2

MAKING HISTORIES

Europe, traditions and other present pasts

> Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were.[1]

A central focus of anthropological research on memory is on ways in which the past is configured and reconfigured in the present. What is recalled, when and why? Whose pasts are told in the public sphere? What is forgotten, not mentioned or perhaps only told in whispers? And what notions of continuity, change, repetition or rupture shape or are expressed in recounted memories?

This chapter looks first at some of the background to interest in these questions among anthropologists of Europe, focusing on interest in the invention of tradition. It then presents and discusses a range of examples and debates about the making of histories and variations in forms of historical consciousness in Europe. This includes a sustained example from my own work on a European project whose aim was to try to identify the elusive possibility of 'European historical consciousness'. As I argue, such projects – and academic research on history and memory in Europe more generally – are not only 'meta' reflections of what is occurring in Europe but themselves play a constitutive part in producing Europe as a particular kind of space and possibility.

Inventing traditions

One spur to these questions about how histories are made in Europe, especially for anthropologists in English-speaking countries, was the attention given by some historians to what Hobsbawm and Ranger famously called 'the invention of tradition' (in their edited volume of that name published in 1983). By

showing that traditions were often not as old as had previously been assumed, Hobsbawm and Ranger's 1983 volume showed clearly that not only did the past shape the present, the present could also shape the past. A main focus of their attention was on histories and genealogies created by nation-states – especially European – as part of their self-legitimation; but they also made a broader argument about tradition-making as a politicised process, serving the interests of some social groups more than others. These points were not wholly novel to anthropologists and, indeed, Hobsbawm and Ranger acknowledge that anthropological and sociological perspectives influenced their own. In Germany, for example, the way that the National Socialists had devised histories and genealogies, and created traditions and monuments – and the role that German *Völkskunde* (folklore) had played in this – meant that there was considerable awareness of how the past could be manipulated to political ends.[2] Nevertheless, the injection of the term 'the invention of tradition' into anthropological discourse, and the forthright nature of its exposition in the 1983 volume, chimed well in a Europe in which many areas were experiencing ethnonationalist revival and heritage movements and variously 'discovering' or 'inventing' traditions in the process.[3] Moreover, the interest in tradition invention and the making of nations coincided with a growth in the anthropology of Europe,[4] which at this time concentrated mainly on more rural or apparently traditional parts of Europe but where there were already questions being raised about the nature, persistence and revival of tradition. The invention of tradition thesis contributed to encouraging further research from anthropologists on the ways in which histories might be mobilised in service of present interests and interrogating how these might link with broader state developments.

The invention of tradition thesis has, however, been subject to critique.[5] In particular, it has been argued to posit a misleading dichotomy between 'real' traditions and 'invented' ones, forgetting that all traditions were made up at some point, and that they are subject to re-making and imbued with new meaning and significance over time. It was also criticised as overly instrumentalist, regarding history-making primarily as an act of elites engaged in forms of social engineering and leaving no space for the agency of those actually performing or living the traditions. In recognition of the fact that renditions of the past are always selective, more recent research has tended be framed in 'softer' terminology, such as historical 'making' or 'memory'; and has turned to more wide-ranging investigation of which accounts of the past are told, by whom, in what forms, and how these might relate to contemporary social relations or aspirations. Nevertheless, the invention of tradition perspective does seem to be productive in some contexts, especially those in which there *is* active and even instrumental tradition-making going on. Before looking at examples of these, let us turn briefly to some other perspectives on tradition, which was already a major topic in the anthropology of Europe before its invention and inventedness became a preoccupation.

Anthropology, tradition and change

A major thrust, and even the *raison d'être,* of much anthropological work in Europe before the 1980s was seeking out and documenting what were perceived as minority and peasant folkways, distinct from the nation-state and regarded as part of authentic ways of life. Salvage – gathering up information about ways of life deemed on the brink of disappearing – was a predominant ambition. Occasionally, questions of invention crept in, as they did in relation to some folktales, for example, but rather than becoming part of the study these tended to be dismissed as 'fakelore'.[6] The anthropological concern was with 'real' tradition.

This did not mean, however, that traditions were always perceived as fixed and unchanging; though the tendency was to see them, if not as stable, as adaptively responding to change.[7] Research on folktales, which was a staple of much ethnological work in many parts of Europe, was often concerned with charting changes in the stories over time (see Bendix 1997). Hermann Bausinger's influential *Folklore in a World of Technology* (1990), originally published in German in 1961, importantly drew attention to the making of traditions in modern societies, arguing that ethnologists should give consideration to matters such as how modern technologies became the subject-matter of new lore; and contending that it was as legitimate to study what he called 'second-hand traditions' – those adopted and usually altered by people who did not originally produce them – as 'first-hand' ones. Eugenia Shanklin's ethnographic study of sheep farmers in South-West Donegal – a part of the world in which it was commonly assumed that traditions were dying out – likewise pointed out that rather than disappearing, 'traditions' were changing 'in order to fit present circumstances' (1985: xiii) and that this was probably the usual rather than exceptional state of affairs. Although Shanklin's work partly fits the pre-1980s emphasis on tradition-making as adaptive, she also makes a significant move that is characteristic of the turn that begins in the 1980s. This is to treat 'tradition' not as a given or as something that she, as the anthropological analyst, is straightforwardly able to identify, but as a discursive construct. As such, her work charts how the term is deployed and what gets to be *counted* as 'tradition'. In an innovative chapter, she presents the voices of five different farmers, showing how 'tradition' could be variously opposed to 'modernity', sometimes being viewed as worth preserving and at others as something to be transcended in order to develop.

Discourses of this type amongst those studied, together with self-evident change, were also part of what prompted attention to questions about what was 'traditional', what kinds of 'past' persisted into the present or what aspects of the present came to be inscribed as part of a longer, more enduring temporality. The development of cultural tourism and the marketing of tradition and heritage also brought to the fore questions about 'tradition' as a resource for selling places and the consequences for localities of the marketing of the past, as in the example

below and as I discuss further in Chapter 5. In some of these cases 'tradition invention' seemed a useful lens, in part at least, through which to examine what is going on.

Inventing quality French wine

Aware of criticisms of the invention of tradition thesis, Robert C. Ulin (1995) nevertheless argues that it is analytically useful because of the attention that it directs to how traditions may be actively created in the service of particular sectors of society. Working historically, but informed also by his ethnographic work as an anthropologist, he directs his attention to the making of *Grands Crus* wines in Bordeaux. Although the status of wine regions is typically seen as a consequence of the 'natural facts' of soil and climate, he shows how elites in certain regions have worked to elevate the status of their wines through various practices, self-promotion, legislation and the construction of a history. In particular, elites lobbied for legislation – beginning with the 1855 classification of wines that ranked them by 'crus' (e.g. *premier cru* – first growth) – that would both distinguish their wines from those of others and ensure that only their wines would be eligible. As he explains, criteria such as yield, length of ageing and also being produced from a château, all worked to favour elite producers and exclude both smaller, non-château wine-makers and cooperatives. Even if the châteaux were no longer owned by aristocrats, and even if new methods of wine production were used, the elite vineyard owners drew on the imagery of age and tradition associated with the aristocracy.

In a more recent study, in Burgundy, Marion Demoissier comes to similar conclusions in her investigation of the concept of *terroir* – a term with no direct English equivalent (though sometimes rendered as 'soil' or 'country'), subject to different definitions that 'nevertheless share an appeal to notions of unchanging place and enduringness' (2011: 689). As she shows, this concept is used especially to the advantage of wine-growing elites in Burgundy, who typically are 'third or fourth generation … inheritors of the best plots in Burgundy' (2011: 699). By emphasising the 'unique attributes of a specific site' (2011: 702) – understood as manifest in the resulting distinctive taste of the wine produced – elite wine-makers confirm 'their own individual economic and social status and sell… their uniqueness at global level' (2011: 702). This will be further consolidated, she argues, if Burgundy and Champagne succeed in becoming recognised by UNESCO as world heritage.

Invented traditions as ideology in Communist Eastern Europe

The legislation and manoeuvring involved in the making of French wine culture have taken place over more than a century – though certain moments were especially busy, notably the 1855 classification, which was announced at the Paris Universal Exposition, itself a hotbed of performative creation of national

culture (Ulin 1995: 522). Hobsbawm's original formulation of 'invented traditions' included that they are established rapidly ('a matter of a few years perhaps', 1983: 1). This, together with active and even self-aware production of tradition, does characterise some situations well. One such is Socialist Eastern Europe. Here, ethnographers were inevitably confronted with newly created practices that had been introduced as part of the state restructuring of the social along Marxist-Leninist ideological lines. Typically, new official histories were written and traditions either invented or adapted in order to 're-educate, to transform practice and consciousness' and generally to integrate localities into the socialist state, as Deema Kaneff describes it for the village of Talpa in Bulgaria (2004: 14).[8]

Unlike in the 'invention of tradition' contexts described by Hobsbawm *et al.,* what this also often produced were high levels of awareness among citizens about how history and tradition might be used to political ends. In some cases too it led to sophisticated folk taxonomies of different kinds of history and tradition serving different social functions. In Talpa, for example, Kaneff explains that villagers themselves make distinctions between

> history [as] the embodiment of political-economy; tradition [as] a potentially oppositional way to conceptualize the human order (primarily through religious/mystical practices); [and] ... folklore [which] provided a state-sponsored notion of national identity.
>
> (2004: 10)

This did not mean, however, that villagers necessarily rejected the newer, ideological forms. It was contrary to what various studies elsewhere in Eastern Europe – including Martha Lampland's in Hungary (1988, 1995), Kathryn Verdery's in Romania (1983, 1991) and Chris Hann's in Poland (1985) – had shown. In these, state ideology and its associated history and traditions were cast primarily as an alien imposition (Kaneff 2004: 16). In Talpa, however, the new rituals and frameworks ('folklore' in local terminology) were mostly taken up widely and enthusiastically. Small numbers of people engaged in minor forms of resistance by ignoring the socialist rituals and valuing 'tradition', which was seen within the official ideology as a retrograde clinging onto the past. For the most part, however, Kaneff argues, local 'officials and others were skilled at using these [state sponsored] pasts ... in strategic ways to achieve their political ambitions' (2004: 15). And they largely succeeded in enlisting the majority of villagers to support them.

Clearly, then, there was here active invention of pasts and traditions in service of particular political ends. But this does not mean that the new pasts – here called 'folklore' – are less meaningful than the older ones. Neither, in Kaneff's analysis, is 'tradition' simply defined as the true and authentic bedrock of practice that had pre-existed socialism. As she shows, the status of 'tradition' changes within new socialist system, not least in it becoming a site of opposition.

As such, she avoids the problematic a priori distinction between invented and non-invented traditions, in which the latter were assumed to be outside political process and somehow more authentic; and instead presents a more nuanced picture that leaves space too for the reflexivity of participants.

Anthropology, tradition and Europe

Investigations of the invention of tradition also drew attention to the role of experts, including folklorists and anthropologists, in the invention process.[9] While this identified some cases of out-and-out fabrication of folktales and traditional practices, for the most part what was involved were more subtle processes of overly enthusiastic search, 'discovery' and selection. In addition, the very fact of *what* anthropologists of Europe directed their attention to and where they carried out their research played a part in configuring Europe as a particular kind of epistemological space. In particular, the concern with non-modern ways of life that was the mainstay and *raison d'être* of much anthropological research on Europe until the 1980s, imagined Europe as sharply divided between, on one side, the modern, central and urban, and, on the other, the rural, peripheral and traditional. This effectively conjured up a Europe of two distinct temporalities: one, of rapid forward momentum and ongoing change; and the other, of static tradition, waiting for the probably inevitable invasion by the former. By focusing on the traditional and seeking this in the peripheries of Europe, it was argued, anthropologists of Europe contributed to what Jeremy Boissevain famously called its 'tribalisation' (1975: 11).[10]

During the 1980s, spurred on too by the *Writing Culture* debates following (and to an extent preceding) publication of an edited volume of that name later in the 1980s (Clifford and Marcus 1986), anthropologists of Europe became more reflexive about how their own research selections and emphases might contribute to particular representations of Europe, and also to how they might best tackle their subject – and the various pasts they encountered. As we see in the next chapter, this also contributed to various methodological explorations and innovations.

Historical situating

One way in which ethnographers of Europe sought to tackle the criticism of their ignoring of history was by emphasising how supposedly marginal areas were *part of* wider historical and political processes. The ethnographic present, in other words, was situated *in* history instead of sealed off from it. In research in Communist countries, this generally happened inevitably as the role of the state and historical situation was so pervasive and visible. Elsewhere, however, historical situating was sometimes against the grain of earlier, more romantic, perspectives that had tended to see villages and rural areas as bastions of only slowly changing tradition (see Boyes 1993; Rogers 1991). For example, researchers (including

myself) in the Scottish Hebrides showed how an apparently traditional practice such as crofting – a form of landholding in which people have small amounts of land in order to be able to undertake small-scale farming – was not the ancient way of life that some romanticised accounts presented it as being. Rather, it was a product of nineteenth-century capitalist development that served to bind local populations into unfavourable labour relations that maximised profits for landlords.[11] While it had taken on other meanings since, ethnographers saw part of their task as to look beyond the immediate romantic descriptions to try to see where ideas about traditionality and community came from and what this might also say about the present. My own experience of this kind of work was that reading historical materials – and especially primary sources – helped me to better understand some of the selections (and silences) involved in official or better known accounts of Scottish Highland history, and thus meant that I was aware of what was *not* recalled or was only referenced in relatively subtle ways that I might not have noticed otherwise. For example, in everyday speech in the area of the Isle of Skye in which I worked, there were sometimes subtle allusions to people whose families had gained from the redistributions of land following the nineteenth-century land wars. I would have been less likely to have registered these if I had kept in mind only the oft-told popular account of local togetherness and community, and not the more complex situation that the primary sources revealed (Macdonald 1997). This was not to imply that my aim was to dismiss popular or romanticised accounts: on the contrary, I attempted to explore how they were variously mobilised and put to work – for example to distinguish different kinds of people or moral positions – in everyday life.

As part of this work of historically situating ethnographic accounts, some anthropologists of Europe also turned their attention to wider nationalist discourses, using anthropological techniques to analyse their structuring. Michael Herzfeld's considerable body of ethnographic research, for example, often gives attention to the relationship between state or nationalist histories and those he encountered in his various fieldsites, ranging from Cretan shepherds to bureaucrats in Athens. In *Cultural Intimacy* (1997), for example, he coins the term 'structural nostalgia' to describe how the Greek state and also 'its most lawless citizens' (1997: 109) deploy an 'image of an unspoiled and irrecoverable past ... an Edenic order – a time before time – in which the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay that affects everything human' (1997: 109). While both the state officials and the 'lawless citizens' share the same idealised vision of a pre-state past – and this 'provides ... the common ground of their continuing mutual engagement' (1997: 109) – they mobilise it to very different ends. For the lawless, it shows that things were better without state interference. 'For the state the model legitimizes its intervention as an act of restoring a formerly perfect social order' (1997: 109). While his argument is drawn from close ethnographic observation of the Greek case, he also suggests that such 'structural nostalgia' – for social states of 'originary perfection' (1997: 112) – is widespread in both nationalist and religious (especially Christian)

narratives. It is so in part because it can act as a 'strategic resource' (1997: 115) to provide 'a spiritual basis' for claims and actions and also to 'disguise the strategic manipulation of present time' (1997: 113). As such, it is a pattern that we can expect to find widely in Europe.

Anthropological work of this kind, then, took on board the notion of histories and traditions as made but instead of viewing this as a feature of only *some* histories and traditions, it regarded history-making – and present-making – as more ramifying ongoing processes with continuing implications. Histories, nations, and cultures are not imagined once and for all, went the argument, but were in a continual process of reimagining.[12] In highlighting this, anthropological work also showed that making histories was not the preserve of political elites – though getting to hear other kinds of accounts, which were typically relatively inaudible both in the historical record and in the present, posed a greater methodological challenge, as we see below. At the same time, it also showed that 'local' accounts were not necessarily separate from national or state ones but thoroughly entangled with them.

Anthropologists also tackled the question of how Europe was imagined by their discipline by looking at other topics, more urban locations and what were at that time unconventional sites. For example, Françoise Zonabend, who had published an exemplary detailed ethnography about time – including, significantly, ideas about change – in a Burgundian village (Zonabend 1980), turned her attention to looking at workers in nuclear installations (1989). Today, it is hard to think of a site in which anthropologists of Europe would not work.

Making European history

As part of growing attention to anthropological practices, George Marcus and Michael Fischer in the US called for what they called the 'repatriation of anthropology' (1986). This entailed anthropological research on the US in order to help fulfil anthropology's promise of a 'cultural critique' capable of 'disturbing cultural self-satisfaction' (1986: 111). Looking at institutions involved in constructing the nation was one dimension of this. In Europe, in a similar spirit, anthropologists increasingly turned their attention to European institutions.[13] Some of this work included attention to their mobilisations of history and, in particular, the way in which history has been produced in attempts to forge a European identity.

EU invented traditions

In *Building Europe* (2000), Cris Shore documents some of the policy initiatives by EU institutions to create new, shared traditions and, as he quotes from an EU official document, 'affirm the awareness of a common cultural heritage as an element in the European identity' (2000: 45). The former included creating 'a new set of symbols for communicating the principles and values upon which

the [European] Community is based (2000: 46). Most of these were modelled on those that were part of the earlier 'identikit' of ways of symbolising national identity (Macdonald 1993). They included a flag, with 12 gold stars on a blue background. According to the official account by the Council of Europe, this was chosen because:

> Twelve was a symbol of perfection and plenitude, associated equally with the apostles, the sons of Jacob, the tables of the Roman legislator, the labours of Hercules, the hours of the day, the months of the year, or the signs of the Zodiac. Lastly, the circular layout denoted the union.
>
> (quoted in Shore 2000: 47)

This seems like a capacious casting around for symbolic attributes of the number 12, though it also shows a predominance of Christian and classical references – the two main pillars in attempts to create a European history – with some more universal ones thrown in for good measure. Marc Abélès also makes the following, rather different, observation about the choice of the number:

> Most people think that the twelve stars correspond to the twelve member states at that time, but the symbol was chosen for more negative reasons. Fourteen or fifteen stars raised the problem of the status of Saarland, and thirteen was a bad omen. From an aesthetic point of view, a circle of twelve stars represented harmony and left enough space for introducing in its centre the particular emblem of the various European organizations.
>
> (Abélès 2000: 38)

Other constructed symbols of the new Europe – part of a self-aware invention of tradition that mixed pragmatics with historical inspiration – included a European anthem ('taken from the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – the "Ode to Joy"' (Shore 2000: 48)); a European passport; and 'new celebratory calendrical markers, such as festive "European weeks" [and] "European Culture Months (to accompany the "European city of culture" initiative)' (2000: 49); and 'proposed new Community-wide public holidays commemorating decisive moments in the history of European integration – such as the birthday of Jean Monnet and the date of signing of the Treaty creating the European Coal and Steel Community' (2000: 49–50). The new currency, the Euro, showed some of the struggle for, on the one hand, linking the new Europe to its history and, on the other, avoiding giving precedence to the history of some nations. Debates about what imagery to show were lengthy and in the end, rather than select particular images of persons or sites, the decision was to put abstract generalised 'European' architecture on the new coins and notes. The new currency thus features imagined bridges or other buildings in various 'European' architectural styles – 'Classical, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo, the age of iron and glass architecture, and modern twentieth-century architecture'

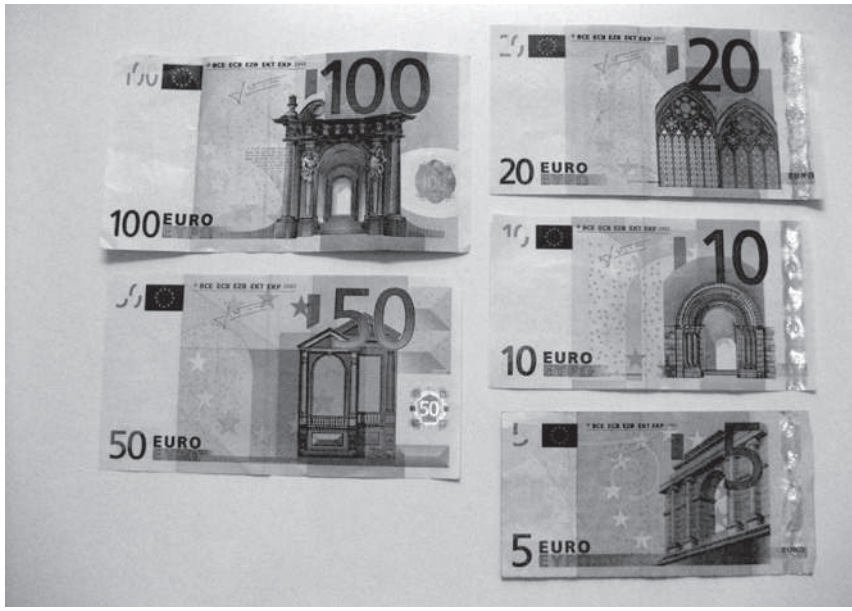

FIGURE 2.1 Euro currency. Photograph by Sharon Macdonald

(Shore 2000: 112). This decision was both fascinating and bizarre, speaking to the significance of place in the European imaginary but at the same time defusing its real situatedness.

Writing European histories

This creative and somewhat perverse strategy was not, however, so readily available for the production of European public histories that addressed Europe's past(s). Making up generalised abstract histories of Europe was not perhaps totally impossible but it was more challenging for media such as school textbooks and public exhibitions. Reviewing some of the possible 'historical building blocks on which to construct a European identity' – 'the classical tradition, Christianity, the Renaissance and European humanism, the Enlightenment, the Holocaust and the European Union itself' (Berger 2009: 29), historian Stefan Berger points out the exclusions and other dilemmas that each of these raises. Having led a major European Science Foundation project, *Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe* (2003–8),[14] he concludes that: 'History is what divides Europeans, not what unites them' (Berger 2009: 29) and that, therefore, it cannot and should not be used as a foundation for European identity building. This robust view is not shared by all historians.[15] Neither is it by the numerous initiatives that have been instigated to try to foster European identity through history. These include commissioned histories and film (Shore 2000: 56–60), networks of history teachers (van de

FIGURE 2.2 Europeans: individuals in *'It's our history!'* Photograph copyright Tempora/Musée de l'Europe

Leeuw-Roord 2000), European Cities of Culture and city twinning initiatives (Sassatelli 2002; Lotterman 2009; Patel 2012), European pavilions at World Fairs and a wide range of exhibitions.[16] The last includes the Museum of Europe project, which was influenced by the ideas of Pierre Nora and officially devised to 'be the "place of memory" that Europe needs'.[17] Its first temporary exhibition, opened in 2007, was entitled *'C'est notre histoire!'/'It's our history!'*

There is not space here for a review of these but it is worth briefly pointing out some of the difficulties with these histories that some have identified. First, there is the point repeatedly raised, as by Berger above, concerning the diversity of Europe and the fact that history is as likely to divide as unify. As such, common histories of Europe have been accused of skating over differences or making unwarranted assumptions of what is shared. In a thoughtful analysis of *'It's our history!'*, Steffi de Jong notes that the exhibition – which seeks to create a shared memory for Europe – begins in 1945. World War II is referenced but not in any detail. It acts, rather, as a shared 'memory' but one evacuated of the detailed content that could highlight antagonisms between different European countries (see also Chapter 8). As de Jong puts it, World War II 'is remembered; but it is remembered as a pan-European catastrophe in which all Europeans appear equally as victims' (2011: 378).

There is also the dilemma that identity-building often works by creating an oppositional 'Other' (see also Chapters 7 and 8) and that this can have the effect of creating exclusions – as has been the case especially in relation to Muslims in some European projects.[18] In many respects *'It's our history!'* takes thoughtful and innovative approaches to avoiding presenting a singular European identity. It does so, for example, by presenting variety through the display of life-stories of 27 individuals, representing what by 2007 were 27 member-states. Those chosen mostly symbolise contributions to the European project, including:

> an Erasmus student, a Swedish scientist working for the European Organisation of Nuclear Research, a Portuguese entrepreneur running a transportation and logistics company, a Finnish interpreter at the European Parliament, a Bulgarian farmer producing organic yoghurt, a Greek and a Maltese civil servant at the European Commission and the

> Austrian founder of SkyEurope… a Belgian worker who fought for equal payment in the Belgian national weapon's factory, a Czech co-signatory of the Charter 77, an Estonian participant in the 'Phosphorite War', a Polish fellow campaigner of Lech Wałęsa in the Solidarity movement and a German couple who fled from the GDR through the tunnel dug underneath the Berlin Wall.
>
> (de Jong 2011: 377)

As de Jong observes, however, all of the 27 individuals who are pictured in the exhibition – and who tell part of their own life-histories – are white. A kind of European diversity is displayed, then, but not one that includes visible 'racial' difference and that might reference histories – of migration and colonialism – beyond the European Union.

In search of European historical consciousness

How to write histories of Europe – and whether these could be done in 'inclusive' ways and that would foster senses of being European – were questions discussed as part of a project on European Historical Consciousness of which I was part during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The project was led by Professor Jörn Rüsen, a charismatic and internationally renowned theoretician of history, based at the Kulturwissenschaftliche Institut (Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities) in Essen, of which he was director. It was funded by the Körber Foundation, a private organisation that is involved in a wide range of projects concerned with history and with multiculturalism.[19] The most famous of these is the 'President's history competition' – a competition held for school children and young people every year since 1973, on a particular theme. This is the competition which is the subject-matter of Michael Verhoeven's excellent fact-based film *Das schreckliche Mädchen –The Nasty Girl* – about a schoolgirl who unearths all sorts of unsavoury details about the public worthies in her small town as she researches its recent history. Central to the Körber Foundation's funding of the European Historical Consciousness project was that they were involved in extending the competition to other countries, including at that time to many in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; and they were also planning a pan-European version of the competition, which was launched as EUSTORY – the History Network of Young Europeans – in 2001.[20] One outcome that the Körber Foundation wanted from the European Historical Consciousness project was assistance with drafting a 'Charter' – a set of principles of what would constitute 'good history' in this context – for this new network.[21] A particular concern – reflected in the Charter's wording – was over nationalistic histories being produced in post-Socialist countries as part of the enthusiastic embracing of national independence. Germany's experience of nationalism under the Nazis had made many historians wary of nationalistic history. The dilemma was how to articulate this without engaging in dictatorial

laying down of rules by the German organisers. Setting up the accompanying academic project and bringing together scholars from a wide range of countries to hopefully provide a robust scientific perspective was intended as a means of helping to find a way of doing so.

I was invited to participate, initially as a guest speaker, as an anthropologist and expert on Scotland, and later to become part of the steering committee.[22] This met regularly over several years and contributed to reports, publications and the Charter. Seven of 12 members of the steering committee were German, more specifically West German, and the others were from the Netherlands, Russia, Norway, and Hungary. All other than myself were trained in history, working either in academic history, or in the field of history pedagogy, or in organisations working with history (e.g. providing information for history teachers). Over the course of the project we heard talks by many presenters, including from those running history competitions in East European countries. These often highlighted dilemmas such as recalcitrant teachers, or the discomfort of young people discovering alternatives to the histories that their families or schools preferred to tell. Certain lines of difference – between some of the participants, including some members of the steering committee – and assumptions also became apparent as I discuss below. First, however, I offer some brief comments on the notion of 'European Historical Consciousness' that was our project's rubric.

What is European historical consciousness?

In the previous chapter, I introduced the term 'historical consciousness' as a possible analytical focus for investigation of modes of historicising. Some of the most extensive and subtle theorising has come from Germany, where it is usually called *Geschichtsbewusstsein*. Developed especially by Jeismann (1985) to draw attention to the ways in which cognitive and cultural factors may structure the learning and teaching of history, and more broadly to how past, present and future are understood in relation to one another, it has been further developed in Rüsen's sophisticated theorising to include conceptualising historical consciousness as a fundamental part of the human condition – the process of 'orientation in the course of time which has to be brought about by remembering the past' (2005: 1). This posits historical consciousness not so much as a particular and contingent way of structuring the past and of configuring time (as, in common with most other anthropologists, I use it below), but rather as a faculty allowing individuals and groups to escape senses of contingency and give meaning to the passage of time. Rüsen is also much concerned with the ways in which different historiographic modes variously help satisfy the need for temporal orientation, arguing, for example, that postmodern approaches fail to do so (2005, especially Chapter 8).

Despite Rüsen's own subtle thinking about the term, there was often dispute in the group about what might be meant by it, and more specifically what was

meant by *European* historical consciousness.[23] Rüsen's conceptualisation of historical consciousness was universalistic. So what could European historical consciousness be? Sometimes, especially in the early days, we talked past one another, employing different assumptions without always being aware of doing so. At others we debated whether it concerned ways of structuring history and temporality (a configurative conception of 'historical consciousness') that might be found in Europe – and, if so, across all parts of it or only some? Or was it about particular knowledge (a content conception) – and then, knowledge about Europe or knowledge held within it? Although we often agreed in our more theoretical discussions that our emphasis was not on knowledge content, in practice, in the detail of debate, it often was. Shocked discussion of teenagers not knowing about this or that historical event or person was recurrent, for example. Most often, however, 'historical consciousness' seemed to relate to *forms* of historical narrative, and particular attention paid was to 'national' and 'nationalistic' (the two sometimes being regarded as synonymous) structuring of history. Such structuring was frequently talked about as involving potentially dangerous degrees of patriotism and negative sentiments towards other nations and minority groups. A 'European historical consciousness', by contrast, was normatively conceived as a mode of historical narration that would avoid these problematic nationalistic dimensions of national historical consciousness.

In the throes of our actual work, our discussion mostly focused on the following: (1) how to write a *common* European history – what should go in, what should be avoided and how should it be disseminated; (2) whether there was history that could give people in different parts of Europe a consciousness of being European. The question of why and even whether these should be done was rarely raised and, when it was, felt like breaking a taboo or being rather politically incorrect, as I found when I did so. (My crassness was readily explained either as being from Euro-sceptic England or as my anthropological peculiarity.) For the most part it was taken for granted that a common European history could act as a basis for a common European identity; and that a sense of a shared past could transcend the potential divisiveness of national histories. This is not to say that Europe's differences were ignored. On the contrary, there was considerable and sometimes heated discussion of how to recognise 'diversity' and allow for 'multiperspectival' history that would not fall into what Rüsen frequently denounced as the postmodern 'anything goes' quagmire.

National differences and cultural models

Not all participants, however, were as ready to so thoroughly castigate 'national' history. (This was especially evident at some of the bigger meetings, involving history teachers from around Europe.) Participants from post-Socialist countries often embraced national history as an escape from socialist and Soviet-dominated history; and my own consideration of Scottish nationalism and history did not lead me to be quite so unequivocal about the need to transcend the national past.

Our Russian colleague, Michail Boytsov, was also concerned that the implicit positing of 'Europe' and 'European' as superior to 'nation' and 'national' was an evolutionistic schema that reinforced a distinction between 'modern' and 'non-modern' parts of Europe, the former being those who accepted 'Europeanness' and demonstrated 'European historical consciousness', the latter being those who did not.[24]

Another 'given' was that bad – usually nationalistic – aspects of the past needed to be addressed. This was based on loosely psychoanalytical ideas that suffuse much discourse about the past in Germany, in which an adequate and healthy relationship to the present (and the future) is seen as premised on having come to terms adequately with the past, and in particular not having repressed anything which will cause continuing trauma or difficulties in the present. Drawing on ideas that are part of a broader European memory complex, the repression model is one that has been adopted especially in relation to the Nazi past in Germany, having become widespread since the 1960s.[25] The past becomes something that must be faced, addressed, worked through, mastered, overcome or otherwise tackled as summed up in the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In project seminars, I noticed that this understanding of the past – which is coupled with a perception of the past as inherently problematic, as dangerous if not properly managed – was one which (West) German steering committee members (there were none from the GDR) were especially likely to bring to bear on the cases which we discussed. As such, they were particularly likely to perceive the past as intruding into the present; and they tended to use language such as 'coping with' history, and individual-psychologised terms such as 'guilt' or 'shame', in their discussions of society to a greater extent than, say, East European members. The latter were more likely to talk about the politics and structures of history production, and to cast particular ways of doing history as bound up with particular regimes in a way that did not so readily depict history as likely to cause eruptions into a later period. On one occasion, a scholar from the Netherlands was given a rough ride when he presented a paper to the European Historical Consciousness project which contained research concluding that the Dutch have not accepted their role as collaborators (nearly all imagine themselves as part of the resistance) and that he suggested was 'healthy' by comparison with the German constant dwelling on their own guilt and culpability. A Norwegian colleague also wittily questioned the German determination to keep confronting their guilty past when he recounted having turned on the television in his hotel room in Essen to find a British-made World War II film featuring Michael Caine, dubbed into German, in which Germans were so clearly and stereotypically depicted as 'baddies'. 'Why do you do this to yourselves?' he asked. Nobody had an answer.

Yet, it was a question that some of the German participants acknowledged as relevant to the ambitions of the European Historical Consciousness project. In particular, would framing histories in terms of 'Europe' lead to a playing down of national histories and affiliations – or would Germans still have to come to terms

with a specifically German past? Or – as was explicitly raised in discussion on more than one occasion – would a more developed *European* history make us think about the Nazi past and the Holocaust less within a frame of *German* culpability? Was the concept of 'European Historical Consciousness', as a German participant reflected to me at one point, a matter of German 'flight' or 'refuge' (*Flucht*) into Europe – a way of not having to think about that burdensome German history any more?[26] If at any level it was, it also was not: for we often found ourselves addressing it. Indeed, it seemed to me – and the other participants that I suggested this to generally agreed – that there was a profound ambivalence over the Nazi past. On the one hand, Germans often resented (understandably) that they were so often identified with it – and that it seemed to them to be mentioned so much (this was often a source of remorse expressed to me – why were the British so obsessed with stereotyping Germans as Nazis?).[27] On the other hand, they were determined that the Nazi past and the Holocaust should remain at the centre of any thinking about the past in Europe – and they often brought discussion back to this even when we were talking about other topics. Interesting here too was how persistently notions of nationality – 'Germans' – kept re-emerging in this attempt to forge European historical consciousness.

During the project, I noted other instances of what seemed to me to illustrate culturally specific forms of historical consciousness. For example, there was often talk about 'generation', with German participants often presenting themselves by noting that they were 'second generation'. This is based on a reckoning of history beginning with World War II – the time from which the clock starts ticking and social relations and present-day German identities are reckoned. As a mode of narration it collapses national and personal, thus deeply implicating individuals in collective relations with history.[28] Yet the clear-cut division into different age-bands that this use of 'generation' implies, does not map out so unequivocally on the ground, and individuals classified as of one particular 'generation' might have diverse relationships even to the 'past of reckoning' – never mind other histories or experiences. Furthermore, this generationalism – thinking about social relations through the lens of generation – is not ubiquitous across Europe.[29]

By identifying some of the culturally specific modes of historical consciousness at work during the European Historical Consciousness project, I do not wish to detract from the value of the project or from the EUSTORY initiative. Discussion was sensitive and sophisticated and the resulting Charter weaves a careful course between some of the issues that the project highlighted. The Charter itself was presented to the European Commission in Brussels and has been used in the President's History Competition, helping teachers across Europe to better articulate dilemmas that they faced in the teaching of history. I personally learnt a good deal during my participation and my observations are in part a consequence of how the high-level debates attuned me to questions of historical consciousness. Moreover, my interest in questions that shape this book owes much to my time on the project. This included an interest in questions of relatively inaudible histories or modes of historicising also present within Europe.

Other histories

Within the anthropology of Europe there has been increased attention, especially since the 1980s, to local memories and ways of telling the past in everyday life. This has helped to highlight 'other histories', that is, as noted in the introduction, accounts that differ from more mainstream or official ones, thus 'demonstrating the inherent plurality of history in Europe… [and] breaking down modern European history's alleged uniqueness and unity' (Hastrup 1992: 1). In some cases 'other histories' constituted major challenges to official accounts, prompting wider revisionism or even political outrage. In others, it exposed not just differing memories of the past but also alternative ways of conceptualising the nature of history and temporality.

Work of this kind has been carried out in many parts of Europe. One particularly productive location, however, has been Greece, ethnographers of which have contributed especially rich studies drawing attention to questions of history-making and historical consciousness. That Greece became the location for such significant work is in some ways not surprising, as Michael Herzfeld argues, in that it had occupied an ambivalent position of being, on the one hand, the historical 'ancestor' of Europe and thus in a sense the most 'European' of Europe's countries, and, on the other, of being relatively marginal within the newer European economy and polity (1987). In addition, the complex history of the Ottoman Empire, World War II occupation and Civil War, of strong nationalism coupled with strong regional and island identities, ethnic minorities, and several and shifting borders with other countries, all contribute to Greece being an especially fertile ground for exploring questions of relations between past and present, and what is 'remembered', why and how.

Nationalist narratives and hidden histories

One theme in past presencing research in Greece, as indeed elsewhere, is the construction of national histories and the ways in which these intersect with local or regional accounts of the past, sometimes differing from these and at other times being mutually reinforcing. Inevitably, this raises questions about nationalist historical narratives, as, for example, in Anastasia Karakasidou's *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Greek Macedonia 1870–1990* (1997). Karakasidou began her research with a model – rooted in her own upbringing and education in Greece – of a clear-cut distinction between 'local Greeks' and 'refugees' (who had arrived later from elsewhere). Her historical and ethnographic research showed, however, that rather than there being a 'pure Greek' historical trajectory back to the ancient kingdom of Macedon, Slavic-speakers had continually been present in Greece, and in greater numbers, than usually acknowledged. This presence had, however, been written out of the official national historical record and Slavic-speakers and their descendants generally concealed their Slavic identities in everyday life. Her work thus showed revision of histories

at national, regional and even personal levels. Conducted at a time when the question of Macedonia was becoming even more politically contested – namely, in the aftermath of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the establishment of an area of North of Greece as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, an independent, Slavic, country – her work was widely seen as unpatriotic, to such an extent that she even received death threats. In macabre fashion this showed the significance with which history was imbued. It also highlighted some of the particular challenges that might be faced by anthropologists working on such questions in their own countries – though others could experience these too (e.g. Cowan and Brown 2000: 2).

One analytical difficulty Karakasidou faced was the fact that the model of identities of which she was critical was widely held by the people with whom she worked. Alternative, or 'other', histories that showed a different reality were relatively muted not only in the official historical record but also in daily life. This did not mean that they were absent but rather, as other researchers of Greece also found, that they were rarely addressed directly. In fieldwork in central Greece, for example, Anna Collard was puzzled to discover that villagers would make 'constant comment' (1989: 95) about the late eighteenth- early nineteenth-century 'Ottoman period' as though they had directly lived through it; while mostly ignoring the more recent traumatic period of German occupation in the early 1940s. On the one hand, reference to the Ottoman period – 'celebrated as a time of freedom fighters (and brigands), of national resistance, of patriotism and heroic deeds' (1989: 96) – fostered links 'with a national culture of patriotism, Greek heroism, and ideas about a untied Greek nation' (1989: 97). Equally, however, it allowed an indirect way of talking about 'a less officially acceptable past' and 'the "forbidden" topic of self-government in the occupation period' (1989: 97). As well as showing how selective 'social memory' (as Collard called these mobilisations of the past in daily life) could be used to morally evaluate the present, Collard's work also showed 'other historical consciousnesses' or forms of 'past presencing'. For the Greek villagers not only made their own particular selections from the historical record, they also flouted usual temporalities, as in their collapsing of certain distant time-periods together or talking about a period before they were born as though they had directly experienced it.

Other historical consciousnesses

Other work too has shown not just other histories but other historical consciousnesses. Michael Herzfeld's extensive Greek ethnography has often addressed such questions. In *A Place in History* (1991), for example, he explored how the people of Rethemnos, in their fight to resist bureaucratic controls on the alterations to their homes that they were allowed to make, attempt to 'reclaim their lives from a detemporalised past and a desocialized present, and to develop other kinds of historical consciousness' (1991: 9–10) than that of the 'monumental conception of history' – or 'monumental time' – produced by the

modern bureaucratic nation-state. These other historical consciousnesses are rooted instead in what he calls 'social time'. As he explains:

> Between social and monumental time lies a discursive chasm, separating the popular from official understandings of history. Social time is the grist of everyday experience. It is above all the kind of time in which events cannot be predicted but in which every effort can be made to influence them. It is the time that gives events their reality, because it encounters each as one of a kind. Monumental time, by contrast, is reductive and generic. It encounters events as realizations of some supreme destiny, and it reduces social experience to collective predictability. Its main focus is on the past – a past constituted by categories and stereotypes.
>
> (1991: 10)

By exploring the contests over restoration and conservation of property in Rethemnos, Herzfeld was able, then, not only to illustrate the fact that people chose different historical periods to preserve or obliterate but also how these selections were thoroughly embedded in ongoing social relations and specific ways of conceptualising time and the nature of history. Importantly, this shaped not only the town's present but also its future – creating a physical heritage that would endure into the future and, in the process, making certain other histories less visible in the future townscape (see also Herzfeld 2009).

This attention to physical and embodied dimensions of the past or memory is another major theme of anthropological research, as I discuss further in Chapter 4. It expands upon the more discursively focused aspects of historical consciousness, highlighting that the ways in which the past is apprehended and mobilised are not necessarily only linguistic. As David Sutton puts it, in his *Memories Cast in Stone: The Relevance of the Past in Everyday Life* (1998), a detailed ethnography of the island of Kalymnos, discussed further below, 'historical consciousness … comes in many forms other than articulated written or oral histories' (1998: 10). Moreover, these other forms do not necessarily 'say' the same thing as the verbally articulated. 'Discursive, narrated historical consciousness is sometimes supplemented by, sometimes contradicted by, ritual and kinship practices' as well as by other embodied practices, such as the ritualised throwing of dynamite (which is as dangerous as it sounds) at Easter, which 'subtly bring[s] to mind different periods of the island's past' (1998: 10). These are periods that 'often remain unarticulated in everyday conversation because direct articulation would explicitly question the relationship between Kalymnos and the local and national authorities' (1998: 10).

This 'indirection', so often found in anthropological work on Greece but also elsewhere in Europe,[30] is in part due to the fact that those involved 'see the past as alive and active in the present', and, as such, as potentially 'dangerous' (Sutton 1998: 203). Sutton suggests that this can be distinguished from 'cut off history' (a notion he adapts from Collingwood 1939) – that is, pasts that

are 'commodified for tourist consumption, museumified, made an object of nostalgia' (1998: 203). At the time that he was writing, such pasts seemed to be becoming increasingly prevalent in Europe (and indeed elsewhere), as we will explore further in Chapter 5; though we should note here that not all anthropologists have found apparently commodified pasts to be as 'cut off' from the present as is often imagined.

Here, however, I present some brief case studies in order to show further some of the varieties of ways of conceptualising history and its significance, of modes of recounting it and otherwise making the past present that have been highlighted by anthropologists working in a variety of countries in Europe. All were based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork and involved the researchers encountering past presencing in a wide variety of contexts, including ones in which they had not expected the past to be of such significance.

The first example, by David Sutton on Kalymnos in the 1990s, already introduced, is from a location that is on the peripheries of 'Europe' according to some of the EU ideas about Europe, though also the 'cradle of European civilisation' according to classical ideas and some Greek self-perceptions (Herzfeld 1987). The second is from Latvia, based on research also carried out in the 1990s, as the country became independent from the Soviet Union. Latvia is a country which is seen as even more marginally part of Europe, though is now part of the new expanded Europe – winning the Eurovision song contest in 2002, hosting it in 2003, and joining the European Union in 2004. The third is Berlin, Germany, in the years before and shortly after the coming down of the Wall dividing the two Germanys. This concerns a country and a history closer in many European imaginations – and in European policy-making – to the centre of Europe today.

The everyday life of long histories – Kalymnos, Greece

In *Memories cast in Stone* (1998), David Sutton explores multiple contexts in which history is invoked in everyday life on the Greek Island of Kalymnos. In doing so, he emphasises that islanders may hold different perspectives on historical events and that these events are not even perceived as equally relevant by all islanders. Moreover, individuals may express different perspectives in different contexts. Also posing a challenge for his understanding was the fact that some forms of 'memory' were expressed indirectly, as noted above, through 'casting stones' and use of dynamite rather than through verbal or written accounts. At the same time, however, Sutton was able, on the basis of his lengthy fieldwork, to highlight certain commonalities or recurrent patterns in the way that inhabitants of Kalymnos think about themselves and the past, as well as to analyse when particular kinds of accounts were mobilised.

One common feature of Kalymnian historicising, he explains, is to conceptualise national and global history within the same model as family histories. 'At a local level', he tells us, '"histories" are disputes, quarrels or acts

of shame (sexual infidelities, stealing) that alter the normal pattern of life in predictable ways' (1998: 121). While these may alter the course of events, however, 'histories' are also regarded as revealing of underlying character that remains constant over time. For this reason, Kalymnians talk of the 'history' of particular families and interpret current behaviour, and even potential behaviour, in light of the behaviour and character of previous generations. Conceived as familial, history is often emotionally charged. To illustrate this, Sutton describes a man called Manolis who explains the strong feelings he experiences on seeing ancient pots in museums by referring to his feelings about his grandfather. '"My hair stands up on end!"' Manolis exclaims, describing the emotional impact of seeing the pots, and asks the ethnographer to imagine what it would feel like if one's own grandfather had actually made them (1998: 143). The grandfather had no direct relationship with the museum pots but the relationship is conceived of through the analogy – as of the same order and having the same senses of affect and duty attached. The pots, even though they are from a very distant past, are felt by Manolis to be connected to him through the same kind of relationship that he shares with his grandfather.

The same familial model of conceiving relationships with 'heritage' is also applied at national level. Kalymnians are aware, however, that other countries do not necessarily see things in the same way as they do. They complain, for example, that 'Europeans' – a category that they generally invoke as an 'other' – tend to forget history, and fail to read contemporary events in light of their historical, and character-revealing, precedents. Sutton gives an insightful analysis of the Greek support for Serbia during the 1990s Yugoslav wars in this light, showing how Greeks tend to view events within a longer historical time frame than commentators from many other parts of Europe. In addition, they draw on their own historical experiences, and interpretation of those experiences in light of their contemporary marginal position within the European Community, leading them to support Serbians, partly *because* Serbians were being condemned by much of the rest of Europe. He also shows how this dispute and that over Macedonia are interpreted partly through senses of continuity and property manifest in familial practices of inheritance of land and of naming of children. As he explains, these 'local-level practices' create 'a sense of historical connectedness', and, moreover, they naturalise 'the connections between history, property and intergenerational continuity,… making disputes over the past seem inevitable' (1998: 193).

Many aspects of how Kalymnians think about the past – and also their strong feelings about certain aspects of it – can be seen as part of the European memory complex. This includes their invoking of notions of history as property, and as fundamental to identity. It makes sense too in terms of their analogies with family relations. Yet, their own contrasting of how they see things with how the past is conceived elsewhere in 'Europe' – especially in the strength of their feelings about the past and their 'long memories' – also show that there are more specific renditions and variations within that complex. It is also worth

noting that they contrast their strong senses of continuity and long temporal perspective even more strongly with North American perspectives on history, noting that Greeks had 1,500 years of civilisation behind them by the time that America was 'discovered'. The US anthropologist, Sutton, does likewise in his efforts, from a country where 'history is toast' (1998: 210), to understand the very tangible connection with a distant past that his subjects describe. While on the one hand critical of the shallow historical consciousness of Americans (and, to a lesser extent, 'Europeans'), Kalymnians also ambivalently regard this as a positive attribute, seeing it as responsible for the prosperity and success of America. Involved here too are different conceptions of what is involved in 'making history'. As Sutton explains, in the US this 'means doing something that has never been done before: setting a record' (1998: 135). By contrast, 'on Kalymnos, history refers to unusual events which can nevertheless be incorporated into a pattern' (1998: 135). This partly accounts for the frequent invoking of analogies between events – of talking of some through the frame of others – that he and other anthropologists of Greece encounter.

Narrating the self and the past – post-Soviet Latvia

Like Kalymnians, the post-Soviet Latvians interviewed by Vieda Skultans in *The Testimony of Lives* (1998) may also invoke long histories and collapse temporally distant times together. One of her interviewees, for example, spoke seamlessly of the fate of a thirteenth-century warrior and the menfolk in her family in an account that drew 'no temporal distinctions between the deaths of husband, brother and son, and the medieval chieftain' (1998: 18). In formulating such accounts, Latvians draw on modes of story-telling that are rooted in what Skultans calls 'European literary traditions' but which are used in specifically Latvian ways. In Latvia, as in most other East European countries, 'the development of a national literature has been particularly associated with the shaping of national identities' (1998: xiii), and has resulted in ways of talking about the past, at an individual as well as a collective level, that employ literary terminology – such as 'destiny' (*liktenis)* or forms of emplotment. Moreover, national literature offers particular plots through which individual accounts may be storied. As she explains: 'The moment people talk about the past they remember it in the way stories are told; they are unable to ignore the conventions of story telling. One such convention is the quest' (1998: 130). The quest positions the teller (usually – or more occasionally some other main character) as having to undergo battles and journeys to achieve their ends, and along the way experiencing 'chance meetings, coincidences and recognitions' (1998: 131). In its post-Socialist Latvian rendition, this narrative is usually a vehicle for stories about overcoming the past repressions of the Soviet era and coming to full recognition of the importance of being Latvian and of the Latvian homeland – return to which, literally or metaphorically, is usually part of the tale (1998: 132).

This does not, however, mean that individuals simply mould what they have to say to fit these narrative 'paradigms' (as she calls them) but, rather, the paradigms 'are actively and selectively enlisted because they help to make sense of the past' (1998: 125). At the same time, '[m]emories of individual suffering derive meaning from their positioning within national history' (1998: 47). While national literature is important to many post-Soviet Latvians in crafting their own self-narratives and understanding the past, written sources are not accorded a greater value than oral accounts and personal memories. This is a legacy of the Soviet period when 'the spoken not the written word was the bearer of truth. ... If history books lie, memory acquires a central importance for the preservation of authenticity and truth as well as a peculiar poignancy' (1998: 28).

Skultans' research was not originally intended to be about the past. A medical anthropologist, her interest was in 'neurasthenia' or 'nervous exhaustion', a category used by Latvian physicians and psychologists. But as she tried to investigate how patients recounted their medical symptoms, she found herself 'pulled ineludibly by people's memories of the past' (1998: xi):

> The past could not be laid to rest and left people little motivation to talk about the present. The brutal and chaotic events following the Second World War did not release their hold on memory... Eventually I let myself be carried by the narrative flow. In this way I found myself listening to accounts of events central to Latvian and, indeed, Soviet history.
>
> (1998: xi)

In listening attentively in this way, she pays attention to variations in ways in which narrators may mobilise the various paradigms. In particular, she notes a difference among older and younger narrators. The former tend to cast their lives 'in a legendary, mythical mode, whereas the lives of younger narrators are told as a sequence of unconnected happenings' (1998: 143), a difference which, as she explains, 'is not merely one of style, but of literary packages which carry social meanings and which position the individual in relation to a culture' (1998: 143). One reason for the difference, she suggests, is the congruence or lack of it between 'public and private scripts' (1998: 142). Older people had attended school during or before independence, were more likely to have been steeped in nationalist literature, and had generally experienced more 'concordance' between the public and the private, and, thus they adopted elements of literary styles which enabled them to configure their own lives as meaningful. For the younger interviewees, however, who were schooled in the Soviet period, 'there was a conflict between the public and the private' (1998: 142), and they were educated instead with texts that 'failed to supply form and structure for personal memories and accounts of lives' (1998: 156). This did not mean that they were unable to articulate their feelings or memories but it did seem to make it more difficult for them to do so. Moreover, it contributes to what Skultans describes as senses of conflict and loss of meaning that are part of the 'neurasthenia' that she set out to investigate.

State and individual historical narrations – the two Berlins

Like Skultans, John Borneman, in his study of Berlin (mainly) before unification, is concerned with the ways in which wider social and cultural experiences can shape individual life histories and their narration, as well as forms of historical consciousness (1992). His historical and ethnographic study considers the state policies and laws concerned with kinship, that is, through which citizenship and the life course were defined in different periods since the 1930s in the two Germanys, with particular emphasis upon family policy, including issues such as child-bearing and bringing up children. He brings this together with accounts by Berliners, primarily from the West. In doing so, Borneman's aim is not to try to suggest that either personal narratives or documented ones are fuller or more accurate than the other. Rather he seeks to look at the structuring of both kinds of 'narratives' in order to understand both the particular tropes that each employ and the ways in which they relate to and diverge from one another. Both play a part in what he calls the 'constitution of meaningful subjects' in the two Berlins.

Borneman analyses state kinship-related policies as a means to understand the ways in which the two German states propose – and in effect try to shape – particular accounts of temporality. In brief, this entails the post-war West struggling to assimilate while simultaneously denouncing the past; and the East configuring itself as the result of a radical break with the past, the full yields of which were still to come. As with the studies by Sutton and Skultans, Borneman acknowledges individual variation and seeks to present a range of perspectives rather than some mythical mean or mode. At the same time, however, like them, he highlights certain patterns, or 'experiential tropes', as he calls them, which shape the construction of state policy and (to varying extents) the narration of life stories in different generations. The point is not to universalise these but to understand their particular historical and social situatedness. For example, he suggests that the gap between state and individual narrations was greater in the German Democratic Republic (especially for his Generation 1 – those born 1910–1935) than in the West. In the latter, individuals more readily recount their own life histories – or more specifically, their accounts of child-bearing and rearing, within a narrative that he calls 'satiric' – that is, concerned with reflecting on the vices of contemporary society and making improvements rather than wholesale transformations (1992: 78). The narrative is also lapsarian – it harks back to ideas about the past and tradition, justifying, for example, certain qualities of motherhood in terms of tradition and religion. This is not, however, just about the continuity of a tradition. Rather, it relates to the contemporary situation of West Berliners. As he explains, this 'lapsarian appeal to tradition, virtue and assimilation into a prosperous community of Germans served for most West Berliners precisely as an antidote to their sense of victimization' (1992: 235). Marooned from the rest of West Germany, West Berliners, before the unexpected fall of the Wall, recounted their own lives primarily through narratives that accepted their own state and anticipated only

small-scale changes. The state narrative in the German Democratic Republic, by contrast, was less congruent with the experiences of East Berlin citizens. In this case, the state narrative that shaped family policy was what Borneman characterises as 'romantic' and 'utopian', 'aimed towards a future Communist destiny' (1992: 79). Over time, fewer and fewer East Berliners subscribed to this mode of temporalising, culminating dramatically in the events that brought the state to an end.

The concern of the anthropologists whose work is described here was not just to understand the uses of the past in the present, then, but to analyse how both the past and the present were interpreted through models or forms of consciousness that themselves have histories. This is not to say that the models were themselves unchanging. All examples also describe struggles faced by people to try to accommodate the social changes underway. This could lead to the demise of some forms of historicising, with, perhaps, school or public histories becoming more dominant or, perhaps, what were previously voiced accounts becoming expressed in more indirect ways. It could also result in different periods becoming the focus of attention; and of a phenomenon that often accompanies change – nostalgia for past times.

★★★

This chapter has introduced some of the forms of past presencing that have been described and discussed by anthropologists of Europe. In particular, it has sought to highlight some of the diverse ways in which the past is conceived, experienced and put to work in different parts of Europe – and as parts of projects to create European history and identity. At the same time, it has attempted – in a pattern that will continue throughout the book – to identify some of the forms of past presencing that we find repeatedly if not necessarily universally or in invariant form. These include trying to define senses of self with reference to the past and through creating traditions for the future; pitting different histories against one another – perhaps regarding a distant past as idyllic; and thinking of 'big' histories (such as those of the nation) through more intimate ones, such as those of family and kinship. Many of the themes highlighted here – such as the mobilisation of different pasts, nostalgia, affect and questions of the authenticity of particular accounts – will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. In the following, however, I extend discussion of modes of narrating history to the 'multitemporal challenge' that past presencing sets for anthropologists.