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Historical Culture and the Mediated Narratives of Nation

> *Just as psychoanalysis has taught us to get access to individual identity by taking into account the person's past, so it is with culture or a civilization. We do not know who we are unless we have an adequate understanding of our past.*
>
> Frank Ankersmit[1]

There has been a 'history boom' in the 2000s, and history has become a significant part of popular entertainment.[2] The commodification of history is a part of *historical culture* concerning a wide range of cultural realms in which history is presented. Besides popular culture and entertainment (e.g. Hollywood films, history magazines, computer games) also older forms of historical culture, such as school education, arts, antiques, and museums mould *historical consciousness*. Public traditions, such as national commemorations are the central scenes of historical culture. They call for a discussion of the essence of nations and nationalism in the public sphere. Narratives about the nation have traditionally served in creating the cultural and political unity of nations. In recent years, several crises and conflicts have amplified nationalistic voices around the world. Although academic historiography is only one of the forms of historical culture, it still matters in forming the historical consciousness of people and peoples.

Historical culture – or *public history*, the term often used by Anglo-American scholars – has been the growing object of research in the 2000s whether it concerns history theory, cultural history or representations of history.[3] The holistic meta-

1 Frank Ankersmit, *Historical Representation*. Stanford University Press, Stanford 2001, 1.

2 Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historian and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. Routledge, London and New York 2009, 17.

3 About historical culture, public history, the influence of culture in history and the relationship between culture and history, see for instance Ludmilla Jordanova, "What's in a Name? Historians and Theory". *English Historical Review*, Volume CXXVI, Issue 523, December 2011, 1456–1477; Jorma Kalela, *Making History: The Historian and Uses of the Past*. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire 2012; Keith Jenkins, *At the Limits of History*. Routledge, London and New York 2009; Jerome de Groot, *Remaking History: The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions*. Routledge, New York 2016; *Public and Popular History*. Edited by Jerome de Groot. Routledge, London and New York 2012; de Groot 2009.

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historical concept of historical culture (*Geschichtskultur*) emerged among West German historians in the 1970s due to the highly complex and difficult German history of the 20th century. Especially history educationalists started to take extracurricular sources – historical knowledge outside the discourse of professional historians – into consideration in teaching at schools. It was a sort of response to the traditional hermeneutic approaches to history education and part of the tendency to treat history as a social science, and to criticise historicism and hermeneutics in a social constructivist scope. Later in the 1980s and 1990s, the popularity of the concept was linked to the 'cultural turn', postmodernism and the rise of memory studies. All in all, history was no longer seen as an act of mind, but as a social practice.[4] As is well known, the cultural turn had a weighty effect on the philosophy of history, namely in questioning and redefining the narrativist approaches to history.[5]

In this essay, I discuss what role historical culture and historical consciousness plays in the narrating of a nation. I am not so much interested in the historical philosophical understanding of narrative than in how different forms of historical culture represent the narratives of a nation. Moreover, although historical consciousness comes close – sometimes used as a synonym – to the concept of *collective memory*, I do not discuss national narrative in reference to memory studies. These highly relevant approaches are for another study.[6]

In terms of concepts, I define what is the essence of historical culture, referring particularly to the ideas by German cultural historian and history theoretician Jörn Rüsen. I also discuss the different meanings of historical consciousness and historical thinking and how historical consciousness as the vital component of historical culture is dependent on the narratives of a given society.

Nevertheless, the focus in this essay is on the role of nation in contemporary historical cultures. My intention is to suggest approaches how to study historical culture from a perspective that takes into account the production as well as the reception context of historical culture in narrating nation. Secondly, I call for studies that analyse the relationship between academic history and other forms of historical culture, namely the media representation of history. I emphasise the importance of mediated and the aesthetic forms of historical culture in creating the view of the history of a nation.

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4 Maria Grever and Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, "Historical Culture: A Concept Revisited", 73–89. *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education.* Edited by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever. Palgrave Macmillan, London 2017, 74–77.

5 See e.g. Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, *Postnarrativist Philosophy of Historiography*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2015.

6 See Jukka Kortti, "War, Transgenerational Memory and Documentary film: Mediated and Institutional Memory in Historical Culture", forthcoming.

The starting point here is Finnish historical culture, yet my arguments are not based on an empirical evidence. This essay is more like an introduction to the emphasises I find central when analysing the narratives of a nation in contemporary societies.

Historical consciousness and sensing history in different context

The concept of historical culture refers to the wide range of activities in which images and information about the past are produced, mediated and used. It also refers to the ways in which historical consciousness and sensing history is socially constructed and expressed in different societies. Historical consciousness has become the fundamental concept to explain the awareness of the history of the human mind and behaviour in the 2000s. It means how modern people broadly and popularly, beyond the history profession, understand the past.

The ideas of historical consciousness are very much fuelled with radical ruptures and changes in European history: discontinuity between the past, the present and the future. Also, the condition of postmodernity with its ideas about plurality and blurring clear distances and differences between the past and the present have influenced how history is conceived and experienced. In the Anglo-American academic sphere, it is more common to use the term *historical thinking*. Historical consciousness and historical thinking, however, do not mean exactly the same thing. The latter refers to more pragmatic and empirical educational agenda. The clearest difference between the concepts is in how they deal with the relationship between academic history and other forms of historical culture. For Anglophone history education, the discipline of history is a governing framework for history education. Rather than being interested in how everyday life affects the sensing of history, 'historical thinking' is interested in the ways of doing history based on historical literacy.[7]

The study by social science historian Pilvi Torsti on Finnish historical consciousness shows that Finns are 'history people'. They are interested in the past in many ways. Compared with three other countries (the USA, Australia, and Canada i.e. countries that talk about public history and historical thinking), where the same kind of research project was conducted, Finns top the charts practically in every form of history activity amongst ordinary people.[8] The Finnish school system is famously one of the best in the world according to international studies, such as PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment).[9]

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7 Peter Seixas, "Historical Consciousness and Historical Thinking". *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education.* Edited by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever. Palgrave Macmillan, London 2017, 59–75.

8 Pilvi Torsti, *Suomalaiset ja historia*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki 2012.

9 PISA 2018 Insights and Interpretations FINAL PDF.pdf (oecd.org).

So, does this mean that we should discuss more about historical thinking than historical consciousness in Finland, because school education has such an important role among the Finns? Rather than telling the historical culture of nations, the different terms most likely indicate the different conceptualisations of sensing history.

In addition, Torsti's survey also shows that approximately all the Finns in the survey (96% compared to approximately 80% in other countries) had watched history programmes and films on TV. The clearest difference (85% against fewer than 57% in other countries) concerned the section 'Visited historical places or sights'.[10] These kinds of media-related interests in consuming history and 're-enacting' history are central ways to participate in historical culture in the 2000s.[11]

Nevertheless, historical consciousness is formed in the historical culture of the late modern world, where academic history and history education at school only partly affect how people sense history. Popular practices, such as entertainment, identity projects and policy justifications often have a more effective role in historical culture than academic history.[12]

One of the key theorists of historical culture, Jörn Rüsen, has divided historical culture into five dimensions: cognitive (*kognitive*), aesthetic (*ästhetische*), political (*politische*), moral (*moralische*) and religious (*religiös*).[13] Of these dimensions, the first three are manifested in sensing history: 'the subject quality of the temporal change of the human world'.[14] Temporality, or 'the temporal orientation' is important in historical consciousness since it ties 'the past to the present in a manner that bestows a present actuality a future perspective'.[15]

In addition, Rüsen divides 'a sense of history' (*Sinn der Geschichte*) into three dimensions: *content*, *formal* and *function,* which are all coherently interrelated. The cognitive dimension of historical culture, content, refers to the 'quality of experience' and reason. It means that we are provided with some factual or other information about the past and its development towards our time. The functional dimension refers to historically interpreted time; the past is subordinated, or at least

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10 Torsti 2012, 40–44.

11 de Groot 2009, 103–145.

12 Peter Seixas, "Introduction", 3–20. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Edited by Peter Seixas. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2004, 10.

13 Jörn Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft.* Böhlau Verlag, Köln 2013.

14 Jörn Rüsen, "Sense of History: What Does it Mean? With an Outlook onto Reason and Senselessness", 40–64. *Meaning and Representation in History*. Edited by Jörn Rüsen. Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford 2008b, 41. Originally, Rüsen included only the first three dimensions in his theory (Jörn Rüsen, *Historische Orientierung: über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbewusstseins, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden.* Böhlau Verlag, Köln 1994, 219–225) but added two dimensions, moral and religious, later.

15 Jörn Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development", 63–85. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Edited by Peter Seixas. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2004, 67.

it must provide answers to the present.[16] In the functional dimension, the orientation of the presentation becomes crucial. The relationship between the past and the present is then particularly relevant. This temporal orientation means that historical consciousness has a practical function.[17]

This often, though not always, means the political dimension of historical culture when history is subordinated to serve a certain purpose. That is why it is important to take into consideration who are producing historical culture and for what purposes. This has been very relevant in recent years when authoritarian (e.g. China, Russia) or semi-authoritarian (e.g. Poland, Hungary) countries make history politics. Besides governmental, the functional motives may also be commercial, such as is often the case with popular culture representations of history. On the other hand, there is a substantial risk of failing in mediating the functional dimension of historical culture if a person does not share the same cultural tradition.

Narrating national history in a state of flux

Traditions play a significant role in historical consciousness; in experiencing time, valuing historical significance, and setting moral values and reasoning. As Rüsen writes: 'Traditional orientations define the "togetherness" of social groups or whole societies in the terms of maintenance of a sense of common origin.' In terms of the identity formation of a nation, they predetermine cultural patterns of self-reliance and self-understanding. Tradition often means the morality of a nation.[18]

Indeed, the narratives of nations are embedded in tradition. As Mark Bevir puts it: 'A tradition constitutes the necessary background to the beliefs people adopt and the actions they see to perform.'[19] In other words, 'schematic narrative templates', although often universal in origin, are highly dependent on the traditions of a nation, according to James V. Wertch. What makes them interesting from the point of historical culture is how these narrative templates are organised and how they shape new accounts of the history of a nation. Modern states have been the most powerful

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16 Rüsen 2008b. Rüsen also writes also about 'making historical sense' (*Historische Sinnbildung*). The concept includes a wide range of phenomena that make meaning out of the past. It is a result of a creative process of the human mind in which the past is given its importance in terms of the present and how people understand the past, how they think about it. In this process, memory obviously plays a crucial role (Jörn Rüsen, "What does 'Making sense of history' mean?", 1–5. *Meaning and Representation in History*. Edited by Jörn Rüsen. Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford 2008a.

17 Rüsen 2004, 68.

18 Rüsen 2004, 71–73.

19 Mark Bevir, "National Histories: Prospects for Critique and Narrative", 56–76. *Narrating the Nation: Representation in History, Media and the Arts*. Edited by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock. Making sense of history, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2008, 66.

institutions in creating collective memory and historical narratives not only through official accounts of the past but also by controlling the uses of these accounts. However, these narratives are by no means stable, they change depending on the present power structures and other trends.[20] Analysing these narrative templates, we cannot only reveal the dominant narratives of a nation, but also investigate how inclusive or exclusive they are.

Therefore, one of the levels of studying historical culture is to analyse it through historical narratives and performances of the past.[21] The formal dimension in sensing history means, first and foremost, historical narrative. It is the realisation of the linguistic form of historical consciousness, its function of orientation by the telling of a story. A cogent historical narrative or other form of chronology is one of the aesthetic dimensions of historical culture as well, albeit only one aspect of it. However, the importance of the formal dimension in sensing history refers particularly to ritual forms of historical culture, such as celebrating the independence of a nation.[22]

Indeed, one of the central meta-narratives of history is that of a nation. Nationalism can be seen as a 'master narrative' and the rhetoric of a nation.[23] To keep a nation together, myths and narratives need to be retold over and over again. On the other hand, certain narratives are actively silenced or otherwise put behind us.[24]

Narratives about the nation have traditionally served in creating cultural and political unity. That is also the case in Finland. 'National awakening' started in the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the image of a Finnish nation and its people started to evolve through the influences of literature and art, as well as the conscious efforts of the political and administrative elites.[25] Finland followed the European way of writing history predominantly through 'the nationalistic gaze'. When modern

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20 James V. Wertsch, "Specific Narratives and Schematic Narrative Templates". *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Edited by Peter Seixas. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2004, 49–62.

21 Grever and Adriaansen 2017, 78–79.

22 Rüsen 2008, 53–56; Rüsen 2014, 69.

23 Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1997, 3–7.

24 Michel-Rolp Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, Boston 1995.

25 As in many other European countries, national awakening started with language revival in Finland. Academic national language societies, such as the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*) and The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (*Kansanvalistusseura*) had a central role in developing a national canon in literature, arts and education (*Bildung*).

professional history writing started in the mid-eighteenth century, it went hand in hand with the process of nationalisation in Europe.[26]

At the same time as history became 'science' with Leopold von Ranke and Wilhelm von Humboldt in the nineteenth century, historians became the prime architects of nations in creating 'imagined communities' (Anderson)[27] and 'inventing traditions' (Hobsbawm),[28] as the classics of nationalism studies state. Also, the linkages between historicism and Christianity fuelled the idea of a nation, because the idealistic theory of history, *Ideenlehre*, of Ranke et al. was at the heart of their Christian worldview. The similarities between these two 'myths', nation and religion, were, and still are, obvious: the importance of sacred symbols, monuments, rituals, cults, fixed calendars, fixed places and using vocabularies of 'sacrifice', 'eternity', 'incarnation', 'salvation,' 'martyrdom', 'communion', 'resurrection' and so on. All in all, as Chris Lorenz puts it in his account of myths and academic history, '"scientific" history has never known where to draw the line between myth-making and myth-breaking, and "scientific" national historians have themselves been very active in helping to construct the myth of the nation while simultaneously deriving their "scientific" legitimacy from a discourse of "myth-breaking".'[29]

Of the 'official' forms of historical culture, also museums have been balancing between these two stances towards historical myths, yet the myth breaking dimension is rather new phenomenon. The creation of the museum institution system was in close relationship with the rise of Western nationalism in the nineteenth century. Through museums, the history narrative of a nation state was created, reinforced, and maintained.[30]

Besides museums, national days have been central commemorative devices in reinforcing national identity. They are full of shared rituals, symbols and collective memories communicating the values, attitudes, and strengths of a nation in time

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[26] For the European perspective, see e.g. Stefan Berger, "History Writing and Constructions of National Space: The Long Dominance of the National in Modern European Historiographies". *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education.* Edited by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever. Palgrave, London 2017, 39–57. In Finland: Marja Jalava, "Kansallisen menneisyyden todistaminen". *Tiede ja yhteiskunta. Suomen Historiallinen Seura ja historiantutkimus.* Edited by Petri Karonen. SKS, Helsinki 2019, 161–215.

[27] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London 1983.

[28] Eric Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Canto edition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992.

[29] Chris Lorenz, "Drawing the Line: 'Scientific' History between Myth-making and Myth-breaking", 35–55. *Narrating the Nation: Representation in History, Media and the Arts*. Edited by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock. Making sense of history Berghahn Books, Oxford 2008, 46 (citation).

[30] Simon J. Knell, *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World.* Routledge, London and New York 2011; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics.* Routledge, London 1995.

and place. For states, national days are an important memorial device to build and mobilise the identity of a nation. However, the traditions of celebrations differ from country to country.[31] Besides annual celebrations, major jubilees, such as centenary celebrations, are obviously even more important for the identity-building of a nation.

The nationalistic gaze and the idea of independence written in the stars as a 'master narrative' is still alive in history schoolbooks and overviews in Finland. Master narratives are intimately related with history education in order to foster social cohesion and national identities.[32] 'The story of Finnishness' is retold by emphasizing myths, such as Finnish *sisu* (resolve and bravery). Particularly wars, especially the heroic Winter War of 1939–40, are strong narratives of Finnishness, providing a linear storyline. Likewise, the role of tradition in historiography has been sustained through the developments in history research and disciplinary trends, yet social science history has questioned the narrative explanations of history in Finland since the 1970s.[33]

But this does not mean that Finnish historical culture has not changed in recent years, quite the contrary. The study by Torsti showed in the early 2010s that images associated with Finnish history are now more politically and culturally diverse than before. Finns appreciate the creation of the Finnish school system and the welfare society more than the Continuation War between Finland and the Soviet Union, for instance.[34]

'War' was only the sixth of the themes in the Finland 100 programme, the Finnish centenary of 2017, according to the analysis by social psychologists Inari Sakki and Eemeli Hakoköngäs. The share of culture was a superior theme according to the content analysis of the programme, and the welfare state third. Even multiculturalism was as common as war according to the analysis. Moreover, besides the 'hegemonic narrative' of war – i.e. the patriotic, romanticised and idealised narrative of Finland being both honoured victim and victor – the representation of war also included alternative narratives provided by the experiences of individuals and memory organisations, such as topics about war children, evacuees or soldiers traumatised by war.[35]

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31 David McCrone and Gayle McPherson, *National Days: Constructing and Mobilising National Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009.

32 Floortje Van Alphen and Mario Carretero, "Past and Present in the Appropriation of Historical Master Narratives". *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, Volume 49, Number 3, 2015, 512–530.

33 About this 'two histories controversy' in Finnish historiography, see e.g. Seppo Hentilä, "Historiantutkijat sotien jälkeisessä yhteiskunnassa". *Tiede ja yhteiskunta. Suomen Historiallinen Seura ja historiantutkimus.* Edited by Petri Karonen. SKS, Helsinki 2019, 523–584.

34 Torsti 2012.

35 Inari Sakki and Eemeli Hakoköngäs, "Celebrating nationhood: Negotiating nationhood and history in Finland's centenary celebrations". *Nations and Nationalism*, Volume 26, Number 4, 2020, 864–882.

Globalisation and the diversifying of Finnish society have changed the setting. The myth about a united Finnish people with the same ethnic origins has gradually crumbled along with globalisation and the new results of history research.[36] As Rüsen puts it, "[s]tories and histories must provide answers to questions shared by narrator and addressee alike, if they, the stories and histories, are to have, and make, 'sense' within this communicative context."[37] Especially Germans, but increasingly other European countries as well, see their national histories as 'a broken mirror': there are several contested narratives about a nation.[38] This is not, however, a universal and linear development. In many East European post-socialist countries, for instance, grand narratives have been revitalised in history education in the 2000s as a reaction to globalisation and multiculturalism.[39] Also, the right-wing politicians in the U.S. have attacked 'anti-American indoctrination' and a 'radicalized view of American history' in schools.[40]

Mediated historicity and academic history in historical culture

The Finland 100 programme was an official state programme reporting to the Prime Minister's office. Although governmental, the centenary programme also included a bottom-up perspective meaning that public and private sector bodies and individuals could suggest a project. The open profile of the programme resulted in a broad range of themes connected with Finnishness to become addressed.[41] The projects funded by the Finland 100 programme also included films, both fiction and documentary

36 Sirkka Ahonen, *Suomalaisuuden monet myytit. Kansallinen katse historiankirjoissa*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki 2017, 194–216.

37 Rüsen 2008b, 55.

38 Stefan Berger, *The Past as History: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Modern Europe.* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2015, 376–377.

39 Sirkka Ahonen, "The Lure of Grand Narratives: A Dilemma for History Teachers". *International Perspectives on Teaching Rival Histories: Pedagogical Responses to Contested Narratives and the History Wars*. Edited by Henrik Åström Elmersjö, Anna Clark and Monika Vinterek. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2017, 41–62.

40 Morgan Matzen, "Gov. Noem: Biggest cultural challenge is 'defeating anti-American indoctrination'". *USA Today News* Tue, May 4, 2021, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/05/03/gov-kristi-noem-calls-defeating-anti-american-indoctrination-cultural-challenge/4932276001/. The statement by Governor Noem is linked to the '1776 Pledge to Save Our Schools' Commission, which was to restore 'honest, patriotic education that cultivates in our children a profound love for our country'. It was a response to the 1619 Project to place 'the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative'. The 1619 Project - The New York Times (nytimes.com).

41 *Suomi Finland 100. Finland 100 years. Together*. Finland 100 Centenary Celebration Report. Prime Minister's Office Publication 11/2018, Helsinki 2018; Olli Ruokolainen, Mervi Luonila, Vappu Renko, Minna Ruusuvirta, Mia Toivanen, Katri Haila, Satu Korhonen and Kati Ahvonen, *Impacts of the Finland 100 anniversary year: Part 3*. Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki 2021.

films. Besides being politicised, it could also be said that history is increasingly *mediatized*.[42]

The development of communication media has created a mediated historicity, as media scholar John B. Thompson wrote already in the early 1990s.[43] The role of media in presenting history is, however, a subject of tension among professional historians. The most obvious criticism of mediated history concerns its tendency to simplify history, to compare televised history programmes, for instance, with coffee-table history books that reinforce historical myths.[44] However, this attitude by professional historians has changed during the recent decades. We must also remember that despite how 'objective' the historians aims may be, they are not only producers but also products of the collective identities of the cultures of which they are part.[45]

Especially history in film and television, which are major mediators and a significant factor in the historical culture in general, have evoked the interest of scholars in the 2000s.[46] In the theorising of historical representations, different media have evidently become the central objects of analyses in the 2000s.[47] One of the most influential history theoreticians, especially in terms (or should I say 'turns') of narrativist philosophy of history, Hayden White, was already interested in the representation of history in visual images and the discourse of cinema in the 1980s.[48]

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42 About the concept of mediatization, see for instance *Mediatization. Concept, Changes, Consequences*. Edited by Knut Lundby. Peter Lang, New York 2009; Andreas Hepp, *Cultures of Mediatization*. Polity Press, Cambridge 2013. On mediatization and media history, see Jukka Kortti, "Media History and Mediatization of Everyday Life". *Media History*, Volume 23, Number 1, 2017, 115–129.

43 John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media.* Stanford University Press, Stanford 1995, 24.

44 James Chapman, "The World at War: Television, Documentary, History". *The Historian, Television and Television History*. Edited by Graham Roberts and Philip M. Taylor. University of Luton Press, Luton 2001, 136. See also Jouko Aaltonen and Jukka Kortti, "From Evidence to Re-Enactment: History, Television and Documentary Film". *Journal of Media Practice*, Volume 16, Number 2, 2015, 108–125.

45 Chris Lorenz, "Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparing Historiographies: Some Preliminary Considerations", 25–48. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Edited by Peter Seixas. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2004, 28.

46 See e.g. *History and the Media*. Edited by David Cannadine. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire 2007; Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film. Film on History*. Routledge, Oxford, New York 2013; *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age.* Edited by Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins. The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky 2001; *The Historian, Television and Television History.* Edited by Graham Roberts and Philip M. Taylor. University of Luton Press, Luton 2001.

47 E.g. *History and Theory* theme issue, Volume 48, Number 2, 2009.

48 Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty". *The American Historical Review*, Volume 93, Number 5, 1988, 1193–1199.

Moreover, the central theoreticians of nationalism have noted the importance of the link between nationalism and media.[49] The historiography of presenting nationhood in different areas of culture, including the media, has interested scholars in many ways.[50] According to the history theoreticians, media play a much more important role than historians in shaping national discourses and overall representations of the past.[51]

One of 'the principles' of the studies on historical consciousness is to investigate the relationship between academic and popular history – the complex relationship between the professional practice of history and the popular practice of history.[52] Despite strong academic roots, 'modern history writing has never been the sole guardian of national narratives, and today histories and historians play only a limited role in the process of continuous reinterpretation of the national pasts', as Stefan Berger puts it.[53]

This was interestingly manifested in the production of *Story of Finland* exhibition at the National Museum of Finland. The permanent exhibition is about Finland's independent years, and it was opened in 2017 as part of the centenary. Although located in a major national, state-owned history museum, the exhibition was not part of the Finland 100 programme, however. The designer and expert team of the exhibition included also (mostly social science) historians, but their role in the materialised exhibition was minor, if not infinitesimal. Besides museum professionals, the exhibition was set up by artists: a film director, a writer, and different set, digital, lighting and sound designers. Finally, as a sort of an excuse, the short essays the academic historians wrote for the exhibition were published in a booklet[54] to be purchased in the museum shop.

Therefore, in analysing the role of academic history in historical culture it is, again, important to reveal the production context of historical culture: How do different forms of historical culture production, whether the motives are aesthetic, commercial

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49 E.g. Anderson 1983; Ernst Gellner**,** *Nations and Nationalism*. Introduction by John Breuilly. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York 2012; Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. Sage, London 1996.

50 E.g. David McCrone and Gayle McPherson, *National Days: Constructing and Mobilising National Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, New York 2009; *Narrating the Nation: Representation in History, Media and the Arts*. Edited by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andres Mycock. Making sense of history, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2008; Karol Jakubowicz and Miklós Sükösd, *Media, Nationalism, and European Identities.* Central European University Press, Budapest 2010.

51 Stefan Berger, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation: Historiography and Other Genres", 1–16. *Narrating the Nation: Representation in History, Media and the Arts*. Edited by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock. Making sense of history, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2008, 7; Lorenz 2004, 27.

52 Seixas 2004, 10.

53 Berger 2008, 7.

54 *Essays on the Story of Independent Finland*. The National Museum of Finland, Helsinki 2018.

or educational, use the latest results of academic history research? Naturally, the analyses of academic history and aesthetic forms of historical culture provide wide empirical material for discussing such history philosophical concepts as 'truth', 'authenticity', 'proof' and 'evidence' – in addition to the narrativist philosophy of historiography.

Conclusion

In the late 2000s, history theoreticians Stefan Berger and Alan Megill argued about whether national master narratives were outdated and beleaguered in Europe. Megill saw that 'master' and 'grand' narratives were lacking in essential authority in the 2000s.[55] Berger instead saw the signs of a strong revival of national master narratives especially in the Eastern European countries that formerly belonged to the Soviet sphere. He also noticed that fears over 'the creation of a European super-state transcending the nation-states' have increased the appeal of national master narratives.[56]

Now, about fifteen years later, the reading of Berger seems much more relevant after the European debt crises of 2008, the refugee crises of 2015, the Catalonian and Scottish independence movements, Brexit, Hungarian and Polish social-national conservatism and the overall rise of populist nationalism on the continent.

Acts of national day celebrations and other national commemorations interestingly unveil what are seen to be crucial characteristics of the nation; national milestone anniversaries define what are worth commemorating about the past. Thus, as such occasions and institutions work to define the memorable and the desirable, they also reveal the boundaries of the undesirable and the unwanted, as well as memories and ideas that are contested, repressed or seen as unfit in the context of (the fostering of) nationhood.

What we need to study more is to analyse the production context of these celebrations – how a nation is narrated and for what purposes: how they have been originated and how the contents of the narratives have been negotiated. This means investigating the motives of institutions – both governmental and independent (artistic, commercial) – and the people behind the representations of nationhood in these celebrations.

National narratives have been studied especially in history didactics during the 2000s, analysing history schoolbooks, curricula, and other forms of history education. However, there are few studies that have investigated how young people, especially

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55 Allan Megill, "Historical Representation, Identity, Allegiance", 19–34. *Narrating the Nation: Representation in History, Media and the Arts*. Edited by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock. Making sense of history, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2008, 25.

56 Berger 2008, 3.

those coming from different cultural backgrounds, experience and construct narratives of the history of their current home country. There are, however, studies conducted on history education implicating that young people construct national narratives in line with their ethnic and religious identities.[57]

Nevertheless, in terms of the reception context of historical culture, it is important to analyse how people with a different cultural background experience the narratives of a nation. Especially the historical consciousness of young people with immigrant family backgrounds should be in the focus of research.

In our current project *Narratives of Finland. Historical Culture, Arts and Changing Nationality*,[58] we are interested particularly in young people with multicultural background in conceiving the narratives of Finnish history, films – both fiction and documentary films – officially accepted as part of the *Finland 100 programme* and the exhibition *Story of Finland* mentioned earlier. Moreover, the project focuses on the aesthetic dimension of historical culture: what is the relationship between artistic expression and an institutional history, and between artistic expression and academic historiography? The project includes a section on art in which the concept of nationality is called into question by asking artists with a different cultural background to take part in producing new viewpoints on the Finnish nation.

Abstract

Academic history is only one of the many forms of mediating history. Popular practices, such as entertainment, identity projects and policy justifications often have a more effective role in historical culture than academic history. Public traditions, such as national commemorations are the central scenes of historical culture. They call for a discussion of the essence of nations and nationalism in the public sphere.

During globalisation and the rise of multiculturalism, national histories are increasingly said to be a 'broken mirror': there are several and contested narratives about a nation. On the other hand, there is also a strong tendency to emphasise and reinforce national 'master narratives' among nations evoked by social-national conservatism and the overall rise of populist nationalism.

This essay discusses what role historical culture and historical consciousness plays in the narrating of a nation. The starting point here is Finnish historical culture. The essay suggests

[57] Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse and Kaat Wils, "Historical Narratives and National Identities. A Qualitative Study of Young Adults in Flanders". *Journal of Belgian History*, Volume XLV, 2015, 40–73; Keith Barton, "School History as a Resource for Constructing Identities. Implications of Research from the United States, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand". *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (International Review of History Education). Edited by Mario Carretero, Mike Aasensio and María Rodríguez-Moneo. Information Age Publishing, Charlotte NC 2012, 93–107.

[58] *Suomen tarinat. Historiakulttuuri, taide ja muuttuva kansalaisuus*. The three years project directed by the author started in the spring 2021, and it is funded by the Kone Foundation.

approaches how to study historical culture from a perspective that takes into account the production as well as the reception context of historical culture in narrating nation. It calls for studies that analyse the relationship between academic history and other forms of historical culture, namely media representation of history. The essay emphasises the importance of mediated and aesthetic forms of historical culture in creating a view of the history of a nation.