# Introduction Narrating the Nation – From the Nineteenth to the Eighteenth Century

It must have been with a mixture of pride and awe that in the latter years of the nineteenth century French children learned from their textbooks about the Battle of Tolbiac; of how Clovis lifted his hands to Heaven, promising God that if he were granted victory he would accept baptism, and how, the divine pact having worked, the Alamanni fled. Had those children delved deeper into their Première année d'histoire de France, their delight would certainly have been compounded when they read about King Pepin and his beheading of a lion and a bull with a single blow of his sword – a deed that, it is easy to suppose, many of those eight- and nine-year-olds mimicked, impersonating their king. No doubt they would have been equally impressed to learn from their textbook that, as her body was burned at the stake, the soul of Joan of Arc was miraculously borne up to Heaven by a white dove - the just reward for the sacrifices she had made for France and the Church.<sup>1</sup> These anecdotes, assured Ernest Lavisse, were récits, stories in which 'the true and the false are muddled up'. As their author declared, their purpose was to capture and hold the attention of young readers, showing how memorable personages and events were once portrayed.<sup>2</sup> Although there is no reason to doubt that this was one of the intentions, another, no less important aim was also being pursued. In the wake of Sedan and amid the calls for *la haine sacrée* to restore lost honour, Lavisse like many others strove to muster a narrative of an extraordinary nation to which all would be proud to belong. The récits were a key to a particular reading of the French past and, though kept separate from the main narrative, they offered a frame, one explicitly meant to glorify and eulogise - rather than describe or explain. Coupled with this was the firm conviction that the purpose of teaching history, or at least the nation's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ernest Lavisse, *La première année d'histoire de France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1876), 12, 22, 125. On Lavisse, see Pierre Nora, 'L'"Histoire de France" de Lavisse', in Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), i. 851–90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lavisse, La première année d'histoire de France, 22.

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment 978-1-107-57184-6 — The Shaping of French National Identity Matthew D'Auria Excerpt <u>More Information</u>

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history, was that of moulding good and heroic citizen-soldiers. As Lavisse made clear in the preface:

[F]or centuries on French soil have lived men who, through their deeds and their ideas, have contributed to a specific work [*œuvre*], to which each generation has contributed. We are working on it today and those after us will do the same. A link binds us to those who have lived and to those who will live on our land. Our ancestors are us in the past; our descendants are us in the future. To know about the work of our ancestors, to be proud of their successes and sad at their setbacks, ... to devoutly honour their illustrious memories, to think of the great examples to follow and the mistakes to avoid, therein lies true patriotism, and it is the purpose of school to teach it to one and all.<sup>3</sup>

More than others, Lavisse, the 'nation's teacher', fully grasped the importance of history and memory in shaping the national imaginary and in forming devout citizens – a task that the Third Republic made the hallmark of its education projects.<sup>4</sup> It was an aim to be achieved by appealing to the most intimate feelings, reawakening an allegedly natural empathy between present, past, and future generations. The affective aspect was crucial: 'Do not let us teach history with the calm befitting the teaching of rules of participles. At stake is the flesh of our flesh, the blood of our blood.'<sup>5</sup>

Between 1876 and 1950 the *petit Lavisse* ran through fifty editions and was read and studied by millions. While a continuous creation on which its author worked during the best part of his life, the underlying message and the image of the nation that went with it remained unchanged. Moreover, by repeating the same narrative and presenting the same *récits* – often through a book passed down from father to son and, in certain cases, to grandchildren – it contributed to the creation of a community that was imagined historically, binding generations that read and memorised the same story. Playing at once a representational and a performative role, the *petit Lavisse* both told a particular 'national history' and contributed to shaping a specific 'national memory'. In doing so, it undertook the unlikely task of reconciling the Revolution with the Old Regime, the secularism of the *République* with the Catholicism of the *fille aînée de l'Eglise*, the inviolable nature of regional diversity with the sacredness of state unity,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibid., 'Préface', n.p.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See the classic by Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France,* 1870–1914 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 303–38; Mona Ozouf, *L'école de la France: Essais sur la Révolution, l'utopie et l'enseignement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 185–213.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ernest Lavisse, Questions d'enseignement national (Paris: Armand Colin, 1885), 210.

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the Classical with the Romantic soul of France, its traditionalist with its liberal passions. Lavisse's narrative was called upon to resolve, in other words, a series of insurmountable antinomies into a coherent national narrative where the stories of the Gesta dei per francos, the glories of the Crusades, and the accomplishments of the Grande nation were but different moments of a 'single history'. Surprisingly, in his search for a thread uniting the many pasts into a single story, the solution embraced by Lavisse was simple: 'Our country was once called Gaul.'<sup>6</sup> It was a straightforward statement, placed at the opening of Chapter 1 and it mirrored, importantly, an untold and unquestioned assumption shared by most French men and women - one burdened, however, with significant consequences. The belief in a shared ethnic origin and a common Gallic past marked in fact the onset, and constituted the frame, of the nation's history, holding together divisions and chasms within a single narration. In Lavisse's book, the 'blissful clarity' of a mythical ethnic unity was ultimately what turned an array of pasts into a 'French' history.7

By the late 1830s, the notion of a Gallic origin of France had been widely accepted.<sup>8</sup> When in Honoré de Balzac's *Le cabinet des antiques* (1838) the old Marquis d'Esgrignon despondently admitted 'the triumph of the Gauls', he was acknowledging a real-life matter of fact.<sup>9</sup> By then, the idea that the Gauls were the ancestors of the modern French had turned into a banal assumption, an unquestioned cliché upon which rested the unity of the nation's history. The most prominent historians of the second half of the century embraced it. Jules Michelet began his *Histoire de France* (1831–1867) with the Gauls, pushing into the background Romans, Iberians, and Franks.<sup>10</sup> In his influential *Histoire de la France populaire* (1867–1875) Henri Martin made the 'character of the Gauls' the thread of his narrative on the assumption that 'their blood has passed, from generation to generation, into our own veins'.<sup>11</sup> By 1926, when Camille Jullian published the last volume of his monumental *Histoire de la Gaule* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Lavisse, La première année d'histoire de France, 3. On this, see Étienne Bourdon, La forge gauloise de la nation: Ernest Lavisse et la fabrique des ancêtres (Lyons: ENS éditions, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The expression is borrowed from Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 230–1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See Eugen Weber, *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 21–39, and Paul Viallaneix and Jean Erhard (eds.), *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois* (Clermont-Ferrand: Publications de la Faculté des lettres de Clermont II, 1982).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Le cabinet des antiques* (Paris: Garnier, 1958), 238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Christian Croisille, 'Michelet et les Gaulois, ou Les séductions de la patrie celtique', in Viallaneix and Erhard (eds.), Nos ancêtres les Gaulois, 211–19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Henri Martin, *Historie de France populaire depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Furne, 1867–1885), i. 5.

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(1914–1926), it had become a truism.<sup>12</sup> The myth was also popularised in successful historical novels. Thus, Eugène Sue's best-selling Les mystères du peuple (1849–1856) told the story of a family of proletarians across the centuries on the basis of a straightforward continuity between Gallic and French history. One important consequence of the diffusion of such a narration was that the past and its memory became a powerful tool of integration, fed by and feeding in its turn a nationalist rhetoric that contributed to defusing and containing social and political conflicts. Drevfusards and anti-Drevfusards, Boulangists and anti-Boulangists, socialists and conservatives all came to view themselves as part of one and the same nation for they shared a common origin - though, of course, in bitter conflict as to how France should be ruled. That proletarians and bourgeois had a common origin and, hence, the same past as in Sue's novel, helped to contain class conflict within the bounds of nationhood. And, in this sense, the 'failure of alternative memories' to contest the narrative espoused by Martin, Lavisse, and Jullian might arguably be the most important ideological achievement of the Third Republic.<sup>13</sup>

That French nationalism, as a mass phenomenon, took root during the Third Republic thanks to obligatory mass conscription, compulsory education, and the development of a centralised administration and of communication and transport, is widely accepted in the current literature - and rightly so. More controversial, however, are the ways in which the official rhetoric came into existence, and the role of the state in its shaping. In fact, until recently it has often been claimed that late nineteenth-century public authorities cloaked with an eternal, natural, and mystical aura the very modern and very mundane phenomenon of the nation and that it was largely to their efforts that the latter owed its deceptive antiquity. However, as this book will argue, things are more complex. Although the role of state institutions in advancing nationalism is indeed undeniable, to assume that the nationalist narrative, in the way it was told, essentially stemmed from the minds of politicians and bureaucrats is a misconception. This book is based on the idea, spelled out shortly, that the official national narrative of the Third Republic was built on a specific past, one of several, that throughout the long eighteenth century had been reshaped into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See, Société des Amis de Jacob Spon (eds.), Camille Jullian, l'histoire de la Gaule et le nationalisme français (Lyons: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1991); also Claude Nicolet, La fabrique d'une nation: La France entre Rome et les Germains (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 226–43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> The expression is taken from Philippe Joutard, 'Une passion française: L'histoire', in André Burguière and Jacques Revel (eds.), *Histoire de la France: Choix culturels et mémoire* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 355.

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a coherent narrative as a result of an intellectual, ideological, and political struggle. Central to this book is the contention that the roots of that narrative, later inculcated in millions of French men and women, were deeper than is often supposed. The narrative in question seemed convincing to contemporaries precisely because it was tied to the antiquity of the Gallic symbols, memories, and myths which it evoked. As its bedrock, these elements influenced profoundly the dominant nineteenth-century narrative and helped it to convey the emotionally laden image of a past defined within clear boundaries. Understanding the relationship between ethnic past(s) and the national narrative is crucial in grasping the true nature of modern French nationalism, shedding light on the causes of its strength and comprehending how it defined boundaries and established hierarchies. From such a standpoint, if we are to grasp just why the official national narrative took on the actual form it did and if we are to uncover the reasons for its sheer tenacity, attention needs to be drawn to the preexisting complex of myths, traditions, and cultural imaginaries.

Gaining such a perspective, a key concern becomes the ways in which one narrative came to organise so effective a superimposition of the many French pasts; how, in other words, so many historians came unthinkingly to assume that the Gallic origins were the only possible canvas on which to sketch the nation's history. In actual fact, the self-explanatory principle that Lavisse so nonchalantly placed as the logical and chronological beginning of his history, far from having always been an undeniable truth, was on the contrary the outcome of a drawn-out intellectual and ideological struggle, a struggle that is precisely the subject of the following pages. A main concern of this book is to cast light on the intellectual origins of the dominant nineteenth-century national narrative by looking at how French antiquaries, philosophes, and historians conceived their national past throughout the eighteenth century and during the Restoration – that is, when those origins were being questioned and debated and when they acquired the meaning later enshrined in the history books and textbooks of the Third Republic. The present work engages with the myth of 'our ancestors the Gauls' - championed in different ways by Sievès, Thierry, and Guizot - and studies its triumph over the competing myth of 'our ancestors the Franks' - promoted by Boulainvilliers, Montesquieu, and Montlosier. It explores how the struggle developed and the values that the two discourses enshrined, the collective actors they portrayed, and the memories they conjured up. Comparing and dissecting the two myths, The Shaping of French National Identity is a genealogy of the nineteenthcentury French national narrative, of the hierarchies it shaped, and the

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ways in which its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion worked. Moreover, it is an attempt to assess how one of two ethnic discourses developed into a full-blown national narrative based on an ethos of work and sacrifice – beautifully captured in the above quotations from the *petit Lavisse* – and capable of imposing itself as a national memory so effectively overlapping with the national history.

# The Nation and Its Past(s)

Since the early 1980s, one of the most widespread approaches to the study of nations and nationalism has been that referred to as 'modernism', proposed, among others, by Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn, Paul Brass, Ernest Gellner, John Breuilly, and Benedict Anderson.<sup>14</sup> While the theories of these authors do differ in many respects, they all share the guiding assumption that nation and nationalism are modern phenomena or, rather, are a consequence of modernity itself. Taking hold during the last two centuries, the invention of the nation should be understood, the above authors argue, as a response directed and controlled by a political and economic elite to the problems caused by industrialisation, urbanisation, the emergence of the bureaucratic state, and by secularism. That before these developments the nation, as such, did not exist would prove it to be an invention. The faith in the nation is what actually creates it; like the Feuerbachian delusion about God, 'nationalism comes before the nation'.<sup>15</sup> All these authors stress the constructed as opposed to the essentialist nature

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Tom Nairn, The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neonationalism (London: Verso, 1981); Paul R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison (London: Sage, 1991); Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); John Breuilly, Nationalism and the State (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982); Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983). On more recent debates regarding nationalism: Paul Lawrence, Nationalism: History and Theory (Harlow: Pearson, 2005); Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); Umut Özkirimli, Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); John Coakley, "Primordialism" in Nationalism Studies: Theory or Ideology?', Nations and Nationalism, 24 (2018), 327–47; Alessandro Campi, Stefano De Luca, and Francesco Tuccari (eds.), Nazione e nazionalismi: Teorie, interpretazioni, sfide attuali (Rome: Historica, 2018). More recently there has been a growing interest in so-called 'neo-perennialism'. See: Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Caspar Hirschi, The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Azar Gat, Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10.

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of the nation which, however real in its consequences, is either 'imagined' or 'invented'. Consistently, they also maintain that the nation's past is constructed or, as Hobsbawm and Ranger argue, it is an 'invented tradition'.<sup>16</sup> This the two authors define as a set of practices of a ritual or symbolic nature 'which inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, thereby automatically implying continuity with the past'.<sup>17</sup> It is to hide its novelty and to show itself as a permanent fact that the nation establishes an incontestable continuity with the past, making of history 'a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion'.<sup>18</sup> Articulating a view that has long been widely accepted, Hobsbawm and Ranger's argument was in part a response - a legitimate one - to the perennialists' thesis regarding nationhood. For the latter had considered the nation to be a fixed entity, unchanging over the centuries except on the surface. Viewed from this angle, modernism indubitably represents a step forward in grasping the true nature of the nation, challenging those unproblematic histories from antiquity to the present day that were once so common.<sup>19</sup>

Despite its remarkable merits, however, the modernist approach has been criticised for several reasons. A first issue is the impossibility of defining a workable concept of modernity.<sup>20</sup> The difficulty in grasping its main traits or even understanding when modernity actually starts are problems overlooked by these authors, who consequently fail to explain why nationalism arises in deeply religious or in under-industrialised countries. A second limit derives from the underlying functionalist premises which lead authors like Gellner to explain nationalism through its effects on society, so that the consequences seemingly precede the causes. By such a token, the extraordinary strength of nationalism remains unaccounted for.<sup>21</sup> If the faith in the nation were the outcome of a manipulation intended to recreate an impossible *Gemeinschaft* now lost to modernity, this would not explain its success and why the nationalist delusion moves so many to sacrifice so much. Anderson's idea that a community is an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 'Introduction: Inventing Tradition', in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1. <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 12. On the point, see Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 116–20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), and Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 89–188.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See the arguments in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2002).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> On this point, Brendan O'Leary, 'On the nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', *British Journal of Political Science*, 27 (1997), 191–222.

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'imagined' bond tying to one another individuals who have never met surely captures a fundamental aspect of what is at stake, and, in his study, he offers a useful list of the ways in which identification with the community takes place. Yet little is said of its strength. Imagining that two persons who have never met feel a special bond because they read the same newspaper, obey the same laws, or use the same currency cannot explain why the one might be willing to give his or her life for the other. Without clarifying this, modernism makes it difficult, if not altogether impossible, to tell the nation apart from other, no less imagined communities – an intellectual necessity that, it might be ventured, modernism itself creates.

Arguably, the strength of nationalism is its most salient aspect. Recently, Italian historian Alberto Mario Banti has tried to explain its success by building on the modernist approach and borrowing from and readapting the thesis of George Mosse. Banti claims that the capacity of nationalism to affect millions of individuals so deeply is connected to the fact that it appeals to what he calls 'deep images': basic, primeval emotions that belong to man as such. Analysing nationalistic rhetoric in nineteenth-century Italy, England, France, and Germany, Banti finds it constantly and invariably appealing to the same deep-seated affective constellations: honour, sacrifice, virility, the sanctity of the nation as a great family, a common ancestry and, most importantly for us, a common past. It is because of their nature that such appeals may move a person to sacrifice everything she or he has.<sup>22</sup> Focusing on novels, poetry, and plays as vehicles of nationalism, the merit of Banti's work lies in considering the emotional aspect central in grasping the causes of its strength. In part, The Shaping of French National Identity confirms the importance such images had in shaping French nationalist feelings as far back as the early years of the eighteenth century. Appeals to the family of the nation, to sacrifices made in the name of the patrie, to a common ancestry, and to a sacred past, all emerge time and time again in the discourses we will examine - if used in different ways by the various discursive and social groups. And yet, illuminating though it may be, Banti's use of 'deep images' remains problematic. In fact, by considering these the exclusive key for analysing nationalism and by defining a set

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita (Turin: Einaudi, 2000); Alberto Mario Banti, L'onore della nazione: Identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla Grande Guerra (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); Alberto Mario Banti, Sublime madre nostra: La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo (Rome: Laterza, 2011); Alberto Mario Banti, 'Conclusions: Performative Effects and "Deep Images" in National Discourse', in Laurence Cole (ed.), Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830–1870 (London: Palgrave, 2007), 220–9.

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of basic emotions common to all men in all ages, it becomes difficult to properly understand how national boundaries are conceived and how processes of inclusion and exclusion actually take place. Furthermore, one would be hard-pressed to explain how nations set themselves apart one from the other. In effect, Banti's is an ethnographic explanation of nationalism and, as such, it inevitably blurs the differences between various nationalist discourses.<sup>23</sup> Partly as a consequence of this, insisting on the constructed nature of national pasts, Banti, like other modernists, leaves unsolved the riddle of why a specific myth might appeal to some but not to others. Since at the centre of his study he places novels, operas, and plays – assuredly another great merit – the question is why, given that deep images are shared by all men and women, an empathic bond is established between the characters of a novel or a play and only some of its readership or audience – but not others.

One solution to the shortcomings of the modernist argument and to Banti's version of it might lie in Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolic approach, an approach usually overlooked by professional historians – with a few notable exceptions – in spite of the advantages it offers to the study of the history of nationhood and nationalism.<sup>24</sup> The ethno-symbolic point of departure is that the nation is a social phenomenon sustained and shaped by pre-existing myths, symbols, memories, and values shared by a pre-modern community. This is referred to as *ethnie*, a term that connotes a community with a 'proper collective name', a 'myth of common ancestry', 'shared collective memories', one or more 'differentiating elements of common culture', an association with a 'specific homeland', and, finally, a 'sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> On Banti's views, see Lucy Riall, 'Nation, "Deep Images" and the Problem of Emotions', *Nations and Nationalism*, 15 (2009), 402–9; Axel Körner, 'The Risorgimento's Literary Canon and the Aesthetics of Reception: Some Methodological Considerations', *Nations and Nationalism*, 15 (2009), 410–18; John Breuilly, 'Risorgimento Nationalism in the Light of General Debates about Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 15 (2009), 439–45; Matthew D'Auria, 'Risorgimento addio? Alcune riflessioni sulla "nazione italiana" di Alberto Mario Banti', *Rivista di politica*, 2 (2011), 17–30.

 <sup>(2011), 17–30.
&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Among the exceptions, for example, Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Colin Kidd makes a fleeting reference to ethno-symbolism in his *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689–c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 21–46; Anthony D. Smith, National Identity (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 19–42. Also see John Hutchinson, Modern Nationalism (London: Fontana Press, 1994); Anthony D. Smith, The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic (Malden: Blackwell, 2008); Anthony D. Smith, Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach (London: Routledge, Routl

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The cultural nucleus of the *ethnie* is located in an articulation of myths, values, and symbols that the members of the group endeavour to preserve and pass on to succeeding generations. Like all cultural and social phenomena, the nation and the attachment to it are clearly constructed - and yet they are not constructed in a void. Shaped in response to external stimuli or internal struggles, national symbols and values are built, for Smith, around the ethnie. Accordingly, at play is a superimposition of several subsequent layers of social representations, the later ones readapting in complex, unpredictable, and often conflicting ways the previous ones. So, rather than a fixed entity, the nation should be viewed as a continuous process, a historical construction operating, however, within parameters set by 'culture and traditions'. It is for this reason that the nation can only be grasped in the *longue durée* since changes, gradual or sudden, take place within longer timespans than would be the case with other cultural phenomena, owing to the resistance offered by ethnic values, memories, and myths.<sup>26</sup> A sort of corrective to the constructivism of the modernists, the emphasis is here on the constraints and the limitations set by existing cultural beliefs and practices to elite understanding and strategies so that, as one pioneer of this approach, John Armstrong, has claimed, the formation of nations cannot be understood without giving due weight to their ethnic forebears.<sup>27</sup> Consistently with such a standpoint, ethno-symbolism assumes that nations are historical constructions in a dual sense. On the one hand, they are built up over long timespans, 'embedded in collective pasts' and embodying shared memories, hopes, and traditions. On the other, they emerge 'through specific historical processes' that end up influencing the previous understandings of the past.<sup>28</sup> Shared by The Shaping of French National Identity, the ethno-symbolists' postulate of

<sup>2009).</sup> For an appraisal of ethno-symbolism see Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (eds.), *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). Also see Jonathan Hearn, 'Power, Culture, Identity, and the Work of Anthony Smith', *Nations and Nationalism*, 24 (2018), 286–91. Smith's notion of *ethnie* is clearly indebted to the vast anthropological literature on ethnicity. On the latter, see the seminal essays in Fredrik Barth (eds.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1969). Also see T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), and Stephen Spencer, *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 22–3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 4; also see Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Anthony D. Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10. Also see: Anthony D. Smith, The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 52–77; John A. Armstrong, 'Definitions, Periodization, and Prospects of the longue durée', in Guibernau and Hutchinson (eds.), History