

PROOF

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

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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-Brause (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 Ladurie’s *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.

⁴ See Peter Schöttlers contribution to this volume.

⁵ See 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 Millean 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 Judt, 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. Ankermit, *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 geglückte 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.