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NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES IN TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: EUROPE IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

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I. INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES NOW?

Modern national master narratives in Europe emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often as a direct response to the political crises caused by the French revolution. The nineteenth century then witnessed the rise of national histories which tended towards homogeneity and closure without ever being entirely successful in achieving either. In the first half of the twentieth century, the concept of national history underwent successive crises, in particular in relation to the two world wars and their aftermath. However, national history also found its apogee in a series of hyper-nationalist narratives which proved to be unparalleled in their destructive energies. Whereas the second half of the twentieth century has seen some movement towards postnationalism, historiographies and historical writing remain firmly structured along national lines. Whether one talks about a revival of the national paradigm in Europe¹ or the emergence of a post-classical national master narrative after 1989², national histories still form a major part of what historians write about today and what has a wider relevance beyond the boundaries of the academy.

Europeanisation and globalisation have questioned the meaningfulness of purely national narratives, but the same processes have also caused a defensive reaction for many people who cling to 'their' national narratives in the hope of countering the effects of such trends. In particular, radical right-wing movements across Europe are seeking to instrumentalise versions of traditional and familiar national histories to bolster their political aspirations. However, it is not only the radical right who employ national history in the pursuit of political goals and support. Mainstream centre-right and centre-left parties also make use of national pasts in all European countries³. Regional nationalisms in Spain, Britain and a variety of other countries equally make frequent references to recovering their own national narratives. In the 1990s, nation states have broken apart peacefully, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, or they have gone down in a frenzy of violence and civil war that many Europeans hoped never to see again in Europe, as in the case of

¹ T. Judt, *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe* (New York, 1997).

² H. A. Winkler, „Abschied von einem deutschen Sonderweg. Wider die postnationale Ideologie“, in *Die neue Gesellschaft/ Frankfurter Hefte*, 40, (1993): 633-636.

³ For the intriguing example of the Switzerland, see G. Marchal, “Die Schweizer und ihr Mittelalter. Missbrauch der Geschichte?“, in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 55 (2005): 131-148.

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Yugoslavia. New nation states, such as Slovakia or Croatia have been keen on using national history for legitimatisation⁴. The twenty-first century might yet witness the decomposition of more nation states - with Belgium perhaps top of the list⁵.

Europe itself is often presented as the sum total of the national historical narratives and cultures in Europe. Such a perspective tends to see the national narratives as working in the direction of 'ever closer political union' after 1945 as a result of the catastrophic experiences with the national paradigm in the first half of the twentieth century. In all these cases then, national narratives and contestation over them has played a major role in determining national, regional and European identities. Against this background of the contemporary relevance of the subject matter, the European Science Foundation programme entitled 'Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (NHIST) explores the common patterns and diverse ways in which national narratives underpinned nation building processes in Europe⁶. After the programme has successfully completed its mid-term evaluation, we are grateful to the editor of *Storia della Storiografia*, Edoardo Tortarolo, for giving us the opportunity of presenting the concept and some of the initial results of the programme to the wider community of interested scholars.

II. NHIST WITHIN THE EXISTING RESEARCH LANDSCAPE ON NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES

NHIST builds on the work of often-younger historians in Europe, many of whom, over the last twenty years, have taken up the challenge of comparative and transnational history to go beyond the older national perspectives on historiography. As far back as 1974, Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse edited a collection of essays on the political impact of specific historians in six European nation states. Apart from a genuinely comparative concluding essay on the alleged decline of the national paradigm between 1900 and 1970 by Paul Kennedy, all of the contributions to the volume are biographical. Many of the essays are on late nineteenth and early twentieth century historians. Hence, the espousal of various forms of nationalism through history writing played an important part in this

⁴ M. Winkler, "Alte Bilder und neue Perspektiven: Aktuelle Arbeiten zur slowakischen Geschichte", in *Bohemia*, 42, (2001): 391-404; W. Bracewell, "The End of Yugoslavia and New National Histories", in *European History Quarterly*, 29 (1999): 149-156. For the desire of post-Soviet nations to fall back on national history for state legitimation see also R. G. Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations", in *Journal of Modern History*, 73 (2001): 862-896.

⁵ M. Conway, *The Death of Belgium* (Oxford, forthcoming). On earlier attempts to create a Belgian national consciousness through historical narrative see J. Tollebeek, "Historical Representation and the Nation State in Romantic Belgium (1830 - 1850)", in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59, 2 (1998): 329-353.

⁶ For details of this programme and regular updates of its progress see www.uni-leipzig.de/zhsesf; see also the programme brochure and first and second newsletter of the programme published by the European Science Foundation in Strasbourg in February and October 2004 and in October 2006 respectively. The programme is running from 2003 to 2008.

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collection⁷. It already demonstrated that a considerable amount of research was being carried out on the national paradigm within national historiographies, i.e. historians of one particular nation state analysing the impact of national history writing on their particular nation state. Whilst such research has undoubtedly yielded important results, the predominance of the national paradigm tended to overlook the European dimension of historiographical nationalism.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that only in relatively few countries a considerable amount of research has been undertaken: we know quite a bit about the relationship between national histories and national identities in the larger European nation states such as Germany, France, Britain and Italy. By contrast, we know very little about that relationship in some of Europe's smaller countries. In particular, for some of the most recent European states in Eastern Europe, hardly anything is known about the interplay of historiographical traditions and national identity formation. Finally, many of the minority nationalisms in Western Europe, e.g. those of the large multi-national states such as Spain and Britain, have also rarely been studied from a historiographical viewpoint.

Only occasionally did national historians consciously use the comparative method to shed light on the specific problems of a particular national history. Major collaborative efforts, such as the ESF-funded projects on 'The Genesis of the Modern State' and on 'Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe 1850-1950' bore rich fruit in the area of national historiographical traditions⁸. A number of conferences in the 1990s, resulting in edited collections, were dedicated to the analysis of national historiographical traditions in comparative and transnational perspective. Much work was being done in the Scandinavian countries, where comparison between the Nordic states had become well established⁹. Other 'historical regions' have followed suit¹⁰. 'Historical region' (*Geschichtsregion*) has indeed been presented as a useful category for historical comparison, as it binds together spatial entities which often can be usefully compared. Clusters of transnational structures can be identified in historical meso-regions, such as East-Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, North-Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, or the Black Sea Region¹¹.

⁷ W. Laqueur and G. L. Mosse, eds., *Historians in Politics* (London 1974).

⁸ W. P. Blockmans and J.P. Genet, eds., *Visions sur le développement des états européens. Théories et Historiographies de l'Etat moderne* (Rome, 1993); G. Brunn, « Historical Consciousness and Historical Myths », in *The Formation of National Elites*, vol. 6, ed. A. Kappeler, (Dartmouth, 1992), 327-38.

⁹ F. Meyer and J. E. Myhre, eds., *Nordic Historiography in the Twentieth Century* (Oslo, 2000).

¹⁰ For East Central and South East Europe, see for example M. Krzoska and H.C. Maner, eds., *Beruf und Berufung. Geschichtswissenschaft und Nationsbildung in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 2005); for Eastern Europe see also D. Schorkowitz, "Clio und Natio im östlichen Europa", in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 279, 1 (2004): 1-33; for the North East Baltic region see 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). Also D. Deletant and H. Hanak, eds., *Historians as Nation Builders. Central and South-East Europe* (Basingstoke, 1988).

¹¹ S. Troebst, ed., "Geschichtsregionen: Concept and Critique", special issue of the *European Review of History*, 10, 2 (2003).

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Lönnroth, Molin and Björk were among the first to develop a framework for the comparative study of national historiographies¹². Specific comparison of historiographical national cultures enriched our understanding of those frameworks¹³. Attempts to delineate the construction of modern nations from the construction of pre-modern nations led to debates surrounding overlaps and continuities between pre-modern and modern national narratives¹⁴. The dominance of national narratives was also identified as a major problem for European history¹⁵. Europe had indeed been a challenge to national historiographies, but it would be mistaken to speak of a one-sided process of decline for national narratives even for the period from 1945 to the present¹⁶.

Some comparisons tended to concentrate on institutions, professionalisation and the structures of the historical disciplines¹⁷, while others chose to concentrate more on the narrative constructions of nation, although in practice the two inevitably overlapped¹⁸. Specific developments in national history writing, such as the emergence of *Volksgeschichte* in diverse national historiographies after the First World War, have also been the object of comparative investigations¹⁹. Jan Piskorski specifically compared the German *Ostforschung* with the Polish *Westforschung*, asking how these two concepts of *Volksgeschichte* related to each other²⁰.

Increasingly, cultural transfer perspectives seeking to explore the relational aspects between diverse European historiographies and between European and non-European historiographies enriched the comparative method²¹.

¹² See, for example, K. Lönnroth, K. Molin, and R. Björk, eds., *Conceptions of National History* (Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 78, Berlin, 1994).

¹³ See, for example, K. Baczkowski and C. Simon, eds., *Historiographie in Polen und in der Schweiz* (Krakow, 1994); S. Howe, "The Politics of Historical 'Revisionism': Comparing Ireland and Israel/Palestine", in *Past and Present*, 168, (2000): 225-253; S. Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Essen, 2001); R. Abdelal, "Memories of Nations and States: Institutional History and National Identity in Post-Soviet Eurasia", in *Nationalities Papers*, 30, 3 (2002): 459-484; K. Ruchniewicz and S. Troebst, eds., *Diktaturbewältigung und nationale Selbstvergewisserung. Geschichtskulturen in Polen und Spanien im Vergleich* (Wroclaw, 2004).

¹⁴ A. Bues and R. Rexheuser, eds., *Mittelalterliche nationes - neuzeitliche Nationen. Probleme der Nationenbildung in Europa* (Wiesbaden, 1995).

¹⁵ H. Duchhardt and A. Kunz, eds., *"Europäische Geschichte" als historiographisches Problem* (Mainz, 1997).

¹⁶ S. Berger, "A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France and Britain from 1945 to the Present", in *The Journal of Modern History*, 77, 3 (2005): 629-678.

¹⁷ R. Thorstendahl, ed., *An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Historiography. Professionalism, Methodologies, Writings* (Stockholm, 2000).

¹⁸ S. Berger, M. Donovan and K. Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories. Western Europe Since 1800* (London, 1999); C. Conrad and S. Conrad, eds., *Die Nation schreiben: Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2002).

¹⁹ M. Hettling, ed., *Volksgeschichten in Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Göttingen, 2003).

²⁰ J. M. Piskorski, „Polish MyÉl Zachodnia and German Ostforschung. An Attempt at a Comparison”, in *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1920 ? 1945*, eds., M. Fahlbusch and I. Haar (Oxford, 2004): 260-271; also Jan. M. Piskorski, Jörg Hackmann and Rudolf Jaworski, eds., *Deutsche Ostforschung und polnische Westforschung im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Politik. Disziplinen im Vergleich* (Osnabrück, 2002).

²¹ For the British-German context see in particular B. Stuchtey and P. Wende, eds., *British and*

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Historiographical micro-studies have been adept in addressing the relational aspect of historiographical developments, including their national bias²². At the beginning of the new millennium, the first publications sought to extend the European perspectives to other parts of the world, seeking an intercultural debate on historical thinking about the nation state²³. As the 1990s drew to a close, the previous focus on collecting research on particular national traditions in one volume and providing a comparative introductory chapter gave way to an increasing number of genuinely comparative pieces, although it was still rare for one scholar to attempt a truly global survey of historiographical developments²⁴. Major exhibitions, such as the two on “myths of the nations”, organised by Monika Flacke in Berlin in 1998 and 2004/5, also encouraged researchers to explore the scope and the fruitfulness of the comparative method in this area of research²⁵.

A new generation of younger scholars are adopting the comparative method to investigate what was specific about particular national historiographies. To give just a few examples: Monika Baar is currently completing a monograph comparing five national historians in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe covering five different national contexts: Poland, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania²⁶. Linas Eriksonas has published a thesis comparing national heroes in national historiographies in Scotland, Norway and the Baltic region²⁷. Pavel Kolar has compared the nineteenth century formation of national histories at the

German Historiography 1750 - 1950: Traditions, Perceptions and Transfers (Oxford, 2000); S. Berger, P. Lambert and P. Schumann, eds., *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750 - 2000* (Göttingen, 2003). For other examples involving other nations see also S. Kaudelka, *Rezeption im Zeitalter der Konfrontation. Französische Geschichtswissenschaft und Geschichte in Deutschland 1920 - 1940* (Göttingen, 2003); T. Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making. Studies in Hungarian Connections to Britain and America, 1848-1945* (Budapest, 1999); P. Stelzel, «Fritz Fischer and the American Historical Profession: Tracing the Transatlantic Dimension of the Fischer-Kontroverse », in *Storia della Storiografia*, 44, (2003): 67-84; S. Spalletti, « Friedrich List en las Historias Nacionales del Pensamiento Economico Italiano y Espanol », in *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 22, (2002): 79-107.

²² See, for example, P. Schöttler, “Französische und deutsche Historiker-Netzwerke am Beispiel der frühen Annales”, in H. Borzarslan, ed., *Regards et Miroirs: Mélanges Rémy Leveau* (Leipzig, 1997), 217 - 221; J. L. Harvey, “An American Annales? The AHA and the Revue internationale d’histoire économique of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, 76 (2004): 578-621.

²³ J. Rüsen, ed., *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate* (Oxford, 2002); H. Kaelble and D. Rothermund, eds., *Nichtwestliche Geschichtswissenschaft seit 1945* (Leipzig, 2001); E. Fuchs and B. Stuchtey, eds., *Across Cultural Borders. Historiography in Global Perspective* (Lanham/Maryland, 2002); S. Berger, ed., *Writing the Nation: Global Perspectives* (Houndmills, 2007, forthcoming).

²⁴ G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, (London 1997); M. Bentley, *Modern Historiography. An Introduction* (London, 1999); L. Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme: Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2003).

²⁵ M. Flacke, ed., *Mythen der Nationen. Ein europäisches Panorama* (Berlin, 1998); M. Flacke, ed., *Mythen der Nationen. 1945: Arena der Erinnerungen*, 2 vols (Berlin, 2004).

²⁶ Her book will appear in the Oxford Historical Monograph series with Oxford University Press.

²⁷ L. Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities. Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels, 2004).

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universities of Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Krakow²⁸. Maciej Janowski has compared the work of three important national historians of Poland, the Czech lands and Hungary, Michal Bobrzycki, Josef Pekafi and Gyula Szekfi²⁹. Ulf Brunnbauer has provided us with fascinating insights into historiographical nation building in the Balkans³⁰. Gabriele Lingelbach has analysed the impact of various forms of history writing on the American and French historiographies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries³¹. Sebastian Conrad has intriguingly compared the German and Japanese historiographies at the end of the Second World War³². Many of these scholars are participating as core researchers in the NHIST programme.

There can be no doubt that the foundations for a systematic comparison of national historiographies in Europe have already been laid by such endeavours. In the history of historiography, and even more so in the research dealing with the public uses of history, considerable quantitative and qualitative progress has been made over the last two decades. In particular, investigations into the relation between history writing and collective memory have been path breaking and inspired an enormous amount of research in this area. Specifically, where unstable or uncomfortable identities were linked with historiographical debates, history writing easily turns into a symbolic battlefield³³. Methodologically, the influence of the linguistic and cultural turn in the human sciences has made itself felt in this particular field of study³⁴. With the proliferation of scholarly monographs and learned articles, it has become more and more difficult to survey the whole of the research field on a truly European scale. It is therefore increasingly necessary to regain vantage points within a highly complex field of research from which to undertake further comparative analyses of European historiographies and wider historical cultures. The NHIST programme, by systematically reviewing the existing comparative work in the area of national history writing, and by encouraging and stimulating further comparative research into the making and

²⁸ P. Kolar, „Nährboden fachlicher Innovation? Verfassungs- und wirtschaftshistorische Seminarunterricht an der Berliner, Wiener und Prager Deutschen Universität im Zeitalter des universitären Großbetriebs (1900-1930)“, in *Universitäre Lehre im Fach Geschichte im historischen Vergleich*, eds. G. Lingelbach and A. Gestrich (Berlin, 2006 forthcoming).

²⁹ M. Janowski, „Three Historians“, in *Central European University History Department Yearbook 1* (2001/02): 199-232.

³⁰ U. Brunnbauer, ed., *(Re-)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism* (Münster, 2004).

³¹ G. Lingelbach, *Klio macht Karriere: Die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 2003).

³² S. Conrad, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan, 1945-1960*, (Göttingen, 1999)

³³ See, for example, D. Levy, „The Future of the Past: Historiographical Disputes and Competing Memories in Germany and Israel“, in *History and Theory*, 38, 1 (1999): 51-66.

³⁴ Much has been written on the ‘cultural turn’ in the historical sciences. For an introduction and compilation of key texts see C. Conrad and M. Kessel, eds., *Kultur und Geschichte. Neue Einblicke in eine alte Beziehung* (Stuttgart, 1998); also H. Hahn, *Writing Cultural History* (London, 2006).

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remaking of national master narratives, is working towards such vantage points for multilateral comparison.

III. NATIONAL MASTER NARRATIVES, THE COMPARATIVE METHOD,
CULTURAL TRANSFER AND TRANSNATIONALISM: SOME METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

In seeking to Europeanise our understanding of national history writing, NHIST is using the concept of 'master narrative' in order to understand better why which particular narrative constructions of nation came to dominate in different parts of Europe. National master narratives and their protagonists have been of crucial interest to the NHIST right from its inception, as they are essentially perceived as attempts to answer important questions of cultural identity. It is through historical master narratives that people make sense of the past and identify with particular versions of the past³⁵. Despite postmodernist attempts to deliver a radical critique of such master narratives, it remains questionable whether cultural identity can in fact exist without them. Yet what stands as testimony to the lasting achievement of postmodern approaches is the successful questioning of the uniformity and homogeneity of master narratives and the highlighting of explicit silences and omissions within them. This project starts from the assumption that the fruitfulness of a critique of master narratives does not entail any assumption about their eventual dissolution and disappearance. What is needed is the thorough analysis of the mechanisms and circumstances of their perpetual construction and reconstruction. One cannot achieve this by simply looking at the history of ideas and textual interpretations. Instead, it is necessary to start asking questions about cultural and political power relationships within nationally constituted societies.

NHIST understands national history writing as an eminently political project. In its self-understanding, national history writing always was a public political project, and its practitioners saw themselves working at the interface of history, cultural memory and politics³⁶. Where nation and state are one, contested national perspectives are often mirrored in competing historical analyses. National historiographies were rarely, if ever, characterised by a complete unity of purpose. Their narrative strategies and their politics were hotly contested and, in the *longue durée*, one can usefully distinguish between the writing of history as legitimation of existing political systems and the writing of oppositional histories which aimed to undermine the dominant versions of national narratives. Where nation and state

³⁵ J. Rüsen, ed., *Westliches Geschichtsdenken - eine interkulturelle Debatte* (Göttingen 1999); M. Middell, M. Gibas and F. Hadler, eds., *Zugänge zu historischen Meistererzählungen* (Leipzig 2000); A. Megill, "Recounting the Past: Description, Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography", in *American Historical Review*, 94 (1989): 627-653.

³⁶ See, for example, K. E. Müller/ J. Rüsen (Hrsg.), *Historische Sinnbildung. Problemstellungen, Zeitkonzepte, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien* (Hamburg, 1997); J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1999).

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have not been as one, national history writing often seeks to legitimate and anticipate the coming of the national state. Yet, everywhere, national history does not appear in the singular. Each national history tends towards homogenisation but in effect produces diversity and dissonance by producing counter-narratives which are often informed by different political perspectives. Such counter-narratives are often characterised according to whether they have been formulated by victors or losers in smaller or larger territorial conflicts and from the perspective of new or old national minorities facing new or old national borders (e.g. Sudeten Germans in the first Czechoslovak Republic or the Magyars in Transsylvania belonging to Romania after the First World War).

Political parties and national politics more generally proved major players in a variety of highly public political and cultural representations of the nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In some countries, it seems, national historians were traditionally closer to politics than in others. Yet we often know very little about how political representations of the nation relate to the historiographical ones. To what extent were national histories important in the political process of nation formation? How did their importance change over time? What was the precise nature of the interdependence between politics and national history in the course of the national movement? How was national history used in political arguments? Conversely, in what way did politics impinge on the motivation and inspiration of national historians? Were major political junctures in a nation's history necessarily major junctures for that country's national historiography? Tied to a particular politics (in the broader sense of the word), national histories are also often self-consciously scholarly products. The writing of national history thus stands at the crossroads of historical science and the politics of history. The relationship between these two sides of national history writing can be described as one of productive tension. NHIST investigates how national histories have been constructed within this relationship using the concept of master narratives.

As Krijn Thijs has argued in several NHIST workshops, there are many meanings of the term 'master narrative' which need to be carefully delineated and distinguished³⁷. He contrasts in particular the following three meanings: master in contrast to slaves, master as a maestro performing in front of an audience, and master as an original copy as opposed to a reproduction. Introducing the term 'narrative hierarchy', Thijs develops a concept of master narrative for the NHIST programme which understands master narratives as narratives which have intertextual power over other narratives. This allows the researchers contributing to the NHIST to examine specific stories and ask what they share in terms of their narrative framing. By describing a set of core narrative elements, authors will arrive at the narrative structure of dominant storylines. Thus, NHIST is asking a number of questions, such as: who are central actors of national histories? Which

³⁷ K. Thijs, "The Metaphor of the Master. Narrative Hierarchy in National Historical Cultures in Europe", in S. Berger and C. Lorenz, eds., *Society and the Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender* (Basingstoke, 2007, forthcoming).

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historical figures populate the national stage? Who are described as enemies of the nation? And what kind of agency are they allowed? How is the passing of time related in national histories? Are we dealing with cyclical, progressive or contingent national histories? What constitutes the nation and who does the constituting? What periodisation does the national storyline follow? Which origins are described for the nation? How do 'dark ages' alternate with periods of 'renewal' and 'rebirth' leading to 'golden ages'?

Using the concept of 'national master narrative' in this way will facilitate the task of comparing historiographies as transnational phenomena. It allows the formulation of a common set of questions about the content of historical narratives, their structure and the images of the past they convey. The four teams of the NHIST project have been using the comparative method to achieve a variety of different aims and objectives:

- comparisons of social actors and institutions in historiographies and historical cultures,

- comparisons of narrative models,

- comparisons of constellations between different historical representations,

- comparisons between the interaction of different paradigms in national histories,

- comparisons between the importance of tendencies of transnationalisation for diverse national histories.

Any look at more than one national historiography will reveal their strong interrelatedness. Historians writing national history did not do so without taking account of developments in other countries. While institutionally and intellectually, history was 'nationalised' in the course of its nineteenth century professionalisation, historians at the same time, at least in some contexts, began to think of themselves as belonging to a single cosmopolitan community of scholarship. Even over periods during which aggressive nationalism poisoned mutual academic relations, historians often remained aware of other national agendas and publications. The relatively high geographical mobility of historians and their linguistic skills increased such awareness of what went on elsewhere. Historians also repeatedly found themselves in situations of exile, where they had to relate to the host society and its historical profession. Their integration into 'foreign' institutional contexts, as well as their contribution to national historiographies, will have to be assessed³⁸. Cultural transfer studies have begun to explore questions such as: why were some intellectual departures received in a different national environment and others ignored? How far were particular institutes, organisations and individuals responsible for making specific academic 'products' of one country accessible in another? How far were national works or approaches to history re- and even misinterpreted in different national contexts? When and why have there been significant instances of the policing of the

³⁸ See, for example, E. Tortarolo, 'Historiker im Exil um 1933. Eine Problemskizze', in *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds., D. Papenfuß and W. Schieder (Cologne, 2000): 289-296.

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boundaries of one national historiographical tradition against encroaching influences of another? What was the role of exiled historians in facilitating contacts between different historiographical cultures? Perceptions and transfers are equally crucial to our understanding of national historiographies as are comparisons³⁹.

The many studies, which have followed the monumental pilot project of Pierre Nora on the *lieux de mémoire*, demonstrate clearly that individualising comparisons, which aim to contrast one case with others in order to understand better the specific characteristics of that particular case, are insufficient on their own if one seeks to understand the functioning of memory places across Europe. The comparative method needs to be supported by an analysis of cultural transfer processes, as all memory places attempt to symbolise the authenticity of 'their' national history while at the same time depending on references to other histories which are related to 'their own'. Models from other, often rival historical cultures, have been taken up and used in different national surroundings. The figures of Marianne and Germania are examples of this general trend as are a variety of national monuments and military parades⁴⁰. Ernst Moritz Arndt is usually seen as godfather to a radical German nationalism directed against France. However, it is rarely acknowledged that he could only become this figure because he had recognised the modernity of the new nationalism, which had arisen in the context of the French revolution, and adapted it for his own purposes⁴¹.

A combination of comparative approaches and cultural transfer studies appears to be best suited for a transnational project aiming to bring together studies on the diverse forms of historical representations of the national past. At present we have a substantial number of case studies which have been and continue to be carried out in practically all European countries. Those studies, which incorporate a great number of phenomena and national research traditions, have to be brought together

³⁹ For the general concept of cultural transfer see the pioneering conceptual thoughts in M. Espagne and M. Werner, *Transferts. Les Relations Interculturelles dans l'Espace Franco-Allemand* (Paris, 1988). M. Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris 1999); M. Middell, «Von der Wechselseitigkeit der Kulturen im Austausch. Das Konzept des Kulturtransfers in verschiedenen Forschungskontexten», in *Metropolen und Kulturtransfer im 15.-16. Jahrhundert. Prag-Krakau-Danzig-Wien*, eds., A. Langer and G. Michels, (Stuttgart, 2001): 15-51. For a good introduction to comparative methods, see H. Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich. Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a. M.-New York, 1999); C. Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit. Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie*, (Cologne, 1997); S. Berger, "Comparative History", in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore, eds., *Writing History. Theory and Practice* (London, 2003); C. Lorenz, "Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparing Historiographies: Some Preliminary Considerations", in P. Seixas, ed., *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto, 2004): 25-48.

⁴⁰ See, for example, J. Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt. Der Kult der 'Nation in Waffen' in Deutschland und Frankreich 1871-1914* (Göttingen, 1997); C. Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum. Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 1995); E. François, M.-C. Hoock-Demarle, R. Mayer-Kalkus, M. Werner and P. Despoix, eds., *Marianne - Germania. Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im europäischen Kontext 1789-1914* (Leipzig 1998).

⁴¹ H. J. Lüsebrink, 'Ein Nationalist aus französischer Inspiration: Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860)', in *Frankreichfreunde. Mittler des französisch-deutschen Kulturtransfers (1750-1850)*, eds., M. Espagne and W. Greiling (Leipzig, 1996): 221-242.

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in such a way as to broaden our empirical knowledge about the diverse ways in which the nation was represented in a variety of national historical cultures. Furthermore, such an undertaking should afford opportunities for developing and refining our methodological tools with which to gain an insight into such national historical cultures. The explicitly comparative nature of the project promises methodological innovation in three different ways:

It seeks to develop ways in which complex narrative structures (master narratives), such as national histories, can be compared effectively.

It attempts to organise the comparison between historiographical and other representations of the past in such a way as to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of diverse forms of representation within specific historical cultures.

It promotes comparisons between different nationally constituted historical cultures in such a way as to take account of different contexts, interactions, exchanges, misunderstandings and conflicts.

Comparison and cultural transfer become instruments for research objectives in all four teams. Yet, at the same time, they also provide the methodological know-how which the project seeks to refine and develop.

The methodological toolboxes of comparison, cultural transfer and transnationalism allows the NHIST programme effectively to cross the traditional East-West divide in European historiography, cemented by the long years of the Cold War. It has been particularly gratifying to watch over the last three years how scholars from Western and Eastern Europe have worked side by side to explore common research questions under a unified methodological and conceptual framework.

Within the overall framework of the project, it has also been of crucial importance to distinguish between the level of production and the level of projection of representations of national history. The former will be restricted largely to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the latter necessarily reaches back to early medieval times and to late antiquity. Of course, the NHIST programme recognises that one could usefully extend the level of production backward to include at the very least the eighteenth century and, in some case, even the early modern and late medieval periods. However, for very practical reasons, we decided to restrict our gaze to the modern period and to try to include as much of Europe as possible into our five-year research programme. This decision also stems from a firm belief that the meaning of 'nation' and of 'national history' changed fundamentally during the European 'bridge period' (*Sattelzeit*) between 1750 and 1850. Many of the tropes of national history were older, but it was only in this period that they acquired a new qualitative meaning and demanded an all-encompassing loyalty of each and every citizen of the nation state. Younger nation states, which only emerged in the nineteenth century, have a especially strong tendency to project their national histories back in time in order to legitimate their striving for a nation state or their recently acquired status as a new nation state. The construction of a centuries-old continuous and uninterrupted development of the nation state depends on such backward projections. At the

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same time, in much of that literature the search for early national roots clashes with a tendency to emphasise the unifying and integrating power of Catholicism, Latinity and Slavness. Sometimes the two have achieved a finely calibrated equilibrium.

IV. THE NHIST PROGRAMME

The NHIST programme understands national history as a specific form of historical representation which aims at the formation of a nation state, accompanies the formation of the nation state, or seeks to influence the existing self-definitions of a national consciousness. It develops its perspectives and criteria from the contemporary self-understanding of the nation. It is always constructed and, as such, undergoes perpetual processes of contestation and reformulation. It recognises that during the nineteenth century national historiographies developed in stable nation states only in a few, predominantly West European cases, e.g. Britain, France and the Netherlands. Throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe, national narratives emerged in opposition to existing empires and contributed to the forging of nation states. Miroslav Hroch has usefully distinguished between national histories that were predominantly written along the lines of statehood and state institutions, national histories that had to be written along the lines of an alleged, often mythical, collective memory, mostly located in 'the people', and national histories which found it hard to construct any kind of continuous story line⁴². The NHIST programme pursues the transnational comparison of national historiographies through four sets of interrelated questions which are investigated by four different research teams. The team leaders are in close contact with one another and the work of each team is shared with that of all other teams.

In the four articles which follow, the team leaders of each of the four teams will introduce the research questions and methods and talk about the preliminary results of the four teams. Each of the teams will contribute to a planned six-volume book series with Palgrave MacMillan, provisionally entitled *Writing the Nation. National Historiographies and the Making of Nation States in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*. The six volumes will be published between the end of 2007 and 2009. Team 1 is led by Ilaria Porciani and is preparing an atlas of historical institutions in Europe, which will be volume 1 of the series. As she explains in her article, it will be as comprehensive as possible. Based on a wealth of data produced by the members of Team 1, it will provide comparative cartographic material on historical institution building in Europe as well as country-by-country summaries of the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the historical sciences. In a second volume, edited by Ilaria Porciani and Jo Tollebeek, leading historians of historiography from across Europe are preparing

⁴² Among his many valuable contributions see the succinct summary: M. Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe", in *Mapping the Nation*, ed., G. Balakrishnan (London, 1996): 78-97.

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comparative articles dealing with a range of key institutions, networks and communities which were vital for the development of national historical narratives. The archives, journals, major source editions, chairs, great syntheses, academies and learned societies, international networks, ideological associations, exiles, clergy, nobility and women historians –they all figure prominently in this European survey of what gave the profession shape and meaning.

Team 2, led by Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, is responsible for the third volume in the planned series which explores the interrelationship of national narratives with other master narratives, notably those of religion, class and ethnicity. This volume will also ask in which ways national narratives have been gendered through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the exploration of the interplay of national, religious, class, gender and ethnic/racial identities, special attention will be given to the emergence of hierarchies, dichotomies, juxtapositions, contradictions and the construction of non-spatial borders in the historiographical discourse about the nation. What tensions were produced by the desire to fix national identity in the singular and the simultaneous practice of the production of several, often mutually exclusive and contradictory identities in the plural? Writing is, of course, never just a mental process, and, as Berger and Lorenz indicate in their article, it will be important to see the texts as situated in a social practice with its own developed rules, taboos and silences. The team is focussing on the analysis of the processual and relational character of national history writing. Texts are not treated as mere expressions of individual authors' intentions, but as part of wider discursive formations. Many key texts are, after all, an integral part of wider debates on national history and often cannot be understood without these debates. Yet, this was not always the case: marked silences about key national texts can be as revealing as major debates. Therefore, it will also be important to question which debates were not occurring in which countries and for what reasons?

Team 3, led by Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura, investigates different territorialisations of the past which rival and/or supplement national histories, particularly regional, European and world history will be analysed. 'Regimes of territoriality'⁴³ nationalised all societal processes during the nineteenth century. Only outsiders to the profession have problematised such methodological nationalism until the arrival of the 'spatial turn' in the 1990s. Since then, an increasing number of historians have engaged in the process of rethinking the spatial dimensions of history. Questions to be pursued in volume 4 of the book series therefore include the following: How does the nationalisation of historical culture proceed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Which stages did it go through? What were the alternatives? And how was the dominance of the national perspective finally dissolved? What was the specific contribution of the historical sciences in comparison to other aspects of a wider historical culture? Regardless of

⁴³ C. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era", in *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000): 807-831.

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the predominance of national history writing during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, it never was the only show in town. Apart from problem-orientated studies which addressed the issue of various forms of social differentiation, many scholars worked within non-national spatial frameworks: they wrote urban histories, histories of villages, histories about smaller or larger regions and did that in the context of national, European or even global history. However, as Middell and Roura explain in their article, their team seeks to demonstrate, even where the spatial focus was not the nation, 'methodological nationalism' also impacted on the ways in which these histories were being written. Thus, regional histories, for example, were often seen as contributing to the foundations of the 'greater' national history in as much as diverse regional histories made up the mosaic of the national history. European and even world histories were organised in chapters which dealt with different nations and their histories. This noted, how pervasive was such nationalisation of all history writing? Was it the same everywhere or were there substantial differences in diverse parts of Europe? Analysing the precise relationship between national histories and those histories consciously choosing alternative spatial frameworks can bring out the multiplicity of different variants of national history writing and their diverse path.

Team 4, led by Tibor Frank and Frank Hadler, focuses on overlapping national histories and their impact on historiography, the politics of history and the wider historical culture of diverse European countries. One can find many territories in Europe which have been claimed by different national histories and the interactions, rivalries and interdependencies of national histories which deal with those territories promise to be a fruitful area for comparative investigation. As Frank and Hadler emphasise in their contribution here, what is needed urgently is a European map of narratives that visualises and dramatises the mutual harm done by nations and nation states to others in the name of history. It will allow the team to establish a pattern of narrative scar tissue emerging on this European map due to a long history of conflicts and enmities. Arguably, this scar tissue played a major role in the interaction of nation states in Europe, determined to a considerable extent the writing of national histories and dominated the memory space of European nations. In particular, where nations share common territories or where national ambitions conflict with multi-national empires, such scar tissue becomes a major characteristic in the description of one's own history and that of the 'other'. The volume will ask specifically which traumas (in the sense of collective suffering and its inscription in national memory) have become part and parcel of national histories and which have not. Also, it will analyse diverse attempts to either adhere to or distance oneself from an imagined European memory landscape. Borderlands and transitional geographical zones formed foci for a nation's problems with its national identity and, therefore deserve more sustained and detailed study⁴⁴. After all, a map of European regions probably would have very

⁴⁴ H. Donnan and T. Wilson, *Borders. Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Oxford, 1999).

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little in common with a map of European state borders at any time during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In addition to the book series, each of the teams is preparing separate publications related to their specific remit. For example, Ilaria Porciani and Mary O'Dowd published a volume on women historians which formed part of a NHIST-funded workshop at the University of Galway in 2004⁴⁵. Frank Hadler and Matthias Mesenhöller are preparing a volume on the historiographies of nations and empires in Europe which arose out of a collaborative conference of the GWZO in Leipzig and NHIST in 2004⁴⁶. Furthermore, the proceedings of the first cross-team conference, held at the University of Glamorgan in Wales in the spring of 2004, will be published soon⁴⁷. Cross-team conferences are an important element of the NHIST programme, as they deal with themes which are of relevance to the work of all four teams, and three have been held. The first, at the University of Glamorgan, dealt with the representation of national pasts through different genres. The second one, held at the University of Geneva, made the interrelationship between national history writing and politics its theme. The final one, at the University of Oxford in April 2006, investigated the uses and abuses of the Middle Ages in national history writing. Representatives from all four teams participated in these cross-team events and provided feedback on the conferences to their respective teams.

A major research programme like the NHIST programme will also identify gaps and sometimes lacunas in the existing research landscape. Thus, for example, we found that it was extremely difficult for our researchers to tell us about the gendering of national narratives, as so little work has been done on this theme. Nation and gender has been a prominent theme for some time⁴⁸, and there are famous studies on the gendering of historiography as well⁴⁹. However, for many historiographies, the gender of national histories very much remains an under-researched topic. Hence, the programme is using travel and exchange grants to allow researchers to begin to fill the gaps and lacunas identified by the programme. Two rounds of grants have been awarded in 2004 and 2006.

⁴⁵ I. Porciani and M. O'Dowd, eds., *History Women*, special issue of *Storia della Storiografia*, 46 (2004). The importance of women for the writing of national history for the case of Italy has also been stressed by I. Porciani, «Women and the Writing of National History. Italy, 1860 – 1914», in *Political Systems and Definitions of Gender Roles*, ed. A. K. Isaacs (Pisa, 2001): 107-116.

⁴⁶ F. Hadler and M. Mesenhöller, eds., *Lost Greatness and Past Oppression in East Central Europe: Representations of the Imperial Experience in Historiography since 1918* (Leipzig, 2007, forthcoming).

⁴⁷ S. Berger and L. Eriksonas, eds., *Narrating the Nation. The Representation of National Histories in Different Genres* (Oxford, 2007, forthcoming).

⁴⁸ See, for example, I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations. Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000).

⁴⁹ B. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); A. Epple, *Empfindsame Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Geschlechtergeschichte der Historiographie zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus* (Köln, 2003).

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V. METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

National histories have developed a complex grammar of stereotypes, both of the self and the other, which contributed to the self-definition of nations through alleged 'others', often constructed as external enemies of the nation. Many of these stereotypes have proved incredibly resilient over many decades. One thinks of the construction of the French as 'hereditary enemy' by German national narratives in the nineteenth century or of the construction of an allegedly unchanging efficient, machine-like, productive but also violent, aggressive and expansionist national character of the Germans by a variety of national narratives underpinning national histories of the immediate neighbours of Germany. It is well established that nationalism is impossible without the existence of 'others' against which one's own nation is defined. Historiography's close alliance with nationalism meant that much history writing also busied itself with finding alleged enemies of the nation. They could be external enemies, i.e. other nation states, or they could be internal enemies, i.e. those within the nation who were allegedly hostile to the nation. Groups who were supposed to have transnational loyalties, such as socialists, Catholics and Jews came under fire most frequently.

However, the very fact that national histories were frequently concerned with the 'others' of the nation also meant that methodological nationalism tended towards transnationalism. After all, it was never enough just to describe and understand one's own nation. In fact, one could only understand one's own nation properly through the understanding of its 'others'. Thus, methodological nationalism carried within it the germ of interest in things which lay outside of the nation state. Many national historians wrote histories about other nations and rarely were national historians interested exclusively in their own nation. As professional historians they were, after all, part of transnational networks which exchanged ideas and communicated well beyond the borders of the nation state⁵⁰. As professional historians, their commitment to the idea of a 'scientific history' that could establish the 'truth' about the past was equally transnational. Yet such commitment to a transnational methodology served the purpose of legitimating them better as spokespersons for the nation and its interests. Such transnationalism did not work against their methodological nationalism; it actually was a precondition for it⁵¹.

Moreover, what about alternative forms of history writing? After all, sub-national history writing in the form of local and regional histories was well developed across Europe⁵². However, as historians have increasingly found, such

⁵⁰ K. D. Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians. The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences 1898-2000* (Oxford, 2005).

⁵¹ For the nineteenth century Prussian school of historiography this has been exemplified by W. Hardtwig, "Von Preußens Aufgabe in Deutschland zu Deutschlands Aufgabe in der Welt. Liberalismus und borussianisches Geschichtsbild zwischen Revolution und Imperialismus", in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 231 (1980): 265-324.

⁵² S. Brakensiek and A. Flügel, eds., *Regionalgeschichte in Europa* (Paderborn, 2000).

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regional histories were not so much alternative frameworks to national history but, rather to the contrary, they were closely linked to national history. The nation found its specificity in the regions. Only the sum total of the regions made up the nation⁵³. That was particularly evident in German history and historiography⁵⁴, but it was not the case everywhere. In the Habsburg empire, unlike in the German empire, regional histories actually worked against the formation of an Austrian national identity⁵⁵. Even if we look beyond regional history to local and urban history, they were not necessarily alternatives to the national paradigm. Especially where large cities, acting *de facto* as capitals of regions, were concerned, histories about such urban spaces were often focused on the location of the city within the national space⁵⁶.

If sub-national history had a tendency to mediate national history and work towards national history, what about transnational history? European history is, after all, a well-developed genre in very many European nation states⁵⁷. However, it is equally a genre which is often written as the sum total of Europe's nation states, especially its larger ones. For several decades now, there has been a search for a European history that will transcend the national history and its methodological framework⁵⁸. One of the most promising interventions was perhaps Stuart Woolf's call for both a comparative European history as seen from above and from below, although he himself had to admit that it would be difficult to imagine the ideal typical European history that he was outlining⁵⁹. Certain aspects of the European past, such as the holocaust and the history of ethnic cleansing have indeed become more European topics over the past decade or so. The end of the Cold War and the advance of postmodernism in historiography were sometimes hailed as opportunities to move away from national histories towards a more

⁵³ C. Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: the History and Historiography of Subnational Groups in Modern Times", in *American Historical Review*, 104, 4 (1999): 1157-1182.

⁵⁴ C. Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, 1990); A. Confino, *The Nation As a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁵⁵ G. Barth-Scalmani, H. J.W. Kuprian and B. Mazohl-Wallnig, "National Identity or Regional Identity: Austria versus Tyrol-Salzburg", in *Contemporary Austrian Studies*, 5 (1997): 32-63. Also: W. D. Bowman, "Regional History and the Austrian Nation", in *Journal of Modern History*, 67, 4 (1995): 873-897.

⁵⁶ M. Umbach, "A Tale of Second Cities: Autonomy, Culture and the Law in Hamburg and Barcelonas in the Late Nineteenth Century", in *American Historical Review*, 110, 3 (2005): 659-692.

⁵⁷ See the special issue on European *lieux de mémoire* of the *Jahrbuch für europäische Geschichte* 3 (2002).

⁵⁸ G. Hermet, "Histoire de l'Europe et Histoire des Nations", in *Vingtième Siècle*, 71 (2001): 73-78; J. Dülfker, "Europäische Zeitgeschichte. Narrative und historiographische Perspektiven", in *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 1 (2004), online edition: www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Duelffer-1-2004; G. Stourzh, ed., *Annäherungen an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna, 2002). One of the most promising networks of contemporary historians seeking to overcome the 'historiographical traditions stressing national singularity' is the EurhistXX network. For details see <http://www.eurhistxx.de/>

⁵⁹ S. Woolf, "Europe and its Historians", in *Contemporary European History*, 12, 3 (2003): 323-337.

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genuine European history⁶⁰. Nevertheless, so far European history has failed to escape the powerful methodological framework set by national history. How did other spatial orientations, notably global or world history fare? Despite the fact that world history has developed a distinguished tradition of its own in many European countries from the eighteenth century onwards⁶¹, actual practitioners at any given moment in time remain rare. Given the demands on the individual historian regarding linguistic abilities and familiarity with so many different cultural contexts, it is little surprising that few good world histories exist. The search for a theoretical framework for world history writing is still producing more philosophical reflections and criticisms of world history than actual history⁶².

Finally, there are the non-spatial alternatives to the entrenched historiographical focus on nation. As the work of Team 2 in particular indicates, methodological nationalism once again developed an uncanny ability to subsume all potential ideological orientations under its wings. Concepts of class often came to prominence in social history approaches which were dominant in Europe throughout much of the second half of the twentieth century. They came in many variants. Across Eastern Europe, official Communist historiographies put class into the centre of their historiographical endeavours, but they also combined class with nationalism in an attempt to reconcile the national tradition with the state-sanctioned Communist ideology. In non-Communist Western Europe, social history also dominated historiographical agendas from the late 1950s to the advent of the cultural turn in the 1980s. Again, however, most social history concerned itself with national societies and its development; it became thoroughly nationalised. The primary aim of many social historians across Europe was to rewrite the national history in societal terms, not to abandon the national framework entirely.

But what of the transnational potential of religion? For a start, one has to realise that Protestantism in many places merged with nationalism. The monarch was not infrequently the head of both church and state: Prussia, England, Sweden and Denmark are all examples of nation states with close official ties to variants of Protestantism. In Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church was even more closely linked to the Russian and Romanian nation states respectively. Arguably, transnationalism was most developed within Catholicism, where loyalty to Rome

⁶⁰ M. Geyer, "Historical Fictions of Autonomy and the Europeanisation of National Memory", in *Central European History*, 22, 3-4 (1989): 316-342.

⁶¹ For a marvellous case study of the University of Leipzig as a centre for world history see, M. Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfachlichung und Professionalisierung, Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890-1990*, 3 vols, vol. 1: *Das Institut unter der Leitung Karl Lamprechts*; vol. 2: *Von der Kulturgeschichte unter Walter Goetz zur historischen Soziologie Hans Freyers*; vol. 3: *Von der vergleichenden Kulturgeschichte zur Revolutionskomparatistik* (Leipzig, 2005).

⁶² For a recent inspiring example see A. Dirlik, "Performing the World: Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histor(ies)", in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Washington*, 37 (2005): 9-25.

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and the Pope often rivalled loyalty to the nation state. This was at least the charge brought against the Catholics from liberal nationalists who tended to be Protestants or, at the very least, cultural Protestants. The European-wide *Kulturkampf*⁶³ often re-enforced notions of Catholicism as an anti-national force. Yet it also left another legacy, namely a desire on the part of Catholic historiography to demonstrate the national reliability of Catholicism. Catholics, this historiographical narrative emphasised, had been in the past as good nationalists as anyone. Thus, Catholic historians were busy establishing the national credentials of Catholicism.

Ethnicity and race were never really transnational alternatives to nation in the way that class and religion might have been. Where race historians split nations along racial/ethnic lines, they tended to do so with the explicit aim of creating a separate nation. Where they identified groups allegedly belonging to the same race or ethnic, which found themselves outside of the boundaries of the nation state, they did so with the express wish of incorporating them into the nation state. Ethnic and racial paradigms therefore mostly worked in line with methodological nationalism, not against it. Overall then, we are left with a conundrum: on the one hand, methodological nationalism transcended the nation, as it subscribed to a transnational method and had to establish 'others' which inevitably led historians to look beyond the nation. On the other hand, methodological nationalism was such an enduring and powerful characteristic of European historiography, because it was able to accommodate, infiltrate, undermine and use other, spatial and non-spatial, forms of history writing for its own purposes. Overcoming methodological nationalism therefore still remains a contemporary challenge for virtually all historiographies in Europe.

VI. NARRATIVES AND GENRES

Nation is Narration. This book title by Homi Bhabha published in 1990 symbolised a major departure in methodological approaches to the study of nationalism⁶⁴. It claimed that the stories that people told themselves about nation constituted that nation. It led to a dramatic increase in the study of national narratives, which allow us today to draw out a range of important elements which seem indeed present in all national narratives. Thus, the notion of foundational moments is prominent everywhere. Where there is a continuous state history, such foundational moments are frequently connected to the foundations of institutions (parliaments, treaties) or to dynastic continuities (monarchies). Where there is no such continuity, historians are often forced to fall back on constructions of 'the

⁶³ J. Clark and W. Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars. Secular - Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁶⁴ H Bhabha, ed., *Nation is Narration*, (London, 1990). To what degree the world was textually constructed was, of course, a matter of huge debate. However, what became increasingly accepted across the humanities and social sciences was the assumption that ideas such as 'nation' and 'class' were culturally constructed. Today the constructivists far outnumber the realists.

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people' and its 'unchanging' national character which preserved the essence of national identity often for centuries of 'foreign' domination. Foundational moments are frequently contested, as competing narratives of the nation rely on different assumptions about the founding of that nation⁶⁵. For most European nations, myths of origin are located in the Middle Ages⁶⁶. Only in a handful of cases, Greece, Italy and Rumania spring to mind, does the period of classical antiquity play a major role. However, even in Greece, reliance on the ancient period soon gave way to appropriation of the Macedonian, Byzantine and Ottoman periods, as the need for a continuous national history became paramount⁶⁷. Foundational events and moments were so important because they were frequently constructed as moments of no return, after which the nation was regarded as virtually indestructible. National histories identified moments of decline and periods of regeneration. Not infrequently, the latter led up to national 'golden ages'. The nation fell and rose, but it could not be destroyed.

National narratives depended also on the construction of 'great personalities' which were depicted as 'national heroes'. Kings and queens, saints and generals, inventors and explorers, scientists and artists – historicism's appetite for individuals who symbolised the achievements and characteristics of the nation was insatiable. Heroes can also be written out and written back into national narratives - especially following major political or historiographical caesuras⁶⁸. The existence of heroes also implied the existence of villains, who frequently came from outside the nation. In fact, periods of foreign domination and resistance to such domination, attempted or real, formed another crucial element of national narrations across Europe. Particular forms of history writing also fitted specific narrative constructions of the nation. Thus, for example, in an 'unhistoric' nation without a state and without the memory of independent statehood, like Wales, political history could not underpin national narratives. However, as Neil Evans reminds us, social history was far more capable of pointing to national particularities of Wales and establishing national narratives⁶⁹.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of characteristics of national narratives, but if we consider where they were formulated, established, transmitted and confirmed, one immediately recognises that national narration occurred through a

⁶⁵ For the example of Turkey and conflicts between secular and Islamist national narratives see A. Cinar, "National History as a Contested Site: the Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nations", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43, 2 (2001): 364-391.

⁶⁶ For an intriguing comparative analysis of East-Central European historiographies and their treatment of the year 1000 see F. Hadler, „Meistererzählungen über die erste Jahrtausendwende in Ostmitteleuropa: Deutungen des Jahres 1000 in Gesamtdarstellungen zur polnischen, ungarischen und tschechischen Nationalgeschichte“, in *Comparativ*, 10, 2 (2000): 81-92.

⁶⁷ A. Liakos, "The Construction of National Time: The Making of the Modern Greek Historical Imagination", in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 16, 1 (2001): 27-42.

⁶⁸ For an example from Hungary see P. Hatos, "Kossuth and the Images of Hungarian Identity after 1989", in *Hungarian Studies*, 16, 2 (2002): 225-236.

⁶⁹ N. Evans, "Writing the Social History of Modern Wales: Approaches, Achievements and Problems", in *Social History*, 17, 3 (1992): 479-492.

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variety of different genres. National histories were part of a wider socio-cultural and ideological memory of the nation. Historians interacted with other purveyors of national images, such as novelists, poets, painters, architects, photographers, composers, theatre directors, filmmakers and journalists. Some historians even crossed the borders between different genres, sometimes writing history, sometimes fiction. Walter Scott in the nineteenth century and Theodore Zeldin in the twentieth are just two prominent examples. Genres themselves, of course, are not static and unchanging. As Ralph Cohen reminds us, genre should be perceived as a process, i.e. the understanding and meaning of genre changes over time and place⁷⁰. What is regarded as history at one moment and in one place is not necessarily the same as what is held to be history at another juncture and location. In the evolution of a particular understanding of genre, the interaction of particular representatives helped to shape and develop borders and overlaps between genres.

Thus, professional historians and their histories did not necessarily dominate the public uses of the past. However, historians played an influential role, precisely because they could and did cross boundaries. They acted as speakers at national festivals, celebrations and commemorative events, they wrote articles in the print media, and they advised television and filmmakers. In short, they negotiated the different demands of science, culture and politics. Therefore, professional history was closely related to the production of a cultural memory⁷¹. In fact, it was frequently privileged in the construction of such a cultural national memory, as it was believed to possess greater cultural authority than other texts. Professional historians were pre-eminently successful in promoting themselves as purveyors of 'historical truth', which explains why the historical sciences played such a leading role in many European societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, they never established exclusivity in narrations about the nation, and they were often not the most powerful. This makes it so fruitful to compare their endeavours with that of others working through other genres.

Literature, for example, possessed infinitely greater powers of legitimate imagination, which meant that stories could be made to fit a plot structure much more neatly than was the case with (professional) histories. Literary authors, if they managed to establish their texts as 'classical' or 'canonical', tended to have a much longer shelf-life than historical authors, whose histories were almost inevitably superseded by the next generation's histories. As Herder, Fichte, and their European disciples did not tire to emphasise, literature was able to express the eternal essence of the national soul much better than history. Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe would be read by generations of Italian, British and German readers. Few, if any historians can claim a similar longevity. National revivals also rarely

⁷⁰ R. Cohen, "History and Genre", in *New Literary History*, 17, 2 (1986): 203-218.

⁷¹ See, for example, K. E. Müller and J. Rüsen (Hrsg.), *Historische Sinnbildung. Problemstellungen, Zeitkonzepte, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien* (Hamburg, 1997); J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1999). Specifically on historians and the media see also D. Cannadine, ed., *History and the Media* (London, 2004).

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began with history. Far more frequently, they were connected to language revivals and the attempt to save or recuperate an allegedly national language. This is also why so many nations in the nineteenth century proudly presented, rediscovered and even forged their own national epics written in the national vernacular.

Arguably, in the twentieth century, the national epic was presented to greater audiences through the genre of film rather than literature. Its visual languages developed a powerful hold over imaginations of the nation. If historiography combined a transnational orientation with the propagation of methodological nationalism, the same can be said for genres such as literature or film. International film festivals promoted styles and filmic images across national boundaries, but national film cultures adopted and adapted them to fit their own national concerns. Similarly, literary movements often had repercussions far beyond national boundaries and writers rarely restricted their circles of contacts to the national stage. Yet, once again, their transnational orientation was frequently used to work more efficiently on the production of national narratives.

As national narratives were prominent, and indeed dominant, in a variety of different genres, and because historians interacted with representatives of other genres to strengthen or weaken particular understandings of the nation, we need to explore the interaction of different genres and their practitioners in the making and unmaking of representations of the nation. Maurice Samuels has recently described the formation of a 'new spectacular mode of historical representation' in the early nineteenth century⁷². As more and more people wanted to experience history as reality, a mass market for the visualisations of the past came into being. Panoramas, dioramas and museums produced images of the past which also, albeit never exclusively, produced stories about the nation. How national pasts were represented in and through a variety of different genres needs many more comparative and transcultural explorations. This programme will only be able to play a small part in this process by looking at the interaction between historical narratives and their counterparts in other genres.

VII. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES

It seems safe to predict that national history writing will continue to be an important mode of history writing for a considerable time to come. Therefore, although it is unrealistic to declare national narratives outdated, it raises the question how to deal with them, especially as they have been, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, extremely explosive, reactionary and dangerous in their consequences and implications. After all, they have been utilised to

⁷² M. Samuels, *The Spectacular Past. Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France*, (New York, 2004). On the pantheon as a historical genre in Belgium, see also J. Tollebeek and T. Verschaffel, "Group Portraits with National Heroes: The Pantheon as an Historical Genre in Nineteenth-Century Belgium", in *National Identities*, 6, 2 (2004): 91-106.

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legitimate wars, genocides and the most horrific crimes. I would like to conclude by suggesting that, as historians, we can do two things to make national histories safer for the future. First, we need to explore in greater detail how national narratives have worked in the past. How were they constructed? Under which conditions did they flourish? Which ingredients made them particularly malevolent?

Comparing national narratives in a genuinely transnational way across Europe and beyond, exploring their interrelationships, commonalities and differences, will help to de-essentialise national stories in Europe. There is now a younger generation of historians in many European countries exploring the tools of comparative and transnational history and seeking to move beyond the stories of national peculiarity that the previous generation still perpetuated in one form or another. By analysing the construction of those storylines and putting them in relation to others, they have made significant progress towards taking away the idea of 'naturalness' and 'inevitability' which made these national narratives so powerful during the course of the last two centuries. It is, after all, through historical master narratives that people make sense of the past and identify with a particular version of the past. It would be foolish to ignore the power of national identity discourses and their underlying historical narratives. However, we can make a first step towards defusing their explosive potential by laying bare the mechanisms and circumstances of their perpetual construction and reconstruction, as the nation has always been an embattled cultural construct. As Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny have recently argued: 'What looks from the outside and from a distance as a bounded group [i.e. a nation] appears much more divided and contested at closer range. Culture is more often not what people share, but what they choose to fight over.'⁷³ Certainly, people fought hard over the 'correct' interpretation of national history. If historians in the nineteenth century naturalised and essentialised national states, historians in the twenty-first century need to place emphasis on de-naturalising and de-essentialising the nation. If we can contribute towards a historical consciousness which is aware of its constructedness, history will work towards a more enlightened response to continuing nationalist demagoguery⁷⁴.

Secondly, a better understanding of how national narratives have worked in the past will encourage the writing of kaleidoscopic national histories, which are based on multiple memory cultures, and incorporate diverse perspectives on the national past. The aim is to replace the paradigm of the one homogenous national history with an acceptance of many different national narratives. National historians and their audiences need to recognise that the pasts which historians construct are

⁷³ G. Eley and R. Grigor Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation", in G. Eley and R. Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York, 1996): 9.

⁷⁴ This kind of history would also contribute to a history informed by Enlightenment values as outlined by J. Kocka, *Geschichte und Aufklärung* (Göttingen, 1989).

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assembled from the pieces of a shattered mirror⁷⁵. Such a pluralisation of narratives within the nation state would be a way of combining national storylines with tolerance and the acceptance of differences within nationally constituted cultures. In the European context, it will also be crucial to avoid a Europeanisation of national story lines which would transfer homogeneity, unity and superiority onto a European level. The danger here is to create new ideological closures and erect new borders and boundaries that would encourage the vilification of non-European nations and cultures (as one sees occasionally in the contemporary debates about the Islamic world). Instead, it will be crucial to continue on the path of 'provincialising Europe'⁷⁶ in order to decentre the European experience within transnational and global narratives of human development.

Far from contributing to the erection of a new European master narrative of history, the NHIST programme is seeking to signal a warning that the constructed national histories of Europe cannot be a model on which to construct a European history. It would be fatal for Europe to adopt their exclusionary, xenophobic and homogenising forms of 'othering'. In fact, the work of NHIST seems to underline that Europe cannot be built on history, for it is history that divides Europeans. Or rather, Europeans have for so long constructed their national histories vis-à-vis national enemies who were also positioned in Europe that the past has become a minefield for European unity. With the passing of time, however, European commonalities could become increasingly pronounced and building blocks for a common European history might be established. Nevertheless, it is not just the content, as the very mechanisms used to construct national histories which are problematic. After all, the national storylines rejected situational and multiple identities and sought to arrive at uniform and homogeneous identities which marked a clear 'us' off against a clear 'them'. This is why it makes sense to come back to Allan Megill's suggestions to seek to build political units below the level of identities and seek concrete and specific things on which solidarities in a polity can be built⁷⁷. The pluralisation of historiographical discourses has arguably exploded the notion of paradigm changes in the historical sciences. Can we, as a historical profession, move from the plurality of histories to a multiplicity of national stories inside and outside of Europe, which would recognise the fragmented nature of national identities in the past and establish more playful forms of national identity in the future?

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⁷⁵ For Germany, see K. H. Jarausch and M. Geyer, *Shattered Pasts: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2003).

⁷⁶ D. Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

⁷⁷ A. Megill, "Historical Representation, Identity, Allegiance", in S. Berger and L. Eriksonas, eds., *Narrating the Nation: The Representation of National Histories in Different Genres* (Oxford, 2007, forthcoming).

Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe is a work of historiography by Hayden White first published in 1973. On the second page of his Introduction White stated: The theoretical framework is outlined in the first 50 pages of the book, which consider in detail eight major figures of 19th-century history and the philosophy of history. The larger context of historiography and writing in general is also considered. White's approach uses systematically a fourfold structural National historiographies in transnational perspective: europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Stefan Berger. I. introduction: why study national historiographies now? Modern national master narratives in Europe emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often as a direct response to the political crises caused by the French revolution. The nineteenth century then witnessed the rise of national histories which tended towards homogeneity and closure without ever being entirely successful in achieving either. In the first half of the twentieth century, the concept of The same sort of work was available to Italian women who emigrated to the United States of America. The success achieved by the women's movement is shown in the paper presented by Irene de Bonis "Occupational diseases among women" and published in the proceedings of the fourth National Congress on Occupational Diseases held in Rome, 9-14 June 1914. Conclusions: The article outlines the main features of the women's movement at the turn of the twentieth century, focussing on their publications describing Italian women's working conditions, considered in an international