

Chapter 5

OF NATIONS, NATIONALISM,
AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Reflections on the Historiographic Organization of the Past

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History has always been important for the development of nations, which draw meaning and identity from a real or invented common past. At the same time, nations have been important for the development of historiography; nations shape the way historians draw their maps, arrange their books, and define their areas of specialization. But nations are problematic as well as powerful. Most nations are the arbitrary result of circumstance and contingency and not the inevitable expression of natural ethnic or cultural communities. Nations must be constructed, sometimes imposed. Like other sources of political allegiance, nationalism is the result both of compulsion and consent, at once source and product of political power. National histories are deeply implicated in the nation's construction and defense. Our task as historians is to do justice to the significance of nations, nationalism, and national histories, without accepting them uncritically; to explain them without explaining them away.

—From the call for papers for 2006 American Historical Association annual meeting, conference theme “Nations, Nationalism and National Histories”

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality.

—Ernest Renan, *Qu'est que c'est une nation?*¹

Historiography, as both a self-referential history and a set of theories about what goes on in the recovery, representation, and construction of the past, is a subject now well advanced. On the one hand, there is now no shortage of histories of

historiography or historical thought in this or that period, as well as those tracing the origins and development of the discipline over the *longue durée*. Secondly, there have been for the past twenty years have seen a swelling number of works on either theory or practice, some defending the historian's traditional terrain and *modus operandi* (a tradition sometimes called historical realism and leading most recently from Arthur Marwick to Richard Evans); others, such as Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit, plumbing the limits of historical knowledge and arguing the primacy of language over document and of narratological over methodological questions.²

Global historiography has not fared nearly as well. For a start, Western historiographers often legitimately feel that there is plenty to talk about in our own tradition, so why waste valuable time looking at other cultures? Even where lip service is paid to other historiographical traditions, of which the Sino-Japanese and the Islamic are the best known, comparisons are often built on the basis of what might be called, to borrow a term from information technology, "historiographical character recognition." Thus, Sima Qian and Ibn Khaldun, the two most familiar figures respectively from the Chinese and Islamic traditions, are most often commended for writing works that look as if they could fit easily into the family tree of modern *homo historicus occidentalis*.³ It is not that Westerners dipping into foreign terrain are simply colonizing the past of other people's pasts—in fact, those expert in their own non-Western national fields frequently adopt the self-congratulatory perspective of Western historiography. For example, the corpus of works on Chinese historiography has, with one or two exceptions,⁴ hegemonically acknowledged modern academic "scientific" practice as the *terminus ad quem*. There has been, as Peter C. Perdue has noted, a remarkable reluctance to move from Western subversion of essentialist and orientalist myths to deconstruction of their Eastern counterparts, in effect maintaining the West as the "privileged site of analysis."⁵

Some of this is inevitable, given the human limitations of language acquisition—even those fluent in several ancient modern Western languages are rarely so gifted in Chinese and Arabic, much less in Peruvian Quechua and Northern Thai. Moreover, we are almost inescapably the prisoners of categories that dictate our ordering not just of the past but of the past of the past. It is no more possible to apprehend the *Ding an sich* of a past historical text than it is to apprehend the past that the text purports to represent. Where language, linguistic context, ideology, and the imperfection of surviving sources limit and shape our capacity to represent the past, they just as equally affect our reading of past histories. It is no more possible for us to grasp the "history in itself" of a work written by Voltaire or Machiavelli (much less a more linguistically remote one by al-Tabari or Ban Gu), than it is to enter into the pasts that they themselves purported to depict. We can, of course, piece together the intellectual and linguistic contexts—the plural is critical—that led a particular historian to write a particular work and to make particular aesthetic choices of material and argument or mode of emplotment.⁶ However, as historians of political thought such as Quentin Skinner have been

telling us for some time, the intention of an author in writing a text—that is to say, in making a “performative utterance” whose subject is the then-past, are not equivalent to the meaning of that text for us.⁷

In recent years, conferences and learned organizations such as the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography and its parent organization, the International Committee of the Historical Sciences, have helped break down some of these barriers.⁸ So, too, have some international editorial projects that involve both Western and non-Western scholars, often working in teams, in writing the history of historiography from a global perspective.⁹ In contrast to other sectors of historiography, there is as yet relatively little theory behind this work.¹⁰ There has been no Collingwood, no Dray or Danto, no Morton White, and certainly no Hayden White to step forward and propose a set of protocols for the global comparison of histories across cultural lines.¹¹ Though an attempt needs to be made, this essay is not it, and I shall keep myself within some boundaries by restricting my comments to a single set of questions: why we tend to organize historiography (the study of history’s history, not the study of history itself) along national lines; and whether and under what circumstances it is legitimate to do so even when the text or texts under analysis originated in geochronological circumstances that manifestly did not feature *nations*, or their associated ideology of *nationalism*, as we have come to understand these terms since the mid nineteenth century. I will suggest that concepts of “nation,” “nationality,” “national character,” and the like can legitimately figure in an account of the past in several very different and sometimes contradictory ways; that because this is the case, there are insufficient grounds for dismissing them as anachronistic on purely chronological grounds (that is, because the author lived prior to the age of the nation-state); and that it is possible to read the nation into a history along several possible interpretative axes that correspond to five modes of authorial choice.

I

Both the dominance of the nation in historiography and the fact (though not the value) of historiography’s preeminence in the building of nations over the past two centuries seem beyond doubt, and are agreed upon on both sides of the subaltern divide. “History was 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.”¹² Others concur. “There is no way,” one scholar 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 European societies.”¹³ The qualifier “European” may be unnecessary. In a recent essay, Japanese historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki has drawn attention to the critical role played by the nation in modern conceptions of history, which she ascribes to the roughly contemporaneous occurrence of two related phenomena:

the formation of modern nation-states and the professionalization of the historical discipline. “The modern practice of history writing began side by side with the rise of the nation-state, and the study of history in schools and universities has largely meant the study of national histories (above all the history of one’s own nation),” Morris-Suzuki comments. The importance of the nation transcends ideological and, indeed, national, boundaries. “In the writings of E. P. Thompson as much as G. R. Elton, of Inoue Kiyoshi as much as Ueyama Shumpei, history is a vision of the forces which have molded national society. *The nation therefore casts a long shadow backwards on our vision of the past, and channels our perceptions into a particular spatial framework.*” She notes the oddity of having on her bookcase histories of Thailand since the tenth century and of the Soviet Union from Paleolithic times to World War II. “The use of the nation-state as the framework for understanding the past, in other words, imposes important biases on our understanding of history.”¹⁴

For “history,” let us substitute “historiography,” since the nation is no less influential in our understanding of how historical writing has developed over the past twenty-five centuries, even down to our selective celebration of heroic, perceptive historical minds such as Ibn Khaldun, Jean Bodin, Giambattista Vico, and Johann Gottfried von Herder, who could imagine nations or national characters beyond their own immediate political boundaries, and theorize the differences and similarities among them. Escaping the perceptual limits of national horizons still assumes the primacy of the nation as that which must be escaped. As James J. Sheehan has remarked, “In every country the dominant historiographical tradition reflects the forces which define the boundaries of the nation.”¹⁵

There is neither space nor need to engage in the debate over whether *historically* (as opposed to *historiographically*) nations and nationalism have always been with us or are creations of the modern age.¹⁶ Among the more strident advocates of what has become known as a “modernist” position, Ernest Gellner argues that nationalisms, however much a creation of modernity and themselves the cause-not-consequence of nations, make frequent use of the past.¹⁷ This seems indisputable, but it broaches two questions: when such uses began (they need not have originated in modernity, as uses of the then-past in much earlier ages suggest) and, more important for the current enquiry, whether the reverse is also true. If the nation has consistently made use of histories and historians to achieve self-definition and legitimacy, have historians in turn made long-standing use of something like the nation? We conveniently and fairly loosely talk of “nationalist” sentiment in European historiographies from the late Middle Ages to the late twentieth century, not least because for a century or so academic history has been so seriously influenced by it. Even those historians who most keenly decry the evils of nationalism and affirm an international code of historians’ conduct still belong in overwhelming numbers to disciplinary organizations that proclaim national identities. Moreover, the neoconservatism of the past twenty-five years, with heritage revivals and state-managed school curricula, has provided a centripetal force aligning historiography and the historical profession in specific countries with the past of that country,

essentially managing the direction of public memory. In post-reunification Germany, there has even been a “renationalization” of history, following the high tide of structural and social history in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ Signs of this turn back to nationalistic political history could be observed as early as the *Historikerstreit*.¹⁹ All of this admittedly runs counter to more left-leaning federalizing, regionalizing, or internationalist projects such as the expansion of the European Community, and to the academic reaction to the horrors of post-Soviet neonationalism and renewed genocides in Eurasia and Africa under the euphemism of “ethnic cleansing.”²⁰

But are words like “national,” “nationalism,” and even “nation” so protean as some scholars have vigorously asserted, in view of changes in political organization and social realities, as to make them worthless for organizing premodern pasts? We tend to generalize geographically from our Euro-American experience of nationalism, even if we concede Benedict Anderson’s arguments about the imagined quality of our own communities, acknowledge the relative novelty of the commonplace association of nation and state since the days of Giuseppe Mazzini and Ernest Renan,²¹ and note that the flourishing of national historiographies occurred chiefly in then newly emergent European states, often built upon fragile institutional foundations and dubious claims of ethnic descent.²² The very dominance of the Western nation-state since the early nineteenth century, coincidentally the very period in which historiography became fully institutionalized and bureaucratized in Europe,²³ (a pattern soon replicated elsewhere, perhaps most successfully in America and East Asia),²⁴ has done more than simply to yoke the ox of nationalism to the plow of history in the last two centuries. It also helped to set the agenda for much of what we say about earlier periods in the history of historical writing, and about other parts of the world where nationalism is of much later origin.²⁵ This holds true in some circumstances outside Europe. In China, for instance, where historiography had for two millennia been state-sponsored and dynastic, not nationalist in the narrower modern sense of the word, there was a marked shift in the late Qing toward the writing of *tongshi*, or general histories, at the very same time that Chinese academics began to adopt Western forms of chronological thinking and some such as Liang Qichao began to argue for a non-dynastic “new history.”²⁶

I would like to pose the problem of how and to what degree the “nation,” subsuming its various non-English equivalents and synonyms,²⁷ such as Rousseau’s *patrie*, which seems as much nation as state, or the social-science *ethnie* (which often differs from a nation proper largely in its non-possession of a homeland) should and can be used as a significant organizing principle in the study of historiography—as assuredly it has been. I will suggest that it can—though not in every instance, and not without some careful qualification—and that where we use such terms, it is important to understand that they cover a rather broad group of past histories in which the nation may have mattered, for their respective authors, in a plural and significant number of ways.²⁸ Whether by nation we intend a particular historical formulation of that term—the ethnic-linguistic Herderian *Volk*, Michelet’s Herderesque and

anthropomorphized France embodying common language and continuous control over its geographic space,²⁹ Renan's guardian of a shared *esprit de liberté*, the military-political Bismarckian *kleindeutsch Reich*, or Meinecke's *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation*—is in this context a second-order concern in analyzing and grouping historiographies. However, for the sake of clarity I borrow here the nomenclature of Anthony D. Smith, a moderate “modernist” who nonetheless concedes the possible past existence of real nations in antiquity and the Middle Ages.³⁰

By Smith's definition, a nation is “a named human population occupying a historic territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories; a mass, public culture; a single economy; and common rights and duties for all members.” This formulation has a modernist tinge, especially in its second part: such aspects as a “mass, public culture” and, to a lesser degree, “common rights and duties,” are phenomena not readily identifiable prior to the eighteenth century. The first part of the definition is more helpful, and it is the working meaning of *nation* that will be employed here. By *nationalism*, Smith intends “an ideological movement for the attainment of autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation.’”³¹ This definition is less problematic since though it superficially appears to describe European movements beginning in the post-Napoleonic romantic era (and their decolonizing African and Asian equivalents in the past century), there is nothing in the statement that would not apply equally to earlier movements, for instance the Bohemian and Catalan insurgencies of the early to mid seventeenth century.³²

The issue is thus not whether one or another of these positions is correct as either a description of the origins of nations and nationalism or an explanation for their modern dominance; rather, it is why the nation has proved so reliable a unit for the analysis of historical texts, and why that continues to be true in a postcolonial era of emerging or newly non-communist nations and fresh national historiographies.³³ In short, the matter addressed in the remainder of this essay is neither the history of nationalism nor the historiography of nationalism (in the sense of competing theories among historians and others about nationalism), but rather the multiple roles of the nation and nationalism *in* historical writing and therefore in any history *of* historical writing. We may begin with the following simple propositions:

1. That the nation is a legitimate organizing principle for the study of the history of historical writing in *some* instances;
2. That some of these instances predate the great age of romantic nationalism and the formation of modern nation-states;
3. And finally, that if both the previous postulates are accepted, it then follows that we must have some basis for understanding the various ways in which the nation figures as the organizing principle in past histories, and when and under what circumstances these can be deployed in our own readings of those histories.

II

Accepting 1 as unproblematic or even self-evident, and 2 as arguable but for now a given, let us focus for the balance of this essay on item 3, the question of when and how a historiographical text legitimately gives rise to a reader-response that it is either “nationalist” (that is, capable of being characterized as nationalist, though not necessarily resonating positively to that characteristic) or at least “possessing a concept of the nation, however framed.” Few would accept that the absence of the modern nation-state in, say, Renaissance Europe, means that there was no ambient sentiment that can be called nationalist, or (if one wishes to be modernist) proto-nationalist, either in those countries such as the north Western monarchies that had the appearance of nations, or in regions where there was no unified political nation or even a common ruler. Machiavelli and Guicciardini need not have imagined the Italy of Mazzini and Cavour in order to write histories that presumed some binding commonality between the various independent cities and princely states of the early sixteenth century. If there is national sentiment in the histories written by these two Florentine statesmen, then there must have been something to be sentimental about, and therefore some concept, however inchoate, that amounts to a proto-nation (in this case a united peninsula purged of the French and Spanish “other”). Hans Kohn, a modernist in the debate on nationalism, acknowledged this in his elegant description of Machiavelli as a “lonely forerunner of Italian nationalism.” This is rhetorically exaggerated in Kohn’s narrative situation of the Florentine politician, which places Machiavelli midway between Dante’s post-Ghibelline imperialism and the dawn of modern Italian nationalism, yet allows him to have “sensed the future with relentless clear-sightedness.”³⁴ Was Machiavelli simply (far) ahead of the curve, or is it not more prudent to concede that he may have formulated some kind of notion of “Italy” that approximates a nation, albeit not the nation of 1860? I would suggest that the latter involves a considerably smaller stretch, and that to dismiss the idea of the nation (or of *a* nation) as being irrelevant to a reading of an author simply because he came too early (and explain away apparent anticipations as simply the remarkable insight of a brilliant mind) is overly ascetic, a point that Marc Bloch made long ago.³⁵ The more useful question is not “Did Machiavelli have a prescient notion of an Italian nation?” but rather “How did Machiavelli imagine the entity of Italy to be constituted or defined, in making it the subject of a history, such that it is possible to read nationalism into his narrative?”

The lack of a state does not entail an absence of national history: the example of Catalonia, independent for only brief periods of its past and semi-autonomous since 1979, provides a modern example.³⁶ “National” consciousness of a distinctive past can be found in many earlier European non-states. The great Norwegian historian, and his country’s foreign minister, Halvdan Koht, was among a generation of historians, more or less contemporary with Marc Bloch, who located the origins of European nationalism in the Middle Ages, first in Capetian France and the *chansons*, and subsequently in the British history of Geoffrey of Monmouth and

some of his continental imitators such as Poland's first historian, Vincent of Cracow.³⁷ Koht's Norwegian citizenship was perhaps not coincidental. A very young state, Norway has only recently marked its centennial as an independent kingdom. Yet, as the medievalist Kåre Lunden argues, a Norwegian national historiography dates from no later than Gerhard Schøning's mid eighteenth-century *Norges Riiges Historie* (3 vols., 1771–81), and medieval precursors can be found much earlier, in Snorre Sturlason's *Heimskringla* and a number of other historical texts produced during an especially intense period of nascent national consciousness between about 1170 and 1230.³⁸ In neighboring Sweden, subject to Danish rule before the early sixteenth century, the foundational early modern history, Olaus Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, was an enquiry into collective characteristics of various northern peoples, the sort of qualities that later generations would describe as "national character."³⁹ Danish historians such as Sven Aggeson and Saxo Grammaticus, also taking a leaf out of Geoffrey of Monmouth's book, similarly postulated a myth of autochthonous Danish descent as a bulwark against Germanic aggression. By the end of the sixteenth century, one of the most famous attempts at historical explanation through collective cultural (and often climatologically influenced) characteristics had appeared in the form of Jean Bodin's *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*.⁴⁰ The seventeenth century would add others along the road to Vico's *New Science* and the eighteenth-century *histoire des moeurs*.

The most severe strictures against use of the term nation in the wide angle of comparative historiography (as opposed to merely a critique of the "back-dating" fallacy, to which he also objects) come from the late Elie Kedourie, a notable modernist foe of contemporary nationalist ideology, who initially charges historians simply with the crime of subtly eliding the distinction between state and nation: "Similarly, when nationalist historiography applies itself to the European past, it produces a picture of nations slowly emerging and asserting themselves in territorial sovereign states . . . The continuity of the French state, or of the Spanish state, and their territorial stability, make it easy to adduce them as examples of the growth and development of European 'nations': the shift is vital, yet almost imperceptible." But Kedourie goes a step further to argue that apart from this generalized diachronic sabotage, nationalist historiography (in the sense of historiography proposing the naturalness and historicity of nations as a whole, not merely of a particular nation) ignores a geographic incommensurability between East and West: "The matter becomes even clearer when nationalist historiography is made to deal, not with certain countries in modern Europe, where it has a kind of plausibility [Kedourie does not, be it noted, concede accuracy as opposed to a *prima facie* persuasiveness], but with countries in almost any other part of the world at almost any period of history. In the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Mogul India, pre-Conquest South America, or China the categories of nationalist historiography, taken seriously, must lead to a contorted, paradoxical, untenable picture of the past."⁴¹

Can we square this circle? Must we purge the nation from our historiographical vocabularies for all but the past two centuries? We would thereby admit that

notions such as “British historiography” and “Spanish historiography” are utterly meaningless except as denoters of groups of histories written in the same language (which in fact they often were not—is William of Malmesbury part of “British historiography” if there was no Britain and he wrote in Latin rather than Middle English, Scots, Gaelic, Welsh, or Cornish?) and be obliged to reorganize virtually all of our accounts of the history of historical writing in order to rid them of this chimera. Surely not, if one can find glimmers of national consciousness in precisely those histories written in non-national contexts: if, as Kohn put it, long ago, “nationalism is a state of mind,” then perhaps the nation, too, can legitimately be read from the actual text, which—as we noted at the start of this discussion—is generally as close to the state of its author’s mind as we can get.⁴²

III

There is something to be learned from a distinction made in an entirely different context, Marxist historiography, between *objective* and *subjective* class.⁴³ A historical text may emanate from a period before nation-states, and may not even use the word nation or its other-language counterparts for there to be some signs of national sentiment and perhaps even embryonic nationalism in the more limited sense of a focused, fully formed, secular ideology.⁴⁴ F.W. Walbank’s perceptive evaluation of “national identity” as a problem in ancient Greek historiography has something to tell us on exactly this point. In an interesting plea for Collingwoodian reenactment of past thoughts, Walbank suggests that to understand early ideas of Greek nationality we must “read ourselves into Demosthenes’ mind.” He goes further to generalize that “the full understanding of the past requires its interpretation not merely in the light of the past, but also in the light of the future—our past and present. . . . This distinction can help us . . . in approaching the problem of Greek nationality.” From the point of view of the ancient Greeks themselves, “the idea of a Greek nation is alien to the thought of most Greeks at most periods throughout Greek history.” However, Walbank continues, analyzed from our perspective “we can clearly trace a movement toward integration in larger units. . . . *In that sense, Greek unity and even the Greek nation are concepts which can be studied and discussed without patent absurdity.*”⁴⁵

Of course, there is a difference between a historical text that objectively (from its reader’s point of view) conveys thoughts or ideas that might now be called “nationalist” or that employ “the nation” as a unit, and a text that appears subjectively aware or even fully conscious of that nation as the basis of the history to be described and perhaps even as a political goal to be promoted. The difference, though, may be one of shades rather than colors, and prior to the nineteenth century it is hard to tell where one strays into the other. The pan-Germanic writings of Reformation-era literati such as Conrad Celtis and Beatus Rhenanus, for instance, can objectively be read (and have been, by nationalist interpreters) as enunciating a sense of the “German peoples” and their “national character,” and

thus providing a useful bridge from Tacitus' ethnography in *Germania* through to Herder's pre-romantic conceptualization of the *Volkseele*, and thence via two centuries of German historical thought from Fichte through late nineteenth-century regional historians or *Landeshistoriker*, to Fascism and *Völksgeschichte*, and finally to post war debates about the *Sonderweg* (its one-time moral and aesthetic positives now inverted into a path toward trauma and destruction) and what has been called "denationalization."⁴⁶ It can just as easily be argued that Celtis, like his near contemporary Machiavelli, had some form of consciousness of German nationality even if he lacked Bismarck's sense of what kind of geographic region would be well-suited to form its political state, or the fully mature confidence of a Heinrich von Treitschke who, by the time he penned his *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, "knew what Germany was."⁴⁷

Other late medieval and early modern examples are not difficult to locate, and they do not require the specific presence of the Latin term *natio*, a word that once denoted collections of foreigners and in medieval universities meant a group of students from the same kingdom or at least speaking the same language (a meaning that survives, for instance, in some very old universities such as Uppsala). They are more likely to occur in relation to other words such as *gens* (as in *gens francorum*, the French), in relation to a monarchy (as in *rex angliae*), and sometimes even as *populus*. A recent collection of essays has usefully explored the dimensions of national consciousness in a variety of late medieval and early modern Central European and especially Polish chroniclers.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, medieval French chansons and chronicles from as early as the anonymous eighth-century *Liber Historiae Francorum*, through the much later *Grandes Chroniques de France* and Renaissance successors such as François Hotman's *Franco-gallia*, render accounts of the past that reach well beyond the tracing of dynasties in order to attempt an identification of the ancient origins and migrations of those who came to be Franks, a matter taken up anew after the Revolution by the conservative neo-Tacitean Chateaubriand⁴⁹ as well as by comparable thirteenth-century Iberian and twelfth- and thirteenth-century British counterparts (English, Scottish, and Irish).⁵⁰ Since we are not assessing their accuracy as historians, then the obvious objection that they frequently ventured into wildly improbable or legendary territory is not relevant.⁵¹

Once again we can and should look beyond Europe for comparisons. Much further afield, the awareness in Han dynasty China and thereafter that there was a thing called China (the Middle Kingdom or *Zhongguo*), and that those outside it, such as the early barbarian enemies, the Huns or Xiongnu, were aliens, implies a similar example of identification-by-difference. That is, it explains what a people is by negative comparison and contrast with those that it is not (a process complicated by inevitable miscegenation and by the absorption of Mongolian and Manchu conquerors into the Han majority).⁵² In China the barbarian idea, which still had currency at the time of the late Ming-early Qing historian Wang Fuzhi,⁵³ originates with the Qin unification and the building of the Great Wall; during the preceding Warring States and Spring and Autumn periods there had been little need to differentiate among peoples. Sima Qian's "national consciousness" is

certainly not ours, nor was it identical to Wang Fuzhi's protohistoricist sense of environmentally driven but gradually educable national character; and neither idea coheres completely with modern communist nationalism—just as the very historiographic form of the *Shiji* defies straightforward analysis according to Western traditions of historical writing.⁵⁴ But comparisons remain possible nonetheless. There are contemporary Western equivalences, for instance in the use of early Greek historiography to establish an “us” and an “other.”⁵⁵ Edith Hall has shrewdly pointed to similarities between Sima Qian's account in the *Shiji* of the origins of China and its conflicts with barbarians, and Herodotus' account of Greeks vs. Persians, accounts similar in their deployment of common descriptors and categories. While the Xiongnu were illiterate, non-Greeks were called “barbarians” initially because of the incomprehensibility of their speech; and in invading the Middle Kingdom, the Xiongnu demonstrated for Sima Qian an arrogance that resembles Persia's hubris in attacking Hellas.⁵⁶ The converse of othering is homogenization, and a much later dynasty, the Qing, practiced this very effectively, declaring their Manchu values of obedience and order a natural fit with those of the conquered Chinese and thus sufficient justification for their rule, adopting Chinese historiographical conventions, and extending these so far as to displace from the historical record any un-Chinese memory of “eliminated” peoples such as the Zunghar Mongols.⁵⁷

We need not replicate examples at this stage. To summarize the argument of this section of the essay, if one avoids judging all thoughts of, or references to, real or constructed nations at the bar of fully-formed modern nationalism, *one can then legitimately find nationalist sentiments or ideals, and by extension an idea of the nation, in historical writings from well before the French Revolution, whether there was then such a nation or not.* In Western Europe this goes perhaps as far back as the great historians of the *Völkerwanderung*, Bede, Gregory of Tours, Paulus Diaconus, and some centuries later, medieval chroniclers such as Saxo Grammaticus or Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁵⁸ These “nations” were undoubtedly just as much “imagined” in the sixth or sixteenth centuries as they would be in the nineteenth, but that does not render them less legitimate as a way of organizing historical accounts, written in those earlier ages, of what was then past, or as a way of classifying those same accounts today into meaningful groups of texts.

IV

Let us concede that it is no easier to find *the* time when nationalism, or national consciousness, “rose” or “began” than it is to locate those elusive single points of origin for the rise of the middle classes or the beginnings of the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁹ That leaves us with the challenge of identifying and defining the varying ways in which past historians may have deployed nationality in their accounts of the past. These ways, I hope to show, are many and complex, and are hopelessly oversimplified when we simply assert that there are (or aren't)

nationalist ideals or ideas of nation in a historical text or that *X* or *Y* historian wrote a history of *Z*.

This brings us to the next stage, categorizing the ways in which the nation figures in particular historical texts. One can identify the different modes in which the nation has figured as an organizing principle, a scope-setter, and an object of authorial affiliation. Historical texts can also be distinguished in the “integrative strategy” that their authors have adopted in order to define the subject of their narration and in some instances to convey the process of national consolidation and identity. The ways in which, and the categories of analysis through which, the “nation” (and by implication, proto-nationalism) can figure largely or not at all in a historical work either past or present can be represented summarily in the following table.

In elucidating the contents of this table, let us first state unambiguously that the several cells of these columns do not map together horizontally: that is, there is no implication that a “Territorially affiliated” author must write contemporary

Table 5.I: Authorial Intent and the Relevance of Nations: Five Modes of Historiographical Choice

Authorial Primary Affiliation	Collective Entity of Analysis	Temporal Scope	Constitutive Factors	Integrative Strategy
Territorial	Political (including local, national, civic, universal subvariants)	Contemporary (recent events)	Legal Tradition and Sovereignty	Neutral or Silent
Ideological	Phenomenal (a particular thing such as guns, rail-ways, food, dogs)	Periodic (a particular event, decade, century, reign, or dynasty)	Sanguinary-Ancestral	Exceptionalist (Imperialist or Isolationist sub-variants) (emphasizing comparative differences from external others)
Institutional (e.g., monastic historians)	Confessional	<i>Origines Gentium</i> (focus on origins and early descent)	Sociogeographic (including manners, morals, economic arrangements; social stratification; connection to particular mass of land)	Disintegrative (emphasizing comparative differences from internal others)
Ethnogenetic	Social-Cultural	<i>Ab origine</i> General (comprehensive chronologically)	Linguistic Unity	Cosmopolitan (emphasizing similarities and common features both internally and externally)

history within a dynastic monarchy or about a politically defined entity, constituted out of common laws and with no comparison between the entity and external or internal “others.” The five modes in the top row of cells are exemplary rather than exhaustive, and one can conceive of additions to the list. A history can be characterized by the choices its author makes within each of the modes, all of which collectively define both the content and the form. Looking at the text, we can choose to focus on any one or more of the five, and in any of them, one might find the nation (and perhaps even nationalism) coming into play, depending on which of four principal variants (and within some of these, sub-variants) of each of the modes the historian has elected to emphasize. This does not foreclose the possibility of other modes, or further variants. Those considered here, however, are fundamental in the sense that *either* an emphasis by the historian on any one mode at play in a particular text, *or* the identification of one of its variants by a subsequent reader, would arguably be sufficient to permit an interpretation of the text as in some way rendering the nation as a concept and nationalism as a sentiment relevant to the analysis and thus defensible against the charge of anachronism.

Authorial Primary Affiliation

Any historian, as a social being, necessarily affiliates with multiple groups larger than himself or herself, whether a nation, a city, a guild, or, nowadays, a professional organization, class, or gender; even the most reclusive medieval author of a monastic history affiliated with his house and order if nowhere else. The nature of an affiliation may be more or less transparent in any text composed by that historian, but affiliations can be identified. These are more often than not plural, but frequently one mode of affiliation will predominate and hence be identifiable as “primary” at least in the circumstances under which the person is acting as a historian: I affiliate by descent and choice with the Jewish religion, and through immigration and residency with the state of Canada, but I write neither Jewish nor Canadian history, so as a historian, my identifiable affiliation would most likely be with groups consisting of other British historians, or perhaps members of the Canadian historical profession.

The principal variants in the mode of authorial affiliation are territorial (author self-identifies as member of a community defined by territory, whether national, provincial, civic, or world); ideological, including religious (Marxist; Islamic; feminist; Christian; Buddhist); institutional (belonging to a particular organization such as a monastery, a university, or a corporation); and ethnogenetic (Yoruba, German, Navajo, Scottish). There is obvious overlap: a monastic historian of the thirteenth century would simultaneously be a member of a religious order (institution), an adherent to an ideology (Christianity), the scion of a linguistic group (for instance, native German speakers) and the inhabitant of a particular territory (France, the Byzantine Empire). Clearly, there are subspecies to each of these, and some immanent tendencies: within the variant of ideology, a Christian or Islamic

primary affiliation is more likely to produce Universal than national history, but there can be exceptions, for instance an Islamic history by an author concerned only with a particular dynasty (Abbasids, Ottomans), and the most interesting aspect of some past texts is precisely their authors' balancing of what amount to conflicting loyalties, for instance to church or king.⁶⁰ Historians whose primary affiliations are institutional—as was true of the Buddhist historians of particular monasteries, such as the authors of the Burmese *Padaeng Chronicle* or the fourteenth-century Tibetan *Deb-ther sngon-po* (*Blue Annals*)—identify both with their particular institution and their religious practice. The idea of a “nation” may or may not be readable from the history, but it is more likely to be a significant factor—and hence a legitimate tool for us to use in describing it today—in the work of an author whose primary affiliation is territorial or ethnogenetic rather than institutional or ideological.

Collective Entity of Analysis

Every history that has ever been written is *about* something. There is a subject whose past is to be recounted in the text, whether that account is cast chronologically or in some other narrative form. Except in the case of the barest annals listing entirely discrete and disconnected events, that subject generally involves the interaction of multiple individual actors in time. Even a history titularly about an event or series of events (“the first century B.C.E.”; “the Vietnam War,” “the French Revolution”) actually describes not a simply a collection of disconnected occurrences (or it would be little more than a list or at best a chronicle), but one or more interacting subjects, actions done to whom constitute the event or make the period a meaningful unit. We will address choice of temporal scope under the next mode. For now, let us call the historically past subject, for lack of a better term, a *collective entity*, or simply entity for short. Setting aside the possibility that this entity is simply an individual (and thus non-collective, belonging to the realm of biography rather than history proper), one can find multiple varieties of politico-geographical entity described and narrated in histories. Since historical writings first began, their authors have at different times represented the pasts of the following sorts of entity.

- I. political entities such as dynasties (as in the Chinese *Zhengshi* or Standard Histories), or their sub-sections (the Veritable Records of particular imperial reigns), or some other politically defined unit (the last Florentine Republic; the Hasmonean Jewish kingdom; a *Heimat*; or a particular city such as that depicted in Justus Möser's *History of Osnabrück*; a region or other district of the sort covered in the post-Song *Fangzhi* (Chinese “gazetteers”); and in their closest Western equivalents, the antiquarian chorographies of the early modern era, the British *Victoria County Histories* and German *Landeshistoriker* of a later period, and the regional scholarship of the *Annales* historians; or even the known world (which features in “world history” and

in the various explanatory frameworks, such as world systems theory and its conservative *doppelgänger*, globalization, that have been developed to explain its macro-unity);⁶¹

2. Phenomenal entities, i.e., particular objects or materials, which really means a history of their use by humans;
3. Confessional entities, i.e., the adherents of a particular belief set including but not limited to those generally considered religious (a history of Christianity or Confucianism; a history of Marxism or economic liberalism);
4. sociocultural entities, which can include large social groups (e.g. Jules Michelet's *le peuple*, and E. P. Thompson's "English working class"), or sociocultural movements ("the Enlightenment," "the Reformation," "humanism"). These variants do not need to cohere with those of the previous mode: a German-speaking author of the nineteenth century living in Switzerland such as Jacob Burckhardt might choose as his entity of analysis the civilization of Renaissance Italy, thereby emphasizing a sociocultural movement ("the Renaissance") rather than Italy as a territory. A unit such as the "nation" is potentially relevant to a narrative based on political entities (an actual nation, or the world of which a nation is part), and sometimes not. It is less likely to be relevant to a confessional history of early Islam (though such a history will by necessity refer to regional variations such as Persian or Syrian, and to political units such as the Umayyads or the Abbasid Caliphate), and even less so to a phenomenal history of mankind's use of the horse in agriculture, though of course such a work could also clearly delimit only "Burmese agriculture" and thereby render the nation relevant.⁶²

Temporal Scope

This mode is relatively straightforward and its implications the least problematic. All histories have a temporal scope, which might range from mere weeks or days (*The Last Days of Hitler; Paris, 1919*) to all recorded time ("recorded" here understood as including tangible as well as inscribed or written evidence). The possible choices of time span to be covered in a history are never infinite, but they are multiple and in most cases their narrowing down to one does represent a deliberate decision, even when pressing the limits of credulity: for instance, the determination of certain Romanian historians to locate the origins of a "proto-Romanian" language as early as the sixth century and of a Romanian people predating both Christ and the Conquest of Dacia reflects, one commentator has reminded us, the impact of a throwaway statement by the dictator Ceaușescu concerning his people's two-millennia antiquity.⁶³ That is why the historian frequently must begin his or her account with a justification of the period being selected, unless that period has been formally prescribed owing to some external set of rules (for instance, the bureaucratic organization of Chinese and Korean historiography that for centuries

presumed the dynasty to be the proper object of narration; or a modern-day book series organized by decades).

For simplicity, the possible choices can be grouped into four variants of temporal scope. In other words, the history may purport to describe: (1) the contemporary, that is, very recent events in the history of the entity whose past is being written; (2) a defined intervening period such as a century, a reign, a dynasty, or a decade or a particular event; (3) an originating episode or set of circumstances that gave rise to the entity (which, because its origin is being claimed, is more than a special case of a variant 2 event), which we might call history concerning *origines gentium*, of which the barbarian Western historians from Jordanes to Gregory of Tours are classic examples (doubly classical in that they are often adduced as examples of this sort of history-writing in the West and because their authors literally, as Patrick Geary has observed, “brought their peoples onto the stage of Greco-Roman history as early as possible” by transplanting barbarian pasts into a world chronological scheme previously established by Roman historians⁶⁴); or (4) the total chronological span over which the historical entity has existed. Any one of the variants of this mode may or may not entail a connection to an actual or imputed nation, or to any other sub-variant of the political collective entity.

Depending on choices made under the mode of collective entity, any one of the variants under this mode of temporal scope may conceivably involve the historian in using some notion of nationhood, however unreflective or incidental. How the “nation” is deployed therein is therefore a consequence of both the selection of collective entity and the subsequent or prior selection of a period over which the action is to be taken. A historian concerned with very recent events is likely to make different assumptions about the coherence of the entity being described than one examining the *longue durée*: Guicciardini’s perspective on “Italy” as a narratable subject in his *History of Italy* differed from his perspective in his *History of Florence* not simply because the entities being described were respectively larger and smaller, but because the former work dealt with very recent events through which he had lived, and the latter with the somewhat longer span—back to the Ciampi revolt of 1378—in the history of his particular city-state and its interactions with the other political forces on and near the Italian peninsula.

Constitutive Factors

A historian affiliated *with* a particular group who wishes to write a history *about* a particular collective entity, *during* a particular temporal span, must logically further subscribe to the notion that the entity under description has a minimal internal coherence or interconnectedness, and that its sub-units, including people, possess a discernible commonality, sufficient to render it a meaningful entity to be described, even if sensitive to internal distinctions and differentiations (however, see the next mode of integrative strategy, below). To take an extreme example, a history of the use of printing presses in ancient Rome is meaningless since it would describe a null-set. A history of the British Isles that eschews

anglocentrism and stresses the pluralism of Britannic cultures nevertheless begins from the presumption that there is some connection that makes the pasts of Scotland and Wales more relevant to the description of England's history than those of France or Germany, much less Siberia or Siam. Temporal distance adds complexity to the task of finding coherence, since entities change over time: a modern state such as Russia or Egypt is not coterminous with its borders of fifty, much less two thousand, years ago. In order to persuade the reader that the entity is itself meaningful, the historian must constitute it by identifying and arguing, however briefly, for the selection and grouping of particular elements as collectively making up the entity, and also for the exclusion of some others which are less important or extraneous. A historian describing the history of a "nation" can constitute his subject as any of the following:

1. A legal entity defined by sovereignty and a collected body of laws;
2. A sanguinary-ancestral heritage or *Erbe*, connected by acknowledged common descent (the Romans, the Jews, the Incas);
3. A sociogeographic tradition, including manners, morals, and economic arrangements;
4. A linguistic unity, bound by common language (Japanese, German, Swahili, Arabic).

An example of a history that constitutes a "new" national entity out of supposed legal and political engagement over several centuries is the obscure Englishman Edward Ayscu's early seventeenth-century account of the interactions over several hundred years between Scotland and England, two perennially hostile neighbors. Ayscu self-affiliated as an Englishman, not a Scot, but he undertook this history in order to provide support for a controversial contemporary political initiative, the union of the two kingdoms under a single monarch, James VI of Scotland, also James I of England (these same circumstances formed the background to two of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*). Though he too included an introductory chapter asserting the common Gothic descent of Angles and Scots, Ayscu's tactic of arguing for the naturalness of "Great Britain," although premature, was quite different from the approach taken by several of his contemporaries, who defaulted to variant 2, the traditional sanguinary-ancestral arguments of common descent from mythical, legendary, or mythistorical figures such as Brutus the Trojan, as developed centuries earlier by Geoffrey of Monmouth (and imitated by Croats tracing their origins to Chrobatos, Incas to Manco Capac, or modern Zulus to Shaka KaSenzangakhona).⁶⁵ Ayscu's slightly better known and much more insightful contemporary, the poet-turned-historian Samuel Daniel, also eschewed constitution of his entity on the basis of mere ancestry. Unlike Ayscu, however, Daniel avoided all reference to remote and mythic antiquity. Daniel was utterly uninterested in making the case for a historical Great Britain,

and his *Collection of the historie of England* (1618) constituted its subject even more clearly on the basis of legal and judicial arrangement—which, in the face of successive invasions, would come to be the sinews holding the country together and underlying the very character of English life.⁶⁶ A famous case from a more recent era, provided to us by Meinecke, concerns Hegel and the German school of legal jurisprudence, for whom a national spirit can be constituted from the combination of substances constitutional, religious, artistic, and philosophical. Germany for Hegel was not the synecdochic “universal nation of mankind” as Fichte might have had it, but rather a *force du jour*, like Thebes or Sparta, enjoying its brief period as the “nation of world historical consequence” in Hegel’s own era. A pawn of the world spirit, Hegel’s Germany was only the most recent bearer of an externally conferred distinction not unlike the medieval *translatio imperii*.⁶⁷

Blood and ancestry as historical themes need little illustration here, since they are well known to have permeated much Western and non-Western historiography back to its virtual beginnings, at their simplest involving the descent of a nation or *ethnie* from a common and often eponymous ancestor, and at a more sophisticated level, some kind of theory of common habits, values, and interests springing from consanguinity, for instance in the great Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun’s belief that blood relationships (*asabiya*) trump all other sorts of connection. As Smith notes, there is an important distinction to be made between the strict biological version of these—literal blood ties—and a “spiritual version” that simply takes certain remote figures as embodiments of ideals to be imitated.⁶⁸

But historiographic constitution on the basis of custom and tradition has as great an antiquity as that governed by blood and ancestry. Consider the famous scene in Book 8 of Herodotus, a classic text for arguments in favor of proto-nationalistic Hellenism in the early fifth century B.C.E. In this episode, following the battle of Salamis, the Persians try to detach the Athenians from other Greeks. The Athenians refuse, noting “our traditional ways are all alike” and referring to a Greek people.⁶⁹ Having rebuffed the Persian emissaries, they then reprove the Spartans for worrying about Athenian betrayal, an unnecessary fear since, apart from mutual interest in preventing the desecration of particular sacred places important to all, “there is the Greek nation—the community of blood and language, temples and ritual, our common way of life.”⁷⁰ This is not dissimilar to the constitutive choice elected by Herder in a more recent century. “Nature produces families; the most natural state therefore is one people (*Volk*) with a natural character. . . . Nothing seems more obviously opposed to the purposes of government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing together of different human species and nations under one scepter.” Herder had in mind expansive states like Prussia, the creations of military ambition rather than of natural affiliation.⁷¹ Religious difference has similarly played a part in group self-identification across cultures: the Hebrews, from the period of the First Temple till the defeat of the Jewish Revolt and the destruction of the Second, identified their “nation” with worship of one God and with status as a chosen people (a point we will take up further on). Evidence here can be found

in scriptural sources such as the Book of Daniel. Written in the Hellenistic era, this central text of medieval and early modern millenarianism was, Doron Mendels comments, a classic parallel exposition of one people's history against the larger background of the history of the world.⁷² It suffuses the historical writing of a Romanized Jew such as Josephus.⁷³

Language is closely related to custom and tradition, but it is arguably a separate variant, though one that needs little explication here. It has probably been the element relied upon by historians more than any other in the past four centuries to justify the commonality of peoples living in separate jurisdictions, under different kinds of political regimes, practicing different religions. It was famously crucial, for instance, to the historical thought of both Fichte and Herder, the latter of whom remarked that while language set men apart from animals, it also set them apart from each other and could be learned only within a community.⁷⁴

Integrative Strategy

The historian *must* constitute an entity, national or otherwise, for it to be describable; otherwise the history is, as illustrated above, meaningless (one could imagine a history of several unrelated things selected randomly, but it is difficult to imagine anyone reading it). That does not, however, bind the historian to a particular position on the value of the entity thus constituted, much less to an obligation to defend or promote it. One might, for instance, write a history of Imperial Germany, as did Treitschke, that celebrates unification as the consummation of nineteenth-century politics. Alternatively, one might write a very different history that takes Germany's very formation, and the values underlying it, as having sown the seeds of two catastrophic world wars and the Holocaust. Fritz Fischer famously did this in his controversial account of German aspirations in World War I, a history that proved objectionable to its critics because it appeared to postulate a more or less straight line from Bismarck to Hitler.⁷⁵ However, histories have been written and continue to be written that both constitute a national entity *and argue for or against it*. This is perhaps most obvious in those histories that do take as their subject a collectivity of humans over a period of time during which political arrangements may not have been constant, for example "Italy." The argument of a history, or in other words, the manner in which the constitutive factors are elucidated, can take a variety of forms, which I shall call the history's "integrative strategy." The historian may (1) simply refuse to engage in such rhetoric and remain silent on the shared and distinguishing features apparent in the past; or he or she may (2) argue for an entity defined principally by distinction from external others, in which case the strategy is exceptionalist. This of course has at least two major sub-variants, since that very exceptionalism may occur in either an isolationist form (advocating withdrawal from engagement with foreign entities) or an imperialist form (implying a duty or even an evangelical mission to bring its values to other entities, whether the *pax romana*, *la liberté française*, British civilization, German culture, or Bushite American "freedom").

John Breuilly has usefully written on the prominence of the past, in particular of ceremonies and symbols, in national self-constitution. “There is the re-enactment of a moment in national history. History provides identity within the historicist frame of reference; symbolic history provides an intense and summary view of that history.” The most frequently memorialized events are “times of heroic resistance to aliens,” such as the struggles of the late sixteenth-century Wallachian prince Michael the Brave, whose struggles against Turk and Transylvanian alike became a defining episode for nineteenth-century historians attempting to locate the origins of a consolidated Romania and the birth of a sense of Romanian national unity.⁷⁶ Isolationist examples of the exceptionalist variant are commonplace: the Tokugawa closing off of Japan to the West in the late sixteenth century, which informs much Japanese historiography up to the early Meiji era;⁷⁷ the Russian “Slavophile” anti-Westernism of the mid-nineteenth century;⁷⁸ and post-revolutionary America with its early isolationist views (and the celebration by early American historians such as George Bancroft and Francis Parkman of the freedom-loving pioneer, fleeing European oppression to start afresh in an uncontaminated wilderness).⁷⁹

Just as easy to find are examples of isolationism’s opposite: an evangelical side to exceptionalism that is not simply definition by contrast with a foreigner, but the notion that one’s own national values and character are either providentially or naturally superior and that there is a duty to impose them on others, by force if necessary. This is the language of aggressive imperialism, of course, and it can be identified in writings from democratic societies like fifth-century Athens or Victorian Britain, in the more expansionist versions of the German *Sonderweg*, and in the political rhetoric of the early twentieth-century (and lamentably, the much more recent) United States. Take the famous quotation from Senator Albert J. Beveridge in 1900, with which Ernest Lee Tuveson begins his history of American exceptionalism:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world’s progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: “Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things.”⁸⁰

In short, a nation can be historiographically integrated as exceptionalist in different ways—one can usefully compare the North American imperialism of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny with the earlier Western idea of a *translatio imperii*

and the still earlier Israelite doctrine of separateness that oscillates between withdrawal from contact with neighboring idolatries and forcible conversion of them over to the Hebrew God.⁸¹ The same is true of historians that distinguish their subject from a putative or real “other,” from Herodotus’ definition of the Greeks through James Mill’s orientalist *History of British India*, to the Japanese authors of the *Kokutai no Hongi*, the classic post-Meiji account of national character, who flatly declared: “We subjects are intrinsically quite different from the citizens of Occidental countries.”⁸²

However, the historian may *not* wish to provide evidentiary support in his narrative for the coherence of the nation and its defensive or offensive separateness. To the contrary, the historian might actually wish (3) to disintegrate the entity by arguing for the separateness of a distinctive *internal* sub-unit (which is in itself another argument for integrity, this time of the sub-unit), such as a region, class, or religious group, from others within the nation: province v state, Christendom vs. Islam, protestant vs. catholic, white Afrikaaners vs. indigenous blacks, Indian Muslim vs. Hindu; Aryan vs. Jew.⁸³ Since they seek to distinguish, not to bind, disintegrative strategies can by their very nature be advanced along single or multiple axes, including language, class, gender, occupation, or custom; they turn descent into *discent*.⁸⁴ Ibn Khaldun’s very emphasis on blood as the predominant constitutive factor in binding a people nonetheless permitted him the disintegrative strategy of contrasting civilized Arabs with their nomadic desert brethren, whom he deemed thoroughly savage (though distinctive and necessary as the source of true nobility, since theirs was the only subset of Muslim peoples not corrupted by miscegenation, from which desert conditions had protected them).⁸⁵ The historical literature of racism is full of such arguments.⁸⁶ A modern Western historiographical example provided by Peter Hallberg is the late romantic Swede, E. G. Geijer, the author of *Svenska folkets historia*. This work is a perfect illustration of a historian’s internal othering in the literary creation of a subaltern group or “national minority,” in this case the Sami. As Hallberg notes, “The strategy for identity making favoured by Geijer and [others] . . . involved contemplating both similarities (typically between Swedes and foreigners or between Swedishness and non-Swedishness).”⁸⁷ Internal difference can be identified temporally rather than spatially, by the ascription of “backwardness” rather than “foreignness,” especially if it is necessary to assert that a minority or subculture must, in spite of its difference, be subject to an over-arching political nation. The Qing efforts to subsume conquered Eurasian peoples into a common Chinese past, described by Peter Perdue, have already been mentioned. Early twentieth-century Japanese ethnographers, writing at a period when Japan was firming up its national frontiers, found it possible to make peoples on the periphery into Japanese who had always been Japanese, “only Japanese marooned in some earlier phase of human history.” Similar tactics were adopted by early Soviet planners in order to absorb non-Russian peoples into a socialist “Great Russian” federation: by encouraging ethnic particularism as a means of eradicating “backwardness,” cultural and linguistic disintegration became a tool of political uniformity.⁸⁸

A further choice, (4) lies in cosmopolitanism, which emphasizes the similarities and common features shared *both* internally and externally. Though this aspect of his thought is often ignored, Herder in many ways exemplified this, as Stefan Berger points out, in his insistence that love of nation could not trump respect for achievements arrived at by the universal community of nations. As Georg Iggers has astutely observed, Herder's historical conception of nationality was universalistic and inclusive, and was only corrupted in the next century when it became "militant and exclusionary and developed a mythology and a symbolism of history which served these aims."⁸⁹ In more recent times another conservative nationalist, Meinecke, who denounced "weak, abstract cosmopolitanism" (the opposite pole of Nazi racism), still saw cosmopolitan thinking as a necessary precursor to true national thinking. The close temporal proximity of romantic nationalist historiography to its internationalist Enlightenment predecessor, together with the importance of a transitional figure such as Herder, lends Meinecke's position some credence.⁹⁰

The sociologically inclined histories of comparativists such as Voltaire or the Scottish *philosophes* similarly exemplify a cosmopolitan strategy, which in Hans Kohn's view was a happy midpoint in the evolution of historical writing, since it "consummated the process of the secularization of historiography" while being "devoid of any national prejudice."⁹¹ So, somewhat earlier, did Vico with his proto-Herderian notions of universal human development manifested in particular local or national developments, as did Ranke, much later, with the view of the equality of all nations in all times under God. Richard Finlay, in a different context, has suggested that the lack of a strong Scottish national historiography has been overemphasized by other scholars, because they have focused on the efforts of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historians to demythologize the Scottish past, and on nationalist history as inherently and necessarily antagonistic to integration with Britain, ignoring the ways in which a distinctive Scottish nationality could be asserted within the larger union.⁹² A history, in other words, can be nationalist and cosmopolitan at the same time.

It will come as no surprise that there is a natural tension between the two modes of authorial affiliation and integrative strategy. A historian with a primary affiliation to an ideology rather than a territory faces an especially difficult choice, if promoting an ideology he or she sees as potentially universal—where to emphasize the significance of the particular nation or people as an embodiment of values that ought to transcend borders? Schiller was a late Enlightenment cosmopolitan, but he also saw the Germans, in an exceptionalist manner, as best able to realize the age of modern liberty and fraternity according to French Revolutionary values.⁹³ The early Soviet historian Pokrovskii experienced the same tension in his stress on class and the commonality of the European proletariat, and corresponding de-emphasis on the particularly Russian character of the Bolshevik Revolution. Pokrovskii was fortunate to die in 1932, before a resurgent nationalism in the form of Stalinist historiography marginalized his more traditional Marxist internationalism as overly abstract, divorced from lived human experience, and

“bourgeois.”⁹⁴ Arab nationalist historians have faced such quandaries at various points since the nineteenth century, with the need to promote the integrity of a particular state and its past territoriality—Hashemite Jordan or Nasserite Egypt, for instance—constantly pressing against competing ideologies such as regional pan-Arabism and international Islam; the imperative to produce ethnically unified and “essentialist” history has been challenged by the need to take account of the longstanding contributions of significant non-Arab or non-Muslim minorities such as the Copts.⁹⁵ As one recent commentator has put it, “national identities are unstable not only because they are susceptible to splits . . . but also because all good nationalisms have a trans-national vision.”⁹⁶

Conclusion

This essay has ranged over a wide variety of periods and national [sic!] or otherwise-grouped historiographies. It began from the premise that the comparison of historiographies over time and across national and language boundaries is, as Georg Iggers has urged, a worthwhile and necessary task, but it also has asked whether or not, in an age in which nationalism is virtually synonymous with intolerance and often violence, we should continue to organize our classification of historical literature along national lines. There are surely other ways to organize historiography—modern encyclopedic works routinely combine national entries with conceptual, methodological, and transnational ones (“the *Annales* School,” “Cliometrics,” “Postmodernism”). And the enormous literature on the nation and nationalism, predominantly by social scientists rather than historiographers, has for the most part warned against the usefulness of terms like “nation” or “nationalism” for early periods. Against this I have argued that there are certainly reasons for declining to use nation-related vocabulary in some instances, but that it is erroneous to base this choice on the purely chronological ground of “time in which the history was written,” both because there is no clear agreement as to when such categories become useful, and because there are other and much more complex reasons for paying attention to the nation. If it is the case that any historian, past or present, makes choices—as to the entity to be studied, his or her own primary affiliation, the time period to be covered, and the manner in which the entity is constituted—and if a further choice, among those historians who do deal in some way with nations or *ethnies*, is to defend that entity-constitution on the basis of a particular integrative strategy, then there is already plenty of reason to defend a concept such as “ancient Chinese historiography” or “Egyptian historiography.”

As historiography becomes a global enterprise, we will need to make meaningful comparisons and contrasts, both geographical and historical, between individual texts and, more broadly, historical traditions. Before we can do this effectively, we require some form of theoretical framework that identifies the key concepts, themes, and terms that can be found in multiple historiographies. The nation has

certainly been one of these so far as very modern history-writing is concerned. Given its usefulness as a concept informing historical texts from a much earlier period, we must guard against any cavalier and universalized use of its language, but be equally mindful that it cannot be simply ruled out of court as entirely inappropriate in pre-nineteenth century histories. I have hoped here to suggest both that the nation can legitimately be read from histories produced in many different times and places, and that there are often multiple justifications in any historical text for doing so.

Notes

1. Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, (London and New York, 1990), 8–22, at p. 11.
2. Arthur Marwick, "Two Approaches to Historical Study: the Metaphysical (Including 'Post-modernism') and the Historical," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 1 (1995): 5–35; Hayden White, "Response to Arthur Marwick," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 2 (1995): 233–46; F.A. Ankersmit, "The Postmodernist Privatization of the Past." In F.A. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford, 2001), 149–175; Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 2001).
3. For two critiques of the "imperialism" of Western historiography, see Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (Oxford and New Delhi, 2003), chapter I on "The history of ahistoricity"; and Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles." *History and Theory* 34, no. 2, Theme Issue 34: *World Historians and their Critics* (May 1995), 44–66.
4. Grant Hardy, "Can an Ancient Chinese Historian Contribute to Modern Western Theory? The Multiple Narratives of Su-ma Ch'ien," *History and Theory* 33 (1994): 20–38, makes the case for the difference, not similarity, of Sima's historical enterprise, in particular his apparent intent to tell multiple competing but plausible stories; idem, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York, 1999). The difference between this method, which necessitates redundant and duplicate accounts of the same event, and the "clean, narrative line of Western historiography" is also attested in Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany, 1995), 73.
5. Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: the Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2005), 516.
6. Hayden White's *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973) is only the most famous example of this approach.
7. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3–53; idem, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978). The best reconstruction of the multiple contexts of a major Western historian is J. G. A. Pocock's multivolume study of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Barbarism and Religion*, 3 vols. to date (Cambridge, 1999–). From a different perspective, Hans-Georg Gadamer has famously pointed out the ways in which our connections to the present can facilitate our understanding of the past rather than provide a permanent blockage against it. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, English edition (New York, 1982); for discussion, see David E. Linge, "Dilthey and Gadamer: Two Theories of Historical Understanding," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (1973): 536–53, at p. 547.

8. Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898–2000*, ed. J. Kocka and W. Mommsen, trans. A. Nothnagle (New York and Oxford, 2005).
9. In addition to the projected *Oxford History of Historical Writing*, there is an ongoing multinational study of history textbooks and the European Science Foundation's project "Representations of the Past: the Writing of National Histories in Europe." See also the following useful anthologies: Q. Edward Wang and Georg Iggers, eds. *Turning Points in Historiography: a Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Rochester, 2002); Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey, eds., *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford, 2002); Jörn Rüsen,, ed. *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate* (New York and Oxford, 2002). The fullest and boldest attempt at a cross-cultural evaluation of historical writing is Donald E. Brown, *Hierarchy, History, and Human Nature: The Social Origins of Historical Consciousness* (Tucson, AZ, 1988). The book contains perceptive commentary on a variety of world traditions, and their social context, but is regrettably marred by the author's assumption that there are "sound" historiographies (Western and those from the east that resemble them), measured against which others fall short.
10. Most of the theory of comparative history deals with historical subjects other than the history of historiography in itself: J. Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond," *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 39–44 is an insightful essay but concerns comparative history rather historiography. However, see Chris Lorenz, "Comparative historiography: Problems and Perspectives," *History and Theory*, 39 (1999): 25–39; idem, 'Toward a Theoretical Framework for Comparing Historiographies: Some Preliminary Considerations,' in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto, 2004), 25–48.
11. It might be argued that the kinds of linguistic analysis applied by scholars such as White to multiple Western historical texts is equally applicable outside Euro-American historiography. This may prove to be the case, but I do not think it can be assumed, given wide variations in what languages are intended to do and how they are represented graphically, and given also widely varying notions of time and chronology. See for instance Ross Hassig, *Time, History and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico* (Austin, 2001).
12. Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London, 1995), 27. I am grateful to John Barwick for drawing this work to my attention.
13. Albert Balcells, "An Example of the National History of a Stateless European Nation: Catalonia," in *Conceptions of National History: Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 78*, ed. Erik Lönnroth, Karl Molin and Ragnar Björk (Berlin and New York, 1994), 15–28, at p. 26. However, see the critique of this point of view by Theodore Zeldin, "What are the Future Prospects for the Writing of National History, and What are the Alternatives?" *ibid.*, 293–99.
14. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Frontiers of Japanese Identity," in *Asian Forms of the Nation*, ed. Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv (Richmond, 1996), 41–66, at p. 42.
15. James J. Sheehan, "What is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography," *Journal of Modern History* 53, no.1 (1981): 1–23, at p. 2.
16. The "modernist-perennialist-primordialist-constructionist" debate appears in some measure to be a problem of semantic disagreement. These positions are well summarized in Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, 2000), chaps. 2 and 3. The following classic and recent expositions of the idea of nationalism and its origins have been of use. Although often considered a modernist (e.g. C. Leon Tipton, ed. *Nationalism in the Middle Ages*) Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944) is much more ambivalent, since it offers a thoroughly Lovejoyesque account of the transmission of an idea from earlier times to modernity, and thus has one foot firmly in the perennialist side of the debate. In contrast, Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism* (New York, 1993) is much more unambiguously modernist in its opening assertion (p. 1) that "Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century." With respect to historiography, Kedourie defines nationalists as those who "make use of the

- past to subvert the present” and asserts that “[N]ationalist historiography operates, in fact, a subtle but unmistakable change in traditional conceptions” (70–71). For other modernist accounts see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990). A useful and wide-ranging selection of writings on the subject is Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford, 1996).
17. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), 55–56 and discussion in Anthony D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge, 2004), 66.
 18. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “What Is the ‘History of Society’?,” in Lönnroth et al., *Conceptions of National History*, 270–84.
 19. Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Oxford, 1997), 198–229; Richard J. Evans, “The New Nationalism and the Old History: Perspectives on the West German *Historikerstreit*,” *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987): 761–97. Paul Kennedy’s earlier announcement of the decline of nationalistic history in Western Europe, defensible in a post-Fritz Fischer era of détente and national self-criticism, and written at the academic peak of social history, now seems to have been a trifle premature. P. M. Kennedy, “The Decline of Nationalistic History in the West, 1900–1970,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 8 (1973): 77–100.
 20. David Lowenthal, “European and English Landscapes as National Symbols,” in *Geography and National Identity*, ed. David Hooson (Oxford, 1994), 15–38, at p. 16. For the possibilities of pan-European historiography, see Stuart Woolf, “Europe and Its Historians,” *Contemporary European History* 12, (2003): 323–37. See also comment by Richard Vinen on this article, and Woolf’s response, in the same issue, pp. 338–41, 342–43. An earlier, pre-World War II journey down this path is described in Domokos Kosáry, “The Idea of a Comparative History of East Central Europe: the Story of a Venture,” in *Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe*, ed. Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak (London, 1984), 124–38. On contemporary historians’ rejection of nationalism see Anthony D. Smith, “Nationalism and the Historians,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 33 (1992): 58–80, reprinted in his *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford, 1999), 29–55; idem, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 1–30.
 21. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983; rev. and exp. London, 1991). The literature on nationalism is enormous. The works of particular relevance here are: Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (Washington Square, NY, 1997) and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge, 2001), esp. 87–119. The theories of Smith, Gellner, and Anderson are helpfully compared and critically examined in Stein Tønneson and Hans Antlöv, “Asia in Theories of Nationalism and National Identity,” in their ed. *Asian Forms of the Nation*, 1–41, esp. 3–13. For a useful distinction between nation and state by a leading Central Europeanist, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: an Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, 1977), 1: “A state is a legal and political organization, with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens. A nation is a community of people, whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness.”
 22. Virgil Krapauskas, *Nationalism and Historiography: the Case of Nineteenth-century Lithuanian Historicism* (Boulder, 2000); Steven Bela Vardy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (Boulder, 1976); William H. Hubbard et al., ed., *Making a Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway* (Oslo, 1995); Hervé Hasquin, ed. *Histoire et historiens depuis 1830 en Belgique* (Brussels, 1981). Nationalist historiography was not, of course, confined to new nations. Multilingual and multiethnic but much older states such as the Swiss Confederacy faced similar issues of national tradition and memory: see Oliver Zimmer, *A Contested Nation: History, Memory, and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761–1891* (Cambridge and New York, 2003).
 23. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories. Western Europe Since 1800* (London, 1999); Stefan Berger, ed., *Narrating the Nation: The Representation of National Narratives in Different Genres* (Oxford, forthcoming).

24. Gabriele Lingelbach, *Klio macht Karriere: die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 2003); Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity" Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988); Margaret Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Basingstoke, 1998); John S. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jimmu* (Vancouver and Tokyo, 1997); Brownlee, ed. *History in the Service of the Japanese Nation* (Toronto, 1983); Stefan Tanaka, "Alternative National Histories in Japan: Yamaji Aizan and Academic Historiography," in Fuchs and Stuchtey, *Across Cultural Borders*, 119–138.
25. Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London, 2002), 13–16.
26. Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 33; Luke S. K. Kwong, "The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China," *Past and Present* 173 (2001): 157–190; Ying-Shih Yü, "Changing Conceptions of National History in Twentieth-Century China," in Lönnroth et al., *Conceptions of National History*, 155–74; Q. Edward Wang, *Inventing China through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography* (Albany, 2001). For a somewhat similar argument with respect to Meiji Japan and the adoption of the "lessons" of Western Whig history, see Peter Duus, "Whig History, Japanese Style: The Min'yūsha Historians and the Meiji Restoration," *Journal of Asian Studies* 33, (1974): 415–436. The Japanese experience of historiography, though influenced by Chinese models (and using Chinese language through much of its first centuries) was never organized dynastically since it recognized no break in succession, all emperors being directly descended from a single founding ancestor, the emperor Jimmu, a descendant of the Sun Goddess. The nation consequently loomed much larger in early historiography, for instance the *Rikkokushi*. I am indebted to Q. Edward Wang for lending me his unpublished essay on the Japanese influences on late Imperial Chinese historiography.
27. For a review of the vocabulary of "nation" and a semantic history, see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1992), 4–8, which borrows from the seminal article by Guido Zernatto, "Nation: The History of a Word," *Review of Politics* 6 (1944): 351–66.
28. Smith (*Nationalism*, 12), borrowing from David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford, 1995), draws a subtle distinction between nations, which have "a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members," and an *ethnie*, which is "a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites." The former definition seems to succumb to the same modernism that Smith criticizes elsewhere and sets up what seem to me false oppositions between "shared memories" and "shared histories"; for purposes of the current analysis I do not adopt this distinction. Cf. Smith, "The Problem of National Identity," in his *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 106ff. for the application of "ethnie" rather than "nation" to certain ancient and medieval collectivities such as the Persians. The distinction is not unproblematic given that a single group such as the ancient Israelites could be both *ethnie* (when dispossessed in Egyptian and then Babylonian captivities) and nation (during the eras of the Davidic and then Hasmonean kingdoms).
29. Paul Claval, "France: From Michelet to Braudel," in Hooson, *Geography and National Identity*, 39–57.
30. Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 77, 127–53.
31. Smith, *Nation in History*, 3.
32. John Breuilly's contribution to the debate acknowledges earlier, pre-Revolutionary phenomena but insists on the fundamental difference of modern nationalism from premodern anticipations. However, his discussion of the intellectual sources of nationalism, emphasizing the particular connection between historicism (as outlined by Vico and transmitted by Herder to the nineteenth century) is especially relevant here since it acknowledges the critical connection between historical thought and the idea of the nation. John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1985), 55–64.

33. For some European cases, see Maciej Górný, "Past in the Future: National Tradition and Czechoslovak Marxist Historiography," *European Review of History* 10 (2003): 103–14; Carsten Riis, *Religion, Politics, and Historiography in Bulgaria* (Boulder, 2002); Ulf Brunnbauer, ed., *(Re)Writing History: Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism* (Münster, 2004). Some recent examples from understudied (in the West) regions such as Asia and Africa are apposite: Patrick Jory, "Problems in Contemporary Thai Nationalist Historiography," *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3 (March 2003), unpaginated; Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge, MA, 2000); Patricia M. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham and London, 2002); Axel Harneit-Sievers, ed. *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South-Asia* (Leiden, 2002); Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab History and the Nation-State: A Study in Modern Arab Historiography 1820–1980* (London and New York, 1989).
34. Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, 127. Compare his dismissal of Flavio Biondo and the antiquaries for works "devoid of any patriotism or nationalism" (126), while admitting that recovery of the Roman past led to humanist narrative historians' sense of "Italian" affinity to that past and its greatness. Cf. E. Marcu, *Sixteenth-Century Nationalism* (New York, 1976), 29–40, a work so confident in locating the origins of nationalism in the sixteenth century (and using historians such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini as evidence) as to conclude (87) that its many examples should "leave little doubt as to the existence of nationalism in the sixteenth century, and of a nationalism that differed in no essential way from any later kind." A more subtle treatment of national consciousness in the Italian case is Felix Gilbert, "Italy," in *National Consciousness, History, and Political Culture in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Orest Ranum (Baltimore and London, 1975), 21–42, which asserts the post-Renaissance and counter-Reformation guardianship of Machiavellian nationalism in the hands of scholars and historians such as Carlo Sigonio and the great text editor Ludovico Muratori; cf. Gilbert's account of the earlier, republican phase in *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, 1965).
35. Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961), 2: 432–37. Bloch's aim was the assertion of the existence of group mentalities under feudalism rather than nations as such, and he ascribed then-modish dismissals of all instances of collective consciousness to an overreaction against the previous century's romantic historiography. Yet he also specifically endorses the notion that by the time of the *Chansons de Geste*, and of a chronicler like Sigebert of Gembloux, ca. 1100, notions such as *Francia* and *Rex francorum* had a particular and well-accepted resonance, even if often confused historically with the much larger borders of the old Carolingian empire. James Campbell has more recently gone much further and confidently asserted, for instance, actual nation-state status for late Anglo-Saxon England. Campbell writes, "Let me state a certainty. Late Anglo-Saxon England was a nation state. It was an entity with an effective central authority, uniformly organized institutions, a national language, a national church, defined frontiers (admittedly with considerable fluidity in the north), and, above all, a strong sense of national identity." James Campbell, "The late Anglo-Saxon state: a Maximum View," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 87 (1994): 39–65, reprinted in Campbell *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London and New York, 2000), 10. I owe this reference to Sarah Foot; for a rejoinder, see her "The historiography of the Anglo-Saxon 'Nation-State'" in *Power and the Nation*, ed. Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge, 2005). For a similar argument, in the context of a critique of Hobsbawm and the modernist position generally and of an attempt to locate the origins of the nation-state consistently in the Christian Middle Ages—and most strikingly in England—see Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997), 4–6.
36. Balcells, "National History of a Stateless European Nation," 15–28.
37. Halvdan Koht, "The Dawn of Nationalism in Europe," *American Historical Review* 52, (1947): 265–80.
38. Other examples include the *Historia Norvegiae* (ca. 1170): see Kåre Lunden, "Was There a Norwegian National Identity in the Middle Ages?" *Scandinavian Journal of History* 20, (1995): 19–33;

- idem, "History and Society," and Trond Nordby, "State and Nation-building," in Hubbard, *Making a Historical Culture*, 15–51, 181–209; Sverre Bagge, "Nationalism in Norway in the Middle Ages," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 20, (1995): 1–18; Andreas Elviken, "The Genesis of Norwegian Nationalism," *Journal of Modern History*, 3 (1931): 365–91; Richard Gaskins, "Visions of Sovereignty in Snorri Sturlason's *Heimskringla*," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 23 (1998): 173–88; for a more modernist view see Alexander Kan, "Scandinavian Conceptions of National History—A Model for Soviet Historians?" in Lönnroth et al., *Conceptions of National History*, 214–25. For the development of national histories in central Europe during the late medieval and early modern periods, see Norbert Kersken, "New Types of National Historiography in the 15th and 16th Century," in *Unwersalizm i Regionizm w kronikarstwie Europy rodkowo-Wschodniej*, ed. Urszuli Borkowskiej (Lublin, 1996), 27–50.
39. Peter Hallberg, "Mirrors of the Nation: the Construction of National Character and Difference in the Historical Writings of E. G. Geijer" *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26, (2001): 25–52.
 40. Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. Beatrice Reynolds (New York, 1945), 86–152.
 41. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 72–73.
 42. Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, 18.
 43. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 7 employs this distinction but regards both objective and subjective definitions as misleading and incomplete. Smith, *Nationalism*, 11 uses similar terminology, but in a rather different way than intended here, to delineate the contrast between Anderson's "imagined political community" (subjective by definition since self-imagined) and Stalin's "'historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup.'" For the application of the distinction in a much earlier setting see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford, 1989), 3.
 44. For the distinction between nationalism proper and national sentiment, see A. Smith, "The Problem of National Identity," in his *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 97–123, at p. 101; idem, *Antiquity of Nations*, 128.
 45. F.W. Walbank "The Problem of Greek Nationality," in Walbank, *Selected Papers: Studies in Greek and Roman History and Historiography* (Cambridge, 1985), 1–19, at 17–18.
 46. Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: the National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT, 1983); Berger, *Search for Normality*, 24–25; Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* 104, (1999): 1157–82; Manfred Hettling, ed., *Völksgeschichten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Göttingen, 2003).
 47. Sheehan, "What Is German History?" 2.
 48. Borkowskiej *Unwersalizm i Regionizm w kronikarstwie Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, passim. See especially the chapters by Christian Lübke, "Demonstrating Unity in History: *Regnum Poloniae* in Polish Evidences versus the Teutonic Order (1422/23), 159–72; Ivica Prlender, "Universal and Regional Ideas in the Medieval and Early Modern Historiography of the Dubrovnik Republic," 148–58; Norbert Kersken, "New Types of National Historiography in the 15th and 16th Century," 27–50.
 49. Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson and Alan V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), 47–57; Martin Thom, "Tribes within Nations: the Ancient Germans and the History of Modern France," in Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 24–43.
 50. Roberto J. González-Casanovas, "Alfonso X's Concept of Hispania: Cultural Politics in the Histories," in Forde et al., *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, 155–70. Other chapters continue in this vein; for Ireland see James F. Lydon, "Nation and Race in Medieval Ireland," 104–24. On the more thoroughly studied case of England there are numerous studies but see especially John Gillingham, "Henry of Huntingdon and the Twelfth-Century Revival of the

- English Nation,” 75–101, who notes a particular moment of change in the 1140s when Henry ceased to refer to the Norman invaders as a separate people from their English subjects (see esp. 79).
51. These are exemplified in inventions such as Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *British History* and, some centuries later, the pseudo-Manetho and pseudo-Berosus of Annius da Viterbo, and includes the common choice of ancient peoples such Trojans, Scythians, or Phoenicians in the role of national founders. For the early modern versions of this see, for instance, T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London, 1950); A. B. Ferguson *Utter Antiquity* (Durham, NC, 1993); D.C. Allen, *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science, and Letters*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, 1963); R. E. Asher, *National Myths in Renaissance France: Francus, Samothés and the Druids* (Edinburgh, 1993).
 52. Lisa E. Husmann, “‘National Unity’ and National Identities in the People’s Republic of China,” in Hooson, *Geography and National Identity*, 141–57.
 53. Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), 68, 247.
 54. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror*; Hardy, “Can an Ancient Chinese Historian Contribute to Modern Western Theory?” and Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo*.
 55. David Konstan, “To *Helle-nikon ethnos*: Ethnicity and the Construction of Ancient Greek Identity,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, Irad Malkin (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 29–50.
 56. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 61. The idea of the barbarian as not merely different but as an “anti-Greek” originated in the early fifth century B.C.E.; *barbaros* could variously mean either Persian-Medes specifically or any non-Greek.
 57. Perdue, *China Marches West*, 476–89. In commissioning a special history of the Zunghars in 1763, the Qianlong emperor, while acknowledging the historically separate identity of the Zunghars, bestowed the gift of Han-style dynastic history upon them in order to bring them into the master-narrative of dynastic rise and fall.
 58. Walter A. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon (Princeton, 1988); Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, “Saxo’s History of the Danes: an Interpretation,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 13, (1988): 87–93.
 59. Greek national consciousness is a case in point. Classicists frame the issue around Hellenic and Hellenistic evidence (see Walbank and Hall, cited above). But a modern Greek nationalist such as A.E. Vacalopoulos, unwilling to stretch the origins of modern Greece back past the caesura of late antiquity, makes a linguistic argument for the beginnings of modern “Hellenism” as early as thirteenth-century Byzantium with the revival of the term “Hellene” about 1204, its use in association with the terms *génos* and *ethnos*, and the coterminous shrinkage of Byzantium over the next two centuries into something like the geographic boundaries of ancient Greece: Ian Moles, “Nationalism and Byzantine Greece,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 10, (1969): 95–107; Smith, “Myths of Ethnic Descent,” 78–79; Richard Clogg, “The Greeks and their Past,” in *Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe*, ed. Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak (London, 1984), 15–31.
 60. On Islam and nationalism see Amir Shakib Arslan, “Islam and Nationalism,” in Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, 331–37.
 61. Applegate, “A Europe of Regions,” 1171 for variants of regional history.
 62. The suggestion that late antique and medieval historiography was inherently “universal,” not “national,” seems to miss the point. The two should be no more mutually exclusive than they were a millennium later in the era of Ranke—the same organicist, synecdochic thought that White has identified for the nineteenth century can be read from a chronicle such as the *Estoria de Espana* sponsored by Alfonso X of Castile. As González-Casanova remarks (“Alfonso X’s Concept of Hispania,” 157), for these chroniclers, any “national history” such as this was simply understood to be “a part of the universal history of the world and of creation”. The same would apply in Germany—Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, 93–94, notes that “[A]ny feeling of national particularism in the later Middle Ages expressed itself as part of the universalism of the Empire. A separate national consciousness, a *Nationalbewusstsein* different from the

- universal *Reichsidee*, was never imagined." Compare the attitude of early twentieth-century Arab nationalists, who had an exceptionalist view of their people's history but believed its greatness could only be realized through the blessing of Islam. See C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, 1973), 70–71: "The Arabs, then, are a special nation, blessed by God with the 'seal' of the prophets. The requirements of Arabism are fulfilled by membership in an Islamic state which enforces the Koran and the sunnah, rather than by possessing a separate, independent Arab state." A Western parallel from an earlier period is the sixteenth-century martyrologist John Foxe's celebration of England as an "elect nation" (see Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 60–66), but one owing its greatness to its membership in a wider reformed Christendom. For old ideas of a single Europe see Smith, "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity," in *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 225–51.
63. Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. J. C. Brown (Budapest, 2001; first published in Bucharest, 1997), 110.
 64. Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton and Oxford, 2002), 61.
 65. Edward Ayscu, *A historie contayning the vvarres, treaties, marriages, and other occurrents betweene England and Scotland from King William the Conqueror, vntill the happy vnion of them both in our gracious King Iames. With a briefe declaration of the first inhabitants of this island: and what severall nations haue sithence settled them-selues therein one after an other* (London, 1607). For contemporary histories involved in this debate see D. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (Toronto, 1990), 55–62. For the Croat and Zulu examples, see Geary, *Myth of Nations*, 159.
 66. D. R. Woolf, "Community, Law and State: Samuel Daniel's Historical Thought Revisited," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, (1988): 61–83.
 67. Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, trans. R. K. Kimber (Princeton, 1970), 198–99. Meinecke well elucidates the difference between Hegel and Ranke in this regard. Ranke, Meinecke commented (*ibid.*, 212) "did not reject the universal element in the life of the great states but located it where it no longer inhibited their free movement. Their origin in the profound depths of nationality and their *telos* blend into the universal, but their life itself is simply the realization of their own being. Historical research, which observes and describes their life, is necessarily universal in that nothing human can be alien to it."
 68. Creation myths are a form of historical account in this regard, from the *Theogony* of Hesiod through, as Smith (63) points out the Edda and the Veda. Spiritual descent can be seen for instance in uses of Brutus the Roman (the enemy of the tyrant Tarquin) as opposed to Brutus the Trojan in eighteenth century England. Smith, "National Identity," 57–95. This is an exhaustive typology of the various sorts of descent myths.
 69. Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.144, trans. A. de Sélincourt, rev. A. R. Burn (Harmondsworth, 1972), 574–575.
 70. Also see Rosalind Thomas, "Ethnicity, Genealogy, and Hellenism in Herodotus," in Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 213–33.
 71. Breuille, *Nationalism and the State*, 59–60, quoting Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie*. . . . Breuille points out that this idea was taken up in Central Europe by Palacky on the Czechs, defined as a language group.
 72. Dan, 8:3–8; Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York, 1992), 19. Smith, "Myths of Ethnic Descent," 80, points out a division within Jewish nationalist thought between a sanguinary-genealogical view of descent, promulgated by medieval rabbis, and a nineteenth-century version more focused on the cultural achievements of past Jewish communities, for instance in Spain; the modern heirs of this are secular Israeli Zionism in the latter case and, in the former, radical Jewish fundamentalism with its irredentist focus on recapturing land given by God to Abraham's descendants. Cf. Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, 2002).
 73. Mendels, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, 3; see in general see Mendels' chapters on "Nationalism in the Hellenistic World," 13–26 and "Nationalism and the Concept of History in the

- Ancient Near East," 35–50. On various versions of the "chosen people" idea, not restricted in antiquity and the Middle Ages to the Jews, see Smith, "Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive," in Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 125–47, at p. 131. The very notion of a *translatio imperii* is a variant of this.
74. See Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, 14 and Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 56–57. Friedrich Schlegel saw language as the ideal principle by which to divide states (Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, 65): "unity of language proves common ancestry" (this is not the same as a constitutive argument through ancestry that simply asserts common ancestry, often based on some foundational myth or legendary figure).
 75. John A. Moses, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography* (London, 1975); Berger, *Search for Normality*, 56–76.
 76. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 40, 131; Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 67.
 77. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths*; Hiroshi Watanabe, "Historiography as a Magic Mirror: the Image of the Nation in Japan, 1600–1990," in Lönnroth et al., *Conceptions of National History*, 175–87.
 78. N.V. Riasanovsky, *Historical Consciousness and National Identity: Some Considerations on the History of Russian Nationalism* (New Orleans, 1991), 7.
 79. Arthur H. Shaffer, *The Politics of History: Writing the History of the American Revolution 1783–1815* (Chicago, 1975).
 80. Quoted in Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: the Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago and London, 1968), vii.
 81. Imperialist should not naturally be confused with "imperial" in the sense of titular Empires. The medieval Western Roman Empire was neither a national nor an exceptionalist entity (except perhaps when leading Christendom in the Crusades); nor was late ancient Rome following the granting of citizenship to the former barbarians.
 82. Quotation from *Kokutai No Hongi*, trans. J. Gauntlett, in Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, 318. For the Herodotean example see, in addition to Edith Hall, François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1988). For Mill, see Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford, 1992).
 83. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 5. Religious differences have been critical, for example, to the ancient Jewish definition of a historical "people," and have similarly separated the Indian population into Hindus and non-Hindus or *mlechas*. Partha Chatterjee has described the varying ways in which early Anglo-Indian historians, struggling against the influence of works like Mill's thoroughly anti-Hindu *History of British India* (1817), were obliged to celebrate a classical Vedic Hindu past that comprised Hindu, Buddhist, and Jainist but excluded Muslim and Christian as alien. "Histories and Nations," in Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993), 95–115.
 84. The term is coined by Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 66.
 85. Cited in John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982), 18.
 86. See George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2002), 151–70 for a survey of the ideology of racism in historical discourse.
 87. See Peter Hallberg, "Mirrors of the Nation," 25–52, at p. 27. See esp. pp. 45–50 on the Sami, whom Geijer treated as barbarians, in contrast to the earlier account of Olaus Magnus. Geijer describes the Sami as "a people whose past does not have any history other than that of its neighbors," whereas the Sami claim to be the oldest inhabitants of Sweden and Norway (Hallberg, "Mirrors of the Nation," 50). This also contradicts his general belief that colder climates produce more virtuous and hard-working peoples—since the north is colder, the Sami should be more virtuous, not less.
 88. See Morris-Suzuki, "Frontiers of Japanese Identity," 64; Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," in Eley and Suny, *Becoming National*, 203–38. Lest it seem that I am casting this particular strategy as inherently

- malign through an unfortunate choice of examples, it is important to note that a disintegrative strategy need not entail a pejorative or violent (that is, genocidal) disposition toward the internal other. It can be pluralist and celebrate difference while rejecting the necessity of internal homogeneity. Acton, for instance, was very critical of Mazzini's form of nationalism, and favorably compared England's 1688 "libertarian nationality" and its inclusiveness of Celtic variants with the monolithic 1789 version, a juxtaposition of tolerance and diversity with intolerance and uniformity. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 33.
89. Berger, *Search for Normality*, 25; Georg G. Iggers, "Changing Conceptions of National History since the French Revolution. A Critical Comparative Perspective," in Lönnroth et al., *Conceptions of National History*, 132–50, at 149–50.
 90. Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, 19: "[A] nation's character is also formed, just like that of an individual personality, through conflict and exchange with its neighbours."
 91. Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, 218.
 92. Richard J. Finlay, "Controlling the Past: Scottish Historiography and Scottish Identity in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Scottish Affairs*, 9 (1994): 127–48. See also Marinell Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1980) for the older position.
 93. Kohn points out (*Ideas of Nationalism*, 409) that Schiller's specifically German treatment of universalism, which was more important to him than national themes, is analogous to the Soviet treatment of nationality problems.
 94. George M. Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M. N. Pokrovskii and the Society of Marxist Historians* (University Park, PA, 1978); Konstantin F. Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1962), 94–107; Alter L. Litvin, *Writing History in Twentieth-Century Russia: A View from Within*, trans. and ed. John H. L. Keep (Basingstoke, 2001), 10–18.
 95. One solution to this problem lay in the integration of national histories within a preexisting and overarching Arabic metanarrative, and another in defending the integrity of the nation as specifically Muslim. Betty S. Anderson, "Writing the Nation: Textbooks of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 21, (2001): 5–14; Choueiri, *Arab History and the Nation-State*; Anthony Gorman, *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (London, 2003), 131–38, 143. "If Egypt constitutes a collective entity," Gorman (143) points out in a sentence with obvious implications for nearly any national history, "how does the historian deal with the diversity of class, religion, gender, culture and political ideology?" A concrete example of the difficulty is provided by criticisms of the historian Albert Hourani who was criticized over his *Minorities in the Arab World* (1947) by Arab nationalists who deplored its disintegrative strategy: cited by Gorman, *Historians*, 4.
 96. Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 13.