the newly created Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences that was entrusted with this task. The production of the *Outline*, which proceeded under close supervision of the Central Committee, went on in a threefold working process. After

¹⁹ See M. Hájek, 'Dr. Bruno Zwicker, významný představitel Brněnské sociologické školy', *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské university* 15 (1971), řada G, 49–64.

'theses' had been formulated and a 'preliminary version' (coined as a 'Maquette') had been discussed, the final version was to be written. The huge collective under Graus's guidance – consisting of almost 50 authors – was to arrive, through numerous 'discussions', at an objective, scientific and definitive account of national history.²⁰ Yet this process, which began in 1953, turned out to be rather thorny. Especially the periodization, that is, the partition of the past into 'stages of development', proved to be a major stumbling block in the discussions. In contrast to 'bourgeois' historiography, in which periodization was considered a mere technical tool, the new Marxist historiography saw in it a crucial element mirroring the fundamental principles of historical development. Two conferences, held in 1952 and 1953, were devoted to the question of periodization alone. It was not clear whether historical development was to be divided exclusively according to developments in the 'economic base', or whether 'superstructure' phenomena could also be accepted as criteria. The obvious problem was that in the case of using the 'base' as the only decisive factor for chronological classification, collisions were to be expected with the older national narratives in which political events and culture traditionally played a more essential role.

While the preparations dragged on, the 'Maquette' itself, given the political developments since the late 1950s, became obsolete. It was the authors' inability to reach consensus about the last volume dealing with the most recent history (1918–48) that drove a nail in the *Outline's* coffin. When a draft version was finally finished, it had to be cancelled again because of the 'new insights' brought by the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU in 1962. Due to the notorious delays and the rapidly changing political context, the three volumes of the 'Maquette', which were published between 1958 and 1960, were already outdated by the time of their publication. The crises of the Novotný regime, as well as the significant reorientation of the historical scholarship, itself favoured a new outlook on the synthesis of Czechoslovak national history. The conception of history as formulated during the early 1950s was more and more called into question by their authors, especially by Graus himself. However, although a definitive version of the *Outline* never appeared, the narrative structure, as developed in the Maquette, shaped Czechoslovak Marxist history – or at least the following attempts at a synthesis of national history – well into the late 1980s. There has been no definitive break with *Outline's* fundamental narrative principles, and some of them remained present even in national histories written from an 'anti-communist' standpoint after 1989.²¹

²⁰ See J. Jílek, František Graus a 'Maketa', in Beneš et al., *František Graus*, pp. 57–68.

²¹ For this argument, see P. Kolář, 'Die nationalgeschichtlichen master narratives in der tschechischen Geschichtsschreibung der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Entstehungskontexte, Kontinuität und Wandel', in C. Brenner, K. E. Franzen, P. Haslinger and R. Luft (eds), *Geschichtsschreibung zu den böhmischen Ländern im 20. Jahrhundert. Wissenschaftstraditionen – Institutionen – Diskurse* (Munich, 2006), pp. 209–41.

What did these two Marxist histories, created under such different circumstances, actually have in common? It is precisely this dissimilarity in institutional conditions and political context that make a comparison instructive since, in the end, in both cases the product was a coherent narrative of national history modelled according to Marxist lines of historical development. Both were, regardless of their formative conditions, 'representative' as they amounted to the very first attempts at a new Marxist national history in both national contexts, with the ambition to serve as a model narrative for particular histories to come. What is more, they had this ambition not only within their respective national-cultural frontiers, but were designed to break through on an international scale too. Finally, obvious similarities in the authors' biographical backgrounds bring us towards the question of how biography shaped their respective writing practices. Obviously, no immediate link can be drawn between personal experience and the narratives these historians created. But it is worth paying attention to those problems of history writing where such repercussions can be expected. I think of two issues in this regard; first, the representation of continuity and rupture in history including the question of periodization, and, second, the concern with national identity as shifting between an affirmative and a more critical approach.

The narrative structure of Marxist national histories

Priester's narrative is divided into two volumes. The first covers the period from pre-history to the seventeenth century and the second volume deals with modern times from the seventeenth century to the demise of the monarchy in 1918. It dedicates considerably more space to modern history than to the Middle Ages. Only 100 pages out of more than 800 deal with the history before 1526. Its chronological organization, that is, the periodization and the choice of 'historical milestones' that reveal the driving forces of history, shows relatively loose ties with the 'dogmatic' Marxism of the time, as represented by the Stalinist concept of the *pyatichlenka*. In particular the narrative concerned with the older epochs is organized around political events and state formation, that is, phenomena usually classified as belonging to 'superstructure' rather than changes relating to the 'social-economic base' or class struggle. Chapter titles such as 'From Borderland to Duchy', 'Beginning of Habsburg Rule', 'Absolutism's Seizure of Power' give away their predominantly political orientation. Social and economic developments are surprisingly marginalized as mere 'social and economic background'. For the more modern periods, Priester attempted to find a balance between socio-economic and political history. Yet, in the second volume it is also prevalingly political events that form the decisive 'milestones' dividing the individual periods such as 1683, 1742, 1809 or 1848.

While deviating only to a lesser degree from the older Austrian historiography in its chronological architecture, the main novelty of the *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs* lies in the restructuring of the plot. The imaginary end of the narrative, which the entire historical development is directed to, is the constitution of an independent Austrian state within the frontiers of the First Republic, with a clearly republican and socialist character. It is a blend of historical reality – the independence of 1918 and 1945 – with the future project of the socialist state which was yet to become reality. In consequence, older political developments under the monarchy are constructed to foreshadow 1918 as the potential beginning of a new, better era, whereas social and economic developments are oriented towards the socialist vision.

This dictate of the future is underlined by the frequent usage of metaphors that help to make the narration more dynamic; as, for instance, when describing the Prague defenestration of 1618 as ‘the Sarajevo of the Thirty Years War’.²² When dealing with modern history, Priester refers to the wisdom of the Marxist/Leninist ‘classics’, in order to underline the teleological, unambiguous and irreversible nature of her story: ‘Stalin’s predictions concerning the consequences of the nationality politics of the Austrian Social democracy came true.’²³ The dictate of the future project becomes apparent in the usage of radical time shifts known from classic Stalinist histories. In some periods, actual historical developments in Austria seemed to be happening ahead of their time. For instance, the peasant leader Martin Gaismayer is depicted as anticipating modern socialism’s arrival, unfortunately too early, on the stage of history: ‘Gaismayer’s programme was in many respects ahead of its own time. Regarding some questions, such as social care, agriculture or mining, he was a visionary. Most of his views could even today become a part of the programme of a modern socialist state with few modifications. Yet these views were formulated for a society which stood only at the beginning of the transition to early capitalism.’²⁴ Thus, although not employed explicitly, the *pyatichlenka* represents a kind of meta-narrative storyboard, an ideal development that is hidden behind the actually narrated story. Personalities, events, institutions and structures are evaluated according to this scheme of ‘lawful’ development. For this purpose, temporal adjectives and comparisons such as ‘not yet’, and ‘still’ as well as other rhetoric tools are used repeatedly in order to constitute temporal distinctions, depicting, for instance, Austria in the sixteenth century as ‘still a rural country’ or characterizing the Turks as a ‘young nation’.

Typical for Marxist as well as other radically modernist narratives is the contrasting juxtaposition between the dynamic periods of progress and the ‘slow’

²² Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 149.

²³ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 2, p. 527.

²⁴ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 106.

periods of stagnation. In Priester's first volume, which is concerned with the older history, 'developed' feudalism is particularly highlighted as an epoch of unprecedented progress, especially in the economic but also in other spheres. This dynamic epoch is characterized by the frequent usage of terms expressing movement, action and change. This applies above all to 'Entwicklung' (development) and 'Erhöhung' (increase) but also 'starke Produktion' (high production), 'starke Steigerung' (massive increase), or 'Konjunktur' (conjuncture). It was not by accident that Priester called the period of the high Middle Ages 'Epoche der Sturmjahre' (The Age of Tempestuous Years).²⁵ On the other hand, slow epochs of stagnation, as, for instance, the *Vormärz*, are characterized by negative terms such as 'non-development' (Nichtentwicklung). Nevertheless, Priester's history seems to lack the revolutionary radicalism of Stalinist narratives that were common in communist states. The concept of revolution seems rather moderate in comparative perspective. For instance, the term 'industrial revolution' is relativized for not having corresponded exactly to reality.²⁶

As a crucial element of every Marxist history, Priester employs the concept of class, both as complementary and adversary of the concept of nation. At the same time, however, the concept of class struggle appears only exceptionally in an explicit fashion, while preference is given to more differentiated expressions such as 'social conflicts and struggles'. The solidarity and unity of the nation, including the Austrian middle class, seem to be a fundamental motif for the narrative. In contrast to typically Stalinist narratives, the future negative role of the bourgeoisie is not underscored. The major conflicts do not so much run between different classes than between 'Nation' and 'Government', with the latter not being understood as a ruling tool of the dominant class. In a similar fashion, the concept of revolution is also used in political and national rather than social terms. It is not so much a class struggle, but more a fight against the old regime epitomized by Metternich's government. Collective revolutionary actors are characterized in rather neutral terms such as 'working people', 'common people' or even the 'population'. During the 1848 revolution itself, all stratas of society participated, including 'students and petite bourgeoisie, workers and industrialists, and even aristocrats and bankers'.²⁷

Thus, although class conflict has an important place in the narrative, it is obviously subordinated to the image of Austria as a united nation in order to reinforce its distinction from Germany. This is the actual thread going through Priester's history. Consequently, all achievements of progress are represented as the results of an autonomous Austrian development, free of any German influence. In some aspects, Austria is even described as more developed, and

²⁵ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 78.

²⁶ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 2, p. 229.

²⁷ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 2, p. 346.

'quicker' than Germany, reaching a higher speed when running on the racetrack of the *pyatichlenka*. Austria appears as the place of origin from where new progressive trends spread out all over Europe. The Reformation, for instance, originated allegedly in Austria, not in Germany. Already in 1499 an Austrian preacher nailed his 'theses' to the door of the St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, which were almost identical to those of Luther 18 years later. This notion of precedence was supported also by giving great historical personalities Austrian identities, such as, for instance, the physician Paracelsus, 'who, admittedly, was born in Switzerland, but from his early childhood onward lived and later worked in Austria.'²⁸

The ambivalent evaluation of the 'Austrian heritage' is truly remarkable. On the one hand, Priester's narrative clearly distinguishes between the 'forces of progress' and the 'forces of reaction'. Yet on the other hand, she often relativizes this discrimination by favouring the Austrian national peculiarities in European history. The *Short History of Austria* thus overestimates the achievements of Austrian culture even in those situations where the reader might expect Marxist criticism. For instance, 'standard' Marxist histories, even though they accept the 'progressiveness' of the bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages, tend to relativize its progressive character with regard to the reactionary role it would assume in later periods. Thus, the bourgeoisie remains the fundamental 'other' or 'enemy' of the popular classes throughout the entire narrative. Not for Priester, however, who treats the Austrian – and especially the Viennese – bourgeoisie surprisingly mildly, for instance, when referring to the civilized manners of Vienna's burghers rather than to the inadequate luxury gained at the cost of the poor.²⁹

This ambivalent evaluation is also applied to the role of the Habsburg dynasty, especially with regard to the period of the 'Making of the Habsburg Monarchy' from the late fifteenth century onwards. The House of Habsburg, though often criticized for particular deeds, doesn't appear as a fundamental 'other' in the narrative. The Emperor Maximilian I, particularly, is evaluated in rather positive terms. Compared to Peter the Great of Russia, he is portrayed as a 'modernizer', a 'father of modern Austria', and 'one of the most modern and progressive rulers of his age', a *Kulturmensch*, a great statesman possessing, however, a human dimension including a sense of humour and irony. Other key figures of absolutism, such as the Emperors Ferdinand I and Ferdinand II, who receive a clearly negative depiction in the Czech national master narrative, are described in a neutral or even positive way as builders of a distinct Austrian state fully independent of Germany. For them, politics in the German Empire was no important issue; they intervened only when Austrian affairs were affected.

²⁸ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 113.

²⁹ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 68.

Similarly, Joseph II not only receives a glorifying account, but is depicted as a mighty maker of history imposing his reform 'from above', while 'social forces' are scarcely taken into account. Thus, Joseph is unambiguously integrated into the progressive current of history – 'He worked in order to free and emancipate the nation.'³⁰ Even the conduct of Ferdinand V during the revolution in 1848 is praised as democratic; 'I will not let my Viennese be shot at.'³¹ Priester's high regard for great personalities and 'superstructure' phenomena such as state building and culture demonstrates an indebtedness to older traditions of state-centred or even imperial Austrian historiography.

Even more striking is the evaluation of the Jesuits who are represented as a 'popular' or 'new' Church, open to the problems and sorrows of ordinary people. They are contrasted to the older – especially German – Church represented above all by the clerical aristocracy, 'indolent Bishops' and 'feudal monastery lords'. In contrast to 'the Church aristocracy, the Jesuits endeavoured to meet the demands of townsmen and especially of peasants, who wanted "their own" church instead of the old Church which would speak their language and engage with their problems.'³² And again, it was the Jesuits who represented the first genuine Austrian Church.

So, who remains the actual 'other' in the narrative? Clearly, it is all German elements entering Austrian history that assume this role. From time immemorial, Priester argues, Austrian history and culture was independent from its neighbour to the north. In fact, German history serves as a kind of negative counterpart to Austrian history. The most negative 'other' is Pan-German imperialism, that is, those forces that sought to subject Austria to German hegemony. The evaluation of the Habsburg 'legacy' therefore remains rather ambiguous; on the one hand, the Habsburg policy in central and especially southeastern Europe is deplored for its imperialist attitude towards the Slavonic nations. Yet on the other hand, Habsburg rule is also viewed in positive terms since it developed distinct Austrian institutions that served as a shield against German expansion. But even those parts of history usually labelled as 'progressive', such as the peasant wars, are viewed critically as soon as they are placed in the German context. For instance, the German Peasant War is clearly progressive, yet not as progressive as Austrian developments. The latter are always represented as more revolutionary and forward-looking.

The resolute repudiation of any German elements from Austrian history resulted in the attempt to entangle Austrian with Czech (Bohemian) history. For instance, Priester highlights the rule of the Bohemian King Přemysl Otakar II over Austria in the thirteenth century, not only as a period of welfare, but also as

³⁰ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 2, p. 264.

³¹ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 358.

³² Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 121.

the 'first common state of Czechs and Austrians'. A clearly positive representation of Hussitism, hitherto one of the stable enemies in Austrian historical accounts, is another element of this intertwining of both national histories. 'During the Hussite period, a Hussite movement emerged also in Vienna and other Austrian towns, which was suppressed violently by the Habsburgs. The Viennese humanists spoke repeatedly about ecclesiastic renewal.'³³ Moments of rivalry and differences make an appearance only in marginal areas, such as the competition between the two countries in silver production in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Besides Germans, especially for the Early Modern Period, 'Turks' appeared in the account as another important 'other'. Priester reproduced almost entirely the stereotypical representation of the Ottomans ('Turks') that had been prevalent in nineteenth-century Austrian historiography. Not only is Ottoman rule over large parts of Hungary and the Balkans described as pure terror resulting in 'suffering and tens of thousands killed'.³⁴ More importantly, the 'two centuries of Turkish rule' – *Türkenherrschaft* – was allegedly a severe setback in the nations' socio-economic development, disrupting the 'natural evolution line' of these nations and preserving them in the stage of primitive feudalism well into the nineteenth century.³⁵

Unlike *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, the *Outline of Czechoslovak History*, a voluminous work of almost 3000 pages written by many authors, might be characterized as a mixed product of Stalinism and half-hearted de-Stalinization, showing both commonalities with, and differences from, the Soviet model. Like the *KGÖ*, the *Outline* also devotes considerably more space to modern than to older history, despite Graus's credentials as a medievalist. Its periodization is organized overwhelmingly around the most important changes in the 'base', the 'relations of production' and, in particular, class struggle. For instance, the Hussite movement does not begin, unlike in the older national histories, with John Hus's burning at the stake in Konstanz, but only with the 'appearance of the revolutionary masses'. The epoch following the Hussite Wars does not terminate with the enthronement of the Habsburgs in 1526, but only with a significant shift in the 'base', the introduction of the 'second serfdom' after 1620. The dawn of modern times is heralded by a 'decline of feudal order', followed by the 'establishment of capitalist order' and the 'rise of imperialism', whereas 'superstructure' phenomena such as 'national awakening' seems rather secondary in shaping the narrative chronology.

Corresponding with the *Outline's* chronological organization around the iron corset of the *pyatichlenka*, the events and persons within individual epochs are

³³ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 115.

³⁴ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 94.

³⁵ Priester, *Kurze Geschichte Österreichs*, vol. 1, p. 94.

strictly subjugated to a crude socio-economic determinism and the principle of class struggle. The main subjects of history are 'popular masses' – 'classes' in later periods – that act in concert with their 'objective interests' which are derived from socio-economic antagonisms. Every individual character of the narrative is firmly subjected to a specific class pedigree. So, for instance, Jan Hus, one of the few heroes of the story, is described as standing close to the 'popular masses': Born a 'little son of his poor parents', he was an outstanding scholar, though free from 'any superfluous, exaggerated scholarship', never becoming a stand-offish intellectual.³⁶ The question of great personalities and individual heroes is, however, treated in an ambivalent way. For instance, the account of the Hussite movement already bears traces of the advancing de-Stalinization of the late 1950s. In the evaluation of the Hussite warlord Jan Žižka, for instance, the first symptoms of 1956 are apparent, resulting in a sort of compromise between the cult of personality and de-Stalinization: On the one hand, the *Outline* characterizes 'genial Žižka' as an extraordinary leader, but at the same time, his 'democratization programme' is highlighted. In the final analysis, Žižka's historical significance is relativized. His death was 'a big, but no irreplaceable loss. It was an illustrious example that not even the most genial and the greatest personality can alone reverse the course of events'.³⁷ It is the unambiguously collective actors such as the 'people', the 'working masses' or the 'revolutionary movement' who determine the course of history, not individuals. In the accounts of modern revolutions such as that of 1848, these collective subjects are, however, described as hapless and without direction, as they allegedly lacked leadership by an avant-garde party such as the present-day Communist Party. So, while a certain degree of unity among the 'proletariat' existed in 1848, the revolution itself could not be successful because it was only a 'spontaneous popular movement', and not an 'organized and systematic revolutionary struggle', that is, lacking the leadership of an avant-garde party, which was only to appear later on the scene of history. Unlike Priester, or, even more strikingly, unlike *Outline's* Hungarian counterpart, the *History of the Hungarian People* (1951), the *Outline* seems rather reluctant to construct the typical Stalinist image of solidarity between the 'people' and their 'leaders' in the revolutionary process.³⁸

There are some relics of Stalinist aesthetics in the *Outline*. They are particularly visible in the pathos, optimism and emotions which are intrinsic for both collective and individual actors. This is the case for frequent expressions such as 'revolutionary enthusiasm', 'euphoric determination' or 'a profound hatred for the class enemy'. The emotionalization was to demonstrate the determination of

³⁶ Graus, *Přehled československých dějin*, pt I (Prague, 1958), p. 176.

³⁷ Graus, *Přehled*, pt I, p. 206.

³⁸ Von Klimó, 'Helden', 98.

acting subjects to destroy both external and internal enemies. Still, the emotional attitudes of the Czech people to other central European nations show a clear differentiation. Whereas the Czech people (národ) 'felt love' towards their Slavonic neighbours – Slovaks, Poles and Russians – their relationship to the German folk (lid – i.e., without the 'ruling classes') is described in terms of 'friendship'.³⁹

While brimming with enemies of all kinds, the *Outline* recognizes in fact only one truly positive hero – the Czech ethnic-national community, with the exception of the Soviet Union after 1917, of course. Provided with various class attributes, the 'Czech people' are represented as a homogenous entity marching through history. Its very existence is never put into question. 'Non-national elements' such as Germans, the aristocracy, the Church or, later, the bourgeoisie – are excluded from the ethno-national community with the help of various narrative strategies. Although there are – in contrast to the Soviet Stalinist models – no imperial tendencies in the narrative, the Czechs are at least considered to have been 'quicker' than other neighbouring nations in adopting and developing elements of progress. For instance, this notion of temporal primacy is expressed in the argument that the Hussite Revolution preceded the course of world history by at least one century.⁴⁰

The heroism and the outstanding character of the Czech people are underlined by Manichean conceptions of history in which various enemies appear representing the forces of evil. The negative connotation of these bad characters is mostly twofold: first, in terms of ethnicity, and second, in terms of class. The broad spectrum of enemy images includes external enemies such as Germans, the Emperor Sigismund, the Luxembourgs, the Habsburgs (including, in contrast to Priester, also Joseph II whose 'feudal-reactionary character' is underlined⁴¹), the 'Crusaders', and the Church. These are followed by ambivalent enemies such as the Bohemian aristocracy or Bohemian Germans, and finally, by internal enemies, coined mostly 'traitors' such as towns or the 'patriciate' during the Hussite revolution, the Czech bourgeoisie and 'right-wing leaders of Czech Social Democracy'. National identities are fixed and practically unchanging throughout the centuries, while social and class ascriptions develop. The Czech nation is gradually reduced to 'working people' or 'working classes' by excluding 'alien elements' from the national body such as the Church, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. However, the concordance between class and nation was not absolute. For instance, in the representation of the 1848 revolution, class is clearly valorized more highly than radical nationalist demands. Similarly to Priester, who excludes the Viennese bourgeoisie from the actual Austrian nation because of its nationalist stance towards the Czech national movement

³⁹ Graus, *Přehled*, pt I, p. 221.

⁴⁰ Graus, *Přehled*, pt I, p. 220.

⁴¹ Graus, *Přehled*, pt II, vol. 2, p. 587 ff.

in 1848, the *Outline* severely criticizes the 'nationalist programme' of Czech liberal politician Karel Havlíček for not taking into account economic and social issues.⁴² So, it was only the radical components of the 1848 movement – students, petit bourgeoisie and, above all, the 'proletariat of both national groups' – who occupied internationalist and revolutionary positions. This is, again, foreshadowing the development of the future Czechoslovak Communist Party which united in an ideal way Czechs, Germans and other nationalities on the Czechoslovak territory. In the account of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *Outline* employs the concept of class in both its distinctive meanings, namely as a concept of contention within a nation ('class struggle') as well as a concept of solidarity across national borders ('internationalism').⁴³ The Marxist notion of the international working-class movement is made strong, standing against the 'reactionary forces of the European bourgeoisie'.⁴⁴ In this sense, the Stalinist division of the world into friends and foes, running like a thread throughout the entire textbook, has been preserved in its original crude form. Often this division is reaffirmed by 'scholarly' discursive commentaries on bourgeois historiography, emphasizing the continuity of 'hostile historical traditions' well into the twentieth century.

Likewise, a correspondence with the 'Stalinist model' is to be found in relation to the *Outline's* temporal structure and the radical conception of progress. The flow of narration is strictly subjected to its dual telos, namely the classless society and national liberation. As a result, the entire story of the Czech nation throughout the centuries appears as a mere prelude to the Golden Age to come, a pre-history of the future communist project. This is underlined by focusing on historical phenomena that, albeit not fully realized yet, allegedly point to the remote future. 'Premature', 'immature' and 'delayed' phenomena and actions are highlighted as well as those future-oriented, progressive and forward-looking ones. For example, phrases such as 'the understanding between progressive Czechs and Germans in the Middle Ages', 'the reactionary putsch of 1427', and the formation of a 'united anticlerical peoples' front' were employed not only to make the narration more vivid and readable. They also expressed a new understanding of history, in which the telling of past events was entirely subordinated to the future utopian project – an understanding in which the frontiers between past, present and future became indistinct. Lacking any kind of historical relativization, the *Outline* confers an absolute validity upon historical facts by means of a future-based evaluation. Any potential alternatives

⁴² Graus, *Přehled*, pt II, vol. 2, p. 35.

⁴³ G. Deneckere and T. Welskopp, 'The "Nation" and the "Class". European National Master-Narratives and their Social "Other"', in Berger and Lorenz, *Contested Nation*, pp. 135–70, here p. 135.

⁴⁴ Graus, *Přehled*, pt II, vol. 1, p. 55.

are excluded. This narrative principle, which might be called 'futuricity instead of historicity',⁴⁵ aims at the unambiguousness and irreversibility of historical development advancing at a rushed pace towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and national liberation.

The temporal quality of historical change is demonstrated in the text with reference to various ruptures and continuities of the historical development. There is interplay between an evolutionary rhetoric of slow historical change, on the one hand, and dynamic, revolutionary change on the other. The first applies particularly to older periods dominated by societal and economic transformations, as mirrored in the chapters on the 'Making of the Feudal Order', the 'Renewed Stabilization of Feudalism' and the 'Introduction and Consolidation of Second Serfdom'. On the other hand, for modern times more ruptures are taken into account, reflecting the emergence of the working class as a new decisive actor on the scene of history. In the chapters following the 'disintegration' of the feudal order, more dynamic elements are poured into the narrative, particularly with the concepts of 'struggle' and 'revolution' dominating its temporal structure. This reinforces the 'Stalinist' mode of history telling in that this acceleration underscores both the unilinear notion of time and, in terms of narrative composition, the strict focus on a single line of action.

Conclusion: Marxist national histories across the Iron Curtain?

As the above examination has shown, both Marxist 'revisionist' histories picked up some of the narrative principles typical of the older historical writing they sought to repudiate. As they were written with the aim of obtaining validity for Communist transformations, real or imagined, they necessarily reflected certain general expectations within the nation's self-perception. Therefore Priester's *History of Austria* cannot be dismissed as a mere outsider's work without any relevance for historical discourse, and the *Outline* cannot be viewed as a sheer propaganda product which did not stand for 'the real historical consciousness' of the Czech people. Their significance went far beyond mere individual texts since they epitomized new forms of political legitimization and collective identity.

Given this historical significance, both commonalities with and differences from the then dominant 'Soviet model' of history writing became apparent. The central problem of the Marxist-Leninist 'rewriting' of history was the way in which concepts such as 'class' and 'revolution', as well as the periodization scheme of historical materialism, were reconciled with or integrated in the

⁴⁵ M. Sabrow, 'Auf der Suche nach dem materialistischen Meisterton. Bauformen einer nationalen Gegenerzählung in der DDR', in K. H. Jarausch and M. Sabrow (eds), *Die historische Meistererzählung* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 33–77.

established national master narratives. Both histories, indeed, made use of 'Marxism' in a different narrative manner. Whereas the *Outline* is full of quotations of the Marxist-Leninist 'classics' in order to strengthen its truth claims, the *History of Austria* deploys this narrative strategy to a lesser degree. The latter seems to be rather loosely based on 'Marxist' assumptions which provide a set of thematic accents such as the ones on labour history or economic development. Priester rarely uses the concept of class and instead prefers to talk about working people. Likewise, the image of class struggle is employed with considerably lower frequency. Therefore, in Priester's narrative social-economic forces serve rather to illustrate the national and political development than to represent the actual engine room of history. What seems to be in line with the 'Stalinist model', on the other hand, is the evaluation of great personalities and their close ties with the 'people', as well as the overall emphasis on national unity. The *Outline*, in contrast, rests unambiguously upon radical base-determinism and the decisive role of collective actors, while openly diminishing the significance of great personalities.

Even more importantly, the Czechoslovak textbook exposes the cleavages within the national community in favour of class-oriented and internationalist identities much more openly. Contrasted with Priester's *History*, in which nation seems to matter more than class, the *Outline's* emphasis on class struggle and intra-national cleavages shows clearly the rupture that early Marxist-Leninist historiography brought about in the development of Czech national-history writing. Reducing 'people's history' to 'class history' was not possible in the Austrian version of Marxist history, because Priester found it more difficult to integrate plebeian-democratic elements into her new national history. Indeed, it proved extremely complicated to represent Austrian people purely as 'oppressed', while, at the same time, maintaining some progressive traces of the Austrian state. Priester could not simply abandon the idea of Austrian statehood and its 'historical task' since it was crucial in distinguishing the Austrian nation from Germany.

In 1954, the Czech translation of Priester's *Austrian History* was published in Prague after a Russian version had appeared in 1952. The reception shows clearly that even a common 'platform' of Marxism was not completely capable of bridging the gap between the different historical traditions. Although Priester's book was acclaimed as a great piece of 'progressive historiography', the Czech commentators could not leave aside relevant differences between the two conceptions of Marxist national history. According to the preface written by a Czech historian, the book has 'merits', but contains important 'deficits' too. Besides its openly political function – 'a weapon in the fight against the Pan-German nationalism and the ideology of the *Anschluss*' – the book's Marxist approach considering Austrian history as a 'lawful process' is also highlighted. Priester is praised for paying attention 'not only to the history

of the forces of production, but also to the history of the relations of production, the class structure of society.⁴⁶ On the other hand, 'errors' include the insufficiently critical evaluation of the 'reactionary clericalism' in Austrian history, the overestimation of the merits of Joseph II, 'inaccuracies' in the account of Austrian Social Democracy, and 'principle errors' such as the absence of references to the classics of Marxism-Leninism.

Notwithstanding obvious disparities, I have tried to portray both histories in terms of discontinuity within the central European historical cultures in the Cold War period. Above all, they brought a new understanding of time and progress that was typical for radical modernity. This included the idea of overall societal change aiming at a homogenization of national societies. In this process, the use of violence by an avant-garde is expressly permitted and individuals can be sacrificed to the welfare of the collective. The pathos of egalitarianism went hand in hand with absolute certainty about the future utopia.

Furthermore, this chapter also showed a mutual entanglement of Marxist national histories in central Europe across the Iron Curtain after 1945, although, at the same time, it revealed how difficult it was to unite different traditions of national history, even when written within the common framework of historical materialism. Although both narratives were optimistic stories of progress in central Europe, their different perspectives and narrative structures prevented a truly 'internationalist' version of central European history from emerging.

⁴⁶ 'Předmluva redakce českého vydání', in Eva Priesterová, *Stručné dějiny Rakouska* (Prague, 1954), p. 11.

16

Nineteenth Century Liberal Master Narratives Revisited: A Comparison of Gyula Szekfű and Benedetto Croce

Árpád v. Klimó

Fascist Italy and the authoritarian state of Hungary under Regent Admiral Horthy presented themselves as regimes that were based on the radical negation of the liberal 'cultural hegemony' (Gramsci) dominating the period before 1918. In both countries, historians now began to question the existing 'Whig interpretations' of national history, which were created to legitimize the nation-building elites of the nineteenth century. Within this political and intellectual context, Benedetto Croce and Gyula Szekfű contributed to the revision of the liberal master narratives of their respective countries with seminal books.¹

A comparative study of the narratives of Szekfű's *Három nemzedék* (Three Generations) (Budapest, 1920) and Benedetto Croce's *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (Bari, 1928) promises a deeper understanding of the crisis of national liberal master narratives in both countries and the attempts to revise them.² How are the strong anti-liberal tendencies of the interwar period reflected in the work of the two leading historians? How did they describe and interpret the liberalism of their countries and liberalism in general? Both Szekfű and Croce were influenced by idealist and historicist schools in German historiography, mainly

¹ Some of Croce's works were translated into Hungarian and his ideas had a certain impact on liberal anti-fascists during the 1930s, although these groups did not have a great impact on Hungarian intellectual life. For Croce's influence on Hungary, see R. Paris, 'L'Italia fuori d'Italia', *Storia d'Italia*, vol. IV/1: *Dall'Unità a oggi* (Turin, 1975), pp. 727–8.

² B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Laterza (Bari, 1928); English edition, *History of Italy* (Oxford, 1929); German: *Geschichte Italiens* (Berlin, 1928). Maciej Janowski has counted Szekfű among other conservative Central European historians like Bobrzýnski and Pekař, see M. Janowski, 'Three historians', CEU History Department Yearbook (2001–02), 199–232. The best study of Szekfű until now, unfortunately never published and only available as microfilm copy, is the dissertation of an unknown historian: I. Raab Epstein, *Gyula Szekfű, A Study in the Political Basis of Hungarian Historiography* (PhD Thesis, University of Indiana, 1974).

by Friedrich Meinecke and Heinrich v. Treitschke.³ How is *Geistesgeschichte* represented in their texts? How did Szekfű and Croce construct their national histories and how did they understand the ‘national spirit’ of their respective nations? Was theirs a typical way of writing national history? In which ways did the political and social contexts shape their critique, revision or apology of liberal master narratives? How did they treat the progressive models of ‘Whig historiographies’ that had been so prevalent in the nineteenth century?

Although Szekfű is mostly seen as a Catholic conservative enemy of liberalism, whilst Croce by contrast is considered to be one of the brave liberal apologists during fascism, any closer look at their writings will also show striking similarities in their historiographies which can be explained by reference to their anti-materialist and anti-positivist positions. In the following, I will first provide some brief biographical sketches of both historians in order to highlight their extraordinary influence on the writing of history in their countries. Then I will summarize the content of Croce’s *Storia d’Italia* and analyse the narrative of Italian history that it offers. Szekfű’s *Three Generations* will be treated in more detail in the following part of my chapter. I will briefly comment on the structure and content of the book and then analyse the narrative it contains. Finally, I will come back to the questions on the revision of liberal master narratives I posed above and try to answer them with reference to the two books.

Croce and Szekfű: liberal vs. conservative?

Both Croce and Szekfű were not only the leading historians of their time in Italy and Hungary, but also prestigious intellectuals who exerted a significant political influence. Their work would often provoke scandals among mainstream historians of their countries whom they both brilliantly outperformed.

Benedetto Croce, born on 25 February 1866, spent most of his life in Naples, where he died in 1952. His parents perished in an earthquake; therefore he grew up in the family of his politically and intellectually very influential uncle, Silvio Spaventa, one of the main representatives of the so-called *Destra Storica*, which was the leading liberal party after unification. He studied law in Rome from 1884 until 1885, but accumulated most of his knowledge through his extensive private studies in Naples. Even if he was mostly known as a philosopher and a literary critic and worked only as a ‘part-time historian’, he set standards in historiography, particularly in the theory of history. Croce was sceptical of the leading liberal ideology of his time, of positivism and the idea of progress, although he criticized even more rigorously the enemies of liberalism: the partisans of nationalism, religion or socialism. He tried to establish a new kind of ‘historicist humanism’ that should replace individualist liberalism.

³ Cf. L. Raphael, *Geschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Extreme* (Munich, 2003), p. 161.

After the Great War, Croce first welcomed Mussolini as a politician who would restore 'order' and save Italy from bolshevism, but he soon became one of the lonely intellectuals who assailed the fascist regime and its politics. His influence on the Italian intellectual and academic scene was so strong that even the *Duce* felt obliged to disapprove publicly of Croce's emphatic re-evaluation of liberalism as a 'religion of liberty', which has to be understood as a rejection of fascism: 'One should not exaggerate the importance of Liberalism in the last century', Mussolini wrote, 'and make of it a religion of humanity for all present and future times when in reality it was only one of the many doctrines flourishing in that century.'⁴

In 1927 Croce wrote the *Storia d'Italia*. The book is regarded as an apology of liberal Italy and a critique of fascism, because it refused to tell the story of Italy as leading directly from Risorgimento to fascism. Far from denouncing the liberal phase in Italian history as an aberration of the country's national trajectory,⁵ he sought to revise certain partisan versions of liberal historical writing. Croce strongly objected to nationalist ideas, particularly the concept of Italian history being a long-lasting continuity from antiquity to the present. In his opinion, a history of Italy prior to 1860 simply did not exist.⁶ On the other hand, he would defend his *Storia d'Italia* as a 'patriotic work' [*opera patriottica*].⁷ According to Karl-Egon Lönne, the *Storia d'Italia* had an enormous impact in Italy as well as abroad, and was regarded as a fundamental critique of Italian fascism and of its self-understanding as the one political force which had the historic task of overcoming the liberal state.⁸ It was one of the best written syntheses of Italian history despite, or because of, its sometimes almost egocentric perspective, a kind of 'Italy seen from the standpoint of Benedetto Croce's thinking'.

Gyula Szekfű was born in 1883 in the Hungarian city of Szekesfehervár [Stuhlweissenburg], close to the Austrian border. He died in Budapest in 1955. He was 17 years younger than Croce and came from a catholic middle-class family. His father was a lawyer, his brother a priest.⁹ After having received his PhD in history at the University of Budapest, he started a career as an archivist,

⁴ B. Mussolini, *La dottrina del fascismo*, 1929. (view text: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/litgloss/mussolini/text2.shtml> [accessed 5 May 2009]; English translation cited in M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, 2000), p. 16.

⁵ This fascist master narrative was represented, for example, by G. Volpe, *L'Italia in cammino* (Milano, 1927).

⁶ G. Galasso, *L'Italia come problema storiografico* (Torino, 1979), p. 178 (*Storia d'Italia* UTET, Introduzione).

⁷ G. Sasso, *La Storia d'Italia' di Benedetto Croce. Cinquant'anni dopo* (Naples, 1979), p. 56.

⁸ K.-E. Lönne, 'Benedetto Croce, *Storia d'Italia* [*Geschichte Italiens*] 1871–1915', in V. Reinhardt (ed.), *Hauptwerke der Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 116–19.

⁹ G. Bányai und G. Szekfű, in K. Boyd (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Historians and Historical Writings*, vol. 2 (London and Chicago, 1999), p. 1166 f.; Irene Raab Epstein, *Gyula Szekfű* (New York, 1987).

first in Budapest in 1904 and then in Vienna in 1912. In 1913 Szekfű published his first extremely influential book – a study on prince Rákóczi, a Hungarian aristocrat who led various revolts against Habsburg rule in the eighteenth century and one of the greatest heroes of national liberal historiography of the time.¹⁰ Based on a variety of sources, which had become available only recently, Szekfű portrayed Rákóczi as a morally dubious figure, a political adventurer who initiated revolts against the Habsburg Empire to increase his own personal power by pretending to fight for the defence of the fatherland.

Quite similarly, Benedetto Croce had tried to prove that the various revolts in Naples from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century should not be regarded as ‘patriotic acts’, but as movements mostly driven ‘by materialist motives’ or ‘private passions’. In his eyes the Neapolitan aristocracy neither cared for the state or the monarch or the people of Naples: ‘their tendency was rather particular and anarchic.’¹¹ Obviously, both had become sharp critics of oversimplified, one-sided, unprofessional, partisan historical master narratives and therefore became engaged in long historiographical and political debates at the turn of the century. They also shared a certain disdain for narrow-minded specialists who could not connect their work on very detailed topics to more general questions and problems.

Croce, for example, labelled the products of the historians of his period as intellectually narrow, and ‘dull, descriptive, but not reflective, without any meaning, without any interest’. He calls them ‘scientists and philologists’ who only produce studies on detailed topics without relating them to the great problems and the wider contexts compared to the great historians of the ‘heroic’ Risorgimento period. Similar to Croce, Szekfű commented disdainfully that ‘the academic discipline [...] limited itself to the scientific collection of materials for very narrow circles and did not dare to present the results to a greater audience, instead they published their volumes, which were usually addressed to very few readers such as archivists.’¹²

After the publication of *Rákóczi in Exile* in 1913, Szekfű was passionately attacked by the liberal press as well as by leading politicians and historians. According to his biographer Irene Raab Epstein, the vehemence of the negative reactions to this book left Szekfű wounded and was one of the reasons why he did not return to Budapest for a whole decade. He returned only in 1925 to become a professor of modern history at his Alma Mater.

¹⁰ G. Szekfű, *A száműzött Rákóczi* [R. in exile], Kir. magy. egy. (Budapest, 1913).

¹¹ Cited in B. Croce, *Storia del Regno di Napoli*, 4th edn, (Bari, 1953), pp. 67, 71, 100. W. Mager, *Benedetto Croces literarisches und politisches Interesse an der Geschichte* (Graz, 1965), p. 162.

¹² Quotations from Croce, *Geschichte Italiens*, pp. 8, 131; and Szekfű, *Három nemzedék*, p. 351.

During the First World War, both historians were engaged in heated political debates, but on different fronts and with diverging tendencies. While Croce was strongly criticized for *not* participating in the propaganda battles against German culture, Szekfű actively participated in the propaganda work of the central powers by writing a short synthesis of Hungarian history in German in a series edited by Erich Marcks.¹³ It seems as if Szekfű used the changes in the political climate for a counterattack against his liberal opponents by embracing the 'ideas of 1914'. His 'biography' of the Hungarian state since its foundation by King St Stephen emphasized instead the belonging of Hungary to the 'Christian-German cultural sphere' (*christlich-germanischer Kulturkreis*) by further developing concepts by Friedrich Naumann and Friedrich Meinecke. From this perspective, the tragedy of the Magyar nation consisted of the split into an anti-Habsburg, Protestant and liberal and a pro-Habsburg, Catholic and Protestant orientation. These two almost equally strong poles with eminent representatives in Hungarian society produced almost permanent conflict. This division could also be seen as the continuation of a much older division caused by King Stephen's integration of the Hungarian kingdom within Western, Germanic-dominated Christianity, separating ancient 'Asiatic', pagan groups from pro-*Abendland*, Christianized 'European'-oriented elites. With his dualist concept, derived from Meinecke's distinction between 'state nation' and 'cultural nation', Szekfű proved to be much more sophisticated than his critics and other colleagues. These would mostly stick to older, one-sided partisan versions of Hungarian national history because they lacked the broader intellectual perspective which Szekfű had.¹⁴

In contrast to Szekfű, Croce had become the leading intellectual of the *neutralisti*, insisting that his 'duty to truth' took precedence over his 'duty to the fatherland'. He rejected passions that could be harmful to a society and culture that was at war, even if he did not deny the importance of defending the fatherland.¹⁵ Against the nationalists, he also highlighted the common ground of European culture to which, in his view, the central powers also belonged.¹⁶

In his book *Három nemzedék* (Three Generations), Szekfű again sharply criticized romantic, Protestant, Hungarian nationalism from a 'political realist' standpoint. Although he had a Jewish wife, in describing the period after 1860

¹³ J. [G.] Szekfű, *Der Staat Ungarn. Eine Geschichtsstudie* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1918). On Croce, see A. Asor Rosa, *La cultura (Einaudi Storia d'Italia dall'unità a oggi, vol. IV)* (Torino, 1975), pp. 1338–44.

¹⁴ A. Pók, 'G. Szekfű', in *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing*, vol. II (New York and London, 1998), p. 873.

¹⁵ Asor Rosa, *Cultura*, p. 1343.

¹⁶ B. Croce, 'Antistoricismo', in Croce, *Punti di orientamento della filosofia moderna. Antistoricismo, Due Letture ai congressi intern. di Filosofia di Cambridge Mass. 1926 e di Oxford 1930* (Bari, 1931), p. 34.

as a period of decline, he also became a spokesman of anti-Semitism and of the new 'Christian-national' course in Hungarian politics.¹⁷ In 1934 Szekfű revised this neo-conservative, mostly Catholic anti-liberalism, and rewrote the book by adding new chapters. He had been approaching the position of the socialist opposition since the late 1930s and openly criticized Horthy's pro-German politics. After the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944, Szekfű had to go into hiding, as he was widely seen as a key representative of the anti-fascist resistance. After the Second World War, both Szekfű and Croce served as high state officials, Croce as minister of culture, Szekfű as an ambassador to the Soviet Union. After the establishment of a Stalinist dictatorship in Hungary, the latter was appointed to a purely representative office in the newly established 'Presidential Council'.

Both historians represented intellectual elites who were not always and not totally immune to authoritarian solutions, but who took up a clear anti-fascist position during the Second World War. The First World War and its consequences had resulted in a divergent political orientation of both historians, but both retained a complex and profound relationship with nineteenth-century liberalism. Hayden White characterized Croce's liberal concept of history as 'bourgeois ideology' which 'soothed the fears of those sons of the bourgeoisie for whom individualism was an eternal value; in presenting historical knowledge as knowledge of human individuality, he provided a barrier against premature assimilation of the individuality to the general truths of science on the one hand, and the universal truths of philosophy on the other.'¹⁸ This was not so far away from Szekfű's scepticism and anti-positivism, although, in Szekfű's case, it was based on a strongly Catholic orientation. They also followed similar ambitions with regard to historiography. How their ambivalent political standpoints and doubtlessly innovative and critical approaches were translated into historical syntheses in the period after the Great War will be analysed in the following.

Croce's *Storia d'Italia 1871–1915* (written 1926/7, published 1928)

In 12 chronologically and thematically separated chapters, Croce treats the conflicts and problems of the new Italian nation-state after the occupation of the Papacy and the decision to make Rome the new national capital in 1870. Right at the very beginning he sets up his plot by going through the various critiques of Italian politics in the years after national unification, which had

¹⁷ For the larger context, see: P. A. Hanebrink, *In Defence of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2006).

¹⁸ H. White, *Metahistory, The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1975), p. 423.

described the post-Risorgimento era as post-heroic and bureaucratic, a 'prosaic era' in stark contrast to the preceding 'era of poetry'. By rejecting these negative judgements as unfair reproaches, expressions of wrong, exaggerated expectations and unrealistic ideals, he makes his own standpoint clear: his story is an apology of the liberal leaders, among them his uncle Silvio Spaventa, and a refutation of all unjust critiques of them. But this is only one layer of his multi-layered narrative. More generally, the book also focuses on the spirit of the time with its expressions in literature, philosophy, art, economy and other fields. He interprets the struggles and conflicts as a progressive development of the idea of liberty. At the same time, his term 'liberty' is not necessarily and not always represented by liberal politics. Croce distinguishes between the unintended, unplanned and totally independent unfolding of liberty as an idea on the one hand, and the decisions and actions of the political class on the other. The latter, he argues, were much less influential for the unfolding of history. Ideas as expressions of the human spirit are the moving factors of history. They represent the dreams, ambitions and goals of the human collectivity and they are only realized by the actions of millions of people, in this case, by the Italian nation. Elites and decision makers can only react to these collective developments, they cannot really guide or control them.

As an example of this scheme we can take his description of the conflict between the Italian state and the Pope during the 1870s. According to Croce, the conflict represented, in reality, not such a deep split of Italian society as many observers and, mostly, the Catholic press in Europe interpreted it at the time. He points to the many pragmatic steps introduced by the Italian government to solve the problem which, in the long run, led to a cooling off of the struggle. Even the Catholic Church was ultimately influenced by the idea of liberty, although it had tried its best for a long time to block and to retard this unstoppable process. His philosophical notion of liberalism can be understood as the main driving force of historical change: the different historical actors, by contrast, possess little agency of their own.

After the first part of the book, which contains Croce's rather positive characterization of the two liberal 'parties', his uncle's *Destra Storica* and the *Sinistra*, which ruled the country in the 1870s and 1880s, he sharply criticizes the politics and habitus of Francesco Crispi in Chapter 7. Crispi was a former republican, who then became an admirer of Bismarck. He dominated the political scene in Italy during the late 1880s. This politician combined populist and authoritarian appeals and methods with an anti-French, pro-German orientation. Similar attempts at an authoritarian reshaping of liberal institutions at the end of the century are interpreted, consequently, as aberrations from the Italian idea of liberty. Here, Crispi is depicted by Croce as the embodiment of the new 'irrational', nationalist and imperialist spirit of the late nineteenth century; a spirit mostly coming from other European countries, above all

Germany, and a spirit unfamiliar to the true Italian spirit of liberty. Crispi and the other authoritarian politicians, the imperialist and nationalist predecessors of fascism, function in his narrative as harmful actors in an otherwise smooth process of the unfolding of liberty.

In the following chapters (9–12) Croce celebrates Giovanni Giolitti, whom he portrays as the liberal reformer who introduced democratic elements (general male suffrage) and integrated moderate parts of the emerging socialist and Catholic movements into the political system, thus radically breaking with the authoritarian attempts of his predecessor. Giolitti was, in sharp contrast to Crispi, the man who led Italy back to the route of a moderate liberal institutional development. Croce describes the era of Giolitti and his very pragmatic political style (*neotrasformismo*, *giolittismo*) as a ‘time of tranquillity, peace, creativity and of success’ (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 215). If history and philosophy could ever have known something like a ‘golden age’, this period would be one. At the same time, Croce warns that liberty should not be regarded as ‘an abstract ideal of such high perfection that one is unable to accept it in its concrete existence’ (*ibid.*). Many critics have interpreted Croce’s celebration of the Giolittian era, which they regarded as an era of corruption and political manipulation, as an autobiographically shaped, one-sided, partisan view of Italian history.¹⁹ Croce also tried to defend Giolitti’s fatal decision of starting imperialist wars against Libya by stating that every country had its imperialism at that time.

His very positive judgement of Giolitti and his era is also based on the simple fact that the beginning of the century was the time of Croce’s rise as the representative of idealist philosophy and aesthetics and his career as senator and member of the liberal establishment.²⁰ However, a personal explanation of his judgement such as this should not prevent us from taking a closer look at his arguments. Very similar to Szekfű, as we will see later, Croce judged the different periods in the history of a nation, personified by a leading politician and his ideas from the background of something he regarded as ‘the specific historical development of this specific nation’. Italy, in this context, was a ‘young’ nation moved by its own idea of liberty, although he does not clearly state how this is different from other leading national ideas.

Giolitti is praised by Croce as a politician who represented the smooth continuation of the work begun by national unification, that is, a historical task which started long before the Risorgimento and which embodied the highest

¹⁹ Sasso, *La ‘Storia d’Italia’ di Benedetto Croce*, pp. 58–77; Mager, *Interesse*, p. 211.

²⁰ In the foreword to the third edition of *L’Italia in cammino* (1928), Volpe criticized Croce’s *Storia d’Italia* as a battle ‘against today’s Italy’ (p. xxi). According to Volpe, Croce’s *Storia* was nothing other than the ‘history of Italy after 1871 seen, almost teleologically, as the progressive realization of liberalism and of the liberal methods, connected to the renovation of philosophy in the idealistic sense’.

values and virtues of Italy, namely the quest for, and the flourishing of, the liberty of the Italian people. From this long historical perspective, the Giolittian era could be interpreted as the closest possible realization of the spirit of Italian history within the limits of the specific historical context.

In contrast to the brilliant pragmatic performance of the political elite, Croce observes a decline in intellectual life, not only in Italy, but all over Europe. In particular, the 1870s and 1880s were marked by ground-breaking naturalist and sceptic tendencies which caused a general crisis of European philosophical thinking. In every field of intellectual life, a narrow-minded positivism was replaced by 'irrational' anti-positivist ideas which prevented a profound understanding and long-lasting resolution of the social and political problems of the time. This negative description of the intellectual history of the last third of the nineteenth century contrasted strongly with Croce's positive or apologetic characterization of political life at the time, but is similar to Szekefű's argumentation about the 'decline' of intellectual life.

For Croce, historiography was only rescued by the emergence of new idealist approaches, like his own and Giovanni Gentile's work. Both changed this bad situation for the better after the turn-of-the-century, but the philosophical renewal was also challenged by nationalist and other irrational ideas, such as the ones represented by D'Annunzio and futurism. These contributed to a climate that made the decision to enter the Great War in 1915 possible – against the opposition of Giolitti and other liberal politicians, including Croce himself. Until then, and against this tide of decadent tendencies, the Italian liberal elite had remained firm and had steadily continued the national work of the development of liberty. Not only is the idea of philosophical and intellectual *decadence*, which also befell historiography, similar in both Croce's and Szekefű's narrative, but the idea that these tendencies represented deviations from the national spirit is also present in both authors. Croce, however, is much more reluctant than Szekefű to specify both 'national' as well as 'foreign' influences. The reason for this might be related to the fact that Croce was strongly influenced by German idealist philosophy, mostly Hegel, but he tried to create his own, 'Italian' idealism.

For Croce, the historian of ideas, the history of the state, of politics, of society and of culture was mainly influenced by the leading intellectual concepts of the time. For him, philosophy represented the source of every culture and was thus to be regarded as the field in which the spirit of a time finds its most genuine embodiment.²¹

In the decade before the First World War, the moderate, idealist critique of positivism, to which he himself contributed a lot, represented the most important intellectual trend. In this context, Croce regarded even Marxism, which he

²¹ Croce, *Geschichte Italiens*, p. 239.

rejected and regarded as an erroneous and dangerous doctrine, as an important ally in his own attack on positivism, which dominated the world of Italian philosophers in the mid-nineteenth century. The Great War would later prove that socialism was dead, and 'that actors of the history of the world are peoples and states and not classes.'²² He would even declare, similar to Szekfű, that the very concept of 'class' was alien to Italian social reality (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 91/*Storia d'Italia*, p. 100). The crisis of positivism was caused by its inner weakness and its dependence on natural sciences, as well as by the problems created by a historiography which was dominated by philology and obsessed with details. The end of positivism came soon, whilst older national and romantic tendencies were renewed. Most of all, idealist philosophy, as represented by Gentile and Croce, began to flourish anew. The success of this restored philosophy was overwhelming; even followers of scholastic theology began to accept certain elements of it.

The following paragraph of *Storia d'Italia* (pp. 239–40), parts of which are quoted here, is characteristic of Croce's narrative: philosophical ideas and concepts (very often his own) are represented as the leading forces in history, their traces can be found in very different fields of reality, including politics.

For Giolitti and Zanardelli, the two leading politicians and representatives of the new pragmatic liberal camp, liberalism was not a 'living believe' like it was for the liberals of the 1860s and 1870s, that is, it was not 'coming from the heart', 'an all-embracing and burning' passion. For them, liberalism was 'practical' and 'natural' (*Geschichte Italiens*, pp. 252–3). Therefore, they could begin to tame anticlericalism and find a 'modus vivendi' with the Vatican, as they would later integrate the moderate socialists. In 1905, the Pope softened the 'Non Expedit' of Pius IX, that is, the official prohibition for Catholics to attend national elections. These first steps on the road to reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the liberal state made it possible for liberal and Catholic candidates in certain polling districts to join forces temporarily to prevent the election of socialist candidates to parliament (*Geschichte Italiens*, pp. 223–4, see also p. 93). The pragmatic renewal of liberalism was thus, in Croce's perspective, paralleled by a revisited, more pragmatic position of the Vatican towards the liberal state and its representatives. Apart from this parallelization of intellectual and political history, or better: the strong relationship of philosophical ideas to political developments in Croce's narrative, we find another remarkable distinctive feature: his extensive use of biographical and naturalistic metaphors.

The practical and 'natural' renewal of liberalism, Catholicism and socialism at the beginning of the twentieth century was characterized as a 'political

²² Croce, *Pagine sulla guerra*, 2nd edn (Bari, 1928), p. 109.

spring' (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 224). Liberalism was as close as it ever would be to its ideal and it looked up-to-date, whilst Marxist socialism looked 'old' compared to the renewed, reformed, more pragmatic and anti-positivist new socialism of this period. Italy as a nation had reached a 'juvenile freshness', and had left behind the 'infancy' of the first decades after unification. Croce explains the peculiarities of Giolittian liberalism, that is, its pragmatism, 'transformism' and corruption by citing the 'youth' of the history of liberty in Italy. Different from England or France, Italian history was not marked by centuries of struggle for freedom; it also lacked the intellectual, particularly the religious foundation for that, namely Protestantism (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 253). Therefore, politics was not interesting for the majority of the people and parties did not gather around a strong belief in a precisely determined ideology or political ideal, but around a handful of political leaders. Even the socialists were not provided with a clear, Marxist, orientation. In 1914, Mussolini, chief-editor of *Avanti*, the central Socialist Party newspaper, is therefore portrayed as a 'young' politician who initiated a renewal of socialism, combining it with the idea of political violence (*Sorel*) and other anti-positivist concepts.

Croce narrates his (autobiographically coloured) history of Italy during the liberal age as the history of ideas whose reception and translation into political, economic, social and cultural reality determine the history of the Italian nation. In his mind, only pragmatic translations of ideas could be fruitful in 'young' Italy, while all literal, word-for-word realizations would lead to dangerous fanaticism. This implied a critique of socialism, nationalism and – above all – fascism as the self-declared antipode to liberalism.

Szekfű's *Három Nemzedék* 1867–1914 (written and first published 1920)

At first sight, the story which Szekfű tells in his book *Three Generations* is the very opposite of the narrative Croce presents to us in *Storia d'Italia*. Here the development of liberal Hungary until 1914 is not marked by progress, but by growing decadence. The third generation of liberals is much less competent than the second, which was already less able than the first generation of liberal politicians. For Szekfű, it was *liberalism* that was ruining the country; and the cause of the growth of Marxism, of the revolutions in 1918 and 1919 and of the main national catastrophe: the peace treaty of Trianon. Szekfű highlights the primacy of foreign policy in history writing and he stresses Hungary's place in the Christian-Germanic cultural circle (*christlich-germanischer Kulturkreis*), as well as the Magyars' mission to defend Western Christianity. He also identifies individualist Western liberalism, 'Jewish influence' and chauvinism as the main reasons for Hungary's decline and the catastrophe that followed the Great

War: the destruction of the historical kingdom of St Stephen.²³ He thus uses constructions of 'national traditions' and determined national 'missions' and historical continuities which Croce vehemently rejected as 'wrong idea(s)', and 'myth(s)'.²⁴

Szekfű's *Three Generations* consists of four 'books' and 30 chapters. In the fifth edition, published in 1934, a fifth book on the period after Trianon was added; a harsh critique of the 'Christian-national course' and the 'neo-baroque' culture dominating the Horthy regime. This edition was issued under a new extended title: *Three Generations and What Followed Afterwards*. For some, it marked Szekfű's transition from a Christian nationalist anti-Semite to an anti-fascist conservative, although the first four books of *Three Generations* remained unchanged.

Apart from their different shaping of the story and their divergent political interpretations and employments of the liberal period as decline (Szekfű) or progress (Croce), we also find a number of similarities. First of all, Szekfű also focused his attention on the history of the state by studying three generations of politicians after 1867/1870. Croce's first generation was represented by the *Destra Storica* and the *Sinistra* which dominated parliament and politics during the 1870s, while the second generation was embodied by the Neapolitan politician Francesco Crispi, who tried to steer Italy on a more authoritarian course oriented towards Bismarck's Germany and against French influence during the 1880s. The third generation, Croce's favourite, was represented by the, already mentioned, pragmatic liberals Giolitti and Zanardelli.

The star of Szekfű's first generation was Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860) who belonged to the era of the *Risorgimento* and was active until the breakdown of the Hungarian revolution in 1849. Here, Széchenyi, who was mostly considered a liberal inspired by British examples, is painted in more conservative and Catholic colours. Szekfű exaggerated these attributes while leaving the liberal orientations of Széchenyi more in the background (*Három Nemzedék*, 1938, s. 18). For him, Széchenyi personified the only realistic Hungarian option in foreign as well as interior policy: a strong alliance with the House of Habsburg and a slow, moderate transformation of the country, including its economy and social structures. This conservative and Catholic idealization of Széchenyi as the peak of political wisdom is not totally different from Croce's idealized portrait of Giolitti as the embodiment of liberal Italy. Both politicians represent ideal historical actors who personify political philosophies as well as their

²³ For Szekfű's use of the modern idea of Hungary as a 'Christian bulwark', see also S. Őze and N. Spannenger, 'Propugnaculum Christianitatis', in M. Krzoska and H.-C. Maner (eds), *Beruf und Berufung. Geschichtswissenschaft und Nationsbildung in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 2005), pp. 19–39.

²⁴ Croce, *Geschichte Italiens*, p. 9.

realizations. Croce and Szekfű use them as a kind of ideal type. Other, mostly less ideal politicians and their actions are measured by comparison with these standards. The first chapter in which the idealized image of Széchenyi is developed by Szekfű can be read as the framing of the rest of his story, which tells the reader how Hungarian politicians and negative 'Jewish' forces from outside the country destroyed the ideals embodied by the great statesman. The development which would have been most favourable to Hungary, according to Szekfű, would have been a slow, conservative transformation of Hungarian society, which would have strengthened not the industrial classes and the urban proletariat, but the 'Christian' middle classes as well as smaller landowners. Because of foreign, particularly French revolutionary, radical liberal and democratic ideas, this development never materialized in Hungary. Instead, a far too dynamic, too radical industrialization and urbanization process was started by the liberal elites. Despite their different assessment of liberalism, both Croce and Szekfű begin their narrative with a description of the historical situation around the middle of the nineteenth century when the further development of the two nation-states was still open and different paths were possible.²⁵ Both distinguish between historical reality on the one hand, and ideal paths of possible national developments, more appropriate to the 'national spirit' of their nations, on the other.

Szekfű's second generation consisted of the liberal reformers around István Deák who arranged a compromise with Austria and created a Hungarian national state within the Habsburg Empire in 1867. For Szekfű, this second generation was still marked by good ideas and great political skill, but it was already doomed by signs of decline. They lacked the great visions of Széchenyi, and most of all, they lacked his deep religious beliefs. In this period immigration to Hungary, mostly Jewish, started to become a mass phenomenon. A politics of assimilation and 'Magyarization' of these newcomers followed, thus creating new and 'harmful' (in Szekfű's eyes) intellectuals, as well as journalists and economic and professional elites.

This process, which made the industrialization and urbanization of Budapest and some smaller towns in Hungary possible, was accelerated by the third liberal generation and led directly to a moral and political disaster, that is, the catastrophic breakdown after the First World War, the influence of Soviet bolshevism (the 'Councils' Republic' of 1919) and the traumatic experience of the peace treaty of Trianon. Szekfű criticized especially the dominant Protestant liberal elites of Hungary who had enforced the process of immigration and industrialization, and who did not limit the hegemony of a liberal, urban culture dominated by Jews in the decade prior to the First World War because

²⁵ I owe this term to J. Leerssen who quotes Lessing as the inventor, see J. Leerssen's contribution to this volume.

they believed the liberal policy to be the only way to national independence from Vienna. The 'Independence Party', consisting mostly of representatives of the Protestant gentry of Eastern Hungary was the main anti-Habsburg force putting a lot of pressure on the Budapest government to distance itself from Austria. But since Hungary was a small nation between the Austrian and the Russian Empires, this policy of national independence could only lead to the breakdown of the Hungarian state. Liberalism turned out to be a 'one-way street' (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 318).

Croce was more interested in the interior development of Italy; he rejected the notion of a national 'mission' (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 9), but this was also due to his critical attitude towards nationalism and fascism and their emphasis on the 'national' or even 'imperial' mission of Italy. Szekfű, in the context of the Trianon treaty (1920), highlighted Hungary's 'mission' in southeast Europe and its cultural superiority over the Balkans.²⁶

Liberalism, according to Szekfű, was an ideal political doctrine for England, where it was the result of a long historical development, but not for Hungary. Even in France, liberal ideas led only to terror and anticlericalism, to a formalist constitutionalism, to an 'enslaving' capitalism and to radical nationalism. In Hungary, historical and social preconditions for liberalism were absent, as there was no Hungarian *tiers état*. In fact, the latter, according to Szekfű, was only 'imported' later in the guise of German and Jewish immigrants estranged from Magyar culture (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 114). Croce also characterized Italian liberalism as a specific form of thinking and policy different from the French or English model. This was a not totally unfamiliar notion, even to some British politicians and authors at the time, quite a few of whom sympathized initially with Italian fascism because they thought that it would probably fit the 'Mediterranean character' of the country better.²⁷

A second important difference between Croce and Szekfű can be found in the latter's open anti-Semitism, his *völkisch* beliefs and, to a lesser extent, his anti-Germanism. Liberalism and capitalism were harmful to the Hungarian state and nation because of their *non-Magyar character*.²⁸ Hungarian moderate, 'conservative' liberalism, as embodied by the reformer István Széchenyi, failed because the problem of the relationship with Austria was not solved along with the

²⁶ He was, as Maciej Janowski rightly stresses, a nationalist 'perhaps closer to the modern nationalist right than to classical conservatism'. Janowski, *Three Historians*, p. 221.

²⁷ Mazower quotes *The Times*, 10 August 1936: 'It may be that the system of parliamentary Government which suits Great Britain suits few other countries.' Mazower, *Dark Continent*, p. 26.

²⁸ The *völkisch* foundation of his concept of a nation has been analyzed by A. Miskolczy and G. Szekfű, 'magyar jellem'-propagandája [Gy. Szekfű's propaganda of the 'magyar spirit'], in Miskolczy, *Szellem és nemzet* [*Spirit and Nation*], 2001, pp. 127–44.

transformation of the Hungarian constitution. The radical leaders of the national movement like Kossuth, 'taken up totally by European ideas' (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 119), represented a dogmatic, foreign liberalism which could not distinguish between different 'völkisch developments'. Therefore they came into conflict with Vienna and the other nationalities within the Kingdom of Hungary which led to the catastrophe of 1849. Afterwards, Kossuth, who lived in Italian exile, exerted a negative, romantic influence, strengthening both the anti-Habsburg opposition of the East Hungarian Protestant gentry as well as free-masonry (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 129). His strong influence weakened the government and the state elites who had to rely on 'foreign', mostly Jewish, immigrants. Liberalism resulted in corruption, fraudulent elections, a decadent culture and a devastating yellow press: 'Society was characterized by bourgeois egotism, political helplessness and intellectual misery' (*Három Nemzedék*, 1938, p. 272).

Exactly the same sentence could have been written on the Giolittian period by the opponents of Croce within Italian historiography.²⁹ One of the most outspoken critics of Giolitti was the positivist historian Gaetano Salvemini who called Giolitti's cabinet 'the ministry of crime' (*il ministro della mala vita*). This kind of anti-liberalism was also common among radical socialists. Szekfű's anti-liberalism was of a different kind: it was deeply nationalist and anti-Western: 'Like cloth, sewed by French tailors after an English model and worn by an eastern people [...] as if we were ashamed of being Hungarians did we try to transform ourselves into liberal and capitalist Westerners' (*Három Nemzedék*, 1938, s. 272) Behind this lay a Catholic-conservative concept of politics totally different from Croce's liberal idea. In Szekfű's eyes, the greatest sin of the liberal dogma consisted of its attack on the Catholic Church: 'here stood freedom, there stood authority; reason replaced moral, a merciless law replaced charity' (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 86). Like many other Catholic intellectuals and politicians, particularly in Austria at that time, the Hungarian historian identified this radical liberal transformation of Hungarian society with 'the superficially assimilated Jew'.³⁰ Szekfű's ideal was the 'Christian-national state', a conservative, authoritarian, Christian welfare state.³¹ His anti-Semitism and rejection of

²⁹ G. Salvemini, *Il ministro della mala vita e altri scritti sull'Italia giolittiana* (Milan, 1962).

³⁰ J. Bunzl, 'Zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Österreich', in Bunzl and B. Marin, *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Sozialhistorische und soziologische Studien* (Innsbruck, 1983), pp. 9–88; I. A. Hellwing, *Der konfessionelle Antisemitismus im 19. Jahrhundert in Österreich* (Vienna, Freiburg and Basel, 1972); H. Rütgen, *Antisemitismus in allen Lagern. Publizistische Dokumente zur Ersten Republik. Österreich 1918–1938* (Graz, 1989); J. Weiss, *Der lange Weg zum Holocaust: die Geschichte der Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland und Österreich* (Berlin, 1998); D. Sottopietra, *Variationen eines Vorurteils: eine Entwicklungsgeschichte des Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Vienna, 1997).

³¹ Further developed in his study 'Állam és Nemzetfenntartás' [The state and the stabilization of the nation], in *Történetpolitikai Tanulmányok [Studies in the Politics of History]* (Budapest, 1924).

Jewish-liberal Budapest culture was not without differentiations; he highlighted the fact that a negative influence on Hungarian society was exerted only by half a million Jewish immigrants from Galicia, whereas Jews living in Hungary for many generations were 'ethical and responsible' (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 266). Only these immigrants had founded the 'greedy' Jewish liberal-cosmopolitan or chauvinist press concentrated in the capital. Jewish influence was even held responsible for the decline of Hungarian historical science (*Három Nemzedék*, p. 162). And in many respects, some of Szekfű's anti-Semitic writings resembled those of Heinrich von Treitschke. Croce, by contrast, stated that 'fortunately' in Italy no trace of this stupidity called 'anti-Semitism' was to be found. All problems could be solved by assimilation (*Geschichte Italiens*, p. 92–3). For the Hungarian historian, however, assimilation on a mass scale *was* the problem.

Conclusions

The 1920s was a time during which strong anti-liberal tendencies marked the intellectual fields of Hungary, Italy and other European countries that had been deeply affected by the Great War. The greatness of Croce's and Szekfű's historical work did not lie in their attempt to counter these tendencies, but in the complexity of their narrative which allowed for multiple contradictions. Szekfű wanted to condemn Hungarian liberalism as the main cause of national decline, but he could not avoid paying tribute to great liberal politicians like Széchenyi, even if he tried to transform him into a devout Catholic. The reason for this contradiction lay in the fact that the Hungarian nation-state was a product of liberal nationalism, and this modern constitutional state was the main actor of his narrative. *Three Generations* was planned as both an apology of this 'one thousand year old Kingdom' and as a revisionist pamphlet against the Trianon peace treaty. But when writing the story of the Hungarian state, it was almost impossible not to start with the liberal nation-state that was founded in 1867. Without the national and liberal reform work of Széchenyi in the 1840s, this state would not have come into existence. By idealizing Széchenyi as the unsurpassed genius of Hungarian politics, Szekfű had also to deal with liberalism. His anti-Semitic accusations of the Jewish immigrants as the ones who ruined Hungary by importing industrialism, decadent journalism, socialism, chauvinism and other modern diseases, seem to be an attempt to circumvent the main contradiction of his narrative. By emphasizing the increasingly 'Jewish', foreign character of Hungarian liberalism, the would-be Magyar, conservative, Catholic liberalism of Széchenyi could be regarded as a potential 'good' Hungarian liberalism not realized by the following generations.

The main contradiction of Croce's *Storia* lay in the fact that Italy experienced (almost) a 'golden age' under the rule of Giolitti, while 'decadent' irrationalism

grew stronger and stronger until its post-war triumph in the form of fascism. While Szekfű tells a story of national decline that cannot explain his critique of liberalism, Croce's story of progress collides with the collapse of liberalism in 1915. Both speak of (unspecific) 'foreign' ideas, mostly associated with positivism, materialism and irrationalism, which had a damaging influence on their nations. As representatives of *Geistesgeschichte* they tried to explain the divergent tendencies of the political actors of their countries mostly by the contradictions caused by the adaptations of these foreign ideas to the totally different national traditions and realities. The concept of a specific national historical path and character, although not clearly explained, is fundamental for both narratives. Giolitti and Szécheny are characterized as politicians who not only embodied these national traditions, but also acted according to them. Both were characterized by a certain sensibility of their nation's 'spirit', which is precisely what made them ideal politicians.

Both did not like the simplistic Whig historiographies of the nineteenth century, trying to replace them by professional historical texts which did not focus only on narrow details, but also had a much wider philosophical and political scope. Quite similar to their opponents, both historians regarded history as *contemporary history*, as a *critique of their own time* with regard to the intellectual actualization of the past. Their history of ideas approach was in reality the story of their national state. It is not ideas as such that 'make history', but ideas as realized by state institutions or political actors. Consequently, Szekfű, despite his recurring reference to the Magyar people and the nation's 'racial spirit', was opposed to *Volksgeschichte*.³² His subject of history was not the people or the 'Magyar race', but the state or political authority and the elites representing the Magyar people.

³² Á. von Klimó, 'Volksgeschichte in Ungarn. Chancen, Schwierigkeiten, Folgen eines, deutschen' Projektes', in M. Middell and U. Sommer (eds), *Historische West- und Ostforschung in Zentraleuropa zwischen dem Ersten und dem Zweiten Weltkrieg – Verflechtung und Vergleich* (Leipzig, 2004), pp. 151–78.

17

The Lombard League in Nineteenth-Century Historiography, c.1800–c.1850

David Laven

The nineteenth-century fascination with the medieval is beyond dispute. No other period caught the historical imagination to the same degree. Within this general enthusiasm, Medieval Italy engendered especially intense scholarly – and sometimes less than scholarly – interest amongst both natives of the peninsula and non-Italians. Curiously, one key reason that the history of Italy from the fall of the Western Empire until the fifteenth century generated such appeal was because it was the part of Europe commonly held to have been least penetrated by the medieval: it was in Italy that many of the practices and institutions usually held to characterize the Middle Ages were at their weakest and least durable. Thus, at a time when – according to the orthodoxy of nineteenth-century historiography – the rest of the continent witnessed feudal monarchy triumphant, the key unit of political, cultural, economic and social organization in Italy was the republican city-state. And it was in Italy, too, that the legacy of ancient Rome both lived on most vigorously, and blossomed forth in the civic humanism and the glories of the renaissance. In Italy the medieval assumed a paradoxical status: a powerful sense of republican liberty, the emphasis on civic virtue, a belief in ‘citizen soldiers’ all spoke of continuity with the classical past; but they also hinted at a form of modernity, which arguably disappeared in the aftermath of 1494, when Charles VIII invaded the peninsula, conquering it ‘with a stick of chalk’ and ‘barbarian domination’ began anew. The Italian *comuni* of the Middle Ages could be seen to prefigure ideas that found voice again in the American and French Revolutions, but which had apparently died out in the peninsula by the sixteenth century (albeit noisily mourned by Machiavelli). It was, therefore, in large part to explain Italian exceptionalism – and apparent decadence and decline – that scholars became so absorbed in the nation’s medieval past, and with the history of the *comuni* in particular.¹

¹ For reflections on the significance of the Italian mediaeval city in the nineteenth century, see G. Tabacco, ‘La città italiana fra germanesimo e latinità nella medievistica

One episode to assume particular significance for historians was the twelfth-century struggle of a confederation of northern and central Italian cities, the so-called Lombard League, in alliance with the Papacy, against the imperial presumptions of the German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa. It is commonplace to point out that, throughout the Risorgimento, the League was seen as an essentially patriotic *lieu de mémoire*, albeit one viewed uncomfortably by some anticlerical nationalists.² It is well-known, for example, that the first performance of Verdi's *La battaglia di Legnano* in Rome in January 1849 was seen as a dramatic rallying cry for Italian independence: the librettist, Salvatore Cammarano, had been determined, as he explained to the composer, to write on 'l'epoca più gloriosa della storia d'Italia'.³ Giovanni Berchet's *Le fantasie* of 1829 described the era of the League as 'l'epoca più bella, più gloriosa della storia italiana'.⁴ The future founder of *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Cesare Cantù, wrote a well-received verse romance, *Algiso o la Lega Lombarda* (1828).⁵ Meanwhile, Gioberti observed in 1843 that 'Io trovo nulla nella storia antica e moderna che in epica maestà pareggi la confederazione lombarda'.⁶ Three years later, Cesare Balbo called the century before the Peace of Constance – particularly the period after 1164 – 'il più bello di nostra bella età'.⁷ Thirty years earlier, Balbo had already written, but not published, a vast novel entitled *La Lega di Lombardia*.⁸ Massimo D'Azeglio also began a novel entitled, *La Lega Lombarda*, and described the period as 'la più bella e luminosa della storia nostra'.⁹ More radical patriots were equally gushing: Mazzini

ottocentesca', in R. Elze and P. Schiera (eds), *Il Medioevo nell'ottocento in Italia e Germania/ Das Mittelalter im 19. Jahrhundert in Italien und Deutschland. Italia e Germania. Immagini, modelli, miti fra due popoli nell'Ottocento: il Medioevo/Das Mittelalter. Ansichten, Stereotypen und Mythen zweier Völkerim neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Deutschland und Italien* (Bologna and Berlin, 1988), pp. 23–42. Also useful is P. Schiera's introduction in *ibid.*, pp. 9–22, and I. Porciani, 'Il medioevo nella costruzione dell'Italia unita: la proposta di un mito', *ibid.*, pp. 163–91.

² On Legnano and Pontida as *lieux de mémoire*, see Brunello, 'Pontida', in M. Isnenghi (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita* (Rome-Bari, 1996), pp. 16–28.

³ Cited in M. Fubini, 'La Lega Lombarda nella letteratura dell'Ottocento', in Fubini, *Popolo e stato in Italia nell'età di Federico Barbarossa. Alessandria e la Lega Lombarda. Relazioni e comunicazioni al XXXIII congresso della Fondazione di Alessandria* (Turin, 1970), pp. 401–20, here p. 406.

⁴ Fubini, *Popolo e stato*, p. 17. On Berchet, see also, Fubini, 'La Lega', and A. Lyttelton, 'Creating a national past: History, myth and image in the Risorgimento', in A. Russell Ascoli and K. von Henneberg (eds), *Making and Remaking Italy: The cultivation of national identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 27–74, here pp. 47–8.

⁵ Lyttelton, 'Creating', 48–9.

⁶ V. Gioberti, *Del Primato morale e civile degli italiani*, 3 vols (Lausanne, 1846), p. 370.

⁷ C. Balbo, *Sommario della storia d'Italia* (Florence, 1962), pp. 182, 188.

⁸ Fubini, 'La Lega', p. 405.

⁹ Fubini, 'La Lega'. In 1855 d'Azeglio explained that he had abandoned the project on realizing that national myth had wrongly turned vassals in conflict with their lord into

exclaiming, 'Oh! I sedici anni, che corsero dalla prima congrega alla pace segnata in Costanza valgono due secoli interi di Roma.'¹⁰ The enthusiasm did not die in the later stages of unification or after it had been completed: one need think simply of Giosuè Carducci's *Canzone di Legnano* and the fascist anthem *Giovinazza*.¹¹

While enthusiasm for the Lombard League was immense – Adrian Lyttelton suggests that it was rivalled only by the so-called 'Sicilian Vespers'¹² – it posed problems for restoration nationalists on several counts. The relative facility with which the modern day Lega Nord has sought to appropriate the struggle as a regionalist *lieu de mémoire*, hints at the essential *northernness* of resistance to Barbarossa.¹³ But the episode was also exceptional in that it represented a rare example of Italians coming together to combat a foreigner. It was precisely this oddity in Italian history – the ability, for once, of different states to form an effective alliance – that made so many nineteenth-century patriots feel that the League was a glorious episode which merited emulation, or, at the very least, to be studied that it might teach something about cooperation and collapse. Still, the one obvious consequence of focusing on the glories of the League and, most notably, its victory, was that it highlighted how, for most of their history, Italians had been incapable of settling their differences even in the face of invasion, reverting readily to internecine struggle and factionalism, not to mention an often self-destructive urge to invite foreigners across the Alps to help settle scores with their compatriots. Moreover, as we shall see, historians of the Risorgimento era, Italian and foreign, were perfectly aware that, even during this most glorious – albeit rather brief – episode from the peninsula's past, ranks were often broken, and the 'German' enemy was almost invariably supported by Italian allies.

It is the aim of this chapter to explore some of the more serious historical studies of the League, which avoided the crudest interpretations evident in the comments of the propagandists and cavalier makers of myth. In doing so, I shall examine some of the strategies that were employed by historians that permitted the League to be interpreted so positively, and to ask how different historians, all using very similar narrative structures, were able to adapt them

heroes of Italian independence. Massimo d'Azeglio, *Epistolario (1819–1866)*, vol. I, ed. G. Virlogeux (Turin, 1987), p. xxxvii.

¹⁰ E. Sestan, 'Legnano nella storia romantica', in G. Pinto (ed.), *Storiografia dell'Ottocento e Novecento* (Florence, 1991), pp. 221–40, here p. 229.

¹¹ Brunello, 'Pontida', p. 25.

¹² Lyttelton, 'Creating', pp. 50–8.

¹³ For a discussion of the modern exploitation of the myth of the Lega, see E. Coleman, 'The Lombard League: History and Myth', in J. Devlin and H. B. Clarke (eds), *European Encounters: Essays in memory of Albert Lovett* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 22–45.

for particular ideological and rhetorical purposes. At the same time I shall try to unpick whether there were distinctive 'national' approaches to the way in which Italians wrote about the League, which distinguished them from foreign historians of the episode.

While this chapter is far from exhaustive in its coverage, I have concentrated on a representative selection of historians. First, I explore the legacy for nineteenth-century historians of the great eighteenth-century historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori, whose fundamental outline of events – and often his interpretation – came to shape all subsequent histories of the period for over a century. I then focus on a number of works, by Italians and non-Italians, which placed the events of 1152–83 more generally within the context of medieval Italian history. These texts are: *Histoire des républiques italiennes* by the Francophone Swiss, Simonde de Sismondi;¹⁴ the Prussian Heinrich Leo's *Geschichte von Italien*;¹⁵ and works by the Piedmontese moderate and royalist, Cesare Balbo,¹⁶ and the progressive Milanese autonomist, Carlo Cattaneo.¹⁷ Finally, I turn to two detailed monographic works, which offer particularly clear insights to how the writing of Italy's past was viewed through the lenses of contemporary politics, and mobilized for contemporary political goals. The first is Johannes Voigt's *Geschichte des Lombarden-Bundes*. This was first published in its original German edition in 1818; an Italian translation, apparently long in preparation, benefited from the new political order brought about by the 1848 revolutions and reached the press in Milan shortly after the *cinque giornate*.¹⁸ The second is the *Storia della lega lombarda* by the Benedictine monk, Luigi Tosti, also published in the heady days of the *quarantotto*.¹⁹

¹⁴ J.-C.-L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 16 vols (Paris, 1809). Subsequent references are from the 1826 revised edition (Paris, 1827).

¹⁵ H. Leo, *Geschichte von Italien* (Hamburg, 1829).

¹⁶ C. Balbo, *Sommario della Storia d'Italia*, ed. Maria Fubini Leuzzi (Florence, 1962). The work initially appeared as part of the *Nuova Enciclopedia Popolare* (Turin, 1846). It was subsequently published in 24 different editions, most importantly as *Della Storia d'Italia dalle origini fino all'anno 1814. Sommario* (Lausanne, 1846). The Sansoni edition cited here is based on the ninth edition of 1850.

¹⁷ C. Cattaneo, *Notizie naturali e civili su la Lombardia* (Milan, 1844). Citations here are from C. Cattaneo, *Scritti su Milano e la Lombardia*, ed. Ettore Mazzali (Milan, 1990), pp. 167–310.

¹⁸ J. Voigt, *Geschichte des Lombarden-Bundes und seines Kampfes mit Kaiser Friederich dem Ersten. Aus den Quellen dargestellt* (Königsberg, 1818), *Storia della Lega Lombarda e delle sue guerre coll'imperatore Federigo I. Tratto dalle fonti originali* (Milan, 1848).

¹⁹ L. Tosti, *Storia della lega lombarda, illustrata con note e documenti* (Monte-Cassino, 1848). This chapter does not address the various local studies of the Lombard League published between 1867 and 1876. Nor does it look at G. Di Cesare, *Glorie italiane del XII secolo ossia la lega lombarda* (Naples, 1848).

Muratori

In 1866, the historian Cesare Vignati bemoaned the fact that histories of the Lega rarely engaged with primary sources.²⁰ This, he argued, was partially a consequence of the destruction of Italian archives by foreign invaders; it also stemmed from ‘la mala custodia delle nostre antiche memorie’. But Italians had not only failed to look after their national heritage; matters were additionally complicated by the dispersal of documents between different cities. Vignati’s account of the shortcomings of the Italian historical profession was a metaphor for Italy’s historical plight: nasty foreigners were only partly to blame; the difficulties faced had been aggravated by internal division and a failure of Italian will.²¹ Vignati further despaired that even easily available documents were often over-looked, including those published by Muratori.²² Notwithstanding Vignati’s exasperation at the neglect of Muratori, the latter’s work cast a massive shadow over all those who wrote in the century after his death in 1750: Muratori’s vast collections of documents – the *Rerum italicarum scriptores* (28 vols, 1723–51) and the *Antiquitates italicæ mediæ ævi* (6 vols, 1738–42) – coupled with his *Dissertazioni sopra le antichità italiane* and the *Annali d’Italia dal principio dell’era volgare sino all’anno 1500 (–1749)* (Milan, 12 vols, 1744–49) became the key sources on which most subsequent accounts of medieval Italy – including those on the Lombard League – were based.²³

Yet the relationship between Muratori and his nineteenth-century successors was not straightforward. The eighteenth-century historian stressed that he was anxious to redress the imbalance of historical writing. In his opinion there had been an obsessive emphasis on ancient Rome, and neglect of the period 500 to 1500. In fact, Muratori exaggerated the disregard shown to the Middle Ages: plenty of early modern Italian historians had shown considerable interest in the period. Muratori’s reasons for a medieval focus went beyond plugging a gap; he wanted this period studied because ‘la storia dei secoli rozzi e infelice’ highlighted the advances of his lifetime. Not only was eighteenth-century Italy vastly more peaceful than it had been in the Middle Ages, but letters, sciences and religion all flourished in contrast with former times.²⁴ This intensely optimistic view of contemporary life would rest uneasily with nineteenth-century

²⁰ C. Vignati, *Storia diplomatica della Lega lombarda con xxv documenti inediti* (Milan, 1866).

²¹ Vignati, *Storia*, p. 9.

²² Vignati, *Storia*, pp. 11–12.

²³ I am grateful to Gianluca Raccagni for pointing out to me that this remained true for other later works, including those of J. Ficker, *Zur Geschichte des Lombardenbundes* (Vienna, 1869).

²⁴ G. Falco and F. Forti (eds), *Opere di Lodovico Antonio Muratori* (Milan and Naples, 1964), pp. 488–9.

patriotic writers, who saw 'settecento Italy languishing under foreign hegemony. Despite stressing the general well-being of his own era, Muratori acknowledged positive conditions in earlier periods. In particular, he believed both that medieval Italy was no worse off than any other part of western Europe,²⁵ and, perhaps surprisingly, that repeated civil conflict had brought marked benefits. In this he laid the foundations for almost all the writers of the nineteenth century, who would make a virtue of the divided and bellicose nature of the era of the *comuni*. While Muratori professed repeatedly to despise the barbarian emphasis on arms over letters, he recognized that the need to mobilize troops had played a significant part in the end of slavery: only free men could be armed without risking rebellion. Moreover, the deeply divided nature of Italy, in which small, independent city-states pursued bloody feuds with their immediate neighbours, permitted the growth of freedom, not least because fugitive slaves could simply slip into rival territory.²⁶ The militarization of northern Italy, resulting from constant conflict between hostile cities, brought suffering, but fostered pride and liberty.²⁷

Muratori's ambivalence is clearest in his treatment of Milan, which would be echoed by later writers. He vilified the city for its 'insaziabil cupidità', the cause of both instability and enmity;²⁸ but praised its inhabitants for their energy and resilience. Muratori was also deeply ambivalent about the German emperor, recognizing his 'rare doti' and 'valore impareggiabile', but also stressing his barbaric severity and cruelty,²⁹ which would ultimately lead to his defeat at Legnano.³⁰ Never, however, did Muratori lose sight of the fact that the northern cities, while sometimes in alliance, always prioritized their particular interests, clashing with one another in preference to resisting outside intervention.

Sismondi

Sismondi's monumental study of the Italian republics numbered among the most influential history books of the century. The underlying principle of this work was that if the study of history taught anything of value, it was that 'le gouvernement est la cause la plus efficace du caractère des peuples.'³¹

²⁵ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, p. 591.

²⁶ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, pp. 606–7.

²⁷ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, pp. 1216–23.

²⁸ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, pp. 710–11. See also p. 1236 for the grievances of Lodi towards Milan.

²⁹ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, p. 1236.

³⁰ Falco and Forti, *Opere*, p. 1254. For Muratori it was not the Lombard League that brought Frederick to his knees, but 'la mano di Dio' punishing him both for his ill-treatment of the Church and for his cruelty.

³¹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, p. v.

In Sismondi's account, the republics of medieval Italy embodied the repossession of liberties lost under the despotic rule of the Caesars. For this reason his work was 'moins l'histoire de l'Italie que l'histoire des républiques italiennes'.³² Accordingly, the most exciting period in Italy's history was from the tenth to twelfth centuries when the Italian republics 'ont eu [...] l'influence la plus marquée sur la civilisation, sur le commerce, sur la balance politique de l'Europe'.³³ Like Muratori, Sismondi recognized the fundamental weakness that came from the partition of Italy into tiny territorial blocs: not only did it make for vulnerability to outside attack, but it also encouraged the Italians' proclivity for conflict with their immediate neighbours. Yet, in common with his eighteenth-century predecessor, Sismondi saw the benefits derived from such civic tensions. War and invasion he held to have been key motors in the resurgence of Italian liberty. For example, in the first volume of the *Républiques italiennes*, Sismondi explains how, had the relative stability offered by Charlemagne's reign endured, it would have proved disastrous to Italy. Peace within a great empire threatened to enervate any spirit of independence, and the uniformity of government imposed would have guaranteed short-term well-being, but longer term stagnation: 'elle seroit arrivée plus tôt peut-être à une demi-civilisation; mais elle seroit restée ensuite stationnaire comme la Chine, sans énergie, sans pouvoir, sans gloire, sans génie e sans vertu'.³⁴ Human well-being ultimately 'demandoit la division des grands empires en petits peuples' because only 'petits gouvernments' can give 'l'attention minutieuse [...] aux objets qu'ils auroient immédiatement sous les yeux'.³⁵ Sismondi went so far as to argue that it was a positive advantage for a region to be outside the protection of a powerful monarch. Thus, for example, the rapacious Saracens and marauding Magyars 'ont eu l'influence la plus immédiate sur la liberté des villes': lacking protection from a strong ruler, Italians deserted the countryside for the greater safety offered by cities. In such urban spaces, they were far more likely to develop civic virtue and political awareness than in scattered rural communities. Moreover, in order to resist invaders, cities had both to build fortifications and enrol citizens in militias, helping re-establish the political virtues of Italians grown soft under barbarian rule.³⁶

In Sismondi's account – following that of Muratori – the growth in size and independence of the cities of north and central Italy was accompanied by ferocious rivalry. But he viewed resulting conflicts positively: it was through

³² Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, p. xiv.

³³ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, p. xvii.

³⁴ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, p. 23.

³⁵ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, p. 20.

³⁶ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. I, pp. 36–40.

municipal pride and military service that patriotism (and in Sismondi's *Républiques italiennes* the locus of 'patrie' was to be found only in the city³⁷), liberty and independence were fostered. Sismondi stressed that, by the twelfth century, the habitual rivalry of the *comuni* had made them as expansionist as any prince. The hatred between neighbouring Pavia and Milan – the two strongest states in Lombardy – had led to their attempts to increase glory and security through conquest. This in turn made vulnerable smaller states seek protection from the two dominant cities, creating two hostile camps.³⁸ The resulting conflict was generally far from brutal,³⁹ and rivalry brought distinct benefits: war taught citizens loyalty to their city, and fostered a love of liberty; conflict disciplined and toughened citizens. Civil war was actually desirable: when Barbarossa first marched into Italy, the superior quality of his troops was a direct consequence of their being battle-hardened in Germany's recent internecine struggles.⁴⁰

While Sismondi respected German soldiers, he maintained that there was a fundamental difference between the way in which they and Italians fought. For Barbarossa's soldiers, atrocities came naturally.⁴¹ Sismondi held that German cruelty initially contrasted sharply with the humane and civilized conduct of the *comuni*: the Lombards even forewarned their enemies before attacking.⁴² Frederick's campaigns brutalized Italy. As Sismondi's narrative progresses there are more and more frequent descriptions of Italians pillaging and wasting enemy lands. Yet they are never truly 'barbarized': despite their occasionally vicious actions, the conduct of Lombard troops was redeemed by a fundamentally virtuous desire to defend liberty, civic pride and independence. Even as victors they retained respect for their vanquished fellows. For example, in enforcing the submission of the Lodigiani in 1158, the Milanese merely expected an oath of obedience, neither demanding hostages, nor garrisoning the defeated city.⁴³ On the rare occasions when Lombards engaged in German levels of viciousness, Sismondi sought excuses: when Cremonesi and Pavesi

³⁷ Sismondi used 'patrie' solely to refer to individual cities. See, e.g., Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, pp. vol. II, 92, 131, 179. Interestingly, he also refers to 'la nation lombarde' (p. 155), and even describes individual cities as 'nations'. Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 6–7.

³⁸ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 2–4.

³⁹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 5. Sismondi did acknowledge exceptions to this general rule, notably the razing of Lodi by the Milanese in 1111. Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁰ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 43.

⁴¹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, *passim*. Sismondi's accounts of the conduct of German forces, especially after victory, become formulaic. See, e.g., the laconic descriptions of defeated cities, vol. II, pp. 53–70.

⁴² Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 56, 72.

⁴³ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 83.

fought alongside Frederick ‘avec la barbarie’, it was justifiable because of their ‘longue oppression’ by Milan.⁴⁴ Even when perpetrating excesses, Italians acted from a spirit of liberty.

In Sismondi’s account the difference between Germans and Lombards is constantly emphasized. Frederick, himself, is portrayed as brave and ‘avide de gloire’. Sismondi’s emperor is also determined to assert his authority over Italy ‘dont, il consideroit l’indépendance comme un état de révolte’,⁴⁵ and to reconquer ‘les anciennes limites de l’empire romain’.⁴⁶ It was this conviction of his right to full sovereignty, which made Frederick utterly pragmatic in his pursuit of his goals,⁴⁷ and capable of punitive vengeance and appalling atrocities, as in his hanging of Cremaschi prisoners in 1159.⁴⁸ For Sismondi, all Germans were despotic, intemperate, driven by blood lust.⁴⁹ In contrast, Lombards, while occasionally capable of brutal reprisals, were motivated both by a love of independence,⁵⁰ and, bitter divisions notwithstanding, by compassion for their fellow Italians. The best example of the latter comes in Sismondi’s description of the aftermath of Frederick’s destruction of Milan in 1162: as the ‘émigrés milanais’ wandered from city to city, they encountered no crowing from their former enemies, who instead honoured their bravery and welcomed them at their tables.⁵¹

Sismondi was aware that such solidarity and sympathy did not endure. Even at the high point of resistance to Frederick – during the so-called League of Verona and in the decade after the formation of the Lombard League at Pontida in 1167 – there was plenty of support for the imperial cause and mutual jealousy between cities. During the League of Verona several cities rallied to the imperial cause, even though, according to Sismondi, Frederick never had much faith in Lombard troops.⁵² Sismondi makes it clear, too, that adherence to the Lombard League was often half-hearted and certainly never universal. The Lodigiani long resisted the entreaties of their former allies, the Cremonesi, to join; ultimately, they were persuaded only by military force.⁵³ Other cities proved even more

⁴⁴ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 91.

⁴⁵ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 46. For Frederick’s hatred of republicanism, see also p. 67.

⁴⁶ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 137.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Sismondi’s explanation of Frederick’s preference for Pavia over Milan. Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 52. For Frederick’s awareness of how divide and rule could be exploited effectively, see Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 151.

⁴⁸ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 111.

⁴⁹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Sismondi stresses that the feudal aristocracy did not share this republican love of liberty.

⁵¹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 132.

⁵² Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 146–7.

⁵³ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 154–7.

reluctant to enlist: Novara and Como only adhered in 1168 after Frederick's retreat to Germany.⁵⁴ The Marquis of Monferrat and Pavia never wavered from the imperial cause.⁵⁵ And even before Frederick's defeat in 1176, defections began:⁵⁶ at Legnano the Comaschi perished alongside Frederick's Germans.⁵⁷ Others defected to Frederick's camp during subsequent peace negotiations. In every city there were pro-imperial factions 'surtout parmi les gentilshommes'. For Sismondi such divisions in the face of foreign invasion were far from edifying. He was especially quick to condemn those nobles and gentleman who ingratiated themselves with the emperor after the Peace of Constance, attributing their motives to the fact that 'la vanité, l'ambition, l'avarice n'étoient complètement satisfaites que par les faveurs de la cour.' But he also attributed the departure of many *comuni* to a reawakening of 'les anciennes jalousies de ville à ville':⁵⁸ municipal hatred and resentment dogged Italian history.

Betraying his Swiss origins, Sismondi despaired of the squandered opportunity to bring union to the independent *comuni*: 'C'étoit un moment important [...] où l'Italie pouvoit établir une république federative: malheureusement il fut perdu [...]'. The *comuni* failed to take advantage of the unity generated by a common foe to form something more durable.⁵⁹ In perhaps the most important passage in the *Républiques italiennes*, Sismondi praised the virtues of 'les petites républiques', while stressing the necessity of forming 'un gouvernement fédératif'. The small republic conditioned a man's entire life, 'le berceau de votre enfance' but also 'l'état entire, dont vous pouvez partager a souveraineté avec vos concitoyens'. Yet just as such a republic provided the perfect arena for each man to become 'ce que l'homme peut être',⁶⁰ so too, within a confederation, each small republic had the chance to deploy 'a son tour toute l'énergie dont il est capable'. The fundamental virtue of such confederations lay in the contrast between their complete ineffectiveness as expansionists, and their ability to defend their own sovereignty.⁶¹ For Sismondi the tragedy was that the love of liberty, which had permeated the Lombard resistance to Barbarossa, had not led to the creation of a federation after Legnano: '[...] avec une constitution fédérative, l'Italie seroit demeurée libre, et ses portes n'auroient pas été toujours ouvertes à tous les conquérans qui se jouent du bonheur des peuples'.⁶² Thus 'la longue lutte pour l'établissement de la liberté italienne', which had resulted

⁵⁴ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 169.

⁵⁵ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 170, 174.

⁵⁶ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 183–4, 216.

⁵⁷ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 207–9.

⁵⁸ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 212–14.

⁵⁹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 174.

⁶¹ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 175.

⁶² Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 176.

in the Peace of Constance of 1183, failed to create a lasting settlement in which the republics could flourish, free from foreign intervention. Instead, northern and central Italy sank once more into ‘[l]es dissensions civiles, les rivalités entre les états voisins’, while ‘l’autorité nationale fut usurpée par une noblesse turbulente, ou par les tyrans sanguinaires.’⁶³

Leo

Sismondi’s work set the parameters for discussion of the Lombard League and its (failed) role in the formation of common political institutions and identity. One historian who responded from very different political and national perspectives was Heinrich Leo. Leo does not easily bear classification: a youthful nationalist supporter of Father Jahn; a sometime disciple of Hegel (who eventually distanced himself from his friend’s ideas); a leading pietist thinker (who nonetheless sought rapprochement between Catholics and Protestants); a member, like Bismarck, of the Gerlach brothers’ circle; and a brilliant, if occasionally vitriolic, spokesman for Prussian conservative opinion. Above all he is perhaps best known as a damning critic of Ranke.⁶⁴ Leo’s work would ultimately range widely across European history, but he was by training both a medievalist and an Italian specialist (his 1820 doctoral dissertation had been entitled *Über die Verfassung der freyen lombardischen Städte im Mittelalter*, his habilitation of 1824, *Entwicklung und Verfassung der lombardische Städte bis zur Ankunft Kaiser Friedrichs I. in Italien*). Although his strengths were stylistic and philological, Leo also knew the available sources on twelfth-century Lombardy extremely well.⁶⁵

Leo’s treatment of the *Lega Lombarda* is based on a much more nuanced understanding than Sismondi’s. The Prussian eschewed anecdote, on which Sismondi, despite his grand methodological claims, was so dependent.⁶⁶ Moreover, for all Sismondi’s protestations that national character was essentially a product of government, his work was underpinned by a powerful sense of innate differences between Italians and Germans. Leo, ostensibly much readier to attribute fundamental characteristics to the two ‘nations’, stressed that twelfth-century Italy could only be understood in terms of the competing interests of individuals, cities, classes and nations. At the collective level,

⁶³ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, pp. 233–4.

⁶⁴ For an account of Leo’s clash with Ranke, see A. Grafton, *The Footnote: A curious history* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 65–7.

⁶⁵ On Leo’s career, see C. Freiherr von Maltzahn, *Heinrich Leo (1799–1878). Ein politisches Gelehrtenleben zwischen romantischen Konservatismus und Realpolitik* (Göttingen, 1979); and P. Krägelin, *Heinrich Leo: Sein Leben und die Entwicklung seiner religiösen, politischen, und historischen Anschauungen bis zur Höhe seines Mannesalters (1799–1844)* (Leipzig, 1908).

⁶⁶ Leo, *Italien*, p. 60.

interests did not reflect inherent characteristics, but were shaped by economic considerations, by the power of ideas, and through the evolution of law and institutions. Leo's sensitivity to these influences made him far less essentialist than the Genevan.

The importance Leo attached to ideology echoed his concerns with recent and contemporary politics. Thus, he saw the horror of Frederick's wars in Italy as stemming not from an incompatibility between Italian and German, but from the different ideological perspectives that they represented. Making an implicit comparison with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Leo saw the conflict as rooted in 'geistige Interessen'. Because of this the wars lost their defensive character and became brutal ideological crusades. The conflicts, thus, pitched 'die Deutschen', reluctant to renounce rights acquired in earlier times, against 'Italien' (note that he refers to the single nation), which, with its new flourishing intellectual and political life, would not quietly accept the domination of an alien German knight.⁶⁷ According to Leo, Barbarossa fought for the honour of his name and imperial rights, while the Milanese fought for their freedom and independence, and to prevent the destruction of distinctively Italian ways.⁶⁸ Such an interpretation is not entirely different from that of Sismondi. Yet, unlike Sismondi, Leo refused to adopt the dichotomy between civilized Italians and barbarian, domineering Germans. This was particularly marked when he dealt with the character of Frederick, and with the horrors of war.

Leo's Frederick is a complex figure, initially tentative in Italian affairs, and never – even after the Peace of Constance – fully comprehending them. Indeed, Leo presented Frederick's first trip to Italy as an attempt to get to grips with regional politics rather than to assert imperial claims.⁶⁹ Leo portrayed Frederick's Italian policies as profoundly handicapped by his fundamental 'Fremdigkeit'.⁷⁰ In addition, his upbringing equipped him with a completely distorted notion of his role as Emperor: 'Friedrich hatte von seiner kaiserlichen Würde und von seinem kaiserlichem Berufe eine durchaus phantastische Vorstellung.'⁷¹ Dangerously, Frederick looked to imperial precedent – to Charlemagne, to the ancient Roman emperors, to the Christian hero Constantine, and to the great law-giver Justinian – to legitimate the 'Herrlichkeit' to which he aspired over Italy.⁷² But in doing so, he placed himself not only in opposition to Italian mores and traditions,⁷³ but also, paradoxically given his appeal to historical precedent,

⁶⁷ Leo, *Italien*, p. 68.

⁶⁸ Leo, *Italien*, p. 68.

⁶⁹ Leo, *Italien*, p. 51. For Frederick's inability after 1177 to understand the failure of his plans, see Leo, *Italien*, p. 113.

⁷⁰ Leo, *Italien*, p. 52.

⁷¹ Leo, *Italien*, p. 54.

⁷² Leo, *Italien*, p. 54.

⁷³ Leo, *Italien*, pp. 53–4.

against the organic and rooted institutions of Italy: the emperor himself became the 'revolutionary'.⁷⁴ It is not clear whether Leo had contemporary politics in mind when he made this judgement. Was he condemning Habsburg domination of the German Confederation, or attacking the recently defeated Napoleonic imperium? What is clear is that Leo saw the emperor in Italy as an interloper, an outsider who would never appreciate the social or political nature of the peninsula: ultimately because of this failure – and here it is hard to believe that Leo was not thinking of Napoleonic parallels – Frederick could not hope to impose his imperial will 'ohne fürchterlichste Gewaltsamkeit'.⁷⁵

Leo never sought to whitewash the emperor's character, and frequently highlighted Frederick's pragmatic brutality.⁷⁶ But he did not demonise the emperor. Instead, he relativized Frederick's actions: they reflected the nature of the conflict, the spirit of the times. For example, in razing Milan after its surrender in 1162, Frederick simply treated the Milanese as they had treated the vanquished Lodigiani in 1111.⁷⁷ Leo's Frederick also changed with time: over a quarter of a century of reverses turned the stubborn, youthful warrior into a softer, wiser ruler.⁷⁸ What Leo did refuse to countenance was that Germans were intrinsically brutal. It was the Milanese, fighting desperately for freedom and a way of life, who brought cruelty and deviousness to waging war. The Prussian historian explicitly argued that Milanese conduct obliged Frederick's troops to jettison their chivalrous code, to start fighting like their Italian enemies: at the siege of Crema in 1159, both sides took the scalps of their enemies, like 'Irokesen'.⁷⁹

Leo was much less tolerant of imperial administrative practices than of military atrocities. Like Sismondi, he was vitriolic in his denunciation of the vicars appointed to run the Italian cities. Both historians, identified the establishment of imperial *podestà* as the most pernicious consequence of the Diet of Roncaglia. Bloodsucking agents of imperial authority, Leo attacked them as completely ignorant of local custom and tradition. Through the *podestà*, Frederick contrived to squander the goodwill he had established in much of Lombardy by taming Milan's domineering ambitions. Instead, he replaced Milan's widely loathed hegemony with an even more widely hated administrative machinery. The *podestà* displayed utter contempt for the people they governed: the *comuni* were inhabited by cheats and liars, to be punished for past insolence to Italian nobles and German lords alike. Such stereotyping meant Lombards could never hope to receive justice at the hands of imperial

⁷⁴ Leo, *Italien*, p. 55.

⁷⁵ Leo, *Italien*, p. 54.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Leo, *Italien*, p. 92.

⁷⁷ Leo, *Italien*, p. 71. For Frederick's comparable razing of Crema, see Leo, *Italien*, p. 69.

⁷⁸ Leo, *Italien*, p. 103.

⁷⁹ Leo, *Italien*, p. 69. Leo does not state who initiated the vicious conduct at Crema; Sismondi squarely blames Frederick. *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 111.

servants. Meanwhile, Frederick failed to appreciate that Italian and German subjects required different institutions and laws.⁸⁰ This meant that there could be no improvement in imperial government: even when an individual *podestà* was dismissed or transferred, 'die Personen wechselten, das System blieb.'⁸¹ Sismondi judged the system 'fatale à la liberté';⁸² for Leo, the institutional and legal legacy of Roncaglia was more disastrous for Frederick than for the Italians since it drove the latter into the republican camp or the arms of Alexander III.⁸³ alien tyranny generated a renewed spirit of independence, symbolized in the Pontida oath to perish rather than live dishonourably.⁸⁴ In arguing this, Leo was not supporting Italian nationhood, but revealing his distinctively German, romantic conservatism, suspicious of rationalized legal codes and bureaucracy: law and institutions functioned when organic, when they evolved over time to suit a particular community; they were not to be imposed from above by a Barbarossa, or a Bonaparte, or even a Joseph II.

Leo drew several lessons from the conflict between the *comuni* and Frederick. Like all serious historians of twelfth-century Italy, he was fully aware of the political divisions and fissures that marked Italian politics. He also recognized that, for all the glory surrounding the League, its cohesion was underpinned by military force rather than principle: Leo, like Sismondi, stressed that adherence of the strategically significant Lodi was achieved by starving the population into submission.⁸⁵ There was no spirit of brotherhood here. As Frederick recognized when he retreated beyond the Alps, intending to consolidate his power in Germany, the longer the League lasted, the more it would fragment.⁸⁶ In Leo's *Geschichte von Italien*, the Italian cities' capacity for mutual hostility was matched only by the hatred between, and even within, classes.⁸⁷

While Leo's account repeatedly stressed the tensions and divisions among Italians, this was not its main message. The pivotal ideas underlying his observations were twofold. First, for an empire to be successful it had to adapt its patterns of government to the traditions, laws and customs of any subject or conquered land. Frederick antagonized Lombardy by expecting its people to behave as if they were Germans. Only when he accepted Lombard privileges at the Peace of Constance did he secure any widespread recognition.⁸⁸ Second,

⁸⁰ Leo, *Italien*, pp. 74–6.

⁸¹ Leo, *Italien*, p. 76.

⁸² Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 100.

⁸³ Leo, *Italien*, p. 76.

⁸⁴ Leo, *Italien*, p. 91.

⁸⁵ Leo, *Italien*, p. 91.

⁸⁶ Leo, *Italien*, p. 93.

⁸⁷ Leo, *Italien*, p. 47. On the problems caused, e.g., by conflict between aristocratic clans within Venice, see p. 94.

⁸⁸ Leo, *Italien*, p. 113.

that trade is the key to independence. Frederick catastrophically misjudged the nature of the Italian 'nation' in trying to crush resistance purely militarily. Even though the emperor may have *sensed* that trade and prosperity underpinned Italian aspirations for freer political institutions, he never fully grasped that such a people could not be defeated through force alone. Only by re-channelling global trade could Frederick hope to destroy Italian resistance. As long as a 'Volk' possessed superiority in 'Handel und Bildung', it could never be dominated: short-term success on the battlefield and ephemeral subjugation was all that could be achieved in the face of the 'goldene Bach des Handels'.⁸⁹ Sismondi had argued that 'l'amour per la liberté' was the key 'arme puissante contre le despotisme': for the Genevan this was why the rule of the Duke of Austria, Phillip II and George III had been overthrown by the Swiss, Dutch and Americans.⁹⁰ For Leo it was economics and the power of commerce.⁹¹ It is tempting to speculate that Leo's position prefigured Prussia's bid for economic dominance in the German Confederation through the *Zollverein*.

Cattaneo and Balbo

Cattaneo was the greatest thinker of nineteenth-century Italy. A polymath and rigorous empiricist, Cattaneo was a democratic federalist, who combined a prominent role in the Milanese 1848 revolution, with a surprising nostalgia for the rule of Maria Theresia. His *Notizie naturali e civili su la Lombardia* was written on the occasion of the sixth Congresso degli scienziati italiani, held in Milan in September 1844. In this work he devoted only a few pages of highly impressionistic prose to Barbarossa's Italy. In his rapid dash through events, Cattaneo made no explicitly republican or anti-imperial statements comparable to those in Sismondi or Leo: in Habsburg Lombardy-Venetia authors could not forget the censors. Despite this, it is possible to tease out the lessons Cattaneo drew from the episode. The city was always the key theme in Cattaneo's reflections on the Middle Ages.⁹² Never hiding the conflict between Lombard *comuni*,⁹³ he highlighted their clash with the emperor. Cattaneo could not dwell on the evils of Frederick, but he did hint at his fundamental barbarism in other

⁸⁹ Leo, *Italien*, p. 114.

⁹⁰ Sismondi, *Républiques italiennes*, vol. II, p. 176.

⁹¹ Leo made no reference to either the Swiss or the American colonies, but drew the identical parallel between the Lombard League and the Dutch Revolt, *Italien*, p. 114.

⁹² P. Schiera, 'Sviluppo delle scienze sociali e studio del medioevo nell'Ottocento', in *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 100 (1995–96): *Studi medievali e immagine del medioevo fra ottocento e novecento* (Rome: 1997), pp. 65–108, here p. 87. See also M. Thom, 'City and language in the thought of Carlo Cattaneo', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 5 (2001), 1–21.

⁹³ See, e.g., Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 229.

ways. For example, when describing the siege and destruction of Milan,⁹⁴ his language closely echoed his description a few pages earlier of the excesses of the Goths, pointedly hinting at highlighting similarities between twelfth-century Germans and fifth- and sixth-century barbarians.⁹⁵ In its breathless narrative, Cattaneo's text repeatedly contrasted the strength of Frederick's forces with the bravery and resolve of the ultimately triumphant Italian cities.⁹⁶

But if his story of conflict with Frederick is one of success against the odds, there is another subtext to Cattaneo's account. Like Sismondi, Cattaneo rejoiced in the free city as a unit of political, economic and social organization.⁹⁷ Cattaneo echoed Sismondi too in his passionate belief in the importance of martial values for the generation of virtue:

L'uso delle armi ravviva il senso dell'onore [...]; l'onore genera tutte le virtù; gli uomini sentono di poter compiere un pensiero; e hanno l'audacia di concepirlo; le menti aspirano a tutto ciò ch'è bello e grande.⁹⁸

With shades of Machiavelli, Cattaneo argued that it was not, as many suggested, the crusades that were the key to the 'risurgimento europeo'; the revival arose from clashes between cities, leading in turn to the foundation of citizen armies.⁹⁹ Anyone who saw the eleventh- and twelfth-century conflict between Lombard *comuni* as weakening Italy missed the point. 'Si direbbe che queste città inferocite corrano all loro distruzione; eppure, fra quelle battaglie il popolo cresce; fra quelle predazioni si svolge un'insolita prosperità.'¹⁰⁰ The wars with the Emperor equally gave birth to new municipal glory and prosperity: 'Così dal seno della distruzione surgevano più forti e più belle, Milano, Crema, Como, Asti e Tortona [...].'¹⁰¹ And, in a typical coda to his observations on the impact of war, Cattaneo – who was an expert on agriculture, communications and irrigation – added that the resurgence of the Lombard cities was accompanied by a growing prosperity in the surrounding countryside based largely on canal construction.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 230.

⁹⁵ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, pp. 216 and 230.

⁹⁶ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, pp. 230–1.

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Cattaneo's comments on Alessandria. Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 232.

⁹⁸ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 225. Sebastiano Timpanaro has highlighted the tension in Cattaneo between defence of the individual city as 'patria', and a faith in cultural and political unity. See S. Timpanaro, *Classicismo e illuminismo nell'Ottocento italiano* (Pisa, 1965), pp. 269, 374–5. See also Thom, 'City and Language', pp. 4–5 for a critique of Timpanaro's analysis.

⁹⁹ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 226.

¹⁰⁰ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 228.

¹⁰¹ Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 231.

¹⁰² Cattaneo, *Scritti*, p. 232.

Balbo's approach was a good deal more detailed than that of Cattaneo. This is unsurprising given that he was a vastly more committed medievalist.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, despite his encyclopaedic knowledge of the period,¹⁰⁴ Balbo made no effort to suggest impartiality. He wrote with the clearest patriotic agenda. Unlike Sismondi and Cattaneo, Balbo could see no virtue in conflict between fellow Italians. While, in *Le Speranze d'Italia*, he recognized that modern Italy was not yet ready for a single, united state, he despaired of the discord that characterized Italy's past. Mediaeval Italy had been marred not only by endemic conflict between cities but also within them. These discords had prevented Italy from rising to 'la grande occasione nazionale'. Mutual jealousies perverted the minds of Italians, and 'le menti pervertite non sono più bastanti alle dure imprese d'indipendenza'.¹⁰⁵

Balbo's monarchism permitted no respect for Sismondi's 'petites républiques' as cradles of liberty, schools for independence. On the contrary, Balbo held that Italy's medieval 'libertà' was 'servile', the origin of the humiliation, vice and the almost total insignificance of the country from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹⁰⁶ Italy divided was vulnerable to foreign domination, and for Balbo it was an immutable historical truth that any foreign government 'quantunque buono' is always worse for a country than 'uno nazionale, quantunque pessimo'.¹⁰⁷ Balbo's text makes it clear that he recognized Barbarossa's abilities as a statesman and military leader,¹⁰⁸ but he utterly condemned the presence of the loathed 'tedeschi' in Italy. Writing in a Piedmont, which was beginning openly to challenge Habsburg hegemony in Italy, Balbo had no qualms about adopting an outspokenly anti-imperial agenda.

In the *Sommario* the finest moment in the struggle with Frederick lay in the victory at Legnano.¹⁰⁹ Otherwise for Balbo the League was a missed opportunity. Unlike Sismondi who bemoaned the failure to establish a confederation of republics, Balbo felt it was the chance to effect independence from foreign rule that was lost. The Peace of Venice of 1183 may have guaranteed cities' freedoms, may have been 'utile, anche progressivo', but it was also shameful. Italians had lost the chance to vanquish an enemy, which, as Balbo observed

¹⁰³ The seriousness of Balbo's medieval interests is testified to by his translation of Leo's *Entwicklung und Verfassung der lombardische Städte*. See F. Cardini, 'Federico Barbarossa e il romanticismo italiano', in Elze and Schiera (eds), *Il Medioevo nell'ottocento in Italia e Germania*, pp. 83–126, here p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., the comments of his friend and cousin, d'Azeglio. *Epistolario*, vol. II, p. 234.

¹⁰⁵ Balbo, *Sommario*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁶ Balbo, *Sommario*, pp. 168–9.

¹⁰⁷ Balbo, *Sommario*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ Balbo, *Sommario*, pp. 186–7.

¹⁰⁹ Balbo, *Sommario*, p. 186.

in the 1850 edition of his work, would not come again for 665 years.¹¹⁰ For Balbo the lessons were horribly clear: ‘Chi non sa portar armi in mano, porti catene, e stia zitto.’¹¹¹

Voigt

In 1818, Johannes Voigt, Professor of History and archivist at Königsberg, published his *Geschichte des Lombarden-Bundes*.¹¹² The work was not originally intended as a discrete study of Frederick’s Italian politics, but as part of larger project celebrating the whole Hohenstaufen dynasty. But in concentrating first on the struggle between the Lombard League and Barbarossa, Voigt had a clear goal: to use Italian history to warn Germany of potential disaster. Voigt believed he was writing in the most intellectually exciting period since that of Luther: the recent liberation of Germany from Napoleonic domination, one of the greatest events in German history, opened up new possibilities for debate about ‘Vaterland, Freiheit, Verfassung und Bundeswesen’.¹¹³ The parallels between Germany’s patriotic struggle during the Wars of Liberation, and those of the League were obvious. Voigt wanted to tell the story of the latter as a cautionary tale of a squandered opportunity.¹¹⁴ It was up to modern Germans to avoid the mistakes of the past. A common enemy brought men together ‘im Brüder-Bunde’. If, with peace, they lost sight of that common cause, they risked losing ‘die Feuergluth der Vaterlandsliebe’.¹¹⁵ Voigt called on Germans to retain the spirit of 1813.

Voigt’s aims left him in an awkward position. On the one hand, he wanted to celebrate Frederick Barbarossa as a member of a heroic German dynasty. On the other hand, he wanted to demonstrate how resisting an invader could unite a fragmented people. However, Voigt knew that many readers would readily equate Barbarossa with Napoleon. If he portrayed Frederick as a cruel and overweening imperialist, trespassing beyond the frontiers of his nation, it would undermine his nationalist hymn of praise to the Hohenstaufen; if he sought to legitimate Frederick’s actions, then he ran the risk of acting as an apologist for the recently defeated Napoleon. One way Voigt avoided too close an association between the his hero and Napoleon, was never actually naming the French emperor.¹¹⁶ At the same time, while his treatment of Frederick was

¹¹⁰ Balbo, *Sommario*, p. 188.

¹¹¹ Balbo, *Sommario*, p. 353.

¹¹² Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. xii.

¹¹³ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, pp. v–vi.

¹¹⁴ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. vii.

¹¹⁵ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. x.

¹¹⁶ There was no need to mention Napoleon: ‘Theories of conquest elaborated under the Restoration were all to some degree meditations upon Napoleon [...]’ M. Thom,

often sympathetic, he did not attempt to hide the failings he encountered in the sources. (In the spirit of Ranke *avant la lettre*, Voigt had announced in his preface: 'Die Quellen sind meine fast einzige Führer gewesen.'¹¹⁷) The Frederick portrayed in Voigt's narrative was certainly not the mythical hero celebrated in Friedrich Rückert's poem 'Barabarossa'. Motivated by an overwhelming urge to dominate upper Italy,¹¹⁸ Voigt's Emperor could be both gentle and forgiving towards his defeated enemies,¹¹⁹ and capable of cutting off the hands of prisoners and hanging hostages.¹²⁰ Barbarossa's longing to be loved,¹²¹ and his optimism that Italians might retain some affection for him,¹²² was tempered by his fierce desire for vengeance when slighted.¹²³ He erred principally both in entrusting the rule of his Italian lands to rapacious and arbitrary deputies,¹²⁴ and in his harsh treatment of those who then rebelled against them.¹²⁵

Voigt's brave and reasonably sympathetic Frederick was remarked upon by his translator in the preface to the 1848 Italian edition. So positive a picture of the emperor would not appeal to Italian readers, since in Italy Barbarossa was principally remembered for the destruction, depredations, sacrilege and war he visited upon the peninsula.¹²⁶ Nor was it likely that Italians would be convinced by Voigt's efforts to transfer blame for tyrannical government from the emperor to his lieutenants, or be especially tolerant of the German's sectarian digs at the Catholic Church.¹²⁷ Context can radically transform meaning: despite the remarkably precise rendering of German into Italian, Voigt's book underwent a dramatic metamorphosis when published for an Italian audience involved in a struggle for independence from Habsburg rule. Immediately after the title page, the Italian edition boasts a dedication to the heroes of the 'cinque giornate', whose courageous actions 'emularono e superarono le prove di Legnano'.¹²⁸ No longer was the book a call to Germans to maintain the bonds forged in the Wars of Liberation. Now it was both an inspirational

"'Liberty and truth" or "sovereignty of reason": Carlo Cattaneo and the place of politics in the modern world', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6 (2001), 178–94, here 179.

¹¹⁷ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. xi.

¹¹⁸ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 16.

¹²⁰ See, e.g., Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, pp. 25, 148.

¹²¹ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 52.

¹²² Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 99.

¹²³ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 141.

¹²⁴ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, pp. 41, 73–4, 92. Voigt was anxious to stress that some of Frederick's underlings were far from tyrannical in their conduct.

¹²⁵ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 92.

¹²⁶ G. Voigt, *Storia della Lega Lombarda e delle sue guerre coll'Imperatore Federico I* (Milan, 1848), p. vii.

¹²⁷ G. Voigt, *Storia*, p. vi.

¹²⁸ G. Voigt, *Storia*, pp. ii–iii.

tale and a warning to *Italians* to work together against foreign exploitation and military domination. From the perspective of Italian patriotism, aristocratic 'traditori della patria' had become the equivalent of collaborators with Radetzky.¹²⁹ More importantly, the need for Italian cities to act in union had become ever more pressing: the self-interested Venetian attack on Ancona;¹³⁰ the defection of Cremona and Tortona to the imperial camp;¹³¹ the fractious relationship between Genoa and Pisa; the constant ill-will between Milan and Pavia... these all assumed a new importance as Habsburg imperial forces regrouped to counter-attack against Milan, and when the only hope for Italy's revolutionary regimes appeared to be a rejection of traditional municipal suspicions. Indeed, to readers of the Italian edition, it would have been evident that the local rivalries, which had dramatically resurfaced following the turmoil of spring 1848, posed potentially as great a threat to the new order as did Radetzky's whitecoats.

Voigt had stressed that Italians who had come together to repel an outsider, fragmented as soon as the enemy withdrew, leaving themselves once again vulnerable.¹³² Indeed, for Voigt and his translator, the danger of losing solidarity even *after* victory had been achieved was enormous.¹³³ What for Voigt was a reflection on the failure of Germans to capitalize on the aftermath of Leipzig, became for his translator a warning of what could happen to a future Italy in the event of the successful expulsion of the Habsburgs. If Italians did not heed the lessons of the League and the Peace of Constance, they would forever find themselves prey to foreign rule.

Tosti

For nineteenth-century Italians, the task of seeking historical inspiration and precedent for political union, or identifying and exploiting national epics or foundation myths to underpin the process of the Risorgimento was problematic.¹³⁴ It is not surprising that in 1848, faced with a common struggle against the Habsburgs in northern Italy, the Lombard League proved a particularly alluring model.¹³⁵ It was in this climate that Don Luigi Tosti, published the

¹²⁹ See, e.g., the case of the Trevisan nobles in 1178. G. Voigt, *Storia*, p. 197. See Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 327 for original German.

¹³⁰ Voigt, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 128–9, Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, pp. 211–12.

¹³¹ Voigt, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 169, Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 279.

¹³² Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 297. See also pp. 326, 357.

¹³³ Voigt, *Lombarden-Bundes*, p. 278.

¹³⁴ D. Laven, 'Italy', in T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds), *What is a Nation? Europe 1789–1914* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 255–71.

¹³⁵ For an account of this event. see F. Cusani, C. Cantù and D. Locatelli-Spinelli, *La Lega Lombarda giurata in Pontida il 7 aprile 1167, ivi festeggiata il 7 maggio 1848. Descrizione*

most aggressively patriotic account of the League that we have yet encountered. Tosti was fully aware that the events of the twelfth-century struggle had particular contemporary resonance.¹³⁶ He was also completely convinced of the power of history to mobilize and convert: 'Anche la Storia è un Vangelo', he announced to the Pope in his opening dedication.¹³⁷ Tosti was no straightforward neo-Guelf, uncritically looking to the Papacy to resolve the twin problems of foreign domination and domestic division. (Indeed, Tosti's dedication and appeal to Pius IX at the start of the book argued that the popes, as both temporal and spiritual princes, had to shoulder a share of responsibility for the history of Italy as one of suffering.) Instead, Tosti's book tried to suggest what part the Pope should play in the struggle against outside interference in Italy.¹³⁸

Tosti's volume eulogized Alexander III for giving 'vita nuova all'Italia ed alla Chiesa'.¹³⁹ But above all for Tosti, Alexander embodied patriotic virtue: his chief goal was 'Italiana indipendenza' and driving out 'uno indisciplinato e potentissimo Imperadore'.¹⁴⁰ It was in Alexander's unflinching resistance to outside intervention that his greatness lay. Hence his recognition by the Lombards as 'quasi un messo da Dio alla liberazione della loro patria':¹⁴¹ without him 'la Lombarda Lega non avrebbe avuto sangue nelle vene'.¹⁴² Tosti's paramount aim was to present Alexander III as a role model – both spiritual and patriotic – for Pius IX. By extolling Alexander III, Tosti hoped to attach Pius firmly to the struggle for national independence. In the face of Austria's threat to the new Italian order, the contemporary relevance needed no explication. In Tosti's account the touchstone of Alexander's pure and utterly patriotic position was that, even in a moment of crisis, he would never seek foreign aid for risk of 'contaminare la patria con altri forestieri'.¹⁴³ (This was a loaded point given the reliance of recent Popes on Austrian troops.) Tosti's message for Pius IX, whose support for the new order was already wavering by late April 1848 (symbolized by his repudiation of the war against Austria) was clear: Alexander III had made the altar of the fatherland and God one and the same; it was time for the 'Papa redentore' to do the same.¹⁴⁴

coi discorsi pronunciati dal Sacerdote Locatelli, Cesare. Cantù e Francesco Cusani (Milano, 1848).

¹³⁶ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 364.

¹³⁷ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 191.

¹³⁹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 249.

¹⁴⁰ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 191–2.

¹⁴¹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 205.

¹⁴² Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 245.

¹⁴³ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 285.

For Tosti, like the neo-Guelfs the Papacy was so important in large part because it offered the hope of unity in the face of foreign oppression. As with the other historians discussed, Tosti fully recognized the fierce hostility between Italy's cities, and the vulnerability engendered by such disunion. This was particularly clear in his treatment of the fate of Milan, which, of course, in 1848 had been the bravest of all Italian cities in its rejection of imperial Habsburg rule. Significantly, Tosti did not whitewash Milan's conduct. Never did he attempt to hide its systematically bullying expansionism, which would have led to its domination of all Lombardy had it not been for Frederick's intervention;¹⁴⁵ nor did Tosti conceal the widespread resentment felt for the major Lombard city amongst its neighbours, resentment which often drove them into the imperial camp.¹⁴⁶ Rather than glossing over problems caused by Milanese policy, Tosti adopted two strategies: he sought to legitimate Milan's ill-treatment of other Lombard cities; and he argued, echoing the likes of Sismondi and Cattaneo, even Muratori, that there was positive virtue in the resulting clashes. Ever the patriot, Tosti defended the Milanese's overweening attitude on the grounds that Milan alone was strong enough to serve as a genuine bastion against imperial ambitions and 'nordica petulanza' in upper Italy;¹⁴⁷ the city embodied both republican dreams, and hatred for Germans;¹⁴⁸ bearing the brunt of Frederick's assaults, it was Milan that would be remembered always as the 'principal sede della italiana libertà',¹⁴⁹ 'la rocca dell'Italiana indipendenza'.¹⁵⁰ This status – especially resonant given the *cinque giornate* – excused its arrogance.

Tosti's explanation of the value of municipal rivalry superficially added little to the ideas of other historians. He argued that war between the cities engendered military values, and forced on them the habit of making alliances (neither widespread qualities in 1848).¹⁵¹ Above all, Tosti saw such conflicts as a consequence of Italy's division into *comuni*; this he would not criticize. As he argued in his prologue, the republican city-state was the foundation of Italy's primacy, because it was the key manifestation of Italian individualism.¹⁵² Whether generating wealth, fostering learning and the arts, or making war and laws, republican cities were the true repositories of civilization, expressions of the way in which Italian individualism operated for the common good. If the cost was the fragmentation of Italy into separate – sometimes hostile – republics,

¹⁴⁵ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 86–7.

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 94, 123–4, 144, 165, 204, 222, 298.

¹⁴⁷ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 99, 137–40, 280.

¹⁴⁸ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 122, 140–1, 156–7, 162., 341.

¹⁴⁹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 217.

¹⁵⁰ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 221.

¹⁵¹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 86–7.

¹⁵² Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 12.

this was a price worth paying.¹⁵³ The League, however, demonstrated that such individualism need not prevent Italians from coming together; indeed, it actually represented the pinnacle of Italian individualism.¹⁵⁴ Precisely because it stemmed from individualism, rather than servile submission to a monarch, this expression of Italian unity was of greater worth, a form of ‘unità morale’ and not the crass ‘unità materiale’ imposed from above, the ‘bastarda unità’ of ‘popoli barbari’.¹⁵⁵ With echoes of Gioberti, Sismondi and Cattaneo, Tosti, by rhetorical sleight of hand, turned Italian weakness into a sign of moral superiority and higher civilization.¹⁵⁶ Significantly, Tosti failed to explain why Italians spectacularly failed to build on the successes of the League, except to remark that the great mistake of the *comuni* in the later Middle Ages had been to jettison their democratic traditions, and accept the rule of princes. This he vaguely attributed to collective moral failure, with no attempt to offer a reasoned, historical explanation.

Central to Tosti’s analysis was a belief in the fundamental superiority of Italians – especially citizens of the republics – to Germans.¹⁵⁷ This partly echoed Sismondi’s belief in the influence of forms of government, but Tosti clearly saw the forms of government as actually stemming from the inherent characteristics of different peoples: Germans were uncivilized, brutal aliens, ill-adapted even to the Italian climate.¹⁵⁸ Tosti did express some grudging admiration for Frederick’s himself, recognizing his martial prowess and cunning, although ridiculing his want of culture.¹⁵⁹ Following Sismondi, Tosti stressed Barbarossa’s overwhelming ambition to set himself at the head of a restored Roman Empire. The Emperor’s strategy for domination was based principally on force and exploitation of internal divisions,¹⁶⁰ but he also looked to law, displays of splendour, control of the Church to bolster his imperial ambitions.¹⁶¹ Tosti reserved some of his most spiteful judgements for the Italians who permitted the emperor to pursue these goals: he was scathing of churchmen who legitimated imperial power, attacked the feudal nobility’s preference for imperial rule, reviled the Pavesi for their loyalty to the emperor, and

¹⁵³ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁴ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 363–4.

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., Tosti’s discussion of contrasting national attitudes to bravery. Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 14, 16–18.

¹⁵⁸ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 96

¹⁵⁹ Tosti did identify moments of cowardice and an occasional propensity for flight in Frederick’s character. See, e.g., Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 210, 303, 337. On his bravery at Legnano, see Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 344.

¹⁶⁰ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 149.

¹⁶¹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 88–9.

rebuked all those who fought alongside Barbarossa.¹⁶² Tosti also condemned the maritime republics for valuing commercial gain above patriotism.¹⁶³ Yet if Italians sometimes facilitated Frederick's cynical policies,¹⁶⁴ Tosti's real villains were the emperor and his compatriots. Tosti held the emperor personally responsible for tyranny in Italy.¹⁶⁵ Yet the brutality and atrocities of 'il Tedesco' simply reflected his race: acts of the most vicious cruelty came naturally to Germans; their readiness in times of war to sack, loot, burn, hang and mutilate, was matched only by their capacity to misgovern, overtax and oppress during times of peace. Tosti directed particular spleen at Frederick's *podestà*, whom he portrayed as the most odious agents of imperial authority, embodiments of all that was worst about foreign rule.¹⁶⁶ Even Legnano was not sufficient to avenge their misrule.¹⁶⁷ Tosti's caricatured view of these officials closely echoed criticism unfairly levied against Habsburg bureaucrats in the Restoration period. What is most significant about Tosti's account of German wartime cruelty and peacetime tyranny is that he argued for their positive effect: it was because the Teutonic yoke was so hateful that Italians had united against Barbarossa; being in chains had taught Italians to love liberty.¹⁶⁸

For Tosti, rather than breaking the will of the *comuni*, German tyranny rekindled in the desire of Italians to 'mantenersi libere':¹⁶⁹ rather than submit to Germans, their republican values were tempered and sharpened.¹⁷⁰ Every act of resistance, even every battle lost, amounted to a 'revirilization' of Italians, affirming their unity in challenging the 'giogo tedesco'.¹⁷¹ The message for 1848 was clear. First, Italians could and should fight: 'la libertà si compra solo col sangue';¹⁷² 'esser degni di libertà, saperla comprare col sangue'.¹⁷³ Those who perished were 'vittime immolate sull'altare della patria';¹⁷⁴ each battle was a 'monumento eternale della italiana virtù'.¹⁷⁵ Second, and more importantly,

¹⁶² See, e.g., Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 103, 121, 144, 150, 165.

¹⁶³ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 308–9.

¹⁶⁴ On Frederick's policy of divide and rule, see, e.g., Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 91, 97, 147, 240, 251.

¹⁶⁵ For Tosti's attacks on Frederick's character, see Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 172, 194, 214, 237, 251–307.

¹⁶⁶ On atrocities, see especially Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 98, 119–20, 169, 215; on the *podestà*, see p. 227.

¹⁶⁷ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 227–32.

¹⁶⁸ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 225.

¹⁶⁹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 201.

¹⁷⁰ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 220.

¹⁷¹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 105.

¹⁷² Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 170.

¹⁷³ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 344.

¹⁷⁴ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 171.

¹⁷⁵ Tosti uses this phrase with regard to Legnano. Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 344.

the struggle with Barbarossa demonstrated that Italians could work *together* in pursuit of liberty. Legnano showed that the *comuni* 'sapessero transandare i materiali confine del municipio, per abbracciare nella unità del concetto nazionale la madre patria Italiana.'¹⁷⁶ The victory was not simply that of the Lombards over Barbarossa, but that of a republican ideal of unity over empire, a victory that obliged Italians to recognize the force needed 'a conservare il tesoro della libertà'.¹⁷⁷ But Tosti wanted to celebrate more than just the readiness of Italians from different cities to stand together heroically against the invader;¹⁷⁸ he also wished to show their capacity to work together when not under immediate threat. Consequently, he stressed the rapid reconstruction of Tortona,¹⁷⁹ and the rebuilding and refortification of Milan itself.¹⁸⁰ The legacy of the brave, but ultimately fruitless resistance at Crema or the brilliant victory at Legnano had been only in part 'la memoria di una virtù, che sola basterebbe a glorificare tutta una gente'.¹⁸¹ The problem with these military exploits was that ultimately they had not secured Italian independence: the rapid fragmentation and desertion from the League, and resurfacing of 'le gelosie municipali' even before the Peace of Constance, meant that Italy soon sank again into 'infamia'.¹⁸² Even if the Austrians were to be driven from Italy, it was paramount that modern Italians grasped the necessity of cooperation and recognized common interests; if they did not, they would be doomed to suffer the fate of their medieval ancestors.

Conclusion

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Lombard League served as a pivotal *lieu de mémoire* for Italian patriots. That it did so was *not* because it was an unproblematic rallying point – all the historians I have examined recognized and acknowledged that the episode actually highlighted the divisions and mutual hatred of Italians – but because there were so few periods in Italy's past to which they could appeal. While poets, novelists or librettists might focus on an individual episode – the oath of Pontida or the battle of Legnano – historians could not simply examine these in isolation. Historical context invariably revealed the propensity of Italians for mutual feuding rather than resisting outside domination. Yet at the same time, both Italian patriots and foreign scholars writing in the decades after Napoleon's defeat could find in

¹⁷⁶ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 346.

¹⁷⁷ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 347.

¹⁷⁸ See, e.g., Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 165.

¹⁷⁹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 107.

¹⁸⁰ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, pp. 286–7.

¹⁸¹ Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 176.

¹⁸² Tosti, *Lega Lombarda*, p. 149.

the Lombard League a laboratory for examining a rare example of a relatively successful confederation of small republics, or of the successful involvement of the Pope in Italian politics. In Italy, this took on special significance in the 1840s, following the impact of Gioberti's *Il Primato morale e civile degl'Italiani* (published in 1843), the election of Pius IX in 1846, and the outbreak of revolutions in 1848. Of course, any attempt to draw parallels between, on the one hand, the struggle of the Lombard League and Alexander III to overthrow the Hohenstaufen domination in northern Italy, and, on the other hand, that of Italian states and Pius IX against the Habsburgs was always far-fetched; by late April 1848, given the change in Pius's policy, such parallels were self-evidently absurd. Nevertheless, the League both offered a model and served as a warning that opportunities must not be squandered. Indeed, all the nineteenth-century historians I have examined here saw the League as a missed opportunity. Moreover, the conflict with Barbarossa also carried with it a very clear message: liberty would not be achieved without the spilling of blood. Since Machiavelli, Italians had argued that their want of martial virtues would sentence them to subjugation. Nineteenth-century historians of the League took up this theme with enthusiasm. And while the republican message withered after 1849, the need for Italians to learn once more to fight remained a commonplace of patriotic discourse. Indeed, what Italian patriots drew from the defeats of the Republics of Rome and Venice in 1849 was *not* a sense of republican virtue, but a pantheon of heroes to compare with those who had lost their lives fighting against Barbarossa. They had demonstrated once again that Italians could not only face death courageously, but that they could do so as patriots.

18

History of Civilization: Transnational or Post-Imperial? Some Iberian Perspectives (1870–1930)

Xosé-Manoel Núñez

The aim of this chapter is to examine the diverging approaches to Iberian and world history taken by some Portuguese and Spanish national historians of the late nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, who made an effort to elaborate on the Iberian-based concept of shared *civilization*. This was related to the attempts made by some intellectual currents on both sides of the border to overcome the mutual ignorance in which both nation-states had lived since the mid-seventeenth century by developing the concept of an Iberian union of states, which was to be based on a new form of relationship which would reconcile the separate claims for nationhood with the objectives of power politics, as well as integrate both their present and former colonies in a shared destiny, a kind of new community of fate.

Many contemporaries regarded these ideas as compensation for the progressive loss of status as colonial powers as the Iberian states entered the twentieth century. ‘Civilization’ appeared then as a grail-like term, which could help expand the narrow boundaries imposed by the master narratives of national history which had already been forged in both countries by the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, civilization was used as a historiographic tool to re-emphasize eurocentrism and to reconcile national independence within the Iberian context with a post-imperial dimension at world level, particularly in the Spanish case. Last but not least, reinventing the concept of Hispanic/Iberian civilization was about rewriting some of the main characters of the respective master narratives of romantic and liberal historiographies in Portugal and Spain. This was done by combining, in an eclectic way, methodological principles inspired by French positivism with idealist-oriented and organicist tenets adopted from German philosophy.

While the Iberian historians analysed here experienced a remarkable success in modernizing and ‘updating’ the way in which national history was written, their attempt radically to reformulate the prevailing interpretation of the past in Portugal and Spain met with more or less discrete failure. The same could

be said about their post-imperial bias, which was mostly rejected by national historiographers of the former colonies, particularly in the case of Spanish-speaking Latin America. However, their attempt to rewrite national history rested as one of the most brilliant and exceptional endeavours undertaken by Iberian historiography during the period considered.

Decadence, regeneration and Iberianism

The most influential historian on the Portuguese side, who made extensive use of the concept of Iberian civilization, was Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins (1845–1894). As a member of the so-called ‘intellectual generation of the 1870s’, together with writers such as the Proudhonian socialist Antero de Quental (1842–1891), the Republican Teófilo Braga (1843–1924) and José Maria Eça de Queiroz (1845–1900) among others, Oliveira Martins was characterized by a firm republican creed impregnated by the idea of social reform. His historiographical preference was for positivism combined with the maintenance of some idealist principles in his interpretation of national history. He aimed to provide new perspectives on the interpretation of Portugal’s past, which stressed liberal values such as freedom, progress and individual liberties whilst, at the same time, upholding Portugal’s historical and cultural distinctiveness. By so doing, republican historians, like Oliveira Martins, also maintained that democracy was not a foreign idea imported from France or Britain, and then transplanted on Portuguese soil. On the contrary, democracy was seen as a natural outcome of the values and distinctive peculiarities of Portuguese history since the Middle Ages, where a specific form of ‘Lusitanian pre-democracy’ was to be found. Human progress and the advancement of democracy were portrayed as being part and parcel of the fulfilment and evolution of Portuguese nationalism.¹

This approach became fairly evident in Oliveira Martins’s several books devoted to the interpretation of the national history of Portugal, such as *História de Portugal* [1879], *O Brazil e as Colónias Portuguesas* [1880] and *Portugal contemporâneo* [1881]. All of these made him the most representative historian in Portugal of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Oliveira Martins was close to socialist ideas during his youth, but from the 1870s onwards he increasingly detached himself from positivism and developed an idealist view of history, which was very influenced by his readings of Herder, Michelet, Proudhon, Schopenhauer and the main French representatives of social organicist thought. This idealism often contradicted his positivist method. Oliveira

¹ See F. Catroga, *História do republicanismo em Portugal. Da formação ao 5 de outubro de 1910*, vol. 2 (Coimbra, 1991), pp. 193–214, and F. Catroga, *Antero de Quental: História, socialismo, política* (Lisbon, 2001).

Martins firmly believed in the power of historical writing to educate citizens and to give moral lessons to his fellow countrymen.²

However, Oliveira Martins's most original study was his history of the whole of the Iberian Peninsula, or *História da Civilização Ibérica* [*A History of Iberian Civilization*, 1879].³ This work, which constituted the most ambitious attempt to write a transnational history of the Iberian peninsula, left some enduring traces in Portuguese and Spanish historiography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and became an object of admiration for twentieth-century Portuguese and, particularly, for Spanish historians. Some of Oliveira Martins's arguments were taken up again on the occasion of the so-called ultimatum crisis of January 1890, as Great Britain's diplomatic pressure forced Portugal to abandon its plans for establishing a link between the colonial territories of Angola and Mozambique. This frustrated the Portuguese project of achieving a kind of homogeneous 'Portuguese South Africa' which would equate Portugal's presence on the African continent with that enjoyed by France and Britain. This symbolic defeat was a real shock for most Portuguese intellectuals and presented them with the possibility of colonial failure. The weakness of diplomatic influence, military power and economic impetus of the metropolitan centre had become strikingly evident.

Portugal's diplomatic surrender to Britain seemed to confirm what had been outlined by Antero de Quental 19 years earlier. In his 1871 lecture 'Causes of the Decadence of the Peninsular Peoples in the Last Three Centuries', Antero argued that Portugal's loss of national prestige in the world began with the end of the Manueline period in the early sixteenth century, which was widely regarded as the highpoint of Portugal's development during the Middle Ages. The causes of decay had been both internal and external. The country was exhausted after having created a maritime empire, but the most decisive factor had been the imposition of a centralizing monarchy, a repressive Catholic Church, the disappearance of the young King Sebastião at the battle of El-Ksar el-Kebir in 1578, the occupation of Portugal by the Spanish King Philip II in 1580, and the 'Philippine period', which was seen as an obscure age of oppressive foreign rule. However, the restoration of national independence in 1640 had never been complete, and it had failed to restore the country's former glory. Portugal's ensuing dependence on Great Britain,

² On Oliveira Martins's relevance in Portuguese historiography, see P. Calafate (ed.), *Oliveira Martins* (Lisbon, 1991); as well as the deep analysis by F. Catroga, 'História e Ciências Sociais em Oliveira Martins', in L. Rei Torgal, J. Amado Mendes and F. Catroga (eds), *História da História em Portugal* (Lisbon, 1996), pp. 117–59; and some insights in C. Maurício, *A invenção de Oliveira Martins. Política, historiografia e identidade nacional no Portugal contemporâneo (1867–1960)* (Lisbon, 2005), pp. 19–40.

³ An English edition appeared for the first time in 1930: See A. H. Oliveira Martins, *A History of Iberian Civilization* (London, 1930).

seen as a guarantee against the fear of Spain, had proved to be ambivalent, since the British Empire could never tolerate the consolidation of a competing overseas empire and maintained Portugal in a subject position.⁴

According to several opinion leaders and journalists who represented a part of the cultural elite of the country, Portugal's dependency on British interests was in conflict with its own projects regarding the Lusitanian colonial empire. And, in fact, some demonstrations of solidarity with Spain followed the ultimatum crisis, because of the diplomatic support given to Lisbon by the neighbouring state. And, what was more striking, it was affirmed in several newspapers that Portugal's subjection to the Spanish monarchy in the past had been more benign than the present experience of British neo-imperialism.⁵ Thereafter, during the so-called 'Regeneration period', some influential voices demanded the reform of the structure of the Portuguese state, which was considered to be inefficient, premodern and dominated by a network of clientelistic politics manipulated by dominant elites. Many of them even proclaimed the necessity of coming to terms with the feared Iberian neighbour, that is, Spain, in order to rebuild a (con)federal unit, which, in its turn, would be powerful enough to expand overseas and maintain an ambitious empire. Oliveira Martins was among the most prominent intellectuals to uphold that opinion. Only days after the Ultimatum crisis he wrote that 'If the Iberian states were allies, the strong nations would be respectful of us.'⁶

A convinced republican federalist during his youth, and a sincere admirer of Spain, Oliveira Martins insisted on a closer relationship between the neighbouring Iberian nation-states. He spent several years in Andalusia during his youth (1870–74) and visited Spain several times afterwards, where he maintained regular contact with Spanish writers and historians. However, in spite of the fact that he has later been considered by many Spanish authors a strong defender of a republican federation between Spain and Portugal, Oliveira Martins never joined the *Iberianist* trend of political and intellectual thought. This was a current of nineteenth-century Portuguese and Spanish intellectual thought, which since the 1830s had raised the banner of Iberian union under the form of either a centralized monarchy or a federal republic. Although this tenet was merely advocated by a tiny minority of urban intellectuals, it enjoyed a remarkable continuity, and provoked sporadic reactions from the

⁴ A. de Quental, 'Causas da Decadência dos Povos Peninsulares nos Últimos Três Séculos', in J. Serrão (ed.), *Prosas Sócio-Políticas* (Lisbon, 1982), pp. 255–96.

⁵ See J. A. Rocamora, *El nacionalismo ibérico, 1792–1936* (Valladolid, 1994), pp. 119–22. For the diplomatic and political context during and after the Ultimatum crisis, see also N. S. Teixeira, *O Ultimatum inglês: Política externa e política interna no Portugal de 1890* (Lisbon, 1989).

⁶ J. P. Oliveira Martins, in *O Tempo*, 25 January 1890. See also P. Vázquez Cuesta, 'O amor sen acougo de Oliveira Martins a Espanha', *Grial* 113 (1992), 20–60.

most nationalist-oriented opinion leaders of Portuguese society. Proposals of Iberian union varied from imitating the German model of a customs union at the peninsular level to setting up a confederate Iberian republic, as well as to adopting a kind of 'mild' economic and literary federalism to including an Iberian confederation within a Herderian concept of a European confederation of nations.⁷ Oliveira Martins only supported establishing closer diplomatic and cultural ties between Spain and Portugal, without undermining the national character of each unit and the sovereignty of each state. During his whole life he continued to be a convinced Portuguese patriot, who nevertheless thought in Iberian terms because he considered that the consolidation of an Iberian alliance was the best way to maintain Portuguese independence and the country's overseas interests, thus detaching the country from the British sphere of influence. Towards the end of his life, Oliveira Martins was 'accused' by several of his fellow countrymen of being too 'Iberianist', but he consistently denied that and never questioned Portuguese national independence in the past. Moreover, the failure of the experience of the First Spanish Republic in 1873 had reinforced his scepticism towards federalism as a form of government to be applied to an 'Iberian state'.⁸

Consciousness of decadence was not only a Portuguese concern. A relatively similar experience was to take place in Spain eight years later, after the 1898 *fin-de-siècle* intellectual crisis that affected the Spanish public sphere, marked by the even harder reality of what was termed a colonial disaster. This was the loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines that followed the Spanish defeat in the short war against the United States. The loss of the last relics of the former empire was seen as the high point of a long-standing process of decadence which had roots in the mid-seventeenth century.⁹

In this context, some Spanish historians, inspired by the more modern historiographic currents of Europe, attempted to write a new national history. They were particularly influenced by French historical positivism and in particular, by historians such as François Guizot and his *Histoire générale de la Civilisation en France* (1830), Ernest Lavisse, Charles Seignobos, Charles-V. Langlois and Ernest Renan. Spanish historians also were influenced by the English historian Henry T. Buckle and his very influential work *History of Civilization in England* (1857–61, 2 vols), in spite of Buckle's endorsement of the 'Black Legend' and

⁷ See F. Catroga, 'Nacionalismo e ecumenismo: A questão ibérica na segunda metade do século XIX', *Cultura História e Filosofia*, IV (1985), 419–83, as well as Rocamora, *El nacionalismo*, pp. 114–18.

⁸ See S. Campos Matos, 'Una perspectiva singular y transnacional sobre España y Portugal', introduction to A. H. Oliveira Marques, *Historia de la Civilización Ibérica* (Pamplona, 2009), pp. IX–LXXXIX. I thank Professor Campos Matos for giving me access to the unpublished version of his essay.

⁹ See S. Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford, 1997).

his negative view of Spain's past. They also received some German inputs, particularly from the historiographic works of Ranke's pupils, who stressed the 'internal' history of the nations as something which went beyond the sphere of politics. Following the German philosopher Karl C. F. Krause, who was widely read in Spain, and Albert E. F. Schäffle's social scientific work, Spanish liberal historians of the late nineteenth century, like Francisco Giner de los Ríos and Gumersindo de Azcárate, placed a particular emphasis on the analysis of the 'inner history' of the nations, which was considered to be shaped by the ideas and 'spirit' generated by their society.¹⁰

One of the best known examples of this school of history writing was Rafael Altamira Crevea (1866–1951), a regenerationist and republican-oriented writer and historian who also played an important role in Spanish foreign policy, first as Spanish propagandist of the League of Nations in the period following the First World War (1918–20), and then as a member of the Court of International Law in The Hague throughout the 1920s. Altamira's contribution to Spanish historiography was twofold. On the one hand, he turned his eyes toward a 'patriotic' vision of History which was aimed at methodologically overcoming traditional political history. On the other hand, Altamira proceeded to elaborate on an (allegedly) *transnational* approach which inherited some insights from historians like Oliveira Martins, though it does not seem that the Portuguese historian has directly influenced him. In accordance with this second tenet, Altamira undertook the construction of a *global* historical concept of Iberia – which comprised the former overseas colonies of both Spain and Portugal. This was endorsed by the writers of the so-called '98 Generation' in Spain.¹¹

This new national history proclaimed the relevance of the Spanish contribution to the history of the world in positive terms. Spain's footprint in the past was not primarily seen in its imperial legacy, but in its supposed contribution to a set of general humanitarian and liberal values, including the advancement of peace, individual freedom and scientific progress, which peaked in the teleological end of historical evolution: liberal democracy.¹² This could be interpreted as the geopolitical search for a future in the past. The writing of history became an instrument to reinvent a new legitimacy for the present that would permit Spain to come to terms with the reality of political decline. According to Altamira, twentieth-century Spain could manage to find a new path of *grandeur* by developing its supposedly innate intellectual and artistic

¹⁰ See J. López-Morillas, *El krausismo español* (Mexico-Buenos Aires, 1956), pp. 39–47 and 122–41.

¹¹ For an English-language introduction to Rafael Altamira's historiographic work, see J. E. Fagg, 'Rafael Altamira (1866–1951)', in W. Halperin (ed.), *Essays in Modern European Historiography* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 3–21; as well as C. P. Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), pp. 134–47.

¹² R. Altamira, *Filosofía de la Historia y Teoría de la Civilización* (Madrid, 1915).

potential – much in the same manner that Spain had survived its first imperial decadence since the mid-seventeenth century, when the loss of political and military power was compensated by the emergence of a flourishing literary culture.. In this pseudo-cyclic imagination, ‘soft’ cultural prestige acted as a substitute for ‘hard’ military and economic power.

Writing the history of civilization

The term ‘*civilization*’ had already experienced some ‘circulation’ in Spain and Portugal’s intellectual milieus since the middle of the nineteenth century. However, before Oliveira Martins and Altamira, there had been only scant theoretical development of the concept in Iberian historiography.¹³ What was civilization supposed to be? Iberianists took their cue from Jakob Burckhardt on the one hand, and from francophone historians, such as Charles Seignobos and Henri Pirenne on the other.¹⁴ At first, civilization was supposed to be a historically based catch-all reality. This meant that it was conceived as a kind of globalizing concept which incorporated several spheres of human life: politics, economics and culture. Civilization was also considered as the frame of meaning into which individuals were born, and which to a great extent conditioned their collective and individual agency. The nation, understood as a community of culture, developed a common conscience of civilization. Sharing the past also implied sharing a community of destiny, based on a set of shared values and perceptions. This concept of civilization was equated by many Spanish intellectuals of the 1880s and 1890s with a culturally – not biologically – defined racial concept of the nation.¹⁵

Belonging to a civilization meant being a member of a wider group than the nation, which was the beloved concept for most Iberian historians of the time. The nation was supposed to be an outcome of history and culture, and this shaped the existence of a national spirit, what Altamira called the ‘peoples’ psychology’.¹⁶ But civilization also meant – for individuals sharing a common set of values – an origin in the past and particularly a common destiny, a ‘shared fate’ that, in spite of the later division of that community of

¹³ See Campos Matos, ‘Una perspectiva’. Some examples of the use of the term ‘civilization’ were to be found in Spain, the earliest one being E. de Tapia, *Historia de la Civilización española: desde la invasión de los árabes hasta la época presente* (Madrid, 1840).

¹⁴ See P. Bourdieu, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris, 1986); N. Elias, *El proceso de la civilización* (Mexico, 1993); J. R. Goberna Falque, *Civilización. Historia de una idea* (Santiago de Compostela, 1999); and T. Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford, 2000).

¹⁵ See I. Sepúlveda, *El sueño de la Madre Patria. Hispanoamericanismo y nacionalismo* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 190–1.

¹⁶ R. Altamira, *Psicología del pueblo español* (Barcelona, 1908).

individuals into several nations, was still able to forge a current of sympathy and comprehension among the people on both sides of the Iberian border and both shores of the Atlantic. Although occasional wars of independence, political splits and dynastic rivalries may have in the past separated human communities that belonged to the same civilization, Rafael Altamira argued that it was only a matter of time before peoples pertaining to it established a kind of privileged relationship among themselves.

Both Oliveira Martins and Rafael Altamira, as well as some of their pupils, were forced to face a historiographic, and political, challenge. They had to reconcile unity in the distant past, and the alleged existence of a common peninsular *civilization*, which was able to contribute to human progress, with the appropriate emphasis on the importance of nationhood and 'national character' in the present. This also allowed them to reinforce the concept of common Iberianness without denying the existence of Spanishness and Portugueseeness. In spite of his sporadic claims for a kind of Iberian customs union and of his pragmatic belief in progress, the late Oliveira Martins, who became a minister of the Portuguese monarchy for some months in 1892, also referred explicitly to the need to remember some of the main historical figures of past splendour who were of Portuguese nationality, especially from the period of the late Middle Ages. Among whom was the commander of the Portuguese troops at the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, presented as a form of heroic resistance against the 'Spanish' invasion.¹⁷

There was a delicate balance between the emphasis on 'civilization' and the parallel stress on 'the nation'. Altamira and Oliveira Martins never ceased to be national historians of their respective nation-states. As self-aware national historians, they felt it necessary to reinforce the pillars of the respective historical master narratives of Spain and Portugal by placing their scholarship in the service of the nation. As mentioned above, a 'nationalizing' history, even if written in a critical and dispassionate way, often conflicted with an emphasis on 'civilization' as a concentric sphere of loyalty for citizens. Thus, Oliveira Martins devoted some pages of his main books on Portuguese History – *História de Portugal* and *Portugal Contemporâneo* – to deconstructing some traditional foundational myths that had been propagated by previous historiography. Thus, he did not blame Castile for having accelerated the loss of Portuguese overseas territories during the political union with the Spanish monarchy (1580–1640), and he maintained that Portugal's independence from Spain was only won thanks to Lisbon's subjugation to British diplomatic interests. And in a similar way, Oliveira Martins stressed the allegedly traditional anglophobia of

¹⁷ See J. P. Oliveira Martins, *A Vida de Nun'Alvares. História do estabelecimento da Dinastia de Aviz* (Lisbon, 1984) [1893], and Oliveira Martins, *Os filhos de D. João I* (Lisbon, 1936 [1891]).

the Portuguese people, something that could be traced back to the Middle Ages and that, according to him, explained why British interests could never act in favour of Portuguese dreams of colonial expansion.¹⁸ Oliveira Martins, who followed the theoretical legacy of his master, the romantic historian Alexandre Herculano (1810–1877), held that Portugal was an organic part of a whole body of the Iberian Peninsula. It was therefore impossible to speak of a Portuguese distinctive ‘race’ in ethnographic terms, or to ascribe great value to geographical determinism given the overwhelming similarity of climate and landscape between Portugal and the neighbouring regions, and hence the non-existence of clear-cut natural territorial boundaries. Even boundaries of language and culture were diffuse, because of the existence of Galicia in the northwestern corner of the Peninsula. Portugal, then, was not a ‘nationality’ in Oliveira Martins’s mind, as he identified this term with a community of descent based on a primordial character. The most decisive difference of national relevance between Portuguese and Spaniards lay in the collective psychology, as well as in human action, political will and the power of the ‘national spirit’. These factors were already present during the Middle Ages, and their interaction conditioned the shaping of Portuguese nationhood. However, Oliveira Martins also insisted on the role being played by contingency, human agency and lust for power in the birth of Portugal. The country was created through the personal ambition of some barons and made up from pieces of neighbouring kingdoms (Galicia and León).¹⁹

The reconciliation between Iberianism and Spanish nationalism, and therefore between the stress on civilization and the parallel stress on the nation, was also a concern for Altamira. He combined his attempt to renew Spanish professional historiography with a commitment to write textbooks and establish the basic lines of the national narrative which had to be taught in primary and secondary schools. A further challenge for Altamira was to reconcile this idealist faith about what the object of history should be – the study of collective ideas and ‘national spirits’ – with a more positivist-oriented method of how a history had to be written that is based on respect for documentary evidence. In fact, Altamira was very much concerned with transmitting an updated version of the historical past of the nation to an educated audience, as well as with modernizing the practice of doing history in the milieu of Spanish scholarship.²⁰ One year after the loss of the last Spanish colonies, in 1899 he argued that the real impulse for the regeneration of Spain had to emanate from its

¹⁸ See Oliveira Martins, *História de Portugal*, vol. I, 11th edn (Lisbon, 1927), pp. 108–11 and 154–5, and Oliveira Martins, *Portugal contemporâneo*, vol. 2, 5th edn (Lisbon, 1919), pp. 270–89; as well as Rocamora, *El nacionalismo*, p. 117.

¹⁹ See Catroga, ‘História e Ciências sociais’, p. 138; Oliveira Martins, *História de Portugal*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰ See R. Altamira, *Cuestiones modernas de historia* (Madrid, 1904).

own national 'essences', which were deeply anchored in the national spirit, as he emphasized in his Spanish translation of Fichte's famous book: *Reden an die deutsche Nation*.²¹ Although Altamira toned down some of his nationalist tenets in historiography later on, thereafter his purpose remained unchanged: to inoculate patriotism into the decadent social body of Spain, by means of a new national history which should be new both in content and in its ways of diffusion. This was related to Altamira's deeply rooted belief in the power of ideas as the motor of historical evolution.²²

For both historians, the division of two nation-states was a matter of politics rather than of nature. But it was also an irreversible fact sustained by the experience of the past and particularly by the people's will in each country. However, the two Iberian nation-states were supposed to share a common *civilization*. This was defined as a result of the aggregation of culture and arts, religion, territory and economic organization, popular traditions, ideas and institutions. Both Spain and Portugal were 'Hispanic' as far as their remote origin was concerned, as both nation-states derived from the peninsular unity shaped by the Roman Empire, which turned what they called *Hispania* into a recognizable unit from the administrative and political point of view. This unity was considered by Altamira to have been so evident that it was even respected by the Gothic kings when they invaded the Iberian Peninsula after the fall of the Roman Empire. Thus, the Goths aimed at maintaining the political unity of all peninsular territories under a common crown, and this tendency was afterwards reinforced by the conversion of the Visigoths under King Recaredo to the Catholic faith. Unity was then a kind of underlining trend which acted independently on the will of human actors.²³

Oliveira Martins, who took his concept of what civilization was from Giambattista Vico, firmly believed that a civilization was the outcome of an organic development of society, which could be compared to a phenomenon of nature. However, unlike his Italian master, the Portuguese historian ascribed a decisive role to the driving force of 'human races'. Together with the natural environment, contingent factors and a general move towards universal progress,

²¹ R. Altamira, 'Prólogo', in J. B. Fichte, *Discursos a la nación alemana* (Madrid, 1899). See also R. Altamira, *El patriotismo y la Universidad* (Oviedo, 1899).

²² See Boyd, *Historia Patria*, pp. 142–3; as well as I. Fox, *La invención de España* (Madrid, 1997), pp. 50–5.

²³ R. Altamira, *Historia de España y de la Civilización Española*, 4 vols [I–III, 1899–1906; IV, 1911] (Barcelona, 1899–1911). Other books by Altamira which incorporated some of the developments made in his master work are, *Los elementos de la civilización y del carácter españoles* (Buenos Aires, 1950), and *Historia de la civilización española* (Barcelona, 1902). See also the later edition of his work *Historia de la Civilización española* (Barcelona, 1988).

racial factors were vital in shaping historical evolution.²⁴ In the face of third countries, which were supposed to be 'Iberia's other', Spain and Portugal had to present a common position in world politics, as their understanding had strong objective roots, sustained by a shared worldview, a common interpretation of culture and a set of values regarding everyday life.

However, both Altamira and Oliveira Martins had to face a further conceptual problem: how to coin a concept of civilization malleable enough to make it universal, while at the same time serving as an affirmation of the 'cultural and historical supremacy' of Spain and/or Portugal (or the Iberian nations as a whole) in the world.

The answer was found, once again, in the sphere of ideas and values. There was a 'peninsular thought, a spirit' which shaped a 'moral physiognomy common to all Iberian populations' and whose main components were 'religious enthusiasm' and 'heroism', understood in the Herderian sense of the hero being the representative of the best qualities of the national soul.²⁵ This had been the outcome of the shared origin of the Iberian peoples with Northern African ones, something that had forged an egalitarian spirit, as well as a 'natural' tendency towards federalism. The Latin-Roman influence had meant a deviation of the evolution of that physiognomy. And the period of Visigothic dominance had also implied the emergence of some further characteristics of a Hispanic character, such as the links between religious and political power. A new Spain was born again under the period of the Muslim presence, characterized by a spontaneous energy dispersed in multiple kingdoms and languages. Hispanic feudalism did not exist as such, due to the strength of the monarchy and of the municipalities, which permeated the Iberian character and gave it a democratic-oriented tone. This creative energy also embraced a persistent character of 'Hispanic' civilization in the future: an enduring fragmentation into two or several states, but also unity of action, thought and sentiments.²⁶

What was required to (re)awaken the creative 'spirit' of the Iberians was the necessity of facing a common threat, having a common *other*. This had been the case with the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims in the eighth century. But an even greater unifying factor which reinvigorated Iberian creativeness was having a great cause worth fighting for. This was the role played by the defence of the Catholic faith, as well as by the discovery, conquest and evangelization of America. Mysticism was considered by

²⁴ See J. P. Oliveira Martins, *As raças humanas e a civilização primitiva*, 2 vols (Lisbon, 1921); Catroga, 'História e Ciências sociais', pp. 130–1.

²⁵ J. P. Oliveira Martins, *História da Civilização Ibérica* (Lisbon, 1994 [1879]), p. 36.

²⁶ J. P. Oliveira Martins, 'Os povos peninsulares e a civilização moderna' [1875], in Oliveira Martins, *Obras completas. Política e História*, vol. 1 (Lisbon, 1953), pp. 187–91.

Oliveira Martins to have been the main idea behind the imperial expansion of the Iberian kingdoms in the early modern period. The fate of colonized peoples was no concern for the Portuguese historian: much as the subjects of the Roman Empire in the past, or of the British Empire in the present, they had either to assimilate or perish. However, such an overseas enterprise had exhausted Iberian energy and since the seventeenth century had distanced both Portugal and Spain from the European core of scientific and intellectual progress. Having shaped a maritime empire and contributed to the expansion of Europe, the colonies had led the Iberian nations astray and onto the path of utilitarianism, robbery, mercantilism and egoistic interests linked to trade and industry. Religious dogmatism had proved to be counter-productive in leading to spiritual backwardness. The old virtues of the Iberian nations 'degenerated'. Thus the place of the Portuguese and Spanish Empires was occupied by the British Empire.

This was the reason why the Iberian nations had to find new ways, which were compatible with the advancement of culture, technology and industry. All Iberians would have to find a new principle to fight for with the same impulse they had developed in the past. And they also had to avoid repeating the same mistakes that, in the period of imperial decay, had contributed to turning virtues into vices and corruption. The new idea, according to the Portuguese historian, could now solely be the search for individual freedom, the defence of the rights of man and the conquest of modern democracy. Democracy was not supposed to be a foreign invention, but a universal cause which was deeply rooted in the genuine character of the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, thus based on the supposedly inherent virtues of Iberian individualism and its rebellious spirit. These qualities, which had been put to the service of a negative principle in the past, should now be redirected to more positive causes. Even at those historical moments when they fought for the wrong causes, Iberians had demonstrated their huge ability to endorse universal principles without bearing any egoistic ambitions. This was why 'the role of apostles of the ideas of the future is reserved for those who have been apostles of the old Catholic tenets.'²⁷

The past and present of empires

The concept of Iberian/Spanish civilization – Altamira never made explicit use of the term 'Iberian civilization', but preferred instead to speak of 'Hispanic civilization' – was not only applied to the whole history of the peninsula, but also to the old empires. Oliveira Martins already spoke in 1875 of the 'intellectual autonomy' and 'superior unity of character' which characterized

²⁷ Oliveira Martins, *História da Civilização*, pp. 315–16.

'Spain, Portugal, Spanish America and Brazil'. All of them were united by a common spirit, which was summed up in a 'similar attitude towards the modern achievements of our time'.²⁸

Thus, a second argument consisted of spreading the concept of shared civilization geographically. The only possible direction was Latin America, as well as – in a more limited way – the Philippines and the African and Asian overseas territories of Portugal. Both Altamira and Oliveira Martins stressed the theory that civilization constituted a common heritage which was shared with the former Iberian colonies of the past, as well as with the overseas territories of the present. In the case of Portugal, this meant underlining the fact that the expansion of the Portuguese language and the 'Lusitanian spirit' in Brazil, and to a lesser extent in Africa and other minor colonies in Asia, represented a decisive contribution to the culture of mankind. However, the deficient exploitation of the colonies had also brought decadence and corruption to Portugal. Just a positive reorientation of the achievements of empire could be capable of spiritually and economically regenerating the metropole.²⁹ In the Spanish case, the legacy of the Spanish Empire in America was also presented as a distinctive contribution to the progress of the human race. Thus, the most benign aspects of Spanish imperialism, such as the extended racial mixing that gave birth to Hispanic *mestizos* all over America, were stressed, explicitly differentiating it from what was considered the oppressive and racially discriminating character of the main European colonial empires of the first quarter of the twentieth century. On the contrary, premodern empires were considered to have developed a model of coexistence and tolerance, in contrast to 'sheer exploitation', a trait which was supposedly the hallmark of modern empires such as the British, American or French ones.

For Altamira, stressing the concept of a 'Spanish civilization' also meant underlining those elements in culture, collective psychology and worldview which were considered common to the Iberian and Latin American countries. This also allowed him more or less consciously to write a kind of 'post-imperial' – or 'post-colonial' – history which elaborated on the positive interpretation of the legacy of the premodern Iberian Empires. Likewise, this idea of 'Spanish civilization' was compatible with the existence of different nation-states. The most important thing was emphasizing history, language, culture and national character as a whole, as an existing common link among different nations in the past, whilst civilization was used as a catch-all concept which was able to include such elements as shared values and culture – in particular, language and 'national spirits'. But this strategy also served to awake a kind of 'spiritual' empire devoid

²⁸ Oliveira Martins, 'Os povos peninsulares', p. 188.

²⁹ See V. Alexandre, 'Questão nacional e questão colonial em Oliveira Martins', *Análise Social* 135 (1996), 183–201; Maurício, *A invenção*, pp. 92–4.

of imperialism at the turn of the century, as well as to raise the flag of a symbolic fight against the rival Anglo-Saxon 'civilization'. This rival image was supposedly characterized by intolerance, violent expansion and lust for domination. Though the capacity of the enemy to generate material progress and scientific advancement was not denied, Spanish and Portuguese historians argued that such an emphasis on material values could not lay the basis of an enduring civilization. On the contrary, the Iberian 'spirits', which were allegedly characterized by the prevalence of spiritual virtues over material and rational values, were considered to be suitable foundations for the (re)emergence of an authentic and enduring civilization in the future, solidified by ideas rather than by economic interest.

Since many Latin American intellectuals of the first decade of the twentieth century were suspicious of US attempts to impose its hegemony over the continent, the return of 'Hispanism' after decades of rejection of what the ancient metropole had to offer appeared an attractive alternative to some influential historians of the Latin American republics.

However, for Spanish national historians, beginning with Altamira, the concept of 'civilization' had a more radical meaning. The way they used it enabled them to speak of a 'shared destiny' with other sovereign nation-states, including both neighbouring Portugal and Latin American republics, as well as the Philippines. For them, and particularly for Altamira's influential work *Historia de España y la Civilización española* [A History of Spain and the Spanish Civilization, 1900–1911], originally written as a textbook for secondary and university students, civilization functioned as a kind of soft 'neo-imperialist' concept, if not as a peaceful substitute for imperial history's replacement of political hegemony with cultural hegemony. This was not seen as a contradiction to Altamira's national master narrative, as he developed it in his main works on Spanish national history. On the contrary, it could be seen as a reinforcement of that narrative: a victory of the Spanish spirit over the contingencies of time and place. For other Spanish intellectuals, renaming Spanish civilization as Iberian civilization had a purely utilitarian character. By becoming 'Iberian', Spain could add to its sphere of influence such immense territories as Brazil and Portuguese-speaking Africa.³⁰

The concept of civilization was reputed not only to be more modern, but also to be less aggressive than that of national – not to speak of 'imperial' or 'post-imperial' – history. Moreover, the term civilization was loaded with a normative character that insisted on the old imperial idea of Europe as bearer of a civilizing mission.³¹ Not all nations were given the badge of a distinctive civilization. And only European colonial powers had the privilege of using culture

³⁰ Sepúlveda, *El sueño*, p. 195.

³¹ See some insights in J. Osterhammel and B. Barth (eds), *Zivilisierungsmissionen* (Konstanz, 2005).

and history as a way of 'civilizing' the rest of the world. The stage of civilization was reserved for those nations which managed to complement individual moral attributes with social virtues, in the form of a collective morality – as it had already been defined by Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant. Following the main trends of the European debate about the differences existing between 'civilization' and 'culture', possessing a 'civilization' was considered to be more important than having a 'culture', as Altamira emphasized in particular during the years of the First World War.³² Unlike several historians and writers belonging to the 1898 Generation in Spain, like Miguel de Unamuno, Rafael Altamira was not proposing to seek refuge in any inward-looking reinforcement of Spanish 'native' qualities, nor to give up any foreign influences, but to look for the Spanish contribution to the advancement of humanity as a whole.³³

The study of the sphere of politics and power policy did not always allow Rafael Altamira to find arguments to emphasize Spain's relevance in the past, and he struggled even more with the present. As a convinced liberal republican, he could not disregard the criminal energies of the Spanish colonization process in America throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He was also well aware of the fact that, from a purely positivist outlook, the Muslim kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula during the Middle Ages were more advanced than their Christian counterparts, at least in intellectual and scientific terms – that is, in many of the elements that informed Altamira's understanding of what a civilization was. Yet the Christian aspects of Spanish history were to be the true and sole forerunners of the modern Spanish nation. Rafael Altamira also lamented the tendency towards centralism and despotism that the 'foreign' dynasties, particularly the Bourbons, had brought to Spain since the early modern period. These vices, due to influences 'imported' from outside – first from the Habsburg monarchy, but later from the French model – were blamed for paving the way towards the decadence of the empire, and the decline of those values for which Spanish civilization had stood in the past.

However, Altamira's emphasis on comparative history, and particularly his comparisons with the British and French colonial empires, also led him to consider that there was some distinctive contribution of the Iberian nations, especially of Spain, to the progress of humanity and to the advancement of democracy. This was the fact that a specific law code for Native Americans (*Leyes de Indias*) had been developed under the Spanish monarchy. In other words, the tolerant and generous psychology of the Spanish people made its empire more 'acceptable' for a twentieth-century liberal interpretation, thus

³² Goberna Falque, *Civilización*, pp. 155–60.

³³ See J. L. Villacañas Berlanga, 'Rafael Altamira y el concepto de civilización española', in E. Rubio Cremades and E. M^a Valero Juan (eds), *Rafael Altamira: historia, literatura y derecho* (Alicante, 2004), pp. 69–76.

constituting a motive of pride for liberal-minded Spaniards in the present and the future. Altamira, in particular, devoted great attention to the study of the Spanish legacy in America, as well as to the history of the so-called 'Indian laws' and the legal treatment of indigenous Americans by the Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth century.³⁴ This interest was reinforced by the deep impact that his visit to some Latin American countries in 1909 left behind in Altamira's perception of the vitality of the 'Hispanic peoples' in the age of imperialism.³⁵

Ibero-American historiographical dreams

The audience for Altamira in Spain, as well as in some Latin American historiographies – particularly in Argentina and Chile – was immense, not only because of the modernity and innovative quality of some of his writings, but also because of the immediate instrumental character of Altamira's ideas.³⁶ Altamira claimed to have established a dialogue with Latin American intellectuals and historians who appeared to share his main presuppositions. However, this was only true for a part of the intellectual circles of those countries. The notion of a Hispanic-American community of destiny, however much it was sponsored by official ceremonies, quickly came into conflict with Latin American national master narratives. Most Latin American national historians were particularly interested at that time in distancing themselves from what was seen as an ancient and decadent colonial power. Thus, they were more interested in elaborating new and independent narratives of nationhood. They focused on a variety of elements, such as the idealization of the indigenous pre-hispanic *civilizations* of the past – such as the Aztec example in Mexico or the Incas in Peru – the influence received from other European countries through the exchange of ideas and the arrival of immigrants, and the emergence of 'myths of the frontier'. The latter often followed the North American model, for example in Argentina, where historians began to idealize the so-called 'campaigns of the desert' which meant the annihilation of thousands of indigenous people since the 1870s.³⁷

³⁴ See Rafael Altamira's later compilation, *Manual de investigación de la historia del derecho indiano* (Buenos Aires, 1950).

³⁵ R. Altamira, *Mi viaje a América* (Madrid, 1911). On Altamira's trip to Latin America and its relevance for the emergence of a new intellectual communication between Spain and its former colonies, see G. dalla Corte, 'Luces y sombras de dos paradigmas del americanismo español en la renovación del diálogo hispanoamericano (1909–1911)', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 63:2 (2006), 195–216.

³⁶ See E. M^a Valero Juan, *Rafael Altamira y la 'reconquista' espiritual de América* (Alicante, 2003); as well as H. Pelosi, *Rafael Altamira y la Argentina* (Alicante, 2005).

³⁷ Sepúlveda, *El sueño*, pp. 263–8.

Latin American historiography in Altamira's time was mostly concerned with elaborating on a revolutionary mythology of the wars of independence as well as reinventing a new project for the future, which was also presented as a search for a distinctive civilizational model. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the common Hispanic origin was considered by most Latin American national historiographies as a somewhat undesired legacy, and Spanish influence in the past, whose effects were considered to have been negative in terms of development and culture, was seen as a real obstacle to the modernization of the new American nations.³⁸ Though many Latin American historians and intellectuals considered it necessary to appeal to a wider cultural community of belonging, being of European descent, as a means to counteract US imperialism, most of them preferred to make use of the term 'Latinity', which was intended to replace the narrow concept of Hispanic/Spanish civilization. This message was explicit in such influential books as the Uruguayan José-Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* (1900). Overall, the contradiction between the necessity felt by Latin American historians, social scientists and writers to emphasize their common cultural traits as a form of independent civilization and the risk of being entangled by the 'trap' of adopting a form of Spanish cultural neo-imperialism proved to be impossible to solve.

Not even the existence of a common language in all Spanish-speaking territories was free of controversies during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Some Latin American intellectuals, particularly in countries characterized by a strong French cultural influence on their educated elites, and where Italian mass immigration was noteworthy, like Argentina and Uruguay, praised the elaboration of a new 'national language' and accentuated its distance from peninsular Castilian. Others emphasized just the contrary: the necessity of maintaining a shared language of culture among all Hispanic lands as the sole means of effectively counteracting US political and cultural hegemony. But at the same time they insisted on claiming their possession of the 'true' Spanish. The national language of Hispanic American nations had come from Spain, but it did not *belong* to Spain, a poor centre which was no longer considered capable of generating a great culture adapted to the modern world. If a new Spanish-speaking civilization was to be born in the near future, its centre would be based in the emergent urban centres of Latin America. Thus, for example, the flourishing cultural dynamism of the city of Buenos Aires during the 1910s and 1920s was usually presented by Argentine intellectuals, beginning with the young writer Jorge Luis Borges, as evidence of where the real centre of the Spanish-speaking 'civilization' was. Madrid or Barcelona, by contrast,

³⁸ For the Argentine case, see L. A. Bertoni, *Patriotas, cosmopolitas y nacionalistas. La construcción de la nacionalidad argentina a fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires, 2001); and N. Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, 1991).

were portrayed by Borges and others as rather provincial and premodern.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, the intellectual atmosphere of Argentina's main city during its period of urban expansion has been defined as an attempt to be the 'capital of an imagined empire'.⁴⁰ References to Hispanic/ Spanish 'civilization' were common in attempts, championed by some Latin American elites, to 'rehispanicize' their nations in response to mass migration from Europe, which was seen as a threat to national homogeneity. But here the references to 'civilization' were clearly harnessed to the national rather than a transnational cause.⁴¹

Altamira was quite clear in emphasizing the intrinsically Spanish origin of Hispanic civilization, but at the same time he saw the progress experienced by some Latin American republics as an interesting development which could enrich the common civilization and hence regenerate a Spanish national spirit. Nevertheless, the centre of that civilization was Spain, and it had to continue to be Spain in the future, since only Spain – and, in more precise terms, Castile – was placed at the European core of civilization and had played a leading role in European history.⁴² But Latin American intelligentsias also looked for other cultural models of hegemony in Europe. First and foremost, they found inspiration in France, whose master narrative for elaborating a national history was closely imitated.

Iberians and their 'other'

Lack of enthusiasm on the part of Latin American intellectuals was just one side of the problem. Iberian internal consensus about how to (re)name a peninsular civilization to be extended throughout the world remained extremely fragile. Portuguese historians usually spoke of 'Iberian civilization', and sometimes of 'Spanish nations', when they referred respectively to the present and to the past. Oliveira Martins, just like the writer Antero de Quental, used to label all nations living on the Iberian soil as 'the Spanish nations', or even as 'the nations of Spain', by making the concepts of Spain and the original *Hispania* of the Roman Empire coincide. 'Civilization' also became a beloved cultural artefact which placed the small Portuguese nation-state in the world of empires at the beginning of the twentieth century.

³⁹ See A. L. di Tullio, *Políticas lingüísticas e inmigración. El caso argentino* (Buenos Aires, 2003).

⁴⁰ H. Vázquez Rial (ed.), *Buenos Aires 1880–1930: La capital de un imperio imaginario* (Madrid, 1996).

⁴¹ See the exhaustive analysis by G. H. Prado, *Rafael Altamira, el hispanoamericanismo liberal y la evolución de la historiografía argentina en el primer cuarto del siglo XX* (PhD Thesis, University of Oviedo, 2004).

⁴² See M^a D. de la Calle Velasco, 'España y Castilla en el discurso hispanoamericanista de Rafael Altamira', in A. Morales Moya and M. Esteban de Vega (eds), *¿Alma de España? Castilla en las interpretaciones del pasado español* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 195–220.

Thus, the Portuguese colonial empire was seen as a necessary outcome of Portugal's own interpretation of a civilizing mission, as it was to extend 'Iberian' civilization by means of the country's maritime vocation. However, in the Portuguese case, to go too far in underlining the common destiny and the affinities with other Iberian nations provoked the parallel effect of re-awakening nineteenth-century nationalist fear of diluting the Portuguese national peculiarity in the melting pot of Hispanic/Iberian civilization.

Therefore, history textbooks in Portugal before and after 1895 continued to emphasize a national narrative where the imperial past was seen as the Golden Age of Portuguese history, and where the period of 'Spanish domination' between 1580 and 1640 was regarded as a time of decadence. After that date, Portugal aimed at resurrecting its past prestige by stressing the role played by its great heroes in defending Portuguese independence from its Iberian neighbour, as well as from other European influences – Napoleonic France, and more recently the British colonial influence. Portugal's common traits with Spain as far as geography, history and imperial experiences were concerned were dismissed in favour of the relevance of a distinctive 'national character', which for Portuguese nationalist history was of the utmost importance. Portugal's love of freedom, lack of fury, melancholy (*saudade*) and individualist character were supposed to be completely different from the Spanish national character, more oriented towards domination and arrogance. Though many anti-Iberianist intellectuals admitted that Spain and Portugal shared a similar 'civilization', they also feared that this commonness of culture could accelerate the end of Portuguese independence, once a peninsular form of political confederation was forged. The influential mid-nineteenth-century historian Alexandre Herculano, who had established the main guidelines of Portuguese national history along the model of Romantic history writing in his *História de Portugal* (1846–53, 4 vols), also shared this opinion, as he feared that the advancement of economic union could reduce the chances of survival of small European nations like Belgium, Holland and Portugal.⁴³ The commemoration of the third centenary of the national poet Luis de Camões in 1880, as well as the nationalist reaction among Portuguese liberal elites in the aftermath of the diplomatic Ultimatum crisis of 1890, reinforced a nationalist interpretation of the Lusitanian past. It emphasized Portugal's overseas destiny, the imperial dimension of Portuguese history, and colonialism as the real achievement of the nation's grandeur.⁴⁴

⁴³ See S. Campos Matos, 'Historiographie et nationalisme au Portugal du XIXe siècle', in *Storia della Storiografia* 32 (1997), 61–9, Campos Matos, *Historiografia e memória nacional no Portugal do século XIX (1846–1898)* (Lisbon, 1998), particularly pp. 278–313 and 333–6. On Herculano's influence, see also H. Bernstein, *Alexandre Herculano (1810–1877): Portugal's prime historian and political novelist* (Paris, 1983).

⁴⁴ See A. Freeland, 'The People and the Poet: Portuguese National Identity and the Camões Tercentenary (1880)', in C. Mar-Molinero and A. Smith (eds), *Nationalism*

This view was maintained throughout the Republican period (1910–26) and afterwards through the military dictatorship and the ensuing Salazar regime (1926–74). Not even the alternative views and discourses on national history which were put forward later on by left-wing oriented and democratic historians questioned the imperial dimension of the Portuguese past and present, at least until the mid-1960s. Throughout the Portuguese republican period, historiography was characterized by a nationalist bias, flanked by the defence of the colonialist dimension of national history (something that became evident in the interpretation of the History of Brazil) and the influence of a theory of knowledge based on intuition – following Henri Bergson’s influence – and on the idea of national *Volksgeist*. This belief impregnated even the work of socialist-oriented historians, such as Jaime Cortesão.⁴⁵

The final fate of the scarce attempts aimed at writing a transnational Iberian history was similar to that experienced by Portuguese intellectual and political supporters of Iberian federalism: to be damned to oblivion, if not to be accused of ingenuous betrayal of their country. This was a typical interpretation of Oliveira Martins’s ‘over-the-top’ Iberianism by Portuguese conservative and even republican historians and intellectuals, though some of the representatives of authoritarian nationalism in the 1920s, like António Sardinha, made some use of the term ‘Iberian civilization’ and promoted the principle of peninsular ‘unity of action’ while keeping both states’ independence. Something similar happened to Martins’s concept of ‘civilization’ as a complementary driving force of Portugal’s historical evolution.⁴⁶ In the end, geographic determinism, ethnic factors – including the appeal to a specific ‘race’ – and language were considered by many republicans, and particularly by Salazarist national historians of the twentieth century, as the most decisive factors of nation building. The golden age of Portugal’s history was the maritime empire. And, last, but not least, the real ‘other’ of the Portuguese nation-building process continued to be Spain.

and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula: Competing and Conflicting Identities (Oxford and Washington, 1997), pp. 53–67.

⁴⁵ See M^a I. João, ‘Historiografia e Identificação de Portugal’, in J. Miranda and M^a I. João (eds), *Identidades Nacionais em Debate* (Oeiras, 2006), pp. 163–87; E. Serpa, ‘Portugal no Brasil: A Escrita dos irmãos desavindos’, *Revista Brasileira de História* 20:39 (2000), pp. 81–114.

⁴⁶ See L. Reis Torgal, ‘Oliveira Martins visto pelos Integralistas’, in *Biblos. Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra* 71 (1995), 351–60; Maurício, *A invenção*, pp. 81–92, and 109–23.

19

After the Deluge: The Impact of the Two World Wars on the Historical Work of Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch

Peter Schöttler

Usually, historians are writing at their desks. Even when reflecting the present, they are committed to the past. But from time to time, for instance during war, things get mixed up, and historians are pushed into 'history'. Suddenly, they have to react and take sides. However, as historians they may also have the opportunity to reflect on this involvement. In this chapter I try to show how the two World Wars of the early twentieth century have forced two important historians, the Belgian Henri Pirenne and the Frenchman Marc Bloch, to confront history in a new way. My focus will be not so much on their practical or political reactions to these events, but more on their mental and intellectual reactions.

Henri Pirenne: comparative vs. national history

Before the 'Great War', Henri Pirenne (1862–1936) was considered to be not only Belgium's most important historian, but the best example of a *national* historian as such. Four volumes of his *Histoire de Belgique* had already been published – dealing with Belgian history from ancient times to the seventeenth century.¹ This work was looked upon as a monument of its genre. Consequently, Pirenne was showered with honours not only in his homeland, but also in Germany (honorary degrees from the universities of Leipzig and Tübingen). Interestingly, the first edition of the *Histoire de Belgique*, which had been commissioned by a German colleague and friend, Karl Lamprecht, first came out with the German publisher Perthes in Gotha in 1899, while the original French version was published only the following year.²

Pirenne's love affair with German historiography, which originated in his studies in Göttingen and Berlin, where he became a member of the 'Akademischer

¹ H. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vol. 7 (Brussels, 1932). On Pirenne's biography, see B. Lyon, *Henri Pirenne. A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent, 1974).

² Unfortunately there has never been an English translation.

Historischer Verein', and which was also expressed in his co-editorship of the *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* from 1903 onwards, ended abruptly in 1914. Together with most of his professorial colleagues, he protested against the invasion of his home country and also against the German policy of occupation. When the German governor of Belgium, General von Bissing, tried to reopen the University of Ghent, which had been closed down after the invasion, and transform it into a Flemish institution, which meant banning any teaching in French, Pirenne refused to obey. As a consequence, he and another leader of the opposition, the Flemish historian Paul Fredericq, were arrested on 18 March 1916, and both, *although civilians*, were deported to Germany, like prisoners of war.³ This deportation rapidly became known throughout the world, provoking a storm of protest.⁴ Dozens of academic institutions and political leaders, especially of neutral governments, and even the Pope wrote to the Kaiser and the German chancellor. American Universities like Princeton and Cornell offered positions. Another proposal was that the two historians should be released to a neutral country like Switzerland. But the imperial government ignored all these protests and kept the Belgian prisoners until armistice came in November 1918. While Pirenne had been known in his field – medieval history – long before the war, he now became even more famous; not just as a great Belgian historian, but, for many years, as the most famous historian in Europe and the whole Western world.

What is most interesting behind this event, is not only the political issues and so on, but an intellectual shift – or even an 'internal' transformation of Pirenne himself – the traces of which can be followed closely in his writings during and after the war. For his contemporaries, the consequences of this shift were at the same time both visible and invisible during the 1920s and 1930s. Pirenne, indeed, became a world-famous person, especially for the English and American public. The most symptomatic event here was in 1919 when, along with a number of prominent military leaders such as Joffre and Pershing, Oxford University awarded him an honorary degree. In other words, Pirenne was one of the *figures de proue* of the victorious allied camp. As a consequence he was elected to important functions such as the presidency of the Union académique internationale or the Comité international des sciences historiques which was organizing international congresses for the historical

³ See H. Pirenne, *Souvenirs de captivité en Allemagne (Mars 1916–Novembre 1918)* (Brussels, 1920), and Pirenne, *The 'Journal de Guerre' of Henri Pirenne*, ed. B. and M. Lyon (Amsterdam, 1976). On German occupation and 'Flamenpolitik' during the First World War, see: H. W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): A Study of Germany's Western War Aims During the First World War* (Baltimore, MD, 1950), p. 92 ff.; S. de Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale* (Brussels, 2004), p. 137 ff. and p. 159 ff.; L. Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I* (New York, 2004), p. 145 ff.

⁴ See the list of newspaper articles and pamphlets in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1938), p. 111 f.

profession. He was also invited to give lectures in a great many countries, especially in the United States, where he spent two months in the autumn of 1922 on a coast to coast tour, including a reception at the White House.

But there was not only this public level of recognition. On the scholarly and historiographical level as well, Pirenne gained a somewhat different status. For a long time, his name had been linked exclusively to his work on Belgium, or more precisely, on the historical *space* in which the Belgian national state was finally built. After the war he actually completed his *History of Belgium* by publishing three more volumes between 1920 and 1932, dealing with the history from the end of the Spanish regime until the German attack of 1914. But while continuing to be the historian of his *mère patrie*, Pirenne, at the same time, opened a much wider international perspective on European history, which became known widely as the 'Pirenne-thesis'.

This famous thesis on the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean, conquered by Islam during the Early Middle Ages,⁵ was made public in a couple of articles which Pirenne published in the early 1920s and some years later in two path-breaking books: *Medieval Cities*, 1925, and *Mahomet and Charlemagne*, published posthumously in 1937.⁶ At that time, Pirenne was also fighting for a somewhat different concept of history, which he had already presented on many occasions since the war and especially at the International Historical Congress, which took place in Brussels in 1923. In his solemn opening lecture, entitled *De la méthode comparative en histoire*,⁷ he used all his fame to advocate a dramatic shift in the writing of history, from a national to a comparative and universal perspective.

By talking about the necessary 'renunciation' of the historian, who has to overcome his own national prejudices in order to analyse history most 'impartially', he was not only giving a Sunday School speech or speaking *pro domo*, but pleading in favour of a new scholarly spirit which, as he said, should not be a 'post-war' one.⁸ And by acknowledging that during the war 'both sides' had forced their scholars into 'service', he even touched a taboo. Because, until then, only 'German science' was supposed to be 'partial' and biased, while Western science, of course, was not. Although being very critical concerning the work of German historians and their aggressive role during the war – and here Pirenne was repeating a theme he had developed on many occasions since

⁵ See B. Lyon, *The Origins of the Middle Ages: Pirenne's Challenge to Gibbon* (New York, 1972); and more recently T. Kölzer, 'Kulturbruch oder Kulturkontinuität? Europa zwischen Antike und Mittelalter – die Pirenne-These nach 60 Jahren', in K. Rosen (ed.), *Das Mittelmeer – die Wiege der europäischen Kultur* (Bonn, 1998), pp. 208–27.

⁶ H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* (Princeton, NJ, 1925; French edition: Brussels, 1927), and Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Brussels, 1937; English edition: London, 1939).

⁷ H. Pirenne, *De la méthode comparative en histoire* (Brussels, 1923).

⁸ Pirenne, *De la méthode comparative en histoire*, p. 4.

the war, especially in his three *Discours de Rectorat* at Ghent University⁹ – he nevertheless refused to endorse the usual asymmetry between ‘them’ and ‘us’. In order to rise above any national or ethnic prejudice, all historians should work with a comparative perspective. On all sides during the past decades there had been many brilliant histories, but not enough ‘scientific objectivity, or let’s say the word: impartiality’.¹⁰ Racial, political or national prejudices were much too strong. In the future, the ‘comparative method’ alone would allow ‘the historian to avoid the pitfalls surrounding him and to appreciate all the facts he is studying at their true value and at their exact degree of scientific truth. With its help, and only through it [the comparative method], can history become a science and free itself from the idols of sentiment. She will do so only by bringing more universal perspectives to national history. She will then become not only more exact but also more humane.’¹¹

Some people have seen in this speech nothing more than a plea for a particular occasion without any heartfelt implications; comparative history, after all, never became popular in the inter-war years.¹² But this is misleading. Comparative history, for Pirenne, was not a ‘tactical issue’ to establish or defend the intellectual hegemony of the West, but a historiographic *strategy* linked to his own ‘intellectual shift’ during the war, which was supposed to lead to a better way of writing history, national *and* international. The traces of that shift can be followed in Pirenne’s writings, especially during his deportation. But because this material was unknown to his contemporaries – including friends and admirers like Marc Bloch – and since most of it has only been accessible for a decade or two, this constitutes a hidden side of his evolution.

Pirenne’s deportation to Germany can be divided into several periods. First he was sent to a prisoner’s camp near Krefeld in the Rhineland, and some weeks later to another camp near Holzminden in Lower Saxony. Treated as an officer, and even as a kind of ‘General’ (because when official negotiations took place, he was visited by a German General¹³), his situation was relatively comfortable. He had a batman, he was allowed to give lectures, and he was part of the community of both Belgian and Allied officers, who venerated him as a hero. But then, probably because of the ongoing pressure from the international and

⁹ H. Pirenne, *La nation belge et l’Allemagne* (Ghent, 1920), Pirenne, *L’Allemagne moderne et l’empire romain du moyen âge* (Ghent, 1921), and Pirenne, *Ce que nous devons désapprendre de l’Allemagne* (Ghent, 1922).

¹⁰ Pirenne, *De la méthode comparative*, p. 13.

¹¹ Pirenne, *De la méthode comparative*, p. 13. My translation.

¹² See, e.g., A. Verhulst, ‘Marc Bloch and Henri Pirenne on Comparative History. A Biographical Note’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 79 (2001), 510. On historical comparison, see the general overview by S. Berger, ‘Comparative History’, in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing History: Theory & Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 161–79.

¹³ Pirenne, *Journal de Guerre*, p. 126 (13 June 1916).

also the German academic community, the Berlin government decided to give Pirenne (and Frédéricq) a more civilian environment by sending them to Jena, a small university town in Thuringia. While the urban context was indeed nicer, and the two historians gained freer conditions in their daily life and work, they were, by the same token, isolated from other prisoners and compatriots. After being transferred to Jena, where Pirenne arrived on 29 August and Frédéricq on 9 September, they practically had only each other to talk to. While the latter fell into depression and refused any contact with Germans, provocatively speaking French all the time, Pirenne tried to make the best of the situation, working at the university library or getting into contact with a few people he considered to be civilized and decent. But even this Jena period ended abruptly after a few weeks, the government deciding to again separate the Belgian professors and transfer them to places without academic institutions in order to avoid any contact with the wider public. That is how Pirenne came to Creutzburg-an-der-Werra near Eisenach, where he would spend more than 18 months until his release in November 1918. It was essentially during this fourth and longest period of exile, when he was completely isolated except for mail and some contact with the local mayor and burgers of Creutzburg who were trying to be kind and polite,¹⁴ that he accomplished his most important projects, leading to a transformation of his historiographical worldview.

Pirenne had started keeping a diary from the first day of the war.¹⁵ After deportation, this work of self-reflection became even more important and was now accompanied by many notes on his readings or for his lectures at the prisoner's camps.¹⁶ On arriving at Jena, Pirenne realized that he had to go further and establish strong working rituals in order to avoid intellectual deprivation. In Creutzburg, this took the form of a twofold project: every day, Pirenne – besides keeping his *Journal de guerre* – wrote a couple of pages for a book on the history of Europe and methodological notes for a collection which he entitled: *Réflexions d'un solitaire* (Reflections of a Solitary). After the War and his return to Belgium, nothing of this material was published and hardly anyone knew about it since Pirenne never mentioned it, not even in his *Souvenirs de captivité*.¹⁷ It was only after his death in 1935 that the unfinished manuscript of the *Histoire de l'Europe* was published by his son – unfortunately without much editorial care. Nevertheless, the book showed clearly how the 'Pirenne thesis',

¹⁴ Pirenne, *Souvenirs*, p. 78 ff.

¹⁵ Only a small portion of this diary (six month out of four years) has been published in 1976. Together with Didier Devriese, the Archivist of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and Matthias Steinbach (Technische Universität Braunschweig) the author is preparing a new and complete edition accompanied by letters and other documents.

¹⁶ Most has been kept and is now part of the Pirenne-Archives at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

¹⁷ Pirenne, *Souvenirs*.

which had become world-famous in the meantime, had already emerged during the war.¹⁸ But the manuscripts of the war diary and the *Réflexions d'un solitaire* remained unknown for decades.¹⁹

This may explain why Pirenne's reworking of his historiographical approach has remained almost unnoticed. But it did not prevent at least some from recognizing its consequences, as one can see from the German, and especially the Nazi, reactions towards the *Histoire de l'Europe* and *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. Since the Weimar Republic, German *Westforschung* had considered Pirenne to be the main target of criticism, his social-economic approach being the most dangerous alternative to the 'tribal' paradigm embraced not only by German historians, but also by some Dutch historians like Pieter Geyl.²⁰ And while Pirenne insisted on the 'voluntary' basis of the Belgian nation, constituting a mixture between Romanic and Germanic elements, his *völkisch* opponents were sticking to the Romantic idea that language and *Volksgeist* were, or should be, the determining factors of any national character.²¹ Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* was therefore all wrong. When its last volume came out in 1932, a German historian, Franz Petri, who would later become a leading figure of the Nazi occupation in Belgium, wrote an incredibly long review, of more than 100 pages, to show its fallacies.²² Furthermore, the same historian, after Pirenne's death, managed to write an obituary for the *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Pirenne had been on the board of the journal until 1914), which culminated in a total refutation of the Belgian historian. Pirenne, Petri says, never understood what was most important about German history; 'the innermost Being of the German and a German Science struggling

¹⁸ H. Pirenne, *Histoire de l'Europe. Des invasions au XVIe siècle* (Brussels, 1936), English edition: *A History of Europe: From the end of the Roman World in the West to the Beginnings of the Western States* (London, 1939).

¹⁹ The first was partially published (see note 15) in 1976 (Pirenne, *Journal de guerre*), the latter in 1994: H. Pirenne, 'Réflexions d'un solitaire', ed. B. Lyon, M. Lyon and J.-H. Pirenne, *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* 160 (1994), p. 177–250. Both documents were mentioned and quoted for the first time in B. Lyon's biography (*Henri Pirenne*, pp. 227–76). They have also been commented on extensively by C. Violante, *La fine della 'grande illusione'. Un storico europeo tra guerra e dopoguerra, Henri Pirenne (1914–1923). Per una rilettura della 'Histoire de l'Europe'* (Bologna, 1997).

²⁰ See P. Schöttler, 'Die historische "Westforschung" zwischen "Abwehrkampf" und territorialer Offensive', in Schöttler (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918–1945* (Frankfurt/M., 1997), pp. 204–61, here p. 226.

²¹ See M. Beyen, 'National-Born Nations? National Historiography in Belgium and the Netherlands between a "Tribal" and a Social-Cultural Paradigm, 1900–1950', *Storia di Storiografia* 38 (2000), 33–58.

²² F. Petri, 'Staat und Nation in Belgien. Eine grundsätzliche Kritik des Schlußbandes von H. Pirennes 'Histoire de Belgique' und der pirenneschen Auffassung der belgisch-niederländischen Geschichte', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 3 (1933), 91–123, 205–72.

for its attachment to the people [*Volksverbundenheit*].²³ When the *Histoire de l'Europe* came out, the *Historische Zeitschrift* had the same criticism. The book was dismissed as a failed and 'outdated' attempt of liberal-positivistic history, missing the essential dimensions of 'folk' and 'race'.²⁴ It was in order to mask these shortcomings that the first German translation, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, published in 1939, had to wear a completely different, more 'Germanic' title and had to carry a great many supplementary footnotes, not identifiable by the reader as editorial additions, and suggesting that the author was discussing – or at some point converging with – German *Volksgeschichte*.²⁵ But in fact, since the Great War, Pirenne had done just the opposite, departing more and more from the German model of history.

How can this revisionism be described? Although Pirenne was a true Belgian patriot and deported for that reason, and although his main field of work had been national history, he was confronted during his imprisonment with a rather irritating discovery; the dangers of national history, *any* national history. It was obvious, at least for Western observers, that German historians had contributed by their political declarations – such as the *Aufruf an die Kulturwelt* of 1914²⁶ – to a strategy of imperial expansion, including the possible annexation of Belgium.²⁷ For many Western historians, including Pirenne, such political instrumentalization of history put a question mark behind German historians' claim, Pirenne included, that their work was 'purely scientific' – a claim that had long impressed Pirenne and the wider academic world. The new question was, what germs of aggression had potentially been brooding in all these writings? Furthermore, if such aggressive germs existed, what about their equivalents in the writings of 'Allied' historians?

In his notes taken at Creutzburg, Pirenne was more and more drawn into a self-critical reflection on the methods of history in an era of nationalism,

²³ F. Petri, 'Henri Pirenne', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 28 (1935), 410.

²⁴ W. Kienast, 'Henri Pirennes' "Histoire de l'Europe", *Historische Zeitschrift* 157 (1938), 527–37.

²⁵ H. Pirenne, *Geburt des Abendlandes. Untergang der Antike am Mittelmeer und Aufstieg des germanischen Mittelalters* (Amsterdam-Leipzig, 1939; 2nd edn 1942).

²⁶ See J. v. Ungern-Sternberg and W. v. Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf an die Kulturwelt!'. Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1996), the document is reproduced on pp. 144–7.

²⁷ See K. Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral. Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen, 1969), p. 84 ff. Historians like A. Schulte (*Von der Neutralität Belgiens*, Bonn, 1915) or K. Hampe (*Belgiens Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1915) were trying to legitimize the invasion of 1914 and calling for a German annexation at least of the Flemish parts of the country. Hampe, like Pirenne, was also keeping a diary which has recently been published: K. Hampe, *Kriegstagebuch, 1914–1919*, ed. F. Reichert and E. Wolgast (Munich, 2004).

imperialism and racism. In January 1918, he wrote down a whole list of criticisms that could be addressed to the traditional approach to national history:

Up to now [...] one has mainly written national history. The vices of that method are obvious. Here are some of them:

1. The danger to take as *national* what is *general*. [...]
2. The danger to take as *national* what stems from a *chronological difference in the development* [...].
3. The danger to take as *national* what is merely borrowed [...].
4. The danger to take as *national* what is an influence of *state* action (discipline).
5. The danger to take as *national* what is an economic result [...].
6. The danger to take as *national* what is the impact of a specific *class* [...].
7. The danger, above all, to relate to the past the impact of some active factors from another period [...] and to give them the value of a constant [...].
8. And the counterpart being true, the danger to take as *general* what is only *local*.
9. The danger to take as *young and primitive* what is *old and decadent*. –

It would be easy to accumulate examples here. Then one would see that the so-called national characters correspond mostly to universal human phenomena.²⁸

He drew the conclusion that the whole perspective had to be changed: history had to be ‘denationalized’. Some weeks earlier, he had already commented on this intellectual shift when denouncing historical racism and even nationalism *tout court*:

What is amusing with the racialists [i.e., historians speaking of nations in racial terms] is how scared they are in their books concerning the denationalization of the people. They are very happy every time they discover that this one or that one has escaped the danger – to romanize or to slavise itself, in fact, because the danger to germanize itself has never been discovered. [...] But is it then a danger or merely a misfortune for the Scots to have anglicized themselves? Is it a misfortune for so many people to have hellenized themselves etc.? The question is easy only for idiots. [...] The idea of a Confederation of Nations as it has been presented by [President] Wilson and as the republican Germany has adopted it right now [Pirenne writes in

²⁸ Pirenne, ‘Réflexions d’un solitaire’, pp. 192–3. My translation.

December 1917!] is the absolute opposite to nationalism. It is grounded in humanity and progress, like the other one is in violence (domination of the people etc.) and war.²⁹

Against this background, Pirenne's post-War writings become much easier to understand. Even his violent critique of the German mentality in general and German historiography in particular should not be understood, as it often has been,³⁰ as a pure product of 'anti-Germanism', but rather as part of his ongoing campaign against nationalism and racism in history, which he conducted under the provocative motto, *Désapprendre de l'Allemagne* (unlearn from Germany).³¹ As his correspondence shows, Pirenne was at all times capable of distinguishing quite well between different types of Germans, whether nationalists or decent patriots. He never refused to be in contact with the latter.³² An impressive example is his friendship with the philosopher Hermann Nohl, a student of Dilthey, whom he met in January 1916, when the German was a soldier in Ghent. As a respectable and sensitive man, Nohl tried to help the historian's family after his deportation, while at the same time, his wife, living in Jena, not only invited Pirenne to their home, but also acted as a conduit for family messages from Ghent which could be sent much quicker via Nohl and the army postal service, delivering them to him in Jena and even by visiting him at Creutzburg.³³ That is why Pirenne never forgot these kind Germans and kept in contact with them at the very moment when he broke off with most of his earlier German friends. And when he and his wife came to Göttingen in 1927 for a meeting of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, of which he was the president, they preferred to stay at Nohl's house, who had become a professor there, instead of the usual hotel.³⁴

²⁹ Pirenne, 'Réflexions d'un solitaire', p. 199. My translation.

³⁰ See Lyon, Henri Pirenne, p. 378 ff.; C. Fink and Marc Bloch. *A Life in History* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 107; N. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991), p. 128 *passim*.

³¹ See Pirenne, *Désapprendre de l'Allemagne*. On the resonance of that motto in France, see P. Schöttler, "'Désapprendre de l'Allemagne". Les "Annales" et l'histoire allemande', in H. M. Bock, R. Meyer-Kalkus and M. Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy. Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années trente*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1993), pp. 439–61.

³² See his correspondence with the German historian Heinrich Sproemberg, to whom he wrote in a letter of March 1931: 'Believe me, from the bottom of my heart I would wish that scientific relations between Belgian workers and German workers can be re-established as they have been before the war.' Published in H. Sproemberg, *Mittelalter und demokratische Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. M. Unger (Berlin, 1971), p. 440. See also Sproemberg's recollections: 'Pirenne und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft', *ibid.*, pp. 377–446.

³³ See Nohl's letters to his wife: W. Thys (ed.), *Ein Landsturmmann im Himmel. Flandern und der Erste Weltkrieg in den Briefen von Hermann Nohl an seine Frau* (Leipzig, 2005).

³⁴ Université Libre de Bruxelles, Archives Pirenne, correspondence, letter from H. Nohl to H. Pirenne, March 18, 1927.

What this desire to protect himself against any form of nationalism meant for Pirenne's way of writing history could be shown in many examples, but the most revealing was his *Histoire de Belgique*. Indeed, he now tried to apply the criticism he had developed at Creutzburg to his own great project. And in doing so, he did not limit himself to writing another three volumes, but also revised the four existing ones for a new edition. Even though this self-critical rewriting of the early volumes has been almost ignored by historiographers,³⁵ it very convincingly shows Pirenne's determination to extirpate any racist or ethnic arguments. If we compare, for instance, the pre-war to the post-war editions of the first volumes, we get a long list of symptomatic changes. Here are some examples from Volume 1. Advanced posts of Germanic colonists, 'scattered among people of foreign race', becomes 'scattered among people of latin language';³⁶ medieval civilization, as a 'common creation of two great races, the Romanic and the Germanic' becomes a 'common creation of two nationalities';³⁷ the Flemish administration no longer crosses 'the boundary of race', but 'the boundary of language';³⁸ Belgium as a 'country populated by two different races', becomes a 'country in between';³⁹ and so on. Other passages have been completely cut out⁴⁰ or rewritten in order to show, for instance, that 'nothing is more different from a war between races than Frankish colonization.'⁴¹

Even if the word 'race' in the early twentieth century was sometimes used in a more open way and without always including a 'biological' bias,⁴² Pirenne did everything to avoid the ethnic terminology that had been so predominant in German historiography, especially for the ancient and early medieval periods, replacing it with new arguments of a more sociological or geographical kind. Maybe this is one of the reasons why his books are still so readable today, compared to other national histories of that time.

During the 1920s und 1930s, Pirenne was seen both as a Belgian hero and as a national historian. This picture has completely changed since his death and especially in the last decades of the twentieth century. Due to the country having been transformed into a federal state with a weak national identity,

³⁵ See P. Schöttler, 'Henri Pirenne face à l'Allemagne de l'après-guerre – ou la (re)naissance du comparatisme en histoire', in S. Jaumain, M. Amara, B. Majerus and A. Vrints (eds), *Une "guerre totale"? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique* (Brussels, 2004), pp. 514–15.

³⁶ Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique* (3rd edn, 1909), p. 14; (5th edn, 1929), pp. 17–18. My translation.

³⁷ Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 3rd edn, 1909, p. 30; 5th edn, 1929, p. 35. My translation.

³⁸ Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 3rd edn, 1909, p. 125; 5th edn, 1929, p. 132. My translation.

³⁹ Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 3rd edn, 1909, p. 151; 5th edn, 1929, p. 158. My translation.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 3rd edn, 1909, p. 326, where a remark on the 'Flemish race' has been cut (5th edn, 1929, p. 335).

⁴¹ Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 5th edn, 1929, p. 18.

⁴² Cf. M. Rebérioux, 'Le mot "race" au tournant du siècle', *Mots* 33 (1992), 53–8.

more defined by political and economic interests than by historical or cultural unity, Pirenne's 'belgicism' – or 'Pirenism' as it is sometimes called – is no longer considered a helpful reference.⁴³ His books have not been republished for a long time.⁴⁴ Even his *History of Europe* and his famous 'thesis' on the early medieval clash between Islam and the Western world has been dismissed as having been falsified by later scholars, especially in urban archaeology.⁴⁵ But Pirenne's ideas are still shaping the scholarly debate a quarter of a century later, and for many historians '*Mahomet et Charlemagne* remains an irreplaceable book'.⁴⁶ Pirenne himself would have been the first to admit that the falsification of earlier theses is a normal part of the history of any science. Still, what makes his work remarkable, and possibly unique, is the inner consequence with which the historian himself tried to reflect the transformation which was provoked by the Great War. Pirenne, it shows, did not become a European and a comparative historian out of opportunism or because of the *Zeitgeist*, but after a cruel intellectual revision *against* the *Zeitgeist* of the war, he applied his new-found scepticism towards national history to his own texts in a situation of solitude.

Marc Bloch: what lessons from history?

Marc Bloch (1886–1944) was much younger than Pirenne and had a different social background.⁴⁷ His father was not a wealthy entrepreneur in a small

⁴³ In fact, the official Belgium began to distance itself from Pirenne almost immediately after the historian's death on 24 October 1935, when the Belgian government, against all expectations, refused to give him a national funeral; see Lyon, *Henri Pirenne*, p. 392 ff. For a remarkable new evaluation of Pirenne's heritage by a Belgian historian of our time, see Jean Stengers, 'Avant Pirenne: les preuves de l'ancienneté de la nation belge', in Académie Royale de Belgique, *Bulletin de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques*, 6th series, VII (1996), pp. 551–72, and Stengers, *Les racines de la Belgique* (Brussels, 2000).

⁴⁴ Today, however, most of Pirenne's books and articles are available on the worldwide web: <http://digitheque.ulb.ac.be/fr/digitheque-henri-pirenne/index.html>.

⁴⁵ See R. Hodges and D. Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (Ithaca, NY, 1983).

⁴⁶ Peter Brown, '*Mohammed and Charlemagne* by Henri Pirenne', *Daedalus* 103 (1974), p. 27. For a recent approach starting from Pirenne, see M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001): 'Even if he [Pirenne] vastly underestimated the changes which had affected the Mediterranean economy of Gaul in the centuries preceding the Merovingians, and saw in Islam a cause, where most scholars today would see a consequence of late Roman economic decline, Pirenne was right in focussing scholarly attention on how different the economic age of the Carolingians was from that of late antiquity' (p. 119).

⁴⁷ On Bloch's biography, see Fink, *Marc Bloch*; and É. Bloch and A. Cruz-Ramírez (eds), *Marc Bloch 1886–1944. Une biographie impossible – An Impossible Biography* (Limoges, 1997). One can also find rich biographical material on the website: www.marcbloch.fr

industrial town, but a professor of ancient history at the Sorbonne, who did everything to encourage his second son to walk in his footsteps. Among his students, the older Bloch was called 'le Méga', while his talented son was given the nickname 'Micromégas', like the giant in Voltaire's short story. Because the family was Jewish, the Dreyfus-crisis with its anti-Semitic implications was the most important event in Bloch's younger years. Like Pirenne, he spent two semesters at German universities, but – unlike the Belgian historian – he never socialized with his German *Kommilitonen* while in Berlin or Leipzig.⁴⁸ Although he was very *au courant* of German historiography, and later became the best French specialist in that field, writing regularly about it, he was never – unlike Pirenne before 1914 – an admirer of the German world. In fact, he was a great admirer of England.⁴⁹ That is why Bloch was much less surprised or even scandalized than Pirenne when the war broke out. Mobilized as a sergeant, he spent most of it at the front, and left the army in 1919 as a captain.⁵⁰

But like Pirenne, Bloch was not a chauvinist either. With his political sympathies on the left, he never supported the *guerre à outrance* or, after Versailles, the provocative politics of French governments towards Germany.⁵¹ Having been a long-time admirer of Pirenne's work, whom he first met in Strasbourg in 1920, he shared his critique of historiographic nationalism⁵² and his commitment to comparative history, which he tried to defend and applied himself, first in his book on the healing powers of French and English kings, *Les rois thaumaturges* (The Royal Touch), then in his famous presentation at the International Oslo Congress in 1928, 'Towards a Comparative History of European Societies', and finally in the two volumes of his *Feudal Society*, published at the beginning of the Second World War.⁵³ As an exceptional proof of Bloch's intellectual proximity to Pirenne, one should also mention that he and Lucien Febvre, his colleague at Strasbourg, asked the Belgian historian several times to take the editorial lead of a new journal they were trying to launch in the 1920s and which finally came out in 1929 under the name *Annales*

⁴⁸ See P. Schöttler, 'Marc Bloch und Deutschland', in Schöttler (ed.), *Marc Bloch – Historiker und Widerstandskämpfer* (Frankfurt/M., 1999), pp. 33–71.

⁴⁹ See F.-O. Touati, *Marc Bloch et l'Angleterre* (Paris, 2007).

⁵⁰ See M. Bloch, *Écrits de guerre (1914–1918)*, ed. É. Bloch (Paris, 1997).

⁵¹ See his later criticism in M. Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (London, 1949), pp. 155, 171 *passim*.

⁵² See P. Schöttler, 'Marc Bloch as a Critic of Historiographic Nationalism', in S. Berger, M. Donovan and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800* (London, 1999), pp. 125–36.

⁵³ M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London, 1973); Bloch, 'A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of European Societies', in Bloch, *Land and Work in Medieval Europe* (London, 1967), pp. 44–81; Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols (London, 1961).

d'histoire économique et sociale.⁵⁴ Although Pirenne refused the offer because of too many projects of his own, he kept a very special relationship with Bloch and Febvre, acting as a kind of godfather to their journal, which opened with a contribution by him.⁵⁵

Even more than Pirenne, Bloch was a very organized man, who hated wasting his time. When joining the first French army in Alsace in September 1939 and whilst waiting for the real war to begin, he urgently needed an intellectual pastime; a specific project to be tackled while living in military isolation. What could he do? Like his model Pirenne, whom he used to call 'the greatest historian of our times',⁵⁶ he decided to start a new book with the title: *Histoire de la société française dans le cadre de la civilisation européenne* (History of French Society in the Context of European Civilization). The very first sentence that he wrote down, was a dedication: 'To the memory of Henri Pirenne, who, at the time his country was fighting beside mine for justice and civilization, wrote in captivity a history of Europe.'⁵⁷ In other words, in this situation of a new war against Germany, Bloch remembered Pirenne's lonely efforts to overcome national fanaticism by writing a book with a transnational perspective. And even though he was ignoring everything about Pirenne's unpublished diary and notes, Bloch perfectly understood that an important shift had taken place during the historian's deportation.

Unfortunately, one might say, at least at first glance, Bloch never wrote that book on France and Europe, which he was planning in the fall of 1939. The only fragment we have is the beginning of a methodological introduction called *Réflexions pour un lecteur curieux de méthode*.⁵⁸ And because Bloch didn't keep a diary like Pirenne, we don't know precisely why he

⁵⁴ See B. and M. Lyon (eds), *The Birth of Annales History: The Letters of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to Henri Pirenne (1921–1935)* (Brussels, 1991). Unfortunately, though, this edition is incomplete and most of Pirenne's letters are missing. For a better picture, see the opening volume of the correspondence between Bloch and Febvre: B. Müller (ed.), *Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre et les Annales d'histoire économique et sociale. Correspondance*, vol. I: 1928–1933 (Paris, 1994).

⁵⁵ H. Pirenne, 'L'instruction des marchands au moyen âge', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 1 (1929), pp. 13–28. Pirenne was also a founding member of the editorial committee of the *Annales*.

⁵⁶ M. Bloch, *La terre et le paysan*, ed. É. Bloch (Paris, 1999), p. 183 (from a lecture of 1938).

⁵⁷ Quoted by L. Febvre, 'Marc Bloch. Témoignages sur la période 1919–1940. Extraits d'une correspondance inédite', *Annales d'histoire sociale* 3:1 (1945), 16; again in L. Febvre, 'A Note on the Manuscripts of the present Book', in M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York, 1953), p. xiv.

⁵⁸ First published by the Dutch historian M. Wessel, in *Genèses* 2:3 (1991), 154–61; now reprinted (without mentioning Wessel's work) in M. Bloch, *L'histoire, la guerre, la résistance*, ed. A. Becker and É. Bloch (Paris, 2006), pp. 505–15. (Unfortunately this whole edition is biased in many ways.)

abandoned the project or never went back to it. Instead, after returning from the *Blitzkrieg*, which he spent on the Belgian border from where he was evacuated to England via Dunkirk and immediately returned via Plymouth, he wrote two other books on quite different subjects: *L'Étrange défaite* (Strange Defeat) and *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (The Historian's Craft).⁵⁹

Obviously, these two manuscripts, which were published after Bloch's death from the bullets of the Gestapo, were not on European history. After the shameful armistice signed by Pétain in June 1940, the first thing that Bloch was thinking of was to write something about France herself. Not in the sense of a national history, but in order to understand the origins of her most terrible defeat. Today, his book, which was later entitled – by others – *L'Étrange défaite*, is considered to be a classic. After having been ignored for a long time, at least in comparison to *Feudal Society*, it has become one of Bloch's most quoted books, and one would even be tempted to say: his most *loved* one.⁶⁰ But this book is not just a personal memoir, as it seems to superficial readers. 'Je n'écris pas ici mes souvenirs', says Bloch,⁶¹ even if his own title, which he eventually would have changed if he had survived, was extremely modest: *Témoignage* (testimony, deposition of an eyewitness). He also speaks of a 'procès-verbal', a simple record.⁶² And that's what his manuscript is: here is a witness, who first gives a short presentation of his own person and his role in the affair, but almost without 'subjective' details (Chapter 1); then he gives a '*déposition d'un vaincu*', which includes

⁵⁹ M. Bloch, *L'étrange défaite. Témoignage écrit en 1940* (Paris, 1946), Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*, ed. L. Febvre (Paris, 1949).

⁶⁰ On the veneration and beatification of Bloch, see P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 376; O. Dumoulin, *Marc Bloch* (Paris, 2000), p. 21 ff. During the French presidential campaign of 2007 a famous sentence from *L'Étrange défaite* was quoted several times by the conservative candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, and even by the right-wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen: 'There are two categories of Frenchmen who will never really grasp the significance of French history: those who refuse to be thrilled by the Consecration of our Kings at Reims, and those who can read unmoved the account of the Festival of Federation [in 1790]' (Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, pp. 166–7; translation modified). But M. Bloch had already coined this aphorism during the First World War and given it a significant heading: 'On the history of France and why I am not a conservative' (Bloch, *Écrits de guerre*, p. 165).

⁶¹ Bloch, *Étrange défaite*, p. 29 (quotation from the new edition published in 1990). The English translation says quite inexactly and rather pompously: 'It is no part of my intention to produce a book of reminiscences' (Bloch, *Strange defeat*, p. 1). Unfortunately the whole translation of that book, dating from 1948, is all too often inaccurate and should be revised. One should also mention that the English edition does not contain Bloch's Resistance writings from 1943–44.

⁶² Bloch, *Étrange défaite*, p. 29.

all the evidence he thinks he has (Chapter 2); and finally, as a vanquished Frenchman, he 'examines his conscience': *Examen de conscience d'un Français* (Chapter 3).

Obviously there are different types of witnesses. Some try to tell the truth, whilst others do not. Some pretend to know, whilst others are much more critical, and even self-critical. In this context, Bloch's *Témoignage* of 1940 is one of the most self-critical statements on French society and the defeat by Nazi Germany one can imagine. Some formulations are even dramatic, like the famous sentence: 'We preferred to lock ourselves into the fear-haunted tranquillity of our studies. May the young men forgive us the blood that is red upon our hands.'⁶³

Behind this kind of auto-accusation, where the historian speaks in his own name and takes responsibility for his social and political behaviour in the past, there is a strong personal impulse. But this does not mean that he intended to give an emotional appraisal. Although written in the mode of a singular eye- and ear-witness, his book is much more analysis than narrative. It has more to do with the 'report' of a social scientist than with the 'story' of a former soldier. There is even a strong methodological side, which strikes us already when we read the headings of the chapters, but it becomes more obvious when we dig deeper into the text.

One of the key questions that Bloch is trying to answer in front of his imaginary audience is: 'Is it fair to hold history responsible for the weaknesses of our strategic planning?'⁶⁴ As a professional historian he was particularly shocked when he heard a remark of that sort whilst being in the army, asking 'whether the lessons of history have not led us astray'.⁶⁵ And obviously this critique was not addressed to history 'as such' (*res gestae*), but to the professionals of history, who apparently had failed to inform the public, and especially the army, in time about dangers lying in the past. But 'history', to Bloch's greatest distress, was presented here 'at the very opposite pole from the science it was supposed to be inculcating'. Therefore, he felt obliged to defend it, and it was only consistent that, after having finished *Strange Defeat*, he started a new manuscript entitled: *Apologie pour l'histoire* (Apologia for History).⁶⁶

⁶³ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 172.

⁶⁴ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 117. A few months later it resurges again with the famous first sentence of the *Apologie pour l'histoire*: 'Tell me, Daddy. What is the use of history?' (Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 3).

⁶⁵ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 117. The same episode is referred to in the *Historian's Craft* (p. 6): 'history has betrayed us'.

⁶⁶ Unfortunately the English and the American title, *The Historian's Craft*, as well as the titles of other translations (e.g., *Introdução à História* in Portuguese, etc.), have deleted this specific reference.

It is interesting though, that the substance of his argument is already at hand in his testimony of 1940. It is as if the diagnosis of *Strange Defeat* was depending not so much on his political experiences and judgments, but on his strong methodology. So we read: 'History is, in its essentials, the science of change. It knows and it teaches that it is impossible to find two events that are ever exactly alike, because the conditions from which they spring are never identical.'⁶⁷ Therefore, good history is quite different from the lessons of diplomacy and warfare as they are taught at military academies: 'No worse charge can be brought against the teaching of history as almost invariably practiced in our military schools than this – that it persisted our army leaders of 1914 to expect the war then imminent to resemble the wars fought by Napoleon, and those of twenty five years later, that the war of 1939 would be a repetition of the war of 1914.'⁶⁸ History, as professional historians were trying to do it, is different. As a science of change, 'it recognizes certain elements in the evolution of mankind which, though not permanent, are extremely long lived' and, at the same time, includes an 'almost infinite' number of 'combinations'.⁶⁹ But even if everything changes all the time, 'successive civilizations show certain repetitive patterns', which 'resemble one another in their general lines, if not in their details, when the conditions determining them may be said to have a family likeness.' That's why, Bloch says in his typical indirect style, history 'can even try to see into the future, and not always, I think, unsuccessfully.'⁷⁰

At least at first sight, Bloch's scientific optimism seems paradoxical. *Because* history, as a science, is open to change and surprise, it can try to explain and even to foresee the continuities and discontinuities in the development of mankind. *But* these kind of 'lessons' do not mean 'that what happened yesterday will necessarily happen tomorrow, or that the past will go on reproducing itself. By examining how and why yesterday differed from the day before, it [history] can reach conclusions which enable it to foresee how tomorrow will differ from yesterday. The traces left by past events never move in a straight line, but in a curve that can be extended into the future.'⁷¹

Behind this statement there is a whole philosophy of history⁷², describing the prospects and limits of historical knowledge. Certainly, Bloch says, history is not an experimental science like others: 'The very nature of its object

⁶⁷ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 117.

⁶⁸ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, pp. 118–19.

⁶⁹ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, pp. 117–18.

⁷⁰ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 118.

⁷¹ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 118.

⁷² In the modern, Anglo-Saxon sense of the word (philosophy of historical knowledge), not in the sense mostly used by Bloch himself (philosophy of the past as such) which was influenced by the critique of any such philosophy by H. Berr, *La synthèse en histoire*

forbids modifying the elements of reality which is possible in experimental disciplines.⁷³ But ‘that matters not at all’, because ‘observation and analysis enable it to establish the relations obtaining between events which are complicated by a whole series of surface variations. It establishes, by its study of them, a science of causes, and traces the different effects those causes may produce. History is, in the truest sense, a science of experience (*science de l’expérience*),⁷⁴ because by studying real events, and by bringing intelligence to bear on problems of analytical comparison, it succeeds in discovering, with ever-increasing accuracy, the parallel movements of cause and effect. The physicist does not say, ‘Oxygen is a gas because we never come across it in any other form’; what he says is: ‘Oxygen, in the conditions of temperature and pressure which most generally obtain in the atmosphere of our universe, shows itself in gaseous form.’ Similarly, the historian is well aware that no two successive wars are ever the same war, because, in the period between them, a number of modifications have occurred in the social structures of the countries, in the progress of technical skill, and in the minds of men [*la mentalité*].’⁷⁵

The best key to Bloch’s conception of history can be found in his *Apologie pour l’histoire*. But since the manuscript remained unfinished, it has been understood in very different ways; as if its fragmented character allowed a fragmented reading. Most commentators seem to forget that Bloch not only intended to write three more chapters, but also left behind some outlines. This applies especially to Chapters VI (‘Explanation in history’) and VII (‘The problem of forecasting’). Many people seem to be quite happy that especially this latter will always be missing, because it is unlikely that the author would have needed a whole chapter just to repeat the traditional idea that historical forecasts are impossible or ridiculous. On the contrary, if we look at all the passages concerning forecasting (prognosis) in the fragments of the *Apologie*, and compare them with passages on the same subject in other writings, like *Strange Defeat*, we can almost reconstruct the substance of what Bloch intended to write.⁷⁶

Even if Bloch’s papers do not contain any drafts, we have at least got a detailed summary of the planned chapter. And although he would have changed a lot

(Paris, 1911). See also H. Berr and L. Febvre, ‘History’, in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 7 (New York, 1934), p. 357 ff.

⁷³ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 118. The whole sentence had to be retranslated here.

⁷⁴ In the English version ‘science de l’expérience’ is translated by ‘experimental science’; in French this would be ‘science expérimentale’.

⁷⁵ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 118.

⁷⁶ For more details, see P. Schöttler, ‘Marc Bloch, die Lehren der Geschichte und die Möglichkeit historischer Prognosen’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 16:2 (2005), 104–25.

in the writing process, some keywords were obviously very important for him and had been thought through for a long time. They read as follows:⁷⁷

1. Forecasting as a mental necessity.
2. The ordinary mistakes of forecasting: economic conjuncture; military history.
3. The antinomy of forecasting in human affairs: forecasting, which destroys forecasting; the role of awareness.
4. Short-term forecasting.
5. Regularities.
6. Hopes and uncertainties.

Here, we have to remember the context. In light of military defeat and German occupation, the Vichy regime and the crisis of French society, some kind of historical forecast was especially needed in order to show the gravity of the situation and to stimulate a political change. In the past ten years or so, many warnings had been formulated – from left-wing anti-fascists to conservatives like de Gaulle, who criticized the insufficiency of French armaments. But a majority of academics and scientists, historians included, had remained almost silent. That is why Bloch was so self-critical in *Strange Defeat*: ‘The generation to which I belong has a bad conscience.’⁷⁸ While ‘not being prophets’, they could at least have ‘foreseen’ that the Versailles treaty and French foreign politics would isolate the Republic and provoke a new war: ‘We did realize that in Germany of that time there were signs, however timid, of a new spirit of goodwill, of an attitude that was frankly pacific and honestly liberal. The only thing wanting was a gesture of encouragement on the part of our political leaders. We knew all that, and yet, from laziness, from cowardice, we let things take their course. We dared not stand up in public and be the voice crying in the wilderness.’⁷⁹ Now, in the situation of war and occupation, historical analogies or predictions were rather common, even cynical ones: ‘The same, or roughly the same, men whom we have heard today preaching, before the last hour had struck, the gloomy wisdom of Louis XVIII [i.e., to capitulate], were then [i.e., in 1918] urging us on to ape the grandiloquent arrogance of Louis XIV [i.e., to annex the Rhineland].’⁸⁰

It was against these kind of careless analogies that Bloch wanted to defend his science and his profession, or as he says at the beginning of the *Apologie*: he wants to prevent a situation where ‘badly understood history could involve

⁷⁷ Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire* (new edn, 1993), p. 45. My translation.

⁷⁸ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 171.

⁷⁹ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 172. Translation modified.

⁸⁰ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 171.

good history in its disrepute'.⁸¹ Even if Comte's famous ruling 'savoir pour prévoir' was no longer a sufficient grounding for a contemporary history and social science and if nobody would any longer 'dare to say, with the orthodox positivists, that the value of a line of research is to be measured by its ability to promote action'⁸², history's 'helpfulness', that is, the possibility of a historically grounded forecast, was still an important question, especially under the circumstances of war. In a little-known fragment of the *Apologie*, which was published only in 1993 and has never been translated, Bloch goes even further: 'Captured by an incredible tragedy into which we were thrown by our own follies, it is quite difficult for us to understand ourselves. But above all, we would like to foresee our destiny and, maybe, to direct it a bit. In this disarray and in front of this hunger to know or to guess, we naturally turn to the past. An old propensity inclines us to hope that, properly questioned [which means: in a proper scientific way], it will be capable of giving us the secrets of the present... and unlocking those of the future.'⁸³

Obviously, such a scientific prognosis had risks of its own, because 'whether confronted by a phenomenon of the physical world or by a social fact, the movement of human reactions is not like clockwork always going in the same direction.'⁸⁴ Even if they had some theoretical models at hand – and here Bloch was thinking of Durkheimian sociology, to which he felt close⁸⁵ – historians should never accept 'any explanation a priori'.⁸⁶ They should always examine from scratch the real causes of a phenomenon, especially when the result might be unexpected, because 'in history, as elsewhere, the causes cannot be assumed. They are to be looked for.'⁸⁷

Probably the most important word that Bloch is using in his *Apologie* is 'souplesse' or 'assouplissement', flexibility, suppleness. But behind these words there is no retraction, no tendency for Bloch to undermine his rationalistic or, as he calls it himself, 'critical-realistic' approach. On the contrary, why should he take anything back in a book that was likely to become his theoretical testament? Indeed, what he underlines more explicitly than before is his belief in

⁸¹ Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 5.

⁸² Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 9.

⁸³ Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire* (new edn, 1993), pp. 281–2.

⁸⁴ Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 196.

⁸⁵ On the strong relationship between Bloch and the Durkheim-school, see B. Müller, 'Marc Bloch und die Sozialwissenschaften', in Schöttler (ed.), *Marc Bloch*, pp. 72–101; while S. W. Friedman, *Marc Bloch, Sociology and Geography: Encountering Changing Disciplines* (Cambridge, 1996), tends to undervalue it. For general reinterpretation of Bloch's philosophy in the light of new findings, see P. Schöttler, 'Wie weiter mit – Marc Bloch?', *Sozial.Geschichte online – Social.History online – Histoire.Sociale en ligne* 23:1 (2009), pp. 11–50.

⁸⁶ Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 197.

⁸⁷ Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 197.

a radical change that has taken place, not only in politics, but in the whole 'mental climate' since the 1920s. And the key, even for historians, lies in the revolution that has taken place in the natural sciences: 'The kinetic theories of gases, Einstein's mechanics, and quantum theory have profoundly altered that concept of science which, only yesterday, was unanimously accepted.'⁸⁸ When even the physicists are substituting a deterministic certainty with the 'infinitely probable', or the 'strictly measurable' by the 'notion of the eternal relativity of measurement', then it is high time that historians and social scientists free themselves from their traditional conceptions, which went back to the nineteenth century, and become more 'flexible', which means more open, more imaginative, in short, more *experimental* than in the past.

For Bloch, as for Pirenne, war and defeat were a dramatic occasion for self-reflection: political, historical and philosophical. In his last writings, especially in *Strange Defeat* and *The Historian's Craft*, he confronted himself with the reality of his time, but also with the bases of his professional work, trying to draw all the lessons he could. Whilst Pirenne turned to the roots of European history in late antiquity, linking a strong anti-Germanic critique with a historiographical revision of some of his own former beliefs concerning Belgian history, Bloch rapidly abandoned his own 'Pirennean' project of a national history from a European perspective. Instead, and after having fought at the northern front, he did something he had always refused to do before: he wrote something on the history of his present day. For the first time, in *Strange Defeat*, the medievalist and economic historian, who never published more than a few lines on contemporary issues, not even on Nazism – something Febvre and other *Annales* historians had no qualms about⁸⁹ – gave his opinion on the government, the army, the labour movement, and so on. Since then, as we saw, he had always stood for a rigorous conception of history, and amongst the worst things historians could do was giving value judgments.⁹⁰ Although he had been a socialist in his student days, he never openly endorsed a political party; therefore even his children remembered him as a kind of political absentee.⁹¹ But in the summer of 1940 this effort to avoid partisanship, which also meant hiding his

⁸⁸ Bloch, *Historian's Craft*, p. 17 f.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., L. Febvre, 'Le régime fasciste, mise en place historique', *Encyclopédie Française*, vol. 10 (Paris, 1935), fasc. 85, pp. 1–5, Febvre, 'Quelques autres régimes autoritaires: l'Autriche', *ibid.*, fasc. 92, pp. 1–8, and Febvre, 'Sur la doctrine national-socialiste: un conflit de tendances', *Annales d'histoire sociale* 1 (1939), pp. 426–8, etc.

⁹⁰ For that reason he was always avoiding political remarks in academic publications, even when speaking of Nazi historians. See, e.g., P. Schöttler, 'Marc Bloch et Lucien Febvre face à l'Allemagne nazie', *Genèses* 21 (1995), pp. 75–95.

⁹¹ É. Bloch, 'Marc Bloch. Souvenirs et réflexions d'un fils sur son père', in H. Atsma and A. Burguière (eds), *Marc Bloch aujourd'hui. Histoire comparée & sciences sociales* (Paris, 1990), p. 28.

sympathies for the political left, came to an end. From now on, Bloch never again retired completely from daily politics, and in his scholarly work he tolerated political remarks. This is particularly obvious for the *Apologie*, which contains many references to the defeat of 1940, Vichy and Nazism, despite being a defence of *scientific* history (i.e., history without value judgments).

But this was not yet the last consequence of Bloch's intellectual shift. At the end of 1942, as the German army occupied the Vichy zone, he joined the active French resistance movement. While he was already a supporter of the *Résistance* from before, he was still considering leaving for America.⁹² But after 1942 the underground struggle became the main focus of his life. Unfortunately, there are no letters or diaries giving explicit explanations for this new and dangerous step. But his last manuscripts, like *Strange Defeat* and *Apologie pour l'histoire*, give us at least some hints: resistance for Bloch was both a question of morals – or, as he says, of the 'modeste moralité de l'honnête homme'⁹³ – and a question of historical reason. For him there were lessons of history, and since 1940 the most important was that an 'honest man' could not avoid taking sides: 'My only hope', says the 'elderly historian' in *Strange Defeat*, 'is that when the moment comes we shall have enough blood to shed, even though it be the blood of those who are dear to us (I say nothing of my own, to which I attach no importance). For there can be no salvation where there is no sacrifice, and no national liberty in the fullest sense unless we have worked ourselves to bring it about.'⁹⁴ And in one of his last contributions to the underground journal *Cahiers politiques*, we read: 'It is through the power of utopia that reality finally appears. What is more utopian than the idea to organize, in a country enslaved and knocked down, a desperate upheaval of rebellion into a vast network of volition? But that's exactly how the *Résistance* has finally come about.'⁹⁵

Therefore, Bloch's decision to join the *Résistance* should not be understood as the *engagement* of an intellectual in the existentialist sense of the word – which he did not like anyway⁹⁶ – but as the decision of a scholar, who, having closely analysed the situation, draws his conclusions most rationally.

⁹² In November 1940 Bloch had accepted an offer from the New School for Social Research in New York, but given the impossibility of bringing over his family (six children), the project was cancelled in August 1941. See P. M. Rutkoff and W. B. Scott, 'Letters to America: The Correspondence of Marc Bloch, 1940–41', *French Historical Studies* 12 (1981), 277–303; Fink, *Marc Bloch*, p. 247 ff.

⁹³ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 27.

⁹⁴ Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, pp. 174–5. Translation modified.

⁹⁵ Bloch, *Étrange défaite*, p. 244. This article is not included in the English edition.

⁹⁶ See his letter to L. Febvre, 8 October 1939; B. Müller (ed.), *Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre et les Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. Correspondance, vol. III: 1938–1943 (Paris, 2003), p. 67.

At first sight it may seem that for both Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch, the experience of war, defeat and solitude essentially had provoked some kind of renewed patriotism, or even nationalism, urging them to previously unknown political activities. While Pirenne had been forced to overcome his old illusions concerning German culture, Bloch on his side had to part with a deep-rooted conviction that good historians should refrain from value judgments and especially from politics. Both men were thrown into soul-searching and had to consider new choices. But while Pirenne discovered a new kind of historical comparativism during his deportation, which he would advocate after the war, Marc Bloch, who had already followed his Belgian model on this path in the 1920s, went a step further by joining the underground struggle, where he would become a major organizer and planner, finally paying with his life. Under the exceptional circumstances of war, the two medieval historians, who loved the remoteness of traditional academic work, were not only forced into self-criticism, but also had to modify their intellectual posture and accept new responsibilities in the public sphere.

20

Rising Like a Phoenix ... The Renaissance of National History Writing in Germany and Britain since the 1980s¹

Stefan Berger

Introduction

It has become a bit of a commonplace that the Second World War marked a major break in the history of nationalism in Europe. Published opinion, which includes many historians, seems to agree that the devastation of war had a sobering effect on the nations of Europe. Nationalism acquired a bad press and was replaced, during the Cold War, by ideas of socialist internationalism in Communist Eastern Europe and the common European market in Western Europe. It looked as though the classical age of national master narratives was over. However, as I have argued elsewhere, it would be premature to see those national master narratives as having been in terminal decline since 1945.² As the histories of class had lost much of their identitarian clout by the 1980s, it left the door wide open for the re-emergence of nation as prime identitarian focus for history writing, and indeed we find major debates on national history in virtually every West European country.

In West Germany the rise to prominence of the so-called Bielefeld school during the 1970s brought a negative inversion of the German Sonderweg and an attempt to narrate German history as a succession of wrong turns.³ From here it was but a small step to ideas of post-nationalism and the notion that the unification of Germany in 1871 had brought Europeans and Germans nothing but misery. From the 1960s onwards a serious challenge to traditional national

¹ The final version of this chapter was completed whilst I had the pleasure to be Senior Fellow at the Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies, School of History. I am grateful to the Institute's directors, Jörn Leonhard and Ulrich Herbert, for making my stay so productive and pleasant.

² S. Berger, 'A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present', *Journal of Modern History* 77:3 (2005), 629-78.

³ T. Welskopp, 'Identität *ex negativo*. Der "deutsche Sonderweg" als Metaerzählung in der bundesdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft der siebziger und achtziger Jahre', in K. Jarausch and M. Sabrow (eds), *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 109-39.

history of an altogether different kind emerged in Britain in the form of Celtic national histories in Scotland and Wales which problematized the notion of the United Kingdom and asked whether Britishness has not been a way to condemn the Celtic fringe to historical oblivion and cement the dominance of Englishness over the British Isles. Celtic national histories in Scotland and Wales can, of course, be found well before the 1960s, but what made them so powerful since then was that political demands for independent nationhood began gathering mass support – more so in Scotland than in Wales.

Yet, arguably, this critical phase for British and German national history writing was itself marked precisely by more critical perspectives on national history rather than the abandonment of national history writing *per se*. In some respects German historians continued by and large to write German history, albeit in a more critical mode, and English, Scottish and Welsh historians continued to write national history, albeit with increasing insecurity about the place of Britishness in this story.

It is only since the 1980s that historians in both countries have begun to look increasingly for alternatives to national history writing. Undoubtedly this search has been much more intense in Germany than in Britain. The quite remarkable rise of comparative history in the German historical profession is the clearest sign that many historians of a younger generation have been looking for ways to transcend a parochial national perspective.⁴ And the subsequent debates on whether comparative history was just reifying the nation-state as key unit of comparison, on the merits of a cultural transfer history, on diverse forms of transnational history writing including global or world history, all testify to the desire among many German historians to investigate something else than mere national history.⁵ Even institutionally, history departments in Germany have begun to move away from their Germanocentric hiring practice and include historians of Europe and the non-European world in a hitherto unprecedented way.

In Britain, there has been much less comparative history.⁶ And the little there is has largely compared Britain to other English-speaking countries. This has a great deal to do with the rise of empire studies in Britain since the 1980s.⁷ Empire history has drawn far greater attention to the diverse ways

⁴H. Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich. Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M., 1999); H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka (eds), *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt/M., 1996).

⁵J. Paulmann, 'Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts', *Historische Zeitschrift* 267:3 (1998), 649–85.

⁶G. Crossick, 'And What Should They Know of England? Die vergleichende Geschichtsschreibung im heutigen Grossbritannien', in Haupt and Kocka (eds), *Geschichte und Vergleich*, pp. 61–76.

⁷See S. Wards and R. Aldrich's chapter in this volume.

in which the empire has shaped Britishness and, in reverse, how Britishness became a part of diverse identities in countries belonging to the British Commonwealth. In some respects, then, it has to remain doubtful whether this kind of empire history, informed by post-colonial and post-structuralist approaches, is really a turn away from national history, as in so many of these histories the concern, albeit highly critical, is still with questions of Britishness, British national identity and the place of Britishness in the identities of former colonies. Another reason for the relative dearth of comparative studies in Britain, which is worth mentioning, is the increasing monolingualism of British historians of Britain. The lack of any language requirements in the training of historians in most history departments in the United Kingdom has reaped a terrible harvest.

More importantly, the challenge to traditional national master narratives in the 1960s and 1970s was followed in the 1980s by a renaissance of such historical national discourses. In both countries, this was closely connected to political developments: Thatcher's revolution in Victorian costume and Kohl's 'spiritual-moral turn' both relied heavily on more positive accents on national history – something supported by some sections of the historical profession and strongly opposed by others.⁸ Following reunification of Germany in 1990, debates surrounding the nation exploded. They centred on the need to abandon any ideas of post-nationalism and to return to 'national normality'. Since the 1990s many German histories have appeared in the bookshops with some historians explicitly seeking to contribute to such normalization of the national discourse.⁹ In Britain, the crisis of Britishness continued but it produced also a significant number of national histories all trying, in different ways, to come to terms with the challenge of Celtic nationalisms.¹⁰

Writing national history at a critical juncture: the cases of Heinrich August Winkler and Norman Davies

What I would like to do in this chapter is to compare two national histories, one German, one British, which hold particularly important places in those

⁸The German Historikerstreit was an attempt to prevent the renationalization of German historical discourse. See, among the huge literature on this controversy, Richard Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow. West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape the Nazi Past* (New York, 1989). In Britain, the History Workshop movement's turn to the investigation of patriotism in the early 1980s was a direct response to the shock and horror about the nationalism unleashed by the Falklands war in Britain. See Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols (London, 1989).

⁹S. Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003).

¹⁰See, e.g., R. Cohen, 'The Incredible Vagueness of Being British/English', *International Affairs* 76:3 (2000), 575–82.

vibrant debates on national identity around the turn of the twentieth century. In particular I will ask how their respective authors narrated national histories under conditions in which the traditional national paradigms were in flux in both countries. Heinrich August Winkler's *The Long Way West* – a German history in two volumes, translated into English in 2007 and French in 2005, was first published in German in two volumes in 2000.¹¹ It amounts to almost 1400 pages. Its sales figures were boosted by the Federal Institute for Political Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), which included the book in its programme of books that are distributed free of charge. The German government also subsidized the French translation, thereby confirming the semi-official status of Winkler's national history. He had been very prominent in debates surrounding the need to renationalize German identity in the 1990s. A representative of the critical historiography of the 1970s, he had, by the 1980s, moved to espousing post-nationalism and called openly for an abandonment of desires for German reunification – 1989/90 was a cathartic moment for Winkler. He began to argue that the post-national paradigm of German historians was yet another form of hubris trying to tell other European nations to abandon the principle of the nation-state when they were perfectly happy with it. Instead of clinging to outdated forms of post-nationalism, Winkler called for a new patriotism, which would bring Germany into line with other European nation-states, that is, 'normalize' German identity. His *Long Way West* amounts to an ambitious attempt to provide the historical master narrative underpinning such normalization.

Norman Davies's *The Isles*, published in 1999, is almost 1200 pages long and comes in one doorstopper volume.¹² His national history is situated in a very different context to that of Winkler. For a start, he had not been centrally involved in debates on Britishness until writing *The Isles*. He was a national historian of some repute, but the nation in question was Poland. He also was an acclaimed historian of Europe. And he turned to British national history not to provide a national master narrative for Britain, but to bury it. He attempts to narrate the story of the British Isles in such a way as to allow the different parts of those Isles to go their own way in future. His is by no means a post-national history. It is not national history *per se*, but British national history which he attacks. He seeks to liberate the national histories of Ireland, Scotland and Wales from the fading grip of Britishness. If Winkler is about constructing a new national master narrative for Germany, Davies is about destroying the old national master narrative for Britain in order to liberate national master narra-

¹¹H. A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols (Munich, 2000). The English translation: *The Long Road West, 1789–1990*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2007); the French translation: *Histoire de l'Allemagne, XIXe–Xxe siècle: le long chemin vers l'Occident*, 2 vols (Paris, 2005). All page numbers are quoted from the German edition and all translations are my own.

¹²N. Davies, *The Isles: A History* (London, 2000).

tives for the four constituent parts of the Isles. Both clearly write their histories with contemporary debates and concerns foremost on their minds. Both authors expressly announce their intention to write for a broader audience than that of historical specialists and history students, thereby underlining their ambitions to intervene in broad public debates about the direction of the nation.

The reviews of both books were quick to ascribe to them the status of historiographical milestones, symbolizing decisive moments of change for the historiographical traditions in both countries. Hugo Young called *'The Isles [...]'* a key book for its time. It seizes the conventional wisdom of the moment, and destroys most of its foundations.¹³ Niall Ferguson wrote: 'The publication of Norman Davies's *The Isles* is a historiographical milestone, the culmination of years of revisionism by a generation of scholars whose common purpose has been to dismantle the "Anglocentric" version of British history.'¹⁴ Ferguson thus saw Davies in a tradition which arguably started with the publications by Tom Nairn, Michael Hechter and Hugh Kearney, who had all, in their different ways, insisted on dismantling notions of Britishness.¹⁵ When the Friedrich Ebert Foundation awarded Winkler the prize 'Das politische Buch', Klaus Hohlfeld in his *Laudatio*, emphasized how the book was making a major contribution not just to historiography, but to the debate about the future concept of a German nation-state more generally.¹⁶ Eckhard Fuhr, in *Die Welt*, welcomed Winkler's rewriting of German national history in line with the rationale of the new Berlin Republic. The epochal changes of 1989/90 necessitated such a new perspective on German national history.¹⁷ And Anselm Doering-Manteuffel argued that Winkler's national history deliberately set out to create a national master narrative which was reassuring to the social-liberal West Germans in the reunified German nation-state: 'Winkler's portrayal of the politics and intellectual climate in Germany creates meaning out of history and explains to the interested contemporary, why things developed in the way they did.'¹⁸

In terms of their chronological scope the books are very different in that Winkler's is a book which deals with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while Davies starts with pre-history and pushes the story along into the

¹³H. Young, 'Little More than an Extension of France', *London Review of Books*, 6 January 2000.

¹⁴N. Ferguson's review in the *Sunday Times* is quoted on the inside cover of the paperback edition of *The Isles*.

¹⁵M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966* (London, 1975); T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977); H. Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹⁶http://www.fes.de/daspolitischebuch/buch2001_index.htm (accessed 17 Oct. 2007).

¹⁷E. Fuhr, 'Geschichte mit Happy End', *Die Welt*, 18 October 2000.

¹⁸A. Doering-Manteuffel, 'Eine politische Nationalgeschichte für die Berliner Republik: Überlegungen zu Heinrich August Winklers "Der lange Weg nach Westen"', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27:3 (2001), 446–62, quote on p. 462.

twenty-first century. Davies's chapters deal with several centuries at a time, whereas Winkler's often deal with two or three decades. Winkler does not completely ignore the period before 1800. As the process of nation building is his declared focus, he deals with almost a thousand years of history in his first chapter, entitled 'The inheritance of a thousand years'. In what amounts to the most analytical chapter in the entire work, he concentrates on what he perceives as 'three waves' of nation building. In the period 1000 to 1500 he traces 'a gradual process of German nation formation' (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, p. 34 f.). In two separate waves, one around the year 1000 and another around 1500, language emerged as a key factor for the development of national consciousness (p. 6). In the sixteenth century the confessional division also contributed in a major way to nation formation in the German lands. German humanists were vital in propagating national ideas (p. 12). A third wave is identified with the period from the 1770s to the 1830s (p. 39). Winkler thus does not do without notions of the *longue durée* which underpin so many national narratives, but he uses it to set the scene for his actual history which only deals with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With broad brushes of the pen, he sketches the national development before the French revolution, which, for him, remains the decisive dividing line between a premodern and a modern national consciousness. As his history is about the development of modern national consciousness, the pre-history is important but only in setting the scene. In Davies's history we do not find any such distinction between premodern and modern forms of national consciousness and national history. In his early chapters, he does remind his readers that there was as yet no understanding of an English, let alone British nation. But he does begin to see forms of national consciousness as early as the Middle Ages.

Perspectivity: the importance of beginnings and endings

As Paul Ricoeur famously put it: 'The ideas of beginning, middle, and end are not taken from experience: they are not traits of real action but effects of poetic ordering.'¹⁹ The beginnings of stories, including histories, determine the narrative framework of what is to be told and allow for what can and cannot be said. Winkler's history begins with an analytical question: Did the German *Sonderweg* exist? This is indeed one of the key structuring devices of his history which seeks to confirm a 'special path' of German national history which allegedly only came to an end in 1990. German national history was 'special' in that it was different from the West. Winkler makes 'the West' into a benchmark for 'normal' national development. The West stands for early nation-state formation, successful parliamentization and democratization and the subsequent solution to the social question. Germany, in contrast, epitomizes belated

¹⁹P. Ricoeur, *La Métaphor vive* (Paris, 1975), p. 67.

nation-state formation and failed parliamentization. In addition, Germany was peculiar in that the challenges of democratization and the 'social question' coincided with the national question. The introduction to the second volume once again emphasizes that the focus of the book is on the relationship between democracy and nation in German history. Winkler confirms that this is national history written from the perspective of the values of 'Western democracy', as epitomized by the 1949 Basic Law, which he describes as the most important German constitution ever (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. II, p. ix).

When the West Germans finally embarked on the road to parliamentization, democratization and the solution of the 'social question' after 1945, they, according to Winkler, still stayed on a special path because they increasingly neglected and avoided the national question. Only the perspective from 1990 allows Germans, for the first time in their history, to develop national consciousness in tandem with a democratic and social consciousness. Only now is the reunified Germany capable of fully abandoning its special path and becoming a full member of 'the West'. Winkler's endorsement of the German *Sonderweg* is thus perhaps best described as a *Sonderweg* with a happy ending.

The problem with this perspective is that it relies on a highly idealized normative assumption of what 'the West' is, which has little grounding in the histories of Western nation-states. It completely ignores, for example, to what extent normal nation-states in the West were formed in and through the context of imperialism – something emphasized by Davies's history of Britain. Hence Winkler's national history suffers from a lack of conceptualization of 'the West'. In fact such lack of conceptualization is arguably constitutive of this history. In 2009 Winkler published the first volume of a history of the West that was meant to fill this conceptual void, but, as several reviewers pointed out, his history of the West is a highly idealized history identifying the West exclusively with human rights, popular sovereignty, rule of law, democracy, constitutionalism and freedom.²⁰

Davies begins his story by contrasting the 'one-island fixation' (*The Isles*, p. xxix) in Britain with the diversity of dictionary definitions and the diverse classification systems of major libraries, listing all the different states which occupied the space of the Isles over the centuries (p. xxxix f.). All of this effectively questions the notion of an unbroken continuity of national history. In Chapter 1, Davies is again insistent: 'The Isles have never displayed uniformity. Important regional variations were always present [...]' (p. 27). Interestingly, he sees in notions of continuity something peculiarly English/British: 'Most European nations are aware that their present territory was once ruled by foreign

²⁰Heinrich August Winkler, *Geschichte des Westens. Von den Anfängen in der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2009). See the multiple reviews in *sehpunkte* 10 (2010), no. 6 [15.6.2010], <http://www.sehpunkte.de/2010/06/16866.html> (accessed 13.7.2010).

powers, dominated by different cultures or inhabited by alien peoples' (p. 35) To which comparative historians of nationalism might answer: no, they are not. In fact, it is a characteristic of all national histories to construct continuities which lose themselves in the mist of time. Once again we find claims of peculiarity hugely inflated.

Davies's first chapters are in fact reminders that the early history of the Isles was not yet national history: 'The English had not yet arrived. The English language had not yet been invented.' The reader might wonder: why start a national history with a non-beginning, but in some respects, of course, *The Isles* is more an anti-national than a national history, in that its main aim is to challenge notions of an eternal British nation. Hence it also needs to question the traditional beginnings of national history. This theme is continued in the second chapter, where Davies notes how most British histories begin with the coming of the Romans (p. 73). The Celts are written out of national history, because decades of classical education made educated Britons identify with the Romans far more than with the 'barbarous Celts'. As the nineteenth-century Celtic revival was linked to nascent nationalism in Scotland, Ireland and Wales; it made it even more suspect in England. Davies, however, displays little sympathy for the Romans – arguably, in his eyes, another imperial force like the English. It was 'vanity', he argues, which made them invade the Isles. His emphasis is on British resistance and on colonial overstretch, describing Roman Britain as an insecure frontier province. There were, he admits, different degrees of Romanization, but overall the Romans left no lasting legacy in the Isles (p. 118). When the Romans left, the people in the Isles, according to Davies, would probably have described themselves as 'former Roman province of Britannia'. Most certainly, he insists, there was no sense of Englishness yet.

He downplays the national elements in 1066, arguing that this was not a battle of the English against the French, but a scramble for the spoils of Viking England (p. 236). It is only with Alfred that Davies sees the beginnings of the English nation, describing the Saxon king as 'founder of a new united nation' called 'Engla land' (pp. 222, 229). This, of course, is in some respect a confirmation of the Anglo-Saxonism of the nineteenth century, which was obsessed with the cult of Alfred. 'By the fourteenth century', Davies writes, 'there could be no doubt that the Isles were inhabited by four historic peoples' (p. 325). Two of them, the English and the Scots, had their own state polity, whilst the Welsh and the Irish were denied theirs in an era of 'national misfortunes' (p. 327) The latter judgement indicates how Davies casts the Celtic national narratives in a Romantic mode that is entirely absent from the way he narrates English national history.

However, there are also some striking inconsistencies in his denial of national continuity. Thus, when discussing 'Canyon Cave Man' in Chapter 1, he is quick to assert: 'he was certainly not English' (p. 3), only to continue with a reference to the strong continuity of the genetic make-up of the people

of England. All invasions and migrations seem to have had little impact on the gene pool of the English, who, in their genetic make-up remained almost unchanged (p. 167). Whilst it is not really discussed what this genetic code tells us about individual or national character traits, it gives the reader a sense of unbroken continuity of local kinship groups over thousands of years.

In both histories, beginnings correspond to endings. After all, Winkler ends with the reunification of Germany, which makes possible the entire 'normalization' of national history and thereby gives structure and meaning to Winkler's *Sonderweg* national history. The final chapter, entitled 'Goodbye to all Sonderwege', provides a succinct summary of the main arguments of previous chapters, ending on what is clearly an upbeat assessment about Germany overcoming its lack of Westernization after 1945 and its post-national *Sonderweg* after 1990.

Davies similarly structures his book from the end. There is a long coda to *The Isles* in which he predicts the break-up of Britain. He regards it as doubtful whether the United Kingdom will live to see the tercentenary in 2007 (*The Isles*, p. 881). The United Kingdom was created to serve the interests of empire, and it has become superfluous after the end of empire. Europe is the new horizon for the Isles (p. 870 ff.). Some of his one-liners graphically underline the book's message: 'The United Kingdom is not, and never has been, a nation state.' Its dissolution 'is not necessarily an unmitigated tragedy' as 'patriotism is a healthy quality' (p. 882) and therefore the emergence of different nation-states in the Isles is not bad at all: 'Even if Britain were to break up, all that is really valuable would remain' (p. 883).

Davies's ending in fact underlines how his whole diatribe against Britishness is not in fact born out of a general anti-nationalism or out of self-deprecating sentiments, but out of sympathy with the minor nations of Europe and their national self-ambitions, in this case the Irish, Scots and Welsh. Ending with two quotes by 'outsiders', Felipe Fernandez Armesto and Bill Bryson, which amount to declarations of love for England and Britain, Davies again underlines his own emotional commitment to the Isles, albeit not to the British Isles or the United Kingdom. Both Davies and Winkler then write narratives which are, in the words of Lawrence Stone 'directed by some "pregnant principle", and which possess a theme and an argument.'²¹

Both authors acknowledge the importance of perspectivity to the writing of history and therefore accept that a wide range of perspectives on British and German national history is possible. They thus relativize any truth claims their histories may possess, indicating a major difference to the classical nineteenth-century national master narratives of the nation. However, Davies is more radical than Winkler in this respect.

²¹L. Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a new old history', *Past and Present* 85 (1979), 3–24, quote on p. 3.

Winkler admits in the introduction to the second volume that he is more unsure in his judgements the closer to the present he gets. And he expressly allows his reader different judgements when it comes to the more recent past. Behind this caution stands Hegel's famous dictum that the owl of Minerva only flies out at dusk. By inversion, one can also read that Winkler's judgments on earlier periods are more 'scientific' and hence less debatable and contestable. Winkler is proud of his own professionalism and expertise in German national history and makes it clear from the start that he can draw on a vast amount of primary source material. Indeed, he quotes at length from intellectual debates and parliamentary proceedings. He also frequently refers to the authority of fellow historians when making particular points, citing named authorities in German national history to underline particular points he is making (see, for example, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. II, pp. 17, 25, 185, 236, 257 ff.).

There is a more rigorous voluntarism in Davies's history. The historian in fact has to choose how best to weave his story together: 'History is wound from many strands. [...] Historians must somehow reduce the tangle to manageable and comprehensible proportions' (*The Isles*, p. 585). Davies, in stark contrast to Winkler, starts from a frank admission that he is not an expert in British national history, that he relied almost exclusively on secondary material and that he had the help of a range of named national experts who commented on his diverse chapters. Like his hero, G. M. Trevelyan, Davies longs to write for a broader public and 'to escape from the professional game'. Like Winkler, Davies also likes to quote at some length, but it is mainly from literature and other colourful descriptions of particular events in national history. Overall, we can see how Davies consciously links his endeavour to a strong 'amateur' tradition in British national history writing, whereas Winkler is the child of an equally strong adherence to the benchmarks of professionalism going back all the way to Leopold von Ranke and his disciples.

Both authors bring themselves into the story. From the 1980s onwards, Winkler, the historian, makes appearances as Winkler, the historical actor, who warned, with other public intellectuals, against anti-Western sentiments and against loosening the relations with the United States (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. II, p. 415). He also refers to himself as a major opponent of the idea of bi-nationalism, prominent among left-of-centre historians and intellectuals in the FRG during the 1980s (vol. II, p. 434 f.). And finally, he accounts for his own position in the *Historikerstreit* (vol. II, p. 445). The historian Winkler talks about the historical actor Winkler in the third person, thereby distancing his historical alter ego from himself as historical narrator.

Davies is not a historical actor in his narrative, but he has no hesitation in describing his book as 'a very personal view of history' (*The Isles*, p. xxiv). He takes a swipe at what he perceives to be the narrow specialization in the field of history, which he blames directly for the alleged diminishing public importance of history. Davies also takes pleasure in revealing himself

with pride as a Northerner, when presenting the 'Boltonian view of modern history', which is all about how the industrial revolution and the modern world started in Bolton, Davies's birthplace (p. 634 ff.).

Winkler's national history is a classical event history with one damn thing following the other. Characteristically, many of Winkler's paragraphs start with time references, for example, 'In the autumn of', 'at the end of', 'On 30 December', and the like. Such temporal ordering highlights the role of the historian as chronicler of events, which are connected in such a way that the whole historical process seems a logical progression.²² The many lines of lived experience do not appear here, but instead the author is intent on following the one line of national history with a capital H. The selection of facts follows the imposition of a narrative order, which closes down other avenues of exploration, which might contradict the narrative framework. However, at times it appears as though the narration of events takes over and pushes the narrative framework into the background. In the introduction, Winkler declares his intention to focus on interpretations of the past (*Geschichtsdeutungen*), but his emphasis on event history in the main body of the text does not allow him to do this effectively.

Davies's national history is narratively more ambitious in that he does not follow a straightforward events' history. Instead, each of his chapters starts with an episode which is supposed to capture an important moment or make a general point about the period of national history dealt with in that chapter. This is then followed by a narrative account of the period, and the final section of each chapter is devoted to a review of historiographical debates about the period in question. Here Davies displays a very broad understanding of historiography, as he often discusses not just historians but also literature, sagas and published opinion more generally. In particular in the earlier chapters, when Davies is confronted with the absence of historically reliable sources, he time and again refers to myths and legends, cites generously from them and argues that they might well contain a kernel of truth. He certainly does not draw a sharp dividing line between myths and 'knowable' history. Instead there are lots of references to 'obscurity' and that 'it isn't known', but also the conviction that 'legends are an unavoidable part of the story' (*The Isles*, p. 151).

Political frameworks for the nation

Winkler's history is by and large a political and intellectual history with very limited information on social, cultural and economic developments. He is keen to trace party and parliamentary politics as well as review the diverse national

²²R. Aminzade, 'Historical Sociology and Time', *Sociological Methods and Research* 20:4 (1992), 403–27.

identity debates through nineteenth- and twentieth-century German history. The slow process of parliamentization is contrasted with the belated, but successful nation formation and deficits in parliamentarism before 1945. Winkler describes Prussia as a 'military state', which prevented any full-scale move towards the rule of law (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I, p. 33). In particular the feudal Prussian east (vol. I, p. 27) is seen as a detriment to Westernization, and Frederick II is made responsible for the re-feudalization of Prussia (vol. I, pp. 28, 31).

Winkler presents Prussian notions of a 'revolution from above' as reaction to the violent revolution in France. The Prussian revolution from above made Prussia the most progressive state in Europe, but such administrative modernization at the same time acted as a break on the political modernization of Prussia. Hence, Winkler concludes, progress became a 'bind' in the German context. As German nationalism itself was a reaction against Napoleon (vol. I, p. 54), the definitions of the nation against France were set on a course which continued through the Rhine crisis of 1840 (vol. I, p. 87) and the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. The sacralization of the fatherland in Fichte and others was born out of a German inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* republican, 'Western' France.

According to Winkler, German liberalism was 'too weak' (third chapter) to achieve both freedom and unity at the same time. The constitutionalization of Prussia through the 1848 revolution was a lasting achievement (vol. I, p. 128), but did not start a significant process of 'catching up' with Western parliamentarisms. In the 1860s the majority of German liberals gave priority to unity before liberty. Winkler emphasizes that German liberalism opted for an alliance with the authoritarian German state in seeking to fight off the powerful challenge from socialism, whilst continuing to hope (largely in vain) to achieve the slow parliamentization and democratization of the authoritarian state (vol. I, pp. 237 ff; 301; 332).

Winkler focuses in his fifth and sixth chapters on arguing that nationalism changed its political alignment in the unified Germany. Originally a weapon of the political left to demand political emancipation (vol. I, pp. 70, 75), it now became a tool of the political right to cement the authoritarian Prusso-German state. The German liberals are presented as too weak to oppose this shift of the national idea to the right (vol. I, p. 246). The Junkers in particular are singled out as the most important social force against any effective Westernization of the German Kaiserreich (vol. I, p. 268).

Winkler emphasizes how the 'revolution from above' in 1918 only ended the backwardness of German parliamentarism on paper (vol. I, p. 366). Adherence to an authoritarian state was still strong in Weimar. Hindenburg's election as president is in fact described as 'plebiscite against parliamentary democracy' (vol. I, p. 460). Overall, Winkler stresses the authoritarian, anti-democratic tendencies in the German lands which contributed to the success of National

Socialism. Hence, he maintains a strong teleology of reading German history backward from the vantage point of 1933.

Winkler's second volume also puts the emphasis on party and parliamentary politics. Entry into the EU and NATO completed a mental Westernization in West Germany which goes back to the 1950s and comes to fruition over the long decades of political development in West Germany. The social market economy is hailed as 'revolutionary innovation' (vol. II, p. 178), which corresponded to the Basic Law in the political sphere in marking the breakthrough to Western political frameworks. The acceptance of the Basic Law and Western-style parliamentary democracy was much helped by the economic boom period after the war (vol. II, p. 221). Anything that Winkler perceives as endangering the Westernization of the FRG is criticized, for example, the peace movement, which is allegedly directed by East Germany (vol. II, pp. 357, 359, 373), Egon Bahr's ideas of equidistance of Europe to both superpowers, or the scandal surrounding party finances (here Winkler is particularly critical of Helmut Kohl).

Winkler is willing to describe the events in the GDR as a 'democratic revolution', but he also mentions that it lacks some of the characteristics of a 'great revolution' and therefore continues the tradition in Germany of not having 'great revolutions' (vol. II, p. 560). He describes the civil rights movement of the GDR as expressing Western values and highlights those moments where he sees such Western values coincide with patriotism. For the first time the tone of Winkler's account changes from the distanced observer to the more involved participant in a momentous historical moment:

The opening of the borders *was* the capitulation of the SED. In West Germany and Berlin the people rejoiced together with their compatriots from the East, with whom they were united by so many things quite apart from the state-enforced separation. During the night of 9/10 November Berlin became one city again. The rejoicing about the breaching of the wall was all-German and even went beyond the German borders. The friends of freedom in the entire world were delighted for the Germans.

(vol. II, p. 512 f.)

Winkler's adoration of the Basic Law makes it a logical conclusion that he defends the decision to bring about reunification through Article 23 of the Basic Law (GDR just enters the existing constitutional framework of the FRG) rather than by starting a new process of constitution making (Article 146 of the Basic Law).²³

²³The FRG saw a major debate on this issue in 1990 – with Jürgen Habermas leading the camp of those wanting to achieve reunification via a longer process of drawing up an altogether new constitution, whilst his opponents, including Winkler, argued that the

He writes very much against the idea that the GDR had been *en route* to a more socially just and democratic society which would have been superior to the one framed by the Basic Law (vol. II, 557). He does not see any danger of the reunified Germany becoming less Western than the FRG, and cites the new citizenship law of the 1990s as a step in the direction of further Westernization.

But overall it is the successful history of the FRG which gives the Germans another chance to try their hand at Western nation building after 1990. It is, however, precisely because of his emphasis on political and intellectual debates that Winkler does not manage to convey any real sense of the Westernization of the FRG after 1945. We learn little about the impact of the European Union, and even less on the changes in consumer cultures and everyday lives of West Germans.

As constitutionalism is at the heart of traditional English/British master narratives, Davies is keen to undermine the Whiggish myth of the early and continuous progress of constitutionalism in England. The Magna Carta is described as 'historical myth' (*The Isles*, p. 328). Instead the 'royal autocracy in Tudor and early Stuart times' is highlighted, bringing it closer to continental systems of absolutism and denying the long-term relevance of early constitutionalism (p. 428). The Glorious Revolution had more to do with religion than with constitutional values. And in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Davies confronts the rhetoric of constitutionalism with the practice of corruption (p. 613), and emphasizes the strength of the British aristocracy, whose 'caste solidarity' (p. 620) ensured their continued political, social and economic dominance. Whereas Winkler makes constitutional political developments the focus of his narrative, Davies seeks to dislodge constitutionalism from its position as cornerstone of English/British national master narratives.

The role of empire in nation formation

Empire plays a crucial role in explaining national concepts in both narratives. Winkler starts his first substantive section after the introduction with the sentence: 'In the beginning was the Reich: [...]'. Throughout the volume he goes on to emphasize how the legacies of the Holy Roman Empire shaped national discourse in Germany up until 1945. He sees the Reich as a major dividing line between Germany and the nation-states of the West. *Staufisch Reich* ideology, he argues, already contained the idea of German world dominance which was to haunt German nationalists in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. In his chapters on the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich,

Basic Law had proven itself over the past 40 years and therefore was not in need of being changed. The new Länder in East Germany would simply join the Federal Republic and take over the Basic Law as their constitution.

Winkler highlights the role of the idea of the Reich in acting as a bridge between conservatives and National Socialists (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. II, p. 524).

In Davies's book the rise and decline of Britishness is closely intertwined with the rise and fall of the British Empire. When Davies's book first appeared, reviewers often commented on the novelty of linking the decline of empire to the decline of Britishness. Previously, scholars had concentrated on the decline of Protestantism, the lack of importance attached to hostile 'others', such as France and Germany, or economic decline. In fact, many national histories published in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s followed a master narrative of decline and were focused around a largely domestic story of post-war descent from imperial glory to 'sick man of Europe'. In the 1980s empire scholars had been establishing the idea that empire was an integral part of Britishness, but had not looked so much at what happened to Britishness under conditions of decolonization.

However, Davies in his depiction of empire is far from pursuing a demolition job. Imperialism, he argues, is now perceived as a 'condemned system' (*The Isles*, p. 603), but he repeats the idea that the British Empire was the best of the lot: 'it was the vehicle for improvement, bringing health, education and increased prosperity to most of the colonial peoples (p. 604). He also is quite positive on the empire establishing a 'worldwide network of settlements of "kith and kin"' (p. 449), and notes the rise of imperial English. He lovingly describes the imperial world of measurements and the imperial ethos. Decolonization itself was handled with 'skill and aplomb' (p. 763). Following, what is, after all, one of his main arguments, namely that the decline of empire necessitates the dissolution of Britishness, one would expect a detailed and systematic argument attempting to show how empire shaped Britishness and why it declined. But Davies is arguably too much a storyteller for this and instead all-too willingly opts for the pleasant anecdote and the gripping story. His textual strategies are also not free of inner ambiguities. In some respects, like the idea of the West in Winkler, so the idea of empire in Davies is a problematic structuring device, because it is in large measure assumed rather than argued through.²⁴

Davies's narrative is infused with a desire to demonstrate that Britishness had a particular function at a particular time. That time was empire, and it belongs, according to Davies, firmly to the past. However, he also refers to Britishness before the age of empire, for example when he writes about the mingling of Germanic and Celtic in the cultural sphere as 'touchstone of "true Britishness"' (p. 191). His re-evaluation of British national history he sees as long overdue: 'The old Anglocentric straitjacket is bursting at the seams' (p. xxvi). Throughout his text, there are extremely few references to British institutions. In fact, only

²⁴See also S. Ward, 'The End of Empire and the Fate of Britishness', in H. Brocklehurst and R. Phillips (eds), *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 243.

two are mentioned: the British civil service is referred to as 'instrument of national unification' (p. 634), and the working class and labour movement is described as an 'all-British affair' (p. 641).

Stories of dominance and subjugation

Both national histories have to account for national rivalries: Like every national historian of Germany, Winkler has to deal with the Prussian-Austrian dualism in the nineteenth century, which was only resolved by the forceful removal of Austria from the German nation through the Prussian-Austrian war of 1866. Despite some misgivings about Prussia's domination of Germany after 1871 and about Bismarck's moral character, Winkler's history is, on the whole, quite Prussian. For a start, he deplores the development of Germany along lines of territorial states in contrast to early and centralized nation-state formation in France and England. There are echoes of the Prussian school in his description of how the territorial states hindered the development of a unified nation-state along French and English lines (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I, pp. 10–12). Second, he sees no alternative to Prussia when it comes to the unification of Germany (vol. I, p. 62). The Habsburg Empire, Winkler argues, was no basis for nation-state formation (vol. I, p. 179). Hence the Bismarckian foundation of Germany is justified as the only realistic solution to the German question which was legitimate and workable in Europe – something Winkler had expressly denied in the 1980s. During the historians' controversy, he wrote: 'Given the role that Germany played in instigating both world wars, Europe and Germany cannot and should not wish for a new German Reich, a sovereign nation state. This is the logic of history [...].'²⁵ The military victory of Sedan is even described as the 'masterly achievement' of Moltke's military genius (vol. I, p. 206). The Allies famously abolished Prussia in 1946, but Prussia's shadow, according to Winkler, lived on to darken the horizon of national debates in Germany after 1945. It was, above all, rejection of Prussianism which led to the rise of post-nationalism and anti-national sentiment in West Germany, which in turn made the left incapable of reacting to the challenges of reunification in 1990 and accept the emergence of a 'post-classical democratic nation state' (vol. II, 638).

If Prussian dominance over German national history is an important theme in Winkler, Davies deals extensively with the dominance of England over

²⁵H. A. Winkler, 'Auf ewig in Hitlers Schatten? Zum Streit über das Geschichtsbild der Deutschen', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14 November 1986, reprinted in *Historikerstreit. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich, 1987), pp. 256–63, quote on p. 262.

Britain. We have already noticed how Davies writes about 230 pages before conceding the emergence of something called England, and he is quick to assert thereafter that four historical people populate the Isles. Because British history is so often told as smooth transition from one regime and century to the next, Davies is keen to emphasize that 16 separate political entities described the British Isles during its long history. His narrative strategy underlines the frailty of Britishness, while he has no such inhibitions, when it comes to describing Scottish and Welsh identities which seem without internal contradictions, strong, firm and unambiguous.

Davies gives much space to the development of the storylines of the Irish, Scots and Welsh. These storylines are invariably linked to the English storylines through forms of domination and oppression. Whilst deriding the English for assuming 'that to be merged into England is the height of felicity', he has little truck with the opinion that the Scots benefited from and were enthusiastic about the union: 'At every stage on the torturous road which led to the formation of the United Kingdom, Scotland was England's junior, weaker and more reluctant partner' (*The Isles*, p. 582).

The aim of defamiliarizing the reader with his conceptions of a slow and timeless evolution of Englishness/Britishness is pursued through giving unusual names to different periods of history in the Isles (Midnight Isles, Painted Isles, Frontier Isles). Recognizing how important names are for establishing continuity, Davies introduced a whole host of new names which are often derived from his musings about what the inhabitants of the Isles might have called themselves at certain times. He also calls on his fellow historians to be careful not to use contemporary names for earlier things – 'for names reflect consciousness' (p. 180). However, in his own practice, he is not always consistent with this demand. Having established that there were no English and that one could best speak about 'Germanics', we find, on the following page this sentence: 'The Celtic nations showed no great solidarity among themselves except in their common dislike of the English.'

In line with his problematic attempt to establish the historicity of the Celtic nations, Davies mentions how the Saxons already referred to the 'Land of the Welsh' (p. 180). Between 800 and 1100 Wales, according to Davies, formed a 'cohesive cultural area' (p. 223). In his historiographical sections Davies is at his most scathing about the dominance of the English over other national histories in the Isles: 'all non-English histories in the Isles were either ignored or ridiculed' (p. 181). The Enlightenment historians and J. R. Green are picked out for particular criticism (p. 183), but all nineteenth-century historians are taken to task for their 'narrow English nationalism' (p. 329). Davies sets out to correct this, describing, for example, the 'fierce Welsh attachment to their law' (p. 299), which provoked a growing xenophobia of the English, who had nothing but contempt for divergent legal systems, languages and

cultures. Henry III plundered the lands of Wales (p. 312). Davies deplors the 'ruthlessness' of 'Edouard I's Welsh wars' (p. 315), in which 'the English response was cataclysmic, not to say exterminatory' and in which 'the infrastructure of Welsh life was systematically destroyed'. His sympathy with Welsh national ambitions is confirmed when he writes about 'the last and greatest attempts to shake off English domination' in the fifteenth century: 'Glyn Dwr's plans can only be described as grandiose' (p. 369). But the subsequent Tudor assault on Wales is described in terms of 'linguistic colonization' (pp. 407, 417) and 'colonial cultural policy' (p. 418). At the same time, Davies recalls how the English campaign in Ireland in 1602/3 was fought 'without mercy': 'a prostrate Ireland awaited her fate' (p. 411). Later on, the Battle of Culloden is described as 'destroying a civilization' (p. 627 f.). The Celtic languages were suppressed by the English, who modelled their language policies on German attempts to suppress Polish in the Prussian eastern provinces (p. 657).

And yet, all attempts to repress the Celts ultimately failed, as the twentieth century saw the English losing their grip. When the bigger part of Ireland was lost in 1922, 'few people in the British Isles noticed that the United Kingdom had lost a larger percentage of its territory than Germany had' after the First World War (p. 760). In the contemporary world key British institutions are seen as a spent force: the peers are presented as an 'endangered species', the monarchy is described as being on its last gasp and the 'relative economic decline was remarkable' (p. 794). Davies adds to this the regionalization of English culture plus the revival of Celtic counter-cultures (p. 808 ff.) to arrive at the conclusion that the real problem about the dissolution of Britishness is a distinct lack of an English national identity (p. 831). Seventy-eight appendices of Davies's book, taking up 120 pages, are concerned with demonstrating the diversity of the Isles: songs, maps, photographs, paintings, chronologies and poems underline the message of four separate historical nations sharing the territory of the Isles. England is just one among others.

National narratives and religion

Winkler's Prussianism involves a rather negative view on Catholicism, which is identified, above all, with economic backwardness (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I, p. 20). The re-Catholicization of Austria in the Counter-Reformation is equated with a permanent economic and intellectual disadvantage (vol. I, p. 30). The Kulturkampf in Prussia is described as 'unavoidable' (vol. I, p. 222), even if the means of that anti-Catholic struggle are criticized. But the delineation of religious and state authority was necessary for the modernization of the state. The Reformation, according to Winkler, was the first in a long series of German revolutions from above. He is not entirely

positive about the Reformation, as he holds it responsible for fostering an anti-Western orientation in the German lands (vol. I, p. 16). The Reformation further institutionalized the Holy Roman Empire and divided it along religious lines (vol. I, p. 19). It is the background for the Thirty Years War, which Winkler describes as *the* national catastrophe of Germany. Subsequently, Calvinism and pietism re-enforced the anti-Western orientation of Prussia (vol. I, p. 26).

Davies is not only extremely kind to the nations subjugated by the English, but also to a group hard done by the English, Scots and Welsh, namely Catholics. For a start, he is highly critical of the Reformation: 'The European dimension to England's internal affairs was one of many things that the Reformation destroyed' (*The Isles*, p. 338). It led to a complete denial of the 'country's long association with the Papacy' (p. 339) and to the adoption of an often fanatical Protestantism. The Reformation is discussed under the heading 'divisions and barriers' (p. 385). Martin Luther is described as a 'vulgar ex-monk'. His conclusion is: 'From any objective standpoint, the results of the Reformation in the Isles were very divisive' (p. 396).

A 'triumphantly Protestant England' was not only 'bad news for Catholics', but also for 'international reconciliation' (p. 399) According to Davies, it was likely that Shakespeare was a secret Catholic (p. 429). And in historiography he singles out the masterly English history of Father John Lingard for special praise, a history which was ignored only because of the author's Catholicism (p. 434). Davies contrasts the sobriety of Lingard with the 'dramatic' and 'vulgar' style of Protestant historians. He also deplors the Anglocentrism of both Geoffrey Elton and A. L. Rowse (pp. 442, 444).

It was also English Protestant prejudice which helped to scupper Charles I's attempt to propose a union with Scotland, something described by Davies as a missed development towards earlier forms of British identity (p. 468). Protestant Ulster was 'the scene of a particularly ruthless form of colonization' (p. 479). Here anti-Catholic hostility produced a 'system of social and cultural apartheid' (p. 480). Throughout his history Davies rarely misses an opportunity to condemn the 'violent persecution of the Catholic community' (p. 535). It was the intolerance of the Protestants which removed the perceived threat of a Catholic king and brought about the Glorious Revolution. This interpretation stresses religious over constitutional issues as the main factor in bringing about the changes of 1688 (p. 604). The 'old disease of anti-Catholicism' (p. 609) persisted well into the modern era: 'The Religious impulse in the imperial enterprise should not be underestimated' (p. 720). Even in post-Second World War Britain 'sectarian hatreds [...]were still thriving in the retarded time capsule of Protestant Ulster' (p. 769), where, as Davies underlines, more Catholics died than Protestants (p. 772).

Class conflict and national unity

Class conflict is always deeply problematic for national histories, as it threatens the unity of the national master narrative.²⁶ Whilst Davies ignores class as an analytical category altogether, Winkler is highly critical of those political forces who he sees as responsible or promoting class conflict. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Imperial Germany is taken to task for adopting an inflexible Marxism, but it is also noted how they were persecuted by the Bismarckian state which pursued a class war from above. Given such oppression Winkler finds it commendable how Social Democrats integrated themselves into the fabric of Imperial Germany and developed patriotic sentiments. His chapter on the Weimar Republic is characterized by strong anti-communism. The republic, Winkler argues, was right to clamp down on communist insurrections between 1919 and 1923, because it thus prevented a German civil war (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I, pp. 382, 397). The Communist Party (KPD) is described as 'willing instrument of Stalin' (vol. I, p. 481). The anti-communist theme continues in the second volume with the use of the communist GDR as a negative counterfoil to the heroic history of the FRG. Winkler consistently juxtaposes 'democracy and dictatorship' in the narrative of the two post-war Germanies, emphasizing how communist totalitarianism replaced the fascist one in East Germany.

In West Germany the banning of the KPD is described as 'constitutionally irreproachable' (vol. I, p. 184). The persecution of communists in the civil service in the 1970s is justified, even if the means are questionable (vol. II, p. 301). And the Godesberger Programme of the SPD is portrayed as a necessary 'emancipation from Marxism' which opened the path to making the SPD a genuine catch-all party (vol. II, p. 199). The anti-communism of the SPD is highlighted in order to contrast it to later attempts of the SPD to enter into dialogue with East German communists (vol. II, pp. 302, 386, 417, 453), which were based on basic misunderstandings about the dictatorial character of the communist regime in East Berlin.

Davies takes exception to Marxist scholarship. Early on in his book he explicitly criticizes Marxist and Marxist archaeologists for their emphasis on material culture, which neglected spiritual and intellectual culture (*The Isles*, p. 30). Christopher Hill is introduced as someone 'who studied at the Stalinist university of Moscow' (p. 536). As for the nineteenth century, Davies is adamant that politics cannot be explained by reference to socio-economic developments. Whilst he spends very little time discussing class cleavages in the Isles, Keir Hardie gets a pat on the back for steering British socialism away from Marxism (p. 640 f.).

²⁶G. Deneckere and T. Welskopp, "The "Nation" and "Class": European National Master Narratives and their Social "Other"', in S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 135–70.

Jews and Europeans as key 'others'

Winkler's storyline includes, right from the beginning, an early focus on the history of anti-Semitism, which is presented as key evidence for the anti-Western *Sonderweg* of Germany before 1945. The anti-Semitism of key nationalists, such as Arndt and Fichte is highlighted (*Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I, p. 66 f). Early pogroms, such as the Hep-Hep riots (vol. I, p. 76) are discussed as are the prominent links between anti-Semitism, anti-liberalism and anti-capitalism (vol. I, p. 227). The political parties' proximity to anti-Semitism is weighed up (vol. I, p. 281 ff.) and Winkler comes to the conclusion that bourgeois German society was 'dowsed in anti-Semitism' (vol. I, p. 320). The counting of the Jews in the First World War (vol. I, p. 344) and the strong anti-Semitism during the Weimar Republic are all dealt with extensively. Of course, this storyline culminates in National Socialism and the holocaust, but it gives the holocaust a teleology, which many historians of German anti-Semitism have questioned more recently.²⁷

If Jews are the most important 'other' in Winkler's narrative, Europe performs that function for Davies's national history. Calling the Channel 'the Sleeve' (*The Isles*, p. 8), he argues that in prehistoric times it did not divide the Isles from the continent but made exchange with the continent more lively, as travel by boat was easier than on foot or cart. This starts a prominent theme in his book which seeks to demonstrate that the Isles belonged to the European continent from time immemorial and had a long history of engagement with the continent. Continental imports into the Isles in the Iron Age are emphasized (p. 23). Outsiders from the Mediterranean first 'brought the Isles into the realm of literate and recorded history' (p. 25). The Celtic Isles (Chapter 2) were again intimately related to Celtic cultures on the other side of the Channel. The link between Roman Britain and the continent is rather obvious, and Vikings and Danes continue the European theme, tying the Isles again to developments on the continent.

Chapter 6 is entitled 'The Isles of Outremer'. Davies emphasizes the French character of the England of the Conqueror and subsequent generations of essentially French kings for whom England was a kind of 'outramer'. He produces a map showing England as part of Capetian and Angevin France (p. 260). And he quotes his favourite national historian, G. M. Trevelyan stating that the England of that time was 'a mere extension of Franco-Latin Europe' (p. 262). He also stresses the Frenchness of Simon de Montfort, a name most closely connected to a crucial foundational myth of Britain, Magna Carta (p. 312).

²⁷ Although note how the debate about long-term continuities of the holocaust have recently been rekindled by the thought-provoking essay of H. Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion and Race Across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2008).

Whilst it is Davies' declared aim to show the connectedness of Britain with continental Europe, linguistic infelicities at times betray the author's discomfort with such continental relations, as for example when he suggests that the 'shadow of France lay across them [the Isles] for the best part of four hundred years'. The metaphor of the shadow suggests something dark, unpleasant and unwanted. Only through defeat in the Hundred Year War did the 'Englished Isles' emerge (Chapter 7). Again, the lesser involvement with the continent should be deplored by Davies, but in fact he argues that 'defeat in the Hundred Years War gave England the chance to be herself for the first time in four centuries' (p. 373). Whatever that 'being herself' might mean, it is positively connotated, whereas the alternative, victory, 'would have inevitably embroiled England in open-ended Continental concerns'. Whilst Davies accuses the English of 'arrogance born of impunity' in their treatment of 'France as a traditional playground for rape, plunder, and derring-do', he also describes the Stewards and Tudors as 'native dynasties': 'they had no home base beyond the Isles'. And talking about Tudor culture, especially drama, he finds it difficult to withhold his admiration for English cultural achievements: 'English culture scaled heights that have never been surpassed' (p. 420). After all that, the reader begins to wonder whether, with Davies, beneath the veneer of championing the proximity of the 'Isles' to Europe, lie in fact sentiments of pride in a native English national culture.

But it is the continued entanglement of the Isles with the Continent which commands his particular attention. Thus, he describes religious conflicts in the Isles in the context of the wider religious conflicts in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Chapter 8). With regard to the Hanoverian monarchy, Davies highlights the fact that it 'was British in name only' (p. 630): 'None of the first three Georges ever visited Scotland, Wales or Ireland.' He includes a portrait of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, with the subtitle: 'the first Englishwoman to marry a British king', and a picture of Victoria and Albert amidst their children carries the subtitle: 'a family of solidly German descent'.

Despite all the links with the European continent, Davies concludes that British official attitudes towards Europe are characterized by 'non-engagement' and 'lofty detachment' (p. 688): "'Europe" was still a foreign country' (p. 690). But, according to Davies, the continued self-isolation from Europe cannot last. In a chapter entitled 'From Sterling to Euro: An Unfinished Tale' (p. 798 ff.), he sees metrication as symbolic of 'a slowly changing mental world' and refers to the Europeanization of British culture and trading patterns.

Gender and nation

Both national histories are extraordinarily male. In Winkler's story, women hardly figure at all, unless they were parliamentarians, engaged in party politics or contributed to debates around German national identity. Any

extended portraits of those who are attributed agency in German history are those of men: Frederick the Great, Otto von Bismarck, Friedrich Ebert, Gustav Stresemann, Adolf Hitler, Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Helmut Kohl (by no means a complete list). The slow and uneven democratization of gender politics in the nineteenth and twentieth century are not part of his exploration of the interrelationship between democracy and nation.

There are marginally more women in Davies's national history, and some even play prominent roles, such as Boudica and Joan of Arc. Yet what is emphasized is not their agency but what is being done to them – their suffering on behalf of the nation and their sacrifice for the nation. Boudica's fate is largely narrated as an example of the cruelty of the Romans: her resistance is described as rooted in personal experience: 'She herself was arrested and flogged. Her daughters were raped.' Her defeat resulted in 80,000 people being killed by the Roman armies (*The Isles*, p. 93), Joan of Arc is described as 'a young girl of seventeen', who 'rode to France's rescue'. The military victories are briefly mentioned, but it is again her tragic suffering which is highlighted: 'she was captured by the Burgundians in a skirmish and sold to the English, who had her burned in the market place of Rouen on charges of heresy' (p. 372). Like so many national historians before him, Davies is also intrigued by the story of Mary, Queen of Scots, and again he spends much time going over her family background, marriages, her personal tragedies and the dramatization of her story (pp. 379 ff.; 445 ff.). It is an almost entirely personal story that is being told here, and it confirms a very traditional affiliation of women to the personal sphere. The women's movement, the Suffragettes, and women's emancipation more generally, do not get a mention in Davies's national narrative. Overall, both histories are male-centred, and both convey an image of the nation as forged by men. One finds in Davies a connotation between national misfortune and sexual deviance, when he compares Edouard III positively with 'his wretched bisexual father' (p. 347). It is, of course, not entirely clear whether wretchedness is tied to bisexuality in this grammatical construction, but one can say that at the very least there is a narrative association here between a negative character and deviant sexuality.

Conclusion

We have argued at the beginning of this chapter that the national histories of Winkler and Davies are paradigmatic for a wider trend in German and British national history writing around the turn of the millennium. In reviewing their respective textual strategies for presenting the nation, we can draw the following conclusions:

Winkler's narrative is presenting a cohesive storyline to underpin the construction of a unified national narrative after decades of division. His

narrative is meant to deliver the common historical consciousness that Winkler sees as lacking in contemporary Germany. By demonstrating that 1945 ended the anti-Western German *Sonderweg* and that 1990 ended the post-national West German *Sonderweg*, Winkler seeks to lay the foundations for the emergence of a historical consciousness of a 'democratic post-classical nation-state'. Concerned mainly with parliamentary politics and intellectual debates on national identity, he relies on a highly idealized concept of 'the West' for providing narrative structure to his story. A mild Prussianism forecloses any discussion of alternatives to the Bismarckian nation-state of 1871. The Reich ideology, Protestantism, anti-Semitism and anti-French sentiments and class conflict all moved the German nation onto a national trajectory that was fundamentally different from 'the West'.

On the surface, Davies's narrative teleology could not appear to be more different, as he is not constructing, but deconstructing the alleged national unity and insisting on the plurality of national storylines in 'the Isles'. But both authors write their histories with a patriotic motivation: Winkler self-consciously sets out to write *the* German master narrative for the reunified Germany. Davies aims to liberate the smaller nations of the Isles from English master narratives masquerading as Britishness. In doing so Davies creates new homogeneous national histories at a different level: stressing the plurality and multiplicity in Britishness, he denies the same plurality and multiplicity in Welshness, Scottishness and Irishness. Seeking to undermine the constitutionalism and Protestantism traditionally underlying British national history, he ties the rise and fall of Britishness tightly to the rise and fall of the British Empire – without ever providing an analytical framework for the analysis of the link between empire and Britishness.

Winkler's national consciousness is an explicitly modern one. Whilst he pays tribute in the first chapter to factors (in particular linguistic factors) contributing to the emergence of national consciousness from around 1000 onwards, he is adamant that modern national consciousness only emerges in the German lands as a response to the French revolution and Napoleon. Hence he concentrates on the interrelationship between the modern nation and democratic Western thinking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Davies's chronological framework suggests that he does not belong to the modernist camp in nationalism studies. Whilst he is careful not to trace national allegiances to pre-history or even to Roman times, he does start to talk the nation talk from about the time of Alfred the Great and is adamant that four historic nations were present in the fourteenth century 'Isles'.

Winkler is also more authoritative than Davies. He is presenting himself as the professional, whose expertise and experience gives him the authority to speak on the nation and on behalf of the nation, providing a national master narrative for the historical consciousness of contemporary Germans. Only

when Winkler arrives at depicting developments in very recent times does he concede the possibility of other perspectives.

Davies, like Winkler, aims for a general audience and his intention is to influence historical consciousness in the Isles, but he is far more willing to portray himself as one storyteller among others. His status as non-expert in British history and his penchant for good stories underline his self-consciously contemporary standpoint. He does not speak with the authority of the professional historian, but as an engaged contemporary citizen of the Isles who wants to make a contribution to a live contemporary debate about Britishness. He wears his historical professionalism lightly.

Both the self-styled amateur and the proud professional need 'others' to bring their national history into sharper focus.²⁸ For Winkler the idea of 'the West' is the crucial 'other' for definitions of Germanness up until 1945. Anti-Semitism, anti-French sentiments, communism and National Socialism were, according to Winkler, the most visible signs of the prevalence of such anti-Western thought. After 1945 the denial of the nation is portrayed as the most important 'other' in West Germany. It is through overcoming these 'others' in Germany's national past that the contemporary re-unified Germany will be able to develop a democratic national consciousness.

For Davies the 'other' of Britishness is, first and foremost, the existence of four historical nations in the 'Isles', three of which have been at various times oppressed by the English. The second important 'other' in Davies' storyline is Europe. Regardless of the fact that the Isles had extremely close contacts with continental Europe for many centuries, the notion of being isolated and different from the Continent became well ingrained in British historical consciousness. Despite being overtly pro-European, Davies's history at times displays a marked ambiguity towards Europe, demonstrating how difficult it can be to frame a national history against the dominant national master narrative.

The textual strategies of both narratives are extremely traditional. If more recent reflections on national histories, under the influence of post-structuralist paradigms, have emphasized the multiplicity of storylines, their internal contradictions and their heterogeneity, Winkler's and Davies's national histories remain solidly one-dimensional. They weave their narration around an interpretative frame, which leads respectively towards and away from particular definitions of national identity. Winkler's is a linear development of the struggle to establish a democratic, Western understanding of nation at the heart of the German national narrative. Davies's is a more cyclical understanding of the development of national histories in the 'Isles': the Celtic nations

²⁸How important 'others' were in the construction of national histories more generally is highlighted by all the contributions in S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation*.

suffered repression by the English for a while, but are in the present returning to their own distinct national histories. The narrative construction of continuity, change and agency in the stories are, as far as possible, hiding internal contradictions and all those things that do not fit. There is no assumption of kaleidoscopic, multiple or playful identities. If, following Winkler, we pronounce the democratic nation-state of the twenty-first century to be post-classical, these twenty-first-century national histories have an altogether 'classical' feel to them.

Overall, then, Winkler's and Davies's national histories capture perfectly what future generations might decide as having been a particular moment in the histories of the British and German nations respectively. For German historical consciousness, this would be the moment in which a democratic Western understanding of the nation became the accepted master narrative of German national identity. For British historical consciousness, it would be the moment in which Britishness faded away and was replaced with three separate national identities (and possibly nation-states), England, Scotland and Wales. The owl of Minerva only flies out at dusk and hence it is too early to judge whether these national histories are indeed providing the foundation stones for such new national master narratives. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, national narratives in both countries remain hotly contested, and the future seems wide open. But one should not be fooled by those who proclaim a declining importance of national narratives in the globalized era. As the analysis of these two exemplary national histories demonstrates, for better or worse (and I tend to veer in the direction of the latter) they retain a topicality and importance for identity construction today.

21

Myth in the Writing of European History

Jan Ifversen

It is a serious question whether a political community can achieve political order without developing a foundation myth.¹

Europe is not so much a 'thing' as an idea, image, myth.²

History, myth and identity

It has become commonplace to claim that the writing of national history plays a prominent role in the creation and the consolidation of national identities. Communities need history. History establishes what Paul Ricœur has called 'the narrative identity of a culture'.³ The narration of what the community 'lives through' is the framework that constitutes identity over time. Through the narrative, the community stands out as an entity despite all the changes it experiences. Ricœur points out that a community only comes into existence through narrative, more precisely through those narratives which the community accepts as its own. We might call such narratives master narratives. Master narratives are what confer identity, it is claimed.⁴ The term is used for representations of the past that acquires a dominant status in a society.⁵

¹ C. J. Friedrich, *Man and his Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics* (New York, 1963), pp. 96.

² P. Burke, 'How to Write a History of Europe: Europe, Europes, Eurasia', *European Review*, 14, 2 (2006), 237.

³ P. Ricœur, 'Myth and History', in Mircea Eliade (ed), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 10 (New York, 1987), p. 276.

⁴ J. Rüsen, 'Einleitung: Für eine interkulturelle Kommunikation', in J. Rüsen, M. Gottlob and A. Mittag (eds), *Die Vielfalt der Kulturen* (Frankfurt/M., 1988), p. 23.

⁵ K. H. Jarausch and M. Sabrow, "'Meistererzählung" – Zur Karriere eines Begriffs', K. H. Jarausch and M. Sabrow (eds), *Die historische Meistererzählung: Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen, 2002), p. 16; M. Middell, M. Gibas

For their history writing to produce master narratives, historians must, however, partake in public discussions of the past. The scientific discourse of the historians thus becomes confronted with public demands for a history that will support a collective identity.

Europe is an object of history. Since the end of the nineteenth century historians have written histories of Europe using the templates of national history writing. In my contribution, I will focus on the challenges which lie in using these templates for a history of Europe. Do the histories of Europe contribute to a European identity? Are the historians of Europe involved in producing myths similar to those made by their colleagues in national history writing?⁶ These are the questions I seek to answer. To do that I need, however, to clarify, what I mean by myths.

Identity relates to myths. Anthony Smith talks about 'the myth-symbol complex' as the basic structure of any community or 'ethnie', to use his term. The principal driving force in this complex containing 'myths, memories, values and symbols' is the constitutive myth or 'mythomoteur'.⁷ It is the basis for forming a political community. Smith therefore speaks about the mythomoteur as the 'constitutive, political myth' of a community.⁸ In the same vein, Bo Stråth points out that myth – together with memory – is what provides identity to a community.⁹

By 'myth' we often mean a narrative that legitimizes a community. Myths are narratives about origin and creation. In this sense, myth differs from history writing.¹⁰ History writing is about linking events within a chronological framework. The myth tells us about a condition prior to history. It is not the first

and F. Hadler, 'Sinnstiftung und Systemlegitimation durch historisches Erzählen. Überlegungen zu Funktionsmechanismen von Repräsentationen des Vergangenen', *Comparativ* 10:2 (2000), 24.

⁶ For the role of myths in nation building, see G. Hosking and G. Schöpflin (eds), *Myths & Nationhood* (London, 1997); E. François and H. Schulze, 'Das emotionale Fundament der Nation', in M. Flacke (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen: Ein Historisches Panorama* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 17–33.

⁷ A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), p. 15.

⁸ Smith, *Ethnic Origin*, p. 58.

⁹ B. Stråth, 'Introduction: Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community', in B. Stråth (ed.), *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, (Brussels, 2000), pp. 19–46.

¹⁰ This is not the same as claiming that history writing does not partake in making myths. As Chris Lorenz has shown, historical theory in the early nineteenth century played a mythical function in the narratives, see Chris Lorenz, 'Drawing the Line: "Scientific" History between Myth-making and Myth-Breaking', in S. Berger, L. Eriksonas and A. Mycock (eds) *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 35–55. An important feature of the scientific discourse is, however, to distance itself from myth making.

chapter in a history, but rather the precondition for there being a history to narrate. As Ricœur puts it, myths only exist 'when the founding event has no place in history, but is situated in a time before all history'.¹¹ This 'time of beginnings' gives the myth a particular sacral status, which separates it from the profane present.¹² Practising the myth means pointing to the separation between origin and present. The basic function of a myth is precisely that it is able to transgress the present time. In Bronislaw Malinowski's formulation, the most important aspect of the myth is 'its character of a retrospective, ever present live actuality'.¹³

Present time becomes relativized through the myth. The rendering of a constitutive moment serves as a standard for evaluating the present. Constitution is not purely about origin; it is also about the values that a community must live by. A constitution sets up the permanent against the contingency of history.¹⁴ In classical, premodern myths, origin and constitution are embedded in a cosmology. They are cosmological as well as cosmogonic, that is, concerning origin. Modern myths are political. They legitimize foundational, political acts. At the same time, however, they keep their function as normative points of orientation, since they express transhistorical values that provide orientation to a given community. Ideally, the present must live by these values, but if the myth is to work, a certain gap must be indicated. Jan Assmann even speaks of myths having a 'counter-presentic' function that makes the present appear deficient *vis-à-vis* the fullness of the myth.¹⁵ In my view, it is precisely this deficiency that makes the myth work.

It is often emphasized that myths must be treated as narratives following the rules of emplotment, but also that, in their constitutive function, they differ from other types of narratives – for instance, folk tales – in their community constituting function.¹⁶ I propose to view the mythical narrative as a particular discourse, the purpose of which is to justify order and authority in a community. For Hayden White, myth is a discourse that is activated in situations

¹¹ Ricœur, *Myth and History*, p. 273.

¹² M. Eliade, *L'aspect du mythe* (Paris, 1963), p. 15.

¹³ B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Boston, MA, 1948), p. 102.

¹⁴ C. Leggewie, 'Der Mythos des Neuanfangs – Gründungsetappen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: 1949–1968–1989', in H. Berding (ed.), *Mythos und Nation: Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt/M., 1996), pp. 275–302.

¹⁵ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992), p. 79.

¹⁶ G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London, 1970), p. 39.

where a community faces catastrophe.¹⁷ Catastrophes denote situations that cannot be mastered within the normal cognitive and moral apparatus of the community. According to White, grasping a catastrophic event within a mythical discourse means producing a dramatizing narrative which introduces a shift from causality to morality: 'A mythic representation of the scene of disaster dramatizes the scene by emplotting the events that occur there as effects, or rather as consequences, of a specifically moral conflict.'¹⁸ When events are being narrated in a moral field – instead of being explained by a set of causes – they will turn around righteousness. The foundational myth of a community contains its basic moral coordinates – its core values. The activation of myth serves the purpose of (re)constituting the community. Reconstitution takes place when the event is perceived as morally crucial and touching on the core values of the community. In his dealing with mythical discourse, Hayden White focuses more on the tragic moments at hand in moralizing the event and less on how the core values are brought to play. I will prefer to focus on how the separation of good from evil forces in the mythical discourse has a (re)constituting effect for the community. If the separation is successful, the myth has made it possible for the community to continue its existence in accordance with its core values.

White is certainly not alone in noting the role of mythical discourse in situations where a community is threatened by collapse. Raoul Girardet has shown how myths are used to establish order in times of crisis: 'Thanks to the myth, the obscure chaos in the events is again placed under the control of a vision of immanent order.'¹⁹ On a more general note, Hans Blumenberg has pointed out that the core function of the myth is to secure ontological stability by minimizing the feeling of an uncomfortable and uncontrollable world.²⁰ In a modern perspective, this rationalizing and ordering function of the myth must, however, be viewed as a particular discourse that competes with different forms of rationalization and ordering. The moral dimension of the myth separates it from the objective gaze of science. Others have highlighted the

¹⁷ H. White, 'Catastrophe, Communal Memory and Mythic Discourse: The Uses of Myth in the Reconstruction of Society', in B. Stråth (ed.), *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond* (Brussels, 2000), p. 52.

¹⁸ White, 'Catastrophe'.

¹⁹ R. Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris, 1986), p. 181 (my translation); for the role of myths in situation of crisis, see also Stråth, 'Introduction: Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community', p. 32; Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (London, 1996), p. 77; Victor W. Turner, 'Myth and Symbol', in David Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 10 (New York, 1968), p. 578.

²⁰ H. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt/M., 1979).

affective dimension of the myth.²¹ Affect is often perceived in opposition to the rational, for instance by Cassirer in his famous study of the irrationality of totalitarian, political myths.²² That myths are immune from certain forms of rationality does not imply, however, that they are irrational. The affective dimension of the myth – its pathos – can be said to fulfil the function of emphasizing involvement and responsibility.

Myths most often narrate dramatic events. Foundational myths are dramatic stories about new beginnings coming into existence. In classical creation myths, creation is often the result of a struggle between violent forces. Modern political myths, where any creation must be perceived as a *new* beginning, typically stage a violent clash with the old order. In its most radical form, this new beginning is represented in a revolutionary myth. The basic meaning of revolution is a new beginning.²³ This new beginning can be presented as the result of a deliberate, violent action or an inevitable destiny. Eliade refers to creation myths that represent a catastrophic ending from which a new world will arise.²⁴ In his theory on liminal experience, Victor Turner links the mythical representation of moving from chaos to cosmos with the creation of a phase of in-betweenness where the values of the community are being questioned and then reconstituted. The role of the myth is to secure a ‘returning to first principles’ which reconstitute the community.²⁵

In-between phases might be viewed as relating to radical events that question the foundation of a community. It is, however, also possible to imagine a re-enactment of myth in less radical situations, for instance in political actions strongly oriented towards the future. The myth might contribute to a reduction of uncertainty.²⁶ If myths are to be summoned and practised in different situations they must be flexible to a certain degree. To use Blumenberg’s famous expression, the work of the myth is also ‘a work on the myth’. The myth ‘works’ in the community, or as Eliade puts it, the community is living its myths.²⁷

²¹ Flood, *Political Myth*, p. 76; Y. Bizeuil, ‘Politische Mythen, Ideologien und Utopien: Ein Definitionsversuch’, in Peter Tepe et al. (eds), *Mythos No.2: Politische Mythen* (Würzburg, 2006), p. 14.

²² E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (London, 1946).

²³ H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 35.

²⁴ Eliade, *L’aspect du mythe*, p. 78.

²⁵ Turner, ‘Myth and Symbol’, p. 577.

²⁶ Bizeuil establishes a division of labour between myth and utopian thinking. In his view, myths are reoriented towards the past, utopias towards the future, see Bizeuil, ‘Politische Mythen, Ideologien und Utopien’, p. 20. I prefer to see both myth and utopia as narratives about a non-historical time that orients the present.

²⁷ M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (London, 1964), p. 19.

In the literature on political myths, there seems to be agreement that political myths are a particular form of myth used to legitimize the existence of a political community. They are viewed as foundational myths built around a constitutive, political act.²⁸ They thus link the emergence of the community to a constitutive act. This implies that political myths differ from traditional, cosmological myths in that they do not defer the creation of the community to a non-historical, non-human time. Political myths do not need cosmologies and are therefore modern.

In as much as political myths are formed in narratives, they display the basic narrative structures around events, time, actors and locations. Collective actors play a particular role in political myths, but we also find individual actors in the shape of heroes or founding fathers. Locations – typically symbolized as homes – are equally central to political myths. Home is essential to a community. In narratives, time is generally the chronological frame that holds together the passing of events. In mythical narrative, time is of a somewhat different nature. Mythical time is either what is before passing time, in a pure beginning, or – in the case of a nostalgic structure – in a golden age long gone. This conception of another time is precisely what characterizes the temporal structure of myth.

Writing European history

In the last ten years, historians have given much thought to how to write *Europe's* history.²⁹ Criticism is directed against earlier multi-volume works on European history for being simple 'container history', where *Europe* only means a scene where national histories are played out.³⁰ Also, those semi-official attempts to write a European history from an integration perspective,

²⁸ Leggewie, 'Der Mythos des Neuanfangs', p. 280; Bizeuil, 'Politische Mythen, Ideologien und Utopien', p. 22; Heidi Hein-Kirchner, 'Politische Mythen', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 11 (2007), 30.

²⁹ For critical reflections, see H. Duchhardt and A. Kunz (eds), '*Europäische Geschichte*' als historiographisches Problem (Mainz, 1997); S. Macdonald (ed.), *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness: Reflections and Provocations* (Hamburg, 2000); G. Stourzh (ed.), *Annäherung an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna, 2002); S. Woolf, 'Europe and its Historians', *Contemporary European History* 12:3 (2003), 323–37; J. Dülffer, 'Europa – aber wo liegt es? Zur Zeitgeschichte des Kontinents', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004), 524–64; as well as articles on www.europa.clio-online.de (accessed 4 May, 2009) .

³⁰ R. Hohls, I. Schröder and H. Siegrist 'Einleitung: Europa und die Europäer', *Themenportal europäische Geschichte* (2006) <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/default.aspx?tabid=40208282> (accessed 4 May, 2009); W. Schmale, 'Die Komponente der historischen Europäistik', Stourzh (ed.), *Annäherung an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 119–39.

which were launched at the beginning of the 1990s, have received criticism from historians.³¹ Besides being described as container histories and semi-teleological, the subject of European history has been perceived as a common structure, as converging systems, as a model, as a community of communication and as a discourse.³² The ongoing debate on how to write European history has clearly heightened the awareness of the complexities involved. Two approaches seem to dominate. In one, the focus is on *Europe* as discursively constructed, which implies considering the positions from where Europe is being interpellated. The other approach concentrates on the various projects of integration and regionalization that have taken shape in Europe. One could add the continuous efforts among historians and social scientists in examining common structures and developments in the different societies of geographical Europe.³³

In a historical narrative of Europe we must expect *Europe* to play several roles. Obviously, it will still signify a more or less well-defined arena on which events take place. But Europe will also appear as a collective subject that can be invoked by many different actors, from politicians to ordinary citizens of the various nation-states. This calling for Europe is part of making it appear as a unity of one kind or another. In the narratives, these features will have to be combined with a particular employment. The recent historiography of European history has proposed various ways of systematizing this employment. For twentieth-century European history, Jost Dülffer has analysed three dominant master narratives.³⁴ The first is a progressive narrative about the rebuilding and modernization of Europe after the Second World War, with European integration playing a particularly dynamic and future-oriented role. The second is a tragic narrative that emphasizes the catastrophic events of the twentieth century, with the Holocaust as the absolute zero point in a history which includes the First World War, imperialism, colonial wars and the Cold War. The third master narrative is of a reactionary nature. It recounts Europe's

³¹ This criticism has mainly targeted Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's *L'Europe: histoire de ses peuples*, that appeared simultaneously in 12 different countries in 1991 at the initiative of Frédéric Lelouches, and the book series *Making Europe* edited by Jacques le Goff and published in several European languages, see Nicolas Roussellier, 'Pour une écriture européenne de l'histoire de l'Europe', *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire* 38 (1993), 74–89.

³² R. Hohls, I. Schröder and H. Siegrist, *Einleitung: Europa und die Europäer* (Stuttgart, 2005); Schmale, 'Die Komponente der historischen Europäistik', in G. Stourzh (ed.), *Annäherung an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna, 2002); M. Müller, 'Europäische Geschichte: Nur eine Sprachkonvention?', in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*.

³³ H. Kaelble, *Europäer über Europa: Die Entstehung des europäischen Selbstverständnisses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M., 2001).

³⁴ J. Dülffer, 'Zeitgeschichte in Europa – oder europäische Zeitgeschichte?', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 1–2, (2005), 18–26.

history as one of decline. Apart from containing the standard critique of modernity, emphasis is put on the merciless 'provincializing' of a Europe that has been reduced from being the home of global power to becoming a pawn in the fame of others.³⁵ Others have pointed to similar patterns in dealing with the identity of Europe whilst writing European history. Apart from the more obvious narratives of progress and decline, Hartmut Kaelble, in an effort to systematize discourses on European 'self-consciousness', points to three other features in defining the European subject.³⁶ One is the universalization of European values which can be linked to progress. A second feature is the emphasis on national diversity. A third feature is tolerance of the 'other' which goes against narratives of decline and threats. These features or perspectives can be detected in the different narratives framing the writing of European history. The emphasis on national diversity would be typical for a container history where a European history is the result of interactions between nation-states. The emphasis on universal values would be expected to appear in histories that portray Europe as an entity acting in a larger world. Tolerance would typically relate to histories that highlight the multiculturalist legacy of Europe. Some histories might include more of these features whereas others might more rigorously follow one particular narrative path.

The making of a myth

In the previous sections I have discussed the general features of political myths. It is widely acknowledged that nation-states build on myths; it is less so when it comes to the European political community. In fact, the dominant trend among scholars has been to emphasize the 'mythical deficit' of the European project and to criticize the superficial and ideological character of any community feeling related to Europe.³⁷ Against this criticism I will first claim that myth making was a necessary step for imagining and establishing European integration immediately after the Second World War, and, second, that a myth of a new Europe became an inherent and important part of the integration project right from the beginning.

³⁵ The term 'provincializing' is used by Dipesh Chakrabarty, albeit not to write a history of decline, but as a call for emancipation from what he still sees as a manifest eurocentrism among former colonial peoples, D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought & Historical Difference* (Ewing, NJ, 2000).

³⁶ Kaelble, *Europäer über Europa*, pp. 25–51.

³⁷ See, for instance, W. Schmale, *Scheitert Europa an seinem Mythendefizit?* (Bochum, 1997); A. D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press., 1995); Cris Shore, *Building Europe: the Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London, 2000).

Much has been written about the ideological background of European integration and even more so about how the European experience of the Second World War created the mental frame for thinking of Europe in institutional terms. It has become commonplace to mention how pan-European and federal ideas were revived in a Europe traumatized by war. In his famous speech in Zürich in 1946, Churchill advocated 'the united states of Europe' as the only viable option for establishing a peaceful Europe: 'If Europe is to be saved from the infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be this act of faith in the European family [...].'³⁸ Churchill painted a gloomy picture of a chaotic Europe that could only be saved by a joint action for peace. That this action was to be accompanied by 'a blessed act of oblivion' only made the changes he advocated more urgent. Federal ideas about European unity circulated in many places all over war-weary Europe. Federalists promoted the idea that the nationalist past of Europe had led directly to chaos and destruction. This disastrous past could only be overcome by European unity or as the leading French federalist organization, *la Fédération*, formulated it in 1947: 'If Europe is not to disappear, it must unite.'³⁹

The connection between the present chaos and European rebirth through supranational unity appeared time and again in the speeches and declarations from the Hague congress in 1948 and in the other meetings taking place to discuss the creation of a federal Europe.⁴⁰ Coudenhove-Kalergi, the grand old man of European federalism, expressed this clearly in his opening speech at the Hague Congress in May 1948: 'We wish to unite Europe to assure permanent peace between its peoples and to prevent the horrors of a war of total destruction.'⁴¹ There is no doubt that the perception of catastrophe was the dominant frame for thinking European integration. The great Enlightenment narrative of a European march through history that had been important for inter-war federalism had lost much of its appeal in the light of the Second World War. Also, the famous Schuman declaration, which announced the

³⁸ W. Churchill, 'Winston Churchill's Speech to the Academic Youth' (1946), *Europa-Informationen*. <http://www.europa-web.de/europa/02wwswww/202histo/churchil.htm> (accessed 4 May, 2009).

³⁹ *La Fédération*, no. 25, February 1947, quoted in Walter Liepgens and Wilfried Loth, *Documents on the History of European Integration*, vol. 3: *The Struggle for European Union by Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Western European Countries 1945–1950* (Berlin, 1988), p. 42.

⁴⁰ For a meticulous analysis of the debates leading up the Hague congress, see W. Liepgens, *Die anfänge der europäischen Einigungspolitik 1945–1950*, Part 1: *1945–1947* (Stuttgart, 1977).

⁴¹ *Congress of Europe*. Produced as a co-edition with the European Union to mark the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1999 (Strasbourg, 1999), p. 14.

European Coal and Steel Community in 1950, turns around the idea of establishing a peaceful Europe. It begins by invoking peace: 'World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threatens it.'⁴² Although Schuman refers to world peace, he has Europe in mind: 'A united Europe was not achieved and we had war.'⁴³ Peace is seen as a precondition for the *creation* of Europe. Europe as such is what must be created out of chaos. This is what myths are all about.

Churchill, Schuman and all the others that spoke of creating Europe were not myth makers in any strict sense. But their statements were part of what I have called a mythical discourse, the purpose of which is to find morally defensible ways out of chaos. Myth making in a proper sense only emerges when an institutional implementation of European unity has to be legitimized and stabilized. It is difficult to say precisely when this happens. It is a rather common view that the EEC and later the EU has been very actively involved in creating an 'official historiography' which places European integration within a narrative of peace, democracy and prosperity in Europe.⁴⁴ This historiography is commonly viewed as part of a larger European identity policy launched in the latter half of the 1980s. It is, however, questionable if the post-war myth played, from the beginning, the prominent role in this policy that some scholars have granted it. It is rather the case that, at the end of the 1950s, the post-war myth became superposed by another, more innocent myth about the emergence of Europe from a long pan-European history dating back to antiquity.

Despite the cultivation of this pan-European myth in official EU rhetoric, it is noticeable how the foundational myth of Europe's rebirth through unity after the Second World War re-emerges strongly in the 1990s. This evolution must, to a large extent, be attributed to the painful reworking of the experiences from the Balkan wars which involved a renewed focus on the Holocaust as a *European* trauma. Many commentators have noticed that a Europeanization of the Holocaust could be observed from the 1990s culminating in the proposal at the Stockholm International Holocaust Forum in 2000 for a European day of commemoration.⁴⁵ Dan Diner even claims that the Holocaust acquires the status of a foundational myth for the European integration project.⁴⁶ The

⁴² Declaration of 9 May 1950, Pascal Fontaine *The New Idea for Europe: The Schuman Declaration – 1950–2000* (Luxembourg, 2000), pp. 36–7.

⁴³ Fontaine, *The New Idea for Europe*.

⁴⁴ E. Larat, 'Presenting the Past: Political Narratives on European History and the Justification of QEU Integration' *German Law Journal* 6:2 (2005), 273–329.

⁴⁵ A. Assmann, 'Europe: A Community of Memory?' *GHI Bulletin* 49 (2007), 11–25; J.-W. Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ, 2007).

⁴⁶ D. Diner, 'Restitution and Memory: The Holocaust in European Political Cultures', *New German Critique* 90 (2003), 36–44.

Holocaust thus functions as that memory glue which could provide European integration with affective power.⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the Holocaust has figured prominently in political and academic debates in recent years it is, however, doubtful whether Diner is right. As I see it, the Holocaust is included in the broader representation of the Second World War as a situation of total chaos from which a *new* Europe had to be created. Due to the intensification of identity politics within the EU over the last two decades, the ideologies of the first post-war projects on European integration have been given a mythical status. Where the first perceptions of chaos and unity served as a broad mental frame – a raw material – for integration, the still more significant references to chaos and the Holocaust in recent EU rhetoric must be seen as an effort of deliberate myth making. In a text from 2003, the then president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, directly relates to the post-war chaos:

After the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the desire for peace was the first and essential driving force of European unification. [...] Right down to the present day the desire for peace is a vital part of the very idea of Europe, the way of looking at life and at the relations between peoples that we Europeans naturally recognize as our own.⁴⁸

In this statement, Prodi, without much ado, views European integration as a consequence and a solution to the post-war chaos. The foundational act which is part of any myth is attributed to the so-called founding fathers. The foundational act is but one side of the myth. The other is its particular temporal structure which is at play in the twofold approach to the past as something which has been overcome and at the same time is still with us. This duality works by incorporating memory. As Jacques Delors, one of Prodi's famous predecessors, once stated: 'We are told that peace was made among us. To reason like this is to forget an important matter, independently of whether one speaks of his family or his nation, namely that there is no vision, no mastering of the future without memory.'⁴⁹ Memory and myth can be fused as they are when the past is conceived as a *learning process*: 'We have learnt to our cost the

⁴⁷ L. Probst, 'Founding Myths in Europe and the Role of the Holocaust' *New German Critique* 90 (2003), 96.

⁴⁸ R. Prodi, *Europe: The Dream and the Choices*, Text in contribution to the debate on the future of Europe, published in Italy, 12 November 2003.

⁴⁹ J. Delors, *L'unité de l'Europe: Un projet pour le 21e siècle*. Exposé de Jacques Delors prononçant la 'Lectio magistralis' ouvrant la session académique 2005/2006 du college européen de Parme, 2005. [My translation].

madness of war, of racism and the rejection of the other and diversity'.⁵⁰ To be able to learn from the myth, we must be able to resuscitate it. In this way, the past is both present and overcome.

As I shall try to show in the following, the myth not only is 'at work' in European identity politics, but also appears in other genres, and not least in those master narratives that the professional historians offer for ordinary citizens as points of orientations in their search for collective identity.

The myth at work – in history writing

It is without doubt much easier to detect the myth at work in ideological texts emanating from within the European institutions, or from normatively loaded texts produced by participants in public debates, than it is to find it in professional history writing. Historians are not – at least not explicitly – involved in creating and justifying communities. They do not need myths. On the contrary, they often see their role as revealing and deconstructing myths in the public use of history. But historians cannot do without narratives, especially not if they are dealing with long periods of history. Narratives might not be mythical, but just as myths, they have to deal with beginnings, with finality. To look for myths in history writing means investigating the narrative structures in master narratives of European history in the twentieth century. I thus imply that we can find such master narratives and that they furthermore contain elements also at play in what I have called the Euro-myth.

I have examined a number of more recent works on European history in the twentieth century. I have limited myself to that specific genre which intends to give a complete overview of European history either in the twentieth century as a whole or after 1945.⁵¹ This, in principle, means covering all aspects of life in European societies, although politics – and often international politics – in most cases, is the dominant structural feature of the narrative. The genre also demands that different places and actors are considered. Nation-states are important for structuring the narrative. They guarantee the representation of diversity. On the other hand, we have common structures and systems, as well as supranational or global actors, such as superpowers and European institutions. These actors and places make European history move around in time and

⁵⁰ R. Prodi, *A destiny shared*, 50th anniversary of the ECSC, Marcinelle, 4 February 2003, SPEECH/03/52 http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_1999_2004/prodi/speeches/index_en.htm (accessed 4 May, 2009)

⁵¹ Obviously, we can find many, many works only dealing with partial aspects of European history in the twentieth century, such as economy or culture, or even more specific themes such as European integration or the European labour movement. With few exceptions, I have only considered general works of European history, by which I mean works that intend to give a comprehensive history of Europe.

space. Time is ordered by events and periods. As a whole, it is structured by the beginnings and endings of the narrative.

To examine mythical traces in this genre we need to focus on some general questions pertaining to the narrative structuring. The first of these questions concerns the role of the Second World War in the history of Europe. As demonstrated above, the Euro-myth positions 1945 as being a radical break – a catastrophe and a new beginning. If the myth is at work in history writing, we must expect to see 1945 presented as a formative event. More specifically, the first question to ask is what role 1945 is given in the narrative on European history. Is it perceived as a major break in European history? And if so, how is this break and new beginning conceptualized?

A second important question concerns the unfolding of the plot. More specifically, it is about the development of Europe after 1945. The myth contains a strong idea of progress. Any new beginning must prove itself as a continuous distancing from the past that resulted in catastrophe. If the historical narratives bear similarity to the myth, we must expect to find a narrative of progress. Progress alone is, however, not enough to confirm the myth. Progress must be inherent in a European project. It is thus important to examine the driving forces, which push this progress in the narratives. Who are the main protagonists in this history of progress? Since progress has to come from Europe, teleology is likely to be at play in the narratives.

A third question has to do with the constitution of the European subject. In a narrative of European history, Europe plays different roles. It is the scene on which history unfolds. In a teleological history, Europe is, however, also a project which is fulfilling itself through history. In fact, the myth is part of this project. Finally, Europe is an actor that partakes in the fulfilment of the project. We must therefore ask how projects and acting are dealt with in the narratives. A particular testing ground for acting is European integration. We must therefore focus on the role given to European integration in the narratives. Is European integration paramount to fulfilling the European project? Or do other factors account for the development?

The final question concerns endings. Although historians hardly ever subscribe to the end of history, they have to end their stories. Endings often appear as conclusions that summarize the major events and ponder the results of historical periods. They contain the historians' reflections on how far history has progressed and – in cases where the myth is at work – considerations on whether the European project has been realized. Readers expect narratives to produce some answers to what history brought to the subject of the story. We must therefore have a close look at how endings are made. Since the events of 1989 have acquired a symbolic status as a break and an ending in history, it will be necessary to look at how it is being inscribed in the narratives of European history. Does 1989 figure as a natural end point which finally liberates Europe

from its past, or is it only one stepping stone towards a grander project? This, furthermore, allows us to look at the role given to 'the other Europe', a term used to denote the excluded part of Europe. Hayden White links endings with a demand for moral meaning.⁵² What he has in mind is that the order established in the narrative must be evaluated. We will probably not find explicit moral judgments in the historical narratives, but in looking back on the period covered they will certainly contain some statements on how to view it. Where the myth is at work, the ending must be viewed as a confirmation of the beginning.

Let us first have a look at the role of 1945 in the historical narratives. Obviously, to present 1945 as a rupture in European history seems almost inevitable. Although it is hard to imagine narratives that downplay the role of the Second World War for European history, the character of the rupture might still be questioned. 1945 and the Second World War can, for instance, be relativized when seen as one among several expressions of European barbarism in the twentieth century,⁵³ or when the emphasis is on the continuous effects of the war after 1945; be that in its material destruction or in the form of haunting memories. It is, nonetheless, rather commonplace to represent 1945 as a rupture in European history, as manifested in the many works that make this year a point of departure for their narrative, or the even more numerous works that have chapters beginning with 1945.⁵⁴

In the myth, 1945 symbolizes total breakdown and catastrophe. To be in line with the myth, the historical narratives must present 1945 as a radical rupture in European history. This can be done by inserting 1945 in a process of transformation from an old to a new Europe. As in any historical narrative, the use of life metaphors abounds. It is conventional to speak of the 'rebirth of Europe'. One book even makes use of the metaphor in its title: *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II* (Black et al., 1992).⁵⁵ Almost as frequent is the reference to the Phoenix rising from the ashes of its previous incarnation: '[...] like the phoenix, Europe would rise again from the ashes to new heights of well-being and prosperity'.⁵⁶ These images serve to underline the nature of change.

⁵² H. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD, 1987), p. 21.

⁵³ B. Wasserstein, *Barbarism & Civilization: A History of Europe in Our Time* (Oxford, 2007).

⁵⁴ Of the works I have looked at, only two deviate from using 1945 as a structuring principle. Mazower deals with the years 1943–49 in a single chapter, and Schulze (1998) covers the years 1939–49 in a chapter, see M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1998); H. Schulze, *Siedler Geschichte Europas. Phoenix Europa: Die Moderne: Von 1740 bis heute* (Berlin, 1998).

⁵⁵ C. E. Black, et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II* (Boulder, CO, 1992).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 48. For Phoenix, examples are abundant in reviews of Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, (New York: 2005). or in the back cover text of W. I. Hitchcock,

Rebirth presupposes decline and death. The Second World War is perceived not only as a breakdown, but as the end of an era. Breakdown is typically symbolized by the ruinous landscape of Europe. One book chooses to write about the period after 1945 under the chapter heading 'Ruin, Reconstruction and Recrimination'.⁵⁷ Material destruction is followed by an emphasis on moral corruption: 'Europe was also profoundly shaken morally and psychologically.'⁵⁸ In many narratives, the material and mental breakdown marks an ending in European history. The common way of signalling endings is to distinguish between an old and a new order. William Hitchcock opens his book on European history after 1945 with the following sentence: 'The war in Europe ended officially on 8 May 1945, a date that marks the death of the Third Reich and the birth of a new Europe.'⁵⁹ Many authors choose the label *new Europe* for the period after 1945. Some leave it a question. Buchanan begins his account of the period 1945–50 with a section entitled, 'A new Europe?'⁶⁰ Others speak less hesitantly of 'the emergence of a new Europe'.⁶¹ The change of order can, of course, be phrased in different ways. Much has to do with the length of the period included in the old order. Some authors might claim that the new order emerging after 1945 signals a radical break with all previous history: 'Thus, if the first half of the twentieth century was an exaggerated version of Europe's normal bellicose and self-destructive history, the second half was a prolonged departure from that history.'⁶² Most historians choose, however, to speak of European history in less dramatic terms, partly because they stick to a traditional causal logic in which new periods are always seen as results of previous periods.

Narratives that display a structure similar to the European foundation myth are organized around three moments: breakdown, rebirth and progress. Rebirth invokes the emergence of a new and better order. The term 'reconstruction', which appears in several chapter headings,⁶³ does not in itself signify novelty, but rather a return to normality. Although conventionalized by the

The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945–2002 (London, 2003): 'From the ashes of World War II to the advent of the Euro, a magisterial history of the post-war rebirth of Europe.'

⁵⁷ E. D. Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2005), p. 265.

⁵⁸ P. M. H. Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe: Unity in Division* (London, 2006), p. 142.

⁵⁹ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 13.

⁶⁰ T. Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000* (Oxford, 2006), p. 61.

⁶¹ H. Altrichter and W. L. Bernecker, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2004), p. 322.

⁶² D. Calleo, *Rethinking Europe's Future* (Princeton, NJ, 2003), p. 4.

⁶³ Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 61; Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 265.

historical actors themselves, speaking of 'miracles' does, on the other hand, imply that this return to normality was extraordinary. Vinen uses the term in a chapter heading.⁶⁴ Hitchcock has a chapter on 'the Miraculous Fifties'.⁶⁵ More important, however, is the grander scheme within which this reconstruction is set. Many authors present European history after 1945 within a narrative of progress. In his introduction, Hitchcock speaks of an 'extraordinary transformation' which made 'Europe richer, freer, and more stable than at any time in its long history'.⁶⁶ Brose opens his history of Europe in the twentieth century, by stating that Europe after 1945 and again after 1989 began an era 'more democratic and peaceful, that may represent the future'.⁶⁷ Few historians, however, would be inclined to begin their histories of Europe as David P. Lewis does: 'Yet from the deathbed of an emperor to the birthplace of a Treaty of Union, it has taken eleven centuries to travel the Road to Europe'.⁶⁸

In none of the books examined, do we find a narrative of linear progress. The story is littered with obstacles and setbacks. The road towards a new Europe is portrayed as winding and uncertain. When describing changes we often rely on notions of transition. Transitions are periods between stable conditions; they signify in-betweens. In European history after 1945, the breakdown is rarely depicted as a complete cut. The consequences of the war live on, and new Europe only emerges gradually. This is different from the myth that needs to emphasize pure novelty. Although the notion of transition can be used by contemporary observers without a strong idea of what is to come, historians must commonly deal with endings. They are thus inclined to let transitions end. A standard way of denoting the transitory nature of periods in history, is to attach the prefix *post* to them. It has become conventional to call the period after 1945 *post-war*, which conveys an understanding of this time as a period that must be explained retrospectively, that is, as the period that has not yet found its proper bearing, but is still moved by the repercussions of the Second World War. It is left to the single historian to decide when the post-war ends, and new Europe finally emerges.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ R. Vinen, *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2000). Vinen begins his chapter by mentioning that the leaders of Western European economies were 'devout Catholics', but does not pursue the religious connotations further.

⁶⁵ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 131.

⁶⁶ Hightcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 1.

⁶⁸ D. W. P. Lewis, *The Road to Europe: History, Institutions and Prospects of European Integration* (New York, 2004), p. 2.

⁶⁹ In Altrichter and Bernecker, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert*, and in Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, *postwar* is used to structure the narrative of European history after 1945. This evidently is even more manifest in Judt, *Postwar*.

As indicated by the term *post-war*, the focus can be put on the effects of the Second World War. But post-war can also be understood as a period in which Europe is distancing itself from its past. The difference in emphasis determines how the status of the European subject in the narratives is presented. It is quite common to use a metaphor of control. If the emphasis is on progress and novelty, the narrative is organized around Europe regaining control over its destiny. Black and colleagues speak explicitly about Europe gradually 'assuming control': 'Decades would pass before Europe could again assert itself strongly to assume control of its own progress.'⁷⁰ In the same vein, Europe's post-war history can be told as being characterized by a constant loss of influence. This is done by highlighting the Cold War and – to a lesser extent – decolonization. Most narratives jump quickly from the end of war to the Cold War. Buchanan ends his chapter on 1945 with the following closing remark: 'The fate of Europe passed into the hands of the Great powers.'⁷¹ The following chapter in which he treats the period from 1945 to 1953 is entitled 'Europe between the powers'.⁷² Vinen begins his account of the post-war with the chapter 'Taking Sides'.⁷³ The loss of control goes hand in hand with the portrayal of a divided and diminished Europe. The division of Europe is a very common heading for chapters on the post-war period;⁷⁴ although there is no agreement on how many years should be included under this heading. In some accounts, the European subject almost disappears. In Brose, Europe is simply dissolved into 'the West' and 'the Soviets'.⁷⁵ Most books have separate chapters for Western and Eastern Europe. Some also have separate chapters on decolonization.⁷⁶ Decolonization can be inserted into a story of a weakening Europe. Bell, in his introduction, announces that the dissolution of the European empires was the most important sign of Europe's

⁷⁰ Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, p. 54.

⁷¹ Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 35.

⁷² Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 36.

⁷³ Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, p. 247.

⁷⁴ Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe: Unity in Division*, p. 149; Wasserstein, *Barbarism & Civilization*, p. 403; Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 288.

⁷⁶ The dismantling of the colonial empires is rendered quite differently in the text books. Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*; Altrichter and Bernecker, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert*; and Vinen, *A History in Fragments* hardly mention it. Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000* only treats decolonization in a French context; while Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* has a short chapter on 'The End of Empire'; and Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, a lengthy chapter with a similar title, 'Winds of Change: The End of the European Empires'.

loss of 'predominance' and 'self-confidence'.⁷⁷ Hitchcock sees it as a result of a deliberate shift in interest within Europe.⁷⁸

It is obvious that a constant focus on a weakened, divided and diminished Europe will bring us far from the Euro-myth. As we shall see in the next section, we can find examples of narratives written in a very pessimistic tone. Most authors, however, present European history after 1945 as one of progress, which includes miraculous growth rates, the rise of the welfare state, the decline of racism and the widening of democracy. For obvious reasons, the transformation of Eastern Europe must be told differently. To the extent that Eastern Europe has any place in the history of 'booms' and 'miracles', it will be rendered as an imitation which does not compare well to the Western version. The typical features that are highlighted for Eastern Europe are Soviet hegemony and oppression.⁷⁹

Progress can be explained in different ways. In a narrative of European history, the crucial question is what role *Europe* is granted in this move towards progress. More specifically, the question is concerned with the ways in which narratives deal with Europe as an actor. Basically, two options seem to be available for historians. They can either choose to relate these changes to efforts within European societies, or they can decide to underline the importance of European integration. In the first instance, the narrative will typically be structured around the themes of prosperity and welfare; where West Europeans will appear as consumers and the states will appear as distributive welfare states. Again, this is only one version available for the history of Western Europe. The rhythm in the accounts of Eastern Europe is decided by changes in Soviet policies and by resistance to them. Through the resistance perspective, Eastern Europeans are assigned an active role in their own history, but often at the expense of an everyday perspective. Eastern European societies are therefore often portrayed as being in a permanent state of emergency.

Whereas the narrative of the Cold War tends to replace *Europe* with the West (in contrast to the communist 'East') or to talk about 'divided Europe', then the focus on European integration opens up the possibility of reinserting *Europe* into history. Although the myth does not presuppose a history of integration tied to the European Community, it is evident that it works best in this setting. It is to be expected that European integration is the basic structuring principle in historical narratives focused around European unity. Some accounts come very close to reproducing the official myth making: 'Amid the ruins of 1945,

⁷⁷ Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe: Unity in Division*, p. 9.

⁷⁸ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 162.

⁷⁹ The term 'the other Europe' that several text book use for Eastern Europe, e.g., Altrichter and Bernecker, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert*, p. 251; and Vinen, *A History in Fragments*; p. 338, can refer to this imitation as well as to the forgotten Europe.

Europe's federalists resolved not just to achieve economic reconstruction but to prevent another war by building a new political union.⁸⁰ The well-known German historian, Wilfried Loth might use less celebratory rhetoric, but still strikes the same tone when introducing his book *Der Weg nach Europa* in the following way:

Through increasing linkages and creation of common institutions a new actor entered the scene of international politics, diminishing the role of the European nation-state and influencing the life of Europeans in multiple ways.⁸¹

This quote amply demonstrates the two important aspects related to 'actor-ness'. First, we need to emphasize how *Europe* in the shape of the European institutions regains influence, that is, becomes 'an international actor'. Second, European actor-ness implies transformation in which Europe becomes different from the European nation-states. Implicitly, we assume that the nation-states belong to an older Europe. To partake in the myth, it is imperative that the narrative links the experience of chaos during the Second World War with the striving for European unity. In its most basic form, the history of Europe's awakening can be told in such a way that European unity becomes the only possibility for Europeans to live in peace and thus to survive. But for the history to progress, the peace project must be combined with the growing actor-ness of *Europe*. In this move towards actor-ness, *Europe* is typically placed in a field of tension delimited, on the one side, by the superpowers, and particularly by the United States on the one side, and the European nation-states on the other. Historians wanting to oppose this narrative of Europe's re-erection as an actor – and not only as a functioning society – can do this by turning the peace project into a product of the Cold War and American hegemony: 'After all, the long period of peace that Europeans enjoyed after the Second World War was facilitated not by Europe's unity but by its division.'⁸² Along the same lines, European integration can be downgraded to a project only made possible under American protection. *Europe* is thus left with very little actor-ness. Finally, integration can be seen as the result of the European nation-states trying to consolidate themselves in the post-war period: 'it was because they [Europe's leaders] sought to advance their countries' national interests that they aimed to craft a new cooperative regime that might bolster

⁸⁰ Lewis, *The Road to Europe*, p. 10.

⁸¹ Loth, *Der Weg nach Europa: Geschichte der europäischen Integration 1939–1957*, p. 5. My translation.

⁸² Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, p. 506.

interdependence and mutual reliance',⁸³ or as an elitist project conceived at a great distance from the European people.

In the works dealing with European history, in general, we find great discrepancies in how much weight European integration is granted, and consequently how much space is devoted to it. In Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, European integration is only mentioned in passing and only within a master narrative about the Cold War.⁸⁴ Hitchcock presents European integration primarily, as a stage for national leaders acting in the interests of their nation-states. Wasserstein links it to economic cooperation. But both Buchanan and Brose lay out integration as a main track in European history. Buchanan grants the history of integration an entire chapter which opens with the following statement: 'The process of integration has been the most significant European achievement of the post-war era'.⁸⁵ Bell is even more direct when he portrays the European Union as the very essence of Europe in the twenty-first century.⁸⁶ Brose adds a teleological dimension to this main track in European history. When introducing the European Coal and Steel Community, he writes that 'a supranational seedling would spread its spores and grow over fifty years into a proud European forest'.⁸⁷

Most accounts of European history end with a general evaluation of the period covered. There seems to be general agreement that Europe's change to a peaceful continent is the most noteworthy. The formulation in Black and colleagues, *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, is typical: 'The most remarkable feature of post-war Europe was the absence of war itself. [...] This change was by all odds the most dramatic development in Europe's long history.'⁸⁸ The master narrative varies according to what determines this transformation. If the narrative turns around the Cold War and its ending, the historical forces can either appear in the form of democracy in general or more specifically, the superpowers – in some cases even the leaders of these superpowers. Democracy can be viewed not only as a force, but also as the most important result of Europe's transformation: 'In politics, the most obvious narrative for the post-war years was one of the entrenchment and diffusion

⁸³ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 147.

⁸⁴ Vinen even manages not to mention European integration in his short presentation of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman.

⁸⁵ Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 226.

⁸⁶ Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe: Unity in Division*, p. 243.

⁸⁷ Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 308.

⁸⁸ Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, p. 506; compare Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 471; Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 463; Calleo, *Rethinking Europe's Future*, p. 5.

of the democratic government.⁸⁹ A Euro-myth is only detectable, however, if peace and democracy is linked to European integration. In their conclusive remarks on the main characteristics of post-war European history, Altrichter and Bernecker note the peace-making role of the European Union:

First of all, the European Union can look back in complete satisfaction about the results obtained so far: The European Union as a 'peace community' without any mutual territorial demands and without any desires for distant regions; that is the true novelty.⁹⁰

In other works, Europe's transformation from a bloody continent dominated by conflicts and dictatorships of all kinds, to a peaceful and democratic continent, is highlighted as the most important result of European post-war history.⁹¹ Not all of them give credit to European integration for this result. It is only in Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, however, that European integration is completely absent from the account of 'Western democracies'. But then, it might also be difficult to include integration in a narrative which, under the title 'A History in Fragments', underlines diversity as the dominant feature for European history. Most of the works I have examined see European integration as being very central to the understanding of *Europe's* history. This is for instance, true for Buchanan: 'The process of integration has been the most significant European achievement of the post-war era.'⁹² In the same breath, this history can also be perceived as a learning process in which *Europe* has learned from its past misdoings. We do not find, however, a strong assertion of the duty to remember. As professional historians, the books' authors perceive history as a progressive process gradually distancing itself from the point of departure.

The narratives on European history are often driven by a teleological undertone. Even if they do not put an end to history as such, they tend to end by underlining that Europe, in an impressively short period of time, has become a better place to live in. *Europe* has, so to speak gained an identity and has changed for the better. The narratives are structured around this subject, taking form through a search for unity.

Only Brose chooses to end his narrative by talking about 'fulfilment': 'the democratization and pacification of Europe seems to have entered an

⁸⁹ Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 299.

⁹⁰ Altrichter and Bernecker, *Geschichte Europas im 20. Jahrhundert*, p. 391.

⁹¹ Black et al., *Rebirth: A History of Europe Since World War II*, p. 506; Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 471; Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 463; Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace 1945–2000*, p. 2.

⁹² Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 224; see also Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 467; Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 463.

exhilarating stage of fulfilment.⁹³ In general, endings tend to be conclusions on the period covered. The narrative must produce answers to where we ended and how far we came. Sometimes it leaps into moral judgement. In fact, the teleological undertone is enforced when linked to moral judgment in the concluding remarks, where the good direction of transformation is confirmed. In their endings, the narratives tend to join company with the mythical discourse. In mythical discourse, the role of history is to fulfil the myth. The way this works is that those values stored in the constitutive moment such as peace, democracy and unity are brought into being, by history. A pure mythical discourse is, however, not teleological, but rather tautological. The values are already there from the beginning and are just waiting to manifest themselves. Furthermore, the myth at work always points to the foundational moment. The myth is therefore in time as well as out of time; in time when realizing itself in history and out of time when serving as the foundational moment from where history begins. The historical narratives mostly have to stay in time. The mythical discourse only surfaces momentarily, as in the concluding remarks. The historical logic demands that history goes on, also after the concluding chapter.

We can definitely observe mythological elements in history writing. The construction of a European subject that emerges due to integration is one such element. Another element is the representation of a chaotic past from which *Europe* can and must draw a lesson. In Vinen's concluding remarks, this underlining of the importance of the dark past becomes almost a parody: 'in one sense, Hitler and Stalin are the most important political thinkers of late twentieth-century Europe, precisely because so many values come from opposition to them'.⁹⁴ But true to the historical logic, the narratives mostly keep history open and future-oriented. Their endings abound with descriptions of the unfinished, for instance the persistence of division, the democratic deficit within European integration, the growing rivalry between Europe and the United States, the conflict between elite and people, the disagreements around immigration or terrorism, just to mention some of the unfinished business, threatening to split the European subject. But all this unfinished business also keeps history open, so that changes in any direction might be imagined. This is what Buchanan does in his final words: 'It is the working out of these questions that will determine whether the twenty-first century will witness Europe's decline into luxurious irrelevance or its emergence as a united, assertive voice in a changing world.'⁹⁵ Hitchcock, alluding to the title of his book,

⁹³ Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 471.

⁹⁴ Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, p. 530.

⁹⁵ Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace, 1945–2000*, p. 305.

concludes in the same vein: 'And so, the struggle for Europe continues.'⁹⁶ An old master narrative of a Europe forever unfulfilled, forever battling with itself, seems to be the subtext for this prophecy. But it also leaves a door open for a grand future in which Europe can continue its search for subjecthood by acting on the world. This mythically enforced narrative of a healed Europe can now be transposed to a world in which Europe has a mission. Hitchcock ends his book with a call from the world to the concerted leadership of Europe and America.⁹⁷ In such prophecies about a global mission for a united Europe, the textbooks almost seem to reproduce the mythical discourse to be found in official strategies of identity politics within the European Union.

Debunking myth

It is common to deny the European community any mythical force. It is less common directly to challenge the role of the Second World War in (re)constructing Europe. This is what Tony Judt does in his very popular book, *Postwar*, from 2005. The book is written in a critical mode and deliberately sets out to challenge dominant ways of narrating European history. Since its publication, the book has found its way onto many curricula and reading lists for courses on European history in universities worldwide.

Tony Judt chooses to narrate European history under the telling title *Postwar*. In his narration, the Second World War appears as the organizing principle in many ways. In the first and most prominent way, history after 1945 is viewed as a continuous period completely determined by the war. Judt often refers to the post-war period as passing in the shadow of the Second World War: 'the long shadow of World War Two lay heavy across post-war Europe.'⁹⁸ To substantiate this claim, he directly challenges 'the myth' about Europe transforming itself 'Phoenix-like' from a murderous to a peaceful continent.⁹⁹ Judt here refers to the conventional meaning of myth as a mistaken or even falsified rendering of the past. He chooses, instead, to emphasize the continuity perspective by inserting the Second World War in a larger 'European civil war' that breaks out in 1914.¹⁰⁰ In this perspective, the post-war period – with its Cold

⁹⁶ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 459.

⁹⁷ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, p. 474.

⁹⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 10.

⁹⁹ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Many historians use the term 'European civil war' in order to link the two world wars in a larger frame, perhaps most significantly Ernst Nolte in his 1987 book *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945*, where the civil war is part of a larger story about the confrontation between totalitarian ideologies in Europe.

War – is reduced to being ‘an extended epilogue’ to the civil war.¹⁰¹ The logic of this principle is fairly evident: the post-war period lasts until all the consequences of the Second World War have disappeared. For Judt, the effacement of the war – or rather the wars – only happens with the end of the Cold War in 1989/1991. This principle is announced in the opening lines of his narrative: ‘an era was over and a new Europe was being born’.¹⁰² The newborn Europe is not portrayed as a result of the breakdown in 1945 and the reconstruction that followed. Even more noticeable is that European integration has no role to play in the birth of a new Europe. Because Eastern Europe is not part of reconstruction, it does not make sense for Judt to speak of a *European* birth.

Judt adds a memory track which parallels his story of Europe encapsulated in a post-war. He argues that the post-war period is characterized by a deliberate policy of oblivion necessitated by the reconstruction effort: ‘Silence over Europe’s recent past was the necessary condition for the construction of a European future.’¹⁰³ The end of the post-war period signals the breaking of this silence which allows for collective memory to enter the scene. Judt sees evidence of this new understanding of the past – and particularly the Second World War – in the renewed interest of the European public in discussing the sins of the past. As he argues, the public interest shows that the events are not viewed as traumatic anymore, which means that they have lost their importance. For Judt, this is another reason for announcing the end of the post-war. Although we are faced with a fascinating and productive paradox in his narrative – that the war really is over when it is being remembered – it is still difficult to accept his closing remarks about the emergence of a Europe built on ‘a compensatory surplus of memory’ about the atrocities of the Second World War.¹⁰⁴ The question that remains is how Europe can be viewed as completely liberated from the consequences of the Second World War at the same time as it is indulging in a moralizing practice of remembering.

Judt adds yet another dimension to the main device of letting the post-war period end in 1989. Post-war Europe is described as weak and in decline compared to earlier times. In the introduction of the themes organizing his narrative, Judt states that the post-war is a history of ‘Europe’s reduction’.¹⁰⁵ Reduction is to be understood both literally as the loss of former possessions and in a more abstract sense as the loss of self-control. Judt deals with decolonization in a chapter entitled ‘Lost illusions’ which alludes to the

¹⁰¹ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 759.

¹⁰² Judt, *Postwar*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 10. Judt alternately speaks of silence, ‘mismemory’ (ibid. p. 828) and ‘canons of well-intentioned official memory’ (Judt, *Postwar*, p. 10).

¹⁰⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 828.

¹⁰⁵ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 7.

megalomaniac views of European colonial powers still captured in dreams of former grandeur.¹⁰⁶ The most significant reduction is, however, the occupation of the international scene by 'outsiders' during the Cold War. Consequently, the political stability that emerges in post-war Europe is seen as an effect of a European loss of influence. Emphasis is put on Europe's failing ability to control its own destiny. This writing of European history is a far cry from confirming any European foundation myths. On the contrary, Judt refers to 'Europe's American moment'¹⁰⁷ and speaks about Western Europe living in a 'happy cocoon'¹⁰⁸ in order to stress the importance of American protection for the development of Western Europe. Although he comes close to accepting the American saviour myth, which has regained prominence recently through the writings of Robert Kagan, he still assigns Europe a different role. In Kagan's version of the saviour myth, grounded in the American liberation of Europe in the Second World War, the United States emerges as the core of a liberal world order.¹⁰⁹ Europe is permanently relegated to being a marginal actor in the founding of this order. In Judt's version, European history is about regaining self-control: 'Only with considerable effort and across long decades did Europeans recover control over their own destiny.'¹¹⁰ To his history of loss of control, Judt adds a European crisis of values. The Europeans are portrayed as apolitical and without beliefs in projects for the future. The great ideologies from the first half of the twentieth century lose their meaning, first in communist Eastern Europe and then in the Western European consensus on growth and welfare – 1968 is nothing more for Judt than the death agony of ideology: 'A 180-year cycle of ideological politics in Europe was drawing to a close.'¹¹¹ This description of a period without beliefs combined with the general understanding of post-war as a time of silencing, enforces the picture of a post-war Europe groping in the dark restlessly and without sense of direction. Judt draws an overall picture of the post-war as a state of exception driven by a 'longing for normality'.¹¹² The metaphorical figure of loss is even more significant in the narration of Eastern European history. Due to 'the Soviet occupation' – as a 'semi-alien Great Power',¹¹³ the Soviet Union has no access to Europe – Eastern

¹⁰⁶ Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 278–92.

¹⁰⁷ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 750.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 7.

¹¹¹ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 449.

¹¹² Judt, *Postwar*, p. 449.

¹¹³ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 196.

Europe is cut off from its European roots and – to make things even worse – disappears from the horizon of Western Europe.

The depiction of the post-war as an unfinished period, in which Europe is sidetracked, prepares for the introduction of 1989 as signalling an ending, a new beginning and a return to a European main track. Judt deals with the breakdown of communism in a chapter entitled 'The end of the old order', the old order being the post-war period.¹¹⁴ Already in the opening lines of the book, he makes it clear that 1989 must be understood as a watershed in European history. By referring to the post-war as a 'parenthesis', he includes the idea of a link between this new Europe emerging after 1989 and an earlier Europe. He remarks that the Eastern European 'euro-dreams' about *returning* to Europe become real in 1989.¹¹⁵ Eastern Europe does not return to a dream world, however. Judt depicts the new Europe as characterized by a drive towards integration and emancipation. He sees 'the European model' manifesting itself strongly after 1989. This is a model expressed in the European welfare state and grounded in a particular 'European way of life' which is different from the American way that dominated old, post-war Europe. Judt only grants political integration through the EU a minor and often negative role in the unfolding of this model. More important in his narrative is the setting free of the European uniqueness as manifested in the model. The chapter entitled 'The Old Europe and the New' ends with the following bravado: 'What binds Europeans together [...] is what has become conventional to call – in disjunctive but revealing contrast with "the American way of life" – the "European model of society".'¹¹⁶ The end of the post-war in 1989 is thus characterized by a double process of setting the uniquely European values free, including emancipation, from American dominance.¹¹⁷ This new Europe, according to Judt, not only has regained the ability to decide its future and rethink its past; it will also have the possibility of influencing the world. Judt ends his history of Europe with foreseeing a global mission for Europe:

In spite of the horrors of their recent past – and in large measure because of them – it was *Europeans* who were uniquely placed to offer the world some modest advice on how to avoid repeating their own mistakes.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 585–633.

¹¹⁵ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 631.

¹¹⁶ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 748.

¹¹⁷ Nor is the United States given any credit for this development: 'The US played a remarkably small part in the dramas of 1989' (Judt, *Postwar*, p. 631), as noticed by several reviewers, see, for instance, M. Walker, 'Europe's New narrative' *The National Interest* (Winter 2005/06), 133–7; and C. Maier, 'Europa, Europa' *The Nation*, 9–16 January 2006, pp. 23–6.

¹¹⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 800.

This final flourish is reminiscent of what you might hear in official EU rhetoric, with the significant difference, however, that Judt only speaks of the Europeans. Neither Europe nor the EU is present in his predicament.

European integration really plays a secondary role in Judt's narrative of European history. The establishment of European institutions after 1945 is given a modest place in the book. The first European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community are mentioned in a chapter on 'The Coming of the Cold War'.¹¹⁹ The latter is simply reduced to 'a device' in the hands of France. In general, Judt treats the European institutions as tools for national interests, in accordance with his overall choice of letting the European nation-states – and their leading politicians – appear as the central actors in the narrative, and often in the rather traditional way in which they unproblematically perform as subjects of the historical process.¹²⁰ Following this thread, Judt ends his history by noting that Europe has stayed 'a familiar accumulation of discrete state-particles'.¹²¹ Thus, there are limits to how new the new Europe actually is. The European institutions and the larger integration project to which they belong, are not only given modest treatment, they are also evaluated very negatively. The project is characterized as 'provincial', 'corrupt', 'exclusive' and 'elitist'.¹²² This is at odds with the overall judgement that the European Union is viewed as 'a good thing' which is given some credit for establishing peace among the member states.¹²³ But Judt still sees peace as a side-effect of integration that counts much less than the American nuclear umbrella. What counts in the end is the creation of a European model, which only became possible because of the re-establishment of the European nation-state.

With his almost complete disregard for European integration and his general view of the post-war period as a time where the Europeans shielded themselves from reflections of the past and lived a protected life in the shadow of the Cold War, Judt directly aims to deconstruct what I have called the European foundation myth. But, at the end of the day, deconstruction seems to give way to construction of just another myth. The foundation of a

¹¹⁹ Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 129–65.

¹²⁰ Only one reviewer, to my knowledge, has noted this very traditional element in Judt's narrative, see A. Ryan, 'After the Fall', *The New York Review of Books* 52:17 (2005). Jarausch points to the problem involved in writing a history of *Europe* in which Europe is reduced to a theatre for nation-states, see K. Jarausch, 'Featured review [of Tony Judt: *Postwar*]', *The American Historical Review* 112:2 (2009), 465–8. To be fair, it is 'a problem' that Judt's book shares with many other histories of Europe.

¹²¹ Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 798–9.

¹²² Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 534, 533, 718, 727.

¹²³ Judt, *Postwar*, p. 732.

new Europe that has come to terms with its past and is conscious of its own value, is just transferred to 1989. In a sense, the Second World War is still treated as the chaotic interruption which necessitates the creation of a new Europe, with the only difference that the war continues in the form of a post-war. In the post-war period, the war appears as 'a shadow'. But since Judt also wants to safeguard his critical position he tends to keep deconstructing the new Europe that he announces. This new Europe is characterized by fragmentation and heterogeneity. Two of the five chapters dealing with Europe carry the headings 'A fissile continent' and 'The varieties of Europe'. So, in the end, what remains of the new Europe seems to be the old nation-states.

Concluding remarks

We do not find full-blown mythical structures in the historical narratives about Europe after 1945. Historians are either too critical to indulge in myth making or they are too positivistic in style to accept strong narratives. But we can certainly find mythical elements appearing in their narratives. Choosing 1945 as a starting point does not have to be significant. But it is when the Second World War sets the scene for a history of catastrophe and rebirth. Furthermore, when rebirth is driven by a common European will manifesting itself in a European actor-ness, we rediscover elements from the myth. Will and actor-ness is most forcefully presented in a story about a European project and a European transnational subject coming to life through European integration. Unlike in the myth, which does not require an unfolding of time, narratives must include temporal movement. The appearance of the European subject is something which happens gradually over time, often presented as a metaphor, in semi-psychological terms as the gaining of self-control. In the narratives, Europe only slowly takes possession of those values which the myth encapsulates in the foundational moment. Most historians, who focus on progress, underline the obstacles and barriers on the way. But if they endorse a master narrative of progress, they will tend to end their narrative with the image of a Europe almost fulfilled; almost, because they also have to acknowledge the basic openness of history.

As demonstrated with the case of Tony Judt, some historians prefer to write in a critical mode. They deliberately reverse the myth-confirming narrative; 1945 is not viewed as a major break. The post-war period is described as a continuation of the war. European history is about loss of control and decline. European integration is a total misfit. Judt's debunking does, however, stop short when he makes 1989 the foundational moment. In his narrative, 1989 has an almost mythical aura. The event marks the true foundation of a new Europe ready to spread its model to the world. The difference, however, is that this new Europe is based on the permanence of the different nation-states. In the end, this counter-narrative relies on another myth, the old national myth.

22

The Nation, Progress and European Identity in *The Rise of Modern Europe*

John L. Harvey

The academic study of European history has not been the exclusive domain of the continent's own scholars. American historians by the nineteenth century believed that understanding their own political and social heritage required a wider consideration of Europe as a single historical identity. With the emergence of the modern university system and professional academic history, Americans were challenged to fashion an integrated European consciousness that derived coherent cultural traditions for an increasingly diverse population in North America.¹ By the early twentieth century, scholars confronted the need to consider a more standard conception of European history in the curricula of higher education across the country, both for contemporary affairs and the pre-modern era, in terms that could identify with American civic attitudes.² This interpretation of Europe, however, could not mirror only domestic conceptions. By necessity scholarship would rely on foreign research that comprised fragmented national narratives and conceptions of cultural uniqueness across ethno-linguistic groupings. At the same time, European specialists were increasingly pressed to relate their research to the 'New History', as practised by Americanist colleagues who called for a more inclusive, interdisciplinary and present-minded examination of the country's entire social past.³ The apocalypse of the First World War only intensified an interest among American

¹ I. Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 43–61.

² On an American inutility for pre-modern European history, see Gabrielle Spiegel, 'In the Mirror's Eye: The Writing of Medieval History in North America', in Spiegel, *The Past as Text* (Baltimore, MD, 1997), pp. 57–82; Edward Muir, 'The Italian Renaissance in America', *American Historical Review* 100 (1995), 1095–111. (Hereafter *AHR*).

³ E. Breisach, *American Progressive History: An Experiment in Modernization* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 100–64.

academics to understand their country's relation to the world through a transatlantic historical identity.⁴

As part of these broad trends, in 1928 the publishing firm of Harper & Brothers conceived of a dramatic, 20-volume project on the development of modern European history. Building on its commercially successful series *History of American Life*, the company proposed to craft the 'New History' onto a meta-narrative of European historical achievement since the thirteenth century, with books that would supplant traditional national histories and their emphases on conflict-ridden state politics.⁵ Aggregated as an entire series, this 'total history' of European social, cultural and economic activity would bridge individual studies by encouraging broad, interpretative concepts of human activity, beyond the episodic appearance of kings and their campaigns. A faith in progress, as defined by American modernity, would set the common compass for the collaborative understanding of Europe's significance, despite its diversified past and uncertain present. American historians were assumed to be the natural progenitors of such a history, based on an alleged 'Actonian' objectivity that derived from their vantage as geographical outsiders, who were still nurtured by European 'civilization.'⁶ With these pedagogical goals and methodological tools, Harper & Brothers expected to publish a definitive history of Europe's 'rise' to global greatness, comprising a set of unique, but interrelated interpretations for informed readers, graduate students and established academics.

The predominance of the 'New History' and a post-war interest in European affairs made the project attractive to American historians.⁷ In addition, the synthetic goals of the series seem to respond to the fragmentation of knowledge that occurred with the specialization and expansion of research topics.⁸ This interest also reflected new concerns to define 'Western Civilization' as a unified 'melting pot' of European culture, which could help the civic assimilation of citizens from varied ethnic, religious and national

⁴ G. A. Eakin-Thimme, 'Deutsche Nationalgeschichte und Aufbau Europas: Deutschsprachige jüdische Historiker im amerikanischen Exil', *Exilforschung* 19 (2001), 71; and the author's 'An American *Annales*? The Revue internationale d'histoire économique of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre', *Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004), 528–621. (Hereafter *JMH*)

⁵ Advertising précis for the series 'The Rise of Modern Europe', located in the papers of Hamilton F. Armstrong, Box 14, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

⁶ Claims of American objectivity regarding Europe include C. Haskins, 'European History and American Scholarship', *AHR* 28 (1923), 226; E. Préclin, 'Bulletin critique: Histoire des États-Unis', *Revue Historique* 59 (1934), 302–3; and V. Valentin, 'Postscript', in *The German People* (New York, 1946), p. 727.

⁷ See F. Stern, 'Europe's Past and America's Experience', *New York Review of Books*, 24 October 1965, p. 3.

⁸ The editor William Langer emphasized this point in a common introductory paragraph to every volume.

backgrounds.⁹ It was reinforced further by an emerging maturity among prominent university scholars who yearned for professional recognition and intellectual independence from Europe with their own uniquely American addition to foreign research.¹⁰

Harper & Brothers originally hoped to place its 'monument to American historical scholarship' under the direction of Carlton Hayes of Columbia, arguably America's leading 'new historian' in the field of European historiography. Hayes declined after Arthur Schlesinger Sr., who had edited the *History of American Life*, warned of the professional sacrifices endured from an excessive editorial workload and relatively low compensation.¹¹ The publisher then turned to William Langer, a young professor of European diplomatic history who had joined Harvard in 1927. Although Langer's intellectual motives remain unclear, its scope and promise of a holistic history of the entire continent certainly appealed to his own scholarship, which emphasized a comprehensive, interconnected understanding of European diplomacy. Having accepted the editorship, Langer sought out the cooperation of senior scholars with established credentials. He emphasized to prospective authors that the series would 'stress the great lines of development and [...] leave the reader with a strong impression of the salient characteristics of the period discussed.'¹² Contributors would rewrite traditional interpretations with new research that 'changed conceptions as to the main threads of European development' away from the last generation.¹³ Less interested in the unearthing of new 'facts', Langer was theoretically dedicated to the broadest historical palette and a readable style of exposition 'without too much scholarly apparatus'.¹⁴ Although he did not want to marginalize political, diplomatic and constitutional history, he explained the need to 'weave into the story the great social, economic, intellectual, religious,

⁹ For the influence of the First World War on 'Western civilization' as a pedagogical concept, see Gilbert Allardyce, 'The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course', *AHR* 87 (1982), 695–743; and L. Hunt, 'Reports of Its Death Were Premature: Why 'Western Civ' Endures', in L. Kramer, D. Reid and W. Barney (eds), *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 34–43.

¹⁰ See, especially, S. Harrison Thompson, founder of the review *Journal of Central European Affairs*, to Roland Bainton, 16 July 1927, Box 9, Folder 164, Roland Bainton Papers, Archives of the Yale Divinity School, New Haven.

¹¹ Hayes and Schlesinger exchange, 1 June and 25 June 1928 in Box 3, Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. Papers, Pusey Library, Harvard University.

¹² William Langer to Edwin Potts Cheney of Penn, 2 January 1931, Personal Correspondence, 'Cheney', HUG 19.9, W. Langer Papers, Pusey Library.

¹³ See this appreciation by Leonard Krieger in *History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1965), pp. 283–4.

¹⁴ Langer to Frederick Nussbaum, 18 March 1934, in Box 6, Frederick Nussbaum Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming in Laramie.

scientific, and artistic movements'.¹⁵ As he assured one sceptic, 'I do not see much sense in a rehash of the good old [political] stuff, and should infinitely prefer to have an emphasis on the intellectual, literary, religious, and artistic ideas.'¹⁶ Remuneration for the works was tied to expected book sales, which were anticipated rather optimistically at roughly 10,000–15,000 per volume.¹⁷

As the series director, however, Langer would prove a mixed choice. A dedicated historian of youthful vigour, he lacked the experience and gravitas to expedite the completion of a cumbersome series when faced with tiresome, if inevitable, delays.¹⁸ He was prone to accept ever-new personal commitments of publication and government service, which hamstrung the project's productivity through long periods of editorial neglect.¹⁹ His decision in the 1930s to direct the *Encyclopedia of World History* overburdened his limited time at Harvard, especially considering the appearance that decade of his massive two-volume treatise on nineteenth-century diplomatic history.²⁰ Most of all, Langer was a diplomatic historian from the traditional Harvard school of Archibald Coolidge, which had little practical experience in social, economic and cultural history.²¹ While Langer's brand of European diplomacy was attentive to topics of imperialism and public opinion, it tended to ignore social or political theory, and often buried synthesis under an avalanche of documentation.²² Langer thus proved a tepid advocate of the clear thematic

¹⁵ Langer to Bernadotte Schmitt of Chicago, 1 June 1929, Box 3, Bernadotte E. Schmitt Papers, Madison Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

¹⁶ Langer to Frederick Artz of Oberlin College, 7 December 1929, Box 1 of 20, HUG 19.9, William Langer Papers, Harvard University Archives.

¹⁷ By 1950 only Carlton Hayes's *A Generation of Materialism* had surpassed 10,000 volumes in sales. Each author was to be paid \$1000 (about 20–25 per cent of an average professor's salary in 1930) on the completion of a manuscript, with royalty rates ranging from 5 per cent per volume to 10 per cent for the first 3000 books sold. By 1957, over 90,000 volumes for 13 titles had been printed, all in hardcover. In 1963 with the 'Torchbook' paperback editions, sales increased much further. See the table for 1950 and the letter of Cass Canfield to William Langer, 15 February 1957, in Boxes 25 and 26 respectively, Harper & Row Publishers Collection, Editorial Correspondence, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Butler Library, Columbia University.

¹⁸ For Langer's recollections, see his *In and Out of the Ivory Tower* (New York, 1977), pp. 141–4.

¹⁹ The Second World War brought Langer into leadership of the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS and post-war collaboration with the CIA.

²⁰ On the *Encyclopedia* and the narrow Eurocentrism that Langer brought to its direction, see P. Stearns, 'History's Advances: Recasting a Historical Reference Classic', *The Historian* 57 (1994), 113–20.

²¹ On Coolidge and his school, see R. F. Byrnes, *Awakening American Education to the World. The Role of Archibald Cary Coolidge, 1866–1928* (Notre Dame, 1982).

²² In F. Schuman, 'Paths of Empire', *The Nation* 141 (1935), 600–1; and Hans Rosenberg to Eugene Anderson, 18 April 1936, Box 24, Hans Rosenberg Papers, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Germany.

concepts that were to be the hallmark of the series. Despite his initial support for history beyond the record of elites, he demonstrated little long-term effort to correct volumes that relegated social history behind narratives of politics and institutions.²³ His personal contacts, particularly in the research periods of modern and contemporary history, often were conservatives or fellow Germanophiles. These qualities would not inhibit Langer's desire to find individuals of talent and energy. But they limited his capacity to oversee the completion of texts for the most controversial periods of the Reformation era and the two world wars.

In theory, threads of enlightened progress were to bind together the critical interpretative syntheses in the series. Authors such as Frederick Artz of Oberlin College thus justified his volume on post-Napoleonic Europe as an explicit defence of West European political liberalism and bourgeois social philosophy.²⁴ But this tended to introduce heavy doses of presentism, which emerged as an interpretative problem for critics of the series. Against the background of the Cold War, John Wolf used his study on the *Grand Siècle* to compare Louis XIV and 'Herr Hitler' in order 'to bring out the prominence of warfare in society and the advantages of those states best prepared to wage it'.²⁵ For his volume on the late medieval era, Edward Cheney of Pennsylvania University believed his work ought to 'serve as a sort of vestibule from which to enter the more spacious rooms of modern times' by employing concepts such as the rise of European proletariat and capitalist-class conflict.²⁶ This sparked numerous reproaches from Langer to avoid the 'roots' of the nationalist crises of the early 1930s and to treat the rise of the 'new monarchies' of the early Renaissance without anachronistic concepts.²⁷ Students of the 'New History' only echoed this unease about the insertion of contemporary concerns into Europe's distant past.²⁸

Attempts to understand Europe as a coherent object of study faced even deeper conceptual inconsistencies. By dividing European history into standard chronological slices, Langer and his colleagues could not reconcile

²³ Langer, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower*, p. 142. He admitted here that the volumes were to be 'basically political history' that attempted to 'take account of philosophical currents, literature, art and science'.

²⁴ See F. Artz's 'Preface', in Artz, *Reaction and Revolution, 1814–1832* (New York, 1934), p. vi. On Artz, see also G. Rudé, *Debate on Europe 1815–1850* (New York, 1972), pp. 33–4.

²⁵ John Wolf to Walter Dorn, 13 August 1948, detailing his plan for his volume *The Emergence of the Great Powers, 1685–1715* in Box 13, Walter Dorn Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Butler Library.

²⁶ Cheney to Langer, 28 December 1932, in Box 1, E. P. Cheney Papers, University Archives, the University of Pennsylvania.

²⁷ Langer to Cheney, 2 May 1931, Personal Correspondence, 'Cheney', Langer Papers.

²⁸ G. Bruun, 'Clio in the Pulpit', *The Nation* 140 (1935), 552–3; C. Hayes, 'History and the Present', *The Social Studies* 27 (1936), 75–81; and J. Hexter's review of Myron Gilmore, *The World of Humanism, 1453–1517*, *JMH* 26 (1954), 372.

concepts of interpretative unity with unworkable, 'dégagé' concepts that either were 'dreamed-up-to-suit-the-occasion', or proved unable to address historical change that differed dramatically over regions and specific topics of study.²⁹ If Oron Hale, who eventually contributed his own Harper volume, praised the project's collective expertise and its continental focus, others claimed that its wide compass dampened vibrant interpretation, while worsening the ability of historians to synchronize explanation across varied research fields.³⁰ Just as Fernand Braudel had encountered in his *Annaliste* history, the authors found that linkages were difficult to form between the static history 'from below' and the wars, statesmen or cultural leaders who journeyed across the theatre stage of Europe's emerging 'modernity'. More often than not, participants resolved this problem by effectively falling back on political-military criteria that the 'New History' perspective was meant to supersede.

Another difficulty emerged when the demand by the publisher to market the volumes for a large market of students and general readers eventually clouded the choice of priorities between simplistic discussion and analytical rigor. Professional historians believed that the public taste for simplistic ideas were incompatible with the demands of analytical rigor that American scholars now wanted to showcase Frederick Artz, worried that the series would be 'a kind of miniature [...] of the editions of the *Cambridge Modern History*' that would be too learned for public consumption.³¹ For Langer and executives at Harper Brothers, Leo Gershoy's manuscript on 'Enlightened Despotism', while rich in interpretative insight, was 'not a good first attempt', because it was deemed 'a bit too analytical and not quite enough narrative'.³² Despite his reputation as a progressive in the field of modern Europe, Louis Gottschalk wondered why Geoffrey Bruun's volume on the Napoleonic years avoided a minute narrative form. Time was 'the only objective norm with which history deals' and, self-evidently, 'history happens in chronological order, and there is no reason to be apologetic about it.'³³ A prominent historian of modern France rejected

²⁹ See, especially, Hexter, *The World of Humanism, 1453–1517*, *JMH* 26 (1954).

³⁰ Wallace Ferguson's review of Gilmore, *The World of Humanism*, *AHR* 58 (1953), 872–4; and O. Hale, 'The Rise of Modern Europe: The Nineteenth Century Volumes', read at the Southern Historical Association meeting, November 1949. See Box 13, Oron Hale Papers, Manuscript Department, University of Virginia.

³¹ Frederick Artz to Crane Brinton, 22 September 1934, in Box 1, HUG 4237.5 C. Crane Brinton Papers, Harvard University Archives.

³² Exchange between Langer and Cass Canfield, 5 January and 10 February 1944, in Box 12, Author Files of Leo Gershoy, Papers of Harper & Bros., Rare Books & Manuscripts, Princeton University.

³³ Louis Gottschalk's review of G. Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium, 1799–1814*, *AHR* 44 (1939), 619.

presenting European history beyond the story of statesmen and warfare, because 'the dynamic rhythm and flow of European has been better documented in political history than in any other medium.'³⁴ His colleague at North Carolina claimed that books of such scholastic ambition were 'much too advanced for the layman'. Considering the capacity of students, he wished that the younger authors had been less 'deep, penetrating, and philosophical, less adept at the use of abstract phraseology, in a word less scholarly' in their analysis.³⁵

Whether or not a more popular narrative style would have obliged a general audience, reviewers heavily criticized the volumes for weak interpretative themes.³⁶ The posthumous work by Penfield Roberts, a friend of Langer from MIT with little background in a general European history, was ridiculed for overemphasizing politics filled with 'half-truths, poor organization, and factual errors'.³⁷ Volumes that covered modern periods dominated by warfare met pointed questions about an inattention to everyday people or an awareness of wider socio-economic debate.³⁸ Elsewhere, contributors grouched that fellow volumes echoed national perspectives 'inspired by the same contracted outlook' of European scholars.³⁹ The American reliance on foreign research could also trigger the embarrassment of plagiarism. In one of the first released volumes, Frederick Artz was caught retyping entire paragraphs out of the

³⁴ James King's review of F. Nussbaum, *The Triumph of Science and Reason, 1660–1685*, *AHR* 59 (1953), 94–6.

³⁵ Mitchell Garrett's review of L. Gershoy, *From Despotism to Revolution, 1763–1789*, *AHR* 50 (1945), 322–3.

³⁶ Jonathan Scott's review of R. Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism, 1852–1871*, *JMH* 8 (1936), 504; W. A. Frayer's review of Artz, *Reaction and Revolution, 1815–1830*, *JHM* 7 (1936), 220.

³⁷ John Murray's review of P. Roberts, *The Quest for Security, 1715–1740*, *JMH* 20 (1948), 165–7.

³⁸ See the separate reviews by Thomas Moodie and Robert S. Brown on B. Schmitt and H. Vedeler, *The World in the Crucible, 1914–1919*, *The History Teacher* 20 (1986), 133–4, 143–5.

³⁹ Walter Dorn especially criticized Geoffrey Bruun's volume because 'everything that does not fit into the liberal pattern is regarded as irrelevant or used merely as a foil [...]. When a man like [Heinrich von] Srbik offers a real correction, it finds no resonance and his work falls flat. That Englishmen and Frenchmen and liberal Germans should have such an outlook is perhaps natural. That socialist historians should follow their lead is less intelligible. I see no way out of this blind alley unless we come around to the notion that national history constitutes no intelligible field of study for the American historian, that we must take Europe as a unit seriously and that can be done only by a rigorous comparative procedure which has really never been attempted, except by certain medieval historians, because it is so confoundedly difficult.' Dorn to Eugene Anderson, 14 June 1938, in Folder 14, Box 1, Eugene N. Anderson Papers, Charles E. Young Research Library. Manuscripts Division, UCLA.

textbook of the equivalent *Vormärz* period written by his French counterpart and good friend Georges Weill.⁴⁰

The challenge of interpretative coherence became more pronounced over time, as increasing numbers of senior historians failed to complete their assignments. William Lingelbach, Sidney Fay, Bernadotte Schmitt, Robert Lord, Harold Deutsch, Edwin Gay and Wilhelm Pauck simply abandoned their manuscripts, sometimes without even the courtesy of professional acknowledgement to the editor.⁴¹ Langer's professional over-commitments exacerbated intellectual limitations that prevented completion of his own manuscript to such an extent that he offered to resign just before his volume was due.⁴² When the book on the period of 1832 to 1852 finally appeared (four decades after his contract date), readers were greeted with a rambling, disjointed tome almost 300 per cent beyond the 100,000 word limit.⁴³ In every case, the historian admitted an inability to synthesize the vast amount of information beyond a more delimited experienced in traditional political history.⁴⁴ After replacing Sidney Fay for a volume on 1900 to 1914 that languished over three decades, Oron Hale admitted that he was only then discovering (after 35 years of experience) that there existed more to the period than diplomatic history.⁴⁵ Five years later, he was still attempting to understand this wider historical scope, confiding that 'the total assignment was really beyond my capacities [...] of scholarship and style.'⁴⁶ E. P. Cheney best summarized these limitations:

I am not very good at generalizations. I have been engaged for so many years in training graduate students that I find it hard to make broad statements which cannot be defended by any convincing arguments.

⁴⁰ Frank J. Manheim's devastating review of Artz in *Political Science Quarterly* 50 (1935), 294–7; and Solomon Bloom, 'Two Stages of Capitalism', *The New Republic* 87 (1936), 358.

⁴¹ Especially Harold Deutsch of Minnesota, see Langer to Canfield, 5 November 1959, Box 26, Harper & Row Editorial Correspondence, Columbia University.

⁴² Langer to Canfield, 23 November 1948 and 29 November 1954, in Box 25, *ibid.* See Langer to Carl Friedrich, 23 May 1947, Box 23, Carl Friedrich Papers, Pusey Library, Harvard University.

⁴³ Langer, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower*, 142–3. The reviews of *Political and Social Upheaval, 1832–1852* by P. Amann in *AHR* 75 (1970), 1446–8, and T. Hamerow in *JMH* 42 (1970), 669–70, both concluded the book lacked adequate integration of research or interpretation.

⁴⁴ Exchanges between Langer and William Lingelbach, 23 May, 10 June, 22 October 1935, in Box 24, Department of History Papers, UPB 1.9, University Archives, University of Pennsylvania; Langer to Wolf, 18 August 1950, Box 2, John B. Wolf Papers, University Archives, Andersen Library, University of Minnesota.

⁴⁵ Oron Hale to Langer, 20 April 1964, Box 7, RG 21/98.911, Oron Hale Papers.

⁴⁶ Hale to Langer, 11 June 1969, Hale Papers.

Generalizations so easily turn into speculations and one man's speculation in historical matters differs from another's, so that we soon get to a condition of reading into the few facts we have in interpretation that is mainly subjective. On the other hand I realize perfectly well that the interest and probably in the long run the value of history is in the interpretation we give to its objective facts, and I am perfectly willing to do what such powers of imagination as I may have are capable of doing to give significance to the story.⁴⁷

The politics of interpretation proved a daunting barrier to the completion of volumes whose topics still divided the American public. Confessional affiliations within the American university system compelled Langer initially to divide the volumes on the Reformation and Counter-Reformation between reliably Lutheran and Roman Catholic historians, each of whom were expected to balance the other's positive gloss on the religious struggle. A quarter-century after the series was launched, these instalments remained unfilled, leaving Langer to grouse that he could not 'make my mind to ask a theologian to do it and have not yet found the non-theologian who appeals to me'.⁴⁸ Still he clung to his goal to divide the two volumes on the Reformation and Counter-Reformation between a conservative Missouri-synod Lutheran and an ordained Catholic historian.⁴⁹ As this denominational division of labour fostered extensive delays, the volumes only appeared at the end of Langer's own life, respectively in 1974 and 1985.⁵⁰ The books by Lewis W. Spitz of Stanford and Father Marvin O'Connell of Notre Dame met positive review from their own respective religious advocates.⁵¹ But otherwise historians dismissed them as mere paeans to confessional heroes that sidestepped questions of anti-Semitism or the suppression of non-traditional Christianity. Far from gaining credit for a readable 'total history', they were seen as 'another

⁴⁷ Cheney to Langer, 17 December 1934, Personal Correspondence, 'Cheney', Langer Papers. Cheney admitted failure at synthetic interpretation in a letter to Joseph Strayer, 8 November 1938, Box 1, Cheney Papers.

⁴⁸ Langer to Cheney, 2 January 1931, Personal Correspondence, 'Cheney', Langer Papers. On his difficulty in securing a proper Lutheran orientation, see his query to Bernadotte Schmitt 'about someone at Chicago theological Seminary named Pauck or Pauk?' Langer to Schmitt, 18 February 1931, Box 3, Schmitt Papers.

⁴⁹ Langer to Cass Canfield, 29 November 1954, Box 25, Harper & Row Publishers Collection, Columbia.

⁵⁰ See L. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation, 1517–1559* (New York, 1985); and M. O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation, 1559–1610* (New York, 1974).

⁵¹ Eric Gritsch of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, *Church History* 54 (1985), 401–2; and William Trimble of Loyola University, Chicago, *The Review of Politics* 38 (1976), 122–4.

narrative[s] of great men and noble ideas' that treated 'all social and economic topics like a child gagging on his spinach'.⁵²

A paradoxical challenge of the American contributors was how to exemplify the progress of Europe's global rise in the wake of its near self-destruction of two world wars and the irreversible ebb of its world predominance. Because the political-religious violence since the thirteenth century hardly seemed to justify a linear path towards liberal democracy, in addition to the difficult quest for unifying concepts, the authors seized upon 'culture' as the identity of the continent and a distinctive stage of evolutionary progress. This field of research before the 1960s was largely an idealized view of western and central European high culture over popular life, in which regions of southern and eastern Europe were considered inconsequential to stages of civilization.⁵³ When contributors such as Leo Gershoy or Carl Friedrich were tempted to use terms such as 'Enlightened Absolutism' or 'the Baroque' to conceptualize a unitary culture of Europe, critics questioned whether regional trends were being stretched well beyond their reasonable areas of socio-geographic applicability.⁵⁴ Texts that identified historical periods through such common cultural and political ideals tended instead to bifurcate Europe into a paradigm that contrasted a liberal, advanced 'West' against an 'East' composed of social stagnation and despotic absolutism.⁵⁵ The present-mindedness of Edward Cheney's 'progress' prompted him to dismiss any attention to Russia as 'nothing more than a dark cloud on the horizon of Europe.'⁵⁶ Social and political movements in Poland or Hungary were to be ignored, as they did not reflect the future significance as the formation of national assemblies in Spain,

⁵² R. Richgels, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 7 (1976), 125; E. Cochrane, *AHR* 82 (1977), 86–8; R. Po-chia Hsia, *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986), 99–100; A. Fix, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (1986), 613–5; and T. A. Brady Jr., *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1985), 410–12.

⁵³ The development of 'New History' exacerbated this tendency even more for the legitimacy of Europe or American societies over other world cultures. See D. E. Segal, 'Western Civ' and the Staging of History in Higher American Education', *AHR* 105 (2000), 770–805.

⁵⁴ Compare Frederick Nussbaum's reaction to Gershoy's volume in the *Journal of Economic History* 5 (1945), 104; and the reviews of Carl Friedrich's *The Age of the Baroque, 1610–1660* (New York, 1952) in the *Journal of Central European Affairs* 12 (1953), 387–90, and *The British Journal of Sociology* 4 (1953), 94.

⁵⁵ On the idea of Slavic backwardness, see L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA, 1994); and D. C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

⁵⁶ Cheney could critique German cultural arrogance against the 'West' while embracing German nationalist historiography, as his volume appropriated Karl Hampe's celebration of a German racial mission to 'civilize' eastern Europe, in *The Dawn of a New Era 1250–1453*, pp. 301–3.

England and France.⁵⁷ Penfield Roberts confided that he could only bring conceptual unity to his study of European stability following the wars of Louis XIV by omitting the Balkans, German lands and the Slavic east.⁵⁸

Langer's Germanophilia aggravated these implicit national imbalances. He urged even advocates of central European conservatism to reflect his cultural biases in rewritten manuscripts. For the early modern period, this sentiment emerged in an admiration among contributors such as Walter Dorn for Prussian authoritarian administration along the lines of Otto Hintze or Gerhard Ritter.⁵⁹ It reflected a belief that politics was the 'central trunk' of historical synthesis, based on 'the State in its expanded sense as a principal and central cultural phenomenon'. Thus Dorn interpreted European progress in his volume on the mid-eighteenth century through a 'Teutonic rather than an American point of view' centred on Prussia's bureaucratic triumph and the 'raison d'état' of Frederick the Great.⁶⁰ Other contributors composed their volumes against problematic affiliation with fascism or National Socialism. Langer had close personal ties to Nazi historians between the wars such as Richard Fester and Egmont Zechlin. Carl Friedrich infused his early response to German and Italian fascism with guarded sympathy for the regimes.⁶¹ Most troubling was the collaboration of John Wolf, then at the University of Missouri, with Nazi propaganda agencies throughout the 1930s. These efforts yielded a string of publications up to 1939 in support of Hitler's call to reorder East European borders, according to attitudes that still resided in the language of degeneration which he voiced in his later volume.⁶²

⁵⁷ Cheney-Langer exchange of 7 and 17 December 1934, Personal Correspondence, 'Cheney', Langer Papers. Cheney simply saw no significance for example of the entire Mongol invasion for European history, in Cheney to Langer, 25 July 1935, Box 1, Cheney Papers.

⁵⁸ P. Roberts to Crane Brinton, 1 August 1941, Box 5, Brinton Papers.

⁵⁹ W. Dorn, 'Some Problems of Contemporary Historiography', *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Journal* 47 (1938), 219–22. Dorn was heavily influenced by his contact with Friedrich Meinecke and especially Otto Hintze, to whom he dedicated his Harper volume. See P. T. Walther, 'Die Zerstörung eines Projektes: Hedwig Hintze, Otto Hintze und Friedrich Meinecke', in G. Bock and D. Schönplüg (eds), *Friedrich Meinecke in seiner Zeit. Studien zu Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 137, 144.

⁶⁰ Chester Higby's review of Walter Dorn, *Competition for Empire, 1740–1763* (New York, 1940), *AHR* 46 (1940), 128; Hoffman Nickerson in *Military Affairs* 5 (1941), 123; T. Pease, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (1940), 283–4; and Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience 1660–1815* (Cambridge, MA, 1966), p. 21.

⁶¹ For Langer, see the author's thesis, 'The Common Adventure of Mankind: Academic Internationalism and Western Historical Practice from Versailles to Potsdam' (Pennsylvania, 2003), pp. 512–20, 535–8. On Friedrich, see Ido Oren, *Our Enemies and US: American Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca, 2003), pp. 83–4.

⁶² The correspondence with agencies such as the DAI reside in Box 2, John B. Wolf Papers. The articles appeared throughout the 1930s in the journal *World Affairs*. For this language, see *The Emergence of the Great Powers*, pp. 123–5, 151–3.

Where authors did not lean towards German nationalism, Langer intervened with his editor's pen. As late as 1969 he asked Oron Hale to remove German responsibility for political crises such as the Anglo-German naval race before the Great War.⁶³ Not surprisingly, reviewers concluded that his volume, *The Great Illusion, 1900–1914*, read as an old-fashioned apologia for Germany's pre-war political leadership.⁶⁴ Langer also rejected a chapter from John Wolf's volume that grouped Russia with Western Europe, suggesting that Eastern Europe could not yet fit into the progressive narrative of Anglo-French political and cultural reform.⁶⁵ A cultural European core rendered the Ottoman Empire or Africa irrelevant. Even the later volumes of the twentieth century, which were dominated by the world wars and composed against the explosion of research from the 1960s, still tended to isolate Europe from its global interconnections.⁶⁶

A further paradox of the series was its intellectual backbone of civic optimism for a 'rising European civilization', compared to the growing socio-political pessimism harboured by American historians in the 1930s. Most of the volumes conceived in the project's first decade proved quite warm towards European political and cultural authoritarianism. This trend was consistent among both conservative historians and their progressive counterparts, many of whom feared the rejection of enlightened elites by an 'irrational', poorly educated, majority underclass.⁶⁷ It produced an inadvertent consensus for sympathy toward traditional European authority over popular nationalism and the relative failures of new states in east-central Europe. Thus, Robert Binkley's admiration for European bureaucratic federalism, in contrast to populist militarism, led to his heroic portrayal of Napoleon III and his designs to formalize a monarchical 'concert of Europe' against national, liberal, or socialist challenges.⁶⁸ Individual liberties could also be viewed as obstacles to long-term European progress directed 'from above'. For Frederic Nussbaum, the study of seventeenth-century cultures affirmed that 'liberty has been a negative factor

⁶³ Langer to Hale, 15 July 1969, Box 7, Hale Papers. Hale replied that he was merely 'bending over backwards' to compensate for his long, pro-German stance.

⁶⁴ For a positive response to Hale's declaration that Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg was 'fundamentally, a man of honor, sensibility, and peace', see J. Remak, *AHR* 77 (1972), 780–1. A more critical stance was an unattributed review in the *Times Literary Supplement* 70 (1971), 1026.

⁶⁵ Langer to Wolf, 18 August 1950, Box 2, John Wolf Papers.

⁶⁶ See Paul Helmreich's review of Gordon Wright, *The Ordeal of Total War, 1939–1945* (New York, 1968), in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 384 (1969), 140 (hereafter AAAPSS).

⁶⁷ E. Breisach, *American Progressive History: An Experiment in Modernization* (Chicago, 1993).

⁶⁸ Reviewers who identified European monarchies as bastions against popular irrationality supported these volumes warmly. See reviews of Binkley by V. Puryear, *AHR* 42 (1936), 124–6; W. Littlefield in the *NYTBR*, 1 March 1936, p. 9; and H. Kohn, *AAAPSS* 186 (1936), 199–200.

throughout European history, as it has been asserted by groups against necessary advances in coordination, resulting usually in the steadily increasing complexity of European society.⁶⁹

The emphasis among authors on the use of European culture as a unifying agent for continental progress also tended to reinforce elitism over popular emancipation. Contributors who experienced Europe as participants in the Great War or as student travellers in the post-war years became avid admirers of either French, Germanic or English culture. Their love, however, was for a Europe that was imagined into something abstractly refined or heroically superior to a world based on the crass materialism of the 'masses'. Crane Brinton longed for a 'reasoned' elitism that drew inspiration from the anti-revolutionary heritage of Edmund Burke and his hero, Prince Talleyrand. Frederick Artz pronounced that Americans may be more 'modern' or more 'sanitary', but are 'less civilized fundamentally'.⁷⁰ He proposed that:

France will be remembered down the centuries not for having charged some American doughboy an extra five cents when she was starving, but for her love of fundamental values of life, of a sense of beauty, of her passionate love of home, of her courage against overwhelming adversary and crushing sorrow, of her great sense of the [...] sacredness of human liberty, of having saved the world from heavy and stupid brutality, and of having shown to a growingly commercialized America the way of her duty. France is the soldier of God.⁷¹

But such pretences for a *juste milieu* also revealed biting disdain for the common people who were theoretically to be the principle object of a 'new' European history. As a young specialist on the French Revolution, Leo Gershoy considered Europe's commoners to be barbaric and uncivilized, despite his positive evaluation of the French republican state and its artistic/literary traditions. He observed:

The French are a sorry lot. I think they are an inferior people anyhow, full of conceit and arrogance, and almost totally lacking in initiative and artistic feeling. They live in the glory of the past [...] about another half year of France and I'd learn to hate the French. One thing I give them credit for – they have made Paris a heaven for the foreigners. If it could be rid of the French, it would be still more heavenly.⁷²

⁶⁹ See Frederick Nussbaum to E. P. Cheney, 23 March 1934, Box 1, Cheney Papers.

⁷⁰ Artz to his parents, Thanksgiving Day, 1918, Box 2, Series III Correspondence, Frederick Artz Papers, Oberlin College Archives.

⁷¹ Travel diary, entry for 5 May 1920, in Box 3, Frederick B. Artz Papers.

⁷² Gershoy to family, 24 April 1928 and 18 September 1927. Folder 8, Box 3, Gershoy Papers.

Reactionary ideology could also be bound to a wider concern with a transatlantic West, as was pronounced especially in Carlton Hayes's volume on the later nineteenth century. Hayes shared a deeply held belief with many of his Catholic (and Protestant) colleagues that the materialism of 'sectarian liberals' and socialism helped to produce a vacuum of cultural meaning for modern Europe, and by inference the United States, which gave rise to 'totalitarianism'.⁷³ He did not hold this position in isolation, as other proposed contributors, such as E. H. Harbison of Princeton, similarly chafed at the de-Christianization of European society and the secularism of contemporary scholars who studied the 'Western' past.⁷⁴ For Hayes, once these forces eroded the public authority of Catholic-led Christianity, popular sovereignty became the agent of powerful false religions, including popular nationalism, militant demagoguery and the self-interests of atomized social groups.⁷⁵ 'Cut off from its historical Christian roots', Western civilization could not endure.⁷⁶ Fellow conservatives, native to both America and central Europe, soon rallied around the book to critique the rise of democracy as a prelude to 'totalitarianism'.⁷⁷

This Burckhardtian conception of refined culture also belied searing prejudices among the project's participants in areas of gender and race. Although the historian Violet Barbour was the original requested author for a volume on 'The Rise of Absolutism', Langer saw no need to find another female historian upon her withdrawal. Excepting some attention to women's suffrage as a political force in the *Belle Epoque*, sections on social or cultural history ignored questions about gender or the family. If the books were free of obvious anti-Semitic language, such sentiment was still present in the professional lives of historians including Hayes, Dorn and Crane Brinton.

⁷³ On the wider Catholic context, see D. W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism 1911–1963* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1996), pp. 49–62.

⁷⁴ Langer had secured Harbison (a devout Presbyterian) for the book on the Protestant Reformation until his early death in 1964. See Harbison, 'The 'Meaning of History' and the Writing of History', *Church History* 21 (1952), 97–107, and 'Divine Purpose and Human History', *Christian Scholar* 37 (1954), 478–86.

⁷⁵ Historians expressed concern over the pedagogical implications of the books main political theses. See Hale, 'The Rise of Modern Europe', p. 5; F. Palm, *AHR* 47 (1942), 852–4; and A. Adey, *Current History* 2 (1942), 61–2.

⁷⁶ Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism* (New York, 1941), p. 135; and K. Pinson, 'Preface to Change', *The New Leader*, 28 March 1942. See, too, G. Bruun, 'Western Civilization', *High School Social Studies Perspectives* (Boston, MA, 1962), 155–60, 170–2.

⁷⁷ C. Brinton, 'The "Harvest" Years', *Saturday Review of Literature* 24 (1941), 12; H. Rothfels, *JMH* 14 (1942), 385–7; and, more ambiguously, W. Gurian in *The Review of Politics* 4 (1942), 91–3. The pro-fascist Ross Hoffman of NYU shared this thesis in his review of Binkley's book, 'The Watershed of the Nineteenth Century', *The American Review* 6 (1936), 503–6.

Even Gershoy, who has faced anti-Semitism in the America academy as a Russian-born Jew, disdained Eastern Europe's 'dirty and noisy' Jewish émigrés who inhabited 'the ghetto of Paris, with old familiar pushcarts and women in house slippers'.⁷⁸

Otherwise, racism was pervasive among contributors who had been educated in the era of Jim Crow. Although a distinguished gentleman to his students, Langer would admit to 'working like a nigger' with confidants such as the editor of the journal *Foreign Affairs*.⁷⁹ Comparable views influenced his editing, such as his desire for Oron Hale to emphasize the requirement of French and British armies after 1900 to recruit non-white soldiers from the empire, in order to discretely pose the later problem of 'Senegalese in the Rhineland occupation [which] created a great deal of resentment and criticism'.⁸⁰ Even if a historian might feel isolated in one category of social marginalization, virulent prejudices could impact other areas of scholarship. The progress of white high culture that drove the 'Rise of Modern Europe' could justify the inhumanity of modern imperialism in the nineteenth-century volumes. Artz, a social outsider as a secular, liberal-minded homosexual, viewed Senegalese soldiers in France as the:

blackest niggers you ever saw. When they arrived we all imagined them [as] man-eating cannibals; but they have turned out to be very – I would say astoundingly, – tractable. They are of course like children in many ways, but most of them speak and understand French. It is wonderful to think what the French have been able to teach them. Only a few years ago they were probably hardly to be distinguished from the monkeys in the trees above them.⁸¹

The conservative political leanings within the most notable Harper volumes also introduced the possibility that European scholars could exploit individual books to bring foreign legitimacy to their own national-authoritarian views of history. While this occurred largely within the inter-war debate on the origins

⁷⁸ Gershoy to family, 22 March (perhaps 1928) and a second undated letter from the spring of the same year. Folder 5, Box 3, Gershoy Papers, New York Public Library. At one point Gershoy claimed 'the Russians! Just as you can't turn around in the Bronx without seeing a Jew (may the philosopher of the heights forgive me of this anti-Semitism) so in the Latin Quarter you can't move without hearing Russian all around you.'

⁷⁹ Langer to Hamilton Armstrong, 4 August 1932, 'Langer', Box 40, Hamilton Fish Armstrong Papers.

⁸⁰ Langer to Hale, 26 July 1969, Box 7, Hale Papers.

⁸¹ While serving at a field hospital in France, Artz compared a Madagascar soldier as 'a monkey scolding at the moon [...] as black as coal' who required shining rather than bathing. See his letters of 4 May and 14 July 1918, Box 2, Hale Papers.

of the First World War, it also arose through the translation of Crane Brinton's volume on the French Revolution, through the efforts of the refugee historian Dietrich Gerhard and Peter Richard Rohden, a *Privatdozent* at the University of Berlin until his death in 1942.⁸² Brinton's volume – among the best selling of the series – synthesized his running critique of the Revolution as an irrational paroxysm of modernity, as was argued through the ideas of Auguste Cochin and Edmund Burke.⁸³ Thus Georges Lefebvre, who otherwise praised American syntheses, concluded that Brinton's presentation of the Revolution as a Jacobin fever was an amateur perspective 'n'est pas sans analogie avec celui de Taine'.⁸⁴ Rohden appreciated the book as a 'refreshingly objective' understanding of the terror as the deliberate act of French leaders, rather than resulting from 'mechanistic' factors such as class struggle, foreign wars or intellectual plot.⁸⁵ In 1935 he and Gerhard proposed to translate the text into German, where it could offer a respectful international critique against French traditions of mass democracy, defined by a radical utopia or religion.⁸⁶ Brinton confided his astonishment to the Harper editor about 'why the Germans should be so interested is a mystery to me, unless people think my book conceals anti-Nazi propaganda.'⁸⁷ But they authorized the edition even after Dr Rohden had joined the Nazi academic propaganda campaign against Franco-British interests.⁸⁸ The volume appeared with the onset of war in 1939, only after Rohden had received Brinton's permission to drop the chapter on intellectual-cultural

⁸² On the war guilt revisionism, see E. L. Evans and J. O. Baylen, 'History as Propaganda: The German Foreign Office and the "Enlightenment" of American Historians on the War Guilt Question, 1930–1933', *Canadian Journal of History* 10 (1975), 186.

⁸³ Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution, 1789–1799* (New York, 1934), pp. 221, 244, 302.

⁸⁴ G. Lefebvre, 'Histoire de la Révolution et de l'Empire', *Revue Historique* 176 (1935), 78–9. On Brinton as an 'enlighten conservative' who admired Burke and sympathized with Cochin, see Eugene Curtis's review in *JMH* 7 (1936), 211–12.

⁸⁵ For Brinton's subsequent comparative studies on world revolutions, see J. Friguglietti, 'Dissecting a Classic: Crane Brinton's *Anatomy of Revolution* after Fifty Years', *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 16 (1989), 428–35.

⁸⁶ Rohden's review of Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution, 1789–1799*, *Historische Zeitschrift* 157 (1938), 165–7. For his part, in 1937 Brinton supported efforts to translate Rohden's history of Robespierre's political thought, as undertaken by the pro-Hitler historian at Temple University, Andreas Elviken.

⁸⁷ Rohden to Brinton, 19 November 1935; Brinton to Cass Canfield in 31 December 1935, in Box 1, Brinton Papers. For private assurance that Rohden compromised early on with Nazis only as a careful career tactic, see Fritz Hartung to Gerhard Ritter, 30 November 1937, in Mappe 487, Gerhard Ritter Papers, Bundesarchiv Koblenz. A more complete discussion of his service for the NSDAP is in K. Schönwälder, *Historiker und Politik: Geschichtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp. 162–4.

⁸⁸ The volume appeared in 1939 as *Europa im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution*; its Viennese publisher notably reprinted it in 1948, perhaps as a comfortable conservative alternative to more racist Nazi studies.

history, to delete any reference for American students, and to modify the translation, over Gerhard's own concerns, to eliminate language not in keeping with the 'tastes of German readers'.⁸⁹

Weighted by all these aforementioned deficiencies, what was the legacy of the Harper series in the American conception of a 'Western Civilization'? Despite its limitations, it was still the first great attempt by American historians to advance beyond conventional undergraduate textbooks with an imaginative and holistic analysis of Europe since the Middle Ages, dedicated to both the academic and general audience. Perhaps in light of these goals it aimed too high. Asked to craft an Olympian view of Europe as an integrated continent, through all of the parameters of a 'total history', most of the authors encountered daunting challenges to conceptualize synthetic concepts beyond their range of learning or imagination. The ideal of progress, so central to the project, compelled historians to justify the relevance of early modern European history with an anachronistic search for Western 'modernity' in periods and places which, in fact, had little similarity with urban, industrialized and (increasingly) democratic America. And while each claim for the root of 'modernity' changed according to each author's explicit volume, all of the works tended to consider the taproot of contemporary identity through the triumph of modern states or the achievements of male elites in 'cultivated' arts and letters.

Perhaps the key weakness of the series was its very measurement of civilization. As the volumes were completed, historians increasingly fell back on 'cultural history' as a common *Zeitgeist* to unify a given era.⁹⁰ But in seeking the character of civilization through a historical process that was to end with the familiar identities of an American guild, the authors measured communities of Europeans on uneven scales of 'progress'. Central and western Europe was privileged over the lagging east, and the closer that the volumes moved towards modernity, the greater became the degree of apprehension about mass politics and secular consumer society. By the 1960s a younger generation of historians, more optimistic about civic equality and popular democracy, began to challenge the problematic inter-war views, as revealed through sharper professional criticism of the latter editions. Thus most of the works were considered antiquated indeed by Langer's death. Yet the series retains its importance as a monument to American historiography, precisely because it demonstrated how closely its authors' views were aligned to the

⁸⁹ See letters of the publisher, L. W. Seidel & Sohn, with Brinton, 6 and 17 November 1937; Rohden to Brinton, 5 July 1938; and Gerhard to Brinton, 17 January and 9 September 1938. All in Boxes 1 and 3, Brinton Papers.

⁹⁰ For the first American manifesto of this turn, see C. F. Ware (ed.), *The Cultural Approach to History* (New York, 1940), pp. 3–16.

intellectual trends of the Europeans who they were to study. *The Rise of Modern Europe* revealed that American scholars were not free to diagnose the continent as detached observers. They were rather unified with Europeans in their vulnerability to the crises of bourgeois liberalism and a cultural pessimism in the twentieth century, one that notions of progress and civility could not simply assuage.

Harper Series: *The Rise of Modern Europe*

This original layout was from a letter and précis of William Langer to William Lingelbach, Professor of Modern History, University of Pennsylvania, 10 November 1929. The titles were provisional. Originally Langer proposed a further volume under Charles McIlwain, a dry 'scientific' historian who specialized in medieval constitutional history.

1. *Dawn of New Era*: Edwin P. Cheney of Penn, completed 1935.
2. *Renaissance & Age of Discovery*: Ernest Nelson of Duke – Myron Gilmore of Harvard, completed 1952.
3. *Protestant Revolt*: Sidney B. Fay of Harvard, changed to First World War – to Wilhlem Pauck of University of Chicago – to E. H. Harbinson of Princeton (died 1964) – Lewis Spitz of Stanford, completed 1985.
4. *Catholic Reformation*: Monsignor Robert Lord – to Mgr. Philip Hughes of Notre Dame – Mgr. Marvin O'Connell of Notre Dame, completed 1974.
5. *Era of Religious Wars, 1610–1660*: Carl Friedrich of Harvard, completed 1952.
6. *Triumph of Absolutism*: Violet Barbour until 1933 – Frederick Nussbaum of Wyoming, completed 1953.
7. *Europe at War, 1685–1715*: Lawrence Packard of Amherst – John B. Wolf of Minnesota, completed 1951.
8. *The Commercial Aristocracy (1715–40)*: Penfield Roberts of MIT, completed 1947 by Crane Brinton.
9. *Dynastic Ambition and Colonial Enterprise*: Walter Dorn of Ohio State, completed 1940.
10. *Enlightened Despots 1763–1789*: Crane Brinton of Harvard, changed to French Revolution, – Leo Gershoy of Long Island University/NYU, completed 1944.
11. *Economic Revolution*: Edwin F. Gay of Harvard Business School, ~~DELETED~~.
12. *Revolutionary Era*: Carl Becker of Cornell, refused – Crane Brinton of Harvard, completed 1934.
13. *Napoleon & Europe*: Guy S. Ford of Minnesota, declined – Louis Gottschalk of Chicago, declined 1934 – Geoffrey Bruun of NYU, completed 1938.
14. *Romantic Reaction*: Frederick Artz of Oberlin College, completed 1934.

15. *Bourgeois Experiment*: William Langer of Harvard, completed 1969.
16. *Victory of Nationalism*: Bernadotte Schmitt of Chicago, declined 1929 – Robert C. Binkley of Case Western, completed 1941.
17. *Prosperity and Doubt*: Carlton J. H. Hayes of Columbia, completed 1941.
18. *The Great Illusion*: Sidney B. Fay of Harvard until 1962 – Oron Hale of Virginia, completed 1971.
19. *World in the Crucible*: James Shotwell of Columbia, declined 1929 – Charles Seymour of Yale until 1940s – Bernadotte Schmitt of Chicago until 1968 – Harold Vedeler of University of Idaho & State Dept., completed 1984.
20. *The New World 1919*: Parker Moon of Columbia, declined 1929 – William Lingelbach of Penn until 1935 – Raymond Sontag of Berkeley, completed 1971.
21. Replacement for Gay volume on Industrial Revolution, *The Ordeal of Total War*: Harold Deutsch of Minnesota until late 1940s – Gordon Wright of Stanford, completed 1968.

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