

subject, there is nevertheless a broad, though unexamined agreement about what appropriate distance is and where its value lies: the modern, professional consensus closely identifies genuine historical knowledge with a position of relative detachment. This chapter challenges this consensus by (a) noting that historical distance is not so much given as constructed, (b) defining several kinds of distance in historical representation (formal, affective, ideological, and cognitive), and (c) providing examples of variations in 'appropriate' historical distance. By articulating and mapping this heretofore largely implicit dimension of historical representation, Phillips opens up the possibility of more deliberate use of distance as a variable in the study of historical consciousness.

#### Notes

- 1 In addition to his chapter in this volume, see also Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. chap. 3, 'Collective Memory: A Term in Search of a Meaning.'
- 2 Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Memory Studies,' *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179–97; Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' in David Graddol and Oliver Boyd-Barrett, eds, *Media Texts: Authors and Readers* (Clevedon, Avon, UK: Open University, 1994), 200–11.
- 3 In addition to his chapter in this volume, see also Rüsen, *Historische Orientierung: Über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbeauftragten, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden* (Köln: Böhlau, 1994); Rüsen, *Historisches Lernen. Grundlagen und Paradigmen* (Köln: Böhlau, 1994); Rüsen, *Zerbrechende Zeit: Über den Sinn der Geschichte* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001); Bodo von Borries and Jörn Rüsen, eds, *Geschichtsbeauftragte im interkulturellen Vergleich* (Pflaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1994); and Rüsen, ed., *Geschichtsbeauftragte: Psychologische Grundlagen, Entwicklungskonzepte, empirische Befunde* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001).

## Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparing Historiographies: Some Preliminary Considerations

CHRIS LORENZ

In his recent book *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*, Montreal historian Ronald Rudin starts his introduction with the following somewhat paradoxical observation:

The point has often been made that history occupies a privileged place in Quebec culture. The motto of the province – *je me souviens* (I remember) – is but one indicator of this reverence for the past. Another is the special status still reserved in Quebecers' collective memory for Abbé Groulx, the first full-time university professor of Quebec history, more than twenty-five years after his death. In spite of this interest in the past, however, no single volume has yet been dedicated to a comprehensive analysis of Quebec historical writing over the course of the twentieth century. During this period historical writing was increasingly carried out, throughout much of the Western world, by people who viewed themselves as professionals engaged in a 'scientific endeavour'.<sup>1</sup>

And then, of course, the author informs his readers that the book they are about to read is the first book containing this comprehensive analysis of Quebec historiography.

Now, assuming for the moment that Rudin's observations about Quebec are correct, he points to the remarkable fact that at the end of the twentieth century the privileged place of *history* in Quebec does not imply a similar privileged place for Quebec *historiography* (the history of history writing).<sup>2</sup> Rudin develops an explanation for this apparent con-

tradition, which goes something like this: the 'Quiet Revolution' that has revolutionized Quebec society since the 1950s has also revolutionized Quebec historiography by producing 'revisionist' historians. These 'revisionist' historians have been promoting themselves as 'scientific experts,' meanwhile profiting from the unprecedented expansion of the universities. At the same time, however, they turned their back on Quebec's specific traditions. Instead of emphasizing the continuing particularity of 'the French fact' in Anglo-Saxon North America, as most of their predecessors had done, the revisionists started stressing Quebec's essential 'normality.' They replaced Quebec's traditional discourse of difference, which emphasized *la survivance*, with a brand-new discourse of normality, emphasizing Quebec as a normal modern, Western society.

This change from a fixation on Quebec's difference to a fixation on Quebec's essential normality was a real 'paradigm shift,' and Rudin interprets this shift both as a product and as a producer of a new collective identity of Quebec. Traditional Quebec history, centred on the French period and the subsequent defeats by the British, was pushed aside by the history of 'modern' Quebec, starting around the 1850s and centred on the unfolding process of industrialization, urbanization, and economic rationalization.

At the end of his book Rudin signals a recent but growing unease among younger Quebec historians with this type of revisionist approach, because the revisionists' apparent obsession with Quebec's 'normality' obscures its particular historical and cultural characteristics. In addition, Rudin criticizes the revisionists for their lack of a sound reflection on their own trade, Quebec historiography itself. Their lack of reflexivity manifests itself in a contradiction: if it is true, as the revisionists say, that Quebec has been surprisingly 'normal' and modern for at least one century and a half, then how can it be that Quebec has produced a 'normal' scientific historiography *only* since the rise of revisionism, that is, after the 'Quiet Revolution'? This last conviction has also been part and parcel of revisionist writings: that the predecessors of revisionism had been amateurs and partisan historians, while the revisionists were the first real 'scientific' historians of Quebec. Rudin thus ends his book by criticizing the revisionist historians for their lack of self-reflection.

Here I have chosen Rudin's analysis of revisionist Quebec historiography in order to introduce some general problems of comparative historiography, which are relevant for theorizing historical consciousness. However, I must inform the reader from the outset that my remarks do

not constitute a theoretical framework in any stringent sense. The most I can offer are some clarifications of questions and concepts that may be useful when comparing historiographies.<sup>3</sup> Most of the real work is still ahead, but that is what research projects are about.

Now, which general problems of comparative historiography am I referring to? The first general theme brought up by Rudin is the relationship between historical consciousness in a broader societal and cultural sense – sometimes identified by the nebulous term collective memory (criticized in John Torpey's contribution to this volume) – on the one side and professional history on the other.<sup>4</sup> This relationship needs to be addressed because professional historians are far from being the only producers of historical consciousness. From its beginning professional history has been in competition with several other representational forms of history, such as myth, literary fiction, and 'amateur' history (including the histories handed over from generation to generation in families and 'Stammtisch'-histories).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, since the sudden rise of cultural studies, the study of the past has also been practised by professionals other than historians, such as literary critics and anthropologists, a trend that has evoked some alarmist reactions.<sup>6</sup> Since television and film have replaced the book as the most important media of information, the non-professional forms of historical representation have been gaining an ever-increasing influence on the formation of historical consciousness. In this arena no professional book can compete with films such as *JFK* or *Schindler's List*. Thus, the *media* of representation have had a profound influence on the *content* of representation of the past.

This theme, which is explicitly addressed by Christian Laville in this volume, is an important one for at least two reasons. The first is that it concerns the relationship between the production and consumption of historical representations (including the schoolbook versions of professional history). The issue here is that we can only determine the influence of professional historiography on historical consciousness in relation to other influences.<sup>7</sup> The second reason is that the relationship between the production and consumption of the various sorts of historical representations may also tell us something important about the contents of professional historiography. It is my hypothesis that one important problem of professional history nowadays is its neglect of several domains of human experience that are regarded as crucial for our modern age. I am hinting at experiences of facing the extreme, also labelled as liminal, catastrophic, and traumatic experiences or the experience of the sublime. These domains of experience seem to escape the grips of 'normal'

professional history, probably because such types of experience usually leave few controllable documentary traces – except for the individual stories about them. This circumstance may explain why the experience of trench warfare has primarily been documented in (memoir) literature written by former participants and not in 'normal' history books.<sup>8</sup> It may also explain why the experiences of modern concentration and extermination camps has been dominated by literary and not by historical representations.<sup>9</sup>

However this may be, I shall argue that the relationship between professional historians and their societies can be analysed in a fruitful way by the concept of collective identity. Although the concept of identity, including collective identity, is also hotly debated, I think it is fundamental for the analysis of the practical functions of history.<sup>10</sup> Through the concept of identity, the three time dimensions of past, present, and future can plausibly be connected, as also indicated by Jörn Rüsen, Jocelyn Létourneau, and John Torpey in their contributions to this volume. The basic idea is that professional historians are both products *and* producers of the collective identities of the cultures of which they are part (the very same idea that Rudin formulated in relation to Quebec).

The second general theme brought up by Rudin is the practical function of historiographical discourse. In identifying both the traditional discourse of difference and the revisionist discourse of normality in Quebec historiography, he touches on the relationship between history and collective identity. Difference simply presupposes sameness or identity and the same holds for normality. Now, whenever the normality of a nation or of a state turns into an issue, this is the surest indication of a widespread suspicion of its *abnormality*. Only people whose normality is being questioned seriously – by themselves or by others – are inclined to debate the issue. The post-war obsession of Germany with its *Normalität* is a paradigmatic example.

The same story holds for the discourse of difference: whenever individuals and collectives transform their difference into an issue, this is the surest indication that their experience of being different is under threat. This circumstance may explain why the discussions about identity issues are unevenly distributed in space and time. Thus, both the discourses of normality and the discourse of difference are symptoms of perceived threats to identity. From a comparative point of view it may be worthwhile to note that we find these discourses not only in Quebec historiography, but also in English-Canadian historiography – in the discussion

about 'limited identities' – and extensively in German historiography.<sup>11</sup> So Rudin's second theme leads to questions about the relation between history and identity.

I shall deal with the relation between history and identity in two steps. First, I shall dwell on some of the conceptual characteristics of the slippery notion of identity in order to elucidate its fundamentally multiple character. This multiplicity is essential for our understanding of multiplicity in historiography. In the second step I shall fill the concept of historical identity with some material content, addressing the relationship between different forms of collective identity, especially national identity, religious identity, and class identity. Further I shall identify some categories and problems that appear useful when comparing historiographies.

### The Concept of Historical Identity

When we are referring to the identity of individuals and collectives, we refer to the properties that make them different from each other in a particular frame of reference. It is on the basis of their particular set of properties that we can identify them as individuals and tell them apart. Identity or sameness and difference or otherness, therefore, presuppose each other: without identity there is no difference and without difference there is no identity. For example, the notion of personal identity or of a 'self' presupposes the notion of the 'non-self' or the 'other.' Therefore, there can be no Other in any absolute sense, because the concepts of the Self and of the Other are conceptually related.<sup>12</sup> Identity and difference are thus fundamentally relational concepts and are, as such, fundamentally opposed to essentialist concepts (which imply that, for instance, nationhood and ethnicity are invariant essences). Sam Wineburg's enlightening location of historical understanding between the poles of familiarity and strangeness can directly be connected to the dichotomy of Self (familiarity) and Otherness (strangeness).<sup>13</sup> And the fundamental multiplicity of descriptions of identity can also be connected to its relational quality, because one can relate any Self to various Others (as is observed in James Wertsch's contribution to this volume on the function of 'aliens' in Russian self-definitions, and also in Peter Lee's contribution).

This relational quality, of course, also holds for the notion of collective identity. We can identify an 'in-group' – a 'we' – only in relation to an 'out-group' – a 'they.' There can only be inclusion in a collective if there

is at the same time exclusion. The notion of a 'limited identity,' which has popped up in the English-Canadian discussion, is therefore a category mistake because identity is limited by definition. The abdication of this notion by Ramsay Cook was certainly justified.

In history we can observe the relational character of collective identity concretely because we can trace the demarcations of in-groups from out-groups *in statu nascendi*. The discourses on national identity are a case in point. For instance, the discourse on German national identity in the early nineteenth century was conducted by opposing characteristics of the Germans to characteristics of the French. In the discourses on Dutch identity, to take another example, we observe a change from opposing the Dutch to the French in the early nineteenth century to opposing the Dutch to Germans from the late nineteenth century onwards. Similar observations pertain to the discourse on the Canadian identity, where the United States often functions as the identity *ex negativo*. So we can observe that representation of collective identity is closely related to other particular collective identities in a negative way. Identity is constructed by negation, as Spinoza, Hegel, and Foucault argued some time ago. This also holds for the special cases in which a new identity is constructed by negating one's own former identity. This phenomenon is not unusual in the aftermath of traumatic experience: both individuals and collectives may try to start a 'new life' by adopting a new identity. This transformation is usually accompanied by publicly acknowledging past 'mistakes' and by trying to make up for them. The Federal Republic of Germany offers a clear historical example because it defined itself politically as the democratic negation of totalitarian Nazi Germany. Because undoing the past is impossible by definition, material reparations for past misdeeds and mourning – *Trauer* – is all that is left in the end.

In history, this negative bond between collective identities is often connected to some sense of being under threat and is therefore embedded in power relations. The Germans and the Dutch in the early nineteenth century, for instance, had recently had bad experiences with France, but later in the century many Dutch started worrying more seriously about the expanding German empire. Since mighty neighbours are usually perceived as (at least potentially) threatening, the negative aspects of collective identities are probably most outspoken among the less powerful collectives. And because power relations may change over time, we can also expect parallel changes in the discourses of national identities.

This negative bond between different collective identities – this need of a 'negation' in articulating one's own identity – also helps to explain another important historical phenomenon, that of the collective exclusion of minorities by majorities – ranging from discrimination to expulsion and annihilation – especially in periods of crisis. Such minorities are usually represented as some kind of aliens or strangers who pose a threat to the very identity of the majority.<sup>14</sup> From this angle, the simultaneous rise of nationalism and of popular anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is not accidental, nor is the fact that anti-Semitism was especially virulent in regions with suppressed forms of nationalism, like in east-central Europe. As we shall see in the second part of my contribution, weak nations may also adapt to mighty neighbours in another way by defining themselves as 'blends' of neighbouring cultures or as international mediators. Their collective identity is then defined not primarily by negating other identities but instead by absorbing them.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the need to specify the core identity in the mix of others still remains.

Before we turn to the concept of historical identity, it is important to keep in mind that historical identity is just one type of identity among others. Individuals, for instance, can also be identified through their biological identity, that is, their DNA profile. Moreover, in a not so distant past, serious attempts have been made in order to identify collectives in terms of racial identity. Thus, the identification of individuals and collectives in terms of historical identity is not self-evident and therefore requires an explanation. Many historians are inclined to forget this fact, because it means that doing history needs an explanation and a justification. In this volume the chapters by Torpey and Rüsen address this issue, so I shall not deal with it here.<sup>16</sup>

Be that as it may, when we are talking about the historical identity of individuals and collectives, we refer to a type of identity that is defined by its development in time. The paradigm case of historical identity can therefore be conceived on the model of personal identity (although we must always be very careful not to attribute the properties of individuals to collectives). The identity of a subject consists of the set of characteristics that the subject develops over time in interaction with its environment and that set it apart from similar subjects. This set of characteristics is not random, if we are talking about historical and personal identity, but must relate to important characteristics. It is also possible in principle to identify individuals through their fingerprints or iris, but we would not associate personal identity with properties of that kind.

The same holds for the concept of historical identity. In both cases, identity does not just mean telling individuals apart from each other (i.e., describing numerical identity); rather, it means a characterization of individuality (i.e., describing a qualitative identity). It is no accident, therefore, that the biography, in which an individual develops a personal identity in time, has often been regarded as the paradigm of doing history (by Dilthey, for instance).

Historical identity thus has a paradoxical quality, because it is identity through change in time. When we are referring to the historical identity of Canada, we are thus referring to a collective that retained a particular identity over time in its interactions with its environment – although this same Canada changed at the same time. Historical identity is therefore essentially persistence through change or the identity of identity and non-identity, to quote the apt Hegelian formulation of Odo Marquard.<sup>17</sup>

#### Historical Identity between Particularism and Universalism

The fact that individuals and collectives can be described in terms of particular characteristics, constituting unique identities, does not of course mean that collective identities can be described in just one way. The mode of description is always dependent on the frame of reference that is used by the historian. Through the frame of reference the historian constructs implicit or explicit relations between his case and others. Within the framework of Canada, for instance, Quebec can be described as the province with a French-speaking majority or as the only province with a formal status as a 'distinct society' – thus constructing a contrasting relation between Quebec and the other provinces of Canada. Within the framework of the new nations, however, Quebec can simultaneously be described as the only new nation in the New World that did *not* attain political sovereignty (as Gérard Bouchard recently argued).<sup>18</sup> Bouchard thus constructs a contrasting relation between Quebec and new nations like New Zealand and Australia. History itself does not force a historian to use the former or the latter frame of reference. It is, rather, the other way around: what history looks like is more or less defined by its representations (although, of course, history in turn defines the range of plausible representations). The frame of reference in representations is entirely dependent on the choice of the historian (although the choice may be an unconscious one, when the historian lacks the imagination to see the past differently from the way he or she does).<sup>19</sup>

The fact that individuals and collectives can be described in terms of

unique identities does not imply that they cannot be described as similar. Actually, this emphasis on similarity instead of on particularity was dominant in Enlightenment historiography, when the diversity of so-called 'national characters' was basically seen as variety within a common human species. The variety of 'national characters' was basically interpreted as the variety of their location on the developmental path of 'civilization.' Only after the Enlightenment, under the influence of Romanticism, was the particularity of each 'national character' anchored in a particular language; next this particular language was transformed into a nation's essence. What the various 'national characters' had in common – their common humanity – then faded into the background (only making its comeback in our 'post-national' rediscovery of universal human rights). The politically emancipatory contents of the idea of the nation also evaporated after 1815; after all, the idea of the nation had been the justification of modern representative democracy and was criticized by conservatives precisely for that reason. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century was nationalism discovered by conservatism as an effective ideology in its struggle against universalism and democracy.

To all appearances, the opposition between the universalist outlook of the Enlightenment and the particularistic outlook of Romanticism is still with us in historiography today. This opposition may be located in the various weights a historian attributes to the factor of ethnicity within the nation. Civic representations of nationhood are a direct offspring of Enlightenment universalism, while ethnic representations owe more to the particularism of Romanticism.<sup>20</sup> The same tension can be located in the debate about so-called post-national identities (like the 'European identity' and perhaps even a 'NAFTA identity'), an issue brought up in Laville's contribution to this volume.

When we stick to the representation of national identity, the case of Canada offers an example. One can write a history of Canada as the history of *the* Canadian nation – the only legitimate way to write Canadian history according to historians like Granatstein. By contrast, many Quebec historians seem to prefer to write the history of Canada as the history of a federation originating in *two* nations – the British and the French. According to others – and Margaret Conrad is among those – this representation of Canada is inadequate, because the First Nations were here long before the French and the British arrived. Therefore, the history of Canada is the history of a multitude of ethnic groups and can better be written as the *History of the Canadian Peoples* – in the plural.<sup>21</sup>

Canada's past can thus be represented from a national, a bi-national, and a multi-ethnic perspective or frame of reference, each with its own blend of universalism and particularism. Therefore, in historiography we are faced with the problem of how to integrate the different perspectives, if we are not satisfied with the observation that historical narratives just look different. As a ground rule, representations that integrate more relevant perspectives than competing representations in a coherent and balanced manner are to be preferred. The more distinct voices of relevant 'Others' are included in a collective identity, the better is the quality of its representation. To be brief, I can introduce my view on multiple perspectives in historiography with three observations.

First, the fundamental fact that historians are faced with a choice among different perspectives does not mean that this choice is free from empirical considerations, that is, free from the evidence. It only means that although historical evidence does not determine the choice of perspective in history, the evidence restricts the choices. Second, the role of empirical considerations does not mean that the choice of perspective is free from normative considerations. This would be very implausible *a priori*, because representations of identity offer an orientation in time (as Rüsen rightly emphasizes) and time implies past, present, and future. The choice among perspectives can therefore usually be connected to the identity politics of the historian (and neither the 'end of ideology' nor 'the end of history' has changed this fundamental fact of historiography, as Torpey and Létourneau have rightly observed in their contributions). As Rüsen states in his chapter, *historical identity is a matter both of factual and of normative arguments at the same time*.

The choice between multiple perspectives, therefore, is not arbitrary; nor does the possibility of choice mean that one perspective is as good as another. The 'underdetermination' of the perspectives by the evidence and the role of normative considerations only implies that historians are forced to justify their perspectives explicitly by arguments. This, again, can only be done by arguing for one perspective in relation to others. Since history has lost what we could call its 'epistemological innocence' – that is, the idea that historians are capable of 'just telling it like it really was' – historians are forced to become self-reflective, whether they like it or not. 'Doing history' has become more 'philosophical' in this sense, because representing history implies presenting a debate, that is, presenting the various ways in which the past has been represented in time. The borderlines between 'plain' history and historiography have therefore become more porous than before.

Third, and last, respect for the evidence (and for the methodological rules) remains paramount as long as historical representations claim to be scientific, that is, are presented as claims to knowledge with a universal validity.<sup>22</sup> This claim to universal validity is the basis of all scientific historical debates. Although history is about identity, therefore, 'identity history is not enough,' to quote Eric Hobsbawm.<sup>23</sup> So much for the problem of multiple perspectives in historiography for the moment.

Bouchard's description of Quebec as the only new nation that did *not* attain statehood, by the way, offers a concrete illustration of what I have said earlier on about the role of negation in the construction of collective identity. Bouchard's description of Quebec is a clear example of a collective that is characterized in terms of a negative property, that is, in terms of what a collective is lacking in comparison to others; in Bouchard's case, statehood. Here there is a remarkable parallel between Quebec and German historiography, because Germany has long been characterized by historians like Hans-Ulrich Wehler as the only modern society in the West that did not develop some kind of parliamentary democracy on its own. In this sense Germany is contrasted with other 'modern' countries, like France, England, and the United States. Instead of a democracy, Germany developed aggressive authoritarian regimes, like the German empire of 1871 and, last but not least, the Third Reich.<sup>24</sup>

This comparison between the historiography of Quebec and of Germany suggests that when a collective identity is explicitly characterized in terms of a 'missing' property, this is a property that is highly valued by the historian – statehood in Bouchard's history of Quebec and parliamentary democracy in Wehler's history of modern Germany. In both cases the 'missing' property is represented as a consequence of a 'false' development in comparison with 'good' developments elsewhere. So both cases show nicely how the construction of a collective identity is negatively related to other collective identities and is thus based on comparisons – implicit or explicit. Both cases illustrate that history writing may be comparative, even when it is concerned with one particular case.

#### Historical Identity: Ingredients for the Comparison of Historiographies

I come now to the second part of my contribution, which concerns the empirical forms of historical identity as we confront them in historiography. Here I want to address the question of how we can bring some order

to the multiplicity of historical representations. In order to do so we have to develop some framework in which historiographies can be 'marked' and compared to each other. For this task we need some ways to classify historiographies and thus some kind of conceptual matrix. My aim is to suggest some dimensions for such a matrix and to identify some of the problems we are likely to face.<sup>25</sup> Alas, we shall soon discover that there are quite a few of those.

For reasons of efficiency, I shall take national historiographies – history writing in the frame of the nation-state – as a general point of reference, because that is the most usual point of departure in professional historiography. I shall propose to use the axes of space and time as the first and most general dimensions for ordering the different sorts of historiography. Because history implies a location in space and time, all objects of historical representation have spatial and temporal characteristics, which can in principle be used as a basis for comparison. Next to space and time I shall propose some other non-spatial dimensions, like religion, class, race, and gender. At the end of my contribution, I will deal with some aspects of the dimension of time.

#### The Spatial Classification of Historiographies: Problems with the Nation

When we take the historiography of the nation-state as our point of spatial reference, we can differentiate between historiographies on a *sub-national* level – such as villages, cities, and regions – and units on a *supra-national* level – such as multinational empires, particular subsets of nations (like the new nations), continents, cultures, civilizations, and, last but not least, the world. So we can construct an orderly scheme containing a sub-national, a national, and a supra-national level. When this scheme is applied to concrete forms of historiography, however, we confront at least three kinds of problems that complicate it in practice. The first problem is that of the ideological load of various spatial concepts; the second is the problem of the double meaning of some spatial concepts; and the third and last problem is that of the essentially contested nature of some spatial concepts, the nation in particular.

The first problem, that of the ideological load of some spatial concepts, has been put on the agenda by Edward Said in his analysis of the notion of the 'Orient.' He showed that although most spatial concepts look quite neutral and innocent at first sight, they often have carried important ideological and political implications. As politics has tradi-

tionally contained a very important spatial dimension, this political dimension of spatial orderings was perhaps to be expected. Like 'the Orient,' the notion of 'the primitive,' 'the savage,' and the 'barbarian' have fulfilled similar ideological functions in the colonial encounter, because – like 'the Orient' – they were used as the justification of the domination of 'the primitive' by its supposed opposite: the 'civilized' part of the world ('the Occident'). In European history of the twentieth century spatial concepts like 'Mitteleuropa' and 'Asia' have fulfilled similar ideological functions, implying claims of political hegemony. Perhaps the spatial notion of 'the wilderness,' versus 'civilization,' has played a similar role in North American history.

The second problem with the spatial scheme is that the spatial scope of a historical work is not always what it seems. This realization is important when, for instance, we would like to assess the relationship between regional and national historiographies in, say, Canada. What makes such an assessment complicated is the fact that historians may cloak the history of a region as the history of a nation. In that case, the micro-cosmos of the region functions as a stand-in for the macro-cosmos of the nation. For instance, a history of Holland – the western province of the Netherlands – has been presented as the history of the whole Netherlands. In a similar manner, the history of Prussia has been presented as the history of Germany. And maybe there are histories of Ontario parading as histories of Canada. The spatial unit, therefore, may function as a *pars pro toto*. This problem may seriously complicate the classification of historiographies on the basis of spatial markers.

The third and perhaps most troubling problem in our spatial scheme is the essentially contested character of its central concept: the nation. The nation belongs to the same category as notions like 'freedom' and 'democracy,' which also refuse unambiguous definition. Therefore, I can only signal the problem here, which is, fundamentally, that in the discourse on the nation, the nation does not necessarily coincide with the state or even with the nation-state. Sometimes spatial units at a sub-state level, like provinces (Quebec, for instance) or tribal areas (the First Nations, for instance) are represented as nations. And sometimes nations (like the British or the German nations in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, or the Albanian and the Kurdish nations in the present) are represented as supra-national units, that is, as units exceeding the borders of a nation-state. The nation therefore has a very fuzzy extension.

To make the definitional problems of the nation worse still, there are

a few collectives identified as nations without a 'place of their own,' that is, without an identifiable spatial anchor. The Jews, the Sinti, and Roma are well-known examples in European history. So, although the rule is that nations are usually associated with some spatial location, there are also exceptions to this rule.

These definitional issues could perhaps be regarded as only annoying if there were no serious practical problems attached to them. This happens to be the case, however, because the issue of collective identity – and especially of national identity – is firmly connected to the issue of collective rights. Since collective identity is regarded as the basis and as the justification of collective rights – including political autonomy – issues of collective identity may have serious political implications. The history of nationalism presents a clear case (and Laville in his chapter rightly points at the intimate relationship between the rise of the historical profession and that of the nation-state). Because representations of collective identity are usually anchored in the past, the representation of historical identity may have serious political implications too. This is, of course, evident in Canada, where the claim to political autonomy of the Québécois has always been based on the representation of the French-speaking majority as a nation.<sup>26</sup> By implication, according to this view, Canada is not a nation, but only contains nations – in the plural (as Létourneau emphasizes in his chapter).<sup>27</sup>

The First Nations offer another clear example of the political implications linked to the representation of collective identity: the Nisga'a Treaty of 1998, which restored the collective rights of this First Nation to its former heartland, offers a clear example, underscoring the practical dimension of historical representation.<sup>28</sup>

Of course it is not the task of professional historians to solve these practical issues – this is a matter of politics – but I do think that it is a task of professional historians to clarify the historical roots of political problems. (I do not say this is their only task, only that it is a very important one.) In practice, this amounts to the identification and the integration of the different and often conflicting perspectives pertaining to present-day issues. This identification and combination of perspectives is the most practical meaning of striving for objectivity in history that I know of. Striving after objectivity in this sense is a necessary condition for scientific history, because striving after truth is not enough.<sup>29</sup> This, by the way, would at the same time be my interpretation of furthering the cause of 'historical consciousness,' because 'objective' history in this sense furthered the understanding of the historical origins of present-day problems.

The attempt to classify historiographies on the basis of the spatial dimension has thus led us to and through the swamps of the nation into the battlefields of historiography. We can conclude that, to a certain degree, the battles for space in the past are still continued in their present-day historiographical representations. This circumstance suggests that it is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect consensus in historiography. As in politics, the most we can strive for is a sound knowledge of the different points of view, leading to a maximum of empathy and to mutual understanding of past and present positions. This can only be achieved, as I argued earlier on, by presenting history in the form of a debate among different and often conflicting representations. This mode of presentation is fit not only for university classes, but also for history education in school. I must admit that to me this is a new insight, because I have often heard the argument that young children must first get one picture of the past before raising the problem of alternative pictures.

### Overlapping and Competing Identities

The battle for space, however, is far from being the only serious battlefield in historiography. The multiple representations of what constitutes a nation are just one instance of the general phenomenon of overlapping and competing identities in historiography. This phenomenon was to be expected because, as I have argued earlier, historical identity can be represented in various (though not arbitrary) ways. Now national identities usually overlap and sometimes compete with other spatial identities – such as regional identities or they may compete with other national identities (especially in borderlands).<sup>30</sup> However, they may also compete with non-spatial types of collective identity, such as religious, racial, class, and gender identities. And to complicate this complex situation still further, different representations of the same collective identity may compete and conflict with one another – as in the case of conflicting ethnic and civic definitions of the nation.<sup>31</sup>

Since the Reformation and the separation of Protestantism from Catholicism, there has often been a close relationship between religious and national collective identities. Especially since the nineteenth century among nations with a problematic existence as a political entity, like the Poles, the Irish, the Italians, and the Hungars, this relationship between nationality and religion has been especially close. Quebec is far from unique seen in this frame of reference.



In the context of an analysis of 'historical consciousness' in the broad sense, the interrelations between national and religious identity may require further attention, because they have more in common than is usually assumed. Recently it has been argued that nationalism and religion are basically comparable phenomena, fulfilling similar cultural functions and using similar cultural mechanisms. The cult of the nation bears a clear resemblance to religious cults: both are centred on a sacred dogma and a sacred object – God and the Nation. Both have sacred symbols and both have a fixed calendar and fixed places for their rituals – the churches and the national monuments. Both worship special persons, who are regarded as mediators between the worlds of the sacred and the profane. In religious cults these special persons are the saints and martyrs; in national cults they are national heroes, especially the ones who founded the Nation and those who sacrificed their lives for the Nation. In both violent death in defence of the Sacred Cause is represented as worthy and meaningful – as a sacrifice – because it helps the community to continue its cult and its existence.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in both cases we usually encounter a reverence for the dead. Both essentially define moral communities that define the borders of human solidarity. The concept of character can thus be regarded as the secularized version of the concept of the soul and this also applies to the idea of 'national character.' The relation and competition between national and religious identity therefore is an important one from a comparative perspective.

The competition of national and ethnic identities with class, racial, and gender identities is of more recent date than their competition with religious identity. Racial identity has competed with national identity in all colonial encounters (outside and inside Europe) and whenever national identity was conceived of in biological terms, as in the Nazi period. Class identity has only been a competitor of national identity in the nineteenth century and under twentieth-century communism. Gender identity is quite another case: gender has not been so much a collective identity in competition with the nation as it has been an analytical category used to determine the gendered nature of representations of the nation (think of the notion of the Fatherland!).

Thus, collective identity can be defined in terms of spatial marks, in terms of non-spatial marks, and also in terms of combinations of spatial and non-spatial marks. And although pure geographic determinism nowadays finds few defenders, we should not forget that 'national characters' have for a long time been explained in terms of geography (and

its correlate, the climate), implying a reduction of the non-spatial marks to the spatial ones. We still confront echoes of geographic determinism in the discourses on national identity; Montesquieu was certainly not the last thinker along these lines. For instance, the Dutch national identity has sometimes been located in the struggle of the Dutch against the surrounding waters, while Swiss national identity has sometimes been located in the Alps.<sup>33</sup> The spatial location of Canada's national identity in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway is thus not unique, and its mythical role may even be compared to that of the construction of the famous Dutch dikes (although the last achievement was never claimed by one company).

### Openness and Closure of National Identity

Next to the characterization of collective identities in terms of spatial and non-spatial marks, it seems meaningful to analyse representations of national identity on the continuum between openness and closure in relation to other nations. In the first part of this chapter I mentioned the fact that some nations have defined their identity as being mediators of other cultures, emphasizing their openness to *other* national identities. The representation of Canada's national identity as a 'mosaic' is probably the clearest example of this fascinating phenomenon, but seen in a comparative perspective Canada is – again – far from unique.

It is probably significant that the national identities of Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands (not a federal state!) have also at times been represented as mediating between various other cultures. In all these cases the nations that represent themselves as 'mediators' are those with powerful neighbour states. Therefore, the emphasis on the mediating functions and on the relative 'openness' of a nation is probably connected to its relative political weakness. The emphasis on a nation's absorbing qualities and its international mediating functions may therefore be interpreted as a sublimation of its relative political impotence. This, at least, can plausibly be argued for the history of several small European nations, an interpretation also backed up by international-relations theory. This sublimation even may lead to a re-definition of a nation's armed forces into a corps of UN peacekeepers (as is exemplified by the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, and Canada). However this may be, it seems worthwhile to test this hypothesis in an international comparison.

### Historical Identity and Temporal Markers

Now that I have indicated some spatial and non-spatial marks of collective identity and also the relevance of openness and closure for comparative historiography, I want – at last! – to say a few words about the role of the axis of time. Since historical identity was defined here as identity through change in time, at least some clarification of the role of time in comparative historiography is needed. I shall touch on only two issues of historiography connected to time. The first is the issue of origins; the second issue concerns the relationship between time and space. For efficiency reasons I again shall take the historiography of the nation as my point of departure.

First the issue of origins. Because all representations of historical identity deal with changes in time, all historical representations are faced with the temporal problem of origins. Before the changes of national identity can be investigated, its existence and thus its genesis must be clarified – unless we presuppose that collective identities are naturally given and that their existence does not require explanation. In that case, however, we are by definition no longer dealing with history, so I can leave this possibility aside. Therefore, we expect that a history of a collective identity – say of the Canadian nation – will inform us about its origins in time. However, the question ‘Where did the Canadian nation come from?’ already presupposes what must be clarified, that is: the existence of a Canadian nation. But as we have observed (see also Létourneau’s and Laville’s chapters), the existence of the Canadian nation is essentially contested, and therefore we can expect the same contest concerning its origins. The two sorts of contests always go together and for good reasons. Canada shares this problem of contested origins with most of the other new nations (including those in the Old World that belonged to former multinational empires, like the nations of the former Habsburg empire). Other nations probably have less-contested origins, but this too is still a matter of empirical investigation.

The second and last temporal problem I want to signal is the relation of time and space in historiography. Although most histories are written within a national frame of reference – without explicit comparison to other nations – they usually contain many implicit temporal references to other nations. This temporal reference to other histories is contained in notions like being ‘late’ or ‘modern,’ or in notions of ‘retardation’ or of being ‘ahead’ and so on. In this way the time axes of different

histories are often connected to each other and transformed into one time axis – that of world time. Sometimes this can be done in an explicit way, as it is by all sorts of developmental schemes and theories. Modernization theory is probably the best-known example. The Enlightenment conception of ongoing ‘civilization’ and the Marxist theories of history provide other examples of the construction of one time axis for the whole world.

Now the construction of one world time leads to a direct connection between space and time by transforming spatial relations into temporal relations, as the German historian Sebastian Conrad has pointed out in his ingenious comparison of German and Japanese historiography.<sup>34</sup> Through the introduction of world time, historians have interpreted the spatial variety of nations, economies, and so on in terms of different positions on the axis of time; that is, in terms of different phases of the same development. Differences in geography are thus transformed into differences in time: being culturally or economically different – for example, China in relation to the United States – is thus transformed into being ‘late’ or being ‘early.’ The result, in Conrad’s terms, is a temporalization of space. So much for the temporal markers of historical identity.

### Summary

In this contribution I have proposed some concepts that may be useful when we are comparing historiographies. (The question of why to compare historiographies I have dealt with elsewhere.)<sup>35</sup>

I have introduced some important general problems of comparative historiography using the example of Quebec historiography as analysed by Ronald Rudin. The first general theme concerns the relationship between historiography and historical consciousness in a broader, societal sense. The second and related general theme concerns the practical functions of historiographical discourse. I have argued that the debates among Quebec historians that were centred on the difference and/or the normality of Quebec society exemplified the identity-construing dimensions of historiography. Next, I suggested that both general themes can best be elucidated through the notion of historical identity. Thus, I have proposed to take the concept of historical identity as the bridge between historiography and society; it is introduced, therefore, as the central notion for the matrix of comparative historiography.

Next, I defined the concept of historical identity in order to highlight

some of its fundamental features. I proposed to define historical identity basically as identity through change in time. Further I elucidated the fundamental relational nature of identity. The fundamental multiplicity of historical identity is a consequence of this relational nature.

Further to its multiplicity, I elaborated on the 'exclusive' nature of identity, leading to its 'negative bond' to other identities. Last but not least, I pointed at the circumstance that although identity implies particularity, the weighting and evaluation of particular and general characteristics is a completely different matter. The Enlightenment tradition tends to emphasize the general features, while the tradition rooted in Romanticism tends to put value on the particular features of identity.

In the second part of my contribution, I identified some fundamental dimensions of a matrix that can be used for classifying types of historiography. I suggested that the dimensions of space and time can be taken as the most general markers of historiography, although both types of markers show problems when applied. In theory the spatial dimension can be neatly differentiated into a sub-national, a national, and a supra-national level, but this order is threatened in practice by the essentially contested nature of its central level, that of the nation. I argued that representations of the nation are so contested because they are used as justifications of collective rights. Moreover, the spatial scope of historiography appears not always to be what it seems.

Next to the spatial markers of historiography, I identified non-spatial markers, like religion, race, class, and gender identities. By this route we confronted the phenomenon of overlapping and competing identities. Religious identity appeared especially to have more in common with national identity than is usually assumed.

The dimension of openness and closure of identities also turned out to be important in history. Nations with powerful neighbours especially may cultivate openness instead of closure, and I suggested that this may be interpreted as a sublimation of their relative political weakness.

The last two markers I addressed relate to the temporal dimension. First, I explored the fact that all representations of historical identity must face the problem of their origins. As a consequence, debates about historical identity always shade off into debates over origins. Second, I showed that spatial relations are sometimes transformed into temporal relations through the construction of world time. In that case, spatial differences are explained as different locations on one time axis. A matrix for comparing historiographies should therefore encompass this eventual 'temporalization of space.'

## Notes

- 1 Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
- 2 I shall not go into the reception of and debate on Rudin's book here. See, for references to reviews, Rudin's answer to his critics in 'On Difference and National Identity in Quebec Historical Writing: A Response to Jean-Marie Fecteau,' *Canadian Historical Review* 80 (2000): 666–76. See also the quite different evaluations of Rudin by Ramsay Cook in *Histoire sociale / Social History* 33 (1999): 120–3 and by Jan Noel in *University of Toronto Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1998–9): 523–5.
- 3 See, for comparative historiography, Chris Lorenz, 'Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives,' *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999): 25–39.
- 4 I regard the term 'collective memory' as highly problematic, because it presupposes a collective subject with the ability to reach back to unmediated collective past experience. The presupposition of both a unitary collective subject and an unmediated contact with some collective experience are not valid. Although similar objections could be raised against the concept of 'historical consciousness,' Peter Seixas's definition of historical consciousness avoids these problems by defining it in terms of the multiple ways in which the past is handled in collectives. See Kerwin L. Klein's fundamental critique in his 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,' *Representations* 69 (2000): 127–50.
- 5 In a research project of the University of Hanover concerning the representations of the Nazi period, it has been established that the family versions of the Nazi past often show very little similarity with the findings of professional history. See Harald Welzer et al., *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt; Fischer, 2002).
- 6 Granatstein's *The Killing of Canadian History* is matched in Australia by Keith Windschuttle's *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (New York: The Free Press, 1997). In England, Richard Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta Books, 1997), is a better-balanced critique of the textualistic approaches of cultural studies. Evans's book also lacks the nostalgia for good old national history that characterizes both Granatstein and Windschuttle. See, further, Tony Taylor's contribution to this volume.
- 7 Jonathan Vance, 'The Formulation of Historical Consciousness: A Case Study in Literature,' paper presented at UBC symposium, August 2001 (<http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=19>).

- 8 As Vance shows in 'The Formulation of Historical Consciousness,' on First World War literature.
- 9 As observed in Theresa Rogers, 'Understanding in the Absence of Meaning: Coming of Age Narratives of the Holocaust,' paper presented at UBC symposium, August 2001 (<http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=11>).
- 10 See, e.g., H. Berding, ed., *Nationales Bewußtsein und kollektive Identität: Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1996); A. Assmann and H. Friese, eds, *Identitäten: Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998); and Lutz Niehammer, *Kollektive Identität: Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000). I have dealt with this issue in my book *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 400–37.
- 11 I have developed this argument in 'Comparative Historiography.' For the discussion see Philip A. Buckner, 'Limited Identities' Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History,' *Acadiensis* 30, no. 1 (2000): 4–16.
- 12 See Steve Galt Crowell, 'There Is No Other: Notes on the Logical Place of a Concept,' *Paideuma* 44 (1998): 13–29.
- 13 See Sam Wineburg, 'Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,' paper presented at UBC symposium, August 2001, (<http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=21>).
- 14 Simmel's sociology of the stranger is relevant in this context.
- 15 The Belgian historian Jo Tollebeek (Leuven) has identified this phenomenon in an unpublished paper, 'National Identity, International Eclecticism and Comparative Historiography,' presented in June 2000 in Oslo, Norway.
- 16 I have dealt with the functions and justification of history in my article 'History, Forms of Representation and Functions,' in Neil Smelser and Paul Baltus, eds, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2001), 10: 6835–42.
- 17 Odo Marquard, *Apologie des Zufälligen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986), 361.
- 18 Gérard Bouchard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du Nouveau Monde: Essai d'histoire comparée* (Montreal: Éditions de Boréal, 2000).
- 19 I have developed this argument at greater length in 'Historical Knowledge and Historical Reality: A Plea for "internal realism,"' in Brian Fay, Philip Pomper, and Richard T. Vann, eds, *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1998), 342–77.
- 20 Roger Brubaker's sharp dichotomy between (French) civic nationalism and (German) ethnic nationalism has, however, recently been under attack as too schematic. See Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Dieter

- Gosewinkel, 'Staatsangehörigkeit in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,' in J. Kocka and C. Conrad, eds, *Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa: Historische Erfahrungen und aktuelle Debatten* (Hamburg: Körber Stiftung, 2001), 48–62.
- 21 Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, and Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples*, 2 vols (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993).
- 22 See Jörn Rüsen, *Grundzüge einer Historik*, 3 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983–9) and my *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit*.
- 23 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Identity History Is Not Enough,' in Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1997), 351–67.
- 24 For an overview of this German debate see my article 'Beyond Good and Evil: The German Empire of 1871 and Modern German Historiography,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 729–67.
- 25 For a recent inventory see Stefan Berger's unpublished paper 'Construction and Deconstruction of National Historiographies' (Strasbourg, 2001) and Lex Heerma van Voss and Marcel van der Linden, eds, *Class and Other Identities: Entries to West European Labour Historiography* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
- 26 See, e.g., Lawrence McFalls, 'Getrennt sind wir stark: Der kanadische Föderalismus als Modell?' *Komparativ* 8, no. 4 (1998): 15–31.
- 27 See Hamish Telford, *The Federal Spending Power in Canada: Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?* (Kingston, 1998; Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Working Paper Series 1999, 4), 12: 'Canadians outside Québec seem blissfully unaware that the federal bargain with Québec may have been broken. The majority of Canadians outside Québec have an identity that corresponds to the Canadian state. Indeed, they rather presumptuously regard Canada as the nation, much to the consternation of the Québécois. As nationalists, many Canadians outside Québec believe that sovereignty should be vested with the federal government. Many Canadians outside Québec have been highly suspicious of the federal principle and the concomitant notion of shared sovereignty, and they are strong supporters of federal social programs, especially Medicare. Indeed, health insurance seems to have become a part of the Canadian identity outside Québec.'
- 28 See the special issue on the Nisga'a Treaty of *BC Studies*, 120 (Winter 1998/9).
- 29 The basic argument is that truth is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for objectivity. See my article "You got your history, I got mine": Some Reflections on Truth and Objectivity in History,' *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 10, no. 4 (1999): 563–85.
- 30 See Margaret Conrad, 'Historical Consciousness, Regional Identity and

Public Policy,' paper presented at UBC symposium, August 2001 (<http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=3>); Buckner, "Limited Identities" Revisited.'

- 31 In this context, the fact that Germany only recently changed its ethnic definition of nationhood into a civic one illustrates the actuality of this issue.
- 32 Vance's paper on the anti-war novel (see note 7) illustrates in an exemplary form what happens to those who cast doubt on this kind of Sacred Cause.
- 33 For the debate on Dutch identity see Rob van Ginkel, *Op zoek naar eigenheid: Denkbeelden en discussies over cultuur en identiteit in Nederland* (The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1999). For Swiss identity see Oliver Zimmer, 'In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998), 637-65.
- 34 Sebastian Conrad, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan 1945-1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).
- 35 Lorenz, 'Comparative Historiography.'

## Specific Narratives and Schematic Narrative Templates

JAMES V. WERTSCH

As Peter Seixas notes in his introduction to this volume, contemporary analyses of historical consciousness draw on many disciplines and intellectual traditions. These include education, history, memory studies, psychology, and museum studies. This makes for an interesting and lively discussion, but it also presents a challenge when we are trying to find a shared focus. The range of voices is sometimes so wide that it is difficult to know whether they are all involved in the same discussion at all. Motivated by such concerns, Seixas argues for the need to find common and overlapping themes that will facilitate cross-fertilization.

In my view, a topic that presents itself as an excellent candidate in this regard is narrative. Bruner<sup>1</sup> has argued for the need to place narrative at the centre of cultural psychology and the analysis of human consciousness more generally, and scholars in literary studies,<sup>2</sup> psychoanalysis,<sup>3</sup> and the philosophy of history<sup>4</sup> have made similar claims. Such arguments about the importance of narrative for the human sciences apply nowhere more obviously than in the study of collective memory and historical consciousness.

A bold version of the sort of approach I have in mind can be found in Alasdair MacIntyre's assertion that 'man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal.'<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre expands upon this claim by arguing that individuals do not create these stories out of nothing, as if in some kind of totally original, creative act. Instead:

We enter human society ... with one or more imputed characters - roles into which we have been drafted - and we have to learn what they are in order to