

# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Contributors . . . . .   | iii |
| Introduction: Understanding nationalism through biographies . . . . .                                    | 1   |
| Nationalism, Biography and the Ecology of Identity . . . . .   | 5   |
| <i>Jonathan Hearn</i>  |     |
| Becoming National? G. M. Trevelyan:<br>The dilemmas of a liberal (inter)nationalist, 1900–1945 . . . . . | 23  |
| <i>Alastair MacLachlan</i>   |     |
| Enoch Powell: The lonesome leader . . . . .  | 45  |
| <i>Ben Wellings</i>  |     |
| The Personal Nationalism of Helmut Kohl:<br>A paragon of Germany’s new normality? . . . . .              | 61  |
| <i>Christian Wicke</i>   |     |
| Richard Sulík: A provincial or a European Slovak politician? . . . . .                                   | 81  |
| <i>Stefan Auer</i>   |     |
| Nationalism and Biographical Transformation:<br>The case of Boudicca . . . . .                           | 101 |
| <i>Stephanie Lawson</i>  |     |
| Closing Reflections: Confronting contradictions in biographies<br>of nations and persons . . . . .       | 121 |
| <i>Paul James</i>  |     |

# HUMANITIES RESEARCH

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# Introduction: Understanding nationalism through biographies

This issue on biographical approaches to the study of nationalism emerged from an international symposium ('European Nationalism and Biography') held in December 2011 at the Centre for European Studies of The Australian National University in Canberra. The aim of the symposium was an initial exploration, across disciplinary boundaries, of the issues involved in using biography as a lens for understanding nationalism. With this issue we have tried to be true to the spirit of the symposium, preserving various ambiguities and unresolved theoretical issues. We invite the reader into an open-ended discussion, and do not attempt to stake out a unified theoretical position.

We are primarily interested in how the study of certain individual persons can contribute to our broader understanding of nationalism. How can the lives of concrete individuals shed light on the vast abstractions of nationalism? How do the imagining of the self and of the nation<sup>1</sup> interact and interpenetrate? We have not tried on this occasion to contribute to the growing theorisation of biography as a genre or medium of social research. Instead our more modest aim and interest have been in making some actual biographical explorations speak to the wider question of Nationalism Studies, to how the unique identities of persons become invested in the collective identities of nations, in highly variable ways. Following the format of the symposium, the issue begins and ends with theoretical and conceptual provocations and reflections on the nature of nationalism and identity. In between is a series of biographical case studies all derived from the European context. The subjects of these studies—the historian G. M. Trevelyan (Britain), the politicians Enoch Powell (Britain), Helmut Kohl (Germany) and Richard Sulík (Slovakia), and the 'Celtic' warrior queen Boudicca (Roman Britain)—provide diverse routes into our topic.

As one of the leaders of the study of nationalism in Scotland at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh, Jonathan Hearn was invited to give a keynote talk at the symposium to raise key issues and provide a framework and starting point for discussion. He does this by reflecting on a decade of his own research on nationalism and national identity. Out of this he suggests that to pose effective questions about how identification works as a process, national and otherwise, we need to make clear distinctions between the unique identities of selves and the identity categories that are applied to larger collectivities. Only by making such distinctions can we explore the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, B. 1991, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, [Second edn], Verso, London.

between these distinct processes. He further highlights two factors in this relationship. On the one hand, the self's relationship with broader categories of national identity is mediated by specific organisational and institutional contexts that affect the salience of the category for the person, and how they relate themselves to it. People's lives are organisationally embedded, and this has consequences for how they identify. On the other hand, the act of relating the self to the category of the national often involves a kind of paralleling of personal life narratives with the larger imagined narrative of the nation, as a kind of collective subject. People invest their personal narratives in larger narratives. Altogether, the study of identity is not the study of a unitary phenomenon, but rather of a complex 'ecology' of interactions, between selves, the forms of social organisation they are embedded in and the repertoire of identity categories available to them. The contributors were asked to engage with these ideas where appropriate in their revisions to their papers, in order to enhance the dialogue between them.

Alastair MacLachlan's study of the British historian G. M. Trevelyan kicks off our series of biographical studies. He highlights the tensions in Trevelyan's work between his liberalism, internationalism, anti-imperialism and British nationalism. This is evident in Trevelyan's romantic identification with the figure of Garibaldi in his historical studies of Italian nation formation—studies that tend to fall silent in regard to the later nineteenth century when the story becomes more complex and compromised, and less romantic. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Trevelyan was becoming a champion of Serbian nationalism, understood as liberation from Austrian imperial domination, but again with limited grasp of the complexities of inter-ethnic politics in the region. One sees Trevelyan struggling to project his idealised liberal nationalism onto an intractable world and history.

Next, Ben Wellings gives us a careful diagnosis of Enoch Powell, the 'lonesome leader'. In this study, the interactions between inevitably flawed personality and political aspiration are strongly evident. Wellings explores Powell's peculiar capacity to appeal across class boundaries, while simultaneously alienating natural political allies in the Conservative Party. This seems to hinge on his ability to present himself as, and believe himself to be, a martyr to his own principles, thus creating a persona of a recalcitrant 'everyman', brave enough to 'speak truth to power' about the dangers of racial mixing for the integrity of the nation. In this way he created a kind of resonance between his own embattled identity and the embattled identity of a racially conceived Britishness. And this is in spite of his rather lofty intellectualism, which also informed his nationalism.

Christian Wicke examines the ways that the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl used his own biography to enable him to personify the project of normalising German national identity in the wake of World War II and the tragedies of



Nazism, and in the context of the Cold War. He did this by emphasising his Catholic background, supposedly less culpable than the Prussian/Lutheran core for Germany's disastrous anti-Western *Sonderweg*; also by managing to fuse a kind of conservative liberalism that identified Germany with traditions of civic Western European rule, with an appeal to particular notions of *Heimat* and ethnic conceptions of nationhood, which nonetheless were meant to be detoxified from their former extremes as associated with the road to 1945. Kohl's PhD in history at Heidelberg sought to reconnect a restored German identity with its pre-Nazi history, rendering that episode an aberration rather than destiny. In these various ways he came to embody a new normality, the 'all clear' signal after the dangers of the Third Reich had been, at least wishfully, escaped.

Stephan Auer brings us up to the present with his study of the controversial Slovak politician Richard Sulík. A successful businessman who spent several of his formative years in Germany, Sulík manages to embody many of the contradictions of post-1989 Slovak nationalism and its ambivalent relationship with the European Union. An advocate of economic liberalism (he played a leading role in developing a 'flat tax' policy in Slovakia) committed to 'Western' European ideals of a liberalised, rule-governed economy, he nonetheless has parlayed this into a kind of political populism in Slovakia. This has been done partly by taking a hardline stance against European bailouts for Greece in order to help keep it in the eurozone despite its sovereign debt crisis. Sulík has managed to identify his policies with Slovak national identity as good, economically disciplined Europeans, in contrast with the spendthrift Greeks.

Up to this point, our biographic studies follow a loose logic of chronology, from the late-Victorian Trevelyan to the contemporary politician Sulík, and of geography from the west of Europe in Britain, eastwards through Germany to Slovakia. Next we take a long leap back to Iron-Age Britain in the first century AD. On the one hand, Stephanie Lawson's study of the historical figure of Boudicca, and how she has been interpreted as a symbol of a national identity in subsequent centuries, is sharply different from the preceding studies. Whereas those dealt with recent and contemporary lives about which we have various sources of information, Boudicca is known only through classical sources. We are forced to view her primarily as a cipher for the concerns of later interpreters. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to view this study as concerned with pre-modern nationalism (if that is not an oxymoron), because it is precisely from the early modern period on, in various guises, that Boudicca's story becomes meaningful for those trying to tell an emerging story about the British nation. Lawson's study fits here as a kind of limiting case, where 'biography' is about the

act of symbolically representing a life, and only minimally about an engagement with an actual person and how they make sense of themselves in relation to the social context they live in.

Chris Bishop from The Australian National University contributed to the symposium with an innovative study entitled 'Bowker's *Alfred The Great: Reimagining an Anglo-Saxon king*'. Bishop's unpublished paper examined primarily the way the author and Mayor of Winchester Alfred Bowker historicised King Alfred of Wessex on the occasion of the thousandth anniversary of his death at the beginning of the twentieth century. Bishop argued that the biographical transition from an obscure West-Saxon warlord to an ancestral 'King of Britain' was due, in large part, to the efforts of Bowker, who then organised a nationwide commemoration of Alfred the Great and edited several books detailing the national achievements of the king. By using this teleological relation between two biographies, between Alfred Bowker and Alfred the Great, Bishop highlighted complex interconnections of nationalism, medievalism and imperialism in Britain before World War I.

Paul James's reflections on the preceding contributions provide a bookend to Hearn's opening suggestions for conceptual framing. In this afterword, James approaches the essays in this volume and Bishop's unpublished paper through his long-established interest in the idea of nations as specifically modern forms of 'abstract community'.<sup>2</sup> Also drawing lightly on the biography of Tom Nairn, a leading theorist of nationalism with whom he has collaborated, he is particularly concerned to argue that we need to specify the modern frame of reference through which biography is being conceived in these studies. James argues that what Benedict Anderson called with reference to Walter Benjamin modern 'abstract, empty time'<sup>3</sup> is a precondition for the mapping of personal biography onto national biography and the multiple contradictions that this entails. He concludes by observing the particular complexities that arise when we engage the biographies of theorists of nationalism, attempting to situate their national identities both within their theories and within their national contexts.

We address these studies and theoretical reflections to anyone interested in the complex relationships between biography and nationalism. We offer them as one way in to a rich and developing field of study, which could be approached in many different ways. Our hope is not to resolve, but to stimulate new questions and inquiries.

Jonathan Hearn and Christian Wicke

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2 James, P. 1996, *Nation Formation: Towards a theory of abstract community*, Sage, London.

3 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

# Nationalism, Biography and the Ecology of Identity

Jonathan Hearn

## Introduction

Since confession has been one of the classic genres of biography since Saint Augustine wrote his, let me begin with a confession: I am not a biographer. But while I haven't worked on biography, my work on nationalism and national identity has frequently been carried out through ethnographic research, forcing me to grapple with the specificity and variability of national identity. However general the discursive categories of 'the nation' and 'nationalism', no two people do it exactly the same way. Over the years people have told me many different stories about the role of nationalism in their lives—stories that suggest that people attach themselves to, and detach themselves from, that category in ways that have irreducible personal narrative significance. So while I have not systematically investigated any individual life histories in regard to nationalism, my ethnographic research on nationalism has instilled in me a strong sense of being surrounded by individual biographies that, even if only partially glimpsed, each tell a specific story about how nationalism becomes significant for people.

One more disclaimer: there are of course extensive interdisciplinary literatures on narrative and biography as methods and modes of analysis. I am not attempting to engage those literatures. The key concept in my work has been 'identity', especially as applied to the study of nationalism, and that is how the present discussion is framed. An artisan normally works best with the tools with which they are most familiar, and that is what I have chosen to do here. But I also think there are specific advantages to this approach. We are interested here in relating biography to nationalism, individual lives to large, complex social structures. I hope to show that scrutinising the concept of identity helps us to foreground certain fundamental analytic problems involved in this venture.

I aim to provide a frame for the articles that follow in this issue. First, I explore the concept of 'identity' in the social sciences, both in general and in regard to nationalism. I emphasise an underlying ambivalence about relating persons to identities. Then I review and reconsider three metaphorical concepts that I have

used to help make sense of identification processes: moods,<sup>1</sup> embedding<sup>2</sup> and ecology.<sup>3</sup> As they arise sequentially in my work, I attempt here to synthesise them a bit, and offer them as a general perspective on the study of identity. The two most fundamental points that I want to stress are the need to clearly distinguish analytically between personal and social dimensions of identity, and that our existential need for power is fundamental to how we connect our personal identities, our biographies, to the social identity categories that surround us. In conclusion, I reflect on biography as a means of investigating these questions, and the centrality of power for the study of social life.

## **Identities: National and otherwise**

‘The national’ is one dimension in which a general theory of identity, or identification, can be investigated and applied. Too often attempts to address national identity fail to provide or even contemplate a wider theory of identity that places the national in context, inviting comparisons with identity processes in other contexts. Particularly noticeable in the study of identity, especially in sociology and approaches informed by literary studies, is a deep unease with the idea of a stable, coherent, individual person. A kind of methodological dread of reifying and essentialising individual identities tends to skew much of the discussion. This poses certain problems in relating the study of identity to the doing of biography. Next I discuss some general approaches to the study of identity, and then more specifically approaches to national identity in particular. Of course these discussions interpenetrate.

### **Identity**

When social-science conceptions of identity first began to proliferate and flow into a wider popular discourse in the mid twentieth century, they were around notions of a tension between individual self-identity and a wider mass society.<sup>4</sup> Concerns about the inhibiting and distorting effects of consumerism, conformism and bureaucracy on personal identity were part of what made concepts like Erik Erikson’s ‘identity crisis’ particularly salient.<sup>5</sup> A social psychologist and psychoanalyst, Erikson formulated his notion of identity crisis partly to understand the difficulties in making the transition from child to

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1 Hearn, J. 2002, ‘Narrative, agency, and mood: on the social construction of national history in Scotland’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 745–69.

2 Hearn, J. 2007, ‘National identity: banal, personal, and embedded’, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 657–74.

3 Hearn, J. 2012, *Theorizing Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, pp. 200–7.

4 Wrong, D. H. 1968, ‘Identity: problem and catchword’, *Dissent*, vol. 15, pp. 427–35.

5 Erikson, E. 1968, *Identity: Youth and crisis*, Faber & Faber, London.

adult, through the rough passage of teenage-hood (an idea itself of fairly recent vintage). Employing cross-cultural research and comparison, he was interested in the different ways that societies equip their members with the emotional and symbolic resources to deal with the various stages of life.<sup>6</sup> So when it first came to prominence, the academic-cum-popular discourse around identity tended to take for granted the reality and value of a constant if changing self-identity, locating social problems in the wider social environment that might threaten its relative stability.

Erikson has tended to be forgotten in recent decades. More enduring in contemporary discussions of identity has been the work of another social psychologist, Henri Tajfel.<sup>7</sup> He and his followers developed what is known as 'self-categorisation theory'.<sup>8</sup> Tajfel, a Holocaust survivor, Polish Jew and prisoner of war, was deeply concerned about the nature of stereotyping and prejudice, for obvious reasons. His work focused primarily on 'social identities', understood as the process by which ideas of distinct social groups and membership in them are formed. Many of his basic formulations are now commonplace: 1) that we develop a sense of self through how we categorise ourselves; 2) that this involves notions of 'in-groups' to which we belong and 'out-groups' from which we are excluded; 3) that we tend to understand in and out-groups comparatively, valuing the former positively and the latter negatively; and 4) that these basic social processes create a powerful tendency to view the world in terms of 'we' versus 'they'. Without gainsaying the insights of Tajfel and his followers, we can note a conceptual subordination of personal to social identities here.

I move from social psychologists to sociologists and anthropologists who have worked on nationalism and national identity, but have helpfully posed their arguments in more general terms. Richard Jenkins places great emphasis on social identity categories as things that are not just 'claimed' or opted into, as often implied in studies of identity politics, but also imposed, as part of processes of domination and social control.<sup>9</sup> Gravitating towards the symbolic interactionist tradition of Goffman,<sup>10</sup> his approach to identity favours treating it as a pattern of observable social interaction. As he puts it: 'First, identity is a practical accomplishment, a process. Second, individual and collective identities can be understood using a unified model of the dialectical interplay of

6 Erikson, E. 1965, *Childhood and Society*, [Revised edn], Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK.

7 Tajfel, H. (ed.) 1978, *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*, Academic Press, London; Tajfel, H. (ed.) 1982, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

8 Reicher, S. and Hopkins, N. 2001, *Self and Nation*, Sage, London.

9 Jenkins, R. 1994, 'Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization and power', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 197–223; Jenkins, R. 2000, 'Categorization: identity, social process and epistemology', *Current Sociology*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 7–25; Jenkins, R. 2004, *Social Identity*, [Second edn], Routledge, London, pp. 79–93.

10 Goffman, E. 1983, 'The interaction order', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 48, pp. 1–17.

processes of internal and external definition.<sup>11</sup> So there is an acknowledgment of a distinction between 'internal' and 'external', but a reluctance to allow either one too much conceptual autonomy from the other. It is the interactive process that is most real.

Similarly, the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen suggests that '[w]hen we talk of identity in social anthropology, we refer to social identity, not to the depths of the individual mind'.<sup>12</sup> The ethnographic approach of anthropology fosters an interest in how people actively invoke social identity categories, how they 'do' them, and what they mean to people as social actors. Thus, there is an interest in what real people are actually doing when they do identity. But again, as Eriksen's proviso indicates, this is an interest that brackets off the depths of the individual mind and that treats identity as action in terms of social categories, as something essentially public.

Rogers Brubaker sounds another, but different sceptical note about the concept of identity.<sup>13</sup> In an influential theoretical essay written with Frederick Cooper, they argue that the prevailing constructivist approach to identity, of which Jenkins could be taken to be a representative, becomes so fluid that the idea of identity becomes meaningless. But far from a return to a 'hard' notion of fixed identity, they suggest that in fact 'identity' is of interest primarily as a 'category of practice'—that is, something the people we study often believe in, and which guides their actions. We should, however, probably eschew it as a 'category of analysis', preferring terms such as 'networks' for doing a more detached, generalising social analysis.<sup>14</sup> Brubaker borrows the ideas of categories of practice versus analysis from Bourdieu, and is uncomfortable with the all-encompassing fuzziness that the term social identity has acquired in recent years. He calls us to study actual patterns of social interaction, and regard any claims to identities associated with these with suspicion. For him, questions of identity are questions about the nature of social groups, or definable sets of social interactions, and personal identity tends to fall away as a concern.

In *Identity as Ideology*, Sinisa Malesevic also problematises the rising discourse of identity in the social sciences. He argues that the rigour with which the term 'identity' is formulated in logic and mathematics gives it a certain allure, but in practice in the social sciences, it is amorphous, covering many distinct social processes, without useful analytic precision and specificity. Moreover, he believes that it has come into currency at least partly because of a discursive

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11 Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p. 23.

12 Eriksen, T. H. 1993, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*, Pluto Press, London, p. 60.

13 Brubaker, R. 2004, *Ethnicity without Groups*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

14 Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F. 2000, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1–47, [Reprinted in *ibid.*].

vacuum in academic and popular discourse left by the decline of concepts such as 'race', 'national character' and 'social consciousness' as tools of social analysis. Malesevic opines:

Although 'identity' remains a highly popular concept, both in academic and everyday discourse it is conceptually, operationally and politically a seriously troubled idiom...the concept is so aloof and vague that it leads either to radically soft and loose uses where 'identity' stands for everything and anything, or it is articulated in a hard essentialist way so that through reified group membership the concept acquires features and attributes of individual human beings.<sup>15</sup>

For Malesevic also, identity is primarily a way of talking about group membership, and not a very good one at that.

In recent years another more extreme strain of ambivalence about the very idea of self-identity has arisen out of a theoretical milieu that combines elements of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and linguistic and literary theory, broadly labelled 'postmodern'. A prime example is the work of Judith Butler, heavily influenced by the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan.<sup>16</sup> From the former she takes a strong scepticism about the existence of 'the subject' as anything other than a historical discursive formation; from the latter, the conviction that the very idea of self-identity is a kind of illusion, which arises at an early developmental stage as the child seeks to impose coherence on an incoherent state of being, by seeking stable markers of identity in the external world. These ideas feed into Butler's notion of 'performativity'. As I put it elsewhere, for Butler: 'Selves are fictions, inferred to make sense of the various actions and utterances—performances—that proceed according to culturally defined scripts of behaviour, or "regulative discourses" in Foucauldian terms.'<sup>17</sup> Thus, Butler views the very idea of stable, coherent self-identity as a kind of conceptual trap from which we should seek to escape through radical transgressive acts of performance that undermine regulative discourses.

Fighting a rearguard defence of the idea of the coherent self, in sociology at least, has been Derek Layder. Layder's approach has two main aspects. First, he conceives of persons as substantive entities with a basic need for power—not necessarily domination over others, but simply the capacity to achieve ends, to 'self-actualise'. Second, he argues that we understand the self by locating it conceptually and theoretically within abstracted layers: of situated

15 Malesevic, S. 2006, *Identity and Ideology: Understanding ethnicity and nationalism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, p. 56.

16 Butler, J. 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, Routledge, New York; Butler, J. 2004, *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, New York.

17 Hearn, *Theorizing Power*, p. 199.

interactions with other selves, of more enduring patterns of social relations constituted through social organisations and institutions, and finally at the most encompassing level of an environment of social resources, material and ideational, which shapes and can be drawn into various kinds of social interaction, and would include notions of collective identities. Contrary to the dominant trend, Layder happily distinguishes between identity as concrete and substantive self as social 'discourse', and makes the distinction a part of his approach to social analysis.<sup>18</sup>

The anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen also expresses deep reservations about the way modern social theory, in anthropology and beyond, has tended to theorise away the self, reducing individuality to the social roles prescribed by social structure. In this kind of unidirectional social analysis the impress of individual consciousness on society gets lost. As he puts it:

If we regard social groups as a collection of complex selves (complex, because any individual must be regarded as a cluster of selves or a multi-dimensional self) we are clearly acknowledging that they are more complicated and require more subtle and sensitive description and explanation than if we treat them simply as a combination of roles. Indeed, the aggregation of these complex entities into groups may itself be seen as more problematic than would otherwise be the case. Collective behaviour is then revealed as something of a triumph, rather than as being merely mechanical.<sup>19</sup>

I have great sympathy for the positions taken by Layder and Cohen. But the main thing I want to convey here is how embattled the idea of the self, and self-identity, has become, and to suggest this must have implications for a social-scientific approach to biography. Minimally it suggests that the same controversies must be replayed in the context of thinking through what a more sociologically sophisticated biography might entail. Perhaps more acutely, it suggests that taking biography seriously entails questioning 'constructivist' and 'performative' trends in the conception of identity in the humanities and social sciences.

## National Identity

How does this connect to nationalism? In Nationalism Studies, definitions of 'national identity' are often formulated without any real concern for what

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18 Layder, D. 2004, *Emotion in Social Life: The lost heart of society*, Sage, London; Layder, D. 2004, *Social and Personal Identity: Understanding yourself*, Sage, London; Layder, D. 2006, *Understanding Social Theory*, [Second edn], Sage, London. Cf. Wrong, D. H. 1996, *The Problem of Order: What unites and divides society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

19 Cohen, A. P. 1994, *Self Consciousness: An alternative anthropology of identity*, Routledge, London, p. 7.



‘identity’ means in general. Rather, a specific ‘kind’ of identity is defined, with the assumption that there are many such ‘kinds’, but these are largely the concerns of others. For instance, Ernest Gellner was adamant that in the modern world people normally require a national identity (a nationality) in the same way that they need two eyes and a nose. Everyone is expected to have one, and usually only one, because that is how the world has come to be organised: into large collectivities called nations.<sup>20</sup> Anthony D. Smith proposes that ‘the self is composed of multiple identities and roles’,<sup>21</sup> and that the major categories that underpin these are such things as: gender, territorial affinity and economic position. Smith pins down ‘national identity’ simply by pegging it to his concept of the nation: ‘a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.’<sup>22</sup> National identity is simply the identity category attached to this kind of historical community.

Informed by rational-choice theory, Michael Hechter considers that many approaches, such as Smith’s, too easily accept naturalised notions of the nation. He prefers to emphasise national identity as a category of group action that becomes salient under certain circumstances: ‘Although the term “identity politics” is bruited about endlessly these days, it is far from clear why people come to primarily identify with one kind of group—say, a nation—rather than another—say a class. Whereas some culturally distinct groups develop national identities, others do not.’<sup>23</sup>

For Hechter, ‘[s]ocial identities are parasitic on group formation’.<sup>24</sup> Thus again, though perhaps with a sharper focus on conducive conditions, national identities are social categories arising out of broad social conditions.

The sociologist David McCrone bemoans the lack of attention to national identity in the study of nationalism, objecting that it is too easily reduced to concepts of nation and nationalism, and not adequately dealt with in its own right.<sup>25</sup> Influenced by the work of the anthropologists discussed above (Eriksen, Cohen and Jenkins, an erstwhile anthropologist who ended up in sociology), McCrone argues for an anti-essentialist view of identity as ‘routes not roots’<sup>26</sup>—that is, as an aspect of the active social construction of the future, rather than a binding category laid down in the past. To this end his work with various colleagues on national identity in Britain has stressed the way people situationally mobilise

20 Gellner, E. 1983, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, NY, p. 6.

21 Smith, A. D. 1991, *National Identity*, Penguin, London, p. 4.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

23 Hechter, M. 2000, *Containing Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 97.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Bechhofer, F. and McCrone, D. 2010, ‘Choosing national identity’, *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 3, 11.

26 McCrone, D. 1998, *The Sociology of Nationalism*, Routledge, London, p. 34.

different markers of identity,<sup>27</sup> deploy national identity in intimate and personal ways,<sup>28</sup> and justify their choices of self-labelling in national terms.<sup>29</sup> Thus, identity is the “hinge” which connects structure and action’.<sup>30</sup>

## Discussion

This grappling with identity, national and otherwise, evinces various reasons for holding the person’s inner life at arm’s length. On the one hand, when our questions are macro-sociological, concerned with history of the *longue durée*, it is understandable, and methodologically appropriate, that individuals largely fall from view. But within a narrower compass, where particular events or social groupings are the focus, it is not so clear why we should shy away from notions of the self. At one extreme there is the paradoxical Butler position: that the self is a powerful illusion that we must struggle to evade. But more generally I think we find variants of the view that the self is by definition non-observable and inaccessible to others. This has two implications. One is that it is not a proper object of social science; talking in terms of selves and what goes on in them can only lead to fruitless speculation. A variant on this, dating back to Durkheim,<sup>31</sup> is that the self may be a proper object of psychological research, but precisely what differentiates sociology (and perhaps anthropology?) from psychology is that it sticks with the observably social. Another reason for reticence may simply be a kind of respect based, somewhat ironically, on the value of individualism. A certain respect for the individual obliges us to be circumspect in our attributions of feelings, motivations, and so on, to others. However we account for it, the main tendency is to treat identity either simply as large social categories—ideological, discursive or cultural constructs (take your pick) pegged to various forms of social organisation and structure (gender, nation, class, race, and so on)—or as the patterns of social action that imply, produce, reproduce and transform those categories. In short there are more structure-centred and more action-centred perspectives on social identity. But individuals with biographies tend to fall away in both cases, because action as much as structure tends to become an object in itself, the basis of an account rather than something that itself needs to be accounted for. The self remains a cipher from both perspectives.

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27 Kiely, R., Bechhofer, F., Stewart, R. and McCrone, D. 2001, ‘The markers and rules of Scottish national identity’, *Sociological Review*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 33–55.

28 Bechhofer, F. and McCrone, D. 2008, ‘Talking the talk: national identity in England and Scotland’, in A. Park, J. Curtice, K. Thomson, M. Phillips and E. Clery (eds), *British Social Attitudes: The 24th report*, Sage, Aldershot, UK.

29 Bechhofer and McCrone, ‘Choosing national identity’.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4.

31 Durkheim, E. 1966, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Free Press, New York.

Erik Erikson, Derek Layder and Anthony Cohen are the exceptions in the preceding account. They regard a social science without a conception of selves and personal identities as one of its elements as incomplete. This is not to deny that 'the self' is itself a culturally defined category.<sup>32</sup> Modern 'Western' societies have tended to emphasise the idea of the individual as autonomous agent, while many others have tended to embed identity more firmly in kin and communal relations, or to conceive of the self as transcending the body. But diverse cultural constructions of selfhood do not rule out a common human experience of living our lives with our consciousness lodged in unique bodies, which must forge relations with other persons similarly situated.

I think that our talk about identity chronically treats it as a covering label for a relationship between two very distinct kinds of phenomena. On the one hand, there is the linguistic-symbolic categorisation of reality, which includes classifying human beings, including our selves, into different types or groups. On the other hand, as living creatures, we have consciousness and unique accumulations of experiences and memories, attached to historically particular and material bodies. For all its appearance of unity, and the efforts we put into binding selves to categories, the relationship between these two different kinds of things is unstable. These distinct processes do not merge into one unified phenomenon, whether regarded as structure or action. There is an ongoing relationship between these processes, but we understand it better by maintaining a clear conceptual separation. Far from treating selves and structures as the dubious shadows of a more real 'social interaction', or simply throwing our hands up and walking away in exasperation from the concept of identity, we need to recognise that we are talking about two different things, *which nonetheless causally relate to one another*.

I have confessed that I am not a biographer, and, in invoking notions of self and personal identity, I may be making certain assumptions about what it means to do biography. It is certainly possible to reconstruct a person's life with minimal attempt to reveal, or speculate about, their inner thoughts and motivations.<sup>33</sup> But it seems to me this depends on the subject and the nature of the record available. A cache of highly personal letters would be difficult to interpret without making such attributions, and possibly difficult to ignore. A person known only through ancient historical accounts written down by their enemies (for example, Boudicca) poses real limits for any speculation about an inner life of the individual. But in many cases biography is based on various kinds of records of diverse social interactions in which the subjects were directly involved. So while evidence of inner states may be limited, because the

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32 See, for example, Elliott, A. 2001, *Concepts of the Self*, Polity, Cambridge; Morris, B. 1994, *Anthropology of the Self: The individual in cultural perspective*, Pluto Press, London.

33 For example: Phillipson, N. 2010, *Adam Smith: An enlightened life*, Allen Lane, London.

individual in question is the constant element in the study, it stands to reason that some notion of their personality, character, who they are as an individual person, and how these developed over their lives, will bear strongly on the coherence of a biographical analysis. If we are prepared to accept that the case study method can yield generalisable insights into social processes<sup>34</sup> then surely this holds for biography. Thus, the merits of biography as a social-scientific venture rest not on some putative access to other minds, but on an appreciation of the way the particular can reveal aspects of the general. This requires at least a working hypothesis about the wholeness and coherence of the case, the person, the self and the biography in question.

## Three Metaphorical Approaches

I introduce a measure of my own intellectual biography at this point. I do not presume that there is an audience interested in an overview of my work on (national) identity. Rather, doing so provides a way of putting a fuller proposal on the table about how to think about identity, in relation to biography and nationalism, against which to read the articles that follow.

I did not originally think of myself, post-PhD, as someone who works on 'identity'. I remember being somewhat bemused when, negotiating the subtitle of my first book with the editor, the suggestion kept coming back to me to work in 'national identity'. In the end I capitulated, aware that term had currency and general relevance to my study of home-rule politics in Scotland, and so the title *Claiming Scotland: National identity and liberal culture* was arrived at.<sup>35</sup> But apart from some working definition of the concept in the introduction, there is little in the way of theoretical engagement with the concept in the book. If you had asked me about my main interests at the time, I would have said the 'social construction of history', 'liberal and communitarian debates', 'social movement' and then just 'nationalism' in the broadest sense. Coming from a rather Marxian graduate department in anthropology, I had picked up a general attitude of wariness towards the concept of identity, regarding it as often displacing more pertinent notions of class in social and political explanations. I would have said that the concept obviously had some utility, but was being rather oversold and overburdened. Frankly, I had not read anything on identity that had captured my imagination.

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34 Flyvbjerg, B. 2001, *Making Social Science Matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 66–87.

35 Hearn, J. 2000, *Claiming Scotland: National identity and liberal culture*, University of Edinburgh Press, Edinburgh.

Over the years, however, I have found myself returning to the question of identity's utility, as a concept for social analysis. It's obviously involved in how people forge links between their selves and their surrounding world, and how encompassing social categories are imposed on, received and resisted by individuals. And this process happens in socially patterned ways that make it consequential for processes such as social mobilisation, legitimation and solidarity. So, while the concept has often been asked to do too much, there appear to be some things it is well suited to doing. My cyclical engagements with the concept of identity have tended to deploy different metaphors in order to get some analytical leverage on the idea. In particular, the images of 'moods', 'embedding' and most recently 'ecology' have helped me articulate certain aspects of identity, so I will address these in turn, to compose a larger account.

In the article 'Narrative, agency, and mood: on the social construction of national history in Scotland', I was still making sense of ethnographic and other data collected for my PhD/first book,<sup>36</sup> and primarily interested in how notions of historical narrative operated in the mobilisation of nationalism. As I put it then: 'How and why do people invest themselves in nations and nationalism? An important part of the answer lies in the ways that constructions of narrative and agency at the collective level articulate with experiences of narrative and agency at the personal level.'<sup>37</sup>

I proceeded by engaging Margaret Somers' work on narrative.<sup>38</sup> Somers argued that narratives, such as national narratives, imposed a logical order on events through 'emplotment', and provided moral orientation to the world and its events through 'evaluative criteria' encoded in narratives. She related these practical and moral ordering effects of narrative to four different dimensions: *ontological* (that is, appropriations of narratives at the personal level); *public* (that is, narratives associated with specific institutions, organisations and networks, larger than the individual); *metanarratives* (that is, 'master narratives'<sup>39</sup> that encompass much or all of human history); and finally *conceptual* narratives—Somers' term for the kind of interpretative narratives formulated by academics and researchers, which often articulate with metanarratives.

To this I sought to add another aspect of narrative analysis, arguing two points. First, that narratives don't just frame social action to help make sense of it; they normally include key 'protagonists': large-scale collective agents such as nations, classes, ethnic groups or other categorical identities around which people

36 Ibid.

37 Hearn, 'Narrative, agency, and mood', p. 745.

38 Somers, M. 1992, 'Narrativity, narrative identity, and social action—rethinking English working-class formation', *Social Science History*, vol. 16, no. 4, p. 591; Somers, M. 1994, 'The narrative constitution of identity: a relational and network approach', *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, pp. 605–49.

39 As in Lyotard, J.-F. 1984, *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

mobilise. Thus, when people invest themselves in a narrative account, they are identifying their own person with that protagonist, fusing their individual agency with that larger agency. This basic process of identification through narrative, while often taken for granted, doesn't receive the scrutiny it deserves. Moreover, I suspect that the ease with which one can imagine links between the agentic self and some larger collectivity is consequential. Like it or not, the claims of 'nations', as communities with a symbolised collective identity, claims to shared values and rights to self-determination within a specific territory<sup>40</sup> are perhaps more susceptible to making this linkage than more diffuse and fractious collectivities such as 'the working class' or 'women'. Their very boundedness and historicalness make them amenable to personification, and thus also to being objects in which personhood is invested.

Second, I argued that narratives don't just encode and make sense of past actions; they are often posed as predictive of the future, and encode agentic situations and dispositions to act. National narratives are often by definition incomplete, locating the person who identifies with it midway in an open-ended narrative. Thus, they offer not just an account, but also a kind of dramatic setting in which the agents' (persons and nations) capacity for and conditions of action are framed. They define not just a series of events, but a disposition for actions. I called this aspect of narratives their 'mood', by which I meant both that they encode certain feelings about agency and that, like grammatical verb forms, they encode characteristic notions about action. I suggested that for analytic purposes we can posit three paradigmatic types of mood:

Those in which the protagonist is portrayed as moving/acting 'with the flow' of an encompassing historical narrative. For example, the general ideological compatibility of middle-class Scottish national aspirations with the British imperial project in the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

Those in which the protagonist is portrayed as moving/acting 'against the flow' of an encompassing historical narrative—for example, the development of quasi-Marxist nationalist narratives that cast Scotland as a colony of England, struggling to break its bonds, which came into currency on the Scottish nationalist left from the 1960s through to the 1980s.<sup>42</sup>

Those in which the relationship between protagonist and its history are portrayed in much more open terms of competing 'cross-currents' with a range of possibilities. I argued that in Scotland in the 1990s the nationalist historical

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40 Cf. Hearn, J. 2006, *Rethinking Nationalism: A critical introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, pp. 11–13.

41 See Morton, G. 1999, *Unionist-Nationalism: Governing urban Scotland, 1830–1860*, Tuckwell, East Linton, UK.

42 See Hechter, M. 1975, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536–1966*, University of California Press, Berkeley; and Nairn, T. 1977, *The Break-Up of Britain*, Verso, London.

discourse was shifting in this direction, as the possibility of devolution was becoming a reality, and a less determinist and more flexible narrative was needed to make sense of the range of political possibilities.<sup>43</sup>

As indicated, I illustrated my theoretical argument by relating it to how Scottish national history and character have been represented, both as formal history and as more general talk about the nation. I noted at the time that perhaps the best way of developing the argument further would be ‘through an in depth treatment of biographical material’.<sup>44</sup> I still have not tried to systematically pursue a more biographical study to test this conceptual framework, but believe it could be illuminating.

Meanwhile in 2001–02 I conducted a year of ethnographic research into the everyday production and enactment of national identity in organisational/institutional settings. Specifically, I worked at the Bank of Scotland during its first year of merger with Halifax (based in the north of England) to form HBOS (2001–02). Moving between the two banks, though primarily based at the Bank of Scotland, I investigated how staff were using notions of national identity and national difference, especially between Scottish and English, to make sense of the stresses and strains of the merger, which were being experienced as an encounter between two ‘national’ banks.

It was during that research, because of its remit, that I began to think more systematically about identity, national and otherwise. The data I was collecting, through observation, participant observation, questionnaires and interviews, increased my dissatisfaction with an approach to identity that talks as though identities are multiple roles that we step into and out of according to the situation, viewing identity as lying primarily in its performance in social interaction. My overriding sense was that I was trying to understand people who, as much as they didn’t want to be ‘pigeonholed’, experienced their identities as going well below the surface of daily interaction, of being fateful for their lives in certain ways. At the same time there was a clear, conscious sense of the hiatus between identity in this personal sense, and the various discursive categories—Scottish, English, and so on—that people regularly had to negotiate.

A few years later I tried to address this sense of a theoretical inadequacy in regard to identity through that ethnographic material.<sup>45</sup> I took as my starting point two attempts to get at national identity, not as high-flown ideology, but as everyday and intimate. On the one hand, there was Michael Billig’s influential notion of ‘banal nationalism’, as the deeply ingrained habits and discourses that

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43 See Paterson, L. 1994, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

44 Hearn, ‘Narrative, agency, and mood’, p. 758.

45 Hearn, ‘National identity’.

reproduce the social category of national identity in implicit, unnoticed ways.<sup>46</sup> I argued that while this idea had sometimes been taken as providing pointers to how national identity 'beds down' into persons, in fact Billig's concern was with nationalism as ideology and discursive category, with little interest in identity at the personal level. There was a tendency to confuse a focus on the micro and implicit with focus on the personal, which isn't necessarily the same thing.

On the other hand, I looked at Anthony P. Cohen's formulation of 'personal nationalism'.<sup>47</sup> In keeping with his general concern discussed above about the neglect of 'selves' in social science, he had been struggling to understand nationalism as more than just a discursive category draped over intractable selves. In sum, he argued that where national identity is available as a stable and widely recognised social category (as in Scotland), far from erasing or obscuring individuality, it provides a medium (among others) for articulating personal identities. Cohen emphasises the flexible and open nature of national identity, treating it as a condition for the realisation of individuality, whether through investment in or resistance to that identity (or more likely a complex combination of both).

Thus, I argued that Billig was more concerned with the social category (ideology, discourse) of national identity and relatively unconcerned with the personal, while Cohen was more concerned with personal inhabitation of national identity and fairly unconcerned with the social category itself. But what is needed is precisely an approach that acknowledges this distinction, and treats the relationship between these very different phenomena as its core problematic. In the article in question, I did this through a metaphor of 'embeddedness', drawing on the ideas of Derek Layder mentioned above. I argued that not only are there two very distinct meanings of 'identity', but also these are mediated by intervening structures. As already indicated, Layder proposes an analytic model of layers, with the self at the centre, successively embedded within layers of more immediate conventions of social interaction, and progressively more 'distant' and encompassing layers of cultural and institutional resources that frame and steer social interaction. I sought to flesh out this perspective by treating the bank(s) as an organisational work environment that had an important mediating effect between national identities as social categories, and as aspects of personhood, for the people I was studying. For many of them, the significance of the categories 'Scottish' and 'English' was being filtered, by force of circumstances, through the experience of the encounter between the two merging banking organisations in which they were embedded. For

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46 Billig, M. 1996, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London.

47 Cohen, A. P. 1996, 'Personal nationalism: a Scottish view of some rites, rights, and wrongs', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 802–15; Cohen, A. P. 2000, 'Peripheral vision: nationalism, national identity and the objective correlative in Scotland', in A. P. Cohen (ed.), *Signifying Identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values*, Routledge, London.



many, being Scottish became particularly freighted with a reputation for being old-fashioned, conservative, slow moving, diffident (banking as was), rather than thrusting, dynamic, self-confident, on the move—terms associated more with Halifax and ‘Englishness’ more generally. This puts it schematically, and obviously matters were more complex than this. And my informants were perfectly capable of questioning this pattern of ideas and associations, while nonetheless being caught up in it.

My key point was that the relationship between categorical and personal identities will always be mediated by intervening forms of social organisation. These refract the category into individual experience, and project those experiences, however weakly, back out into the category. This study provided a very particular case of how this was happening in regard to a ‘national’ bank. The mediations in question will be very different in other contexts, such as militaries, political parties, sports teams, universities, public services, major cities, and so on, ad infinitum. Although some are more explicitly associated with ‘nationality’ than others, all will have the potential to play a role in mediating national identity, according to specific circumstances. And for any individual there will be multiple forms of social organisation in their lives doing this mediating. Most obviously, on a small scale and in very immediate ways, families mediate the category of the nation for the individual, some heightening it, some playing it down, some, such as where parents are of different nationalities, problematising it in their very constitution.

A chapter in my latest book on theorising power attempts to bring together my thinking on identity in general, particularly in the context of power.<sup>48</sup> There I use the metaphor of ‘ecology’ to express what I have just been arguing. In other words, I suggest that we should think of identity as emerging out of a pattern of interactions (an ecology) between these three elements: 1) selves with unique biographies and identities, 2) social identity categories through which we cognitively organise and make sense of the social world, and 3) multiple mediating forms of social organisation. In my view, much social theory about identity errs when it tries to reduce identity to either (1) or (2), or to some very abstract notion of interaction between them, which becomes more ‘real’ than either of them.

In that book, and through this ecological metaphor, I emphasise the role of power. It is not just that selves, social categories and forms of organisation together outline a balance of forces involved in a relatively stable but dynamic and evolving set of relations. More crucially, each of these three defines a level at which problems of power crystallise. In regard to the ‘self’, figures such as Erikson and Layder recognise—and I agree—that the power to act, to exhibit

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48 Hearn, J. 2012, *Theorizing Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, Ch. 10.

some degree of agency and self-determination, is a defining feature of the self. Selves need power, not necessarily in the sense of the capacity to dominate others, but more fundamentally in the sense of the capacity to act and have an effect on their lives and circumstances. Good relations between persons are characterised not by the absence of power, but by its negotiation, its balance and distribution. Indeed, caring for others is a demonstration of power well executed. Pathologies in personal psychology and interpersonal dynamics arise precisely when power is not effectively negotiated and regulated. In many ways the power of the individual agent provides our commonsense paradigm of what power is: the capacity to have intended effects.<sup>49</sup> We often understand more organisationally and institutionally complex forms of power (for example, of states, corporations, and so on) as ramped-up versions of nonetheless coherent individual actors realising intentions.

Social taxonomies are also bound up with power. In all their forms, they come into existence as means for apprehending and controlling the world around us. They have basic practical power implications. And of course, systems of categorisation can be and are used to gain power by some people over others; they imply not just power, but domination. Social identity categories encode notions of power relations, and the legitimisation of those relations.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the categories are subject to revision, and are under construction, and that process becomes an arena of power contests over who can define the categories, to what ends. Individuals, with their self-identities, are confronted with fundamental existential questions about what categories will be imposed on them, which ones they have some choice in and how to calculate the advantages and disadvantages. But much of the time simply 'opting out' isn't an option.

Organisation is central to the constitution and disposition of power. As Gaetano Mosca put it: 'the dominion of an organized minority, obeying a single impulse, over the unorganized majority is inevitable.'<sup>51</sup> Our lives are organised in an encompassing social structural sense. Where we fit into a landscape of power positions defined by class, gender, religion, ethnicity, urban–rural relations and so on, determines our fates and possibilities to some degree, but also in the more circumscribed sense of formal organisations—which is more what Mosca was talking about. Our power in life and over our own fates depends greatly on what organisations we are a part of, and our positions in them. These are the main means by which we magnify our individual wills into larger collectivities and achieve efficacy on a larger scale. Formal organisations follow the paradigm

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49 Cf. Russell, B. 2004, *Power: A new social analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, and New York.

50 Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p. 79–93.

51 Mosca, G. 1939, *The Ruling Class, Elementi Di Scienza Politica*, A. Livingston (ed.), H. D. Kahn (trans.), McGraw-Hill, New York; cf. Mann, M. 1986, *The Sources of Social Power. Volume I: A history of power from the beginning to A. D. 1760*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; and Galbraith, J. K. 1983, *The Anatomy of Power*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

of individual agency because that's what they're there for in many respects. And this point echoes the one made earlier about narratives and the fusion of the protagonist roles, between individual selves and larger collectivities such as nations. How we invest our selves in these larger categories, and the various forms of organisations that mediate between us and those categories, reflects how effective the linkages are at constituting and challenging power relations. The personal, the categorical and the organisational are all political, and particularly so in combination.

## Conclusions: Biography and power

I've talked about the problems of conceptualising identity, national and otherwise, in my own work and the work of others. I've tried to treat 'identity' not as a proxy for biography, but as a conceptual framework for thinking about the biographical study of nationalism. It seems to me that biography provides a powerful means of examining how categorical national identities are attached to personal identities, and the complexities of this process. Each biography is 'a case' of that process, which will reveal specific aspects of how it happens. Despite their uniqueness, case studies provide insights into complex processes. The framework of an 'ecology' of self-identity, social identities and mediating organisations is meant to provide clues to the comparability between cases. So this is not a matter of privileging the individual as a unit of analysis, but of recognising individuals, with their biographies and self-identities, as a distinctive element in a wider social analysis. This is not a matter of essentialising selves, but rather of appreciating how they are capable of development and change. One of the most intriguing issues in this area is that of people who undergo radical transformations of identity, fundamentally changing how they understand themselves and their relations to social identity categories (for example, religious or political conversion).

Finally I also believe that power provides a key to how and why persons attach their biographies to categorical identities, such as nationalism. I think the study of power and identity has tended to be biased in its attention towards identity as social category. On the positive side there is the recognition that getting people to participate in certain collective identities is a crucial part of political mobilisation for change. On the darker side is the recognition that such acts of identity categorisation can involve schemes of domination between groups, social control by states and 'regulative discourses'.<sup>52</sup> But as social scientists we have been slower to recognise that the search for power is not simply a matter of domination, but also an existential aspect of being human. As healthy

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52 Cf. Tajfel, Jenkins, Butler.

individuals, we need to have some power over our lives, and this search is inscribed in our identities and laid down in our biographies. The various ways people connect and disconnect their personal identities and their collective identities reveal struggles for and against power. The study of biography and nationalism provides a rich vein of material about this fundamental process, one that deserves continued and closer scrutiny.

# Becoming National? G. M. Trevelyan: The dilemmas of a liberal (inter)nationalist, 1900–1945

Alastair MacLachlan

On the face of it, biography, with its focus on intimate, personal identity, seems an unpromising genre for addressing the public, collective idioms of nationalism. But arguably the national is but ‘one dimension in which a general theory of identity...can be investigated’.<sup>1</sup> And the biographical mode may offer insights into specificities, complexities and antinomies occluded in broader, impersonal studies of national identity.

George Macaulay Trevelyan was not a profound thinker about nationalism. He was primarily a narrative historian, a celebrant not an analyst of nationalist movements, but his career, nevertheless, illustrates some of the dilemmas of a liberal (inter)nationalist in the period 1900–45. Son of George Otto Trevelyan, a leading liberal of the Victorian era, great nephew of Lord Macaulay, he had an identity firmly rooted in the interlocking family networks of England’s political and intellectual aristocracy. He grew up primarily at Wallington, the ancestral home on the edge of the Northumbrian moors. In the writing room stood the desk where Macaulay wrote his *History of England*; in the study, the table where his father completed his *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* weeks before Trevelyan’s birth. Its vast central hall was decorated with scenes of local history from Roman times to the 1860s, ‘interspersed with portrait medallions of famous Northumbrians, starting with the Emperor Hadrian and culminating with mid-nineteenth century Trevelyans’.<sup>2</sup>

Houses like Wallington provided tangible moorings for elite Victorian families like the Trevelyans, enshrining family archives, memories and emotions, linking its inhabitants to the neighbourhood and to similar families throughout the country; they were palimpsests of local and national history.<sup>3</sup> The same was true of the grounds and surrounding countryside, whose history Trevelyan evoked in some of his early essays. For, like many such families, the Trevelyans cared as much for the rural setting as for the house itself. ‘Trevy’ was himself one of those late-Victorian ‘pilgrims of scenery’, for whom ‘landscape theology’ served as a substitute for religion. So, when he thought of Wallington, he thought

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1 Jonathon Hearn’s essay in this volume.

2 Collini, S. 1999, *English Pasts, Essays in History and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 20–1.

3 Tolley, C. 1997, *Domestic Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, especially Ch. 1.

immediately of the Northumbrian moors and ‘the sheep runs that sweep up to the Scottish border’, which he walked obsessively. For him, walking, especially hill and mountain walking, was both a daily tonic and a spiritual experience: ‘the best means whereby a man might regain possession of his own soul, by rejoining him in sacred union with nature.’<sup>4</sup> And the appeal was not just to the ‘solitude [and] silence of primeval nature’, but to its literary, historical associations. Thus, Wallington for him also connoted Hadrian’s Wall, the Middle Marches, the Border ballads and a heroic Anglo-Scottish warrior past. His devotion to English literature—apparent in everything he wrote—was an essential part of his sense of place and his feeling for nature, history, and local and national identity. Richly chronicled in prose and verse, the English countryside for him was a ‘storied landscape’, filled with associations and attachments.<sup>5</sup>

But the very naturalness of his privileged national belonging prevented him from asking searching questions. Englishness, like history and liberal politics, was an almost invisible environment of which he was barely aware. It was only in later life, when the social fabric, the environment and England itself were under threat, that he became a self-conscious celebrant of his own national identity—notably in his *English Social History*, a work explicitly ‘confined to the social history of England’, written between 1940 and 1941, though only published in 1944.<sup>6</sup>

Before 1914, his Englishness was underscored and a broader British patriotism repressed by political radicalism and dislike of empire. Though not unusual, this was family tradition, too: his father was a fierce critic of the post-Mutiny Raj and, unusually, a supporter of Scottish home rule. Trevelyan himself was in the habit of signing his youthful letters ‘God Save Ireland’ or ‘God Save the People’ (GSI or GSP for short). As a student, he had quarrelled with the Regius Professor J. R. Seeley over what he saw as the latter’s illiberal, expansionist reading of English/British history.<sup>7</sup> He cut his political teeth during the Boer War; and, as the British authorities locked up settler families in concentration

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4 Cannadine, D. 1992, *G. M. Trevelyan: A life in history*, Harper Collins, London, pp. 144, 146 ff; Trevelyan, G. M. 1913, ‘Walking’, *Clio, A Muse and other Essays*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 1–19, especially pp. 3–4.

5 Lowenthal, D. 1985, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 8, 248–9; Trevelyan, G. M. 1949, *The Autobiography of an Historian*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 11, 24–6; Trevelyan, G. M. 1913, ‘The middle marches’, in *Clio*, pp. 19–41.

6 Trevelyan, G. M. 1944, *English Social History*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. vii, 416.

7 Wormell, D. 1980, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 128, 130–3; Seeley, J. R. 1883, *The Expansion of England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Seeley, J. R. 1895, *The Growth of British Policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. The particular object of Trevelyan’s ire was Seeley’s attack on Whig history in ‘History and politics’ (*Macmillan’s Magazine*, 1879, p. 40).

camps and painted Africa red from Cape Town to Cairo, he deplored the jingoistic imperialism of the age: ‘the mother of freedom’, he lamented, ‘has become the Austria of the twentieth century’.<sup>8</sup>

His ‘Little Englandism’ was complemented by firm belief in self-determination. Before 1914, his feelings about nationality focused on other peoples’ struggles for nationhood—stories more recent, contingent and heroic than England’s. He was a prominent liberal internationalist of the pre-1914 era, and a member of various committees formed in support of national independence movements in Eastern and south-eastern Europe and the Middle East, including the Finnish, Macedonian, Persian and Balkan Committees. Like his friend Robert Seton-Watson, as a well-heeled patrician, he travelled extensively: Italy every year, but also Hungary, Romania, Serbia and the Balkans. And his travels, like his histories, were a continuation of politics by other means.

A historian by choice, he regarded his histories not as academic exercises but as ‘Liberal Tracts for the Times’; in 1903, he abandoned what he considered a sterile university career for a ‘more useful life’, writing books that would ‘make a permanent difference’. For the essence of Victorian liberalism was not a fixed ideology but an implicit language about the past and how the present had grown out of it.<sup>9</sup> His histories of nationhood imagined, anticipated, fought for, achieved and grew naturally out of the time-honoured story of English religious, political and economic freedoms. As a pupil of Acton and a New Liberal, he viewed nationalism as ‘a modern idea, which could exercise its full force only in a society, where freedom was recognised as one of the most precious human possessions’. For national self-determination involved not just liberation from foreign rule and autocracy, but also the reawakening of national culture and creation of a truly democratic ethos. It embodied J. S. Mill’s teaching on liberty, happiness and secular toleration and T. H. Green’s on moral development and full citizenship in the ‘ethically enabling state’. This, he believed, had been achieved in America and France during the late eighteenth century, and in Greece and Italy during the nineteenth. And he hoped it could now be fulfilled in Eastern and south-eastern Europe and the Near East.<sup>10</sup>

8 Trevelyan, G. M. 1901, Letters to *The Times*, 23 and 31 October; Trevelyan, G. M. to Charles P. Trevelyan, 20 October 1901, Trevelyan Papers, Robinson Library, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, UK CPT 237 (2).

9 Trevelyan, G. M. to Charles P. Trevelyan, 1 March 1903 and 1 and 18 December 1905, Trevelyan Papers, Robinson Library, CPT Ex 201, 202; Cannadine, G. M. *Trevelyan*, p. 71; Moorman, M. 1980, *George Macaulay Trevelyan, A Memoir*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 46, 51; Feske, V. 1996, *From Belloc to Churchill: Private scholars, public culture and the crisis of British liberalism 1900–1939*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, pp. 4–5, 141–2, 150.

10 Acton, J. E. 1907, ‘Nationality’, in J. N. Figgis (ed.), *A History of Freedom and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Simonhy, A. and Weinstein, D. 2001, *The New Liberalism: Reconciling liberty and community*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 17–18, 209 ff; Vincent, A. 1986, *The Philosophy of T. H. Green*, Macmillan, Aldershot, UK; Trevelyan, G. M. 1903, ‘A plea for a new programme’, *The Independent Review*, pp. 1–17.

From the defeat of Napoleon until 1914, the connection between liberalism and nationalism to him seemed obvious: a result of the consolidation in 1815 across Central and Eastern Europe of deeply conservative, multinational, military empires and the analogous convergence of reformist political agendas and movements for national unity and liberation within and across frontiers. As he explained in a series of essays written during World War I combining meta-history and propaganda, ever since Waterloo, continental Europe had been subject to 'the iron law' of Prussian, Austrian and Russian imperial power. Initially, it had 'triumphed in the spirit of mere negation: the Dead Hand which Metternich transmitted from the Chancelleries of the ancien regime'.<sup>11</sup> So it was that 1830 and 1848, the years of revolution against the 'Old Corruption', were also 'Spring-time' years 'of nations'. Nowhere was this clearer than in Italy—and specifically Rome—where in 1848–49, Mazzini and Garibaldi established their short-lived republic. It was a remarkable experiment in democratic government: open, tolerant, secular, based on universal suffrage and on Mazzini's principles of interlocking political rights and social duties—quite different from the Papal regime it displaced, hyperbolically described by Trevelyan as 'the most ancient and terrible theocracy in the Western world'.<sup>12</sup>

Trevelyan's most famous work before 1914 was the *Garibaldi Trilogy*, his celebration of Italian nation-making from 1848 to 1861, the first volume timed to coincide with the centenary of Garibaldi's birth, the last with the fiftieth anniversary of the modern Italian state. It was the perfect national liberation story. Unlike the chequered narrative of English freedom, Italian 'liberation' was concentrated on 'the Risorgimento', the 'one all embracing movement: a time when a whole people acquired a Faith and its history became spirit-serving and notable'. Unlike England, the Italian state did not evolve over centuries; it was made and made quickly. And its makers, in Trevelyan's eyes, were men of incomparable nobility: Mazzini, the prophet, Cavour, the statesman, above all, the poet-warrior, Garibaldi, 'the incarnate symbol of two passions not likely soon to die out of the world, the love of country and the love of freedom'.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Trevelyan, G. M. 1919, *The War and the European Revolution in Relation to History*, Creighton Lecture London University, Athlone Press, London, pp. 29, 35; Trevelyan, G. M. 1918, 'From Waterloo to Marne', *Quarterly Review*, vol. 229 (June), p. 77 ff; Trevelyan, G. M. 1918, 'The four great wars', *Edinburgh Review*, October, pp. 216, 265–75.

12 Trevelyan, G. M. 1907, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, p. 70; Trevelyan, G. M. 1909, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, p. 3; Cannadine, G. M. *Trevelyan*, pp. 67–8.

13 Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, pp. 23–4; Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, pp. 7–8. It may be claimed that all nations, England included, are 'made', if by 'made', one means 'imagined'. But Italy's construction as a unitary state in the period 1859–70 is clearly of a different order from the long process of state formation in England—and in Britain also. For a 'short view' of a late-nineteenth-century construction of a specifically English nationalism, see Kumar, K. 2003, *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. For a longer historical perspective on England, see MacLachlan, A. D. 1997, 'Patriotic scripture: the making and unmaking of English national identity 1500–1800', in S. Jack (ed.), *Festschrift for Patrick Collinson*, Parergon, Sydney, pp. 1–34; Hastings, A. 1997, *The Construction of*



The Garibaldi story in his opinion was ‘the most romantic...history records’, and he told it with ‘ardour and fury’.<sup>14</sup> A disciple of Carlyle, he was a great hero worshipper, and his trilogy perfectly fused the hero’s life with the liberal morality tale—the early training in freedom fighting, the forging of character through adversity in 1849, the victory against impossible odds in 1860, and then the consolidation, the quiet retirement—a transcendent romance of ‘all the elements whereby history becomes inspiring, instructive and dramatic’. Garibaldi’s greatness lay in his legend; and his was not conventional history, but a retelling of the legend—a legend ‘which turns out on examination to be true’.<sup>15</sup> In the 1850s and 1860s, Garibaldi had become a global cult figure—nowhere more than in England, which he visited in 1854, when he and Mazzini were welcomed as ‘champions of...an enslaved country by the working men of Tyneside’ on a visit partly financed by the Trevelyan; and, 11 years later, when the ovation given the ‘redeemer of Italy’ was ‘universal and overwhelming’.<sup>16</sup> Alongside Garibaldi, the other hero of Trevelyan’s books was Italy. Italy, as A. N. Wilson observed, tapped all ‘the sunniness and optimism’ of the Victorian character.<sup>17</sup> What Trevelyan described as her ‘unrivalled appeal to the imagination’ inspired English artists, poets and politicians throughout the nineteenth century. And nowhere were the connections stronger than at Wallington. George Otto had gone to Italy to fight for Garibaldi in 1867, an adventure he regarded ‘as the greatest romance of [his] life’; and Garibaldi saluted the family every day from the last of the historical panels in Wallington’s central hall.<sup>18</sup>

‘That there should ever have been a time when Mazzini ruled Rome and Garibaldi defended her walls sounds like a poet’s dream.’ Trevelyan’s avowed aim in *Garibaldi’s Defence of the Roman Republic* was ‘to give shape to that dream’ by telling the story of Mazzini’s doomed experiment, Garibaldi’s heroic defence of the Republic and inevitable defeat, followed by his epic retreat across the Apennines, the death of his wife, Anita, in his arms and his own eventual escape into exile. Ostensibly, it was a human and political tragedy, but Trevelyan made

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*Nationhood: Ethnicity, religion and nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 35–65; Murray, A. V. (ed.) 1995, *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Leeds; especially essays by A. D. Smith, J. Gillingham and L. Colley in *Britons: Forging the nation, 1707–1837*, 1992, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.; Davies, N. 1992, *The Isles, A History*, Macmillan, London.

14 Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, p. 102.

15 Riall, L. 2007, *Garibaldi, The Invention of a Hero*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., and London, pp. 13–14; Trevelyan, G. M. 1911, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, Longmans Green & Co., London, p. 296.

16 Trevelyan, *Garibaldi’s Defence of the Roman Republic*, Preface, p. 2; Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, pp. 289–91; Riall, *Garibaldi*, pp. 125, 330–44; Beales, D. 1991, ‘Garibaldi in England: the politics of Italian enthusiasm’, in J. A. Davis and P. Ginsborg (eds), *Society and Politics in the Age of the Risorgimento*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 184–216.

17 Wilson, A. N. 2003, *The Victorians*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, p. 84.

18 Cannadine, G. M. *Trevelyan*, p. 66; ‘A memory of Garibaldi: Sir G Trevelyan’s experience’, *The Times*, 17 December 1925.

it a triumph also, by prefiguring its resolution in national unification 11 years later, and by infusing it with the poetry he later anthologised in his *English Songs of Italian Freedom*.<sup>19</sup>

But it was the author's own experiences re-enacting the scenes of Garibaldi's resistance, following in Garibaldi's footsteps, re-treading 'the whole route traversed by [his] column from the gate of Rome to...the Adriatic', which, he said, 'taught me that Italy is not dead but risen, that she contains not only ruins but men, that she is not the home of ghosts but the land which the living share with their immortal ancestors'.<sup>20</sup> Part biography, part history, part travelogue, this was his most poetic text. His second and third volumes—*Garibaldi and the Thousand*, telling the story of the famous Sicilian expedition, and *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, tracing the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples—were triumphalist. But here again, the storyline was enhanced by his intimate knowledge of the terrain, as he retraced his hero's marches across the most inaccessible parts of Sicily and southern Italy. By reliving and writing Garibaldi's story, Trevelyan, the frustrated political activist, acquired a second, adventitiously heroic identity, fusing his own persona with his protagonist and his protagonist's agency with a collective Italian agency: the personal and the national.<sup>21</sup>

Students of national identity commonly have distinguished 'liberal nationalism', based on citizenship and political rights, articulated in constitutions and representative institutions, from a 'romantic nationalism', based on blood, soil and belonging, expressed in language, poetry, folk music and landscape rather than in political arrangements.<sup>22</sup> Trevelyan's perception of nation formation in Italy, which was both liberal and romantic, suggested it could be both. And because unification was the work of three very different men—the liberal constitutional monarchist Cavour and two distinctive romantic republicans, Mazzini and Garibaldi—he was possibly right.

To work effectively as a popular ideology, writes John Breuilly, nationalism 'needs simplification, concreteness and repetition'; and Trevelyan's style of altruistic nationalism was all of these things.<sup>23</sup> But because his attachment was so total, he never addressed the difficult issues of nation formation: the extent to which Italy was 'made' by others, was incompletely made and remained divided;

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19 Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, p. 4; Trevelyan, G. M. 1911, *English Songs of Italian Freedom*, Longmans, Green & Co., London.

20 Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, p. 7.

21 Hearn, this volume.

22 This distinction was the organising principle of the pioneer studies of nationalism by Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes, and it can still be found explicitly in works such as Greenfeld, L. 1992, *Nationalism: Five roads to modernity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.; and Ignatieff, M. 1994, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the new nationalism*, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, New York.

23 Breuilly, J. 1993, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 62–4.

or the degree to which his three ‘miracle men’ wanted quite different things: in Mazzini’s case an integral democratic Republic, in Cavour’s a territorially enlarged Piedmont, in Garibaldi’s—for Garibaldi was a simplifier and an ‘outsider’ too<sup>24</sup>—an ill-defined, idealised Italia. By ending his narrative with Italy ostensibly ‘made’ in 1860, he also avoided the inglorious denouement: the protracted civil war in the south; Garibaldi’s failed marches on Rome; Mazzini’s death in bitter exile. More seriously, he never queried the existence of a common Italian identity—a national character, a clearly defined territory and a mission which, as Mazzini said, was ‘God-given’—and never asked whether Romans or Neapolitans saw themselves as Italians and were better off in a unified Italy than under their ancient rulers.<sup>25</sup>

In many ways, Italy remained an unfinished, dissatisfied nation. Francesco Crispi, Garibaldi’s lieutenant in Sicily, was not alone in calling for a ‘purifying’ war that would make Italians ‘in a moral sense’. After 1860 Italy did not need to go to war, but on five occasions over the next 50 years she did: twice in Europe, three times in Africa. From the 1880s there was much agitation for colonial conquests; and Crispi, having failed to cajole Bismarck into a joint attack on France, sought in Africa the glory that eluded him in Europe. But the invasion of Ethiopia, proclaimed by Garibaldi’s son, ‘a renewal...of the splendour of Garibaldi’s victories’, led to the military disaster of Adowa in 1895, where Italy lost more men than in all her wars of independence.<sup>26</sup> None of this registered in Trevelyan’s account. ‘Nothing’, he concluded in 1911, ‘is more remarkable—though to believers in nationality and ordered liberty nothing more natural—than the unity and stability of the Italian Kingdom...The power [of] this great national movement has been directed only to the securing of Italian liberty, not to the oppression of others’.<sup>27</sup>

This was never entirely true; but by the time his words were published, they spectacularly had fallen foul of the imperatives of Italian imperial expansion.

Unusually for Trevelyan, the book went to press later than intended—at the end of September 1911—and he could not have chosen a worse moment. On 29 September Italy began her invasion of Libya. Trevelyan was appalled: the oppressed nation had become the imperial oppressor. But he could make little sense of it, save that the current crop of leaders had lost the idealism of the Risorgimento and that the materialists and militarists had taken over: ‘the action

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24 He was born in Savoyard Nice, which was given to France in 1859.

25 Duggan, C. 2008, *The Force of Destiny: A history of Italy since 1796*, Allen Lane, London, pp. 217–73; Gilmore, D. 2008, ‘Garibaldi’s gift’, *New York Review of Books*, 26 June; Gilmore, D. 2011, *The Pursuit of Italy*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 238–63; ‘The end of Italy’, *Foreign Policy*, 15 November 2011.

26 Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, pp. 345–8; Duggan, C. 2002, *Francesco Crispi: From nation to nationalism*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 698–702.

27 Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, pp. 294–5; Trevelyan, G. M. 1911, ‘The festival of Italian unity’, *The Times*, 27 March.

of the degenerate Italians of today in going to conquer another race', he wrote, 'takes the heart out of me as far as my books are concerned'.<sup>28</sup> For it must have been galling to read reviews of his work alongside news of Italian war crimes, even more to be taken to task by harsher reviewers 'on the evidence of recent events' for misrepresenting history and promoting 'Italian illusions'.<sup>29</sup>

It may have been his Italian experience that explained the national liberation story he did not write. Early in 1912 he spoke at the Workingmen's College in London on 'race nationalism': 'Race Nationalism...the passion for your race as a political entity', as distinct from civic patriotism, a 'cultural, historical and traditional affair', was modern and biologically determined.

It is simply a fundamental passion which I might compare in all reverence with the great reproductive passion of sex—not a thing which is good or bad in itself—but a great forcing power responsible for so much of the poetry, idealism and purpose in the lives of men and productive of the highest forms of political and military nobility and self-sacrifice that adorn the history of all countries but also responsible for race rivalry and hatred which have led to great cruelties and horrors.<sup>30</sup>

A year later, he was invited by the Serbian military authorities to visit the battlefields of the recently victorious first Balkan War. Filled with heroic images of Garibaldi's campaigns, he responded warmly to the historical romanticism of his hosts and to the legends of Serbian history: evocations of the great medieval empire of Stefan Dusan 'five hundred years ago before the Turkish flood' and 'the thrill of contemporary battle amidst the untamed beauties of the Balkan landscape'.<sup>31</sup> What he recorded on that '[h]oliday among the Servians' was a sanitised war of liberation with the rivalries, atrocities and 'ethnic cleansing' omitted, and the Serbs as bringers of freedom to Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. But once bitten, twice shy, and he discreetly ducked requests for a history of the recently completed wars of independence after the manner of his Italian volumes—a refusal he attributed to his 'sense of the complexities of the Balkan problem...and the multitude of conflicting racial standpoints, each reasonable in itself were it not for all the others', but which may have stemmed from a reluctance to submit this Risorgimento to liberal examination. He was

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28 Trevelyan, G. M. to Robert Trevelyan, 4 October and undated mid October 1911, in Raina, P. 2001, *George Macaulay Trevelyan, A Portrait in Letters*, Pentland Books, Durham and Edinburgh, pp. 74–5.

29 'Italian illusions', *Saturday Review*, 18 November 1911, p. 647; *English Historical Review*, vol. XXVII (January 1912), p. 174.

30 Trevelyan, G. M. 2012, 'Race nationalism', *Workingmen's College Journal*, (March), pp. 278–9.

31 Trevelyan, G. M. 1913, 'A holiday among the Servians', *Contemporary Review*, civ, pp. 153–63; 'The Servian armies and its Turkish victories', *Nation*, 19 July 1913; Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 120–3.

also convinced that the Serbians, like the Russians, ‘wouldn’t produce a man as attractive as Garibaldi’. So there was no identification with a heroic protagonist, and hence no process of altruistic national encoding through narrative.<sup>32</sup>

A year later, as war on the Continent loomed, along with many radical intellectuals initially, he favoured British neutrality. Immersed in his biography of *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill*, he had just reached the year 1792, and the coming of what he called ‘the unnecessary war’ against revolutionary France: the war that had ‘barbarised’ Europe for 20 years, had set back national independence movements for a generation and, when it was over, had handed continental Europe back to Russian, Austrian and Prussian imperial power and the ancien régime.<sup>33</sup> Tearing himself away from ‘the colossal waste and wickedness’ of that war, he rushed up to London at the end of July for what he called ‘last hour neutrality work’, speaking at the Trafalgar Square peace rally on 2 August and adding his name to statements denouncing the war as a threat to ‘Western civilization’.<sup>34</sup>

By mid August, however, the advance of the German military juggernaut across northern Europe had persuaded him that unless the Germans were beaten, ‘civilization, as we know it, is done for’.<sup>35</sup> By a characteristic quirk of the liberal mentality, he now came to believe that the war would serve progressive causes: that it would sweep away military despotism and advance the causes of nationality, liberty and democracy throughout Europe. A ‘patched up’ peace ‘on the basis of the status quo’ was, therefore, unthinkable: military empire had to be smashed, and Europe remade along national lines. It was this that justified even the alliance with tsarist Russia: ‘the idea that because Russia has an internal system of government that we disapprove, the people of Russia cannot go on a crusade of liberty abroad will be dispelled in anyone who stands beneath the statue of the Tsar Liberator in Sofia.’ Russia was engaged on behalf of ‘the suppressed nationalities’ of Eastern and south-eastern Europe, and this was ‘their war of liberation’.<sup>36</sup>

He was convinced that the war was fundamentally a struggle for nationality: ‘study the race map of Europe’, he advised a friend in December 1914, ‘if you want to see why there has been a European war’. But ‘the Germans and their allies had to be beaten before they would recognise the nationalist principle

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32 Trevelyan, ‘A holiday among the Servians’, p. 163; Trevelyan, G. M. to Robert Trevelyan, 20 July 1913, in Raina, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, p. 80; Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill*, pp. 163–5.

33 Trevelyan, G. M. 1920, *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 67–72 (pages written in late July 1914); Trevelyan, G. M. to Lady Caroline Trevelyan, 24 July 1914, Trevelyan Papers, GOT 105; Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 123–4.

34 ‘The peril to civilization: Mr G. M. Trevelyan and “The Balance of Power”’, *Daily News & Leader*, 3 August 1914 (war was declared the next day).

35 Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 127–8; Cannadine, G. M. Trevelyan, p. 78 ff. The phrase recurs in many of his letters to his family from mid August 1914.

36 Trevelyan, G. M. 1914, ‘When the war is over’, *McClure’s Magazine*, [New York], vol. XLIV, no. 2, pp. 37–8; ‘Slav and Magyar: the “Curse of Ham” theory’, *Daily News*, 15 March 1915.

in the form of home rule, redistribution of territory or otherwise'.<sup>37</sup> For the configuration of 1914 appeared to replicate that of 1815; and the alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey allowed prowar liberals like himself to equate nationalism with liberalism in south-eastern Europe and the Near East. As he explained in another 'take' on nineteenth-century history: after 1848—'the liberal turning point where Europe failed to turn'—nationalism had also assumed a virulent form. The failure of liberal revolution corrupted liberalism: the German parliamentary movement 'turned rabid'; the Hungarian national ideal was deflected into 'the racial absolutism' of the Dual Monarchy. And, with the 'Blood and Iron', non-liberal unification of Germany, the success of Bismarck's policies merged 'military despotism' and nationality into 'an active principle': 'efficient, boastful, contemptuous in the name of modern science and culture of "the retrograde formulas" of liberty'—a spirit that corroded international relations, dominated Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Turkish Empire, and insinuated itself into Disraeli's Britain and Italy, where imperial delusions eroded the 'humane...liberal tradition' in both countries.<sup>38</sup>

But even before 1914, the Bismarck system gradually had unravelled. The despots fell out amongst themselves. Tsarism confronted Prussianism. 'The Concert of Europe', anaemic heir of the Holy Alliance, could not sustain the Turkish 'Chamber of Horrors'. Austro-Hungarian expansion met its match in the peasant democracy of Serbia. And the war unleashed by the Central Powers to hold back nationalism and perpetuate military empire turned instead into 'the belated finale' of the struggle against the ancien régime. The Great War, then, was not just a war of national liberation, but also a crusade for liberal democracy: a clash of political and social systems, which pitted regimented Prussians against the 'children of revolution' in France, and eventually in Russia and America also, and semi-feudal Austrian-Magyar landlords with their reluctant peasant conscripts against the free yeoman farmers of Serbia and Italy.<sup>39</sup>

As the celebrant of Italian liberation, Trevelyan was used to seeing the Hapsburg Empire as the prison-house of nations. Also, recent visits there had convinced him 'there could be no lasting peace in Europe until [its subject] races... obtain[ed] self-government'. As a member of the Balkan Committee, he was also conditioned to respond to the propaganda of Balkan independence. But unlike most of his colleagues, he viewed the Balkan and Austro-Hungarian problems as one and the same: 'for this reason—that...the South Slav and the Romanian

37 Trevelyan, G. M. to J. L. Hammond, November or December 1914, *Hammond Additional. Mss. Eng.c.* 5787, ff. 81–2, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Trevelyan, 'When the war is over', pp. 34, 39–40.

38 Trevelyan, 'From Waterloo to Marne', pp. 79, 83–5; Trevelyan G. M. 1919, *The War and the European Revolution in Relation to History*, pp. 35–6, 38.

39 Trevelyan, 'The four great wars', p. 271 ff; Trevelyan, G. M. to G. O. Trevelyan, 27 and 29 March 1917, 7 April 1917, Trevelyan Papers, GOT 109; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, 'Serbia revisited', *Contemporary Review*, vol. cvii (March), pp. 273–83; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, articles in *Daily News*, 4, 14, 19, 20 and 27 January and 1 March.

race are each cut in half, one half free in the Balkans, the other subject to the Emperor Franz Joseph.' Austria-Hungary, he explained, was formed long before the age of nationalism under the imperatives of dynastic accumulation and Catholic reconquest, 'at the expense of the Turk...but no less at the expense of the future freedom of the races...then delivered'.<sup>40</sup> Twelve years before the war, he recalled in October 1914, he had gone to Hungary, an enthusiast for 'the gallant Hungarian country gentlemen', who had fought so nobly for their...liberty in 1848', and in 1867 had won racial parity within the Empire. They had, however, 'never conceived the idea of granting it to others', but 'treated the Romanians and Southern Slavs like barbarians'; in Transylvania, he was reminded of Ireland, with the Magyars as the garrison landlords of the Protestant ascendancy, 'dwelling amongst an alien...hostile people'.<sup>41</sup>

In the Balkans things were worse. Gladstonians, like his father, had all deplored the role Britain had played at the Berlin Congress of 1878. What they excoriated, however, was the propping up of Turkish rule, while what he retrospectively attacked was the sanctioning of the Austrian occupation of Bosnia. This 'fragrant violation of the national principle', he said, enabled the Dual Monarchy to 'tie Serbia up in a sack' and to deny the young state 'natural expansion' to its 'racial littoral' on the Adriatic. Since in his view Serbia and Bosnia were 'in reality one country divided in half', the acquisition—after the 1908 formal annexation—of Bosnia tied the Austro-Hungarian elites to domestic repression and a belligerent, 'suicidal' foreign policy. Disconcerted by the rise of Balkan nationalism, threatened by adjacent independent nation-states and by 'unredeemed' nationals and 'nationalist movements' inside their empire, they saw Serbia especially as their 'deadly foe'. Twice the monarchy planned a pre-emptive war; twice her allies refused support. Eventually, the murder of the Archduke by Bosnian-Serb freedom fighters provided them 'a fitting opportunity to wipe Serbia off the map'. But he was hopeful that what had started as 'a punitive Austro-Hungarian expedition' would turn into a war of liberation for the Southern Slavs, with Serbia in the role of 'a hero-nation, similar to that undertaken by Piedmont for the other Italian provinces'.<sup>42</sup>

But, as his friend the radical historian J. L. Hammond pointed out, the analogy was forced. 'Italy was wholly Italian; Bosnia and the other coveted Austrian provinces...Serb though they [we]re in race [we]re only one-third Serb in

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40 Trevelyan, 'When the war is over', pp. 183–4; Trevelyan, G. M. 1914, 'The new map of Europe', *English Review*, vol. 18, pp. 488–9.

41 Trevelyan, G. M. 1914, 'The Magyar tragedy', *Nation*, 10 October, pp. 33–4.

42 Trevelyan, G. M. 1914, *The Servians and Austria*, The Victoria League, London, pp. 6–12; Trevelyan, G. M. 1914, 'The Servian people', *The Times*, 18 September; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, 'Serbia and south-eastern Europe', *Atlantic Monthly*, (April), pp. 126–7; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, 'Austria-Hungary and Serbia', *Fortnightly Review*, (June), pp. 978–86.

politics and creed.<sup>43</sup> Like most of his British contemporaries, Trevelyan was convinced of the ethnic unity of the Southern Slav—or, in a typical slippage, ‘the Serbian race’, a term he applied promiscuously to the inhabitants of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo and northern Macedonia. Their disparate political, religious and cultural histories—the divisions of Cyrillic and Latin, Orthodox and Roman, Muslim and Christian, independent successor states that had achieved nationhood at the price of an extra century and a half of Turkish rule and those that remained subject to the Emperor Francis Joseph—like the divides of pre-Risorgimento Italy, were fruit of a distorted history, which ‘a resettlement of the European state system on the basis of nationality’ would surely sweep away.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, he never distinguished between a Greater Serbia, an enlarged Serbian nation-state, and a federal state of nations, a Yugoslavia, in which Serb and Croat, Bosnian and Slovene would enjoy some degree of autonomy. Bred on Mazzini’s notion of a homogenous nationhood, founded in a common culture and shared political consciousness, and achieved through the exercise of popular will—as a tidy marriage of state and culture—he did not allow for the likely violence and brutality of any unification process, where political units were so brittle and ill defined, and the sense of historical victimhood was so strong, and where nation-states could only be created through forcible and contested political and cultural engineering. Nor did he grasp ‘the narcissism of small differences’: the fact that ethnic and linguistic proximity, coupled with divergent historical experiences, might simply allow the interested parties to exchange myths and confirm prejudices with greater facility.<sup>45</sup>

As one of the ‘few Englishmen’ who had visited Serbia before the war, he thought it his duty to show his countrymen ‘what the Serbians are really like’. Serbia, he said, had all ‘the virtues and the limitations of a peasant democracy’. Since nearly all the population consisted of yeoman farmers cultivating their own farms, it was remarkably democratic and egalitarian; there were no class questions to speak of, ‘no social problem’, and consequently ‘no vital politics except foreign politics’: ‘patriotism’ was ‘the sole political feeling of the average Serb’. It was this that explained ‘the unanimous and spontaneous devotion of

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43 Hammond, J. L. 1915, ‘Serbia and the war’, *Nation*, 3 July 1915; Hammond, J. L. 1915, ‘A war for the ideals of 1789’, *Nation*, 17 July.

44 Trevelyan, ‘When the war is over’, pp. 38–9; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, ‘What are we fighting for?’, *War and Peace*, (April), pp. 103–5.

45 Ignatieff, M. 1997, ‘The narcissism of minor differences’, *The Warrior’s Honor: Ethnic war and the modern conscience*, Henry Holt & Co., New York; Ignatieff, M. 1999, ‘Nationalism and the narcissism of minor differences’, in R. Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, pp. 91–102. The term was first coined by Sigmund Freud in 1917.



the Serbian nation in arms': a natural fellowship of officers and men comparable with that of the early American and First French Republic—'as co-partners in the national defence'.<sup>46</sup>

Serbian nationalism was one of blood, soil and belonging; but he was persuaded that the Serbs, like the Italians, would soon learn liberal, constitutional ways. The war, he said, had stimulated a desire for 'personal, commercial, intellectual and educational...connections with England', and he was hopeful that 'the great outburst of British sympathy for Serbia in the last few months has laid the foundations for a close friendship...similar to that which has bound Italy to this country by the memory of the sympathy and aid we gave in the hour of their birth-throes'.<sup>47</sup>

He was the embodiment of that friendship; and the war, it seemed, might bring about the sort of identification he had achieved with all things Italian. Along with other activities during the autumn, he worked for the Serbian Relief Fund, wrote and lectured on the Serbian cause under the auspices of various British propaganda organisations, and in December was sent with Seton-Watson on a diplomatic mission to Belgrade. Partly humanitarian and morale-raising, it was also designed as the first step of an ambitious strategy to secure the support of all the Balkan peoples. The prospective confederation was, of course, easier to conceive than to deliver, and it soon foundered on their lack of official accreditation and on the ethnic differences, mutual suspicions and competing territorial ambitions of the interested parties.<sup>48</sup>

Trevelyan's role in this, though peripheral, was symptomatic. For, by the time he left for Serbia early in December, his Italian sympathies had begun to cloud the purposes of his mission. In August 1914, his greatest anxiety had been that Italy might enter the war alongside the Central Powers as a member of the Triple Alliance. So he was greatly relieved when she had stayed neutral. In fact, there was never much chance that Italy would fight alongside her ancient enemy Austria, the possessor still of the 'unredeemed provinces' of Trieste and the Trentino. And once she had defaulted on her treaty obligations, there were grounds to suppose that she might go one step further and join the Allies. Somewhat artlessly, Prime Minister Salandra had defined his government's policy as a 'sacred egoism' for Italy; and for his Foreign Secretary, the egoism focused obsessively on the Adriatic. Convinced that the Trentino and Trieste were insufficient to convince neutralists of the merits of intervention, and that

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46 Trevelyan, 'Serbia revisited', pp. 274–5.

47 Ibid., p. 274. British, of course, considered coterminous with English.

48 Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 130–3; Seton-Watson, H. and Seton-Watson, C. 1981, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the last days of Austria Hungary*, Methuen & Co., London, pp. 105–17; Seton-Watson, H. and Seton-Watson, C. 1976, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs. Volume 1*, [Letters of Seton-Watson and Trevelyan in Serbia and Romania, January and February 1915], British Academy, London, pp. 21 ff, 193–7; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, articles in *Daily News*, 4, 14, 19, 20, 27 and 29 January.

Italy's vital interests as a Great Power could only be satisfied by control of the eastern Adriatic coastline, he was determined to secure as much as possible in Istria, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Albania, however much this might poison relations with her prospective co-belligerents and compromise the Allies' position in the Balkans.

This placed Trevelyan in a cleft stick. A notorious Italophile, he was also one of the first to urge the claims of Serbia as 'the nucleus of a new Yugoslav state', which was to include Croats, Slovenes and Bosnians. After his return from Belgrade in March 1915, he was involved in a number of propaganda exercises—lecture tours, manifestoes, public celebrations and the like in England and America—designed to show 'that the Serbs and Croats have a culture of their own... and regard themselves as a single people with two names'.<sup>49</sup> He had accused Austria of tying Serbia up 'in a sack'. Was not Italy about to do the same? Seton-Watson and the Yugoslav lobby certainly thought so. The promise of the Adriatic coastline to Italy under the terms of the Secret Treaty of London was, they said, 'a flagrant betrayal of the cause of nationality' and 'a crime against the Serbo-Croat nation', which could only be enforced by 'brutal force', would demoralise the Serbians and destroy Allied credibility in the Balkans. Of course, the public was treated to much misinformation. But that, too, was a problem: the competing claims of co-belligerents could only be met by secret treaties—hallmark of the old, discredited diplomacy—designed to disguise the extent of one ally's 'sacred egoism' at the expense of another.<sup>50</sup>

In May 1915 Trevelyan was sent to Rome to promote closer understanding between Britain and Italy and to stiffen wavering Italian resolve. And he had witnessed the famous street demonstrations, led by Nationalists like d'Annunzio and Mussolini, which had toppled neutralist doubters in Parliament and stampeded the Government into declaring war. Predictably, he invoked the names of Garibaldi and Mazzini, and hailed the so-called 'radiant days of May' as the last act of Risorgimento drama, which was to reclaim Italy's 'unredeemed provinces' from Austria-Hungary. Mazzini and Garibaldi, he said, had triumphed over Machiavelli; Italy had rediscovered her soul and reaffirmed 'her political liberty and her instincts for humanity and justice'.<sup>51</sup> From the vantage point of subsequent history, however, the combination of extra-parliamentary forces—

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49 Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 134–6; Trevelyan, *Daily News*, 1 and 15 March 1915; *The New York Times*, 25 April and 22 May 1915. (In London, for example, he was an organiser of the exhibition of Serbo-Croatian art in the Victoria and Albert Museum, featuring the Croat sculptor Ivan Mestrovic, June 1915; see *The Times*, 25, 26 and 28 June 1915; Anon. 1919, *Ivan Metrovic, A Monograph*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

50 Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, pp. 121–7; Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson, R. W. *Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs*, pp. 224–7; Seton-Watson, R. W. 1915, 'Italy and Dalmatia', *Nation*, 29 May.

51 Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, 'What Garibaldi saw: Mazzini and the present war', *Daily News*, 8 March; Cannadine, G. M. *Trevelyan*, pp. 80–1; Trevelyan, G. M. to F. Jackson, 21 May 1915, 1915, Jackson Papers

irredentists, annexationists, ‘Nationalist men of order’, futurists, revolutionary socialists—all baying for war against an unheroic liberal political establishment, could also be depicted as a dress rehearsal for the fascist coup d’état of 1922. On the matter of the Adriatic, also predictably, he temporised. But he found his balancing act at the hub of Italian politics, trying to square his Italian and Serbian alter egos, deeply uncongenial. So much so, that in another personal U-turn, he availed himself of the opportunity for front-line action instead, as Commandant of the 1st British Red Cross Ambulance Unit in northern Italy, thereby combining his yearning for service with his revulsion against the Realpolitik inseparable from the diplomatic war effort.

For the duration of the war, he was able to ignore the difficulties of his commitment both to ‘race nationalism’ and to liberal democracy. Indeed, the events of 1917 confirmed his conflation of the two: the February revolution in Russia that toppled tsarism and the tsarist empire—always an embarrassment—was, he said, ‘the first great triumph of the principles for which we are fighting’: proof that the war could promote liberal outcomes.<sup>52</sup> And ‘the entry of American democracy’ on the Allied side two months later, which ‘turned the tables on the whole ancient order of ideas in Europe’, transforming the conflict, as had the Protestant hero Gustavus Adolphus in another European civil war some 300 years before, promised ‘to liberate the world once and for ever from suicidal mania, by the destruction of military despotism in its ancient lair’. For Trevelyan, as for many other liberals, US President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points were a sure guarantee of a new peaceable international order: a league of nations, self-determining, independent, liberal and democratic.<sup>53</sup>

With the end of the war in 1918, however, he could no longer evade the problems shelved in 1915. He spent fruitless weeks around the Versailles peace talks, trying to mediate between the Italians and the new Yugoslav authorities. But since 1915, he had stopped thinking about Serbia: ‘I keep whole chambers of my brain sealed up for my health’, he told his mother-in-law, ‘and one is labelled “Serbia”’. His hopes that the Serbs would become good liberals had withered once Serbia was overrun in a second national ‘Golgotha’ in 1915–16; all they would want, he feared, was ethnic ‘revenge’.<sup>54</sup> His experiences on the Italian front, moreover, had deepened his attachment to Italy, and he was something of a dishonest broker: rejoicing, as he entered Trieste in November 1918, at the city being ‘united to her mother Italy after many years of longing’;

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[loose], Trinity College, Cambridge; Trevelyan, G. M. 1919, *Scenes from Italy’s War*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 1–22; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, ‘Italy at war’, *Nation*, 10 July; Trevelyan, G. M. 1915, ‘Rome in wartime’, *Daily News*, 14 July.

52 Trevelyan, G. M. to G. O. Trevelyan and Caroline Trevelyan, 20 March and 8 July 1917; Trevelyan, G. M. to Charles P. Trevelyan, 24 March 1917, Trevelyan Papers, GOT 109, CPT 241.

53 Trevelyan, ‘The four great wars’, pp. 266–7.

54 Trevelyan, G. M. to Mrs H. Ward, 20 March and 19 October 1916, Trevelyan Papers, MM 1/2/2; Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, p. 153.

'smoothing' Italian egos with exaggerated accounts of their heroic war efforts; and defending their Mediterranean appetites as 'a hankering for small sugar plums' compared with the vast colonial acquisitions of Britain and France.<sup>55</sup> Identity is invariably relational, and Trevelyan could only define his postwar Italian persona by shuffling off the Serbian sympathies of yesteryear. When President Wilson accused Italy trying to strangle the infant Yugoslavia at birth, Trevelyan angrily demurred, telling his mother he 'hate[d] Wilson now', and referring to Italian citizens 'beyond the frontier' who needed protection 'from oppression by an alien and traditionally hostile race', and seeking to counter what he described as 'the shrill, one-sided attacks' of the Yugoslav lobby—special pleading, which his brother dismissed as 'the most beastly jingoism on behalf of his beloved Italians'.<sup>56</sup> In December 1920, in the teeth of the widespread nationalist excesses in the Mediterranean and Adriatic, he still sought to preserve a clear distinction between the brutality and ethnic exclusivism of its south-eastern and Eastern European manifestations and what he professed to be the liberal, universal legacy of the Risorgimento, so 'thoroughly in keeping with the fundamental kindness and good sense of the Italian nature'—this more than a year after d'Annunzio's march on Fiume, at a time when fascism was taking root in northern and central Italy.<sup>57</sup>

But he found the rise of Mussolini and the abrupt termination of liberal parliamentary democracy difficult to square with his interpretation of Italian nation-making. For if the Italians were as freedom loving as he insisted and if the Italian state had been a model marriage of nationalism and liberalism, how could Mussolini's authoritarian regime have come about? The new regime's apologists were to argue that fascism not parliamentary liberalism embodied the spirit of 1915 and 1860. And certainly there were strong continuities of policy and personnel, not least in the person of the King. But to Trevelyan, fascism could not be the heir of the Risorgimento. Rather, the gradual eclipse of the Risorgimento tradition and the failure of its official inheritors were to blame. Before the war and again after 1919, the parliamentary elites had corrupted political mores. Political parties turned into venal factions; graft became rampant;

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55 Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 153, 188; Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War*, Preface, pp. 10–12, 188 ff, 233–4. 'Many years of longing' indeed, as Trieste had been a Hapsburg possession since 1386!

56 Trevelyan, G. M. 1919, *Englishmen and Italians: Some aspects of their relations, past and present*, British Academy, London, pp. 108–9; Trevelyan, G. M. 1918, 'A plea for moderation', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 December; Trevelyan, G. M. 1919, 'In the cause of right, GMT on Italy's sacrifice', *The Times*, 22 February; Trevelyan, G. M. 1919, 'Italy's peace', *The Times*, 12 December; Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan*, pp. 187–8; Trevelyan, G. M. to Lady Caroline Trevelyan, 29 November 1919, Trevelyan Papers, GOT 111; Morris, T. A. 1997, 'Trevelyan, G. M., to Charles P. Trevelyan, 15 December 1919', *C. P. Trevelyan, Portrait of a Radical*, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, p. 143.

57 'Letter to editor', *History*, vol. IV (January 1920); Trevelyan, G. M. 1920, 'New preface', *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, December 1920, p. iii; Trevelyan, G. M. 1920, 'Napoleon and Italy', *The Times*, [Special Supplement], 20 December.

bureaucracy was compromised; and parliamentary government, in 1915 tainted by its 'political and cultural vassalage' to Germany, was now damaged by its inability to preserve order.<sup>58</sup>

It was the stock apologia for authoritarian reaction all over Europe. In the 'semi-Bolshevist' revolt, which infected every war-ravaged society, Italian socialists 'had adopted the methods of violence in place of the ballot'. The restoration of order and security could only come about through 'fearless exercise of power and authority' by a government 'strong enough' to tackle 'parliamentary graft' and to harness the spirit of 1860: 'a popular propaganda of patriotism.' Despite—he was not ready to say because of—the legacy of Mazzini and Garibaldi, parliamentary government had never gained a firm foothold in Italy. For, as he admitted, parliamentary institutions were something of an innovation in Italian history as a whole. 'The Italians', he had written, 'are not a great parliamentary nation but they are a great democratic nation'. Political issues invariably were settled by demonstrations, marches and 'rows in the piazza': 'the Populo goes down into the streets and takes things into its own hands.' Even Garibaldi believed in 'good violence': that 'an honest dictatorship [was] the best means of carrying out the democratic will in times of crisis.'<sup>59</sup>

Mussolini's revolution—part coup, part street theatre, part manipulation of elites—was, then, part of an older, populist Italian tradition. Order always preceded liberty; even in England, freedom of speech and person were relatively recent. Perhaps, he suggested, in the long run the fascist state would prove analogous to Tudor despotism after the anarchic Wars of the Roses: a temporary swerve from the path of liberty in the direction of executive authority. But the parallel was forced; and, by 1928, it was clear even to him that Mussolini was not a mixture of Henry VIII and Garibaldi, but a dictator who had 'suppressed every vestige of liberty with an efficiency far surpassing that of the Bourbons and Austrians of old'. As for fascists, they were the new Jacobins who sought 'to abolish the easy kindly temperament of the Italian people and 'drill and bully' them into becoming 'second rate Germans'.<sup>60</sup>

After 1923, he stopped writing Italian history. But he would not condemn Italy publicly. Even in 1935, though privately he deplored the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, he refused to lend his support to the call for sanctions and resigned from the League of Nations Union in protest. It had always been inevitable, he said, that a united Italy would eventually become a great Mediterranean and African power; and what had been thwarted at Adowa and at Versailles, where

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58 Trevelyan, G. M. 1923, *The Historical Causes of the Present State of Affairs in Italy*, University of London, Athlone Press, London, pp. 15–20.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9; Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, p. 163; Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill*, pp. 165, 167.

60 Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan*, pp. 82–3, 85.

she was denied the colonial mandates promised her in 1915, had now occurred. Two years later, convinced that Anglo–Italian friendship was ‘essential to peace’, he applauded Chamberlain’s ‘cheerful courage’ in initiating talks with Il Duce, and fully backed the policy of mending diplomatic fences through appeasement.<sup>61</sup>

As a liberal internationalist, he was committed to the principles of national self-determination, minority rights and open covenants embodied in the League of Nations. But thanks to American withdrawal and to British and French manipulation, he believed that instead of acting as ‘a clearing house for peaceful change...to keep pace with national tendencies’, the league had become an instrument of perpetuating a distorted status quo. He considered the creation of an irredentist Germany the worst of all the evil legacies of the war. And he refused to allow his loathing of the Nazi regime to affect his judgment on what he saw as legitimate frontier revision from the early 1920s through until 1939, in Silesia, East Prussia, the Saarland, Austria and the Sudetenland. This seemed to him to embody the right of the majority to decide their political future in a manner not dissimilar to what, as a liberal, he once had claimed for Boers, Italians, Serbs and Bosnians. Indeed, the analogy he chose as late as 1938 for the *Anschluss* with Austria, was the benign one of 1860, and the ‘scandalous breaches of peace and international law’ perpetrated by Garibaldi and Cavour in ‘the forcible union of the Papal States and Neapolitan Kingdom with Piedmont’. Even over Czechoslovakia, he agreed with Ernest Barker, arguing that the issue was between mutually exclusive liberal ideals: support for a liberal-democratic multinational state and for the principle of self-determination:

In the nineteenth century English liberals and democrats could sympathize with national movements in Europe because they were or seemed to be, liberal and democratic as well as national. Those days are gone...One might regret that the Bohemian Germans should prefer to follow the call of national feeling at the cost of surrendering membership of a democratic state, but that is their preference.<sup>62</sup>

By 1939, however, the attempt to combine liberalism with enthusiasm for every expression of national self-determination however illiberal—including ethnic *Gleichschaltung*, dictatorship and aggressive imperialism—had become too

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61 Trevelyan, Janet, George Trevelyan and H. Goad, Director of the British Institute, 1936, Goad Papers [16 January 1936], British Institute of Florence; Trevelyan, G. M. 1939, ‘The Anglo–Italian agreement: a cloud lifted’, *The Times*, 19 April; ‘Keeping the peace’, *The Times*, 25 April 1938.

62 Trevelyan, G. M. 1937, ‘Epilogue’, *History of England*, [new edn], Longmans, Green & Co., London; Trevelyan, G. M. 1937, *Grey of Fallodon*, Longmans, Green & Co., London pp. 356–9; Barker, E. 1938, ‘Letter to the editor’, *The Times*, 26 September; GMT–Rowse, A. L., 28 September 1938, Rowse Papers [unsorted], Exeter University; Trevelyan, G. M. to M. Moorman, 16 March and 30 September 1938, Trevelyan Papers, MM 1/4/26.

hard. And, on 10 June 1940, when Italy declared war on Britain and France—the ‘bitterest day of [his] life’, he said—he reached the end of the international line.<sup>63</sup>

Since the mid 1920s, he had retreated from Europe and had returned to the university; the ‘causes’ he attached himself to were now almost entirely domestic and apolitical—the National Trust, the Youth Hostels Association (YHA), Outward Bound, the Pilgrim Trust—and his writing focused on the celebration of English exceptionalism, notably in his *History of England* of 1926 and *England under Queen Anne* of 1930–34. The first was full of ‘the peculiarities of the English’: the ‘Mingling of the Races...from the Earliest Times’, ‘the Making of the Nation’ and of ‘a distinct English nationality’ in the Middle Ages, the creation of a national church and the growth of ‘seapower’ under the Tudors—when ‘the English grown to manhood dismissed their Latin tutors’ and ‘Britain bec[a]me a world by itself’—the development of parliamentary institutions and of religious pluralism in the seventeenth century and the gradual but uninterrupted movement towards democratic control ever since. But the traditional Whig story was broadened to include Seeley’s idea of England as a living organism, a nation in the process of ‘continuous expansion into Greater Britain’.<sup>64</sup>

England and Britain—the domesticated and imperial idioms of national identity—conducted their familiar ‘*pas de deux*’ over the past three and a half centuries, wherein British history was continuous and usually coterminous with the story of England. Perhaps it came naturally to a Northumbrian. All the same, Trevelyan knew that the British imperial state forged in the eighteenth century was a peculiar invention: the outcome of dynastic chance, religious choice, and political and economic calculation. But his treatment of its making was bland and congratulatory. Neither in his general history nor in his *Queen Anne Trilogy* was there any acknowledgment of the costs to the geographically or socially marginal of the Union, the Hanoverian Succession, the Whig oligarchy and the absolute rule of property.<sup>65</sup> In ‘the age of the League of Nations’, where ‘conferences, compromises [and] concessions’ were essential to mutual survival, the Anglo–Scottish parliamentary union of 1707 was for him a timely lesson in imperial wisdom and initiative. The two peoples were reconciled ‘on terms of equality and justice’: Scotland, released from ‘poverty and isolation’, was

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63 Trevelyan, G. M. 1940, *The Spectator*, 10 June; Trevelyan, G. M. to M. Moorman, 14 June 1940, ‘Easter Sunday’ 1940, Trevelyan Papers, MM. 1/4/27–28.

64 Trevelyan, G. M. 1926, *History of England*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, chapter headings, pp. xxi–xxii, 480–2.

65 Trevelyan, *History of England*. Even for the 1920s, his comment on the Highland Clearances is rather shocking: ‘an Afghanistan could no longer be tolerated within fifty miles of the “modern Athens”’ (p. 538).

able for the first time to fulfil her economic, intellectual and artistic potential; and 'the British Empire became much greater and in every sense richer than an English Empire could ever have been'.<sup>66</sup>

Yet in 1940 it was to a still implicitly English empire he appealed. 'All Englishmen [we]re in the Front-line now': 'internationalism', he said, 'is not enough, and it is a good law of nature that we should rejoice in our own land'.<sup>67</sup> Recalling the struggles against Spain and France from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, he retreated into patriotic contemplation of his own English/British national identity, which was again under threat, but was politically and culturally securely grounded in history: nostalgically celebrating the literature and landscapes of 'Englishry' in Chaucer's, Shakespeare's, Dr Johnson's and Cobbett's times—a social history which, he said, 'might be defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out', but which possessed 'its own positive value and peculiar concern'. And in a return of the repressed or what might be called 'Wallington Revisited', he outlined its scope: 'the character of the family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude of man to nature [and] the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life.'<sup>68</sup>

What then does this briefly sketched personal trajectory over 40 years—with its continuities and unchanging assumptions, but also its changing contexts, agendas and enthusiasms—have to offer the student of nationalism? Perhaps, one can argue, it offers just this: a way of looking at nationalist thinking, grounded in a real-life story and shifting real-life situations. As such, it may allow one to trace connections, relationships and modulations sometimes obscured in generalist, sociologically driven inquiries. In many respects, Trevelyan was a representative liberal of his era, but his interests and experiences and especially his ways of interpreting them historically were quite distinctive and were by no means fully shared by his contemporaries. His biography can therefore serve as 'a prism of history', by articulating the ways in which a 'mind meets the world', exploring the tensions or what E. P. Thompson called 'the nodal points of conflict' between the individual and the social/political worlds he

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66 Trevelyan, G. M. 1932, *England under Queen Anne: Ramillies and the Union with Scotland*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, pp. 174–5, 285–6; Trevelyan, G. M. 1929, 'The parliamentary union of Scotland and England', *The Listener*, vol. XX, pp. 669–71, 697–8; Trevelyan, *History of England*, pp. 538–9; Cannadine, G. M. *Trevelyan*, pp. 115–16.

67 Trevelyan, G. M. 1940, 'All in the front-line now: are we ready in heart and soul?', *Sunday Times*, 7 July; 'For ever England', *The Observer*, 3 December 1944. The latter was a review of Francis Brett Young's epic war poem 'The Island' from 1944, a celebration of national identity even more riveted than Trevelyan's in traditional English rural values. Cannadine, D. 2002, 'Emollient, Stanley Baldwin and Francis Brett Young', *In Churchill's Shadow*, Allen Lane & Penguin Press, London.

68 Trevelyan, G. M. 1944, *English Social History*, Preface, p. vii. This is a passage invariably misquoted and misunderstood. The allusion is, of course, to another English nostalgic exercise of the time: see Waugh, E. 1945, *Brideshead Revisited: The sacred and profane memories of Captain Charles Ryder*, Penguin Books, London.



or she encounters.<sup>69</sup> Precisely because the ‘proper function of the biographer is to deal with the individual, the contingent and the instantaneous’, because biography is a descriptive mode of narration, happily resistant to theory—‘a form of understanding that consists in seeing connections’—it may even act as a corrective to studies of nationalism, which suffer from a surfeit of theorising or ahistorical model-building, and ‘a craving for generality’, as Wittgenstein puts it, ‘born out of [a] preoccupation with the method[s] of science’.<sup>70</sup>

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69 Tuchman, T. 1979, ‘Biography as a prism of history’, in M. Pachter (ed.), *Telling Lives, The Biographer’s Art*, New Republic Books, Washington, DC; Kessler-Harris, A. 2009, ‘Why biography?’, *American Historical Review*, (June), pp. 625–30; Thompson, E. P. 1993, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the moral law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. xix.

70 Monk, R. 2007, ‘Life without theory: biography as an exemplar of philosophical understanding’, *Poetics Today*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 527–70, especially pp. 529, 531–2, 546, 563 ff.



# Enoch Powell: The lonesome leader

Ben Wellings

## Introduction

By all accounts Enoch Powell was not someone you would warm to, but his personal awkwardness was offset by his enduring popular appeal—a charisma that enabled support for his political causes to cross class boundaries and party affiliations. Despite his education and erudition—or perhaps because of it—he appealed to the working classes and Labour voters, and appeared as a man speaking truth unto power, unafraid to break the political taboos of the day and thereby appealing to individuals who similarly felt silenced by political developments. Therefore his mass appeal lay in his projection of himself as an outsider: the middle-class parvenu surrounded by Tory grandees; the spokesman for the oppressed white majority; the lone voice against Europe in the Conservative Party; the defender of Protestant Ulster’s freedom. Support for such causes may have been the death knell for his leadership ambitions, as he was unable to make the enduring connections necessary for such a role; however, his leadership existed in a less formal sense than through a political party or government. Powell’s political appeal lay in the fact that he was a self-consciously lonesome leader.

We can view Powell as both an exemplar and an articulator of a post-imperial English nationalism, but one deeply rooted in the experience of empire. Here, then, is what Jonathan Hearn has referred to as the ‘ecology’ of Powell’s national identity and indeed his nationalism. Hearn argues that ‘the relationship between categorical and personal identities will always be mediated by intervening forms of social organisation’.<sup>1</sup> For Powell, these social categories meditating his sense of national self were empire, state and locality. But here we run into a difficulty in examining English nationalism through a biographical approach to Enoch Powell: Powell not only identified strongly with England, but he also expressed it for others. To paraphrase Hearn, he fused his individual agency with the larger agency of the nation.<sup>2</sup> But this was not merely an individual quest for power within one’s life. Powell sought to mobilise the English and British nation for political ends at a distinct moment in political time when previous national narratives were in flux. Powell self-consciously moved ‘against the

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1 Hearn, this volume.

2 Ibid.

historical flow', talking of England as a nation nearing the end of its natural life and crucially under threat. But he also cast himself 'against the flow' of other social categories, notably party, in order to increase his popular appeal. Thus, his political charisma—in distinct contrast with his personal charisma—lay in an ambivalent relationship to the 'ecology' in which he operated: strongly influenced by a brief experience of empire, a deep veneration of the English state, but breaking free of the confines of party and living the life of a political loner in order to speak for the nation.

## The Myth of Powell

On 25 February 1974, John Enoch Powell rose to address an audience in Saltaire in Yorkshire. On this occasion he commanded an audience of an estimated 1000 people with another 1000 having been turned away. One older member of the audience claimed to have walked six miles to see Powell speak.<sup>3</sup> This was a large audience for someone who was formally outside politics, having stood down as MP for Wolverhampton South-West at the beginning of the month. But in the previous six years, Powell had become one of the best-known and most controversial political figures in British politics. The audience cheered him and chanted his name as he rose to speak for the second time in a week on his decision to oppose the party he had been a member of only weeks before. The issue was Britain's membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), the advent of which Powell could not reconcile in his conscience. This was the issue that led to his decision not to stand for re-election and indeed to advocate voting for the Labour opposition on polling day. But as he began to speak, a heckler from the audience yelled 'Judas!' 'Electrified, Powell pointed to him. He shouted back: "Judas was paid! Judas was paid! I am making a sacrifice."'<sup>4</sup>

This incident during the general election campaign of February 1974 is indicative of Powell's political charisma and his ability to mobilise opinion—or at least strongly cohere sections of the public—with his ideas and rhetoric. The intensity of feeling in the hall that night spoke to the support he had gained for himself and his ideas during his political career, but especially since his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech to the West Midlands Conservative Association in April 1968. The presence of a heckler, however, offended by his betrayal of the Conservative Party also attested to his divisiveness and not just amongst

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3 Warman, C. 1974, 'Mr Powell reaffirms EEC call but says "I shall die Tory"', *The Times*, 26 February 1974.

4 Cited in Heffer, S. 1998, *Like the Roman. The life of Enoch Powell*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, p. 704. A similar account of this incident is given by Cosgrave alongside a photograph of Powell in full verbal flood, although *The Times* from 26 February played down Powell's emotive response and said that he responded to the heckler with the same retort but 'grimly'. Cosgrave, P. 1989, *The Lives of Enoch Powell*, The Bodley Head, London.

political opponents on the left. His response to the heckler also demonstrated a command of biblical knowledge that befitted a classical scholar and translator of the New Testament from Greek and a man who liked to wear his learning on his sleeve. His superior knowledge of the scene at the Garden of Gethsemane trumped his interlocutor and drew a rapturous response from his audience. In an instant it also refashioned Powell from the Betrayer to the Martyr.

This image of the brilliant yet persecuted loner outside the walls of party and answerable to nothing but his conscience was an essential part of Powell's appeal. His charisma lay in his combination of logic and professorial analysis along with his emotional response and intensity of feeling towards certain issues. Combining this charisma with issues that were popular and populist, Powell drew support from across class and political cleavages and in doing so outlined a vision of the nation. But this vision was not one without contradictions. Powell's logic and political style—or naivety—did not allow him to lead from within government. Importantly, if the balance between professorial logic and emotion was out in his thinking and rhetoric, his popular appeal diminished. Neither was he always able to translate his intellectual reasoning into political action with a mass appeal. Instead his popular appeal rested on him being the outsider 'going against the flow', a loner, leading a national community.

Enoch Powell died on 8 February 1998. The following morning *The Sun* said:

He always said what people in power didn't want to hear. That was because Enoch Powell was almost always right. His death robs the country of one of the finest Conservative thinkers in history. Enoch didn't care who he upset if he believed something needed to be said. What a change from today's fawning Yes-men.<sup>5</sup>

*The Sun's* bite-sized opinion encapsulated what we might call the 'myth of Powell': a narrative that aligned the wider social category of the nation with a widespread understanding of Powell's role in public life. In this narrative, Powell was a thinker, a man of conscience and a man unsullied by the grubby compromises of quotidian politics. There is truth in all of this, although these qualities may not have made Powell a brilliant politician. But there can be no denying his impact on British politics in his day, or his continuing appeal amongst some members of the community. Margaret Thatcher described Powell as 'magnetic', adding that 'there will never be anybody so compelling'.<sup>6</sup> His most recent biographer, Simon Heffer, argued that 'Powell's contribution to British national life was greater and longer-lasting than most executive action

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5 'The Sun says...', *The Sun*, 9 February 1998.

6 Wooding, D. 1998, 'Maggie's tribute as Enoch dies at 85', *The Sun*, 9 February.

could ever be. His effect on the thinking of others, from the highest ministerial level down to the British elector, was perhaps more profound than that of any other practicing politician of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

These assessments of Powell—only two amongst many—attest to the way in which he became a tribune for a new articulation of English nationalism, a nationalism that was both post-imperial and rooted in the experience and assumptions of England's past. But even more than this, Powell actually embodied and lived English nationalism even as he acted it out. Powell experienced the Empire at the moment of its passing. Much of his political life was spent in an attempt to work out a coherent and consistent framework for English nationalism within a post-imperial British framework. Powell's nationalism was both intelligent and narrow-minded; it was articulate, expressed with panache and at times spiteful. It was this attempt at a consistent underlying logic—unusual in British conservatism—which led him towards positions and statements that would challenge his party loyalty and make his continued membership of the Conservative Party untenable. But the consequences of this unyielding logic and Powell's subsequent alienation from potential supporters added to his aura as a man of principle placing nation before party and personal interest, or, as Powell liked to put it, subsuming the part to the whole.

Powell's own actions put him at odds with many if not most of his colleagues and contributed to his 'lonesomeness', which in turn fed into the 'myth of Powell'. This lonesomeness inspired respect and frustration in equal measure. Even those opposed to Powell's views could register admiration for the man, usually predicated on his intellectual honesty. In the wake of the 'Rivers of Blood' speech, Vidya Anand and F. A. Ridley wrote of Powell's 'deserved reputation for his outstanding intellect and his political sagacity'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Paul Foot, whilst portraying Powell's Birmingham speech as an attempt to harness racist attitudes to help Powell win the leadership of the Conservative Party, could admire the way in which Powell cooperated with an obviously hostile commentator in the preparation of his Penguin Special on Powell and immigration, an attribute that made him stand out against some of his party colleagues.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, otherwise sympathetic observers such as Patrick Cosgrave could not help but notice that Powell was not the easiest of people to work with. 'In no ordinary sense of the word', wrote Cosgrave, 'could Powell be called a good colleague. His interpretation of his duty, exact and honourable as it was, was at least gnomic, if not even Jesuitical.'<sup>10</sup> Part of the reason for his expulsion from the Shadow

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7 Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 958.

8 Anand, V. and Ridley, F. 1969, *The Enigma of Enoch Powell. An essay in political realism*, Medusa Press, London, p. 9.

9 Foot, P. 1969, *The Rise of Enoch Powell, An examination to Enoch Powell's attitude to immigration and race*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, Preface.

10 Cosgrave, *The Lives of Enoch Powell*, p. 228.

Cabinet in April 1968 was the declaration of two senior colleagues to the party leader that they would no longer work with Powell. Powell's fall from grace might suggest another interpretation away from Anand and Ridley's view of him as a 'political maestro' and tend in the direction of some sort of political naivety whereby the pursuit of logic and consistency was a death knell for his political ambitions (but not his popular appeal). So his sacking from the Shadow Cabinet freed him from the constraints of collective responsibility and pushed him closer to 'the people' on whose behalf, from this point on, he began to speak.

So in assessing Powell's impact on the mobilisation of English nationalism as a political force in the late 1960s and early 1970s, we cannot divorce his personal identity from the issues that he espoused. Powell's vision of the nation coalesced around four main issues: free-market neo-liberalism; opposing Britain's part in the process of European integration; a defence of Northern Ireland's integration within the United Kingdom; and anti-immigration. It was around the last issue that Powell had the greatest impact.

Postwar Britain experienced a labour shortage. During these years of austerity, many Britons migrated in the hope of a better future for themselves and their children. This population outflow exacerbated a labour shortage created by the demands of postwar reconstruction. The answer to this shortage was to bring in labour from the so-called New Commonwealth: essentially the 'non-White Dominions' of the former empire. In a legal sense, migration to Britain was fairly straightforward since, until 1962, any subject of the Crown had the right of residence and employment in the United Kingdom. But in that year, the Conservative Government sought to restrict this inflow of 'coloured' labour. In the general election of 1964, the issue of race relations made an appearance in the constituency of Smethwick. But the issue of race really came to a head in 1968 over the Labour Government's plans to introduce a Race Relations Bill.

Unlike Paul Foot's analysis that Powell crudely used racism as part of an attempt to win the leadership of the Conservative Party from Edward Heath, it seems as if Powell had made some speeches about immigration in the years before 1968. The speech he gave to the West Midlands Conservative Association in Birmingham on Saturday, 20 April 1968 was, however, quite different to any of his previous forays into the subject. In this speech, Powell mixed population projections based on figures gleaned from the Registrar-General with unsubstantiated anecdote: a perfect mixture of Powell's emotion and logic. The speech was destined to attract press attention as it seemed to stray off Powell's defence portfolio and last, and importantly, it was recorded on film. The vision of Britain contained in the speech was apocalyptic, conjuring visions of the slave revolts of the nineteenth century. 'In twenty years time', Powell relayed from an unnamed constituent, 'the black man will have the whip-hand over the

white'.<sup>11</sup> He went further in relaying the story of an elderly woman forced to move from her house, taunted as a 'racialist' by 'wide-grinning piccaninnies', situating the defence of British sovereignty right into the streets and homes of white people in his constituency of Wolverhampton South. He concluded that Britain as a nation must be 'literally mad' to allow continued immigration and defend the rights of such immigrant groups with instruments such as the proposed Race Relations Bill currently before Parliament.

The speech created a political uproar. Powell was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet the following Sunday evening. But the speech, and Powell's sacking, also mobilised support for him across existing political and class boundaries, establishing that Powell was most politically appealing as an outsider. On Tuesday, 23 April, dockers from London's West India docks went on strike and marched in support of Powell's right to 'free speech', immediately identifying Powell as a lone voice within the political Establishment.<sup>12</sup> The following day meat packers from Smithfield market struck and marched to the House of Commons, presenting Powell with a 92-page petition in his support. Letters flooded into his London home at the rate of four or five sacks per delivery, amounting to a total of about 40 000 letters within four days, of which Powell claimed that only about a dozen were opposed to his views.<sup>13</sup> Powell's speech gained support from other anti-Establishment figures on the right, beginning the sense that Powell might be a sophist, but his political constituency was right-wing populist and radical. Policy Director of the newly formed National Front, A. K. Chesterton, claimed that Powell's views did not vary in any way from those of the National Front, whilst Oswald Mosley claimed that Powell was only saying what Mosley himself had said nine years earlier.<sup>14</sup> At the end of a giddy week in politics, *The Times* commented that '[o]ver the past six days, Mr Powell has stirred the national emotions more than any other single politician since the war'.<sup>15</sup> But aside from this potential rupturing of support for a Labour government and legitimisation of views held by the extreme right, the greatest immediate impact was on the Conservative Party. Tory leader, Edward Heath, initially struggled to balance support for Powell over immigration whilst maintaining party unity. Powell's sacking in April resolved this problem in the short term, but set a precedent for subsequent action regarding European integration: a principled stand followed by more effective politicking free from Cabinet or party constraints. Powell's stance appealed to the right wing of the Conservative Party, in particular the Monday Club, whom he addressed in November 1968. On 12 February 1969, Powell and Duncan Sandys introduced a bill seeking to amend the immigration

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11 Cited in Lord Howard of Rising (ed.) 2012, *Enoch at 100. A re-examination of the life, politics and philosophy of Enoch Powell*, Biteback Publishing, London, p. 173.

12 'Dockers march for Powell', *The Times*, 24 April 1968.

13 'Mounting volume of race protest. 40,000 Powell postbag', *The Times*, 25 April 1968.

14 Labour Research Department 1969, *Powell and His Allies*, LRD Publications, London, pp. 15–16.

15 Trethowan, I. 1968, 'Mr Enoch Powell: a Cromwell or a Goldwater?', *The Times*, 26 April 1968.



laws by restricting the right of dependants of migrants to entry to the United Kingdom, supported by a significant number of senior Conservatives including the up-and-coming Margaret Thatcher.<sup>16</sup> Powell's legacy, however, may well have been beneficial in electoral terms: an NOP survey during the 1970 election found that 18 per cent of usually Labour voters said they had voted Conservative because of Powell and a further 22 per cent had considered doing so.<sup>17</sup>

Another issue over which Powell was outspoken and garnered popular support was Britain's part in the deepening process of European integration focused on negotiations for the United Kingdom's accession to the EEC and the referendum on Britain's continuing participation in the Common Market in 1975. Here again, Powell was out of step with his party; indeed he resigned from the Conservative Party ahead of the February 1974 election since he could not endorse Britain's membership of the EEC. He went so far as to urge the electorate to vote Labour since that party at least might hold a referendum on continuing membership, implying in a televised interview on 26 February that he had already done so himself by postal vote.<sup>18</sup> Again we see Powell's strong identification with the nation coupled with the need to have himself expelled from political organisations in order to act upon matters of principle. The Common Market issue and his stance on it allowed Powell to further articulate his vision of the nation as irrevocably linked with the enduring sovereignty of the Crown-in-Parliament as well as to place himself again in the position of the loner and man of principle who always put nation before party. Although no longer a candidate standing for Parliament, Powell could still draw crowds greater even than the Leader of the Opposition and his erstwhile chief, Edward Heath.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the election campaign, Powell felt he could not remain silent on the threat posed to the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Parliament by Britain's membership of the EEC. Accordingly, he re-entered the political fray, simultaneously placing himself at odds with Edward Heath and putting nation before party. At Saltaire in Yorkshire on the night of 25 February, Powell defended his decision to vote Labour. Claiming that the defence of Britain's national and political inheritance had never been the preserve of one party alone, Powell declared '[i]n that defence a citizen may without inconsistency or discredit stand side by side with those from whom on lesser matters, however important in themselves, he totally dissents'.<sup>20</sup> With regard to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, he added in eloquent yet populist tones that

the miracles of tergiversation which the present Administration has accomplished leave nothing to admire cessors in that department. In

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16 Labour Research Department, *Powell and His Allies*, p. 22.

17 Cosgrave, *The Lives of Enoch Powell*, p. 289.

18 Sweeney, C. 1974, 'Mr Powell has voted by post for Labour', *The Times*, 27 February 1974.

19 Warman, *The Times*, 26 February 1974.

20 *Ibid.*

the prowess of their predeacrobatics the previous Prime Minister [Harold Wilson] for all his nimbleness and skill is simply no match for the breathtaking, thoroughgoing efficiency of the present one [Edward Heath].<sup>21</sup>

As in 1970 when it seemed that Powell helped win the election for the Conservatives, it seemed that in February 1974 Powell foiled Heath's attempt to form a parliamentary majority, opening the way for Wilson to form a minority government in March.

There were, however, severe limits to Powell's appeal, partly to do with the translation of his personal identity into his political one. What emerges from a consideration of the issues of immigration and European integration was that Powell was articulating a vision of the English nation predicated upon a defence of (Crown-in-Parliament) sovereignty, but it was a vision of the nation in which his charisma, personality and logical approach to issues also prevented him from broadening his support base. Indeed, in the early 1970s there were some tongue-in-cheek references to *Wolverhampton-les-deux-Eglises*, a reference to General de Gaulle's residence to which he retreated before assuming leadership of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Powell's precocious belief in a neo-liberal and deregulated economy, however, did not allow him to make quick common cause with the dockers or mobilise the meat packers in April 1968. When presented with the petition by the striking Smithfield workers outside Parliament, Powell thanked them but discouraged them from taking further industrial action, advising them to write to their MPs instead. Here was an example of how Powell's logic on race and industrial relations—both internally coherent—clashed. But although these fears of Powell as a latter-day de Gaulle or Mosley can be understood, there were certain contradictions that arose from Powell's unusually logical approach to the nation, which resulted in the vision of England bequeathed to posterity by Powell being close to his own political personality and profile: readily articulated, somewhat resentful and not quite part of the mainstream but always present in the wings.

To understand why this was the case, we need to examine Powell's vision of England. Powell's thinking about the nation had cohered somewhat since the mid 1950s when he co-authored a book with Angus Maude entitled *Biography of a Nation: A short history of Britain*. In the introduction, Powell and Maude run up against the illogical and subjective bulwarks of the nation. 'There is no objective definition of what constitutes a nation', they wrote:

It is that which thinks it is a nation. Race, language, geography—none of these is conclusive. If geography made a nation, there would not be

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21 Ibid.

two nations in Ireland today. If identity of language were the key, the Swiss would not be one nation, yet they are. As for race, Hitler looked for it as a basis of nationhood, with all that was left of German learning and science to help him, but failed to find it.<sup>22</sup>

In short, they concluded that '[n]ations are the units of mankind as a political animal'.<sup>23</sup> Yet to this ultimately political definition was added a biological one, the refutation of Hitler's racism notwithstanding: 'Yet however intensively it is studied, this phenomenon of national consciousness in mankind remains almost as mysterious as that of the life of the individual organism.'<sup>24</sup> His and Maude's history of Britain was almost elegiac, concerning itself with the way that

the consciousness of being a nation began among the English; how it grew and changed, embracing with various intensity and various meaning the inhabitants not only of these islands but of countries and continents across the world; and how that consciousness is now waning and its limits shrinking as if some natural span were nearing its close.<sup>25</sup>

As the 1950s wore on, Powell sharpened his concept of the nation and—in England's case at least—linked it to a certain vision of homogeneity under the Crown-in-Parliament. Writing in the *National and English Review* in August 1958, Powell reflected on his sojourn in Australia as Professor of Greek at Sydney University in the late 1930s and commented on the White Australia Policy, which had underpinned Australia's national imaginings since Federation in 1901: 'Finding herself providentially lacking the elements of racial division, yet able to achieve her national development without creating them', wrote Powell, 'Australia would be worse than foolish if she did not jealously preserve the advantage of an all-white population', adding that 'there will be problems enough in the assimilation of the "new Australians" from Europe'.<sup>26</sup> But by the 1960s, Australia and Britain were different in many regards: in Australia the mood was one of optimistic national development, whereas Powell believed that Britain was gripped by a resignation to relative decline. It was this resignation that, in his view, was blighting politics and the national spirit:

The British are a parliamentary nation: internally and externally they are conditioned and defined by that institution and that historical experience. If our values are in danger, and if our freedom and

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22 Maude, A. and Powell, E. 1955, *Biography of a Nation: A short history of Britain*, Phoenix House, London, p. 7.

23 Ibid., p. 7.

24 Ibid., p. 8.

25 Ibid., p. 9.

26 Powell, E. 1958, 'Development down under', *National and English Review*, August, pp. 67–70.

independence are in danger, it is because Parliament is endangered, and endangered in the only way an institution can be—by inner loss of conviction.<sup>27</sup>

Powell came to believe that the way to prolong England's natural span was to reverse the inner loss of conviction and defend it from threats inside and out. More and more he linked the nation with homogeneity under the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Parliament. The link between the threat to Parliament's sovereignty and the provisions and *finalité* of the Treaty of Rome are easy to discern. Powell outlined them in one of his first speeches against the Common Market in Smethwick during 1969:

The precondition for any political unity is the subordination of the parts to the whole. Short of force, this can only come about through a section settled and deep instinctive conviction felt by those concerned that they belong first and foremost to the whole and that its interest[s] override those of the parts. Unless and until that conviction exists, democratic or representative institutions are unworkable. On the other hand, without such institutions, the acts of sovereignty, which a political unit must perform on behalf of all its members and binding on all its members, would be intolerable and unacceptable.<sup>28</sup>

This similar logic of homogeneity also informed some of his thinking regarding the consequences of immigration, or more particularly, the concentration of immigrant communities in England's cities. Speaking to the Monday Club in April 1976, Powell logically imagined a homogenous immigrant community in parliamentary political terms. If 5 per cent of the population was 'coloured' or 'black', Powell mused, adding 'it tends to be brought under one single classification in order to enhance its leverage', then in a quota system it would require 32 MPs—more than the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, the Ulster Unionist Party and Liberals combined. Powell went on:

I need not follow the analysis further in order to demonstrate how parliamentary democracy disintegrates when the national homogeneity of the electorate is broken down by a large and sharp alteration in the composition of the population. While the institutions and liberties on which British liberty depends are being progressively surrendered to the European superstate, the forces which will sap and destroy them from within are allowed to accumulate unchecked.<sup>29</sup>

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27 Cited in Ritchie, R. 1978, *Nation or No Nation? Six years in British politics*, BT Batsford, London, p. 134.

28 Powell, E. 1969, Speech on the Common Market to a public meeting at the Warley College of Technology, Smethwick, 5 September 1969, Anti-Common Market League, London.

29 Cited in Ritchie, *Nation or No Nation*, p. 166.

More and more, Powell was guided by emotion rather than at the expense of the logical precision that even his detractors had admired in the 1960s. In 1988 Powell estimated that 'in the foreseeable future' (again displaying what was becoming an uncharacteristic lack of precision on this subject), the 'New Commonwealth' ethnic population will represent one-third or more of the population of inner London and other cities in England. This will be more than sufficient to secure effective political control locally and nationally 'by dint of its distinctiveness and solidarity', and this point could not be reached 'without civil strife of a degree that makes it indistinguishable from civil war'.<sup>30</sup> This lack of precision—the emotion minus the logic compounded by hyperbole—had the effect of leaving his core support unchanged, but allowed his opponents more and more room to attack the basic assumptions of his arguments.

The logic of cleaving closely to a Parliamentary definition of nationhood was now skewing the analysis. In such a manner did Powell's charisma start to break down. Much of his appeal rested on the combination of logic and emotion giving him the aura of being 'almost always right', to quote *The Sun's* obituary cited above. But when these two elements were decoupled, the spell weakened and all that was left was an emotive man speaking out in what seemed to those unimpressed by his use of language, history and numbers a nasty advocacy of what we would today call ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, defending the unity of parliamentary sovereignty in Ulster may have been sound reasoning, but it was not good politics from the point of view of mass mobilisation in England. Indeed his adherence to Crown-in-Parliament sovereignty arguably weakened his ability to mobilise popular sovereignty. Powell was indeed populist, as many had long realised. 'Powellism is a subtly constructed appeal', wrote the *Sunday Times Magazine* on 29 December 1968:

It is populist and more. It will unite Mrs Mary Whitehouse, the old lady who campaigns against electricity pylons or tree fellers, the resentful poor, the racist poor, the red-tape haters, the weak, the halt and the lame. All those who hunger for a good thumping cause, country and flag.<sup>31</sup>

But at the same time, Powell struggled to reconcile what Tom Nairn identified as 'the necessary resort to populism' in nationalist mobilisation<sup>32</sup> with the sovereignty of Parliament. Speaking at Chester-le-Street in January 1972, Powell told his audience that '[t]he power is still the people's if they have the will

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30 Cited in Lewis, R. 1988, *Anti-Racism. A mania exposed*, Quartet Books, London, un-numbered page in introduction.

31 Cited in Labour Research Department, *Powell and His Allies*, p. 23.

32 Nairn, T. 1981 [1977], *The Break-Up of Britain. Crisis and neo-nationalism*, New Left Books, London, p. 339.

to use it'.<sup>33</sup> But Powell couldn't divorce this incipient 'People Power' from his understanding of Parliament and a Burkean view of representative democracy. As far as Powell was concerned, the development of the EEC was a direct threat to the nation since it was a threat to Parliament. This fact can explain some of Powell's initial prevarication over whether or not to support a referendum on EEC membership. Eventually, though, Powell supported a referendum, thereby undermining the sovereignty of the institution that he sought to defend.

But if his logical drive to defend the nation by defending Parliament through a referendum was straining even Powell's intellectual abilities, there were other areas where his personality and logical approach undercut his potential mobilisation of English nationalism. The first of these was the fact that Powell was not a 'clubbable' man. This meant that what could seem like a principled stand by a lone tribune actually translated into an unwillingness to work with other people—and the feeling was often mutual. This 'aleness' meant that Powell was not able to form the necessary political alliances that would have enabled him to fully capitalise on his popularity post 1968. As the campaign to derail the accession to the Treaty of Rome grew in Parliament in the early 1970s, Nigel Spearing MP assessed Powell's likely actions in a letter to Labour Anti-Marketeer Peter Shore:

It would therefore seem likely that [Powell] will launch an individual anti-market campaign...This could be either chauvinistic, or more likely on post-imperial criteria. I suggest that his Indian background is a very important influence. If Powell believes what he says, and I think he does, he will try to destroy Heath rather than see us sign the Treaty.<sup>34</sup>

This excerpt also points to other dimensions of Powell's attitudes and actions that could be perceived as principled stands but which had more prosaic roots. Powell was only human and part of his antipathy towards the EEC was that it was the pet project of Edward Heath. Powell hated Heath and the feeling was mutual (Heath's silence when Powell died in 1998 was deafening). So what was in part a clash of ideals over the future of Britain and the lessons to be learned from Europe's past was also in considerable part a clash of personalities.

Powell's self-presentation as a loner was good for his persecuted image; his principled stand on particular issues was a similarly important plank of his charismatic appeal, but it was not necessarily good politics. In certain ways, then, Powell, if not exactly the 'Patron Saint of Lost Causes', could more plausibly be described as the 'Patron Saint of Rearguard Actions'. Nor did Powell offer a compelling vision of Britain's future, except one rooted in England's past.

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33 Powell, E. 1973, *Common Market: Renegotiate or come out*, Elliot Right Way Books, Kingswood, UK, p. 118.

34 Spearing, N. 1971, Letter to Peter Shore MP, 31 May 1971, British Library of Political and Economic Sciences, SHORE/9/44 [Miscellaneous, 1971].

Such then is the enigma of Enoch Powell: of an intellectually brilliant man and a political maestro seeking at once to lead contemporary Britain in two ways, both new and old.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Powell's seeming mass appeal needs to be closely examined. Whilst it is true that there were strikes and marches in support of Powell's 'right to free speech' on the issue of immigration and race relations in 1968, there were also demonstrations against Powell and his views. Tony Barrett, a spokesman at the Tilbury Docks, stated that 'many dockers are disgusted by the support shown to Mr Powell'.<sup>36</sup> The actions of Ray Campbell supporting those marching for Powell should give us pause, too. Campbell, described by *The Times* as 'a West Indian', told its reporter that 'I do not agree with what Mr Powell said, but the men are my mates and they treat me alright. I'm going out with them to show support for the union.'<sup>37</sup> This evidence alone shows that there were dynamics at play other than the force of Powell's ideas alone.

And then there was the hostility to Powell and the implication of his ideas. The 'Rivers of Blood' speech caused a storm of controversy. The Reverend Canon Mark Green feared for the effects of such attitudes on society, and asked rhetorically 'are we simply to tear up all [the New Testament] says about the reconciliation of races?'<sup>38</sup> And whilst Powell's historical memory was filled with the development and expansion of the institutions of British representative government, other observers' view of history was more contemporary. One former Conservative MP, Humphrey Berkeley, said that Powell's speech was 'the most disgraceful public utterance since the days of Sir Oswald Mosley',<sup>39</sup> which put him in common cause with Frank Cousins, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, who reminded strikers that before the war the dockers were the ones who marched against the Blackshirts.<sup>40</sup>

In short, Powell's views and style were ultimately too divisive to mobilise a broad and enduring national base, and his logical defence of Crown-in-Parliament sovereignty shied him away from any Gaullist authoritarianism. Certainly Powell was able to cohere a significant section of the electorate around issues such as immigration, Europe, taxation and the economy. His principled defence of parliamentary sovereignty in Ulster gained him support, too, but far less so in England. Furthermore, Powell's ideas had a legacy that was taken up by others in the Conservative Party, and his status as the conscience of the party was strong during the years of Thatcherite ascendancy. Many of his causes

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35 Anand and Ridley, *The Enigma of Enoch Powell*, p. 23.

36 'Dockers march for Powell', *The Times*, 24 April 1968.

37 Ibid.

38 Green, M. 1968, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 29 April 1968.

39 'Mosley speeches recalled', *The Times*, 22 April 1968.

40 'Mounting volume of race protest. 40,000 Powell postbag', *The Times*, 25 April 1968.

were championed between 1979 and 1990, but many were not (or rather the ideas were championed but the policy actions spoke differently). A free-market economy was implemented by the Thatcherites, who also took a hard line on immigration. But only in Thatcher's later years as Prime Minister did she adopt a Powellite line on Europe, and with disastrous results for her and her party after she left Downing Street in 1990. Ulster was not treated as an unequivocally integral part of the United Kingdom after 1985. The final failure of Powell's mass mobilisation was signalled by the Conservative Party leadership under David Cameron as it positioned itself for government between 2005 and 2010. In 'detoxifying' the Conservative brand and attempting to redress the image of the Tories as a 'nasty' party, Cameron was quick to move away from the 'toxic trio' of policy issues: immigration, Europe and tax.<sup>41</sup>

Powell was a divisive figure and his obituaries are a testament to that. Former chancellor Norman Lamont described him as 'the greatest politician of my lifetime...a genuine giant amongst pygmies'. But Denis Healey had a different view:

Enoch was an intellectual in the worst sense of the word. He would pursue everything to its logical conclusion, even if it made political nonsense...The best thing he ever did was marry Pamela who is a very nice human being. Enoch was a bit short on the human side.<sup>42</sup>

These views encapsulate some of Powell's charisma and also why Powell failed to mobilise English nationalism in an enduring way. His personal appeal was based on his combination of logical precision and emotional engagement with causes he clearly felt passionate about. This logical approach to politics forced him out of government and led him to adopt causes that were not politically advantageous in the formal career sense, but which gained him wide support in the country. This tendency also led him to be perceived as a loner outside the constraints of politics at a time when principle seemed in short supply. But there were tensions in his logical approach to English nationalism, most specifically in the relationship between popular and parliamentary sovereignty, tensions that reduced the logical consistency of Powell's approach and thereby some of his appeal. Furthermore, as many people were repelled by Powell's ideas as were attracted to them. Since his ideas were put forward with such eloquence—though at times the sophistry obfuscated as much as it illuminated—there was much for his critics to attack, and the cold logician could repel as well as attract, inhibiting Powell from building important and enduring political alliances related to his causes. And even though the issues he chose, especially immigration and race, resonated with a broad base, ultimately he could cohere

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41 Bale, T. 2010, *The Conservative Party from Thatcher to Cameron*, Polity, London.

42 Lamont, N. and Healey, D. 1998, 'Hero and villain: opinion', *The Sun*, 9 February 1998.



only a core group of supporters who saw in Powell a far-sighted man of principle whose stance caused him to remain the outspoken, yet lonesome, tribune of the English nation.



# The Personal Nationalism of Helmut Kohl: A paragon of Germany's new normality?

Christian Wicke

## Introduction

Helmut Kohl, the purported 'Chancellor of Unity', is a key figure in the history of German nationalism. During the Cold War era, when a German nation-state was territorially absent and society in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had developed a culture of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, of trying to come to terms with the horrific Nazi past, Kohl's personal nationalism made up the quest to be a normal nation.<sup>1</sup> After World War II, the FRG assimilated into the conglomerate of Western nation-states situated under the umbrellas of NATO and the European Community. West German state officials were forced to espouse the government line that the division of the nation had been unjust and unnatural, and that the FRG was the only legitimate representative of the German nation. While West German politicians frequently faced tensions between the cultures of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and Westernisation, the representatives of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) marketed their country as the one that stood essentially in opposition to the fascist culture of the Nazi empire and its continuation in the FRG. The incorporation of the GDR into the FRG on 3 October 1990 ended this dichotomous political development in the form of the (re-)establishment of a German nation-state, which could be interpreted as a historic leap towards normality. Jürgen Habermas, who is of the same generation as Kohl, has been apprehensive about this process of normalisation. The German philosopher feared his fellow citizens would lose their critical awareness of the fact that they only truly became Western through, and after, the atrocities of the Holocaust, and were thus gambling away their post-national achievements.<sup>2</sup>

Kohl's biography provides a useful tool not only for exploring the development of contemporary nationalism in postwar Germany, but also for engaging with some theories and ideal typologies that emerged within the broad field of Nationalism Studies. This paper is not intended to offer a classic, chronological account of

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1 Fischer, T. and Lorenz, M. (eds) 2007, *Lexikon der 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in Deutschland: Debatten- und Diskursgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus nach 1945*, Transcript, Bielefeld.

2 Habermas, J. 1995, *Die Normalität der Berliner Republik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

Kohl's life, but rather to address the value of biographical method in relation to the concepts of nation and nationalism, and the application of ideal types of nationalism to the analysis of the personal nationalism of an individual. First, I shall discuss this methodological approach, and outline the (West) German context in which Kohl's personal nationalism can be located. Subsequently, I shall take some very high angle shots of four significant biographical features that together animate the 'ecology' of Kohl's national identity.<sup>3</sup> These four features will be directly linked to particular kinds of nationalism that have been established here for analytical purposes, without assuming that this ideal typology existed in any real and pure form.

Kohl will be treated as a (1) *Catholic Nationalist*, whose religious denomination shaped the way he represented himself and his national identity. Kohl will then be observed as a (2) *Liberal Nationalist*, whose date of birth influenced his ideology and self-narration. Born on 3 April 1930, he belonged to the '45-er' generation, those who were on the whole strongly loyal to the newly Westernised state of the FRG. Further, his origin in the Rhine, in the Palatinate region near the French border, also played an important role in Kohl's personal nationalism. This allows me to examine Kohl as a (3) *Romantic Nationalist*, who expressed a cultural, decentralised and almost apolitical nationalism. As a final point, Kohl will be analysed as a (4) *Nationalist Historian*. His educational socialisation, including a PhD in History from the University of Heidelberg (in 1958) on the political reconstruction of his home region after 1945,<sup>4</sup> facilitated his world view, in which nations constitute a normative order, legitimised through the historicisation of positive continuities that transcended negative periods, such as the Nazi era. This work, moreover, had obvious autobiographical tendencies: Kohl described the place of his political socialisation.

The vanishing point of this ideal-typological analysis is Kohl's hope for normality. He saw this as only being realisable in the form of a united nation—united in ideological, cultural and (geo)political terms—which he believed he legitimised through his biography. He emphasised the four abovementioned features—denominational, generational, regional and educational—to produce an image of himself that was in accordance with his quest for the preservation, re-normalisation and thus Westernisation of German nationalism. Kohl selectively conveyed his (auto)biography in order to bring forth an image of himself that Habermas described as '*dieverkörperte Entwarnung*', which can loosely be translated as 'the all-clear incarnate' or '-embodied'. Although Habermas was being slightly tongue-in-cheek when he used this expression, making an allusion to the chancellor's enormous physical size, he was primarily

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3 For the concept, see Hearn, this volume.

4 Kohl, H. 1958, 'Die politische Entwicklung in der Pfalz und das Wiedererstehen der Parteien nach 1945', PhD thesis, University of Heidelberg, copied from the Bibliothek des Niedersächsischen Landtags, Hannover.

referring to Kohl's appearance as someone whom nobody in the world should fear anymore. The Federal Republican German, as represented by Kohl, would no longer be abnormal, but finally firmly anchored in Western culture and ethics.<sup>5</sup> The Christian Democratic politician was thus succeeding—at least to some degree—in exploiting his own biography to project his vision of Germany into the public and overcoming the *Sonderweg* paradigm.

## Nationalism, Normality and the Biographical Response

Nationalism has become normal in the contemporary Western world, and it is not surprising that this normality has barely been problematised. In a world of nations, the historical development of nation formation is 'over the hump'. Paradoxically, however, many of our contemporaries present 'nationalism' as something extreme and outdated. Michael Billig sought to fill this notional void with his concept of 'banal nationalism', which focused on the reflexivity—or normality—of nationalism in daily life, and theorised the absence of reflectivity with regard to the mass consumption of nationalism in Western societies.<sup>6</sup> Since the nineteenth century the nation has been imparted as an absolute norm, and questioning this norm became an immoral breach of a social taboo, as Norbert Elias pointed out.<sup>7</sup> In 2012, Ernest Gellner's comment still seems valid for most sections of Western society: 'A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur,—but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind.'<sup>8</sup> The congruence between sets of personal (national) identity and social (national) identity is thus usually taken for granted, instead of being analysed as a form of interaction: the individual being reduced to a homogenous rather than autonomous actor.<sup>9</sup>

This intertwining of social and individual identities is a key mechanism of nationalism and has probably greatly contributed to its phenomenal success in mass societies. In that regard, Kohl was no exception. Nationalism continues to endow people with a sense of 'being someone in the world';<sup>10</sup> paradoxically, both individuality and the holistic category of an anonymous collective have

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5 Habermas, J. 1994, in Greiner, U. (ed.) 1994, *Meine Jahre mit Helmut Kohl*, Bollman, Mannheim, pp. 9–11.

6 Billig, M. 1995, *Banal Nationalism*, Thousand Oaks, London.

7 Elias, N. 1989, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 194–5.

8 Gellner, E. 2006, *Nations and Nationalism*, [second edn], Cornell University Press, Ithaca, p. 6.

9 Hearn, this volume.

10 Geertz, C. 2000 [1973], 'The integrative revolution: primordial sentiments and politics in the new states', in C. Geertz (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays*, Basic Books, New York, p. 259.

contemporaneously become zenith values; the person and nation still appear to be closely related and not as purely independent beings. The performance of one's own nation has consequently come to play a formative role in shaping modern self-esteem.<sup>11</sup> Kohl's controversial *geschichtspolitisch* attempts in the 1980s to improve the German reputation in the world can be seen in this light, especially against the fact that these ambitions had already become apparent with his PhD thesis from the 1950s. For Kohl, however, like many of his West German contemporaries, 'nationalism' was a false term that was associated with Nazism and replaced with positive euphemisms (like patriotism or national consciousness). Depending on the definition of nationalism, this can lead to certain contradictions: Kohl warned, for example, of the particularistic thinking of the nineteenth century, but presented the principle of national self-determination as untouchable.<sup>12</sup> Throughout his political career, moreover, he used his European-ness as evidence of his anti-nationalism, although he assured us that German unity was a self-evident aim.<sup>13</sup> After all, being both thoroughly national and simultaneously Western was crucial to Kohl's notion of normality.

When aiming at a broad definition of nationalism, one could argue that this global mass phenomenon comprises the accumulation of all individual ideas and actions that contribute to the construction and maintenance of the nation—reflexively or purposively. The relative emptiness of the concept of nation, which stands in the centre of this definition, allows for nationalism's 'chameleon-like ability', as Anthony Smith described it, and perhaps contributes to its pertinacity.<sup>14</sup> The extreme flexibility of nationalism in comparison with other ideologies allows for a relatively strong individualism amongst modern co-nationals within the cultural system of their nation. It is ultimately very difficult to analyse this parasitic phenomenon as a distinct ideology, as Michael Freeden pointed out.<sup>15</sup> The notion of the nation can be charged with all kinds of ideologies, religions and historical imagination. This openness also indicates that nationalism is something fundamentally personal, as Anthony Cohen suggested.<sup>16</sup> Co-nationalists can have very different notions of their own nation: different versions of its past, different conceptions of its present and different visions for its future. Thus, despite the shared material that each nation offers, the content depends very much on one's individual context, to some extent

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11 Spinner-Halev, J. and Theiss-Morse, E. 2003, 'National identity and self-esteem', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 515–32.

12 'Kohl zu CDU-Jugend: nationalistische Politik undenkbar', *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 September 1970.

13 'Dr. Helmut Kohl neuer Regierungschef', *Staats-Zeitung*, 25 May 1969.

14 Smith, A. 1991, *National Identity*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, p. 144.

15 Freeden, M. 1998, 'Is nationalism a distinct ideology?', *Political Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 748–65.

16 Cohen, A. 1996, 'Personal nationalism: a Scottish view of some rites, rights and wrongs', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 802–15, at pp. 803–5; Cohen, A. 1996, 'Owning the nation, and the personal nature of nationalism: locality and rhetoric of nationhood in Scotland', in V. Amit-Talai and C. Knowles (eds), *Re-situating Identities: The politics of race, Ethnicity, Culture*, Broadview, Peterborough, Ontario, p. 280.

contingent on features such as one's date of birth, locality, family background, education, political affiliation, and so on. On top of (and in stark correlation to) these categorisable biographical features, very personal experiences can play an important role in the making of imaginations and representations of nationhood: Kohl's experiences of loss and gain during World War II and its aftermath were both generational and personal, and endowed his representation of self and nationhood with central impressions and narratives.<sup>17</sup>

That is exactly where the method of biography offers fresh perspectives on the study of nationalism. A biographical approach to nationalism can illuminate the nationalist's 'ideas in context': how are individual ideas shaped by the personal context, and how does the protagonist seek to manipulate the status quo?<sup>18</sup> From this point of view, one can go further than Cohen suggested with his concept of personal nationalism: personal nationalism is not only the individual identification with the nation, or a form of self-imaging, it is also the specific ideological and biographical constellation within the personal notion of one's nation—deriving from the individual's socialisation. It is thus strongly context dependent, with the contexts varying and overlapping at the personal level. It is the mix of different sociological categories that surrounds the individual combined with the 'non-categorisable' that make biography a very attractive method. In the case of Kohl, this method demonstrates the individual roots and representation of a firm ideological position within the discursive competition over the meaning of German nationhood.

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17 Kohl's first major autobiographical work focused on his role during the unification process; see Kohl, H. 1996, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, K. Diekmann and R. Reuth (eds), Propyläen, Berlin; see also Kohl, H. 2000, *Mein Tagebuch: 1998–2000*, Droemer, Munich, which he wrote in response to the CDU contributions scandal of 1999. For Kohl's most important autobiographical writing, see the three volumes of his memoirs: Kohl, H. 2004, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982. Volume I*, Droemer, Munich; Kohl, H. 2005, *Erinnerungen 1982–1990. Volume II*, Droemer, Munich; Kohl, H. 2007, *Erinnerungen 1990–1994. Volume III*, Droemer, Munich. Kohl has recently published a shorter version of his memories of the reunification process in order to reach a broader readership; see Kohl, H. 2009, *Vom Mauerfall zur Wiedervereinigung: Meine Erinnerungen*, Droemer, Munich.

18 For Quentin Skinner's 'ideas in context' approach, see Tully, J. (ed.) 1988, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Polity, Cambridge; Bock, B., Skinner, Q. and Viroli, M. 1990, *Machiavelli and Republicanism: Ideas in context*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Skinner, Q. 2000, *Machiavelli: A very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford; Skinner, Q. 2002, *Visions of Politics. Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, New York. See also Ashcraft, R. 1986, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; Ashcraft, R. 1971, 'Hobbes's natural man: a study in ideology formation', *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 33, pp. 1076–117.

## German Nationalism and the Quest for Normality

After the downfall of the Third Reich, German politicians sought to extract 'good and normal patriotism' from 'bad and abnormal nationalism'.<sup>19</sup> Normality was about the reconstruction of the country, the need for security, the suppression and denial of the Nazi past, and about the question of the divided nation-state. Further, the concept of normality related to the belief that the German nation and its history were special in psychological, social, cultural and political terms. Before 1945, the perception that Germans were different to other nations was viewed as positive; afterwards it was reversed into something negative: normality was about being like all other peoples in the West.<sup>20</sup>

The first West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, a Catholic Rhinelander from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), laid the foundation for the partial normality in the 1950s that Kohl later felt obliged to defend: Adenauer stood for unconditional integration with the West or *Westbindung*.<sup>21</sup> Since the 1960s, however, when Fritz Fischer caused a long-lasting furore by arguing that Germans had followed a negative historical trajectory from the Protestant Reformation towards Nazism, and that their imperialist attitude had triggered World War I, the unity of German historiography has been publicly contested.<sup>22</sup> The Nazi episode would subsequently be historicised as more than simply a historical accident that might also have occurred in other nations; rather it was depicted as the cumulative result of peculiarly German developments: Germany's un-Western *Sonderweg*, or special path. At the same time, Adolf Eichmann's sentencing in Jerusalem and a series of Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt increasingly confronted the public with the German past, which then appeared as anything but normal.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, conservatives, including the young Kohl, publicly agitated against the initial calls for younger generations to recognise the crimes committed in Nazi Germany.<sup>24</sup>

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19 Gabbe, J. 1976, *Parteien und Nation: Zur Rolle des Nationalbewußtseins für die politischen Grundorientierungen der Parteien in der Anfangsphase der Bundesrepublik*, Anton Hain, Meisenheim.

20 See Aleida Assmann on the notion of normality in (West) Germany: Assman, A. 1999, 'Die Schlagworte der Debatte', in A. Assmann and U. Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, DVA, Stuttgart, pp. 59–63; see also Niethammer, L. 2001, "'Normalization' in the West: traces of memory leading back into the 1950s", in H. Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A cultural history of West Germany, 1949–1968*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, Ch. 10.

21 Poppinga, A. 1975, *Konrad Adenauer: Geschichtsverständnis, Weltanschauung und politische Praxis*, DVA, Stuttgart; Frei, N. 2002, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The politics of amnesty and integration*, J. Golb (trans.), Columbia University Press, New York.

22 Moses, J. 1975, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer controversy in German historiography*, Prior, London.

23 Wittmann, R. 2005, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz trial*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

24 Fröhlich, C. 2005, *Wider die Tabuisierung des Ungehorsams: Fritz Bauers Widerstandsbegriff und die Aufarbeitung von NS-Verbrechen*, Campus, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 151–2; Bauer, F. 1961, *Die Wurzeln faschistischen und nationalsozialistischen Handelns*, Landesjugendring Rheinland-Pfalz, Mainz.



By the end of the 1960s, university students were at the forefront of the movement that was challenging the normality of their young country and their silent parents, whom they held responsible for Auschwitz.<sup>25</sup> The year 1968 stood for another normalisation of Germany, a different kind of Westernisation, different to what Kohl had in mind. The '68-ers' deconstructed the myth of the *Stunde Null* (the zero hour of 1945), thus exposing the continuities between Nazism and Federal Republicanism. The Social Democrat Willy Brandt, who became chancellor in 1969, responded to the rising demands for greater *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), which was not appreciated by the majority of the West German mainstream.<sup>26</sup> Normality was still open to dispute. The Christian Democrats, including Kohl, agitated against Brandt's new foreign policies towards the East, in which they saw the betrayal of the constitutional demand for unification.<sup>27</sup>

The change in the political climate in the mid 1970s, moreover, quickly ignited a reactionary spirit that yearned for the lost values of the 1950s, which Kohl sought to reactivate.<sup>28</sup> Kohl, as Chairman of the CDU from 1973 onwards, sought to repair the damage caused by the post-national 68-ers, and marketed his coming to power in 1982 as a *geistig-moralische Wende* (spiritual moral change).<sup>29</sup> While the division of Germany itself increasingly became accepted as normal, Kohl sought to endow the citizenry with a national identity. This, he felt, was needed to pre-empt the normalisation of a post-national identity, as envisaged by the philosopher and major public intellectual Habermas and his left-liberal associates.<sup>30</sup> It was this tension that led to the *Historikerstreit* (the German history wars) in 1986, which would have been hard to conceptualise without the conservative reaction headed by Kohl's government.<sup>31</sup> In the 1980s, there was a growing desire to dismantle the German stigma, shaking off the burden, rejecting the notion that the nation's division had been a punishment for the uniquely evil crimes the Germans had committed.<sup>32</sup> Kohl responded to

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25 Kundnani, H. 2009, *Utopia or Auschwitz: Germany's 1968 generation and the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York.

26 Fink, C. and Schaefer, B. (eds) 2009, *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and global responses*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; 'Kniefall angemessen oder übertrieben?', *Der Spiegel*, 14 December 1970.

27 Clemens, C. 1989, *Reluctant Realists: The Christian Democrats and West German Ostpolitik*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

28 'Tendenzwende: Jeder fühlt den neuen Wind', *Der Spiegel*, 6 January 1975.

29 Seuthe, R. 2001, *Geistig-moralischen Wende?: Der politische Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit in der Ära Kohl am Beispiel von Gedenktagen, Museums- und Denkmalprojekten*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt.

30 Habermas, J. 1988, 'Historical consciousness and post-traditional identity: remarks on the Federal Republic's orientation to the West', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 3–13.

31 Maier, C. 1988, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German national identity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

32 Moses, A. 2007, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 24–31, 258.

this desire and sought to amplify it. His search for normality was about both the departure from the old, anti-Western *Sonderweg* and the closure of the new, post-national *Sonderweg*.<sup>33</sup>

The question of whether Germany as a nation had undergone an abnormal historical trajectory outside the West has become one of the most important historiographical questions of the postwar era.<sup>34</sup> This question concerns a kind of normality that is about the memory of two world wars and the Holocaust, and not primarily the absence of the nation-state in the context of the Cold War, although the latter has sometimes been historicised as the result of the former. Because of the Federal Republican society's Westernisation during the Cold War era, one could argue that Germans came closer to an international status of normality. This process of normalisation, which Kohl's chancellorship aimed to foster, neared its completion through Germany's sudden (re)unification within a Western framework. This merger of East and West Germany in 1990 was a prime example of a nationalist event, confirming the globally idealised congruency of state and nation, and has thus been described as Germany's return to normality.<sup>35</sup> During the (re)unification process, however, Kohl anticipated an ongoing struggle for normality in the post-unification era. Kohl pleaded 'that things will normalize...that we become a wholly normal country, not "singularized" in any question...that we simply don't stick out'.<sup>36</sup> Yet, against the backdrop of

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33 Berger, S. 2007, *The Search for Normality. National identity and historical consciousness since 1900*, [revised edn], Berghahn, Oxford, pp. xiii–xxvi, 176–97.

34 There are different interpretations of the *Sonderweg* thesis; a comprehensive review is outside the scope of this paper. For a concise introduction to the controversial concept of the *Sonderweg*, see Kocka, J. 1988, 'German history before Hitler: the debate about the German "Sonderweg"', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 3–16. For this paper, it makes little sense to distinguish between *Sonderweg* and *Sonderbewußtsein* (special mentality), as Karl D. Bracher suggested. For this discussion, see Bracher, K. (ed.) 1982, *Deutscher Sonderweg: Mythos oder Realität?*, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, p. 53. For the notion of a cultural *Sonderweg*, see Watson, P. 2010, *The German Genius: Europe's third renaissance, the second scientific revolution and the twentieth century*, Harper Collins, New York, p. 28 ff. Important scholars on nationalism have reinforced the conception of a cultural *Sonderweg* in Germany, in which romanticism had a negative function in the course towards Nazism. See, in particular, Kohn, H. 1994, *The Idea of Nationalism: A study of its origin and background*, Macmillan, New York; and Greenfeld, L. 1992, *Nationalism: Five roads to modernity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 10–11. For early cultural *Sonderweg* explanations of Nazism, see, for example, Stern, F. 1961, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A study in the rise of the Germanic ideology*, University of California Press, Berkeley; Viereck, P. 2004, *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German romantics to Hitler*, [expanded edn], Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick; and Shirer, W. 1962, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A history of Nazi Germany*, Secker & Warburg, London.

35 Habermas, J. 1995, *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, p. 170. For a recent discussion on the concept of normality in the German context, see Taberner, S. and Cooke, P. (eds) 2006, *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond normalization*, Camden House, Columbia, SC; Breuilly, J. and Speirs, R. 2005, 'The concept of unification', in J. Breuilly and R. Speirs (eds), *Germany's Two Unifications: Anticipations, experiences, responses*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, p. 2.

36 Schmemmann, S. 1990, 'Kohl, the man for the German movement', *The New York Times*, 1 July 1990.

the remaining memory of Nazism, combined with the celebration of Germany's national re-creation, it remains debatable whether German society can even now be considered as a normal nation.<sup>37</sup>

## Kohl as Catholic Nationalist

Catholicism played an important role throughout Kohl's life and in his rhetoric. Kohl explicitly stated that his motivation for joining the Christian Democrats in 1946 was 'the black [that is, Catholic] milieu from which I originate'.<sup>38</sup> His political party would become the most significant social organisation in Kohl's life and provide a solid platform from which to express his Federal Republican nationalism. After World War II, his political mentor, the local priest Father Finck, introduced him to the principles of Christian democracy, and facilitated his CDU membership at the remarkably young age of sixteen. Kohl saw in his mentor's authorisation of de-Nazification certificates how Nazis were rehabilitated in an act of Christian fairness.<sup>39</sup> Finck embodied to Kohl the epitome of the unsuspecting Catholic tradition in German nationalism—and the moral obligation to fight for the unity of the nation. At that time he learned about Catholic social teaching and the importance of Christianity for the new German state, which should represent the good essence of the nation.<sup>40</sup> The atheist failures of Nazism were taught as being equally prevalent in socialist materialism, with the East threatening the Occidental culture.<sup>41</sup> The long and painful hangover from the *Kulturkampf* (1871–78), which Otto von Bismarck had launched against German Catholicism in the newly established nation-state under the hegemony of Lutheran Prussia, finally came to an end in 1949 with the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the CDU as its major conservative force. The Protestant centre in Germany was then sidelined to the GDR and 'the former *Reichsfeinde* [the enemies of the state] turned their exclusion from power in Berlin into a virtue, allowing them to reject both

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37 Bleek, W. and Maull, H. (eds) 1989, *Ein ganz normaler Staat? Perspektiven nach 40 Jahren Bundesrepublik*, Piper, Munich. Habermas feared the national normalisation of Germany; see Habermas, J. 1992, 'Die zweite Lebenslüge der Bundesrepublik: Wir sind wieder "normal" geworden', *Die Zeit*, 11 December 1992. On the other hand, Germans from the centre-right and the centre-left were careful to not do things fundamentally differently than in the West; see Winkler, H. 2001, 'Ende Aller Sonderwege', *Der Spiegel*, 11 June 2001, <<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-19383801.html>> The Walser-Bubis debate symbolised the ongoing controversy about the question of whether Germans and their memory culture should become normal; see Schirmacher, F. 2010, *Die Walser-Bubis Debatte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Berlin.

38 Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*, p. 57.

39 Schwarz Müller, T. 2002, *Albert Finck und die Nationalhymne: Eine Lebensreise vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, Plöger, Annweiler, p. 88.

40 Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*, pp. 72–3; Victor, C. 1906, *Sozialismus: eine Untersuchung seiner Grundlagen und seiner Durchführbarkeit*, Herdersche, Freiburg im Breisgau. Kohl, Die politische Entwicklung in der Pfalz und das Wiedererstehen der Parteien nach 1945, Ch. IV.

41 See also Mitchell, M. 1995, 'Materialism and secularism: CDU politicians and national socialism, 1945–1949', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 278–308.

Prussian militarism and its National Socialist stepchild', as Ronald Granieri put it.<sup>42</sup> The problematic relationship between the Vatican and the Nazis was concealed. Adenauer, the former mayor of Cologne, became the first Federal Republican chancellor, and, for Kohl, Germany's most important national hero. Adenauer personified the alternative to the *Sonderweg* and used Catholic maxims to reform German conservatism.<sup>43</sup> Under the new chancellor, the policy of Western integration was presented as the salvation of the Christian Occident against the communist threat.<sup>44</sup> The new party represented what young Kohl had already learned at Finck's political Sunday school, although with a greater emphasis upon capitalism.<sup>45</sup> Kohl wrote about the mind-set of his Palatine educators in his doctoral dissertation,<sup>46</sup> and there is no evidence that Kohl's ideology fundamentally changed from this point in his life, from the age of twenty-eight. In 1991, when the Cold War was finally over, he proclaimed at the *Katholikentag*: 'today we can assert that Marx erred in his prediction that the days of religion were numbered. It all happened differently. Under communist dictatorship the people realised that Marxism does not have an answer to the meaning of life.'<sup>47</sup>

Kohl has constantly exposed his Catholic identity: he wrote about his Catholic upbringing and his friendship with clerics, and he enjoyed the public images of his relatively frequent meetings with the popes over the decades (with the last meeting in 2011).<sup>48</sup> His personal nationalism has been reminiscent of Pope John Paul II's *Memory and Identity*, in which nationalism is presented as a Christian command.<sup>49</sup> 'As a Pole', Kohl explained in 1980, Pope John Paul knew 'what it means when the *Heimat* is violently cut up'.<sup>50</sup> In articles and in his memoirs,

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42 Granieri, R. 2004, 'Thou shalt consider thyself a European: Catholic supranationalism and the sublimation of German nationalism after 1945', in M. Lehmann and H. Lehmann (eds), *Religion und Nation, Nation und Religion: Beiträge zu einer unbewältigten Geschichte*, Wallstein, Göttingen, p. 340.

43 Williams, C. 2000, *Adenauer: The father of the new Germany*, Little, Brown & Company, London, p. 221.

44 Herf, J. 1993, 'Multiple restorations: German political traditions and the interpretation of Nazism, 1945–1946', *Central European History*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 21–55, at pp. 40–2.

45 See Uertz, R. 1981, *Christentum und Sozialismus in der frühen CDU: Grundlagen und Wirkungen der christlich-sozialen Ideen in der Union, 1945–1949*, DVA, Stuttgart; Spicka, M. E. 2007, *Selling the Economic Miracle: Economic reconstruction and politics in West Germany, 1947–1957*, Berghahn, Oxford, p. 18; Pridham, G. 1977, *Christian Democracy in Western Germany: The CDU/CSU in government and opposition, 1945–1976*, Croom, London, pp. 21–34.

46 Kohl, Die politische Entwicklung in der Pfalz und das Wiedererstehen der Parteien nach 1945, Ch. IV.

47 Kohl, H. 1993, 'Christen in Verantwortung für Europa', [Speech delivered at the 57th *Katholikentag*, Johanniskreuz, 23 June 1991], in P. Hintze and G. Langguth (eds), *Helmut Kohl: Der Kurs Der CDU, Reden und Beiträge des Bundesvorsitzenden 1973–1993*, DVA, Stuttgart, p. 367.

48 You are here Kohl, H. 1993, 'Unabhängig aber partnerschaftlich kooperieren', [Interview with the *Herder Korrespondenz*, March 1975], in *ibid.*, p. 105; Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*, vol I, Droemer, Munich, p. 54, 140–1, 495–6, 516–7; Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1990–1994*, p. 991; Ramstetter, E. 2005, 'Die christlichen Wurzeln des Politikers Helmut Kohl', *Politische Meinung*, vol. 424, Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, <[http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_6327-544-1-30.pdf?07092512214](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_6327-544-1-30.pdf?07092512214)>

49 John Paul II, 2005, *Memory and Identity: Personal reflections*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.

50 Kohl H. 1980, Ehrung der ganzen deutschen Nation, [article on the visit of John Paul II], *Deutschland-Union-Dienst* 34:213, [Press release], 10 November 1980, Archive of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Kohl/Artikel.

Kohl described his childhood as religious and patriotic, and his parents' faith as an indication of their guiltlessness during the Nazi era without failing to love their fatherland.<sup>51</sup> The Catholic symbols of his home region were to Kohl simultaneously German and European *lieux de mémoire*: 'especially the Cathedral of Speyer, built in the eleventh century as the greatest church in the occident [which was for him] a symbol of unity of the German and European history'.<sup>52</sup> Kohl wrote that 'the Roman-German Kaisers' who once resided in this region 'did not rule over a nation-state, but over an early house of Europe, which reached from Sicily to the North Sea. They contained the consciousness of the occidental world in themselves, this ancient and Christian *Kulturkreis*.'<sup>53</sup>

His Catholic background endowed Kohl with a powerful source to mobilise an image of an innocent, Western German. Similar to Adenauer, for Kohl, this biographical feature allowed him to articulate a notion of Germany that stood in contrast with the allegedly dangerous Prussian-Lutheran representation of Germany that was associated with the abnormal *Sonderweg*. Kohl was able to present a narrative of himself that was aligned with the Federal Republican narrative of the German nation, as one that was not essentially supportive or characteristic of Nazism. To speak with the words of Jonathan Hearn, Kohl could thus portray himself as 'moving/acting "with the flow" of an encompassing historical narrative' of the new FRG and as one who is 'moving/acting "against the flow" of an encompassing historical narrative' of Nazism, which would become increasingly unpopular.<sup>54</sup> The proto-religious tendencies of nationalism are not a new insight. Since the 1920s, beginning with Carleton Hayes, nationalism has often been portrayed as ersatz religion—a substitute for religion that itself has religious features.<sup>55</sup> When looking at Kohl's rhetoric, however, what is much more interesting is that he used religious content to fill his notion of the German nation. Or, to use another of Hearn's metaphors, Kohl's nationalism was 'embedded' in the social-identity category of Catholicism.<sup>56</sup> Kohl's Catholicism underlay all the other ideological pillars that sustained his personal nationalism—in particular, the way he interpreted liberal principles, but also the way he romanticised the homeland and the way he historicised its past. In all regards, his Catholicism helped Kohl to represent a benign nationalism, bound to the West.

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51 Kohl, H. 1984, 'Katholisch, liberal, patriotisch', in R. Pörtner (ed.), *Mein Elternhaus: Ein Deutsches Familienalbum*, Econ, Düsseldorf; Kohl, H. 1987, 'Kohl über die Gnade der späten Geburt', *Welt am Sonntag*, 1 November 1987; Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*.

52 Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*, p. 25.

53 Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1930–1982*, p. 26.

54 See Hearn, this volume.

55 Hayes, C. 1926, *Essays on Nationalism*, Macmillan, New York, p. 104.

56 Hearn, this volume.

## Kohl as Liberal Nationalist

Kohl can also be studied as a liberal nationalist, as defined by Yael Tamir and David Miller. These two theorists synthesised liberalism and nationalism after the fall of communism, based on the assumption that functioning liberal democracies had been proven to be reliant on nationalist ideals that merely required the taming force of liberalism.<sup>57</sup> This aspect was most fundamental to Kohl's demonstration of a benign, trustful, Western nationalism during his quest to correct its old, illiberal and new, post-national *Sonderweg*. Similar to his religious upbringing, Kohl's generational belonging endowed him with a powerful source to articulate an authentic image of German normality and the new liberalism that developed after World War II. Born in 1930, Kohl belonged to the '45 generation'. Dirk Moses explained that, having experienced the failure of the Nazi ideology, Kohl's generation developed a 'republican consensus', which they later felt was threatened by the '68 generation'.<sup>58</sup> Kohl represented the liberal-conservative camp of his generation, a form of Federal Republicanism that was qualified by a liberal nationalism, aiming at the sublimation of nationalist traditions and not at their abortion. Unlike the constitutional patriotism of his coeval Habermas, Kohl portrayed West Germany's Constitution as the most precious *national* symbol, based on German traditions.<sup>59</sup>

In order to represent normality, Kohl could resort to a personal and generational narrative of the Third Reich and World War II: too young to be guilty, but old enough to see what happened—and in a position to learn from his own national history. This is what Kohl tried to suggest with his contentious slogan of 'grace of late birth' at the Knesset in 1984.<sup>60</sup> On the whole, however, this narrative has been repetitively publicised by his biographers and himself, which helped him to sustain the image of an innocent German who was longing for peace and

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57 Tamir, Y. 1993, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; Miller, D. 1995, *On Nationality*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

58 A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

59 Habermas, J. 1986, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung', *Die Zeit*, 11 July; Habermas, J. 1992, 'Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität', in J. Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main; Kohl, H. 1973, 'Verfassung und Nation als Auftrag der Unionspolitik', Speech delivered to the Catholic Academy in Munich, Uncorrected ms, 8 December 1973, Archive of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Kohl/Reden; Kohl, H. 1974, 'Das Grundgesetz—Verfassung der Freiheit', Speech delivered at the Frankfurter Paulskirche, Uncorrected ms, 23 May 1974, Archive of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Kohl/Reden; Kohl, H. 1984, 'Die Bedeutung von Heimat und Gemeinde für die demokratische Verfassungsordnung', [Speech delivered on the 700th anniversary of the city of Haltern, 8 February 1984], *BPA Bulletin*, vol. 13, p. 125.

60 The notion of *Gnade der späten Geburt* was developed by Günter Gaus and initially had a different meaning; see 'Verschwiegene Enteignung: Wer erfand die Wendung von der "Gnade der späten Geburt"?', *Der Spiegel*, 15 September 1986; Kohl, H. 1984, 'Besuch in der Knesset', *BPA Bulletin*, vol. 13, 25 January 1984, p. 112. Kohl used the concept of 'grace of late birth' a long time before he caused this controversy; see Harpprecht, K. 1970, 'Klaus Harpprecht im Gespräch mit Dr. Helmut Kohl, Ministerpräsident von Rheinland-Pfalz', [Interview with Helmut Kohl, *ZDF Dialog*], BPA press review, 23 April 1970.

freedom:<sup>61</sup> Kohl had experienced bombing as a child, his father had gone to war, and his brother fell. The boy sat in bunkers and collected dead bodies. When he turned fifteen, he was transferred from a Hitler Youth camp to protect Hitler's Eagle's Nest. A few days later, the area was bombed and Kohl began to walk back home to Ludwigshafen. This chaotic return in 1945, which took several weeks, ultimately symbolises the beginning of Kohl's search for normality. Kohl was subsequently able to present himself as a guiltless witness of the transition from the Third Reich to Adenauer's Bonn Republic, which he perceived as a positive and existential movement towards normality. He became politically active and established himself quite successfully within this atmosphere of restoration and renewal, but also insecurity. He witnessed the economic miracle, the Westernisation of the West German mainstream and the rehabilitation of the new state within the transatlantic and Western European frameworks. Adenauer's doctrine of Western integration became the superior rationale in Kohl's conceptions of society, state and nation. Kohl was convinced that through this movement under Adenauer 'we achieved the cutback of disputable German traditions, namely the anti-Western effects of nationalism'.<sup>62</sup> His constant defence of Adenauer's legacy, of taming German nationalism under the primacy of 'freedom', which then meant 'the West', facilitated Kohl's appearance as the paragon of German normality, while he tried to stimulate a national revival.<sup>63</sup>

Kohl's aim was to conflate national and Western identities in Germany. In his world view, West Germans had already found their natural state in the liberal system of the Federal Republic, whereas East Germans had not.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, normality was incomplete. Like Ernest Renan, he theorised the nation as based on the willingness to be a nation and simultaneously claimed that all Germans wanted to share one nation-state.<sup>65</sup> In keeping with the liberal-nationalist tradition, the common 'will' of the people was, for Kohl, decisive in the formation of a nation: 'the awareness of common history, common ancestry, finds a specific component in the desire for common political action', as he wrote in 1973.<sup>66</sup> 'Since the French Revolution', Kohl argued, also at the Catholic Academy in Munich, 'the notion of nation has not been detachable from the notion of

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61 Many biographies on Kohl have appeared over the decades. For some in-depth biographical accounts, though predominantly in line with Kohl's autobiographical presentation of his youth, see Dreher, K. 1998, *Helmut Kohl: Leben mit Macht*, DVA, Stuttgart; Filmer, W. and Schwan, H. (eds) 1990, *Helmut Kohl*, [fourth edn], ECON, Düsseldorf, p. 29. For the most recent biography, see Hans-Peter Schwarz's 1000-page volume: *Helmut Kohl: Eine politische Biographie*, DVA, Stuttgart.

62 Kohl, H. 1973, *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus*, A. Rummel (ed.), Bonn Aktuell, Stuttgart, p. 62.

63 See, for example, Kohl, *Verfassung und Nation als Auftrag der Unionspolitik*.

64 Kohl, *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus*, p. 45; Kohl, H. 1993, 'Europa und die deutsche Frage', *Lutherische Monatshefte*, May 1981, Reprinted in Hintze and Langguth, *Helmut Kohl*, pp. 200–1.

65 Renan, E. 2009 [1882], 'Qu'est ce qu'une nation?', [Speech delivered at Sorbonne University, Paris], *Discours et Conférences*, BiblioLife, Charleston, SC.

66 Kohl, H. 1973, *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus: Aspekte und Ansichten zu Grundfragen der Politik*, A. Rummel (ed.), Bonn Aktuell, Stuttgart, p. 46.

state’;<sup>67</sup> however, the ‘central content of German political consciousness’ was, according to him, ‘not the nation-state, but the liberal political order’.<sup>68</sup> As a liberal-nationalist, Kohl thus found an instrumental way to present the nation as an a-priori fact, willed by all Germans, without failing to guarantee the good, liberal, Western nature of his nationalism as representative of his entire nation. According to Kohl:

[O]ur consciousness of state and nation are identical, because we connect the willingness to national unity with the willingness for a very specific form of state, that is the liberal as opposed to the illiberal. According to the historical development of the Anglo-Saxon countries are the values of our national consciousness most closely connected to the basic democratic values.<sup>69</sup>

## Kohl as Romantic Nationalist

It is also possible to look at Kohl as a romantic nationalist, as someone who regarded culture and ethnicity—and not the state—as the essence of a nation. This kind of nationalism reappeared in Germany in reaction to the repetitive absence of the nation-state. A very interesting paper on romantic nationalism was given more than 20 years ago in Canberra by the conservative German historian Thomas Nipperdey.<sup>70</sup> Nipperdey was reacting against the often-held mistrust of this type of nationalism, which developed most strongly in German lands after the French Revolution and which was usually held to be illiberal and bad, as opposed to an allegedly good and liberal nationalism associated with the West. John Hutchinson’s work on cultural nationalism is very similar to Nipperdey’s positive approach to romantic nationalism.<sup>71</sup> If one looks at other popular writing in the field of nationalism, however—for example, at Hans Kohn’s or Liah Greenfeld’s work—it is noticeable that German romanticism has been used to sustain the cultural *Sonderweg* thesis.<sup>72</sup>

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67 Kohl, *Verfassung und Nation als Auftrag der Unionspolitik*, p. 63; Kohl, *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus*, p. 46. Relevant sections in Kohl’s book *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus* are almost identical with his speech at the Catholic University in December 1973. Also, Kohl’s speech on national identity in the Federal Republic at the Political Seminar of Bad Godesberg resembled large sections of his book; see Kohl, H. 1973, *Deutsche Nation—Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Speech delivered at Politisches Seminar, Bad Godesberg, Uncorrected ms, 23 January 1973, Archive of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Kohl/Reden.

68 Kohl, *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus*, p. 56.

69 This section of Kohl’s book *Zwischen Ideologie und Pragmatismus* is identical to Kohl’s speech, *Verfassung und Nation als Auftrag der Unionspolitik*, p. 64.

70 Nipperdey, T. 1983, ‘In search of identity’, in J. C. Eade (ed.), *Romantic Nationalism in Europe*, ANU Press, Canberra.

71 Hutchinson, J. 1999, ‘Re-interpreting cultural nationalism’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 392–409; Hutchinson, J. 2005, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, Thousand Oaks, London.

72 Kohn, H. 1944, *The Idea of Nationalism: A study of its origin and background*, Macmillan, New York; Greenfeld, *Nationalism*.



While being transformed through the shock of 1945, ethnic and cultural notions of German nationhood once more became a kind of compensatory nationalism in response to the territorial constraints of the Cold War era.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the structural restrictions—the loss of territory in the East, the division of the nation and the West German Constitution, and to some extent also European integration—strengthened a romantic imagination of local, national and supranational cultures as constitutive of the German *Volk*. Kohl could thus represent a romantic nationalism that was reconciled with—and ultimately subordinated to—his liberal nationalism. The most dominant aspect of his romantic nationalism was his continuous propagation of *Heimat*<sup>74</sup> as an apolitical identity of destiny, a cultural notion of homeland that would not explicitly refer to the nation-state. Kohl stressed his regional identity to represent a typical German national, naturally rooted in lovable local traditions of a culturally decentralised people, and foremost Western. This ideological and biographical feature had already surfaced clearly in his PhD thesis, in which Kohl sought to impart a stereotype of the liberal, non-dogmatic, tolerant, cheerful, wine-drinking, down-to-earth, spirited, cosmopolitan and Francophile *Pfälzer* from the Rhine.<sup>75</sup> And also later, during his political heyday, he aimed at the representation of a typically Palatine habitus. He spoke publicly with a thick local dialect, brought foreign statesmen to Speyer Cathedral and Hambach Castle, and took them to his local restaurant for his favourite dish, *Saumagen*.<sup>76</sup>

Celia Applegate used Kohl's home region as a case study to learn more about the general idea of *Heimat* in Germany.<sup>77</sup> *Heimat* appeared during the conservative reaction to 1968 as less burdened than the terms 'nation', 'Volk' or 'Fatherland';<sup>78</sup> however, like nation, notions of *Heimat* can differ greatly, and it would be wrong to assume that the concept of *Heimat* was restricted to conservative or right-wing discourses. The best counter-example vis-a-vis Kohl is represented by the Marxist Philosopher Ernst Bloch, who was, like Kohl, from Ludwigshafen, and who saw in *Heimat* something that people hoped for, something to be realised in the future, in a real democracy, in absence of the workers' exploitation.<sup>79</sup> Kohl's *Heimat* ideology, in contrast, sought to mediate between a romanticised German

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73 See Otto Dann, O. 1995, 'Nationale Fragen in Deutschland: Kulturnation, Volksnation, Reichsnation', in E. Francois et al (eds), *Nation und Emotion*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, pp. 66–82.

74 For the concept of *Heimat*, see, for example, Popper, K. 1927, 'Zur Philosophie des Heimatgedankens', *Die Quelle*, vol. 77, no. 10, pp. 899–908; Applegate, C. 1990, *A Nation of Provincials: The German idea of Heimat*, University of California Press, Berkeley; Blicke, P. 2004, *Heimat: A critical theory of the German idea of homeland*, Camden House, Columbia; Umbach, M. and Huppau, B. 2005, *Vernacular Modernism. Heimat, globalization, and the built environment*, University of Stanford Press, Stanford, Calif.

75 Kohl, Die politische Entwicklung in der Pfalz und das Wiedererstehen der Parteien nach 1945, pp. 48, 160.

76 Crolley H. 2010, 'Pfalz: "Deidesheimer Hof": Kohls zweites Wohnzimmer', *Die Welt*, 4 April 2010, <<http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article7036286/Deidesheimer-Hof-Kohls-zweites-Wohnzimmer.html>>

77 Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

79 Bloch, E. 1959, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Surhkamp, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 16, 28.

community and the modern effects of the industrialised West by suggesting a conservative lifestyle that he associated with German culture.<sup>80</sup> In 1984, at the Tag der Heimat of the Federation of Expellees (BdV) in Brunswick, Kohl explained that

*Heimat* is a German word, which is not translatable into any other language. It makes us think of the compatriots and the landscape, the particularities of our language and our vernacular, of the social and cultural heritage, of history and stories, of tradition and custom, of many things that make life worth living and loving.

*Heimat* is the place or the country, where one is born and brought up or where one feels at home because of permanent residence [*beheimatet ist*]. To that belong people, like the family and the friends, the solidarity with neighbours and cohabitants, the familiarity with one's village, city, region, memories of the parental home, the school, and church. To that belong the commitments to values and the ancient ways of life of our *Heimat*.

*Heimat* derives from the term *Heim* [home], house and yard, from inheritance and property. Beyond the claim of ownership, however, *Heimat* first reminds us of the inalienable rights of every human to have a place he feels belonging to and where he finds security.

*Heimat* gives answers to the questions: Who am I, where do I come from, how did I become who I am...

*Heimat* thus means two things: the direct experience of a space and the spiritual relationship to anything that is distinct about that place.<sup>81</sup>

Remarkable in Kohl's rhetoric was that he would always try to guarantee the primacy of the West, which was more important to him than the recovery of *Heimat* in the territories Germany had lost in the East—even though the German *Heimat* was in his rhetoric always exclusively reserved for ethnic Germans and not for the non-ethnic German immigrants.<sup>82</sup> This was not only in accordance with the perception of the West German mainstream, which was reluctant to

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80 Kohl, H. 1986, 'Politik der Verständigung im Interesse des Friedens', [Speech delivered at the Tag der Heimat, Braunschweig, 2 September 1984], in *Zur Teilung Deutschlands und Europa: Zusammenhänge, Perspektiven, Aufgaben*, Europa Union, Bonn, pp. 51–70.

81 Ibid., pp. 52–4.

82 See, for example, Kohl, H. 1984, 'Koalition der Mitte: Für eine Politik der Erneuerung', [Policy statement to the Bundestag, 13 October 1982] in *Reden 1982–1984*, BPA, Bonn, p. 16, cf. pp. 25–6; Kohl, H. 1984, 'Bericht zur Lage der Nation im geteilten Deutschland', [Report to the Bundestag, 15 March 1984] in *Reden 1982–1984*, p. 222; Kohl, H. 1989, 'Deutsche Wiedervereinigung und Europa', [Speech delivered at the Bundestag, 1 December 1988] in *Reden: Zu Fragen der Zukunft*, BPA, Bonn, pp. 237–60, at p. 257; Kohl, H. 1991, Policy statement to the Bundestag, 30 January 1991, Plenarprotokoll 12/5; Kohl, H. 1991, Report as CDU Chairman to Federal Party Congress of the CDU, Dresden, 15 December 1991, <<http://www.kas.de/upload/ACDP/CDU/>

recognise that the FRG had been a country of mass immigration since the late nineteenth century, as Hans-Ulrich Wehler explained.<sup>83</sup> It was also in line with Federal Republican legislation, which encouraged an ethnic and cultural notion of nationhood.<sup>84</sup> Kohl's romantic image of nationhood was thus almost always contained within a socially, politically and legally acceptable context, which the politician carefully used in order to match the image of German normality.

## Kohl as Nationalist Historian

Kohl can also be observed as a nationalist historian. Historians have traditionally played a vital role in the forging of nations. This problematic relationship between history writing and nationalism has received some well-deserved attention during the past decades. There has been a more self-reflective trend perceivable since the 1980s, when historians of nationalism, such as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm in particular, pointed to the constructed nature, imagination and invention of national history.<sup>85</sup> Yet the exploitation of historical material for nationalist purposes has not ceased. Nations cannot exist without the idea of a common national history, a fact that Kohl has been very much aware of, and prepared to take care of. For Kohl, 'a *Volk* cannot live without history...a *Volk* loses its identity when it denies its own history...One cannot remove oneself from the common history...He who does that removes himself from the solidarity of our *Volk*', as he asserted at the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the 1953 uprising in the GDR.<sup>86</sup>

The nation was to Kohl a fixed entity in the stream of modern history, and to save Germans from their allegedly ahistorical post-nationalism, he sought to exonerate Germans from the Nazi past by stressing positive continuities and by de-substantiating the memory of Nazism.<sup>87</sup> As already mentioned, Kohl's PhD is a valuable document in that regard. In his thesis, Kohl was interested neither in explaining the causes of the Nazi era nor in what actually happened during

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Protokolle\_Parteitage/1991-12-15-17\_Protokoll\_02.Parteitag\_Dresden.pdf> p. 34; Kohl, H. 1993, [Speech delivered at the Evangelische Arbeitskreis der CDU/CSU, Wittenberg, 29 September 1992], in Hintze and Langguth, *Helmut Kohl*, p. 426.

83 Wehler, H.-U. 2008, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte: 1949–1990. Volume V*, C. H. Beck, Munich, p. 40.

84 For the relevant section in the Basic Law, see Jarausch, K. and Gransow, V. (eds) 1994, *Uniting Germany: Documents and debates, 1944–1994*, A. Brown and B. Cooper (trans), Berghahn, Oxford, p. 7; see also *Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge (Bundesvertriebenengesetz) [Federal Expellees Act] (Germany)*, 19 May 1953, BGBl I, 1953, 1902, art. 1 [hereinafter *BVFG*].

85 Anderson, B. 1991, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, [second edn], Verso, London; Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds) 1992 [1983], *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

86 Kohl, H. 1973, Der 17. Juni 1953. 20 Jahre Danach, Speech delivered at CDU/CSU event, Berlin-Charlottenburg Sporthalle, 17 June 1973, Archive of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Kohl/2/293.

87 Moller, S. 1998, Die Entkonkretisierung der NS-Herrschaft in der Ära Kohl, Universität Hannover, Hannover.

this time. His thesis aimed at the establishment of positive liberal continuities in German politics from the *Kaiserreich*, the Weimar Republic, via the Resistance during Nazi times to the political renewal of the Federal Republic. It was designed to contribute to the FRG's foundation myth, glorifying the foundation fathers and rehabilitating German history as such. Steven P. Remy, in his book about Kohl's alma mater, showed that those who had lost their positions under Nazi rule remained, with a few exceptions, effectively absent from the academia of the 1950s.<sup>88</sup> Kohl's university education took place in an atmosphere of suppressing the past rather than coming to terms with it: his professors tried to justify their Nazi membership and the content of their former lectures and publications. In the curriculum vitae attached to Kohl's thesis, he mentioned six scholars at Heidelberg whom he saw as most influential for his study.<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, among the six were four historians who had been affiliated in different ways with Nazi ideology: Walther P. Fuchs, Fritz Ernst, Johannes Kühn and Werner Conze. Kohl's instrumental and uncritical appropriation of history for ideological purposes is thus no great surprise. Already during his time as a university student, Kohl dedicated most of his time to politics, and there is no indication that he ever aimed at a career in academia; however, he saw it as part of his political role to engage with German history and intellectual debates: in the 1960s, Kohl began to publish newspaper articles in reaction to a collective culture of shame in Germany that he saw as a hindrance for Germans to find 'a lasting national self-image'.<sup>90</sup>

With his chancellorship, Kohl became the most important voice within a wider conservative movement in West Germany, which sought to encourage Germans to walk out of Hitler's shadow.<sup>91</sup> His initiative to build two museums of national history then caused increasing controversy and should be seen as part of the intellectual atmosphere surrounding the *Historikerstreit*. Kohl was predominantly accused of imposing an official history for nationalist purposes.<sup>92</sup> What is sometimes overlooked in that regard, however, is that a key motivation in creating these museums was Kohl's constant battle over the prerogative to

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88 Remy, S. 2002, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and denazification of a German university*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

89 Kohl, Die politische Entwicklung in der Pfalz und das Wiedererstehen der Parteien nach 1945. The CV is at the last page of his thesis.

90 Kohl, H. 1966, 'Angst vor der Geschichte?', *Die Rheinpfalz*, 7 May 1966; see also Kohl, H. 1968, 'Wie soll es nun weitergehen?', *Die Rheinpfalz*, 22 June 1968.

91 Evans, R. 1989, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German historians and the attempt to escape the Nazi past*, Pantheon Books, New York.

92 Kohl, H. 1984, 'Programm der Erneuerung: Freiheit, Mitmenschlichkeit, Verantwortung', [Policy statement at the Bundestag, 4 May 1983], in *Reden 1982–1984*, pp. 115–63, 159, 161–2. For a more detailed account of the debates surrounding the DHM, see Stölzl, C. (ed.) 1988, *Deutsches Historisches Museum: Ideen, Kontroversen, Perspektiven*, Propyläen, Berlin; and also Mälzer, M. 2005, *Ausstellungsstück Nation: Die Debatte um die Gründung des Historischen Museums in Berlin*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn, <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/historiker/02952.pdf>> For a critical account of Kohl's politics with the past, see also Moller, Die Entkonkretisierung der NS-Herrschaft in der Ära Kohl.

interpret German history against his antagonists in East Berlin. He excluded the GDR from the appropriation of the *Kulturnation*, the cultural nation. He was thus worried not only that younger generations would have a different notion of Germany and the republic than he had, but also that the GDR would monopolise German history for its own purposes. The GDR and the division, on the contrary, were in Kohl's rhetoric artificial constructs, aberrations from the natural, normal and national course of history as much as the Third Reich had been.<sup>93</sup>

The anti-communist factor in Kohl's *Geschichtspolitik* should not be underestimated. Throughout his career, Kohl represented Germans themselves as victims of Nazism and communism. There are a number of noteworthy examples of this.<sup>94</sup> One of Kohl's greatest scandals occurred in 1985, when he visited the Bitburg War Cemetery with US President, Ronald Reagan.<sup>95</sup> It was insensitive to choose a cemetery where SS members were buried, yet the US President supported Kohl's quest for Germany to be a normal nation, even though the Bitburg scandal was counterproductive to this ambition as well as to Reagan's own political success. Nevertheless, Reagan backed the German Chancellor on West Germany's participation in the Strategic Defence Initiative.<sup>96</sup> Reagan proclaimed that even the young SS soldiers in the cemetery were victims 'just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps'.<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusion

Kohl's biography facilitates a better understanding of the contemporary history of German nationalism. He felt Germany's reputation, being held responsible for the two world wars and the Holocaust, was a thorn in his side. In order to overcome the *Sonderweg* paradigm, he thus sought to represent normal, Western continuities of the German nation that would prove the good essence of his people. His nationalism was fundamentally shaped by his early socialisation,

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93 Kohl, 'Der 17. Juni 1953. 20 Jahre Danach'; Kohl, H. 1980, *Perspektiven deutscher Außenpolitik für die 80er Jahre*, Speech delivered to the Wirtschaftstag '80, Frankfurt am Main, 18–19 July, Archive of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Kohl/Reden; Kohl, 'Bericht zur Lage der Nation im geteilten Deutschland'.

94 Kohl said this very clearly during a TV interview in The Hague in 1974; see BPA, ZDF, 'Bürger Fragen—Politiker Antworten', [Kohl interviewed in The Hague by Reinhart Appel], 22 February 1974, Archive of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Kohl/SII-2. He repeated the claim that the Weimar Republic had been destroyed by the common effort of communists and fascists in his first policy statement to the Bundestag: in Kohl, H. 1984, 'Koalition der Mitte: Für eine Politik der Erneuerung', [Policy statement to the Bundestag, 13 October 1982], in *Reden 1982–1984*, BPA, Bonn, pp. 9–49, at p. 47. Also, his comparison between Gorbachev and Goebbels was perceived as scandalous; see 'Kohl to Reagan: "Ron, be patient"', *Newsweek*, 27 October 1986.

95 Hartman, G. (ed.) 1986, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

96 'Re-enter Germany: SDI plus Bitburg equals new West German power?', *The Economist*, 10 May 1985.

97 Jensen, R. 2007, *Reagan at Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg*, Texas A & M University Press, College Station, Tex., p. 62.

such as the Catholic milieu, his belonging to the 45 generation, his teenage membership of the CDU, his regional background in the Rhine Palatinate, and his university education at Heidelberg in the 1950s. In accordance with these biographical features, Kohl's notion of the German nation was filled with elements of Catholicism, liberal and romantic nationalism, as well as components of historicism. The combination of these elements helped him to articulate a normal, Western nationalism within the context of the Cold War and its aftermath. Kohl used his biography to present himself as an ideal German, who was in his own eyes Christian, liberal and anti-communist, rooted in local traditions, conscious of Germany's glorious past and free from any Nazi guilt. He tried to represent a departure from the new and the old *Sonderweg*, a proud German about whom nobody had to worry anymore. He has been the paragon of Germany's new normality.

# Richard Sulík: A provincial or a European Slovak politician?

Stefan Auer

Richard Sulík, a controversial Slovak political leader, embodies the conflicting nature of Slovak nationalism(s) since 1989. It has been argued that the process of post-communist transition in Central Europe has been driven by contradictory forces of liberal/illiberal, civic/ethnic and Eastern/Western nationalisms. Slovakia is no exception. Sulík's personal story and his political career shed light on these developments. This is in line with the expectations, articulated by Jonathan Hearn in this issue, that 'no matter how unique, individual, personal cases of national identity, in all their specificity, will provide clues to how more general social patterns of national identification are formed'.<sup>1</sup> Sulík's short political career to date has reflected and shaped Slovak self-understanding.

This article takes as its point of departure Hearn's typology of 'moods', by situating its protagonist as someone who acted self-consciously 'against the flow', even paying a significant political price for his convictions (though with a clear expectation that he would 'be ultimately justified').<sup>2</sup> Through his lived experience, multilingualism and outlook, Sulík could be viewed as a perfect example of a modern *European* politician. Like a majority of Slovaks, he was initially an enthusiastic supporter of Slovakia's membership of the European Union, including its membership in the single currency. His enthusiasm turned to scepticism when his hopes about Europe as an anchor of stability were disappointed. Sulík's determined stance towards one of the defining issues of contemporary Europe—the eurozone crisis that threatens the European project at large—led to his political isolation in Slovakia, and earned him a mixture of admiration and contempt in Germany, where he spent his formative years as an adolescent. As a result of his uncompromising views on euro-rescue policies, Sulík has been criticised as a populist, or even an extreme nationalist, particularly after the October 2011 vote on the increase of the eurozone bailout fund in the Slovak Parliament, which brought down the Government, necessitating early elections. Undeterred, Sulík revelled in his Europe-wide reputation as an

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1 Hearn, this volume.

2 Hearn, J. 2002, 'Narrative, agency, and mood: on the social construction of national history in Scotland', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 745–69, at p. 750.

'oddball',<sup>3</sup> and though his popularity amongst Slovak voters has not increased, his political prospects may yet benefit from further deterioration of the eurozone crisis.

## Nationalism and Biography in Central Europe

There is an obvious connection between biography and nationalism in the post-communist world. Strong personalities matter for any 'imagined community',<sup>4</sup> but during times of radical change nations are even more likely to depend on charismatic leadership. As George Schöpflin astutely observed immediately after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe:

Almost hypnotically, people turned to personalities, virtually without regard to their political programmes, as a repository for society's hopes and desires in particular, because persons were felt to be more reliable, more authentic and thus more likely to embody what the individual wanted. In this way personalities were invested with what amounted to a suprapolitical status.<sup>5</sup>

The post-1989 ideological vacuum could not have been filled by robust institutions (which were yet to be created) or alternative ideologies (which were yet to be articulated to harness public support); it was hence filled by strong leaders, spanning from enlightened, liberal and pro-Western leaders such as Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia, and, after 1993 in the Czech Republic, to narrow-minded, chauvinistic demagogues such as Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, one of the pathologies of post-communist societies was people's proclivity to support populist leaders whose all too often rather incoherent political programs were far less important than their personal charisma. Sulík is not charismatic,<sup>7</sup> and he

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3 "I'd rather be an oddball in Brussels than feeling ashamed in front of my children, who would be deeper in debt should I back raising the volume of funding in the EFSF bail-out mechanism", Parliamentary Chairman and head of co-governing Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) party Richard Sulík said in Parliament on Tuesday.' *TASR, News Agency of the Slovak Republic*, 11 October 2011, <[http://195.46.72.16/free/jsp/search/view/ViewerPure\\_en.jsp?Document=.%2F.%2FInput\\_text%2Fonline%2F11%2F10%2Ftbbvabg034463.dat.1%40Fondy&QueryText=>](http://195.46.72.16/free/jsp/search/view/ViewerPure_en.jsp?Document=.%2F.%2FInput_text%2Fonline%2F11%2F10%2Ftbbvabg034463.dat.1%40Fondy&QueryText=>)

4 Anderson, B. 1991, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, [Second edn], Verso, London.

5 Schöpflin, G. 1993, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945–1992*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 268.

6 For studies on Mečiar's impact on Slovak politics in the 1990s, see, for example: Williams, K. 2000, *Slovakia after communism and Meciarism*, SSEES Occasional Papers 47, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London; Haughton, T. 2005, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe*, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.

7 The billboards that Sulík employed in his 2010 election campaign openly alluded to his lack of charisma by stating next to his depiction, '*Fešák nie som, ale hrám fér*', which can be translated loosely as, 'I might not be handsome, but I play a fair game'.



is, in fact, unlikely to ever become as influential as the likes of Havel or Mečiar. Yet, his story is revealing about Slovak nationalism in the way in which his position towards Europe highlighted new divisions within Slovak society.

Central Europe was a testing ground for competing theories of nationalism well before scholars started to ponder the challenges of post-communist democratisation. There is no need to rehearse arguments here about the conflict between primordialists and modernists<sup>8</sup>—that is, those scholars who viewed nations as going back to ancient times<sup>9</sup> and those who argued that they emerged as a result of modernisation, and were thus invented as recently as the eighteenth or nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever theoretical camp they belonged to, most experts on nationalism after 1989 were united in seeing it as a threat to the process of democratisation in Central Europe, particularly in a country like Slovakia. Scholars were reminded of the old conceptual division between civic and ethnic nationalism that can be traced back to Hans Kohn.<sup>11</sup> John Plamenatz restated the concept in the 1970s and sharpened the geographical focus of this theoretical device by differentiating between the Western and the Eastern kind of nationalism.<sup>12</sup> This distinction remains influential: the first kind of nationalism was meant to be positive, because it was civic, it was by definition forward looking, tolerant and enlightened; the second one was negative, because it was ethnic, backward looking and intolerant. Civic communities were meant to be open to newcomers, because their membership was defined by certain political values, rather than descent or culture. Ethnic nations, in contrast, were said to base their membership on birth and were hence more exclusive, tending towards chauvinism. For Kohn, Plamenatz and their countless followers, civic nationalism was characteristic of nations in Western Europe, such as France and the United Kingdom, while ethnic nationalism was typical of nations in Eastern Europe, such as Slovakia. It is worthwhile noting that these conceptual boundaries have shifted over time: Germany was initially seen as typically Eastern (that is, by Kohn), only to be declared typically Western a few decades later (that is, by Plamenatz).<sup>13</sup> In a

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8 I am inclined to side with Hearn's assessment 'that there are problems with both primordialist and modernist approaches, and that the fruitfulness of framing the debates in terms of this antinomy may be exhausted'. See Hearn, J. 2006, *Rethinking Nationalism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, UK, p. 229.

9 Scruton, R. 1990, *The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, Carcanet, Manchester; Smith, A. D. 1991, *National Identity*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK.

10 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, E. 1983, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford; Hobsbawm, E. 1990, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

11 Kohn, H. 1945, *The Idea of Nationalism: A study in its origins and background*, Macmillan, New York.

12 Plamenatz, J. 1973, 'Two types of nationalism', in E. Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism*, ANU Press, Canberra, pp. 22–37.

13 Plamenatz's categorisation ignored the fact that West Germany continued to define its citizenship by descent.

similar vein, the Czechs were promoted to being a typically Western nation shortly after 1989,<sup>14</sup> while the Slovaks had to wait almost two decades to acquire such status.

This 'academic nationalism'<sup>15</sup> finds its predecessor in popular culture. An amusing encounter with a stereotypical Slovak occurs, for example, in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in which a traveller heading for Transylvania observes, 'the strangest figures...the Slovaks, who are more barbarian than the rest, with their big cowboy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts'. The fictional traveller is also bothered by the lack of efficiency, complaining that 'the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains'.<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein, Agatha Christie's invented country 'Herzoslovakia' is populated by people who are 'picturesque', but also 'very reactionary' and 'most uncivilized'. Their national 'hobby' is 'assassinating kings and having revolutions'. Although the reader does not learn much about Herzoslovakia's geography, the country clearly represents *the* Eastern Europe of Western imagination.<sup>17</sup> A great deal of similar images can still be found in popular media across Western Europe.

Yet, there is a growing realisation that Kohn's East–West dichotomy is unhelpful in understanding different sources of nationalist mobilisation in Europe. As Roger Brubaker demonstrated, 'nationalism resists neat parsing into types with clearly contrasting empirical and moral profiles'. Brubaker's argument that 'the civic–ethnic distinction is overburdened'<sup>18</sup> echoes earlier findings by David Brown, who questioned whether we should differentiate between 'good and bad nationalisms'.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, the theory of two kinds of nationalism in Europe tends to obfuscate rather than explain differing qualities of nationalist mobilisation. As I have argued more specifically in relation to Central Europe,<sup>20</sup> this theory is

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14 Kořalka, J. 1994, 'Hans Kohns Dichotomie und die neuzeitliche Nationsbildung der Tschechen', in E. Schmidt-Hartmann (ed.), *Formen des nationalen Bewußtseins im Lichte zeitgenössischer Nationalismustheorien*, R. Oldenburg Verlag, Munich, pp. 263–75.

15 Drakulić, S. 2011, 'Academic nationalism', in T. Harrison and S. Drakulić (eds), *Against Orthodoxy: Studies in nationalism*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, pp. 17–38.

16 Stoker, B. 2002 [1897], *Dracula*, J. P. Riquelme (ed.), St Martin's Press, New York, pp. 28–9.

17 Agatha Christie created Herzoslovakia as a background to one of her many murder-mystery stories. Her invented country is politically unstable and threatens the peace in Europe. Christie thus created an archetype of a small Eastern European country by bringing together the Balkans and Central Europe. The name is an amalgam of Herzegovina and Czechoslovakia. Christie, A. 2001 [1925], *The Secret of Chimneys*, St Martin's Minotaur, New York, pp. 8, 54, 123.

18 Brubaker, R. 2004, "'Civic" and "ethnic" nationalism', in *Ethnicity without Groups*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 132–46, at p. 146. 'Sometimes, as in Kohn's work', Brubaker argues, 'this distinction is projected in space, and used to contrast the civic nationalism of Western Europe...with the ethnic nationalism of Eastern Europe or other world regions. Such grand contrasts of world regions easily acquire a neo-orientalist flavor' (p. 133).

19 Brown, D. 1999, 'Are there good and bad nationalisms?', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 281–302.

20 Auer, S. 2004, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*, Routledge, London.

problematic for two main reasons. First, its crude reductionism has the potential to ‘condemn’ entire nations to being illiberal by their natural predisposition; in other words, it deems them insufficiently civilised or even barbaric. Second, the theory prevents us from realising that different kinds of nationalism compete for dominance within each nation—indeed within any political community that shows some level of social cohesion. This became relevant after 1989, when many observers simply assumed that the prospects for liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe would be seriously undermined by the rise of extremist nationalism. The violent disintegration of Yugoslavia seemed to have confirmed some of these assumptions, while the apparent success of democratisation in the Czech Republic after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1993 appeared to have defied it (and so the Czechs were simply labelled a Western nation as noted above). At any rate, despite the obvious shortcomings of such a simplistic approach to nationalism, in the 1990s the theory of ‘two kinds of nationalism’ dominated the thinking of many political scientists within the field of European studies.

Following this logic, Milada Vachudová and Tim Snyder differentiated between ‘two types of political change in Eastern Europe’, contrasting the Poles, Hungarians and Czechs with the Slovaks, Bulgarians and Romanians. They argued that ‘the most striking and important feature dividing [the two groups] is the role of ethnic nationalism in domestic politics’.<sup>21</sup> Jack Snyder expanded on this theory, claiming that ‘the sophisticated Czechs were able to invent a working civil society virtually overnight’, while ‘more rural and less sophisticated’ people in Serbia, Slovakia and Romania were more likely to be tempted by ‘counterrevolutionary nationalist appeals by former communist leaders’.<sup>22</sup>

## Liberal Nationalism in Slovakia

Slovakia presented a fascinating case. As we have seen, in the early 1990s the country appeared to have vindicated those scholars who doubted Eastern European prospects for democratisation. After it reclaimed its independence in 1993, Slovakia drifted towards an illiberal democracy led by an authoritarian leader, Vladimír Mečiar, who showed disregard for the basic principles of freedom of the press and undermined the establishment of the rule of law. Yet, towards the end of that decade, and even more so after 2000, Slovakia was seen (and saw itself) as being back in the heart of Europe.

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21 Vachudová, M. and Snyder, T. 1997, ‘Are transitions transitory? Two types of political change in Eastern Europe since 1989’, *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1–35, at p. 2.

22 Snyder, J. 2001, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and nationalist conflict*, Norton, New York, p. 73.

The question at the heart of Slovak nationalism (of every nationalism?) is simply: who are the Slovaks? For European nations, this question is also about their role in Europe. Most Slovaks like to think of themselves as good Europeans, which is positively reflected in their perception of the European Union. Numerous Eurobarometer surveys have consistently shown that a very strong majority of Slovaks view EU membership as beneficial.<sup>23</sup> Even Mečiar was forced to present himself as being pro-European. This is not to ignore the fact that he also used extreme nationalist rhetoric whenever he believed it opportune. In fact, the growing discrepancy between Mečiar's rhetorical commitment to Europe and the reality of increased isolation from Europe eventually contributed to his demise. Mečiar's authoritarian tendencies displayed, for example, in his attempts to constrain the freedom of the media could not have been tolerated by a European Union committed to certain democratic standards. Eventually, Mečiar ended up entangled in an 'argumentative self-entrapment', claiming that Slovakia's destiny was its full integration in the European Union, all the while not being able to deliver on that goal.<sup>24</sup>

The traditional societal cleavage, which had shaped Slovak political developments in the 1990s, was the one between a more ethnocentric nationalism that was hostile to the outside world, including Europe, and a liberal strand of nationalism that saw no inherent contradiction between the aims of European integration and national emancipation. This contest appeared to be won by liberal-nationalist forces in the 1998 elections, which were dubbed by some observers as the 'Second Velvet Revolution'.<sup>25</sup>

Sharon Fischer, for example, believed that the 'peaceful civic revolution' in 1998 transformed post-communist Slovakia from 'Nationalist to Europeanist'. As she argued, Slovakia's

quest for independence and the challenges of democratization created a contest between two powerful forces in domestic politics after the collapse of communism: the 'Nationalists,' who stressed the importance

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23 In the Spring 2011 survey, for example, 72 per cent of respondents believed that Slovakia's EU membership had been beneficial. Only Ireland (78 per cent), Poland (73 per cent) and Luxembourg (73 per cent) showed higher levels of support. This is remarkable also against the background of worsening crisis in the eurozone and the controversy about the first bailout package for Greece, negotiated in 2010. *Standard Eurobarometer 75, Public Opinion in the European Union*, Spring 2011, viewed 31 May 2012, <[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75\\_publ\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75_publ_en.pdf)> pp. 34–5.

24 Auer, S. 2009, 'Slovakia: from marginalization of ethnic minorities to political participation (and back?)', in B. Rechel (ed.), *Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe: Success or failure of EU conditionality*, Routledge, London, pp. 195–209.

25 Bútora, M. and Bútorová, Z. 1999, 'Slovakia's democratic awakening', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 80–95.

of national sovereignty even at the risk of international isolation, and the 'Europeanists,' who believed that their country's brightest future lay in Western integration.<sup>26</sup>

Fischer went so far as to suggest that post-1998 Slovakia entered into 'the postnationalist period', in which 'the lines between the two sides [nationalists and Europeanists] have largely disappeared, as new divisions have developed that are more typical of Western societies'.<sup>27</sup> This confident assessment was proven wrong just at the time of the book's publication. The result of the June 2006 elections marked a setback for those political forces in Slovak society that combined their commitment to Europe with a clear rejection of ethnocentric nationalism. The elections empowered the young populist leader of 'Smer [Direction]—Social Democracy', Robert Fico, to lead a coalition government that included the extremist Slovak Nationalist Party alongside Mečiar's People's Party—Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (whose democratic credentials had already been discredited in 1992–98 as noted above). Even Fico did not shy away from nationalist rhetoric, his pro-European stance notwithstanding. Undoubtedly, the 2006 elections weakened liberal-nationalist strands in Slovak society, with the Government stirring anti-Hungarian sentiment and advocating policies of economic nationalism. Fico's increasing domination of the Slovak political sphere was halted temporarily in 2010 when a centre-right and emphatically pro-European Union coalition defeated him, but he returned to power thanks to a strong victory in the March 2012 elections.

In any case, Slovakia's post-1989 development exposed the limitations of theories of nationalism that depended on crude binary oppositions—whether Western and Eastern, civic and ethnic or indeed 'Europeanist' and 'nationalist'. It is unhelpful to differentiate between civilised and uncivilised nations; rather each nation has faced divisions from within about the right conception of what it means to be Czech, Slovak or Polish. Amongst those competing conceptions, there was always a strong presence in Central and Eastern Europe of liberal nationalism, which allowed for the combination of universal liberal values with a strong attachment to one's national community. Clearly, such a blend of liberal values and nationalism is also conducive to the key aims of European integration. A liberal nationalist is by definition a good European, because he rejects a chauvinist vision of his nation that prioritises its narrowly defined

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26 Fisher, S. 2006, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From nationalist to Europeanist*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 209.

27 Ibid., pp. 8, 13. Vít Hloušek and Lubomír Kopeček echoed this assessment, arguing that 'nationalistic cleavage of transformation' lost relevance after 'the Slovak accession to the EU on the 1st May 2004'. Hloušek, V. and Kopeček, L. 2008, 'Persistence and change: cleavages in the contemporary Czech and Slovak politics', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 518–52, at p. 545.

interests above anything else. A number of influential Slovak political leaders fell into this category,<sup>28</sup> amongst them the founder of Freedom and Solidarity (SAS), Richard Sulík.

This is not to ignore the fact that the very term 'a good European' is open to contestation, just as is the case with regard to the basic question of national identity. The answer to the question of 'who are the Slovaks', for example, is usually shaped by the respondent's normative views about Slovaks' desirable traits and their role in the world. In line with this, the political contestation about Slovakia's place in Europe is often pursued through conflicting visions about Slovak national identity. The same applies to the debates about the European Union's future and European identity.

At any rate, the eurozone crisis in 2011 dramatically changed the defining political cleavages in Slovakia, when a radical split emerged within the liberal-nationalist camp about Slovakia's role in Europe. Sulík was instrumental in this story. Having been elevated to the prominent position of Speaker of the Slovak Parliament thanks to the June 2010 elections, in which conservative and liberal parties opposed the bailout of Greece, he found himself and his party isolated when rejecting similar policies more than a year later.

Martin Šimečka, a Slovak journalist based in Prague, spoke for many Slovak liberals when he observed in a lengthy interview for an influential Slovak TV program, *Pod lampou*:

What we have witnessed is a paradigmatic change in Slovak politics. I consider nowadays Richard Sulik and his entire party, SAS, as a radical right-wing party, which is extremist, populist and anti-European, at the same level as [the party] of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. What I find particularly shocking on this phenomenon is the fact that this party emerged from within the reformist spectrum of Slovak politics... This fundamentally changes our situation. The division [that we have accepted to date as our founding myth] between us, 'the goodies', who oppose them, 'the baddies', such as Mečiar and Fico, lost its credibility, because this purely extremist party came into existence from our side of the political divide.<sup>29</sup>

Similar allegations against Sulík were made on high-impact political talk shows on German television. Sulík was attacked as an irresponsible populist stirring extreme nationalist sentiments by prominent politicians, from the

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28 See the chapter on Slovakia in Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*.

29 Hrib, Š. 2011, 'Lampa o páde vlády a eurovale', *Pod lampou*, 14 October, <<http://www.tyzden.sk/lampa/lampa-pad-vlady.html>>

Social Democratic leader of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz (SPD),<sup>30</sup> the former Mayor of Hamburg, Klaus Von Dohnanyi (also SPD), to the parliamentary Secretary and Deputy Finance Minister, Steffen Kampeter, from the ruling conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU).<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, in the eyes of his numerous supporters at home, Sulík represented a stand that was both pro-European and responsive to Slovak national interests.<sup>32</sup> The Slovak TV broadcast cited above also included comments sympathetic to Sulík's resistance of further mutualisation of debt across the eurozone. The actress, writer and singer Lucia Piussi noted pithily, 'Europe broke in [to Slovakia], and we lost sovereignty'.<sup>33</sup> The respected theatre director Blaho Uhlár echoed that sentiment, bemoaning that Sulík's isolation confirms what he had felt for a long time: 'that this [Slovak] nation is fundamentally a nation of subservient subject people and Europe is feudal [in its structures]. European aristocracy demands more money and whether their subjects like it, or not, they will have to pay.'<sup>34</sup>

Virtually identical was the assessment by the political commentator Dag Daniš, in the same broadcast as well as in a Slovak financial daily newspaper. Daniš argued that the Slovak nation, by first attempting to defy and then being forced to comply with EU demands to increase the bailout fund, behaved like 'a servant who dares to use his own money as he pleases and ends up being punished and constrained in his freedom'. According to Daniš, Sulík became a victim of the German and French change of heart about EU policies with respect to the eurozone. As a result of his principled opposition to these misguided measures, Daniš argued, 'Sulík ended up in the [political] wilderness'.<sup>35</sup>

## Who is Richard Sulík?

Who is Richard Sulík and what political values does he stand for? Were Sulík's many critics, or rather his supporters, right? Undoubtedly, Sulík is an unlikely candidate for a populist, an anti-European, let alone a 'provincial' Slovak. He is fluent in English and German, and no less comfortable appearing on German

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30 Illner, M. 2012, 'Sind die Griechen noch zu retten?', *ZDF*, 2 February.

31 Will, A. 2011, 'Die Euro-Abstimmung—Riskieren wir jetzt alles?', *ARD*, 26 September.

32 This resonates with Sulík's self-understanding. As he put it in an interview with the author, 'I am a European, but I am also a Slovak. But when there are European issues, which damage Slovak interests then I oppose them. I am not so blinded by Europe...Yet, there are many nonsensical measures emanating from EU bureaucracy that I oppose regardless of my nationality.' An interview conducted in Bratislava on 26 June 2012.

33 Hríb, 'Lampa o páde vlády a eurovane'.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Daniš, D. 2011, 'Slovensko stratilo suverenitu', *Hospodárske noviny*, 14 October, <<http://www.hnonline.sk>>

TV, addressing an audience at the Cato Institute's Centre for Global Liberty and Prosperity in Washington, DC, or the prestigious St Gallen Symposium in Switzerland,<sup>36</sup> than he is when addressing his Slovak electorate.

The sudden rise to power of Sulík, a highly unconventional (a)political figure, occurred in the June 2010 elections, when his newly created (and largely unknown) party, Freedom and Solidarity (SAS), secured 12 per cent support. He first entered politics as a special adviser to the Finance Minister, Ivan Mikloš, with whom he shared responsibility for the bold reform of the Slovak taxation system in 2003–04. The reform radically simplified the Slovak taxation system through the introduction of a 'flat tax' amounting to just 19 per cent on all income. The tax reform is credited with a significant improvement in the Slovak economy, which is still considered one of the most dynamic within the eurozone (though admittedly starting from a very low level). At any rate, what Mikloš and Sulík accomplished made Slovakia very attractive to foreign investors and reinforced the ongoing process of Europeanisation. These were not policies of a provincial, let alone an anti-European government. It is safe to assume that Sulík's surprising success in the 2010 elections was related to the overall success of these policies, for which he was able to take some credit.

Through his upbringing and his political outlook, Sulík too is thoroughly Europeanised. Thanks to his commercial success, he also happens to be one of the richest individuals in Slovakia. He spent his formative years in (what was then) West Germany. His family emigrated through the former Yugoslavia in 1980, when he was only twelve. His secondary education took place first in Munich, then in Gelsenkirchen, and led finally to a leaving certificate at the Technical High School in Pforzheim (Technisches Gymnasium). He proceeded to study physics at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, only to switch to economics in 1989 (*Betriebswirtschaftslehre*). Sulík discontinued his studies in order to return to Slovakia, which, after the collapse of communism, offered great opportunities for young, daring entrepreneurs. He founded a company (FaxCopy), made his fortune and then successfully completed his degree at the Economic University in Bratislava.<sup>37</sup>

Sulík's return to Slovakia and his transition from the private sector into politics were not without setbacks. The Slovak media developed a love–hate relationship with the former expatriate well before his controversial stance towards eurozone policies. Immediately after the 2010 elections, he accepted a prominent political role as the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament (defying expectations that he might

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36 Policy making under extreme circumstances, Opening panel of the 42nd St Gallen Symposium, 3 May 2012, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu7VfSzHPA4>>

37 Remarkably, Sulík's final thesis produced at the Economic University, 'Daňová reforma SR [Tax reform of the Slovak Republic]', served as a blueprint for the radical transformation of the Slovak taxation system. The thesis is available at: <<http://diplomovka.sme.sk/zdroj/3431.pdf>> (viewed 30 May 2012).



become the Finance Minister). A few days after his nomination, Sulík attended an informal lunch with the Austrian, German and Swiss Ambassadors, where he learned his first lesson about managing appearances. Newspapers accused him of not doing justice to his newly acquired political role, because he failed to dress properly for such a meeting.<sup>38</sup> In Slovakia such behaviour is considered a major faux pas. Sulík dressed like what Slovaks call dismissively a *Gadžo* (a provincial, uncultivated peasant); what's more, he did this in the presence of sophisticated Westerners. This trivial episode received a considerable amount of press coverage. It was a revealing manifestation of the deep-seated anxiety among the Slovak people that they would not be accepted as equals in the family of European nations: sitting at the table with sophisticated, rich and powerful nations like the Swiss, Austrians and Germans. Sulík was blamed for embarrassing the nation by looking like a barbarian.<sup>39</sup>

What is, in fact, ironic about Sulík's short political career is that rather than being a Slovak populist, he seems to have internalised distinctly 'Germanic' virtues, which manifest themselves, in particular, in his strong belief that for a polity to be successful it must be rule-based. This is at the heart of the German conception of the *Rechtstaat*—that is, the rule of law that ought to underpin a liberal-democratic state.<sup>40</sup> German elites, arguably more than anyone else, have consistently seen the project of European integration as one based on a stable supranational legal order. For the European Union to survive, it must remain primarily a community of law. This argument spans half a century, from Dr Walter Hallstein,<sup>41</sup> the first president of the European Commission, to current commentaries by the likes of Professor Paul Kirchhof,<sup>42</sup> a former judge of the German Constitutional Court, and Jens Weidman,<sup>43</sup> the President of the German Bundesbank.

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38 See 'Sulík na večeri s veľvyslancami: Šéf parlamentu sa správal ako sedliak! [Sulík's dinner with ambassadors: the president of the parliament behaved like a peasant]', *Nový čas*, 28 July 2011, <<http://www.cas.sk/clanok/175018/sulik-na-veceri-s-velvyslancami-sef-parlamentu-sa-spraval-ako-sedliak.html>> and 'Oblečte si svojho Sulíka! Zvládnete to lepšie, než predseda parlamentu? [Dress up your Sulík! Will you manage it better than the president of the parliament?]', *Nový čas*, 30 July 2011, viewed 31 May 2012 <<http://www.cas.sk/clanok/175292/oblecte-si-svojho-sulika-zvladnete-to-lepsie-nez-predseda-parlamentu.html>>

39 Parenthetically, it is worthwhile noting that the theory of two kinds of nationalism mentioned above is particularly offensive to nations in Central and Eastern Europe for very similar reasons. To argue that a nation has a strong proclivity to subscribe to Eastern nationalism amounts to questioning its rightful place in Europe to the extent that Europe is usually equated with the West. Following this logic, to be described as 'East European' implies that one is *less* European.

40 See, for example, Smith, G. 1981, 'Does West German democracy have an "efficient secret"?', *West European Politics*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 166–76, at p. 171. The strict adherence to the rule of law stabilised the post-World War II political system in West Germany, creating what Jan-Werner Müller described as 'constrained democracy'. Müller, J.-W. 2011, *Contesting Democracy: Political thought in twentieth-century Europe*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., p. 6.

41 Hallstein, W. 1969, *Der unvollendete Bundesstaat*, Econ, Düsseldorf & Vienna.

42 Kirchhof, P. 2012, 'Verfassungsnot!', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 July.

43 Weidmann, J. 2012, 'Nur eine Stabilitätsunion kann den Euro retten', *Der Standard*, 27 June.

This leads to the second decisive moment in Sulík's political biography, which occurred in October 2011, when he defied both domestic and EU pressure to endorse the enlargement of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF). In his defence, one can plausibly argue that by rejecting the EFSF he simply remained truthful to what he promised his voters a year earlier, when, alongside his coalition partners, he vehemently opposed the bailout of Greece.

How did Sulík's actions reflect his own self-understanding and how did they impact on Slovak self-understanding? Here, again, it helps to follow Hearn's lead: 'How and why do people invest themselves in nations and nationalism? An important part of the answer lies in the ways that constructions of narrative and agency at the collective level articulate with experiences of narrative and agency at the personal level.'<sup>44</sup>

Reflecting on Hearn's triangle of 'narrative, agency, and mood', it becomes clear that Sulík's controversial actions played out at two levels concurrently: at the levels of Slovak and EU politics, which impacted on both Slovak and German national debates. The narrative that emphasised rules was strongly anchored in German political culture, but might have found resonance with the Slovak electorate, particularly when Sulík contrasted Slovak compliance with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty with Greek—and indeed, German and French—transgressions of the same provisions. His 'agency and mood' as a self-proclaimed 'oddball' defying external pressure were primarily directed towards Slovaks, who were keen to escape their past status as a 'subservient, subject people'.<sup>45</sup>

In an hour-long programmatic speech to the Slovak Parliament on 21 June 2012, in which he outlined his party's fundamental objections to the establishment of the European Stability Mechanism (which was meant to eventually replace the temporary EFSF), Sulík implored Members of Parliament and the Slovak Prime Minister to resist the pressure from Brussels:

I challenge Robert Fico, the premier of our country who pledged that he will fulfill his duties in the best interests of Slovak citizens and not in the interests of a handful of unelected officials in Brussels, to reject the Treaty about the European Stability Mechanism from his position of the Prime Minister. Mr Fico, it is your moral duty to protect Slovak national interests and not to damage them. To be a statesman does not mean that

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44 Hearn, 'Narrative, agency, and mood', p. 745.

45 Hříb, 'Lampa o páde vlády a eurovale'.

one simply obediently follows the instructions from Brussels, in order to be popular there [*a byt' tam za fešáka*]. To be a statesman means to act in one's country's interest.<sup>46</sup>

It is worthwhile repeating that this position is not incompatible with Sulík's support for European integration per se. Asked about the possibility of giving up national sovereignty in the German weekly *Stern*, Sulík accepted that it would make perfect sense for Slovakia to do so in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is precisely the area in which the European Union has achieved very little. Yet, only those who are 'fixated on the idea of the United States of Europe and are willing to risk everything [to implement that vision]', Sulík argued, are considered 'good Europeans'. Queried about whether he had any regrets about threatening the collapse of the eurozone through his October 2011 opposition to the EFSF, Sulík retorted: 'I haven't changed my mind. The bailout of Greece was wrong. Following my personal initiative we rejected it [in 2010]. We did not succumb to blackmail. I know that I am viewed as a bad European by the politicians in Brussels. The good ones are those who obey.'<sup>47</sup>

Clearly, Sulík implied that such views about 'good Europeans' are one-sided. His proposition was credible. It is worth recalling that from the outset, the process of European integration was driven by competing visions for Europe. Although the founding Treaty of Rome promised 'an ever-closer union' already in 1957, the aims of the founding fathers were more modest. Indeed, as Alan S. Milward argued in his seminal study, the pragmatic realism of the postwar leaders and their legitimate concern with national interests resulted in the 'European rescue of the nation state'.<sup>48</sup> Sulík is, hence, right to invoke the legacy of the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, when stressing the importance of national interests in Europe.<sup>49</sup> In Sulík's defence, it can be argued that the reckless policies pursued to maintain the integrity of the eurozone at any price are not just against German and Slovak national interests, they do not serve European interests either.<sup>50</sup>

Sulík's determined opposition to the eurozone rescue policies was based on two strands of argumentation. First, any talk about the need for more European

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46 Published on YouTube by Sulík's party, Freedom and Solidarity, under the title 'Essential speech by Richard Sulík about the ESM madness', <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8KSBykRJl8>> and 'Grundsatzrede von Richard Sulík zum Wahnsinn namens ESM', <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nva\\_51lQ6M&list=UUDwcHhCZOWHb6sguW4O6XBg&index=7&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nva_51lQ6M&list=UUDwcHhCZOWHb6sguW4O6XBg&index=7&feature=plcp)> It is worthwhile noting that the speech is published with both German and English subtitles, demonstrating Sulík's determination to reach beyond the Slovak electorate.

47 'Die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa sind eine fixe Idee', [An interview with Richard Sulík], *Stern*, 29 August 2012, <<http://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/richard-sulik-slowakischer-politiker-die-vereinigten-staaten-von-europa-sind-eine-fixe-idee-1886108.html>>

48 Milward, A. 1992, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Routledge, London.

49 'Die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa sind eine fixe Idee'.

50 I developed this point further in Auer, S. 2012, *Whose Liberty is it Anyway? Europe at the crossroads*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, pp. 81–2.

solidarity was misguided considering the massive discrepancy in per capita income between Slovakia and Greece, accompanied by significantly lower levels of spending on basic infrastructure and welfare support in the former in contrast with the latter. Slovakia was asked to support spendthrift countries that were significantly richer but incurred unsustainable levels of debt. In effect, or so Sulík argued, the Slovak electorate was being punished for supporting governments that had behaved in a fiscally prudent manner. Second, Slovakia was initially proud to join an elite club of eurozone countries in 2009, assuming that what kept the club together was a set of strict rules. After all, Slovakia's entry was preceded by great efforts made in order to comply with the stringent demands of the Maastricht Treaty: an overall level of debt lower than 60 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and a deficit no higher than 3 per cent. Slovak liberals, including Sulík,<sup>51</sup> welcomed the external pressure that would force Slovak governments to behave in a fiscally prudent manner.

The Maastricht criteria, however, were not applied in the same way to all the countries of the eurozone. Before its admission to the single currency in January 2009, Slovakia was scrutinised far more thoroughly than any other existing member state. While the admission of Greece was made possible regardless of its deficiencies with respect to fiscal discipline—the 'cradle of democracy' was seen as a symbolically important partner in the enterprise that aimed to foster a sense of pan-European identity—the admission procedures applied to the countries in Central and Eastern Europe were significantly more rigorous.

Sulík favoured a rule-based approach. As he noted in his speech to the Cato Institute in February 2012: 'In the first 10 years of single currency the Maastricht criteria were broken 97 times, but no country was punished. In 2004 Germany and France publicly declared that they will not follow the Maastricht criteria.'<sup>52</sup>

What particularly angered Sulík and many of his supporters was the fact that Greece had falsified its statistics for years, well before the escalation of the eurozone crisis. In fact, as noted above, the electoral success of the centre-right governing coalition, of which Sulík's party became a member in 2010, was partly based on their rejection of the first bailout of Greece. As the eurozone crisis deteriorated further in 2011–12, EU leaders and national politicians felt compelled to pursue policies that further violated the provisions anchored in the Maastricht Treaty in order to preserve the currency union. Furthermore, the independence of the European Central Bank was compromised by its purchases of government bonds on secondary markets; the no-bailout clause in

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51 'This is exactly the kind of stability community [*Stabilitätsgemeinschaft*] that we want to belong to', Sulík recalled years later. See Fischer, P. 2012, 'Der Euro führt so in die Knechtschaft', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 25 June, <<http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/wirtschaftnachrichten/der-euro-fuehrt-so-in-die-knechtschaft-1.17277615>>

52 Sulík, R. 2012, European integration: what's gone wrong?, Address to policy forum, CATO Institute, Washington, DC, 21 February, <<http://www.cato.org/event.php?eventid=8836>>

the Maastricht Treaty was violated through the refinancing of Greek, Irish and Portuguese sovereign debt. This was anathema to a number of influential critics in Germany—Olaf Henkel, Axel Weber and Thilo Sarrazin<sup>53</sup>—as well as Sulík. As he wrote (together with Marian L. Tupy) in February 2012:

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Slovakia underwent painful but necessary economic reforms, with the burden of the transition to capitalism squarely on the shoulders of the Slovak people. Meanwhile, Greeks were enjoying artificial prosperity stimulated by government borrowing and spending. The average income in Slovakia was \$17,889 in 2011; in Greece, it was \$27,875. The average Slovak pension was \$491 in 2010; in Greece, it was \$1,775. Slovakia's national debt is 45% of GDP; Greek debt is approaching 160%.

Yet Slovakia is now being asked to borrow in order to lend to Greece, thereby sacrificing its relatively high credit rating and low interest rates. Is this solidarity? This kind of 'solidarity' with Greece also flies in the face of the rule of law. Article 125 of the Lisbon Treaty, for example, states that each EU member state is responsible for its own debts, and Article 123 prohibits the European Central Bank from lending to the EU member states. Both stipulations have been breached.<sup>54</sup>

As noted above, Sulík's criticism of the eurozone rescue policies appears to have received stronger support from abroad than in his native Slovakia. His actions attracted attention from a wide variety of well-respected foreign media outlets, such as the *Wall Street Journal* (see above), and German newspapers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Spiegel* and *Stern* magazines and the weekly *Die Zeit*. The Swiss monthly the *Schweizer Monat* featured Sulík on its cover, presenting a lengthy interview with 'the preacher' (*Prediger*) of fiscal responsibility.

More recently, Sulík directly entered the public discourse in Germany by responding to an article in *Die Zeit*, written by a German MEP for the Green Party, Franziska Brantner. Expressing her frustration with the German Government, Brantner argued that German politicians should be more honest with their electorates and admit that the pooling of debt across Europe is both necessary and just, even though it will expose Germany to further liabilities. It is necessary because the eurozone cannot survive without it, and it is just because of Germany's historical responsibility towards its European partners.<sup>55</sup>

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53 Henkel, H.-O. 2010, *Rettet unser Geld!*, Heine, Munich; Sarrazin, T. 2012, *Europa braucht den Euro nicht: Wie uns politisches Wunschenken in die Krise geführt hat*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munich.

54 Sulík, R. and Tupy, M. L. 2012, 'The limits of European solidarity', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 February.

55 Brantner, F. 2012, 'Weil wir nicht ehrlich sind', *Die Zeit*, 2 August, <<http://www.zeit.de/2012/32/Euro-Krise-Schulden-Brantner/komplettansicht>>

In response, Sulík recalled his school years in West Germany, in which he learned a great deal about Germany's guilt and its massive reparation payments. 'It was right that Germany paid so much', Sulík argued, 'after all it had caused immense damage. But for how much longer is it expected to pay now in the Eurozone crisis?'<sup>56</sup> Sulík's article elicited hundreds of reader comments, mostly positive, with many readers exasperated by the fact that Germans needed to be told by an outsider how to best look after their own and Europe's interests.

Sulík also found a sympathetic response in Poland. *Gazeta Prawna*, for example, ridiculed EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso's attack on Sulík. Barroso argued: 'sovereignty is fine, but you cannot allow a small stakeholder in the community [Slovakia] to slow down all the others.' 'It goes without saying', opined the Polish commentator, that 'the UK, France and Germany can veto any major development without inviting any criticisms'.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast, Ivan Mikloš, the then deputy prime minister and minister of finance from the ruling Slovak Democratic and Christian Union, accused his former coalition partner of employing Goebbels' methods:

In a desperate attempt to arrest the decline in their popular support, Sulík and his party, Freedom and Solidarity, resorted to populism and destroyed their own government. They displayed a complete disregard not merely for the solutions advanced for the Eurozone crisis and for Slovak foreign policy, but for politics as such...The spread of phobia against the establishment of the protective bailout fund failed, so instead of advancing a real political program they resorted to relentless attacks, baseless accusations and manipulations.<sup>58</sup>

As noted above, one of the remarkable paradoxes of Sulík's EU politics is that it might have been more successful in Germany than in his native Slovakia. His principled position resonates with German political culture. In June 2012, Sulík was even awarded the Hayek Award by the Friedrich A. von Hayek Society. As the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported, Sulík addressed the Friedrich A. von Hayek Society gathering, reminiscing about his initial enthusiasm for the single currency as the bedrock of fiscal prudence and stability. As it happened though, Sulík warned his audience gathered in Bayreuth, 'the Euro now leads to serfdom'.<sup>59</sup>

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56 Sulík, R. 2012, 'Deutschland ruiniert sich', *Die Zeit*, 9 August, <<http://www.zeit.de/2012/33/Euro-Rettung-Zahlung-Deutschland>>

57 Parafianowicz, Z. 2011, 'Europejczycy równi i równiejsi', *Gazeta Prawna*, 14 October.

58 Mikloš, I. 2012, 'Sulikova politika je mimo reality', *Hospodárske noviny*, 23 January, p. 7.

59 Fischer, P. 2012, 'Der Euro führt so in die Knechtschaft', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 25 June, <<http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/wirtschaftnachrichten/der-euro-fuehrt-so-in-die-knechtschaft-1.17277615>>

Well before Sulík received the award, a Slovak commentator speculated that his uncompromising stance was reinforced through the prominence he gained in Germany, which must have been particularly flattering for someone who could not have reached such elevated status while living there. Samuel Abraham, a leading Slovak public intellectual, wrote a personal attack on Sulík for the large Slovak daily *Sme* (7 October 2011), alleging that his misguided positions were driven by the vanity of an expatriate who wanted to prove himself in Germany:

Wherever you end up as an immigrant, you become just an observer in that new society...And now imagine Richard Sulík, who lived and studied in the émigré anonymity of the Federal Republic of Germany. He can suddenly see how his speeches about the Euro bailout fund make it to the front page of [German] newspapers that he used to read with reverence. He takes part in a TV talk-show in Berlin to explain the downsides of the Euro rescue efforts to those very Germans who had ignored him until now. This amounts to a perfect satisfaction for a former emigrant.

He earned himself Warhol's five minutes of fame across all of Europe—an inducement stronger than his political career in the province.<sup>60</sup>

Yet even in Slovakia, where Sulík was often dismissed as a one-issue-party leader for one electoral term, he proved his critics and political opponents wrong. He was re-elected to the Parliament in March 2012, defying an exceedingly hostile media environment and relying largely on simple use of new social media and the Internet. This is not to underplay the significant decline in support for his party, which secured only 6 per cent compared with 12 per cent at the previous election.

While the election campaign of Sulík's SAS party focused on the unfair deal that the Slovak Government accepted through its support of the euro-rescue policies,<sup>61</sup> the March 2012 elections were overshadowed by a massive corruption scandal that implicated leading political figures in the centre-right parties. Even Sulík was involved, if only in a minor way, in the so-called *Sasanka* affair.<sup>62</sup> Sulík

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60 Abraham, S. 2012, 'Europopolizmus: päť minút slávy Richarda Sulíka [Europopolism: five minutes of Richard Sulík's fame]', *Resetované Slovensko: čistá teória vs. politická prax* [Slovakia Reset: Pure theory versus political practice], Kalligram, Bratislava, pp. 44–8.

61 The short and snappy party video released on the eve of the March 2012 elections emphasises Sulík's personal integrity and his determination to defend the interests of Slovak citizens against misguided EU policies. It contains also the highlights of Sulík's appearances on German TV and the British MEP Nigel Farage's endorsement of Sulík. See the YouTube video 'Voľby 2012: Kto koná v záujme občanov? [Elections 2012: who acts in the interests of citizens?]', viewed 30 May 2012, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTUy4DLskd4&feature=youtu.be>>

62 'Another anonymous document named "Sasanka" emerges', *The Slovak Spectator*, 30 January 2012, viewed 31 May 2012, <[http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/45221/2/another\\_anonymous\\_document\\_named\\_sasanka\\_emerges.html](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/45221/2/another_anonymous_document_named_sasanka_emerges.html)>

could not deny that he met on numerous occasions with the highly dubious entrepreneur Marián Kočner, who exploited his connections with a wide cross-section of Slovak politicians across the ideological divide. The allegations undoubtedly dented SAS's and Sulík's credibility as fighters against corruption, and, as Sulík himself admitted, they might have cost the party valuable electoral support.<sup>63</sup> Sulík accepted that the meetings were imprudent, but blamed himself for being politically naive, rather than corrupt. What cannot be doubted is the fact that the scandal diverted people's focus from the eurozone crisis.<sup>64</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

The eurozone crisis has had a decisive impact on the Slovak political landscape by creating new political cleavages. The liberal-nationalist forces, which were unable to maintain unity in November 2011 with respect to the enlargement of the euro-rescue fund, were punished by the Slovak electorate in March 2012. The main beneficiary in the 2012 elections was Robert Fico, the leader of the centre-left party Smer, which gained an absolute majority and was able to govern without the support of any minor parties. Fico's European credentials were somewhat mixed in 2006–10 owing to his alliance with the extreme right Slovak Nationalist Party; Smer was even temporarily expelled from the alliance of European Social Democratic Parties. Yet, in 2012, Fico could credibly present himself as a 'good European'. He showed no doubts about the need for Slovakia to support the euro-rescue policies. It is not without irony that Fico, who did not hesitate to enter into a governing coalition with the party of extreme nationalists in 2006, became the main beneficiary of the European Union's pressure on the Slovak centre-right government. In fact it was Fico, rather than Sulík, who repeatedly demonstrated populist tendencies. Another article would be needed to describe and analyse Fico's enduring allure to the Slovak people and what it can tell us about the competing conceptions of nationalism in Slovakia. Measured against Fico's popularity, Sulík is—and is likely to remain—only a marginal political actor.

Yet Sulík's non-conformist thinking resonates with a small but remarkably stable segment of the Slovak electorate. Moreover, it is yet to be fully vindicated. Further escalation of the eurozone crisis is bound to strengthen his clout both in Slovakia and in Europe. Owing to the crisis, Slovaks as a nation are being forced to rethink their love affair with Europe. Like other peoples across the European Union, they are learning the hard way that EU membership is not always a win–win proposition. What Sulík's short political career also shows is

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63 'Instead of achieving about 6 per cent', Sulík stated, 'we could have had about 8 per cent'. An interview with the author conducted in Bratislava, 26 June 2012.

64 Zsilleová, M. 2012, 'Európa strany v kampani nebaví', *Sme*, 15 February.



that politics within EU member states can no longer be constrained to national matters. In fact, through his outlook, personal biography and political actions, Sulík has sought to influence both Slovak and European politics. He also became increasingly aware of himself as a European political actor. An entrepreneur who became a politician out of a strongly held belief that this was the only way to make his society more free, he found a new calling in response to the (mis-)management of the eurozone crisis. He exemplifies what Hearn finds so rewarding about the study of nationalism, biography and power:

[T]he search for power is not simply a matter of domination, but also an existential aspect of being human. As healthy individuals, we need to have some power over our lives, and this search gets inscribed in our identities, and laid down in our biographies. The various ways people connect and disconnect their personal identities...reveal struggles for and against power.<sup>65</sup>

As this article was being finalised, Sulík saw himself as being on a mission to save Europe from itself—or, to be more specific, what he considered to be its incompetent and reckless leadership in Brussels, Berlin and Paris. Somewhat isolated, but no longer alone, Sulík sketched the beginnings of a tentative alliance that spanned political ‘oddballs’ in Germany, the United Kingdom and Slovakia. As he put it in an interview with the *Schweizer Monat*:

I see myself as a part of a splinter group, a European avant-garde, that includes [the MPs] Frank Schäffler and Peter Gauweiler in Germany and [the MEP] Nigel Farage in England. We travel through Europe in order to spread enlightenment. We are the thorns in the eyes of the EU dreamers. We denounce the crooked deals of Merkels, Hollandes and Junckers, who meet every couple of weeks at various crisis summits and continue turning the European Union into a monster in the name of solidarity and justice. We feel at times like Jehovah’s Witnesses, but it is also fun.<sup>66</sup>

Sulík might be posturing here and overestimating his influence; yet, this is clearly not a statement of a parochial nationalist or an opportunistic populist (even if Sulík is doing himself a disservice through his association with Nigel Farage, whose relentless criticism of the European Union is far more radical). Sulík’s story is interesting precisely because it reflects and shapes a small, but increasingly influential strand in the Slovak political spectrum that is in its outlook and commitments both liberal and national, European and Slovak. The suspicion of centralised power and the supranational bureaucracy of EU institutions goes hand-in-hand with the commitment to a Europe of open markets

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65 Hearn, this volume.

66 Scheu, R. 2012, ‘Der Prediger’, *Schweizer Monat*, no. 998 (July–August), <<http://www.misesinfo.org/?p=2650>>

and its four freedoms that have defined the project of European unity from the outset: the freedom of movement of people, capital, goods and services. Seen in this light, a liberal defence of Slovak national interests is not incompatible with the pursuit of European interests.

Sulík is not a populist. In fact, committed as he is to fiscal prudence, Sulík has consistently opposed populist policies pursued by politicians willing to spend money on reckless electoral promises. What Sulík presented to the electorate was the necessity of cutting spending; he also opposed the tax on high earners—such political positions are unlikely to attract much popular support. Even Sulík's personal background does not lend itself to populism. A populist is someone deeply steeped in the political culture of his country, for whom telling the people what they want to hear is second nature. As a former expatriate, Sulík took some time to readjust to his homeland; as an outsider to politics, he took time to adjust to political games. He remains a committed liberal nationalist who, by defending Slovak national interests, defends European interests too (or what he perceives them to be). In fact, it may well be argued that European politics would benefit from having more politicians like Sulík.

To democratise itself, the European Union needs to open itself to radically different views about its future. European elites ignore the views of their electorates at their peril. If the mainstream political parties in Europe and their leaders fail to address the legitimate concerns of their nations, more extremist leaders will do so. As a result, the future students of European politics might end up being confronted with the revival of ethnocentric nationalism in an increasingly divided Europe, rather than various strands of liberal nationalism, which seek to combine commitment to one's own nation with universal liberal values.

# Nationalism and Biographical Transformation: The case of Boudicca

Stephanie Lawson

## Introduction

If the purpose of nationalist historiography is to construct a past worthy of the present and future then the role of heroic individuals in the course of key historical events and developments and the construction of suitable biographies to support the narrative is essential to the purpose. Episodes of warfare very often provide the most heroic figures, bolstering national imagery and myth with tales of renown as well as introducing a personal life-story element that not only anchors the individual's biography in a suitable national past but also personalises it in a way that a mere retelling of events cannot. Images of Boudicca, the renowned 'warrior queen' who led an army against the might of imperial Rome in Iron-Age Britain, have been deployed in modern nationalist projects from Victorian times through to more recent times. Not surprisingly, the same images have sometimes been used in feminist struggles for liberation of a different kind.

A suitably stylised iconography—most famously represented by Boudicca's statue at Westminster—is accompanied by a popular biographical representation casting her in the role of leader of her 'nation' against the alien occupier and subjugator. That she ultimately failed matters little. Indeed, to have met death in the course of struggle only enhances the individual's stature. The nationalist romanticisation of Boudicca, however, has not gone unchallenged. Alternative interpretations of her biography depict a violent, vengeful figure who cared as little for most of her fellow Britons as for the occupying Romans. An equally negative version figured prominently in representations of Boudicca in early modern England. These, however, seem to demonstrate more of a discomfort with the challenge to gender roles presented by a female warrior leader in the nation's past than a concern for the way in which she prosecuted her cause.<sup>1</sup> These differing interpretations highlight the way in which biographies are

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Mikalachki, J. 1998, *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and nation in early modern England*, Routledge, London.

transformed according to the circumstances of the time and the interests, values and projects involved, thus producing different identities for the figure in question and, by implication, of the nation itself.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, Jonathan Hearn notes that 'identity' is therefore not simply a proxy for biography, but rather also provides a conceptual framework within which the link between biography and the study of nationalism can be better understood.<sup>3</sup> As suggested above, the way in which Boudicca's life story has been told and retold also reflects aspects of the highly problematic status of heroic women in nationalist myth-making when they step outside the bounds of their 'normal' gender roles and appear to not only act within what is considered to be a largely masculine realm of activity, but also to take leadership positions in that realm. The 'warrior' is very much a masculine ideal embedded in varying cultural contexts. Indeed, it has been argued that war is the most gendered social activity of all, and the strong association of masculinity and war has been expressed in numerous ways across time and space.<sup>4</sup> It has been promoted in British popular culture, for example, over a considerable period.<sup>5</sup> One contemporary British commentator suggests that her society is 'very odd' because on those occasions when women do come to power, the only way it can cope with figures such as Boudicca, Elizabeth I and Margaret Thatcher is to make them superhuman.<sup>6</sup>

Female heroism is certainly acceptable, but it has usually been limited to activities associated with the 'feminine arts', nursing and nurturing in particular, as well as sacrificing sons to the cause. A pamphlet produced in the wake of a nineteenth-century war, for example, provides an account of the 'noble sacrifices and exploits of heroic women' who not only 'sent forth their sons' but also themselves displayed, in the face of persecution and danger, a heroism that 'surpassed the charity of Florence Nightingale, and repeated the gentle sacrifices recorded of Mary in the sacred Scriptures'.<sup>7</sup> These nurturing images also accord with common images of one's country as the 'motherland', easily accommodated by masculinist narratives of the nation. But these are scarcely the images associated with Boudicca, or of most female war leaders produced from time to time in various places, but who are almost always treated as anomalous

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2 A detailed study of texts about Boudicca is Williams, C. D. 2009, *Boudica and Her Stories: Narrative transformations of a warrior queen*, Associated University Presses, Cranbury, UK.

3 Hearn, this volume.

4 Goldstein, J. S. 2003, *War and Gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice-versa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 10.

5 See, generally, Paris, M. 2000, *Warrior Nation: Images of war in British popular culture, 1850-2000*, Reaktion Books, London.

6 Miranda Aldouse-Green quoted in Jeffries, S. 2004, 'Return of the queen', *Guardian*, 30 June, viewed 12 August 2012, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2004/jun/30/features.stuartjeffries>>

7 Reproduced in Moore, F. 2004, *Women of the War: Their heroism and self-sacrifice*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, Mont., p. 18.

figures transgressing normal war–gender relations.<sup>8</sup> Another such transgressor was Jeanne D’Arc: the Maid of Orleans; however, despite riding astride with sword in hand, she simultaneously epitomised the purity and sanctity of those endowed with special grace and who could therefore be elevated to Christian sainthood. Interestingly, the English considered her to be a witch because it was simply beyond belief that she could have defeated them without the aid of the devil.<sup>9</sup>

Very little is known with any certainty about Boudicca (sometimes Boudica), better known in an earlier period as Boadicea. As Hearn remarks, such a figure, known only through brief historical accounts recorded by her ‘enemies’, poses serious limitations on the interpretation of her ‘inner life’.<sup>10</sup> This has scarcely prevented a great many authors, from classic times to the present, from writing extensively not only about her exploits and place in history, but also about her character.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it has been noted that legends about Boudicca flourish so richly precisely because we know so little about her actual life, which remains, in Umberto Eco’s words, an ‘open text’ available for endless interpretation.<sup>12</sup> All these interpretations, of course, say more about their authors and the context from which they write (an observation that must apply as much to the present author) than they do about the person herself, and the discussion that follows shows how changing contexts of national life in Britain impact on the interpretation of the past and the particular figure of Boudicca within it.

There are two classical sources—Tacitus and Cassius Dio—without which knowledge of Boudicca as an individual historical figure would not exist.<sup>13</sup> Both

8 See, generally, Fraser, A. 2011, *Warrior Queens: Boadicea’s chariot*, [E-book version], Orion Publishing, London.

9 Scott, W. S. 1974, *Jeanne D’Arc*, George G. Harrap & Co., London, p. 137.

10 Hearn, this volume.

11 Scholarly analyses, semi-scholarly accounts, novels and juvenile literature abound. In addition to those cited in this article, some of the others published since 2000 alone include: Johnson, M. 2012, *Boudicca*, Duckworth Press, London; Waite, J. 2011, *Boudica’s Last Stand: Britain’s revolt against Rome, AD 60–61*, The History Press, Stroud, UK; McCullough, M. C. 2011, *Boudicca*, Xulon Press, Maitland, Fla; Fields, N. and Dennis, P. 2011, *Boudicca’s Rebellion AD 60–61: The Britons rise up against Rome*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford; Williams, B. 2010, *Boudicca: Great women leaders*, Heinemann, London; Bradman, T. 2008, *The Story of Boudicca*, Wayland, London; Aldhouse-Green, M. 2006, *Boudicca Britannia: Rebel, war leader and queen*, Pearson-Longman, Harlow, UK; Busby, S. 2006, *Boudicca: Warrior queen*, Short Books, London; Roesch, J. E. 2006, *Boudica: Queen of the Iceni*, Robert Hale, London; Ross, S. and Shields, S. 2006, *Down with the Romans*, Evans Brothers, London; Gold, A. 2005, *Warrior Queen: The story of Boudicca, Celtic queen*, New American Library, New York; Trow, M. J. 2005, *Boudicca: The warrior queen*, The History Press, Stroud, UK; Sutcliffe, R. 1979, *Song for a Dark Queen*, Crowell, New York; Scott, M. 2003, *Dreaming the Eagle*, Seal Books, Toronto; Hunt, R. 2003, *Queen Boudicca’s Battle of Britain*, Spellmount, Staplehurst, UK; Harrison, A. 2000, *Boudicca: Furie of the Celts*, Writer’s Showcase, Lincoln, Neb. In 2004, it was reported that at least four films about Boudicca were in production or pre-production. See Jeffries, ‘Return of the queen’.

12 Jeffries, ‘Return of the queen’.

13 The editions consulted for this article are: Tacitus 2010 [1996], *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, M. Grant (trans. and intro.), Penguin, London; Tacitus 2010, *Agricola and Germania*, J. B. Rives (trans. and intro.), Penguin, London; Dio Cassius 1987, *Roman History*, E. Carey (trans.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. Citations in the remainder of the article are in the conventional format for classical sources.

wrote some time after her death, although Tacitus was a near contemporary. Dio wrote a century and a half after the events he depicts and so, apart from the fact that he relies at least partly on Tacitus, he is not considered as authoritative. The basic facts about her exploits as set out in these texts, which include razing three major urban sites to the ground in Roman Britain, are supported by archaeological evidence unearthed in the twentieth century, mainly in the form of a clear destruction layer in each location and which have been dated to the relevant period.<sup>14</sup> More generally, a reasonable historical knowledge of Iron-Age Britain—and the people now called Celtic—under Roman occupation makes it possible to describe in broad terms the social and political context within which she operated. One commentator says that the best biographers are those ‘steeped in the history of particular historical periods and geographical arenas’ and this leads in turn to biographies that can explain ‘why influential individuals did what they did when they did, and with what exact aims in mind’.<sup>15</sup> A biography, however, will also be judged according to the issues it speaks to in the present. One reviewer of the Hingley and Unwin text referred to above complains that a disproportionate emphasis is given to ‘gender’ (which the reviewer places in inverted commas, perhaps to signal a discomfort with the term).<sup>16</sup> Yet it is precisely because Boudicca is female that she has been the subject of so much commentary both in the past and in the present. As one of her best-known biographers has noted, Boudicca presents paradoxes common to the canon of female warrior leaders. Often treated as an exception to the rule of male leadership, the ‘warrior queen’ may on the one hand excite ‘a remarkable outburst of excitement and even awe, sometimes accompanied by admiration and enthusiasm for her cause, beyond the ability of a mere male to arouse’. On the other hand, the emergence of such a figure may be ‘accompanied by disgust and fear at her very existence, emotions which would never be aroused by a male leader occupying the same position’.<sup>17</sup> The fact that British society is assumed to have problems—or ‘issues’ in contemporary parlance—with powerful females is therefore not so odd, but rather a phenomenon common to many societies.

Gender has of course become a critical concern in the humanities and social sciences with respect to both femininities and masculinities and it is therefore scarcely surprising that it should figure prominently in a scholarly analysis of Boudicca. Some of these issues will be further discussed at a later point, but it is time now to turn to a basic account of the events, so far as they are known, which effectively constitute her individual biography.

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14 Sealey, P. R. 2004, *The Boudican Revolt Against Rome*, Shire Publications, Buckinghamshire, UK, pp. 22–3, 32. See also Hingley, R. and Unwin, C. 2005, *Boudica: Iron Age Queen*, Hambledon & London, London.

15 Rotberg, Robert I. 2010, ‘Biography and historiography: mutual evidentiary and interdisciplinary considerations’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. XI, no. 3, p. 305.

16 The review in question is by A. T. Fear in *Biography* (vol. 29, no. 2 [1996], pp. 351–4).

17 Fraser, *Warrior Queens*, pp. 6–7.

## Life and Times

Boudicca was born around 30 AD, possibly to a prominent family in the region of what is now East Anglia. She was married to Prasutagus, king of the Iceni people native to the region and which was under Roman occupation at the time. Prasutagus and Boudicca were by no means resistance figures. They headed a client kingdom, effectively ruling the Iceni people on behalf of the Roman Empire. This was a common enough arrangement yielding advantages for both sides. When Prasutagus died in AD 60, however, everything changed. He had done a very Roman thing by leaving a written will. Half of his estate was left to the Emperor, Nero, and the other half to his daughters. It is probably safe to assume that he would have preferred to have preserved his family's patrimony in full, but perhaps expected that by leaving half to the Emperor the remainder would be preserved. Alas, if this was indeed the reasoning then it failed dismally in its purpose. The reaction of the Roman Procurator of the time, Catus Decianus, is recorded by Tacitus:

Kingdom and household alike were plundered like prizes of war...As a beginning, his widow Boudicca was flogged and his daughters raped. The Icenian chiefs were deprived of their hereditary estates as if the Romans had been given the whole country. The king's own relatives were treated like slaves. And the humiliated Iceni feared still worse...So they rebelled.<sup>18</sup>

Looking back, it seems that Catus Decianus was not just brutish and nasty in his behaviour, but also irredeemably stupid. After a long period of peace in which Roman interests had thrived, he immediately made implacable enemies of a sizeable tribe in an important area of south-east Britain, and it was to spread further. The outraged queen sought personal revenge, and it was not difficult to garner the support of the Iceni people who had likewise been dispossessed and humiliated. The neighbouring Trinovantes had their own grudges against the Romans. Sometime earlier, the Romans had appropriated the Trinovantian settlement of Camulodulum—present-day Colchester—as a *colonia* for retired soldiers, and then raised taxes from the local people to pay for building works including a very large temple, which had been dedicated to the deified emperor Claudius. Tacitus reports that the Roman troops encouraged outrages by these settlers, 'since their own way of behaving was the same—and they looked forward to similar licence for themselves'. In addition, 'the temple erected to the divine Claudius was a blatant stronghold of alien rule, and its observances were

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<sup>18</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, vol. XIV, p. 31.

a pretext to make the natives appointed as its priests drain the whole country dry'.<sup>19</sup> The Trinovantes therefore appeared to need little encouragement to join in what was to become a large-scale revolt.

As luck would have it, the main Roman forces under the command of Suetonius Paulinus were engaged in a campaign against the Druids in their stronghold on the isle of Mona in Anglesey on the other side of the country. This left Camulodunum, which was in any case unfortified, with just a small garrison to defend it and therefore a soft target for the enraged Boudicca and her followers. To cut a long story short, Boudicca and her army wiped out the entire town and its people—Roman and British alike—who at the time numbered around 10 000. The archaeological destruction layer, up to 1 m deep in some places, shows that Boudicca followed a scorched-earth policy quite literally, the town having been burnt to the ground at very high temperature.<sup>20</sup> One of the most disturbing elements of the classical accounts, however, is the behaviour of Boudicca's army with respect to women on the other side—both Roman and Briton. Stories of their breasts being sliced off and sown into their mouths and of their bodies being skewered, if true, would rank among the most horrific of atrocities committed against female victims of war.<sup>21</sup>

Having taken revenge within its own territory, Boudicca's army next turned its sights on Londinium on the Thames. According to Tacitus, the town did not rank as a Roman settlement but was rather a prosperous trading port. After dealing out exactly the same treatment to its perceived enemies—a mixture of Roman and local civilians—the army moved on to a third town, Verulamium, near the site of present-day St Albans. This town was occupied mainly by the Catuvellauni people, traditional enemies of the Trinovantes and also more Romanised than many other native tribes.<sup>22</sup> Archaeological evidence shows, in addition to the destruction layer here, that a number of other smaller native settlements in the surrounding countryside met the same fate. But the rampage was soon to be ended. Suetonius, back with his troops from Anglesey, engaged Boudicca's huge but ill-disciplined and poorly equipped army in a battle that saw the latter's total defeat. Boudicca herself is said to have died from self-administered poison. Her burial site remains unknown, as does the fate of her daughters.<sup>23</sup>

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19 Ibid.

20 Sealey, *The Boudican Revolt Against Rome*, pp. 22–3.

21 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, vol. LXII, p. 62.

22 Some caution is needed in the use of 'Romanisation' since it has multiple meanings and interpretations, not least because it is part of a modernist (and often uncritical) discourse on the nature of empire. This argument is presented in detail in Mattingly, D. 2010, *Imperialism, Power and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

23 Cassius Dio provides a similar, albeit briefer, account, probably based partly on that of Tacitus, but differing in many of the finer details and saying almost nothing about the circumstances that instigated the revolt in the first place. Tacitus is considered the more authoritative source. See Overbeck, John C. 1969,



Thus ended Boudicca's short life of somewhere between 30 and 35 years, and the beginning of nearly 2000 years of contributions to what might be called the Boudicca canon. But before moving on to her representation in this literature, the implications for the relationship between biography and nationalism, and the issues this raises, we need to consider further the social or cultural context of Iron-Age Britain.

The native people of most relevance to the story are those who occupied present-day England and Wales, excluding parts of Yorkshire in the north and Cornwall in the far south-west. These people have been called Celts only since the eighteenth century. The Romans called them Brittones in the north and Brittoni in the south, while, among themselves, the people of the British Isles went only by tribal names. These groups were quite diverse, each evincing distinct cultural practices. In the south-east, including the region of the Iceni, archaeological and other evidence points to the development of a more stratified society in the pre-Roman period, a trend maintained and encouraged by the Romans following conquest of these more 'developed' polities.<sup>24</sup> As for political unity, it was virtually nonexistent and warfare between the tribes was a commonplace phenomenon. In some regions there were loose confederations of tribes, but beyond this there was certainly nothing resembling a 'national' polity. Tacitus suggests that the Britons once had kings, but had become divided into factions. He further observes that these divisions gave the Romans a decided advantage, for as long as the tribes failed to act in concert, they could more easily be controlled.<sup>25</sup> The united front presented by the Iceni and Trinovantes, and possibly other smaller groups who joined their ranks opportunistically at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion, was therefore a rare occurrence. One analyst emphasises that there was no such thing as a 'British' identity and that we must guard against seeing the position at the time of the Boudiccan revolt simply in terms of Rome versus Britain.<sup>26</sup> This is reinforced by detailed historical studies showing that at the time of the invasion of AD 43, there may have been support for Rome among some tribes, especially those who had suffered at the hands of more powerful neighbours and who 'saw Rome as their salvation against their British oppressors'.<sup>27</sup>

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'Tacitus and Dio on Boudicca's rebellion', *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 90, no. 22, pp. 129–45.

24 Hill, J. D. 1995, 'The pre-Roman Iron-Age in Britain and Ireland (ca. 800 BC to 100 AD): an overview', *Journal of Prehistory*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 82.

25 Tacitus, *Agricola and Germania*, vol. I, p. 12.

26 Niblett, R. 2006, 'Images of Boudicca', *Britannia*, vol. XXXVII, p. 490.

27 Webster, G. 1995, 'The Celtic Britons under Rome', in M. J. Green (ed.), *Celtic World*, Routledge, London, p. 629. For a more critical analysis from a post-colonial perspective, which suggests that the tendency to interpret native cooperation with the Romans may be exaggerated in the interests of presenting a more positive and indeed pro-Roman view, see Mattingly, D. 2006, *An Imperial Possession, Britain in the Roman Empire*, Penguin, London.

Of particular interest for the present discussion are certain cultural elements that served to distinguish certain practices and values of what are now called the British Celts of the Iron Age from Romans, or from Romanised people, especially with respect to the status of females. There is evidence for at least some of the tribes that female leadership was a cultural norm, something that contrasted very markedly with Roman attitudes to women. Tacitus remarks that Boudicca's regal status was typical of Britons, who he said made no distinction between the sexes when it came to matters of royal succession.<sup>28</sup> In both the *Histories*<sup>29</sup> and the *Annals*,<sup>30</sup> Tacitus tells of another Queen, Cartimandua, leader of a loose confederation of the Brigantes tribes of northern England, whose leading deity was the goddess Brigantia. Cartimandua's realm had become another client kingdom in Roman Britain, one which remained in alliance with the Romans and which in fact assisted in their battles with other, less cooperative tribes, including those of King Caratacus, the best-known male leader of the period resisting Roman rule.<sup>31</sup> With respect to female leadership generally, one source says that queenship was an institution peculiar to Britain in this period, and was not evident among European Celts. Its absence among the latter makes it unlikely that the phenomenon was imported with Celts moving from the Continent into the British Isles, and therefore may have originated with pre-Celtic inhabitants of Britain.<sup>32</sup>

As for the Romans, they had their goddesses, but female leadership among mortals was not to be tolerated and the fact that female leaders appeared among the Britons only confirmed them as uncivilised primitives. Furthermore, it seems to have 'feminised' Britons. Tacitus's accounts of both the battle in Anglesey against the Druids, in which native females participated (although evidently not as leaders), and the subsequent battle against Boudicca's forces tend to assimilate native forces with women. According to historian Michael Roberts, Tacitus depicts native Britons as relying on 'emotion' and 'display', which are equated with femininity, while the Romans show manly discipline and rationality.<sup>33</sup> This is very familiar imagery in gender analysis. Roberts goes on to note, however, that the formulation of Boudicca's cause is particularly

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28 Tacitus, *Agricola and Germania*, vol. I.

29 *Ibid.*, vol. III.

30 *Ibid.*, vol. XII.

31 For a recent account of Cartimandua, which includes an assessment of Roman attitudes to female leadership as slightly more forgiving in the case of a loyal client, see Howarth, N. 2009, *Cartimandua: Queen of the Brigantes*, The History Press, Stroud, UK. It is interesting to note that only one book on Cartimandua has ever been produced, in contrast with the dozens written about Boudicca.

32 Bulst, C. M. 1961, 'The revolt of Queen Boudica in A. D. 60', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 496–509.

33 Roberts, M. 1988, 'The revolt of Boudica (Tacitus Annals 14-29-39) and the assertion of libertas in Neroian Rome', *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 109, p. 123.

subversive because ‘it associates *libertas* with the female, and *servitium* with the male’.<sup>34</sup> In the further interpretation of Boudicca, and her place in British national historiography, gender continued to play a key role.

## Interpreting Boudicca

It has been noted that the works of both Tacitus and Cassius Dio are the only surviving accounts produced relatively close to the time of the rebellion. Without them, no knowledge of Boudicca at all, and only a very hazy idea of some of the major events in the history of Roman Britain, would be available. These works themselves only just survived, having been preserved in monastic libraries after the fall of the Roman Empire. The only other possible independent source appears in a sixth-century text, *De Excidio Britanniae*, authored by the pro-Roman Saint Gildas, where mention is made of a ‘treacherous lioness’ in connection with the murder of some Roman governors. It is possible that Boudicca’s exploits may have survived to that point through oral tradition. The text does not mention her by name, but at least one of Boudicca’s biographers assumes the words of Gildas to be a direct reference to her,<sup>35</sup> although another source suggests that the ‘treacherous lioness’ was Britain itself.<sup>36</sup> The Venerable Bede’s eighth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica* mentions two towns being sacked, but again there is no direct mention of Boudicca. Even so, some contemporary authors claim that this is a reference to Boudicca.<sup>37</sup>

It wasn’t until the Renaissance that the works of Tacitus and Cassius Dio became available and Boudicca was given a firm place in British history. And it is from this time onwards that her biography becomes entangled in varying approaches to nationalism. Although her name appears in the works of many historians and literary figures over the past five centuries, we have space here for just a few of those which best exemplify her shifting status through ongoing interpretation, which in turn reflects changing attitudes to gender and its entanglement with the nationalist enterprise. The most important periods in question are those more or less encompassing the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I and, later, Queen

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34 Ibid., p. 127. For further analysis of Roman attitudes to sex and gender, and broader comparisons of the ‘feminisation’ of ‘lower races’ in later political and social thought as well as the associations with power, see Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity*, especially Ch. 4.

35 Collingridge, V. 2006, *Boudica*, Ebury Press, London, p. 307.

36 It has been suggested, however, that the ‘treacherous lioness’ was Britain itself, and not the Icenian Queen. See Thompson, E. A. 1979, ‘Gildas and the history of Britain’, *Britannia*, vol. 10, p. 204.

37 See Matza, A. (ed.) 2010, *Boudica: Historical commentaries, poetry and plays*, Xlibris Corp, Bloomington, Ind.

Victoria. It has been argued that in the former, early modern period, images of Boudicca took shape for the political and social needs of the day, and that these 'set the tone for future depictions of the nation's greatest female patriot'.<sup>38</sup>

Her first appearance of real substance, clearly based on Tacitus, is in Hector Bœce's *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, published in 1526, sometime before Elizabeth was to take the throne. In a bid to boost the importance of Scotland, the story of Boudicca's exploits is relocated northwards. Bœce also mistakenly calls her 'Voada', while a daughter is given the name 'Vodicia', thus creating two characters. The errors of naming aside—a common occurrence in many accounts of her exploits through the ages—gender is an issue for Bœce, who composes a speech for his leading character: 'Had I been born a man...I might not have suffered so many cruel and intolerable injuries...these Romans, so valiant against women...may soon know what valour ladies may do when extreme danger occurs...I shall fight foremost in the battle with 5,000 armed ladies.'<sup>39</sup>

Bœce's interpretation is considered sympathetic to his female characters, who, though forceful, are also honourable in avenging the serious wrongs inflicted on them.<sup>40</sup> Another account, which now appears squarely within the Elizabethan period, again presents two separate female characters: Voadicia and Bunduica. This is the narrative provided by a Florentine scholar, Petruccio Ubaldini, who spent much of his adult life in England and was associated with the Elizabethan Court. A work on *The Lives of the Noble Ladies of the Kingdom of England and Scotland*, published in 1591, includes an account of Boudicca in which, again, a sympathetic note is struck, with honour rather than shame being emphasised and certain moral lessons drawn from righteous resistance to oppression and cruelty as vengeance.<sup>41</sup> Here we may note also that biography in this period was 'highly esteemed for its didactic value',<sup>42</sup> a tradition no doubt adapted from the much admired classical authors, especially Plutarch.<sup>43</sup>

This was preceded, although only just, by Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a massive work of history, which was published between 1577 and 1587. Holinshed's narrative, while perhaps not intentionally setting up a 'national project' as such, is nonetheless said to 'be characterised by a set of rhetorical figures and thematic paradigms that establish the national, royal, chivalrous and

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38 Frénée-Hutchins, S. 2009, 'The cultural and ideological significance of representations of Boudica during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I', Unpublished PhD thesis, Universities of Exeter and Orléans, pp. 9–10.

39 Quoted *ibid.*, p. 21.

40 Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica*, p. 118.

41 See Dudley, D. R. and Webster, G. 1962, *The Rebellion of Boudicca*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, pp. 119–20. See also Matza, *Boudica*, p. 24.

42 Dudley and Webster, *The Rebellion of Boudicca*, p. 120.

43 See Plutarch 1992, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, J. Dryden and A. H. Clough (trans), Modern Library, New York.

heroic ideals that define a state, its monarch, its leaders, and the political role of the common people'.<sup>44</sup> It is interesting that in this context Holinshed evinces strong elements of sympathy with the character of Boudicca. But this was also the period in which, according to one analyst, anxiety over the nation's descent from a collection of barbaric tribes became apparent in a 'conflicted nationalism' that required 'both affirmation and denial of the "native" in projects of national reconstruction'.<sup>45</sup> Boudicca is said to have become problematic in more than one way, for she not only embodied native savagery, but also subverted the natural order of things in terms of gender hierarchy. With respect to Holinshed, the analysis sees him subscribing to a wholly masculinist view of his subject, portraying the Boudiccan revolt and accompanying atrocities in terms of a 'grotesquely feminized savagery'—an interpretation that, it is said, resonated strongly with early modern misogyny.<sup>46</sup>

A very different interpretation of Holinshed, however, sees him representing 'Voadicea' as 'a spokeswoman of national self-consciousness and political freedoms'. Holinshed's text also provides a long speech ostensibly delivered by Boudicca on the eve of the final battle on the subject of 'ancient liberty' (a speech derived loosely from Cassius Dio's, which borrowed in turn from a shorter speech composed by Tacitus).<sup>47</sup> It was common of course for classical authors to pen such speeches, partly because their texts were designed to be read out loud, and the spirited delivery of an ostensibly authentic oration delivered by a key character enhanced dramatic effect. The tradition continued with subsequent writers composing speeches that tended to reflect their own concerns and interests. In any event, it is clear from Holinshed's version of her speech that he did indeed endow Boudicca's character with a love of liberty and a willingness to sacrifice her life in the cause of freedom from an alien oppressor:

I doo suppose...that there is no man here but dooth understand how much libertie and freedome is to be preferred before thraldom and bondage...How much is it more commendable to lose our lives in defense of our countrie, than to carie about not so much as our heads toll free, but dailie oppressed and laden with innumerable extractions?<sup>48</sup>

Having delivered the speech on her behalf, Holinshed goes on to report Boudicca's final march against the Romans 'to whom she giveth a shameful and bloudie overthrow without anie motion of mercie, dredfull examples of the Britains crueltie indifferentlie executed without exception of age or sex'.<sup>49</sup>

44 Djordjevic, I. 1998, *Holinshed's Nation: Ideals, memories and practical policy in the chronicles*, Ashgate, Farnham, UK, p. 10.

45 Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea*, p. 9.

46 Ibid., p. 15.

47 Patterson, A. 1994, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 104.

48 Reproduced in Matza, *Boudica*, p. 63.

49 Ibid., p. 66.

Whether we are entitled to read this latter comment, and other references to the slaughter that Holinshed drew from Cassius Dio, as an example of early modern misogyny is open to question. That Holinshed depicts her as a defender of the nation's liberty, however, is beyond doubt. It is perhaps no coincidence that this positive interpretation, and those of others noted above, was offered during a period in which a female wore the British Crown, for the first time. With Elizabeth I on the throne it seems likely that some more flexible approaches to gender roles were required. But as we have seen, Böece had already provided a more or less sympathetic interpretation of Boudicca well before Elizabeth's ascent, and so not all such accounts can be attributed to a desire to make a female monarch more acceptable.

When James I came to the throne after 45 years of female leadership, however, he seemed 'eager to impress his own identity onto the British landscape'. This meant that 'references to strong female leaders, particularly unmarried ones, fell out of favour as women were re-consigned to the home and family' and the name Boudicca became 'a by-word for political and social subversion'.<sup>50</sup> A play by John Fletcher produced between 1609 and 1614, during the reign of James I, depicts Boudicca as a nasty witch surrounded by Druids, apparently to please the king.<sup>51</sup> Hingley and Unwin note that although Boudicca is also portrayed as courageous, Fletcher generally characterises her as rash and headstrong, the implication being that as a woman she was incapable of dealing wisely in matters of politics and warfare. The initial victories of her army are credited to Caratacus, whose lines in the play take Boudicca to task for playing the 'woman fool' commanded by the devil.<sup>52</sup> The play was evidently a great success and was adapted and reproduced throughout the following three centuries.

John Milton's *A History of Britain*, published later in the century, re-examines the classical sources and produces an account of Boudicca's exploits based largely on these. Milton declines to repeat the set speeches placed in Boudicca's mouth, or to compose one of his own:

I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been spoken in effect as they are written...and to invent such, though eloquently (as some historians have done,) is an abuse of posterity, raising, in them that read, other conceptions of those times and persons that were true.<sup>53</sup>

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50 Frenee-Hutchins, The cultural and ideological significance of representations of Boudica, pp. 11–12.

51 Johnson, P. 2007, *Heroes: From Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar to Churchill and de Gaulle*, Harper Collins, London, p. 53.

52 Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica*, p. 131.

53 Milton, J. 1818, *The History of Britain: That part especially, now called England; From the first traditional beginning, continued to the Norman Conquest*, R. Wilks, London, p. 55.

But Milton does refer to the set speeches in the classical texts, and their repetition by earlier chroniclers, when it comes to describing the prelude to the final battle. He first comments on the folly that doubtless made 'the serious Romans smile at, as a sure token of prospering that day: a woman also was their commander in chief'. He continues:

For Boadicea and her daughters ride about in a chariot, telling the tall champions, as a great encouragement, that it was usual for women to be their leaders. A deal of other fondness they put into her mouth, not worth recital; how she was lashed, how her daughters were handled, things worthier silence, reticence, and a veil, than for a woman to repeat, as done to her own person, or to hear repeated to a host of men.<sup>54</sup>

With references to Britain's earlier chroniclers, Milton goes on to say that in repeating and elaborating the set speeches, they were 'hoping to embellish... their history with the strangeness of our manners, not caring, in the meanwhile, to brand us with the rankest note of barbarism, as if in Britain women were men, and men women'.<sup>55</sup> It is noteworthy that Milton, on the one hand, makes a case for good historiography by rejecting the rhetoric of set speeches, which may distort the original context, but on the other appears to suggest that historical references to female leadership should be elided, thus distorting the context in another way.

Writing on the general problem of establishing suitable narratives of national origins in early modern England, Jodi Mikalachki notes that in the works of writers such as Milton, the 'absence of a native classical past on which to found the glories of the modern nation' is made even worse by the fact that 'powerful women loomed large'—a fact that simply emphasised the primitive savagery of the early Britons. Thus Mikalachki proposes that 'powerful and rebellious females in native historiography threatened the establishment of a stable, masculine identity for the early modern nation'.<sup>56</sup> Whether we agree with this interpretation, it is at the very least evident that there were diverse approaches to Boudicca in the early modern period generally, both positive and negative, some of which illustrate the anxieties and contradictions provoked by the challenges presented by prominent female figures in the formation of an acceptable national history and identity.<sup>57</sup> At an even deeper level, the control of women then, as in many societies now, was seen as essential to social order,<sup>58</sup> and clearly Boudicca was out of control.

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54 Ibid., p. 54.

55 Ibid.

56 Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea*, pp. 302–3.

57 See Hingley and Unwin, *Boudica*, p. 118 ff.

58 See Yuval-Davis, N. 1993, 'Gender and nation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, p. 623.

Moving from the early modern to the Victorian era, we see that although there were certain continuities in thought, there were also some significant changes in Boudicca's status. One commentator notes that although authors in previous periods saw Boudicca 'as an object of scorn and admiration in almost equal measure', she had not generated sufficient public interest to elevate her to heroic status until the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Another writes that this period saw the emergence of a belief 'that Britain's unwritten constitution was of immemorial antiquity' and that Boudicca had played a part in its foundation. This marked a major turning point in the transformation of the Boudicca narrative and her establishment as a heroine of the British nation.<sup>60</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson's 1859 poem 'Boadicea' links her exploits specifically with the glories of an early British nation, although references to the 'wild' and 'fierce' nature of the chief character and her followers maintain an image of savagery, as established in the first verse:

While about the shore of Mona those Neroian legionaries  
Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and Druidess,  
Far in the East Boadicea, standing loftily charioted,  
Mad and Maddening all that heard her in her fierce volubility,  
Girt by half the tribes in Britain, near the colony Camulodune,  
Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild confederacy.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, work on a monumental sculpture had begun in 1856, although it wasn't finally placed in its present position on the Embankment near Westminster Bridge until 1902, where it inspired both nationalist and imperialist sentiment. This was, after all, the heyday of the British Empire. The inscription, from a prescient 1780 poem by William Cowper called 'Boadicea: An Ode', reads: 'Regions that Caesar never knew, thy posterity shall sway.'<sup>62</sup> Thus Boudicca represents, at one and the same time, a form of anti-colonial nationalism *and* the glories of contemporary imperial Britain. Both are celebrated, evidently without fear of contradiction or anachronism, as representing the magnificent character of the British nation. Here is where one of the hypocrisies of nationalism is most clearly manifest. Imperialism is not a bad thing—unless you (or your ancestors) are the subject nation. Yet, at the same time, admiration for the Roman Empire persisted in scholarly approaches to historiography, with one analysis published in 1906 proclaiming the Roman Empire to be the first great imperial experiment, 'which rose above the methods of brute force or mere well-devised bureaucracy

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59 Vandrei, M. n.d., 'Who will be a coward when a woman leads? Boudica and the Victorian female hero', Unpublished paper, viewed 10 April 2012, <[http://www.essex.ac.uk/.../Vandrei%20-%20Who\\_Will\\_Be\\_a\\_Coward.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/.../Vandrei%20-%20Who_Will_Be_a_Coward.pdf)>

60 Johnson, *Heroes*, p. 55.

61 Tennyson, Baron A. 1870, *The Poetical Works of Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate*, Harper & Brothers, New York, p. 206.

62 Cowper, W. 1835, 'Boadicea: An Ode', in John S. Memes (ed.), *The Works of William Cowper*, [Second edn], Fraser & Co., Edinburgh, p. 358.



[and] made a genuine effort to unite liberty and empire',<sup>63</sup> thus inviting comparisons with a flourishing British Empire legitimated by its own version of what it means to liberate and civilise.

But there is another equally telling irony in the placement of the statue in the heart of London. Geographer Peter J. Taylor points out that 'on her route to historical glory, Boudicca razed London to the ground and slaughtered its residents. London is honouring its destroyer!' The presence of the statue, he says, thus represents the 'victory of one history over another'.<sup>64</sup> Another commentator notes that Boudicca's statue stands as if she was 'defending the very embodiment of the kind of Establishment she tried so hard to destroy'.<sup>65</sup> She is also commemorated in Colchester, scene of her most violent confrontation, with a stained-glass window in the town hall: a sombre head-and-shoulders representation with the figure holding a spear.<sup>66</sup> Another statue of Boudicca, which shows quite a different kind of character, is on display in Cardiff's civic hall: Boudicca poses in soft, flowing robes, with arms around her daughters in a protective maternal embrace.<sup>67</sup> Apart from this very different, much gentler representation, the location of the work appears to claim Boudicca for a Welsh national tradition based on the closer link of the Welsh to the ancient Celts.<sup>68</sup>

Another paradox emerges in the fact that early feminists in general and suffragettes in particular found inspiration in the figure of a woman whose army dealt out particularly nasty treatment to 'enemy' women, both Roman and Briton. A woman arrested during the course of a suffragette protest gave her name as 'Boadicea'.<sup>69</sup> Also available as part of the paraphernalia of the suffragette movement were Boadicea badges, which were worn along with the movement's colours of green, white and purple.<sup>70</sup> A portrait of Christabel Pankhurst, a leading suffragette of the early twentieth century, appeared in London's *Bystander* magazine on 1 April 1908, bearing the legend 'A Boadicea of Politics'.<sup>71</sup> While she may have provided some inspiration for feminists in the

63 E. Fiddes, quoted in Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity*, p. 10.

64 Taylor, P. J. 2007, 'Problematising city/state relations: towards a geohistorical understanding of contemporary globalization', *GaWC Research Bulletin*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 133–4.

65 Webster, G. 1978, *Boudica: The British revolt against Rome*, Routledge, London, p. 14.

66 Both images may be viewed at the web site of 'Culture 24': <<http://www.culture24.org.uk/history%20%26%20heritage/war%20%26%20conflict/pre-20th%20century%20conflict/tra22669>> (viewed 10 April 2012).

67 See <[http://www.welshicons.org.uk/html/statue\\_of\\_boudicca.php](http://www.welshicons.org.uk/html/statue_of_boudicca.php)> (viewed 10 April 2012).

68 One work of note in this respect is a storybook: Rutherford, A. 1999, *Boadicea and Her Sisters: Women of Wales*, Rhwymbooks, Cambridge, Mass.

69 Van Wingerden, S. A. 1999, *The Women's Suffragette Movement in Britain, 1866–1928*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, p. 150.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

71 See National Portrait Gallery n.d., Chasing the suffragettes: a Boadicea of politics, viewed 6 April 2012, <<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/new-research-on-the-collection/chasing-the-suffragettes-a-boadicea-of-politics.php>>

past, Boudicca presents rather too many contradictions to be really useful in feminist iconography and no longer appears anywhere on the Fawcett Society web site.<sup>72</sup>

It is interesting to note that the suffragette movement brought out into the open some grossly negative attitudes to woman, which resonated with some of those of earlier periods. One critic of the movement opined that figures such as Boadicea, along with Amazons, Lydians, Brunhilde and the Valkyries, were relics of 'primordial dominance' and appeared only among 'savage tribes that still retain their primitive customs'.<sup>73</sup> And, referring back to Elizabeth I, the same commentator was positively venomous in his assessment of her reign:

Her voice was coarse and masculine when it did not shriek with rage. She could outswear a fishwife...She cheated all contemporary diplomacy and won the palm of a lying epoch as its liar paramount...when the Spanish Armada went down she grumbled at the cost of the fleet that sank it...in her mean and stingy way...She deliberately turned frivolity into a statecraft; hawked, hunted and danced in the midst of perils that the people might not see them...meanwhile the Nation prayed for her death...as every other nation has done and will do for the woman who tries to rule it.<sup>74</sup>

But how was this to be reconciled with the glorious reign of a female monarch that had ended just a few years before? Quite simply, through sheer hypocrisy. Of Victoria, he claimed that during her half-century or so on the throne:

She wore the crown without meddling in the affairs of State. In the realm her husband was her subject, but at the fireside he was her sovereign...Court pomps and revels could not beguile her from the higher home-throne where she proved her transcendent queenliness by a womanly demeanor worth more than a thousand times to her people than Elizabethan statecraft.<sup>75</sup>

Attitudes to female leadership on the part of British men such as these clearly not only represented a continuity from early modern times—at least after Elizabeth I—but also evinced a mode of thought on gender issues more compatible with that of the Romans than their own ancient forebears. Indeed, the author quoted above, and others like him who rejected the aims of the suffragette movement and opposed greater equality for females more generally, displayed a positive

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72 The Fawcett Society is named for Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a nineteenth-century activist, and campaigns for equality between women and men in all spheres of life. See <<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=37>>

73 Holland, R. A. 1909, 'The suffragette', *Sewanee Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, p. 276.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 287–8.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

distaste, if not shame, with respect to the primitive, uncivilised nature of the native inhabitants of Iron-Age Britain. As for Victoria herself, we know she opposed the suffragette movement and cared little for the rights of other women, believing their primary role to be that of mother and wife subordinate to their husbands.<sup>76</sup>

Even so, it was during her reign—and perhaps despite Victoria herself—that significant advances were made with respect to women’s rights, although voting rights remained elusive for the time being. This was also the period in which the Boudiccan monument was commissioned and installed by the Houses of Parliament, another contradiction apparently accommodated without great difficulty. Martha Vandrei writes that Boudicca’s elevation to status of national heroine actually came not through her promotion by women activists, but was in fact due to powerful men with royal contacts who placed her in that position.<sup>77</sup> The incorporation of heroic female leaders in the national/imperial narrative clearly did not bother these men—and indeed they must be seen as having encouraged it.

Boudicca’s status as a national figure of heroic character consolidated throughout the earlier part of the twentieth century, as exemplified in a 1928 feature film<sup>78</sup> and by the works of such authors as Lewis Spence and C. H. Abrahall in which she is hailed as the first national patriot striking a blow for British freedom.<sup>79</sup> This is almost certainly linked to the changing status of women in general. World War I had seen the active participation of women in a range of occupations, and in 1918 they were finally enfranchised in the United Kingdom. In World War II, women’s participation extended further, and the young Princess Elizabeth, heir to the throne, insisted on serving as a mechanic. Gender roles were not exactly turned on their head, but these developments paved the way for much more thoroughgoing social change in the second half of the century and to a nationalism more receptive to female heroes.

In mid-century, however, the conservative Winston Churchill’s *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* still displayed a somewhat ambivalent attitude to the nature of the Boudiccan revolt and what it meant for British history. He certainly saw the ancient Britons as primitive in relation to the ‘higher civilisation’ achieved by Rome, even though he believed the latter to be both rudimentary and flawed. Of the revolt itself, he wrote that it was

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76 This illustrates the importance of not treating women (or men) as a homogeneous category. See Yuval-Davis, ‘Gender and nation’, p. 630.

77 Vandrei, ‘Who will be a coward when a woman leads?’, p. 7.

78 See <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018713/>> (viewed 10 April 2012).

79 Spence, L. 1937, *Boadicea, Warrior Queen of the Britons*, R. Hale, London; Abrahall, C. H. 1949, *Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni*, George G. Harrap & Company, London.

probably the most horrible episode which our Island has known. We see the crude and corrupt beginning of a higher civilization blotted out by the ferocious uprising of the native tribes. Still, it is the primary right of men to die and kill for the land they live in, and to punish with exceptional severity all members of their own race who have warmed their hands at the invader's earth.<sup>80</sup>

Interest in Roman Britain generally at the time of Churchill, however, was not strong and it was not until the 1960s that the field began to attract more interest from historians, classicists, archaeologists and others.<sup>81</sup> But it was the emergence of Britain's first female prime minister, and especially the outbreak of the Falklands War, that gave the figure of Boudicca more prominence. Linkages with Margaret Thatcher were inevitable, but most were superficial, appearing simply as trite headlines in daily papers. With respect to imagery, cartoons of Thatcher—one following victory in the Falklands War and the other on polling day 1987<sup>82</sup>—are clearly associated with female success in leadership. At the time of the Falklands War, it was of course Thatcher who took the decision to deploy military force, while Queen Elizabeth, as Antonia Fraser points out, was simply the reigning monarch.<sup>83</sup> It might also be said that the personality of Thatcher, otherwise known as the 'Iron Lady', was always more likely to attract comparisons—whether favourable or unfavourable—with the Iron-Age queen. Still, it is noteworthy that Elizabeth II, the monarch and symbol of (and for) the British nation for the past six decades, does not appear to have attracted a single comparison with the figure so often held up as Britain's first female monarch.

As for the present, Boudicca's statue remains in place on the Embankment next to the Houses of Parliament from where she continues to inspire elements of British nationalism. Standard accounts now generally present her as 'one of Britain's greatest heroines...a freedom fighter who rebelled against the Roman government...Queen to the Celts and truly...one of history's most fiercest and passionate warrior queens'.<sup>84</sup> This is certainly the image that dominates in contemporary popular culture—mainly through films and novels but the occasional song as well.<sup>85</sup> Not surprisingly, Boudicca also has a presence on web sites associated with far-right xenophobic nationalism, although not to a significant extent.

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80 Churchill, Sir W. S. 1965, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, Dodd, Mead & Company, London, p. 27.

81 Todd, M. 2004, 'Introduction', in M. Todd (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Britain*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. xx.

82 Reproduced in Frénée-Hutchins, The cultural and ideological significance of representations of Boudica, pp. 290–1.

83 Fraser, *Warrior Queens*, p. 5.

84 See <<http://heroinesofhistory.wikispaces.com/Boudica>> (viewed 2 April 2012).

85 See Collingridge, *Boudica*, pp. 397–402.

## Conclusion

The life and times of Boudicca are perhaps as well known as they ever will be, although archaeologists and others will no doubt build incrementally on the evidence available to date, filling in more detail of what is known of the period. And it is not impossible that something will emerge in the future that throws more light on her personal history. Those issues aside, this discussion has been as much concerned with illustrating how the biography of a particular individual constitutes (as Hearn suggests in this volume) an element within a wider analysis of national identity. With respect to the last question, we may well ask whether the limits of her biographical interpretation have been reached. She has already been cast in roles as diverse as mother heroine of the British nation on the one hand, and as a disgraceful figure plumbing the depths of primitive savagery and thereby bringing shame on the nation's past on the other. These contradictory images are in part a reflection of the difficulty that nationalisms often have in accommodating female figures who do not conform to conventional gender images and who challenge hegemonic masculinities.<sup>86</sup> Beyond the particular difficulties that a fighting female presents—to some forms of feminist analysis as much as to traditional masculinist approaches—any serious student of nationalism knows only too well that historical figures can be made to play different roles according to the circumstances of the time and the interests and values involved. We live in an era of diverse and often conflicting and contradictory approaches to feminism and the study of gender as well as of identity, biography, nationalism and the history of empire. For these reasons, acts of interpretation producing varying identities for Boudicca, and emerging on the basis of a scant but provocative life story, are likely to remain ongoing projects in narratives of the British nation and its history.

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86 For an analysis of the latter, see Nagel, J. 1998, 'Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 242–69. See also, Yuval-Davis, N. 1997, *Gender and Nation*, Routledge, London.



# Closing Reflections: Confronting contradictions in biographies of nations and persons

Paul James

The biography of a nation is not the same as the biography of a person. That much is simple. One is about a single person's life history and the other is about the formation of a community of persons. On the other hand, analytically describing how a biographical method can be used for both persons and nations is not straightforward. The central crossover occurs in the concept of 'the social'. An individual identity, like the projection of a national identity, is a *social* identity. Thus, biographies, whether of persons or of nations, are specific social genealogies, social histories, social mappings—call them what you like—graphic narratives of the *bios* or 'ways of life' of a person or community of persons. In this understanding, 'the social' is thus not just a background context, nor is it just another dimension to be considered among others. The social does not act as the stage on which characters walk around. The social is us—as persons *and* communities. In this sense, the 'social context' is a complex metaphor that describes our interrelations with others and with nature, including particular spatial configurations, specific organisational contexts and distinctive self-and-other understood histories, whether they be personal or national. The notion of a 'social context' can thus be a useful metaphor, but it is too often abused.

Taking this issue as its touch-point, this essay draws on the other papers presented at the Nationalism and Biography conference to explore a 'constitutive levels' approach to understanding the social biographies of both nations and persons. Based on the range of 'national' figures discussed in the present volume, two broad forms of personal-national biography can be distinguished. Both forms present us with contradictions or paradoxes. The first is the biography of a person who is at once inside a nation-state, though not necessarily a nationalist, and, at the same time, is abstracted from it through his or her intellectually driven attempt to understand the nation analytically. Here the concept of 'intellectually driven' is used broadly to encompass narrators of nations as diverse as Enoch Powell, Helmut Kohl, Richard Sulik and G. M. Trevelyan, the subjects of earlier essays in this volume. The second is the biography of a nationally framed individual who, during his or her own lifetime, was not constituted as a national person at all. Here the figures of Boudicca and King Alfred provide points of reference. In both cases, nationalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were the ones

who claimed these figures for the national canon. As Stephanie Lawson writes about Boudicca: at the time she lived, 'there were loose confederations of tribes, but beyond this there was certainly nothing resembling a "national" polity'.<sup>1</sup>

Carefully navigating the difficult relation between the personal and the general here is crucial, and this is what the contributors to this volume do so well. Positing a singular layer called 'the social context' is going to leave us with many difficulties of explanation. To understand figures as complex as those discussed in this volume, we seem to need manifold layers of the social, including layers of historical reception and canonising. The present essay is developed around a number of general propositions. These are not intended to reduce each example to an instance of the general, but they do emphasise the generality of dominant patterns.

## Proposition 1

Nations are abstract communities, made up of and made by people who as a community will never all meet. Yet at the same time, nations are lived—at least in their classical form—as embodied genealogies constituted in the particularities of their time (history) and place (territoriality). This tension between the abstracted and the embodied placement of the nation is the core to understanding the formation of nations, as well as its contradictions. It helps us fathom how a narrator living in a national life-world can draw upon a figure they have never met, a person who lived long ago in a world without nations, and use them to subjectively embody a nation that objectively came into existence long after the death of that person.

## Proposition 2

Narrators of *a* nation—and, by extension, narrators of *the* nation (videlicet theorists)—are embodied persons in time and place, but this is in tension with the act of narrating. That is, they are constituted through all the foibles and particularities of that time and place. Yet at the same time, by virtue of their work (the act of narrating), they are at one level lifted into an abstract relation to that 'social context' in order to reflect upon it.<sup>2</sup> In other words, they are contextualised at two levels: as a subject and as the narrator of a subject.

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1 See Lawson, this volume.

2 The distinction here between 'narrators of a nation' and 'narrators of the nation' is a simple one. While they are both intellectual categories describing persons living with and for ideas, narrators of *a* nation can be describers of a particular nation, whereas narrators of *the* nation are pushed to be generalising historians, comparative sociologists or social theorists.



## Proposition 3

Good biographies of such communities (nations) or such persons (both narrators of *a* nation and narrators of *the* nation) require an understanding of the (contradictory) layers in tension that make their subjects what, and who, they are. To use a different metaphor, as Christian Wicke identifies in his study of Helmut Kohl, the ‘biographical constellation’ is full of different and competing lights.

## Proposition 4

Biographies of persons written by narrators of *a* nation (often themselves nationalists) *tend* to reduce the complexity of that person to his or her ‘national context’. Conversely, contemporary critics of that reductive tendency now look back from a great height upon that earlier canonising of ‘national’ persons and *tend* to reduce those nationalist narrators to intentional creators of national fictions. This is part of a trend that Jonathan Hearn identifies in his introductory essay: a post-structuralist tendency to reduce the biographies of persons to unstable constellations of discursive performance.

The argument of the present essay is that it makes no sense to choose one side or the other of the stability/instability, social formation/self-formation or structure/agency dialectics. The essay begins with a discussion of the problems of using biography as a method, arguing that it is best understood as an orienting and organising metaphor to bring together seemingly different fields of inquiry. Then, after briefly outlining an alternative analytical method for doing social inquiry, the essay turns to discuss a series of contradictions that needs to be understood in order to develop a deeper understanding of nations, persons who narrate nations, and persons who are canonised by nationalists.

## Problems with Biography as Method

Biography as conventionally understood is problematic. Mainstream biographies describe individuals as actors walking around in the world against a background context—exactly the kind of approach that I began by questioning. The subjects of biographies think about things, pick up things and relate to significant others. They make things happen in a ‘they-did-this and then they-did-this’ kind of way. The background context remains just that—a colourful background. This method, even when it has persons being influenced by their background and then acting, is located within the ‘socialisation’ lineage of identity formation.

This lineage, including the hypodermic-syringe model of media socialisation, reduces individuals to the carriers of the narrative into which influences from the outside world are injected.

The problems with such conventional biographies are manifold. Biographies usually treat the public as a reflection of the private, with the private realm being assumed to be foundational. This is strange given that biographies are most often written about public people who project a *persona*. That is, for such subjects the dominant passages of the presentation of themselves in everyday life are already formed by what might be called a 'self-biofication' process. The ugliness of that neologism is more appropriate than the beauty of the modern cliché 'life is a work of art', and it is more accurate than the post-structuralist trope 'life is a series of self-inventions'. It means, in short, that it is hard to write biographies about subjects, particularly intellectuals or public figures, who are already formed in the era of biographical and autobiographical writing and self-projection.

The usual recourse of conventional biographies to this problem is that they seek the inner truth in the inner life of their subjects. This leads to the second problem. Biographies usually overemphasise the personal, working as a life-story of actions based on attributed motivations and feelings rather than as an integrated social story.

Third, biographies are usually based on a methodological individualism that takes the modern individual as a given category. That is, biographies are usually constitutively flat. Very rarely do they reflect upon the different senses of personhood across history or the different *ontological formations* that frame being a person. For example, it is important to recognise that in the case of all the biographical figures in this volume, all the 'narrators of a nation' are *modern* individuals, just as their nations are all *modern* communities, at least at their dominant constitutive level.

Fourth, biographies are usually based on retrospective understandings of where the person ended up, thus interpreting actions in terms of a naturalised final trajectory. The same thing happens in histories of nations, and it tends to distort the work of all national historians, as well as all those writers who have ever been tempted to use the term 'proto-nationalism'.

It could also be said that the descriptive narrative bias of biographies can lead to profound weakness. This tends to be the case; however, it should also be said that descriptive narrative has to be one dimension of all good biographies and social narratives. To the extent that it brings out interconnected details of life—tensions between the general and the particular, between contingency and pattern—empirical work is foundational to understanding a subject. Making

quirky connections, the stuff of many biographies, can usefully bring out relations and references otherwise unconsidered. For example, it is Powell who gives us the phrase 'the biography of a nation', and it is the theorist of nationalism Tom Nairn who most prominently uses Enoch Powell as an archetype to distinguish his own nationalism.<sup>3</sup> To extend the connections, Nairn played a supervisory role in both the masters and the doctoral theses by Ben Wellings, who wrote the essay in this volume on Powell.<sup>4</sup> And, to add another connection, Enoch Powell's Saltaire 1974 speech on nationalism was written in the same town in which I spent a month in 2002 writing on nationalism and globalism, the same year in which Ben Wellings concluded his PhD research. The point is that time and place are important. Saltaire, once the centre of a global textiles empire, was in 1974 in the throes of de-industrialisation. If Powell gave that speech now, four decades later in the context of a lingering global financial crisis and a festering immigration contestation, even as a conservative, he would address a changed relationship between the national and the global imaginaries.<sup>5</sup> A concept that was barely available in the 1970s, 'globalisation', has become by the 2000s one of the most contested concepts in political writing. Thus, instead of the context being treated as a background feature, apparently trivial parallel stories can lead us to think of the double movement of the social: context as constitutive, and persons as constitutive of their context, a movement first given reflexive momentum by Marx's notion that people make history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. It can also lead us to flat description filled with quirky facts—and this is why a good biography is hard to write.

As a way through these issues, Jonathan Hearn has in this volume used the metaphor of identity as an ecology—a dynamic balance of forces between self-making (the process of being an individual and making oneself), social categorising (the process of using categories to make people) and social organising (the process of forming of organisations to mobilise resources).<sup>6</sup> The method works well for many purposes. It brings social context in from the cold; however, because understanding questions of contraction and tension is at the heart of this essay, there is a need here to go a little further. The following discussion sets biographies of both persons and nations within an understanding of levels of analysis as they relate to levels of doing, acting, relating and being.

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3 See Nairn, T. 1973, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and neo-nationalism*, [Second edn], Verso, London.

4 Wellings, this volume.

5 The term 'global imaginary' here comes from Steger, M. B. 2008, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political ideologies from the French Revolution to the global war on terror*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

6 Hearn, this volume.

## Biography as Understood through Different Levels of Analysis

Distinguishing different domains of 'the social' requires moving across different levels of analysis, but once those domains are defined the analysis begins concurrently as an empirical task and a theoretical claim about that task. The method thus begins by presuming the importance of a first-order abstraction, here called *empirical analysis*. It entails drawing out and generalising from on-the-ground detailed descriptions of history and place. This does not mean accepting that what the subject of a biography or a person-as-nationalist says is an adequate explanation of a particular phenomenon; however, it does take such descriptions seriously as expressive of the experience of the world.

All social theories, whether they acknowledge it or not, are dependent upon such a process of first-order abstraction. This first level either involves generating empirical description based on observation, experience, interviews or archival work—in other words, abstracting evidence from that which exists or occurs in the world—or it involves drawing upon the empirical research of others. The first level of analytical abstraction is an ordering of 'things in the world', before any kind of further analysis is applied to those 'things'. This is the level at which most biographies or national histories are written and all of the contributions to this volume are careful to ground their work in detailed empirical research.

From this often taken-for-granted level, more theoretical approaches work towards a second-order abstraction, a method of some kind for ordering and making sense of that empirical material. At the very least they occasionally move to an unacknowledged second level either to explain or to rationalise the first. As we move to this more abstract level of analysis there is good reason for agnosticism about how this is done. The steps of analysis listed below are just one possible way. Each level has both a hermeneutic dimension (a focus on the subjectivities of practice and meaning) and a structural dimension (a focus on objective patterns of practice and meaning).

The second level of analysis, *conjunctural analysis*, involves identifying and more importantly examining the intersection (the conjunctures) of various patterns and subjectivities of practice and meaning. Here we draw upon established sociological, anthropological and political categories of analysis such as production, exchange, communication, organisation and inquiry. This is the level of analysis at which it makes sense to map what Jonathan Hearn calls 'social organising'; however, in the account that I am presenting, 'organisation' is only one of many things that people do when they 'act'. They also produce, exchange, communicate and inquire. Hence at this level it makes sense to talk about modes of production, exchange, communication, inquiry, as well as organisation. In

relation to biographies of persons and nations, it is not just that a nation is embedded in an organisational context (the state and its bureaucracies) or that a person works for an organisation (the state, a corporation, a religious body, and so on), it is that any given organisational context has a specific social form or intersection of forms—for example, tribal kinship, traditional patrimonialism, modern bureaucracy, postmodern hyper-rationality, and so on. Boudicca's attack upon Camulodunum, for example,<sup>7</sup> was embedded in intersecting tribal-traditional organisational relations that included contested understandings of inheritance. Two forms of polity-community confronted each other—the tribal-traditional kingdom ruling the Iceni people and the traditional empire of Rome—and both were fundamentally different from the kind of nation-state polity that Helmut Kohl headed.<sup>8</sup>

The third level of entry into discussing the complexity of social relations, *integrational analysis*, examines the intersecting modes of social integration and differentiation. These different modes of integration are expressed here in terms of different ways of relating to and distinguishing oneself from others—from the face-to-face to the disembodied. Here we see a break with the dominant emphases of classical social theory and a movement towards a post-classical sensibility. In relation to the nation-state, for example, we can ask how it is possible to explain a phenomenon that, at least in its modern variant, subjectively (and contradictorily) explains itself by reference to *face-to-face* metaphors of blood, soil and placement—ties of genealogy, kinship, ethnicity, territory and citizenship—when the objective 'reality' of all nation-states is that they are *disembodied* communities of abstracted strangers who will never all meet, even by accident (see Theme 1 below).

Finally, the most abstract level of analysis to be employed here is what might be called *categorical analysis*. This level of inquiry is based upon an exploration of the ontological categories such as temporality and spatiality, epistemology and performativity. At this level, generalisations can be made about the dominant modes of categorisation in a social formation or in its fields of practice and discourse. It allows us to make sense of what Jonathan Hearn calls 'social categorising', the process of using categories to make people; however, much more broadly, it is only at this level that it makes sense to generalise across modes of being, and to talk of ontological formations: societies as formed in the uneven dominance of formations of tribalism, traditionalism, modernism or postmodernism (see Theme 2 below). Even the act of writing a history or biography as we know it today is a *modern* (or postmodern) phenomenon. A *modern* biography, the dominant form, is framed by an ontology of time that moves calendrically along an arrow that moves inexorably from the past to the

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<sup>7</sup> See Lawson's essay, this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Wicke, this volume.

present and into the future. It provides an empty line to be filled with content. Traditional (that is, non-modern) narratives of persons and communities had no such empty line to fill. Lives were not, could not, be given a biographical singularity. Persons did not live in a universe of abstract empty time that they filled with their own content; their narrators depended upon a cosmological frame to give meaning to their practices and ideas. *Empty time*, the leitmotiv of modernism, gradually came to overlay the power of cosmological time, particularly in Europe across the period of the late medieval and after—the time of Boudicca and King Alfred. It eventually carried through to the dethroning of those cosmological frames. This does not mean, for example, that religious temporalities and epistemologies disappear. In the case of Helmut Kohl, as Christian Wicke describes, he could believe in both the traditional truth of the Catholic Church—Jesus died for us for all time—and modern ideas of progress.

Modern time is often described metaphorically: it travels like an arrow, it is spaced like knots on a long string, and it flows like a river. This is the form of temporality that allows for historicity, biography and conceptions of progress. That is, it leaves the space for reflection upon persons moving through 'historical time' as it is measured (tautologously) across time and space. The emergence of such a level of temporality leads us in two simultaneous directions: the first is subjectivism, for example, as expressed by Immanuel Kant for whom time was the foundation of all experience. The second is objectivism, expressed by Isaac Newton in 1687 as giving the possibility of '[a]bsolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, [flowing] equally without relation to anything external'.<sup>9</sup> This had a foundational effect on modern biographies as they developed in the centuries that followed. In relation to the nation-state, it was Benedict Anderson via Walter Benjamin who made the extraordinary analytical breakthrough here to recognise that without *modern* time, the formation of nation-states was not possible.<sup>10</sup>

The discussion is only intended to give a minimal working sense of the method, sufficient that we can now turn to analysing the lived contradictions in the intertwined biographies of persons and nations. While the conceptual material of the levels approach will be there in every sentence, in seeking to track the contradictory intersections of levels, the technical referencing will largely disappear into the exemplification of the tensions. Tom Nairn, for example, evoked one lineage of tension when he described nationalism as Janus-faced. The nation, he said, is the modern Janus, with one face looking forward along the passage to modernity but forced to endure violent upheaval, while the

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9 Both examples, including the quote, are from Kern, S. 1983, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., p. 11.

10 Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, [Second edn], Verso, London.

other face desperately glances backwards to the reassuring remnants of past traditions.<sup>11</sup> The following section develops this notion of contradiction in relation to a series of interconnected themes.

## Theme 1. Abstraction and Embodiment

The tension between abstraction and embodiment is no more clear than in the lives of writers. Narrators of persons and nations work from a position of disembodied abstraction through the medium of print while simultaneously they either call upon embodied relations or attempt to enact embodied connections. This tension is at the core of their identity. That is, in their capacity of being writers—the writer qua writer—intellectuals are relatively lifted out of the constraints of time and space, while in their broader identities as persons their bodies keep them firmly in place (see Proposition 2). This is similarly one of the bases for drawing connections between the objective abstraction of the national community and the flesh-and-blood citizens of any particular nation—denizens both dead and alive (see Proposition 3).

Stephanie Trigg in her book *Congenial Souls* evokes this tension beautifully. She describes how, long after Geoffrey Chaucer's death in 1400, and across the abstracting distance of time and space, writers, biographers and critics wanted to complete his unfinished poems, to talk with him, and even to be intimate friends with the man, Geoffrey. In general, their homo-social longing became ever stronger despite the distancing of the modern arrow of time—that is, until the middle of the twentieth century when something gradually changed.<sup>12</sup> Expressed more generally, conversing with dead authors across separated times is commonplace in academic literature, just as drawing flesh-and-blood connections across the discontinuities of history is common in the archives of those who contribute to writing their nations into being. (It is only more recently that this has been somewhat challenged—but that is a whole other story.)

In one of the talks given at the symposium from which this volume began, Chris Bishop used the biography of the long-dead Alfred the Great to suggest that the bio-nation had been invented. The biography, he said, involved 'a deliberate attempt to misremember'.<sup>13</sup> My argument goes in a contrary direction. It suggests that the process of what might better be called '(mis)representation' has, in these cases at least, little if nothing to do with personal intention, much less with

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11 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, Ch. 16.

12 Trigg, S. 2002, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from the medieval to the postmodern*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

13 Bishop, C. 2011, Alfred the Great: reimagining an Anglo-Saxon king, Paper presented at European Nationalism and Biography symposium, ANU Centre for European Studies, Canberra, 15 December 2011.

intentional falsification. Its basis can be found deep in the contradictory nature of nations and the tensions involved in writing about nations. When Alfred Bowker, writing a biography of Alfred the Great as a progenitor of the English nation, says that 'Alfred's mighty heart throbbed into every vein of the nation's organism',<sup>14</sup> Bowker is being carried along by the abstracting/embodying possibilities of his means of inquiry—in particular, writing. He believed that it is simply true that Alfred was a progenitor of the nation, and, like Michelangelo, said to be the first Western artist to have a biography published about them while they are still alive, Bowker wrote as if he was simply finding the figure that was already present in the eternal stone of history. He believed, as many did across the century that stretched from the 1870s to the mid twentieth century, that the nation is continuous from the deep past to the present. For Bowker, the ties from Alfred to Victoria were clear: 'the sign and token of it was that blood of Alfred still ran in the veins of her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.'<sup>15</sup> We reflexive (post)moderns, constituted in a world that forces us to reflect on questions of social being in new ways, are the only ones who are not so sure.

Other processes also draw embodied connections. 'Being there' with Alfred and Victoria is of course not possible in a literal sense. But it is possible in a literary sense. And it is possible by reliving or re-enacting the past. 'Walking with' (as a lived written metaphor) or 'walking in the footsteps of' (as an embodied re-enactment of the past) are both common lines of performance. Alastair MacLachlan's stunning essay in this volume describes the phenomenon of 'being there' through walking.<sup>16</sup> Putting one foot in front of the other is never simple if you think about it too much. Alastair elaborates the consequences for G. M. Trevelyan of *re-walking* Garibaldi's route across southern Italy and Sicily, and using the embodied experience as a means to writing about him. As MacLachlan tells us: 'By reliving and writing Garibaldi's story, Trevelyan, the frustrated political activist, acquired a second, adventitiously heroic, identity, fusing his own persona with his protagonist and his protagonist's agency with a collective Italian agency: the personal and the national.'<sup>17</sup>

It is only a short distance from re-enacting the 'being there' to writing about 'wanting to be there' and reconstructing who is there at the same time. While Alastair was giving his paper at the conference, I searched the Web by wireless connection and found a contemporary blog from October 2011 by Peter G. Shilston. He describes his response to the re-walking. 'I have always thought this would be the most unforgettable of holidays: a walk across Sicily *with* Bertrand Russell and G. M. Trevelyan; both at the time young men at the height of their

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14 Bowker A. 1902, *The King Alfred Millenary*, Macmillan, New York, p. 6, quoting Frederic Harrison from 1888.

15 Ibid., p. 13, citing Bishop Creighton.

16 MacLachlan, this volume.

17 Ibid.



powers' (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup> It is telling that Peter G. Shilston describes himself as an 'English writer, lecturer, teacher, now retired'. He has immediately given us both his nationality and his vocation as writer. And when quaintly he uses the term 'powers' he is referring both to the bodies and to the writing of his cultural heroes.

The theme of making one's national and personal identities by walking and writing carries through into Christian Wicke's essay on the personal nationalism of Helmut Kohl. Wicke's essay references the walk by Kohl from the Hitler Youth camp, and the journey back along the Palatine wine route on the Rhine. Walking across war-ravaged Germany has since become a common reference point in Kohl's and Germany's biographies. It should be no surprise, then, in a common parallel, that Kohl wrote his doctorate (1958) on the political restoration of the Palatinate. This is, on the one hand, one of those quirky facts about a particular person that makes for an emblematic biography and, on the other hand, part of a pattern of embodiment/abstraction that afflicts all narrators of nations. In one sense, given the period that we are talking about, it is probably accurate to say that Helmut Kohl exploited his (auto)biography to project his vision of Germany into the public. At the same time—in the sense for which I am arguing—it is no accident that such a technique of 'biofication' in the name of the nation had become both available and widely used. Both Helmut Kohl and Enoch Powell are masters of the process. Stephan Auer's essay on Richard Sulík in this volume suggests that Sulík did not have their naturalised skill.<sup>19</sup>

## Theme 2. The Modern and the Traditional

The tension between the modern and the traditional is palpable in the nation-state. The most important contemporary theorists of nationalism all write of nations as being a modern phenomenon.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, nation-states as a formation have no longer history than the end of the eighteenth century. States have a long history and modern nations go back a little further than nation-states, but there are no prominent primordialist theorists of the nation left writing today who suggest that the nation *as we know it* goes back continuously into a pre-modern past.<sup>21</sup> Despite this relative scholarly consensus, the nation-state

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18 See <<http://petergshilstonblog.blogspot.com.au/2011/10/g-m-trevelyan.html>> (viewed 15 May 2012).

19 Auer, this volume.

20 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, E. 1983, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford. Even Anthony D. Smith is a modernist theorist; see Smith, A. D. 1986, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford; Smith, A. D. 2001, *Nationalism: Theory, ideology, history*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001.

21 Tom Nairn notwithstanding. Even when he writes himself in that tradition, he is doing so with a touch of irony derived from a reflexive modernist stance. He writes of himself: 'Formerly a left half-back (reserves) with Team Modern's one-world economania, Tom Nairn switched sides in the 1990s and tentatively joined the neo-primordialists, at least for the after-match discussions.' Nairn, T. and James, P. 2005, *Global Matrix*, Pluto, London, p. 7.

remains caught in Janus-faced tension between its objectively modern formation and its subjectively generated ideologies of deep traditional roots (to re-render Tom Nairn's metaphor). It is partly because, rather than replacing traditionalism in a revolutionary and epochal shift, modernism emerged unevenly and across a long period of change and upheaval as the dominant ontological formation. These practices and subjectivities of modernism have come to interconnect the globe at one level, but they did not change everything or completely sweep aside earlier formations. Hence, there is a phenomenal sense of deep continuity. On the street in the 'old' nation-states of Europe there is still a dominant sense that their nations have deep roots in history even if the political birth dates of their nation-states can be given as more recent: 1789, 1861, 1871, and so on.

This tension between modernism and traditionalism is strong but strange. In times and places which can be characterised by an overriding dominance of an ontology of traditionalism—places such as England in the seventeenth century—tradition was self-authenticating. It was not something for which arguments are needed to give it legitimacy. Arguments about the proper ritualistic or political way to do things tended to be over the interpretation of that tradition, not over its ontological standing. In comparison, the kind of desperation that we find in some nationalists like Enoch Powell to re-establish the 'continuous' force of the traditional requires, counter-intuitively, a lifting into the modern. That is, it is only with the dominance of modern understandings and practices that the defence of tradition becomes variously an imperative (for many conservatives) and a limitation to be vigorously argued against (for many liberals).

The intersection of traditionalism with modernism, for example, in the nineteenth century—the time of the formation of nation-states—brought with it tensions between, on the one hand, cosmological embodiment held in the hands of God or Nature (as *traditional* subjectivities and practices) and individualised personhood linked to an emerging and universalising nation imaginary, on the other (as *modern* subjectivities and practices). Hence, when the good liberal G. M. Trevelyan writes *descriptively* as a historian about Mazzini, he is able to understand that Mazzini is simultaneously a nationalist, a cosmopolitan and God-oriented. For Mazzini, Italy is God-given; therefore it does not matter that most 'Italians' do not speak Italian—'nothing is more natural'.<sup>22</sup> This is not so easy for a modernist *theorist* to explain. In the same way, without a capacity to understand internal and social contradictions, it is otherwise difficult to explain how liberals can be nationalists, and how nationalists can be cosmopolitans or internationalists. Here strange alignments can be found between Mazzini, Trevelyan and Richard Sulík.<sup>23</sup>

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22 See MacLachlan's essay, this volume.

23 On the last, see Auer's essay, this volume.

### Theme 3. The Nation, the Person and an Emerging Global Imaginary

The tension between the national and the global is also patterned in what would seem, from a contemporary commonsense, to be peculiar. On the street today in most places in the world—to the extent that people think about issues about the relation between the national and the global—there is a taken-for-granted sense that globalisation is antithetical to the nation-state. This tension, in Christian Wicke's terms, has been *normalised*. We might say (paradoxically) it is 'a globalised normality' that nation-states should seek to find their own integrity under the pressure of global change. Until recently it was a common academic position that globalisation was an unmitigated threat to the sovereignty of the nation-state. The approach presented here allows us to see that there is certainly a tension between them, but the assumption that globalisation is an unqualified threat to the nation-state is completely unfounded. It depends. The tension between them works predominantly within a common ontological formation: the modern.

To the extent that we do find ontological contradictions between the national and the global it is where, at one level, *postmodern* economic practices have changed the nature of time and space such as through the derivatives market based on contracted deferral of time and value; and where these come into contention with a continuing level of *modern* practices of nation-state building such as the territorial boundary maintenance of old-style state borders. This is currently handled by ultra-management of embodied globalisation across old borders (namely, the regulated movement of immigrants and refugees—Enoch Powell would be pleased) and the counter-deregulation of disembodied globalisation, particularly exemplified by the movement of capital (Richard Sulik would applaud).

A generation earlier, the uneven emergence of this contradiction helps us to understand how, for example, Enoch Powell could be a fervent critic of open immigration policies as evidenced by his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech (thus defending the modern bounded nation), a defender of British territories in the Falklands (defending the modern globalising empire), a free-market radical (open to the movement of global capital as long as it does not impinge on the 'embodied' cultural nation), and at the same time an advocate of unilateral British nuclear disarmament (a critic of abstracted political extension to the extent that is not grounded in historical and continuing relations of modern power). It was a confusing and contradictory time—which is true of all modern periods for those who live through them.

This is not to say that the nation-state in the present is not under enormous pressure. Nevertheless, the national and the global grew up together. In

the nineteenth century, the nation-state was constituted within a broader universalising social imaginary. It was a different and emerging global imaginary linking race and nation, organised at that time in imperial terms. Chris Bishop's talk emphasised the pre-eminence of the national in the nineteenth century, but what if at that time the national was also caught in a universalising context? I would argue that it was. The other side of the emergent dominance of the national at that time was that the national was an unstable category mixed with globalising considerations of race. We only need to return to the 1902 biography of Alfred the Great to find confirming evidence: 'Alfred is, and will always remain, the typical man of our race, call him Anglo-Saxon, call him American, call him Englishman, call him Australian—the typical man of our race at his best and noblest. I like to think that the face of the Anglo-Saxon is the face of Alfred.'<sup>24</sup> Imagine that being said today. It relates to the later race-nationalism of Trevelyan in his 'holiday among the Serbians' where he sees Serbs as bringers of freedom to Kosovo.<sup>25</sup> In passing, we can say that this relates to a form of nationalism that is never discussed in the literature: 'Other-projected nationalism'—that is, the romantic projection of the nationalism of somewhere else (linked only implicitly to the naturalisation of one's own nation).

## Theme 4. Gender and the Body of the Nation

Gender and the uneven link to the body politic form another relevant theme. Stephanie Lawson's essay on Boudicca in this volume reminds us at least implicitly that in searching for the real person we do not search for Boudicca's face—mythological or actual. The same can be said of Joan of Arc, Marianne, Britannia, Liberty, and the other female figures who became iconographic carriers of different national bodies politic. In comparison, recall the quote about Alfred the Great: 'I like to think that the face of the Anglo-Saxon is the face of Alfred.' It seems that the author has no trouble imagining an actual face that at the same time can become stretched across time and other bodies, but it is not the face of the nation, but it is a face that can exemplify racial commonality. If we turn to another historian writing about the same time, we get a clue as to the gender difference here. Writing in 1915, Basil Edward Hammond is concerned about the continuity of the nation given the death of actual persons:

A community or a body politic retains its *personal identity* complete only from the death of one of its members to the death of the next; and as soon as all its members are dead its existence as a body consisting of certain definite persons is entirely ended. But through the space of thirty years, for which a generation remains in its prime and is not superseded by its

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<sup>24</sup> Bowker, *The King Alfred Millenary*, p. 9, quoting Sir Walter Besant.

<sup>25</sup> See MacLachlan's essay, this volume.

sons, the persons gathered in a group for common purposes remain for the most part the same. Thus the lifetime of a community or body politic is about thirty years [emphasis added].<sup>26</sup>

The telling phrase here is 'personal identity'. In contrast, even at a time when the state was still being theorised in embodied terms as having a personality,<sup>27</sup> Hammond, like others, found it somewhat easier to deal with the abstraction of the state than the abstraction across time and embodiment of polity-communities. He did this through invoking the legal doctrine initiated, he said, in the seventeenth-century age of treaty-making states. The doctrine suggested that the word 'state' can be 'adopted as a technical name for any succession of bodies politic which transmit rights and obligations from generation to generation'. For states, Hammond confidently concluded, 'bear no relation to concrete things'.<sup>28</sup> Thus, his approach becomes thoroughly confused. The state is strangely conceived as immaterial because it is hard to form in the mind as a 'complete image' and the body politic is strangely conceived as its opposite and reduced to a perceptible body of bodies:

A body politic, on the other hand, may be a perfectly concrete thing. All the members of a German tribe, or of a Greek city, or of the modern republics of Andorra or San Martino could, or can, be seen at a glance; the German tribesmen could all be heard at once if they murmured disapproval, or the citizens of Athens if they shouted or groaned... And beyond that every body politic... is like a concrete thing in its capacity for acting as if it were a single person.<sup>29</sup>

Here the biography of the person and the nation becomes one in the figure of the body politic. But who can best stand in for that generalised body? It is not a person with an actual face—even Napoleon Bonaparte, George Washington and Che Guevara, despite their iconic status, cannot become figures that stand for the body of the nation. Male figures with that capacity become figures of fun: Uncle Sam and John Bull. It is the female figure, mythologised and abstracted across history in a way that leaves behind her embodied particularity, which for a period in history can join the biography of the person and the biography of the nation. England for Enoch Powell is female. In his words, cited by Tom Nairn, 'the nationhood of the mother country remained unaltered through it all... England underwent no organic change as the mistress of a world empire'.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in Tennyson's poem (1859), Boudicca is timeless: she is the figure

26 Hammond, B. E. 1915, *Bodies Politic and their Governments*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1–2.

27 See, for example, von Gierke, O. 1900, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

28 Hammond, *Bodies Politic and their Governments*, pp. 3, 4.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

30 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 259.

'standing loftily charioted'. In William Cowper's poem 'Boadicea: An Ode' (1782), she is the princess who is not described. In the first two lines quoted below, we are not there, but it is *as if* our aged eyes could respond with tears:

Princess! if our aged eyes  
Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,  
'Tis because resentment ties  
All the terrors of our tongues.  
'Rome shall perish'—write that word  
In the blood that she has spilt;  
Perish, hopeless and abhorr'd,  
Deep in ruin as in guilt.

The poem concurrently links the tropes of the abstract ('write that word') and the embodied (spill that blood). It brings us full circle to the relation between the abstract and the concrete of the first theme and what it means to write. It also returns us in a different way to Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech. That talk had its power both because it used tropes of the body in history to carry his political message in way that it 'spoke' to a significant minority of Britain and because it was carried nationally by the power of 'print capitalism', to use Benedict Anderson's term. The speech was carried across the nation on the machine of the dominant modes of communication and production.

## Conclusion

Theorising the nation benefits greatly from understanding both the biographies of the narrators of nationalism *and* the biographies of the theorists of nationalism. In conclusion, we might well ask why both the nationalists discussed in this volume and the key theorists of nationalism are caught in a tension between the centre and the periphery. In Tom Nairn's theory of nationalism, the uneven development of the dominant mode of production, capitalism, extended through the pressure of imperialism on the periphery and led intellectuals of the new middle class to defend themselves against empire in the name of the nation. 'The new middle class intelligentsia of nationalism had invited the masses into history; and the invitations had to be written in a language that they understood.'<sup>31</sup> This meant that the world was simultaneously unified and divided (Theme 3): 'Capitalism, even as it spread remorselessly across the world to unify human society into one more or less connected story for the first time, also engendered a perilous and convulsive fragmentation of that society.'<sup>32</sup> The intellectuals of the nation were similarly divided both politically and in themselves. In political

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

terms, some travelled along the pathway to become nationalists themselves: being conservative (Powell's national closure and Kohl's Catholicism) or liberal (Kohl's and Trevelyan's liberal nationalism) tended only to make a difference to the content of that nationalism. And some, particularly after the 1980s, came to treat nations as social inventions or more adequately as social fabrications. In 'seeing through' the process of nation formation, they became sceptics of its commonsense power.

In personal terms, theorists of the nation came to be divided against themselves. Whether nationalist or sceptic, the most important theorists of nationalism found themselves theorising the centre from an emotional periphery. The 1970s and 1980s were an incredible couple of decades in which most of the important work on theorising nationalism was written, and all the key theorists were outsiders who, through various means, came to confront the central commonsense of their time: Gellner, Nairn, Smith, Hobsbawm and Anderson. Jonathan Hearn is no different. Apart from Nairn and Hearn, they all tended to move to the centre, but none ever felt at home. Jonathan moved to Scotland. Tom Nairn remained a Scottish outsider who travelled to a series of peripheries including Prague on the Eastern periphery and then Melbourne, part of a southern colony; interestingly, Enoch Powell also had a sojourn in Australia. Nairn wrote *The Break-Up of Britain* in chosen exile from the place of his birth. Ernest Gellner was a Jewish outsider born in Paris, raised in Prague (now in the Czech Republic). Benedict Anderson's academic life was lived at Cornell, the centre of the New Empire, but he was born in China, and is now more at home in Thailand than in the United States. Anthony Smith is a Jewish outsider, like Hans Kohn, Sir Isaiah Berlin, Elie Kedourie (born in Baghdad), Ernest Gellner, George Mosse, Eric Hobsbawm (born in Alexandria in 1917 and raised in Vienna). They were all émigrés of one kind or another.

Thus, we can say that the nation and its theorists, and therefore the biographies of nations and persons, are intertwined. But it is not a simple process. The concept of writing biographies of such different phenomena—a community and a person—cannot be taken as a self-evident process based on a quaint homology. Like all histories, it can be done well or, as is more likely, written as various shades of badly. When it is done well, as evidenced by the essays in this volume, biography opens up new lines of insight.

