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ARTICLE

For Science and Country: History Writing, Nation Building, and National Embeddedness in Third Republic France, 1870–1914

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This article examines late nineteenth and early twentieth-century historiographical practices and convictions in Third Republic France. It shifts the focus from the question of whether French academic historians were nationalists to the issue of how they were nationalists. If republican academic historians took a critical stance on nationalist distortions of the past, they nevertheless associated the teaching of history with patriotism and opposed historiographical "pan-Germanism" in ways favorable to French cultural and territorial claims. Meanwhile, the growing internationalization of the field stimulated scholarly competition across the West and spurred reflections about nationals' epistemological privilege over national histories, methodological nationalism, and the invention of national historiographical traditions. Uncovering the anxieties of continual debate with foreign historians and the nationalist right wing, this article offers a prehistory of present-day dilemmas over global, national, and nationalist histories in an international field characterized by structural inequalities and academic competition.

Some concepts have a bad reputation in the field of history. This is undeniably the case of "presentism," long discredited as an anachronistic or ideological mind-set, but also "positivism," generally equated with naive hyper-empiricism, and a fortiori "historiographical nationalism."[1] The rejection of the latter, which presents a rare case of disciplinary unanimity, is by no means a recent phenomenon. In early modern times, the Scientific Revolution had already led scholars to discard subjectivity and partiality in favor of objectivity and insensitivity in a universal and nation-blind Republic of Letters. Like other writers, the eighteenth-century philosopher and historian François Fénelon drew a strict line between one's affection for one's country and the detachment required by the practice of history: "The good historian is not from any time or country; while he loves his fatherland, he never flatters it in anything."[2] More recently, the dramatic consequences of modern nationalist ideologies have delivered the *coup de grâce* to chauvinistic attitudes in

[1]David Armitage, "In Defense of Presentism," in Darrin M. McMahon, ed., *History and Human Flourishing* (Oxford, forthcoming 2022).

[2]François Fénelon, *Oeuvres diverses de Fénelon* (Paris, 1844), 439. Translations from French are by the author.

historical research. Throughout the twentieth century, historians, philosophers, and political thinkers have weighed the misdeeds and ill effects of history writing when combined with nationalist tenets. These critical reflections have singled out the history discipline as a privileged field for nationalist writing, characterizing history as "the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction."[3]

These preconceptions overdetermine contemporary scholarly attitudes towards historiographical nationalism and recent research undertakings. As a rule, present-day historians take a critical stance toward nationalism in both politics and historiography. While waging resolute battles against the remnants of nationalist narratives in popular media and books, they frequently approach past realities through thematic studies and geographical areas that transcend the national framework. Several attempts, of which Emma Rothschild's *Infinite History* is one of the latest examples, have been made to articulate the different scales of historical analysis in a meaningful way and desacralize the national through stimulating exercises in global *microstoria*.[4] Meanwhile, historians now undertake to present the general public with engaging studies decentering the nation itself, as shown by the example of Patrick Boucheron's *Histoire mondiale de la France*, translated into several languages and imitated in Catalonia, Flanders, Italy, and Spain.[5] Echoing recent calls for an "international turn in intellectual history," this trend has not failed to encourage further investigation of past transnational networks, cross-border exchanges, and global histories of historiography.[6]

Simultaneously, scholarly and normative impulses have led researchers to explore historically how past historians, consciously or unconsciously, contributed to the forging of national identities and "imagined communities" in modern Europe, as well as in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.[7] The outcome is a widely

[3]Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London, 1997), 5.

[4]Emma Rothschild, *An Infinite History: The Story of a Family in France over Three Centuries* (Princeton, 2021); John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "Seeing the World Like a Microhistorian," *Past & Present* 242/14 (2019), 1–22.

[5]Patrick Boucheron, ed., *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris, 2017); Andrea Giardina, ed., *Storia mondiale dell'Italia* (Bari, 2017); Borja de Riquer, ed., *Història mundial de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 2018); Marnix Beyen, Marc Boone, and Bruno de Wever, eds., *Wereldgeschiedenis van Vlaanderen* (Kalmthout, 2018); Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, ed., *Historia mundial de España* (Barcelona, 2018).

[6]David Armitage, "The International Turn in Intellectual History," in Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), 232–52; Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey, eds., *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in a Global Perspective* (Boulder, 2002); Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London, 2017). For a survey of this literature see Stefan Berger, "National Historiographies in Transnational Perspective: Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Storia della storiografia* 50 (2006), 3–26.

[7]Among other studies see Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak, eds., *Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe* (Basingstoke, 1988); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives in Modern China* (Chicago, 1995); William H. Hubbard, ed., *Making a Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway* (Oslo, 1995); Virgil Krapauskas, *Nationalism and Historiography: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Historicism* (Boulder, 2000); Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State* (New York, 2003); Anthony Gorman, *Historians, State, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Egypt: Contesting the Nation* (New York, 2003); Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (New Delhi, 2003); Oliver Zimmer, *A Contested Nation: History, Memory, and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761–1891* (Cambridge,

agreed narrative according to which the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment and Napoleon and, later, the professionalization of history gave an irresistible impetus to the conflation between history writing and nation building.[8] Consequently, there is a widespread understanding that modern Western historians systematically distorted the past, in a "statist" or "populist" fashion, for the sole benefit of their homeland's unity and identity.[9] As a result, their national "master narratives" are said to have prevailed over all available counternarratives, casting oblivion on early modern "universal histories" and succumbing to a sort of intellectual reductionism detrimental to the understanding of the past.[10]

In the case of Third Republic France, this accumulated scholarship has made clear that the relationship between modern historians and the nation depended on three major factors: defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, academic rivalries with German scholars, and the desire of public authorities to equate the nation and the republic as a means to immortalize the latter. The literature has explored how Third Republic academic historians responded to this challenge, depicting their "scientific" histories as contributions to the ongoing "nationalization of the masses." More often than not, however, these analyses are based on isolated manifestos and declarations of general theoretical principles. For instance, Gabriel Monod's famous statement that history should "give our country the unity and moral strength it needs" has been frequently used to assert that "many nineteenth-century historians thought of themselves as public intellectuals in the service of their respective nation."[11] This statement and similar articles of faith only reveal the authors' intentions without shedding light on their professional practices. In this matter, as in many others, intellectuals should not be taken at their word,

2003); Derek Fewster, *Visions of Past Glory: Nationalism and the Construction of Early Finnish History* (Helsinki, 2006); Joseph Dager Alva, *Historiografía i nación en el Perú del siglo XIX* (Lima, 2009); Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 2009); Monika Baár, *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2010); Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, 2010); Jörg Matthias Determann, *Historiography in Saudi Arabia: Globalization and the State in the Middle East* (London, 2014); Farzin Vejdani, *Making History in Iran: Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture* (Stanford, 2014).

[8]Maria Grever, "Fear of Plurality: Historical Culture and Historiographical Canonization in Western Europe," in Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser, eds., *Gendering Historiography: Beyond National Canons* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 45–62, at 49; Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *Historiography and the Modern World: Western and Indian Perspectives* (Oxford, 2016), 265–85; Stefan Berger, "National Histories and the Promotion of Nationalism in Historiography: The Pitfalls of Methodological Nationalism," in Stefan Berger and Eric Storm, eds., *Writing the History of Nationalism* (London, 2019), 19–40.

[9]Stefan Berger, *The Past as History: National Identity and Historial Consciousness in Modern Europe* (New York, 2015), 173–5; Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002), 7.

[10]Georg G. Iggers, "The Role of Professional Historical Scholarship in the Creation and Distortion of Memory," in Anne Ollila, ed., *Historical Perspectives on Memory* (Helsinki, 1999), 49–67, at 58; Angelika Schaser, "The Challenge of Gender: National Historiography, Nationalism, and National Identities," in Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert, eds., *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historiography* (New York, 2010), 39–62, at 44.

[11]Stefan Berger, "Introduction. Historical Writing and Civic Engagement: A Symbiotic Relationship", in Berger, ed., *The Engaged Historian: Perspectives on the Intersections of Politics, Activism and the Historical Profession* (New York, 2010), 1–31, at 9.

given the discrepancy that can exist between their professed epistemological and political conceptions and the concrete results of their scholarly undertakings.

Instead of drawing conclusions from programmatic sources, this article aims to take a closer look at historians' actual practices and convictions as they appear in their articles, reviews, chronicles of academic life, source collections, and public interventions. It seeks to ask, as one insightful reviewer recently put it, "what actually counts as national in a 'national' history" or, in other words, what actually counts as nationalism in historiographical nationalism.[12] It attempts, that is, to shift the focus from the question of *whether* Third Republic academic historians were nationalists to the issue of *how* they were nationalists.

This approach allows us to see more clearly the specific features of the nationalism embraced by Third Republic academic historians and avoids subsuming their wide range of attitudes under a single concept or characterization. The existing literature has often assumed that, throughout "the entire French nineteenth century," all intellectuals dedicated themselves to restoring the "explicit continuity of the national narrative" and suggested that, at that time, "the writing of history, not surprisingly, was put to the service of the 'nation' not only on the right but also by historians [on the left] such as Albert Mathiez," a socialist and specialist on the French Revolution who struggled relentlessly against right-wing misuses of eighteenth-century French history.[13] Breaking with all-encompassing approaches, this article takes as its starting point the considerable gap that existed between historians such as Jules Michelet and Ernest Lavisse and authors from chauvinist and xenophobic circles such as Pierre Gaxotte and Frantz Funck-Brentano.

Indeed, their commitment to the republic shaped the activity and convictions of academic historians as deeply as their commitment to the nation. The new alliance between the Third Republic and academia was critical in redefining the historians' social and political roles. Through research, teaching, and knowledge dissemination, republican authorities hoped to fight obscurantism, including clericalism and nationalism, and consolidate the regime. While chastising xenophobic chauvinism, monopolized by the nationalist and royalist opposition in the Dreyfus affair, historians who claimed to be heirs of the French Revolution endorsed both universalist and patriotic worldviews. This position was a perilous yet efficient one since it allowed them to oppose both the excesses of right-wing lay historiography and the exclusive nationalism best embodied, in their eyes, by their German counterparts. This is also why the threshold of the Great War also marks the end of the current study. The conflict rendered the intellectual tension between nationalism and patriotism unsustainable. Anxious to pay their due to the intellectual mobilization while demonizing "scientific pan-Germanism," historians faced the limits of their ambiguous position when the interests of their fatherland undermined the ethical foundations of their intellectual and professional identity. As a

[12]This question was directed at what appeared to the reviewer to be one of the blind spots in the Writing the Nation book series. Gábor Gyáni, "Review of Stefan Berger, *The Past as History*," *Hungarian Historical Review* 5/2 (2016), 377–83, at 381.

[13]Daniel Fabre, "L'histoire a changé de lieux," in Alban Bensa and Daniel Fabre, eds., *Une histoire à soi: Figurations du passé et localités* (Paris, 2001), 13–41, at 17; Bertram M. Gordon, "Right-Wing Historiographical Models in France, 1918–45," in Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London, 1999), 163–75, at 164.

result, the guilty conscience of French intellectuals and their firm commitment to pacifist values ushered in a new era in the historical profession during the interwar years, although the increased challenge of right-wing historiography and the growing threat from Nazi Germany ultimately reactivated their republican patriotism.

By studying historiographical and political nationalism, this article does not intend to ask which came first but to comprehensively investigate the relationship between the two. This approach requires placing the spotlight on the social conditions of scholarly research. These conditions are characterized by two seemingly contradictory factors: the growing internationalization of the field of history and the nationalization of the profession's working environment. On the one hand, historians were well aware that their activity took place in an expanding intellectual arena, which prompted them to engage even more actively in cross-border collaboration and exchange. Simultaneously, this context also laid the foundations for increased competition among scholars. In the eyes of historians who perceived themselves as representatives of their entire nation, there was no contradiction between committing to "objective" and cosmopolitan research standards, taking pride in their compatriots' scientific achievements, and promoting their country's prestige in the global competition for cultural prominence.

Scholars in our time have tended to assume that historiographical nationalism corresponded first and foremost to a political agenda, stressing either the historians' conscious endeavor to lionize their country's "national character" or their unconscious involvement as artisans of national identity. By contrast, recent studies have proposed an alternative conceptual apparatus establishing "methodological nationalism" and the "political culture of historiographical nationalism" as scholarly forms of "banal nationalism" to understand how the nation-state shaped the academics' professional mind-sets, self-representations, and intellectual dispositions.[14] In line with these studies, this article investigates the roots of Third Republic historians' commitment to the nation by looking at the social and intellectual background of their professional existence. Focusing on the relationship between historians and the nation implies regarding them as both actors and subjects of the nation-state and emphasizing the national embeddedness of their intellectual training and scholarly practices. Nineteenth-century Western states furthered the nationalization of education systems and research environments, thus transforming the way historians perceived the "epistemological privilege" of nationals in the writing of national histories. Meanwhile, post-Romantic reactions to eighteenth-century universalism and encounters with the other in an increasingly international field of research stimulated varieties of methodological culturalism in the form of invented "national traditions" of history writing, just as other disciplines strove to craft particularly "French" traditions of sociology

[14]Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995); Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences," *Global Networks* 2/4 (2002), 301–34; Francisco Javier Caspistegui, "Los metarrelatos nacionales y el retorno del nacionalismo historiográfico," in César Rina Simón, ed., *Procesos de nacionalización e identidades en la península ibérica* (Cáceres, 2017), 19–45; George Vasilev, "Methodological Nationalism and the Politics of History-Writing: How Imaginary Scholarship Perpetuates the Nation," *Nations and Nationalism* 25/2 (2019), 1–24.

and philosophy.[15] In short, before asking how academic historians contributed to nationalizing the public mind, it is critical to study how the nation-state nationalized their own minds.

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In the late 1860s and early 1870s, a cohort of modernizers initiated a wave of reforms promoting a "scientific" conception of history writing and advancing the academization of French historical research.[16] This objective was consistent with the ambitions of republican authorities imbued with positivist conceptions and anxious to rehabilitate the country after the humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. The republican establishment promoted science as the bedrock of national unity, following the example of nineteenth-century Germany. In the aftermath of the Austro-Prussian war, Ernest Renan had already characterized Germany's moral and intellectual advance in well-known terms: "Some said that it was the German elementary schoolteacher who won at Sadowa. Not at all; it was German science."[17] Scholarly journals such as the *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* (1866), the *Revue historique* (1876), and the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (1881) played a leading role in this strategy. Their articles, book reviews, editorial addresses, and correspondence offer an overview, if not a panopticon, of the activity and shared values of the profession. Thus they provide a convenient vantage point to understand how Third Republic academic historians were nationalists and to what degree.

In this regard, the question of their actual contribution to what George L. Mosse has called the "nationalization of the masses," which is the starting point of most existing studies on historiographical nationalism, calls for a nuanced answer. By the time of the Third Republic, France had become a model nation-state for the century, provoking the admiration of German nationalist intellectuals themselves. The situation of French historians was therefore not comparable to that of their colleagues from the other side of the Rhine or the Alps, who had to consolidate the collective identity of young nations. Moreover, it is difficult to measure empirically the role played by French historians in fostering national identity. On the one hand, defeat in the Franco-Prussian war encouraged the republican establishment to undertake reforms and invest in schools, science, and the army. Republican officials hoped that knowledge of history would reconcile the country with its past, a century after the revolutionary fracture.[18] Certainly, the thirteen million copies of Ernest Lavisse's history textbooks circulated between 1896 and 1920 were a crucible

[15]Frédéric Worms, "Au-delà de l'histoire et du caractère: L'idée de philosophie française, la Première guerre mondiale et le moment 1900," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 31/3 (2001), 345–63; Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson, "Internationalisme et tradition nationale: Le cas de la constitution de la sociologie française autour de 1900," *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 18 (2008), 35–62.

[16]George Weisz, "The Anatomy of University Reform 1863–1914," *Historical Reflections* 7/2–3 (1980), 363–79.

[17]Ernest Renan, *Questions contemporaines* (Paris, 1868), vi.

[18]Mona Ozouf, *L'École, l'Église et la République, 1871–1914* (Paris, 1963); Évelyne Héry, *Un siècle de leçons d'histoire: L'histoire enseignée au lycée, 1870–1970* (Rennes, 1999).

for national identity.[19] Besides, the French system required future historians to pass the *agrégation*, a national competitive examination for secondary and (tacitly) university teachers, and teach in provincial high schools before seeking a university chair. As high-school teachers, it is doubtful that historians saw any inconsistency between "the seemingly contradictory demands of history for moral and patriotic indoctrination, and history as objective science," as Peter Novick wrote about their American counterparts.[20] In addition, historians such as Octave Gréard, Ernest Lavisse, and Alfred Rambaud were involved in the republic's administrative and political spheres, where they had a firm grip on the nation's patriotic memory policy.

Other elements nevertheless nuance this well-known picture. First of all, educational publishers preferentially commissioned teachers from prestigious Paris high schools, such as Jules Isaac and Albert Malet, rather than university professors, to compose the most widespread history textbooks. Many representatives of the academic elite, such as the historian Charles Seignobos, discarded the "patriotic conception" of history teaching as an antiscientific mutilation of the past.[21] More importantly, the existing literature has assumed that historians were directly responsible for the making of national identities without raising the question of their concrete audience. However, one might ask how publications devoted to matters of strictly scholarly and local interest, in historical journals distributed to four hundred subscribers and specialized books purchased by (at best) five thousand readers, could have achieved the nationalization of the masses.[22] The professionalization process has thwarted rather than furthered the historians' relationship with the general public. Their participation in turn-of-the-century *universités populaires* was as limited as their interventions in the mainstream press, which remained the monopoly of a few notorious Paris mandarins. Republican authorities themselves did not acknowledge historians as manufacturers of national glory and identity. If the anticlerical and positivist Third Republic extended the traditional French cult of the writer to an additional Pantheon of internationally renowned scientists, by contrast, the only historian officially celebrated as a nation's *grand homme*, Jules Michelet, was as much a writer as a historian, which shows that the selection of national figures included history men as long as they converted into men of letters.[23]

This approach focusing on the historians' contribution to national identities is thus not the most conclusive. It would, therefore, seem more relevant to focus, instead, on these historians' own perceptions of nationalism. To do so,

[19]Pierre Nora, "Ernest Lavisse: Son rôle dans la formation du sentiment national," *Revue historique* 228/1 (1962), 73–106.

[20]Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 70.

[21]Archives nationales, Paris (hereafter AN), Charles Seignobos Papers, AB XIX 2841.

[22]Bertrand Müller, "Critique bibliographique et construction disciplinaire: L'invention d'un savoir-faire," *Genèses* 14 (1994), 106–23, at 115; and Olivier Dumoulin, "Profession historien, 1919–1939: Un métier en crise?" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, EHESS, Paris, 1983), 361.

[23]Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La fabrique de l'écrivain national, entre littérature et politique* (Paris, 2019); Christophe Charle, *Birth of the Intellectuals, 1880–1900* (Oxford, 1994), 18; Camille Creyghton, *Résurrections de Michelet: Politique et historiographie en France depuis 1870* (Paris, 2019).

"we ought to put into brackets *what we think we know* about their understanding of the nation-state."[24] Their limited impact on collective representations does not settle this issue: after all, they could have been unsuccessful or powerless nationalists. In this regard, the existing literature has usually associated the professional turn of the 1870s with an intensification of nationalist historical writing, which is even said to have transcended the French political divisions. Whether partial to the Crown, the church, or the French Revolution, all historians, we are told, professed conflicting narratives of the nation but shared equally nationalist intentions.[25] However, there are good reasons to support the opposite assumption. First of all, there has never been a single conception of the nation within a given nation, as illustrated by the cases of Germany and France, where "ethnic" nationalism and "civic" nationalism coexisted with each other in various sectors of public opinion and political discourse.[26]

More fundamentally, the vast majority of academic historians in France adhered to the republican views professed by the regime. Among the pillars of this theoretical and political system was the opposition between what Michel Winock has termed "open nationalism" and "closed nationalism," or, in the language of that time, between exclusive "nationalism" or "chauvinism" and inclusive "patriotism."[27] This opposition was not only an ideological conviction but also a professional ethic or virtue. As academics and "organic intellectuals" of the republic, historians could not sanction openly chauvinistic standpoints without undermining the foundations of their collective identity. Their conception stemmed from different sources. On the one hand, the nationalism-versus-patriotism dichotomy was a legacy of the French Revolution, which the Third Republic strove to establish as the origin and mirror of the new regime. At that time, historians showed little sensitivity to the contradictions of the revolutionary period in matters relating to cosmopolitism and xenophobia.[28] In 1893, Alphonse Aulard, who held the first chair of the history of the French Revolution at the Sorbonne, could thus define "patriotism" as a form of affection for the fatherland that sought fraternity and "sympathy between the nations." He contrasted it with "chauvinism," a "selfish, ignorant, credulous, vainglorious, and anti-humane" feeling, born from "military despotism" and averse to international exchange and communities of thought.[29]

More contextual reasons were also involved in this dichotomous conception of legitimate and illegitimate feelings towards the nation. First, the outcome of the Franco-Prussian war was the German annexation of several French border territories. This urged French intellectuals to redefine the nation, emphasizing the free will and right of peoples to self-determination rather than deterministic criteria such as territory or language. In addition, the revanchist movements led by Georges

[24]Daniel Chernilo, "The Critique of Methodological Nationalism: Theory and History," *Thesis Eleven* 106/1 (2011), 98–117, at 110, emphasis added.

[25]Krishan Kumar, "Nationalism and the Historians," in Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London, 2006), 7–20, at 10.

[26]Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

[27]Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and Fascism in France* (Stanford, 1998), 5–26.

[28]Sophie Wahnich, *L'Impossible citoyen: L'étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1997).

[29]Alphonse Aulard, *Science, patrie, religion* (Paris, 1893), 28–9.

Boulanger and Paul Déroulède represented serious nationalist threats to the regime. Eventually, the Dreyfus affair played a pivotal part in redefining nationalism as the hallmark of the right and equating it with militarism and anti-Semitism. Although divided, academic historians nonetheless rallied massively to the Dreyfusist camp.[30] Gabriel Monod, who descended from an old Calvinist family, relentlessly antagonized the anti-Semitic right and became the prime target of nationalist and xenophobic movements. The leader of the Action française, Charles Maurras, maintained that even though Monod "said and thought he was a good Frenchman" and sincerely "wanted to be one," his patriotic will could not deny history and sever him from "the three or four great anti-French houses that share control of the country."[31] In the *Revue historique*, Monod displayed nothing but contempt for the anti-Dreyfusard Ligue de la patrie française, which, in his view, desecrated the noble concept of patriotism. Fueled by "the hatred of foreigners, religious intolerance, the blind cult of authority, and the idolatry of the army and war," nationalism was doubly harmful in that it exacerbated its proponents' taste for "militarism, anti-Semitism, egoism, and despotism," while stimulating its antagonists' contempt for all temporal powers and the very idea of patriotism.[32]

The defense and illustration of this republican approach to patriotism, based on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national pride, appears clearly in the scholarly journals of the period. French historians held patriotism to be a perfectly legitimate feeling in both politics and the writing of history. They did not feel a "tension between disinterested scholarship on the one hand, and patriotic duty or moral engagement on the other," any more than their American or English colleagues did.[33] The *Revue historique* has thus been depicted as the cornerstone of a renewed and sophisticated union between republican scholarship, patriotism, and historiography.[34] Gabriel Monod's 1876 "manifesto" introducing the journal's first issue made it clear that this brand of patriotism meant to be inclusive and universalistic: "History," he wrote, seeks only the truth and "works in a secret and secure manner for the greatness of the fatherland and the advancement of mankind."[35] Politically, historians from this cohort did not deny other peoples' right to regroup in the form of the nation-state or forbid foreign researchers from honoring their country. On the contrary, their reviews showed a deep understanding of foreign works that provided their societies with pleasant narratives and spared them the most burdensome aspects of their past. As Albert Sorel wrote about the work of his Italian colleague Nicomede Bianchi: "the Italian people have good reasons to pride

[30]Madeleine Rebérioux, "Histoire, historiens et dreyfusisme," *Revue Historique* 255/2 (1976), 407–32.

[31]Quoted in Laurent Joly, "Gabriel Monod et 'l'État Monod': Une campagne nationaliste de Charles Maurras (1897–1931)," *Revue historique* 664 (2012), 837–62, at 843.

[32]Gabriel Monod, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 78/2 (1902), 354–64, at 360.

[33]Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 85; Reba N. Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History, and the Making of an English Elite, 1870–1930* (Stanford, 1994), 6.

[34]Inga Gerike, "Notre siècle est le siècle de l'histoire: Die *Revue historique* im Spannungsfeld von historischer Forschung und politischem Engagement. 1876–1900," in Matthias Middell, ed., *Historische Zeitschriften im internationalen Vergleich* (Leipzig, 1999), 63–81, at 70; Charles-Olivier Carbonell, "La naissance de la *Revue historique*: Une revue de combat (1876–1885)," *Revue historique* 255/2 (1976), 331–51, at 339.

[35]Gabriel Monod, "Du progrès des études historiques en France depuis le XVIe siècle," *Revue historique* 1/1 (1876), 5–38, at 38.

themselves on this book that presents them before Europe in a most interesting and honorable aspect."[36] Reciprocally, Rodolphe Reuss judged that Germany's lack of interest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was understandable, "as these two centuries are not among those that a German historian, especially nowadays, could take pleasure in recounting to his compatriots."[37]

Their accounts of French historiography differed inasmuch as they did not encourage their compatriots to write about their country in hyperbolic terms, which would have contradicted their anti-chauvinistic convictions. In the *Revue historique*, a review of Albert Sorel's *Histoire diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande* praised the author for having "used his patriotism not to present the facts in a fashion pleasant or useful to France's international position but to address his compatriots in a language devoid of flattery."[38] On this delicate matter, Albert Mathiez went as far as to write that, in 1870, "German chauvinism was at least as aggressive as French chauvinism," adding that nothing could have "stopped the explosion of their mutual hatred."[39] For all that, bibliographical reviews provided a pretext to shield France's image from foreign criticism. In 1881, the *Revue historique* harshly chastised the German historian Werner Hesse, author of a monograph on the city of Bonn under French domination, for his "intense Gallophobia."[40] For historians equating the nation with the republic, foreign assaults on the French Revolution were also a direct insult to the fatherland, judging from the objections precipitated in 1901 by Henry Jephson, a British writer who devised a historical work critical of the French Revolution: "The tone of this work is not that of a historian," observed the French reviewer, "but of a preacher eager to preserve his flock from the cruelty and irreligion of the French people and Republic. It is a chapter of a practical moral code devised at our expense on the other side of the Channel."[41]

Taking the French side in these history and memory wars also meant defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As we shall see below, French criticism of Germany's expansionist nationalism amounted to a condemnation of the 1871 annexations. Another consequence of this concern for territorial integrity was the historians' unaltered support for the French colonial venture. They regularly addressed these controversial issues in scholarly journals, as did Gabriel Monod in an 1899 article supporting his country's colonial policy, which he sought to improve by advising against the French cultural *assimilation* strategy, whose cost appeared excessive in comparison to British self-government.[42] Other historians used their professional skills to legitimize national claims from a historical

[36]Albert Sorel, "Review of Nicomede Bianchi, *Le Materie Politiche relative all'Estero degli Archivi di Stato Piemontesi*," *Revue historique* 4/1 (1877), 212–14, at 214.

[37]Rodolphe Reuss, "Bulletin historique: Allemagne," *Revue historique* 1/2 (1876), 556–564, at 556.

[38]Gabriel Monod, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 1/2 (1876), 509–21, at 520.

[39]Albert Mathiez, "Review of Jean-Jaurès, *La guerre franco-allemande*," *Annales révolutionnaires* 2/2 (1909), 298–300, at 299.

[40]Albert Sorel, "Review of Werner Hesse, *Geschichte der Stadt Bonn waehrend der franzoesischen Herrschaft*," *Revue historique* 15/1 (1881), 207–8, at 207.

[41]Paul Bondois, "Review of Henry Jephson, *The Real French Revolutionist*," *Revue historique* 75/2 (1901), 416.

[42]Gabriel Monod, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 71/2 (1899), 324–6.

standpoint: in 1904, a writer of the *Revue historique* sought to provide documentary evidence to justify "the French point of view" on Terre-Neuve.[43] There was thus a connection between the historians' ambivalent perception of disinterested science and colonialism and their take on scientific objectivity and the nation.[44]

At the same time, the alleged incompatibility between republicanism and "closed nationalism" led academic historians to adopt a critical position against aggressive militarism, exclusive chauvinism, and, more specifically, the nationalist misuses of history. In 1901, the foundation of the Société d'histoire moderne, conceived as an academic and Dreyfusard "think tank," stemmed from a reaction against the Académie française. Founded in 1634 to exalt the absolute monarchy and establish a "canon of great Frenchmen," the academy promoted history books establishing continuity between modern France, ancient Gaul, and the Catholic monarchy.[45] The society's founder, Albert Mathiez, recalled, "In the wake of the Dreyfus case, we were outraged to see that the majority of academicians sided with the impostors and joined the Ligue de la patrie française. We were impatient to challenge their dominion with a rationalist and critical stronghold."[46] This is also the reason why Pierre Caron, a leading member of the Société d'histoire moderne, could observe, in commenting on a book prefaced by Henry Houssaye of the Académie française, "Chauvinistic epithets are everywhere. The battles fought by the French are necessarily 'glorious' … It would be wise to drop these 'clichés' and feelings, which are appropriate for patriotic literature, but which objective history has no use for."[47]

Such criticism targeted with equal passion the nationalist distortions of the past in foreign scholarship. In 1877, Alfred Morel-Fatio praised the author of the *Historia general de España* for not "presenting Spain as the most preeminent nation and the Spanish people as the best-beloved of the gods, in contrast to most of his compatriots."[48] However, German writers unsurprisingly polarized these critical judgments. In line with Fustel de Coulanges, who in 1872 depicted German science as a means towards nationalist goals and not an end per se, Monod identified two chief flaws of German scholars: "they place Providence at the service of their national conceptions and establish Germany's greatness as the primary purpose of historical writing."[49] In the eyes of French historians, the fact that the Reich erected a bust of Bismarck at the University of Strasbourg after the

[43]Jean-Charlemagne Bracq, "La question de Terre-Neuve, d'après des documents anglais," *Revue historique* 85/1 (1904), 24–41, at 24.

[44]Sophie Dulucq and Colette Zytnicki, "Une histoire en marge: L'histoire coloniale en France (années 1880–années 1930)," *Genèses* 51 (2003), 114–27, at 125. On the imperial and internationalist dimensions of liberal nationalism see also Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The Rise and Fall of an Idea* (London, 2012).

[45]David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 107–39.

[46]Albert Mathiez, "Les transformations de la Société d'histoire moderne," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 3/6 (1925), 506–8, at 506.

[47]Pierre Caron, "Review of Adrien Dry, *Reims en 1814 pendant l'invasion*," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 4/3 (1902), 207–9, at 208–9.

[48]Alfred Morel-Fatio, "Bulletin historique: Espagne," *Revue historique* 3/2 (1877), 381–410, at 392.

[49]Gabriel Monod, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 73/2 (1900), 336–50, at 346.

Franco-Prussian War testified to their neighbors' misconception of scientific autonomy.[50]

Above all, the French obsession with Germany shows the limits of this normative dichotomy between nationalism and patriotism, which aimed to enable republican academics to justify historiographical contributions to national pride while standing against the nationalist misuses of history. If French historians seemed more independent of the state's nationalist agenda than their German counterparts, who "saw themselves in the service of the Hohenzollern dynasty as the guarantor of a *bürgerlich* order and a powerful Germany," they were blinded by the 1870 defeat and subsequent annexation of parts of the French territory.[51] While mocking their German counterparts' nationalism, they failed to see that they themselves acted, thought, and wrote in somewhat comparable manners. For instance, French scholars commented derisively on the fact that the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* was initiated in 1819 under the slogan "Sanctus amor patriae dat animum," but the journal issued by the Cercle Saint-Simon, a historical society founded in 1883 by Gabriel Monod, had on its front page the motto "Scientia et Patriae."

Besides, during the period from 1870 to the Great War, which Claude Digeon's seminal study characterized as the "German crisis of French thought," French disapproval of German nationalist uses of history was out of proportion to similar judgments on other countries.[52] If French scholars also discarded alternative expansionist ideologies such as pan-Slavism, pan-Celtism, and pan-Latinism, they showed special dedication to instrumentalizing German nationalism and turned what they called "scientific pan-Germanism" against their rivals. This attitude had a double benefit: while exposing the alleged ideological biases of German scholarship, it also delegitimized Prussian expansionism in the name of "self-determination" and denied Germany's historically grounded claims over the French regions annexed in 1871. For instance, historian Christian Pfister, born in the French territory of the Upper Rhine that would be lost to Prussia in 1870, contended that German historians could not deal impartially with Alsatian history.[53] Another Alsatian-born scholar, Rodolphe Reuss, devoted his work to discrediting German historical allegations regarding the German origins of Alsatian cities as nationalist distortions of the past. The distinction between patriotism and nationalism thus provided French republican historians with a helpful tool to oppose the nationalist right while shielding their country from foreign criticism and threats to its integrity. French accounts of German history and historiography, however, expose the weaknesses and limits of this unstable intellectual construction. This patriotic commitment was to find its mirror image at another level, as historians engaged ever more actively in the international scholarly competition to defend their fatherland's academic prominence and scientific reputation.

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[50]Alphonse Aulard, "Devant un buste de Bismarck," *La Révolution française* 43/4 (1902), 381–4.

[51]Georg G. Iggers, "Nationalism and historiography, 1789–1996: The German Example in Historical Perspective," in Berger, Donovan, and Passmore, *Writing National Histories*, 15–29, at 20.

[52]Claude Digeon, *La crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870–1914* (Paris, 1959).

[53]Christian Pfister, "Review of Hermann von Müllenheim, *Die Annexion des Elsass*," *Revue historique* 38/2 (1888), 411–12.

The literature on science and nationalism has stressed the paradoxes of late nineteenth-century academia. First, the very age of exacerbated nationalism witnessed a "denationalization" of scientific production and circulation.[54] Simultaneously, modern universities acted as both "an instrument of the nation-state's cultural policy" and a vector of "cosmopolitanism."[55] Third Republic academic historians were the living proof of this ambivalence. As proponents of objective and autonomous scientific knowledge, they assumed that history writing should be indifferent to contingent political boundaries or agendas. However, they firmly adhered to the patriotic view that their practice of history had a part to play in the international battle for academic and scientific prestige.

These academics contributed to institutionalizing the international cooperation that materialized in the first historical congresses on diplomatic and comparative history in The Hague (1898) and Paris (1900). The International Association of Academies (1899) intensified relationships between scholars from around the globe. French universities expanded their funds and efforts to welcome international students. By the end of the century, the Sorbonne included a Franco-American Committee and a British Section of the University of Paris, as well as Franco-Russian, Franco-Hispanic, and Franco-Scandinavian associations.[56] Although foreigners represented but 4 percent of the students at the Sorbonne, and an even smaller portion in the other French universities, their cohorts quadrupled between the 1880s and the Great War.[57]

Historical journals spearheaded this move towards international integration. Between 1878 and 1885, the bibliographical section of the *Revue historique* reviewed 235 works published in Germany and 144 Austrian, Belgian, British, Italian, and Swiss books. Reviews of German literature represented one-third of the total and were even more numerous than those of French works.[58] Despite the significant drop in reviews of German historiography after 1914 and the fact that not all French historical publications showed the same interest in German historical writings as the *Revue historique*, these figures are consistent with the journal's cosmopolitan stand. Its contributors endorsed a genuine ethic of international discussion, as their objections to the disparagement of foreign scholarship emanating from French conservative intellectuals amply demonstrate: "As much as we may pay tribute to the efforts made since 1870 by our scholars to contribute to the country's recovery through their zeal and labor," noted an anonymous reviewer in 1877,

[54]Elizabeth Crawford, Terry Shinn, and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Denationalizing Science: The Contexts of International Scientific Practice* (Dordrecht, 1993); Anne Rasmussen, "Tournant, inflexions, ruptures: Le moment internationaliste," *Mil neuf cent* 19 (2001), 27–41.

[55]Rudolf Stichweh, "From the *Peregrinatio Academica* to Contemporary International Student Flows: National Culture and Functional Differentiation as Emergent Causes," in Christophe Charle, Jürgen Schriewer, and Peter Wagner, eds., *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), 345–60, at 349.

[56]Alfred Croiset, *La vie universitaire à Paris* (Paris, 1918), 30.

[57]Ministère de l'instruction publique et des beaux-arts, *Statistique de l'enseignement supérieur, 1889–1899* (Paris, 1900), 203–5.

[58]Charles-Olivier Carbonell, *Histoire et historiens: Une mutation idéologique des historiens français, 1865–1885* (Toulouse, 1976), 550.

> it is inappropriate to sing on the subject a song of triumph, to look down on neighboring nations, to mock the British, and pretend to see in German scholarship nothing other than mediocre plagiarism … Self-respecting French and German scholars know how to recognize the diverse but eminent qualities that prevail in each nation and the services each of them renders to science, which is neither French, nor German, but simply *science*.[59]

Acknowledging foreign accomplishments also involved matters of international authority, as manifestations of "presumptuousness and ignorance" were said to undermine French credibility in the eyes of the world, and academic historians showed considerable concern for the worldwide reputation of French universities and scholarship.

Worried by the annual faculty exchanges between the University of Berlin and Columbia and Harvard, early twentieth-century French officials and academics gave new impetus to policies now labeled "academic diplomacy."[60] They regarded the ability to capture international student flows as "a major symbol of international stature" and were well aware of the obstacles French universities faced in terms of visibility and attractiveness, especially across the Atlantic. This was one reason for the institutionalization of "universities" in 1895, which provided French higher learning with a structure more recognizable internationally than the complex system of "faculties." The same year, the implementation of a *doctorat d'université* that could be obtained more easily than the traditional state doctorate, which was much longer and required a secondary thesis in Latin, was a gesture towards foreign students willing to pursue a high academic degree in France.[61] For Ernest Lavisse, the need to attract foreign students did not stem from disinterested cosmopolitanism but represented a way to propagate an advantageous image of France worldwide—and, he added, "we need, and the world needs, France to be loved."[62] This way, the nation would achieve international prominence and secure contingents of foreign intellectuals and policy makers culturally and emotionally sympathetic to France and possibly inclined to take its side in the advent of a new conflict.

The inflow of international students also guaranteed the diffusion of the French language. In a fragmented world of clashing cultural imperialisms, all attempts to create an original language of international science were doomed to fail, thus fueling scientific competition between the dominant vernacular languages established since the "philological–lexicographic revolution" as the bedrock of the nation-state.[63] The fact that English, French, German, and Italian were the sole vectors of communication during the major international historical congresses of this

[59]"Recueils périodiques et sociétés savantes," *Revue historique* 3/2 (1877), 464–79, at 468–9, emphasis added.

[60]Christophe Charle, "Ambassadeurs ou chercheurs? Les relations internationales des professeurs de la Sorbonne sous la IIIe République," *Genèses* 14 (1994), 42–62.

[61]Reports of the Paris Faculty of Letters, in AN, AJ^{16} 4748, 331, 352.

[62]Ernest Lavisse, *Études et étudiants* (Paris, 1890), 134.

[63]Anne Rasmussen, "À la recherche d'une langue internationale de la science, 1880–1914," in Roger Chartier and Pietro Corsi, eds., *Sciences et langues en Europe* (Paris, 1996), 139–55; Françoise Waquet, *Le latin ou l'empire d'un signe* (Paris, 1999); Michael D. Gordin, *Scientific Babel: How Science Was Done*

time shows the critical character of linguistic hegemony in academia. Under the Third Republic, contributors to historical journals were mindful of the scientific isolation resulting from linguistic marginalization. They regularly praised Russian historians for translating their works into French. Otherwise, they said, "our ignorance would make us unable to use the specialized Russian works."[64] They also attributed the lack of scientific interest in specific areas to the absence of scholars able to master the documentation and bibliography: as Johan Adam Wijnne pointed out in the *Revue historique*, "the Dutch language is poorly known outside our country, and its isolation makes it difficult to exchange ideas with foreign nations."[65]

If the country's academic and linguistic prominence represented a strategic priority, so did the promotion of the international visibility of French historical writing. The objective was not so much to provide French citizens with a flattering narrative of their past as to raise the national historical science to a level of international recognition able to satiate their (alleged) thirst for glory. History was thus bound to become a nationalized good on the international market of ideas. As early as 1868, Victor Duruy, a historian who served as minister of education, advocated for the foundation of the École pratique des hautes études, one of the first research-based institutions hosting "German-style" seminars, especially in history and philology. He feared the existing French institutions were unfit to compete with the developed nations whose scientific achievements were "a serious threat to one of our most legitimate ambitions" and concluded that "France's interest and glory are at stake in the stimulation of progress in all branches of advanced studies."[66]

Third Republic officials and intellectuals furthered this prestige policy. In a cultural universe relying on hierarchical representations of intellectual "advance" or "backwardness," history books were assessed on their adequacy according to an ever-evolving canon and whether they were said to bring "honor" or "dishonor" to their homeland.[67] These manifestations of national-mindedness characterized a "statist conception of internationalism," which turned each historian into a representative of the whole nation.[68] Even an official document such as the 1903 circular letter on the *doctorat ès lettres* stated that the dissertations accumulated over the past decades constituted "a collection of works that honor French science."[69] By contrast, books that did not meet the standard criteria were deemed a disgrace to French scholarship and to France itself. In 1867 and 1873, the *Revue critique* heavily criticized a glossary of the medieval French language by Célestin Hippeau. One of the journal's founders, Paul Meyer, justified his criticism

before and after Global English (Chicago, 2015); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 83.

[64]André Lichtenberger, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 82/2 (1903), 325–40, at 336.

[65]Johan Adam Wijnne, "Bulletin historique: Pays-Bas," *Revue historique* 2/2 (1876), 595–607, at 596.

[66]École pratique des hautes études, *L'École pratique des hautes études (1868–1893): Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la Section des sciences historiques et philologiques* (Paris, 1893), 2.

[67]As observed in the literary field: Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 90.

[68]Gisèle Sapiro, "Le champ est-il national? La théorie de la différenciation sociale au prisme de l'histoire globale," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 200 (2013), 70–85, at 79.

[69]"Actes et documents officiels," *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 48 (1904), 142–76, at 168.

in the following terms: "Obviously, M. Hippeau does not suspect the harm he inflicts on French science or the difficulties and requirements of his endeavor. But those who are tired of reading or hearing what foreigners write about French carelessness and lack of perception will agree with me. We must do justice among ourselves if we wish to command respect abroad."[70]

Eventually, the French academic discipline was haunted by a sort of siege mentality. Its actors were convinced that some foreign scholars meant to undermine the French past and rob the French of the honors that were rightfully theirs. German historians were naturally their prime adversaries, especially in specific domains such as Greek archaeology. The French programs in Delos and Delphi, initiated in 1877 and 1892, responded directly to the German excavations operating in Olympia since 1875.[71] In 1887, the *Revue historique* triumphantly announced the first French results from Delos: the publication was said to "bring the greatest of honors to French scholarship" and present "discoveries of equal importance to the German ones in Olympia."[72] Most of all, the French were intimately persuaded that their German colleagues wanted to challenge them on their "own" ground, that of French history. When Alexander Cartellieri undertook a book on *Philipp II August, König von Frankreich*, the *Revue historique* perceived his undertaking as a symptom of "the particular satisfaction that all historians from across the Vosges experience when leading the way to French scholarship and outpacing it on its own ground."[73] The issue of foreign works on French history was a serious one, for it involved crucial epistemological questions.

* * *

The scholarly persona of Third Republic academic historians encompassed a set of moral and intellectual values such as objectivity, impartiality, and disinterestedness.[74] However, as far as their national identity was concerned, historians knew perfectly well that Fénelon's idealist stance, quoted earlier, was unrealistic. In Aulard's words: "Sure enough, among Michelet's compatriots, there is no room in national history for the classical and ideal abstraction of the self that Lucian and Fénelon fantasized. We are still awaiting the true historian, who would not be of any time and any country."[75] The collective words "we" or "us" used in scholarly reviews did not so much designate an abstract community of scholars as a sum of national subjects, overdetermined by their national working environment. In this regard, the question of what we might call a national "epistemological privilege" was a matter of concern: are historians of a determined

[70]Paul Meyer, "Review of Célestin Hippeau, *Collection des poèmes français du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: Glossaire*," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 33/1 (1872), 610–14, at 614.

[71]Klaus Fittschen, "L'École française d'Athènes et l'Institut archéologique allemand," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 120/1 (1996), 487–96, at 490.

[72]Paul Girard, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 33/2 (1887), 313–38, at 317.

[73]Achille Luchaire, "Review of Alexander Cartellieri, *Philipp II August, Koenig von Frankreich*," *Revue historique* 71/2 (1899), 368–72, at 369.

[74]Herman Paul, ed., *How to Be a Historian: Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000* (Manchester, 2019).

[75]Alphonse Aulard, *Études et leçons sur la Révolution française* (Paris, 1893), 15.

country best placed to write its history or, on the contrary, the most unreliable authors because of their affective involvement and potential blindness to some aspects that foreign observers might detect more clearly?

In the few cases encountered in the *Revue historique*, the argument of "epistemological privilege" went only as far as to grant foreign historians an intimate understanding of their nation because of their deeper knowledge of its culture. National anchorage was thus a key to historical understanding, as suggested by Alfred Morel-Fatio's critique of Henry Charles Lea's *History of the Inquisition of Spain* in 1908. In his view, "an American Protestant hostile to Catholicism and to all the institutions that sustained it" could not dive into the "intimate sentiments and movements of opinion" that shaped the Spanish mentality. Morel-Fatio recommended that this study be undertaken preferably by "a highly enlightened and detached Spaniard, who nevertheless inherited from his homeland and primary education the faculty to feel things like his compatriots."[76] By contrast, and although a survey of right-wing historical journals might produce different results, this study has not witnessed in the leading professional journals cases of reviewers explicitly denying their foreign counterparts the legitimacy to engage in historical research on the French past—as did some Russian historians "persuaded that foreigners could not decently study a country's history."[77]

Third Republic academic historians did not consider the French past their exclusive preserve, nor did they present their position as Frenchmen as an objective advantage. They even refrained from resorting to this line of argument when foreign critics targeted the French scholars' inability to tackle specific aspects of their history, such as the 1789 Revolution, in a detached and impartial fashion. British historians from the most diverse political orientations showed special dedication to demonstrating that judgments from across the Channel were impaired or clouded by the Revolution's contemporary resonance. In his 1886 *History of the French Revolution*, Oxford historian H. Morse Stephens commented on the work of Henri Martin, a republican activist and publicist, claiming,

> He cannot do justice to all the actors engaged in that terrible crisis which is called the French Revolution, and it is not to be expected from him or from any Frenchmen for at least a century. Only when the results of the Revolution cease to be burning political questions, and the names of its heroes cease to be flags, round which parties rally, can Frenchmen treat the history of their Revolution with dispassionate calmness.[78]

The most nuanced opinion was expressed by Heinrich von Sybel in the 1869 preface to his *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit*. In his view, foreign writers had the ability to shed a colder light on the history of the revolution, for they were not blinded by "habits or national pride." However, he saw Frenchness as both an inconvenience

[76]Alfred Morel-Fatio, "Review of Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*," *Revue historique* 98/1 (1908), 180–85, at 182.

[77]E.H., "Review of Vasilii von Bilbassof, *Katharina II, Kaiserin von Russland*," *Revue historique* 70/1 (1899), 161–2, at 161.

[78]Henry Morse Stephens, *A History of the French Revolution* (New York, 1886), xviii.

and an advantage. If distance did facilitate the serene comprehension of past events, it also limited moral and intellectual identification with past actors. More importantly, he maintained that "writing a history of the French Revolution will always be a bold undertaking for a foreigner," given the location of the corresponding sources.[79]

This was a fundamental point to be made. French historians did not engage in debates on national advantages for studying the French past because they felt confident about their documentary privilege. If the vicissitudes of history had scattered specific French materials across Europe, the French still had a stranglehold on their national archives and libraries. That is why their reviews repeatedly underlined the empirical fragility of foreign contributions to French history. It is not the purpose of this article to either confirm or contradict that assertion, but its recurrence in the sources is overwhelming. An English biography of a seventeenth-century marshal of France "might interest English readers, but the French ones will discover nothing that they do not already know"; an American book on Lafayette "that must have been very useful to the Americans will naturally be less valuable to French readers"; a German work on the French Revolution "adds nothing to what we know in France about the Terror."[80]

This situation stemmed from the nationalization of the professional field of history. Since the early nineteenth century, modern states had claimed monopolistic control over access to privileged professions, thus naturalizing the nation-state as the "normal" setting of professional practice and self-definition. In the French academic sphere, the *agrégation* and the state-awarded *doctorat ès lettres* became prerequisites of a professional historical career. The only obstacle to this nationalization process was the absence of a single national historical society similar to the American Historical Association, the British Historical Society, and the Deutscher Historikerverband. These organizations, founded in the 1880s and 1890s, had no equivalent in France, where local and regional societies remained active centers of historical investigation, although the Société d'histoire moderne once aspired to play this coordinating role.[81] Meanwhile, the creation of archival centers by nineteenth-century Western states followed a nationalistic agenda and encouraged methodological nationalism.[82] If the empirical turn initiated in academia aroused a growing interest in archival research, Ph.D. candidates were encouraged to focus their efforts on national sources as the slightest deficiencies on this front condemned their theses to a disastrous reception. In contrast, insufficiencies in international documentation remained a most venial sin. Academic patrons pressed their students, who usually wrote their theses while making a living as secondary teachers, to take "interest in the province where fate might send them" and conduct archival research locally.[83]

[79]Heinrich von Sybel, *Histoire de l'Europe pendant la Révolution française* (Paris, 1869), vii.

[80]"Chronique et bibliographie," *Revue historique* 49/2 (1892), 451–64, at 462; Henri Hauser, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 82/2 (1903), 307–24, at 316; P. Villard, "Review of Julius Eckardt, *Figuren und Ansichten der Pariser Sckreckenzeit*," *Revue historique* 53/2 (1893), 396–7, at 397.

[81]Jean-Pierre Chaline, *Sociabilité et érudition: Les sociétés savantes en France* (Paris, 1998).

[82]Bruno Delmas and Christine Nougaret, eds., *Archives et nations dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2004); Tom Verschaffel, "Something More than a Storage Warehouse: The Creation of National Archives," in Ilaria Porciani and Jo Tollebeek, eds., *Setting the Standards: Institutions, Networks and Communities of National Historiography* (Basingstoke, 2012), 29–46.

[83]Gabriel Monod, "Lettre-préface," in Roger Lévy, *Le Havre entre trois révolutions, 1789–1848* (Paris, 1912), i–ii, at i.

Source collections also facilitated historical research on national subjects. Western countries devoted colossal means to selecting, editing, and publishing historical sources that established the continuity of national sentiments and cultures.[84] While most countries prioritized medieval sources, Third Republic officials raised substantial funds to create copious source collections securing the memory of the French Revolution, countless volumes of which were sent to national and departmental archives, universities, and local libraries.[85] Likewise, while the Dahlmann-Waitz *Quellenkunde der Deutschen Geschichte* helped German historians investigate their national history, Gabriel Monod's *Bibliographie de l'histoire de France* (1888) and Pierre Caron's *Répertoire méthodique de l'histoire moderne et contemporaine de la France*, initiated in 1899, aimed at providing French scholars with research tools that considerably facilitated source-based research on national matters.

These source collections and bibliographical guides could not but foster historiographical nationalism. Ouof the twenty-five historical societies founded between 1833 and 1902, twelve comprised the words "France" or "French" in their title.[86] From 1876 to 1900, 63 percent of the articles published in the *Revue historique* focused on French events or protagonists, as did 168 of the 209 books on European history issued in France in the early 1870s and 60 percent of the history dissertations defended between 1895 and the Great War.[87] In this regard, French historical journals were no exception. If their scholarly concerns appear more nationally grounded than those of the *American Historical Review*, the *Historische Zeitschrift* reviewed a majority of German books on national history, and the *English Historical Review* was even more insular.[88] This methodological bias did not go entirely unchallenged. In 1900, Gabriel Monod himself raised his voice against what appeared to him as a display of national narrowness:

> Generally, our historians do not pay sufficient attention to foreign countries. We neglect Spain. We treat Germany a little bit better, but our neighbors have already written countless books on their history—and the German sources are tedious to read, we must confess. We completely overlook England's admirable field … Italian history attracts more candidates, thanks to the École de Rome … In Russian history, since Rambaud's book, we have had nothing new. M. Waddington seems to be the only one interested in

[84]Daniela Saxer, "Monumental Undertakings: Source Publications for the Nation," in Porciani and Tollebeek, *Setting the Standards*, 47–69.

[85]Robert J. W. Evans and Guy P. Marchal, eds., *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States: History, Nationhood and the Search for Origins* (Basingstoke, 2011); Christine Peyrard, "La création de la Commission ou l'oeuvre de Jean Jaurès," in Christine Peyrard and Michel Vovelle, eds., *Héritages de la Révolution française à la lumière de Jaurès* (Aix-en-Provence, 2002), 19–42.

[86]Gabriele Lingelbach, *Klio macht Karriere: Die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtwissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19* (Göttingen, 2003), 697.

[87]Alain Corbin, "La *Revue historique*: Analyse de contenu d'une publication rivale des *Annales*," in Charles-Olivier Carbonell and Georges Livet, eds., *Au berceau des Annales* (Toulouse, 1983), 105–37, at 135; Carbonell, *Histoire et historiens*, 92; Dumoulin, "Profession historien, 1919–1939," 279.

[88]Margaret F. Stieg, *The Origin and Development of Scholarly Historical Periodicals* (University, AL, 1986), 31, 49, 59.

> Dutch history. On Scandinavia: nothing; on Switzerland: nothing … on Islamic, Arabic, or Turkish history: nothing.[89]

Needless to say, Monod's plea did not meet with success. Even the promising international congress on *histoire comparée* held in Paris in 1900 had, in fact, very little to do with comparative history.[90] Reader demand proved to be one of the principal reasons for this long-lasting methodological nationalism. History's specificity among the various disciplines of the humanities was its ability to attract a much broader audience than, for instance, philosophy or geography. It was without a doubt the discipline most intimately connected with the "profane" general public, which happened to favor national histories. The prestigious prizes awarded by the Académie française to history books contributed dramatically to orienting readers towards works on French history. It is no surprise, then, that the first best sellers published in the interwar years were national histories – originating, moreover, from the Action française – such as Jacques Bainville's *Histoire de France* and Pierre Gaxotte's *Histoire de la Révolution française*.[91]

This rent-seeking temptation eventually showed its limitations, as the rise of international research travel enabled foreign scholars to challenge the monopoly of French nationals. In 1901, when a historian from Helsinki, Alma Söderhjelm, presented the French audience with her thesis on the periodical press during the French Revolution, Rodolphe Reuss exclaimed disappointedly: "It is almost shameful for us that the first somewhat complete work on this matter came from the pen of a Finn and was defended before the Faculty of Helsingfors, and not in Paris."[92] The internationalization of historical research on France in the interwar years only aggravated these feelings of dispossession, which seemed even more painful given that the French were convinced they had a specific historiographical tradition to defend. In 1912, Charles Petit-Dutaillis bemoaned the lack of depth and clarity in the latest works of young French historians and concluded, "If we are not careful, the French historical science will lose some of the unique qualities to which it owes its worldwide reputation."[93] Preserving and cultivating this "national" historiographical character was thus tantamount to gaining distinction in the international market of ideas. To illuminate this intellectual attitude, we must now tie it to the process of "invention" of national historiographical traditions.[94]

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[89]Gabriel Monod, "La mission du vingtième siècle," *Le Temps*, 5 Sept. 1900, 3.

[90]Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898–2000* (New York, 2005), 17.

[91]Stephen Wilson, "A View of the Past: Action Française Historiography and Its Socio-political Function," *Historical Journal* 19/1 (1976), 135–61.

[92]Rodolphe Reuss, "Bulletin historique: France," *Revue historique* 76/1 (1901), 113–25, at 117.

[93]Charles Petit-Dutaillis, "Bulletin historique: Histoire de France," *Revue historique* 110/1 (1912), 77–87, at 87.

[94]Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992); Peter Wagner, "Varieties of Interpretations of Modernity: On National Traditions in Sociology and the Other Social Sciences," in Charle, Schriewer, and Wagner, *Transnational Intellectual Networks*, 27–51.

The spread of historiographical exchange across national frontiers was not unrelated to the rise of scientific nationalism.[95] On the contrary, international competition and confrontation reinforced the sense of uniqueness of national historiographical styles. Like their colleagues across the Channel, French scholars showed growing concern about the scholarly gap between Germany and the rest of Europe.[96] After the Franco-Prussian War, Germany became a reference, if not a model. While reformers advocated for adopting the German methodological and documentary conception of historical writing, cohorts of French students went to study in German universities.[97] However, the literature now insists on the limits of this *imitatio Germaniae*, stressing how the genuine differences between the French and German approaches to teaching and research generated contrasting national styles.[98]

If the making of French historical science was based on a comparison with Germany, just as late nineteenth-century German nation building was a mirror image of French national construction, the French academic establishment never sought to imitate their neighbors blindly.[99] The German example did serve as an inspiration to reform the higher and secondary French teaching systems, but the "impossible German model" proved to be overly aristocratic for a republic that promoted an alternative conception of the scholarly persona—republican, secular, and democratic. On a theoretical level, academic historians borrowed very little from Germany. More broadly, seldom did historians anxious to distinguish themselves from philosophers reflect on their scholarly practices within a robust theoretical framework. When they did, they rarely used a substantial conceptual apparatus. Even the famous controversies between historians and sociologists such as François Simiand and Émile Durkheim did not lead the historians to engage in profound philosophical discussions. Reluctance and misgivings about theorization remain a characteristic disciplinary feature, which more recently allowed Peter Novick to note that "very few historians have any philosophical training, or even inclination," to which Pierre Bourdieu added, "When historians start to do philosophy, it is really the end of everything."[100] Therefore it is not surprising that, even in the most reflexive writings of historians of the period, references to Descartes or Auguste Comte are difficult to find, to say nothing of Kant or Hegel. When German philosophers were mentioned, it was essentially for normative purposes, lamenting that Hegelianism allowed German historians to endorse the idea of

[95]Stefan Berger, "Towards a Global History of National Historiographies," in Berger, ed., *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (New York, 2007), 1–29, at 13.

[96]John Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance* (London, 1983), 144.

[97]Hélène Barbey, *Le voyage de la France en Allemagne de 1871 à 1914: Voyages et voyageurs français dans l'Empire germanique* (Nancy, 1994).

[98]Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890–1920* (Cambridge, 1992); Christophe Charle, "L'impossible modèle allemand," in Charle, *La république des universitaires, 1870–1940* (Paris, 1994), 19–131.

[99]Mark Hewitson, *National Identity and Political Thought in Germany: Wilhelmine Depictions of the French Third Republic, 1890–1914* (Oxford, 2000).

[100]Novick added sarcastically, "Not a crime; not even blameworthy; most philosophers are rotten historians." Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 11; Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'État: Cours au Collège de France, 1989–1992* (Paris, 2012), 490.

"the historical mission (*Beruf*) assigned to specific peoples and characters" and asserting that the German historical doctrine that "everywhere the strong prevail over the weak" was inconsistent with the philosophical values of "the homeland of the Kantian imperative and great modern apostles of the moral conscience."[101] In the end, French historians were not particularly familiar with German theoretical models. In the field of history itself, even though historians looked at Germany with a mixture of admiration and apprehension, this concern never generated a durable platform for cross-border discussion.[102] Even a historian such as Karl Lamprecht was discussed only in the restricted and innovative circles of the *Revue de synthèse historique*, founded by the philosopher Henri Berr. What French academic historians saw in their German colleagues' intellectual advance was essentially a methodological model and a technical apparatus, which is precisely what allowed them to claim the uniqueness of their own national historiographical tradition.

The German reference provoked adverse reactions from French actors determined to resist "Germanization." The scholars who suffered the most ruinous reviews in the *Revue critique* frequently accused their censors of being blinded by their idolization of German philological erudition. In the aforementioned controversy over Hippeau's glossary of the medieval French language, the outraged author, who belonged to the previous generation of historians, attributed his colleagues' disapproval to their undue Germanophilia: "You read my book as enemies and not as judges. You would have deemed it less defective had it borne a German name."[103] In 1873, Hippeau published a work on *Public Instruction in Germany* defending the traditional French model aimed at the cultivation of "elevated" and "noble" sentiments and thundering against contemporary attempts to "Germanize our education."[104] Later, feelings of national "decadence" and the "bankruptcy of science" resulted in a radical backlash against positivism, republicanism, and the "Germanization" of French culture. On the verge of the First World War, in a context of "nationalist revival," a renewed traditionalist and anti-intellectualist critique of republican scientism took a nationalist and elitist stance on the state of French higher learning, calling for a reversion to the so-called national tradition.[105]

This campaign prompted resolute reactions, but the nature of the academic historians' defense reveals that, despite irreconcilable differences, they shared a language with their opponents and even some of their conceptions regarding national historiographical traditions. Facing accusations of senseless *imitatio Germaniae*,

[101]Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris, 1899), 248; Antoine Guilland, *L'Allemagne nouvelle et ses historiens* (Paris, 1899), 129.

[102]Charles-Olivier Carbonell, "La réception de l'historiographie allemande en France (1866–1885): Le mythe du modèle importé," in Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, eds., *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1988), 327–44.

[103]Letter from Célestin Hippeau to Paul Meyer (23 March 1873), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 24422, 111.

[104]Célestin Hippeau, *L'instruction publique en Allemagne* (Paris, 1873), 265.

[105]Gisèle Sapiro, "Défense et illustration de 'l'honnête homme': Les hommes de lettres contre la sociologie," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 153 (2003), 11–27; Sarah Shurts, *Resentment and the Right: French Intellectual Identity Reimagined, 1898–2000* (Newark, 2017).

Monod strove to demonstrate that a genuinely French tradition of philology and erudition had existed since the *Ancien Régime*.[106] The Sorbonne's dean, historian Alfred Croiset, added that the learned writers of early modern France had devoted themselves to scholarly research until the irruption of the frivolous and dilettantish eighteenth-century *honnête homme*.[107] Academic historians did not question the existence of national traditions of historical writing but pictured them in more historicist terms than did their adversaries.

More importantly, they did not challenge their opponents' view on the intrinsic difference—and inequality—between German and French history writing. Their collective pattern of thought was luminously summarized by Ernest Renan as early as 1868. "Germany," he contended, "comprehends history much more as a science than as an art. It does not generate great historians in the meaning we attach to this word, which requires talent in composition that the Germans seem to despise, although no race shows a more outstanding aptitude for erudite research."[108] During the following decades, academics maintained a great divide between the French literary sensibility and interpretive disposition and the narrow German meticulousness. In 1900, commenting on the work of Karl Lamprecht, Rodolphe Reuss condemned the German aversion to literary ambition: "It may be a consequence of the 'French frivolousness' so harshly disavowed in Germany, but we enjoy the use of artistic skills in the composition of a scientific work and believe that the expression of contempt for the art of writing—or inability to exercise it—does not make for a better or more learned historian."[109] Two weeks later, Reuss maintained that history, to achieve its full dignity, ought to be regarded as both a "true science" and a "work of art."[110]

Likewise, in the 1910s, when nationalist detractors of the Sorbonne prompted further defense of disciplinary norms, Alphonse Aulard, who acknowledged the merits of Germany's philological thoroughness and accuracy, protested that republican higher learning did not intend to eradicate the French cultural character but, instead, to nurture its classical qualities:

> We are accused of Germanizing the Sorbonne to Germanize the French spirit and altering, out of imitative malice, out of servility towards our victors, the traditional qualities of clarity, order, and liveliness. What do we say to that? We say that we are doing, or striving to do, the exact opposite. Composing in a French fashion, with clarity and order, avoiding the German blurring of language, and writing readable books: this is the advice we give (or rather harp on) to our students. Let our critics attend our doctoral seminars, and they will see if we Germanize![111]

[106]Gabriel Monod, "Les études historiques en France," *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 18 (1889), 587–99, at 598.

[107]Reports of the Paris Faculty of Letters, AN, AJ[16] 4751, 42–8.

[108]Ernest Renan, *Questions contemporaines* (Paris, 1868), 252.

[109]Rodolphe Reuss, "Review of Karl Lamprecht, *Die kulturhistorische Methode*," *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* 49/12 (1900), 237–8, at 238.

[110]Rodolphe Reuss, "Review of Paul Frédéricq, *L'enseignement supérieur de l'histoire*," *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* 49/14 (1900), 274–5.

[111]Alphonse Aulard, "Griefs contre la Sorbonne," *Le Siècle*, 6 Oct. 1910, 1.

If academic historians differed from nationalist intellectuals on the intellectual benefits of German methodology, both groups ultimately agreed on the existence of specific French qualities and habits they were eager to preserve and cultivate. This explains why the French academic establishment was able to indulge so easily in aggressive propaganda based on the most hostile representations and prejudices during the Great War. A considerable body of literature has demonstrated that the conflict did not create these categories *ex nihilo* but revealed and accentuated formerly stratified reflexes and attitudes. The war not only generated inspiring patriotic writings and historiographical campaigns for territorial purposes, but also increased the uses of cultural definitions of "German," "French," and even "Latin" sciences, history included.[112] The outcome of the conflict, which saw the exclusion of German scholars from the 1923 International Congress of Historical Sciences in Brussels, intensified French determination to achieve domination in the global cultural arena. In 1920, scholars from the Institut de France and the University of Paris added their voices to Ernest Lavisse's *Manifesto in Defense of French Thought*, positing France as "the guide of humanity on its difficult path."[113]

However, unlike previous decades, the war revealed the limits and contradictions of the relationship between French academics and the nation. Accusing their German colleagues of deliberately falsifying history for militaristic purposes while providing the French public with galvanizing historical comparisons and empirical justifications of French claims on the Rhenish regions was a delicate balancing act. Historians persisted in contrasting expansionist pan-Germanism with a French conception of the nation purportedly based on the people's right to self-determination. But to place their knowledge and professional skills at the direct service of the state left them with an unsolvable paradox. This paradox was even more painful since French authorities frequently censored their writings, regardless of their patriotic intent, not to mention that many French academics showed even greater concern for intellectual autonomy after experiencing and opposing the perils of *raison d'État* during the Dreyfus affair. This explains why Albert Mathiez defended the French cause in his writings on *The Victory in Year II* while condemning contemporary studies, whether academic or not, which took liberties with the historical truth in order to "purify" the annals of French history, such as Jacques Bainville's nationalist and royalist book on *The Monarchy and National Politics*. Still, when French historians criticized the 1914 *Aufruf an die Kulturwelt*, the so-called manifesto "to the civilized world" signed by ninety-three German scholars, warning that "the day will come when [the Germans] will have to examine their conscience and ask themselves if they are not the first victims of this militarism eager for domination, rapine, and blood," they could not have failed to wonder whether they themselves were not the victims of a similar militarism.[114]

The interwar years thus opened a new chapter in French academic life. When Alphonse Aulard rediscovered his war writings, he described "the feelings of

[112]Martha Hanna, *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers during the Great War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); Christophe Prochasson and Anne Rasmussen, *Au nom de la patrie: Les intellectuels et la Première guerre mondiale, 1910–1919* (Paris, 1996).

[113]"Un manifeste pour la défense de la pensée française," *Le Temps*, 22 Dec. 1920, 2.

[114]Charles Bémont and Christian Pfister, "À nos lecteurs: L'appel des Allemands aux nations civilisées," *Revue historique* 117/1 (1914), 1–4, at 4.

anxiety that one always experiences when finding what they have written in this time of suffering and delirium, when the war made all imaginations sick."[115] It is impossible to account for the rise of pacifism among French historians in the interwar period without considering the contradictions of their previous commitments and the guilty conscience these intellectuals shared. The progressive calls for restored scholarly ties with Germany and the enthusiasm prompted by Wilsonianism, the League of Nations, and its International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation all stem from the historians' behavior during the conflict. The context of the 1920s–1930s was particularly auspicious to renewed republican interventions against radical nationalism as these years saw the appearance of the first historical best sellers, emanating almost exclusively from the Action française. Faced with this nationalist offensive imbued with counterrevolutionary, conspiratorial, and anti-Semitic ideas, academic historians reacted vigorously in their journals and books and in the mainstream press. However, they did not renounce all forms of patriotism. Indeed, as the 1930s threatened to end in aggression from Nazi Germany, French historians returned to their older, ambivalent posture. Thus, speaking in 1936 before his colleagues at the Cercle Descartes, a newly formed organization named after the great French rationalist philosopher in opposition to traditionalist campaigns in academia, Georges Lefebvre concluded,

> Therefore, we are French and intend to remain so. We cannot tolerate the idea that the integrity and independence of our national community should be undermined. That being said, nothing shall prevent us from exercising our critical spirit freely before the consequences that have sometimes been drawn from the idea of the nation and the resulting conceptions of our history. We cannot approve of chauvinism and imperialism.[116]

Although the experience of the Great War undermined the certitudes of French historians concerning their relationship with the nation, it did not weaken their patriotic commitment. Likewise, the cosmopolitan culture of the interwar period did not put an end to the "nationalization of literature" (and culture as a whole) that Jean-Paul Sartre was still disparaging as a particularly hazardous phenomenon in 1945.[117] On the contrary, it increased French historians' sense of dispossession and their fear of decline while consolidating their perception of national traditions in the humanities and social sciences.

* * *

There are many ways a historian can be a nationalist. Revealing these different dimensions requires focusing on the social and intellectual conditions of their practice, even more than reflecting on their contribution to nation building. The academic field was based on a tacit contract with the republican state, which expected scholars to spread the values of the regime and to support its policy of

[115]Alphonse Aulard, "Willette et la Révolution russe," *La Révolution française* 79/1 (1926), 67–69, at 69.
[116]Georges Lefebvre, "Esprit critique et tradition," *Cahiers du Cercle Descartes* 1 (1936), 7–29, at 27.
[117]Jean-Paul Sartre, "La nationalisation de la littérature," in Sartre, *Situations II* (Paris, 1999), 33–51.

enhancing French cultural prestige. Even avowed adversaries of right-wing nationalism were obsessed about their country's scholarly reputation, eager to promote studies that could advance it, and tolerant of historical writing that sought to flatter national pride. Professionally, these historians devoted themselves to exploring national archives, searching for documents and references in national collections of primary and secondary sources, and publishing their findings in historical journals with nationwide scale. As a result, the very framework of academic research could not fail to instill the idea that the nation-state was the natural setting for the historians' activity. Comparisons with their foreign colleagues and confrontations with the literary right who accused them of imitating German scholarship increased their sense of the uniqueness of their national historiographical tradition.

Nationalism has not disappeared from present-day history writing, although it seems contained outside the academic field. This has resulted in a growing contradiction between the overall antinationalist convictions of academic historians and mainstream popular historians, the former often accusing the latter of delivering up hagiographic versions of the national past.[118] By contrast, professional historians are prone to assert that the Second World War, the end of colonial empires, and the professionalization and democratization of the field have made the problem of nationalism obsolete in their own scholarly writing.[119] The very fact that they study and historicize nationalism shields them, in their view, from its most harmful dogmas.[120] More recently, the "global turn" in historiography has provided fresh impetus to decenter the discipline's focus on the nation-state, debunking national myths, and overcoming methodological nationalism.

However, just as condemning "methodological individualism" does not amount to "proclaiming the end of the individual," the critique of historiographical nationalism does not abolish the nation-state and its cultural effects.[121] The fact that the author of this article, a French historian trained in France, would specialize in French history and look at historiographical nationalism from a French perspective is itself a result of the long-lasting effects of the discipline's national embeddedness. Today, the discipline of history is far from being the most open to foreign references, not to mention the fact that "history writing still takes place overwhelmingly in nationally constituted historiographies" and languages.[122] Dissent over controversial aspects of national pasts continues to impair cross-border discussions and collaborations. Moreover, some of the problems raised by Third Republic historians still resonate with present-day issues, starting with the epistemological difficulties

[118]Paul Lawrence, "Nationalism and Historical Writing," in John Breuilly, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), 713–30, at 726.

[119]Paul M. Kennedy, "The Decline of Nationalistic History in the West, 1900–1970," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8/1 (1973), 77–100.

[120]Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992), 12.

[121]Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda," *British Journal of Sociology* 57/1 (2006), 381–403, at 384.

[122]Johan Heilbron and Anaïs Bokobza, "Transgresser les frontières en sciences humaines et sociales en France," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 210 (2015), 108–21; Stefan Berger, "A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present," *Journal of Modern History* 77/3 (2005), 629–78, at 634.

and delights inherent to writing about a country that is not one's own.[123] The disciplinary reflexivity of historians has yet to get around issues relating to the international production and circulation of historiographies, such as the national modes of historical investigation and data collection, approaches to composition, intellectual reference systems, and languages that shape historical reflection. Anyone who has ever engaged in international scholarly exchange knows that matters of strictly linguistic translation appear of minor importance compared to the (actual or imagined) adjustment to foreign styles of thought, bodies of literature, and argumentative methods.

Nor has the growing internationalization of the field of history given rise to a "World Republic of Letters." One of the main obstacles may lie in the ongoing clash for scientific dominance and imperialism already raging at the time studied in this article. Although to a lesser extent for those who most benefit from it, every historian experiences the effects of international hierarchies between historiographical nations. The selective map of legitimate scientific languages and the asymmetrical conditions for conducting research perpetually reshape a system of centers and peripheries in the global historical field.[124] In the age of rankings and academic capitalism, the ongoing competition between universities and nations has never been so ardent. If US academic and scientific hegemony acts as a vector of standardization, it fosters, in turn, fears and tensions over the future of national academic and scholarly identities.[125] As far as France is concerned, the traditional concern for international recognition and fear of decline remain striking. The conflicts of the interwar years did not help the French realize "the extent to which their country's artistic and literary primacy rested on an accumulation of past glory."[126] The feelings of decline expressed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1955 resonate with recent laments over the downfall of France's former historiographical prominence, perpetuated for some time by the "*Annales* school."[127]

The long-lasting influence of the national setting on the historian's craft still results from the interweaving of academia and historical research with the nation-state. Whatever their degree of independence from political nationalism, today's scholars remain bound to the nation that offers them a professional position. Researchers may publish articles or books in as many languages as they want and work abroad as visiting scholars. But they end up settling in the country that grants them a salary, which, most of the time, is their native one, because of

[123]The objectification of their relation to this country remains an exercise in reflexivity and introspection for foreign historians of France. Philip Nord, "Pourquoi l'histoire? Pourquoi la France?", in Philippe Gumplowicz, Alain Rauwel, and Philippe Salvadori, eds., *Faiseurs d'histoire* (Paris, 2016), 191–206; and David Bell, *Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present* (Oxford, 2016), 1–11.

[124]On the effects of Western standardization see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "A Global and Multicultural 'Discipline' of History?", *History and Theory* 45/1 (2006), 101–9.

[125]See, for instance, the French resistance to the US academic "model" often depicted as "neoliberal," in Christophe Charle and Jacques Verger, *Histoire des universités, XIIe–XXIe siècle* (Paris, 2012), 214–25.

[126]Henry Stuart Hughes, *The Obstructed Path: French Social Thought in the Years of Desperation, 1930–1960* (New York, 1968), 3.

[127]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, trans. John Russell (1955); repr. (New York, 1961), 105. For contrasted diagnoses on the current state of French thought see Perry Anderson, *La pensée tiède: Un regard critique sur la culture française* (Paris, 2005); Jean-François Sirinelli, *L'histoire est-elle encore française?* (Paris, 2011); Sudhir Hazareesingh, *How the French Think: An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People* (London, 2015).

the national dimension of specific professional prerequisites or because the precious currency of diplomas does not have the same value of exchange across the globe. More importantly, the incorporated frames of scientific thinking still stem from national higher and secondary learning systems that shape the scholarly *habitus*, traditions of thought, and intellectual practices that make it difficult to emancipate oneself from these national categories and frames of mind.[128] While these observations apply essentially to Euro-American nation-states, it is important to add that postcolonial spaces are, in contrast or in addition, affected by imperial dynamics that subject knowledge production to exogenous constraints in terms of languages, research networks and institutions, and publishing circuits.

National embeddedness, however, has advantages as well as drawbacks. Nationally grounded histories based on primary sources can prove more valuable to the understanding of the past than global histories that rely overwhelmingly on secondary literature.[129] Moreover, several authors have recently pointed out that neglecting "place-based knowledge" about local contexts and erasing the internal dynamics specific to "small places" has detrimental effects on historical research.[130] Finally, by mobilizing a common and familiar set of references and addressing both historically and politically the dilemmas of their societies, historians involved in the creation of national history find themselves in a unique position to perform the civil and ethical tasks of the historian's work. Nevertheless, it is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff of history's national embeddedness and examine which of its dimensions are scientifically or ethically justified. The cases examined in this study make it clear that even the most avowed opponents of historiographical nationalism and promoters of academic autonomy were not free of objectives aligned with the nation-state's policy. Moreover, the nationalization of the field of history initiated in the nineteenth century produced documentary, professional, and cultural effects that impacted Third Republic historians' choices and practices in ways that they may not fully realize. Objectifying and historicizing the national dispositions of the collective unconscious in the field of historiographical production and reception are, therefore, a requirement of disciplinary reflexivity if we intend to pave the way for a global historical discipline in which only the past would be foreign.[131]

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[128]Pierre Bourdieu, "Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145 (2002), 3–8; Johan Heilbron, "Qu'est-ce qu'une tradition nationale en sciences sociales?", *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 18 (2008), 3–16.

[129]Francesca Trivellato, "Microstoria, storia del mondo e storia globale," in Paola Lanaro, ed., *Microstoria: A venticinque anni da "L'eredità immateriale"* (Milan, 2011), 119–31.

[130]Lara Putnam, "Daily Life and Digital Reach: Place-Based Research and History's Transnational Turn," in Debra Castillo and Shalini Puri, eds., *Theorizing Fieldwork in the Humanities* (New York, 2017), 167–81; Richard Drayton and David Motadel, with replies from David A. Bell and Jeremy Adelman, "Discussion: The Futures of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018), 1–21.

[131]David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985).

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