Review Article

Before and after *Nationes*: Accounting for Medieval Peoples in Twenty-First-Century Germany

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Volker Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde: Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck* (Orbis mediaevalis 4). Berlin: Akademie, 2002. 375 pp. €94.95 (hardback).

Andreas Mohr, *Das Wissen über die Anderen: Zur Darstellung fremder Völker in den fränkischen Quellen der Karolingerzeit*. Münster: Waxmann, 2005. 356 pp. NP (paperback).

David Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden: Vorstellungen und Fremdheitskategorien bei Rimbert, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen und Helmold von Bosau* (Orbis mediaevalis 5). Berlin: Akademie, 2005. 415 pp. €74.95 (hardback).

Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Orbis mediaevalis 7). Berlin: Akademie, 2006. 458 pp. €74.95 (hardback).

Georg Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen: Entstehung und Wirkung deutsch-französischer Fremdbilder in der volkssprachlichen Literatur und Historiographie des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts* (Orbis mediaevalis 9). Berlin: Akademie, 2008. 446 pp. €64.95 (hardback).

Thomas Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität: Selbst- und Fremddeutung im Norden des hochmittelalterlichen Europa* (Europa im Mittelalter 14). Berlin: Akademie, 2009. 228 pp. €59.80 (hardback).

Michael Borgolte, Julia Dücker, Marcel Müllerburg, and Bernd Schneidmüller (eds.), *Integration und Desintegration der Kulturen im europäischen Mittelalter* (Europa im Mittelalter 18). Berlin: Akademie, 2011. 635 pp. €99.80 (hardback).

Writing in 1933, Eckart Kehr remarked that 'German historical scholarship has since the middle of the nineteenth century reflected the [contemporary German] political-social situation almost exactly'.[1] The medievalist reading these words will think at once of the *Kaiserzeit* – the glory-days of medieval western emperorship between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries – as the central theme in a protracted modern historiography of power. The politicized study of Germany's 'time of emperors' had begun in *Vormärz*, gathered strength in the unification era, and supplied historical legitimation for successive modern German imperialisms, before sinking precipitately in 1945.[2] What had allowed that remote imperial age repeatedly to be appropriated for contemporary ends was the conviction that it was a *deutsche Kaiserzeit*: an era in which, uniquely among the peoples of Europe, the Germans had (whether to their own long-term benefit or not) gained the rule of Christendom, and come thereby to know themselves *as* Germans. It was with the aim of stimulating national renewal that, four years after the Peace of Vienna, Freiherr vom Stein had founded the *Monumenta Germania Historica*, to publish the sources for medieval German history but particularly that of the Empire. 'Sacred love of Fatherland' was inscribed on the banners of German academic medievalism from the start.[3]

Study of the medieval *Reich* was accompanied from an early date by interest in 'the Germans' as a people: a people fashioned, according to prevailing views, both within and in consequence of its first age of imperial greatness. Medieval peoples and nations, which have for long commanded the attention of medievalists across Europe and North America, found their first serious historians ~~in Germany in~~ during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Germany. Among ~~these~~ German scholars, however, the quest for the medieval nation was infused with the same keen political partisanship as was study of the Empire itself. And just like the *Reich*, the medieval *Volk* was seemingly rendered obsolete, if not irredeemably toxic, as a theme for contemporary invocation, with the fall of the Nazi *imperium* and what followed. Radical discontinuity long appeared to mark this corner of the

[1] Eckart Kehr, 'Neuere deutsche Geschichtsschreibung', in Eckart Kehr, *Der Primat der Innenpolitik: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur preußisch-deutschen Sozialgeschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Berlin, 1965), cited in Karen Schönwälder, *Historiker und Politik: Geschichtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1992), p. 26.
[2] Gerd Althoff, 'Das Mittelalterbild der Deutschen vor und nach 1945', in Paul-Joachim Heinig, Sigrid Jahns *et al*. (eds.), *Reich, Regionen und Europa im Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für Peter Moraw* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 731-49; Len Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245-1414* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 1.
[3] For the foundation and early history of the *MGH*, see Harry Bresslau, *Geschichte der Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Hannover, 1921). Its motto continues to invoke *sanctus amor patriae* to the present day.

German historiographical landscape.[4] It is not therefore without interest to observe the appearance, during the early years of the twenty-first century, of a ~~rich~~ dense succession of publications of German authorship, concerned with what Benedict Anderson called 'imagined communities' in the Middle Ages – and, prominently, with peoples and nations. ~~In examining a number of these works in the present essay, it will be helpful to keep in mind the words of Eckart Kehr.~~ Taken together, these reveal significant departures from, but also some striking points of contact and continuity with, earlier phases in the long and periodically troubled German-language historiography of medieval ethnicity and nationhood. They suggest, moreover, that in this field of German scholarship at least, the words of Eckart Kehr remain just as apposite today as they were when they were formulated.[5]

The following discussion seeks to offer a broad account of German scholarship concerning medieval group identities during the first decade-and-a-half of the twenty-first century. In order to illuminate salient trends and developments, it focuses particularly upon a group of books – six monographs and a large essay collection – published in the decade between 2002 and 2011 and representing predominantly the work of young scholars. ~~However, if we are to judge their significance, it will be useful first to retrace in some detail what had gone before~~ This essay contends, however, that in order to grasp their full significance, recent and current writings in the field must be approached historically. We cannot begin with the works of the new millennium, but must first spend some time uncovering the successive layers of historiographical sediment upon which they rest. What most clearly stands out, when ~~these recent~~ contemporary studies are read alongside earlier German scholarship in the field, is not only that peoples and nations are now sharply relativized, as just one potential layer of identification among others (when they are considered at all). Rather, it is the very limited place allotted to the medieval *German* people, and to its political incarnation the *Reich*. For it was with the German people that it had all begun, and the German people that for at least a century had constituted the one true object of such studies.

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[4] George G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, 1968), ch. 8.

[5] For the long and varied history in Germany of attempts to complete the (variously-understood) unfinished business of a literally interminable medieval epoch, see Valentin Groebner, *Das Mittelalter hört nicht auf: Über historisches Erzählen* (Munich, 2008). The utility of medieval identities as a resource of modernity is explored in: Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton NJ and Oxford, 2002), pp. 1-40; Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden and Boston, 2013).

Modern German nationalism summoned the medieval nation into being. For Dietrich Schäfer, looking back from the 1880s, it was no surprise that German historical scholarship of his own time 'swims happily in the national tide', since it was 'above all in this national tide that it learned to swim in the first place'.[6] To the first generation of Romantic nationalist historians of the German Middle Ages, the workings of a national spirit had been immanent in the deeds of their medieval forebears, and therefore required no analysis. But after 1848, when the national principle seemed set 'to turn the old Europe into an inferno', German historians became increasingly interested in locating (and celebrating) the earliest evidence for its workings among their own ancestors.[7] It was not, therefore, long after mid-century that the first short studies appeared, purporting to trace 'the historical development of the German sense of peoplehood' (*Volksbewußtsein*).[8] Their authors rarely omitted to refer, by way of justification, to the startling changes of their own day.

By the century's close, medieval German 'national sentiment' was already the subject of a hefty (albeit unfinished) monograph.[9] Most of the evidence underpinning this and comparable studies was drawn from the utterances of medieval chroniclers, many of whose works were by now accessible in the editions of the *MGH*. Almost always, their words were held to speak for themselves, requiring little more than putting into a tidy heap by the historian. Down to the late twentieth century, German medievalists showed little interest in theorizing collective identities, tending (though, as we shall see, with different emphases at different times) to invoke *Nation* and *Volk* interchangeably and fairly unreflectively. Although sociologists, among them Max Weber, had already begun early in the twentieth century to engage with the problem of nations and with the chronology of their emergence, that did little to nurture greater conceptual rigour among their medievalist-peers.[10] Imaginatively, above all, German historians wrote from within the medieval, as also within the contemporary, *Reich*. The proudly self-conscious nation, it was argued (or more often assumed), had had its origins within the strong state. To Wilhelmine professors, the Germans

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[6] Dietrich Schäfer, *Deutsches Nationalbewußtsein im Licht der Geschichte* (Jena, 1884), p. 31.
[7] Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, 'Die Entwicklung des deutschen Volksbewußtseins', in Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, *Deutsche Reden* (Leipzig, 1871), p. 57.
[8] Ibid., p. 57.
[9] Fr. Guntram Schultheiß, *Geschichte des deutschen Nationalgefühles: eine historisch-psychologische Darstellung*, vol. I (Munich and Leipzig, 1893).
[10] As late as 1990 Carlrichard Brühl pronounced the existence of nations in the Middle Ages to be *selbstverständlich*, declaring that he 'couldn't care less' about 'the chattering of sociologists, who haven't read any sources' on the matter: Carlrichard Brühl, *Deutschland – Frankreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Cologne and Vienna, 1990), p. 270 with n. 180. For early German sociologists and the medieval nation, see Walter Schlesinger, 'Die Entstehung der Nationen: Gedanken zu einem Forschungsprogramm', in Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder (eds.), *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter* (Nationes 1, Sigmaringen, 1978), pp. 11-62 (here 29).

were 'the first people of Europe', not only (of course) in their rightful geopolitical claims, but also chronologically, since the political unity which had given them collective life was itself of uniquely early origin.[11]

The ~~European~~ international crisis of the early twentieth century brought changes, opening up viewpoints which, while no less partisan, were notably more outward-facing. The acts of contemporary European statesmen were now held to give access to the meanings of purportedly comparable actions from hundreds of years before. The great Church councils of the early fifteenth century, it was argued, had been hotbeds of implacable national rivalries, just like the international peace conferences that so signally failed to check the rush to war in 1914.[12] Medieval Germans were no longer viewed in isolation, but as a people alongside, and in competition with, other peoples, whose alleged rivalries anticipated and sanctioned contemporary quarrels.[13] The writings of medieval poets and chroniclers were scoured for examples – of which, it transpired, there were many – of inter-ethnic abuse and the trading of usually derogatory collective stereotypes.[14] But if German medievalists now discovered a keener interest in the non-German, its purpose was still solely to trumpet the honour and standing of their own nation, medieval and contemporary.[15]

The remaking of the European political landscape after 1918 brought a more fundamental shift in the writing of medieval nationhood by German scholars, as well as important continuities.[16] The collapse of the imperial regimes in Germany and Austria shook profoundly, although without altogether banishing, the well-established account of the Germans as owing their origins to the high-medieval *Reich*. A redrawn post-war map, which left German-speaking populations as minorities within non-German states, called into question the link, previously held as axiomatic, between nationhood and constitutional allegiance. The same changes, reinforced by the harshness, in German perceptions, of the

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[11] Fr. Guntram Schultheiß, *Das Deutsche Nationalbewußtsein in der Geschichte* (Hamburg, 1891), p. 19; for the Germans as the first medieval people to attain to 'dem Gefühl einer einheitliche Nationalität', see Schäfer, *Deutsches Nationalbewußtsein*, p. 17.

[12] Heinrich Finke, *Weltimperialismus und nationale Regungen im späten Mittelalter* (Rede gehalten bei der Jahresfeier der Freiburger Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft am 28. Okt. 1916, Freiburg im Breisgau and Leipzig, 1916), p. 40.

[13] Fritz Kern, *Die Anfänge der französischen Ausdehnungspolitik bis zum Jahr 1308* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910).

[14] Finke, *Weltimperialismus*, pp. 36-8.

[15] Thus Paul Joachimsen, *Vom deutschen Volk zum deutschen Staat: Eine Geschichte des deutschen Nationalbewußtseins* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1916), p. 2, for the outbreak of the Great War as a stimulus to trace back to its origins 'die Idee *unseres* nationalen Bewußtseins' [my emphasis].

[16] Gerd Althoff, 'Die Beurteilung der mittelalterlichen Ostpolitik als Paradigma für zeitgebundene Geschichtsbewertung', in Gerd Althoff (ed.), *Die Deutschen und ihr Mittelalter: Themen und Funktionen moderner Geschichtsbilder vom Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1992), pp. 147-64. For the *Zwangsfrieden* as stimulus to seek medieval parallels for contemporary nationalities-problems, see Karl Gottfried Hugelmann, 'Studien zum Recht der Nationalitäten im deutschen Mittelalter', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 47 (1927), 275-96 (here 275 n. 1).

post-war settlement, led some to insist that the very survival of the German people was now at stake. Under these circumstances, and particularly following the accession of the National-Socialist regime in 1933, the medieval German people and its relations with its neighbours became matters of concern well beyond the lecture hall. Findings culled from medieval charters and chronicles were now to become 'weapons' to wield in contemporary and future political contests.[17]

Their appropriation for such ends was encouraged in part by the establishment in the post-war period of specialist research institutes, dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of the new German minority populations, from their first appearance in the historical record. Their rise was one manifestation of a more general interest, emerging at the time, in the historical study of cultural zones and regions (*Landesgeschichte* or *Landesforschung*).[18] Universities located towards the geographical margins of German settlement, such as Bonn, Vienna, Prague, and Königsberg, became the leading centres in this highly politicized field of scholarship.[19] The study of the medieval German people was thereby relocated, in more senses than one, to the frontier. In the process, the historical nation yielded place to a broader, less ~~narrowly~~ exclusively political, conception of the *Volk*. A new generation of ideologically-committed medievalists promoted an ethno-popular German history (*Volksgeschichte*), more concerned with culture and settlement patterns than with institutions or rulers, and imbued with a pervasive, if often vague, blood-and-soil mysticism.[20] Medieval

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[17] The term is that of Erich Maschke, cited in Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: a Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 37.

[18] Willi Oberkrome, *Volksgeschichte: Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918-1945* (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 28-41; Alois Gerlich, *Geschichtliche Landeskunde des Mittelalters: Genese und Probleme* (Darmstadt, 1986), p. 80.

[19] For frontier studies and their locations, see: Winfried Schulze, Gerd Helm, and Thomas Ott, 'Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu einer Debatte', in Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle (eds.), *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), pp. 11-48 (here 19-27); Karel Hruza, 'Heinz Zatschek (1901-1965): "radikales Ordnungsdenken" und "gründliche, zielgesteuerte Forschungsarbeit"', in Karel Hruza (ed.), *Österreichische Historiker 1900-1945* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 2008), pp. 677-792. For the eastern frontiers, see Althoff, 'Die Beurteilung'; Burleigh, *Germany turns Eastwards*; for the west, Peter Schöttler, 'Die historische "Westforschung" zwischen "Abwehrkampf" und territorialer Offensive', in Peter Schöttler (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918-1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp. 204-61.

[20] See generally: Oberkrome, *Volksgeschichte*, esp. pp. 22-5; James van Horn Melton, 'From folk history to structural history: Otto Brunner (1898-1982) and the radical-conservative roots of German social history', in Hartmut Lehmann and James van Horn Melton (eds.), *Paths of Continuity: Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 263-97 (here 282-8); Stephen P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge MA, 2002), pp. 228-9; Hruza, 'Heinz Zatschek', pp. 740-3. For a medievalist's view of the formative role of *völkisch* forces in history, see Paul Kirn, *Aus der Frühzeit des Nationalgefühls: Studien zur deutschen und französischen Geschichte sowie zu den Nationalitätenkämpfen auf den Britischen Inseln* (Leipzig, 1943), p. 9. Biological racism is more evident in some works in this genre than others. It is explicitly present in Heinz Zatschek, 'Das Werden des deutschen Volkstums in Böhmen und Mähren', *Zeitschrift für sudetendeutsche Geschichte* 4 (1940), 241-57, esp. 242, 257, for the 'breeding-up' of the Czech population of Bohemia as a result of its 'crossing' with German blood.

writers were co-opted to the cause: they too became activists, protagonists in a *kämpfende Wissenschaft* directed at combating the 'historical distortions' of jealous enemies and rivals.[21]

The study of medieval ethnicities thus attained new prominence, underpinned by hitherto-unknown levels of organization and official funding.[22] The approach was self-consciously interdisciplinary, with historians working alongside archaeologists, historical geographers, philologists, and specialists in the burgeoning field of racial studies. The writings of the new medievalist generation took on a more abstract and generalizing – in its members' own estimation, more 'scientific' – quality than those of their naively chronicle-grubbing forebears. They did not, however, become less truculently partisan or myopically Germanocentric. On the contrary: as Erich Maschke remarked in 1933, such works reflected their authors' sense of responsibility 'towards the fate of our *Volk*'.[23] Not long before, Ernst Kantorowicz had called upon German historians to turn their backs on the international scholarly community, and to embrace instead the 'nationalization' of their discipline.[24] *Volksgeschichte*, as its proponents tirelessly declared, was addressed to an audience beyond the ranks of the specialists; but it sought only a German audience. And not only was it 'our' history, but history for the here-and-now. Writers insisted on the iron immutability of old-established inter-ethnic rivalries: knowing which peoples medieval Germans had viewed as their main adversaries mattered, 'since for the present day, too, this is not without importance'.[25]

Yet, with all its willing service of revanchist political goals, inter-war German *Volksgeschichte* also anticipated, in its assumptions and points of focus, much later scholarship in the field. Peoples, its proponents argued, existed only in and through their relations with other peoples. 'Only through opposition [*Gegensatz*] was reflection stimulated,

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[21] Heinz Zatschek, *Das Volksbewußtsein: Sein Werden im Spiegel der Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin, 1936), p. 80.

[22] See generally, Burleigh, *Germany turns Eastwards*.

[23] Erich Maschke, *Das Erwachen des Nationalbewußtseins im deutsch-slawischen Grenzraum* (Leipzig, 1933), p 51. For Maschke and Volksgeschichte, see Barbara Schneider, 'Geschichtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus: das Wirken Erich Maschkes in Jena', in Tobias Kaiser, Steffen Kaudelka and Matthias Steinbach (eds.), *Historisches Denken und gesellschaftlicher Wandel: Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft zwischen Kaiserreich und deutscher Zweistaatlichkeit* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 91-114 (esp. 94-8).

[24] Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'German malaise of modernity: Ernst H. Kantorowicz and his "Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite"', in Robert L. Benson and Johannes Fried (eds.), *Ernst Kantorowicz* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 33-56 (here 49).

[25] Zatschek, *Das Volksbewußtsein*, p. 52; Maschke, *Das Erwachen*, p 51. This view was pursued to bizarre lengths in Heinz Zatschek, *England und das Reich*, 2nd edn (Berlin, Munich and Vienna, 1943), presenting England as an implacable, trans-historical enemy, consistently seeking German weakness and division since the eleventh century. An alleged centuries-long Franco-German rivalry rooted in the Frankish legacy was traced by Hermann Heimpel, 'Frankreich und das Reich', in Hermann Heimpel, *Deutsches Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1941), pp. 160-75.

rendering consciousness of ethnic [*völkisch*] particularities possible.' It was the 'contrastive effect' of encountering others that enabled a people to gain awareness of its own shared qualities.[26] It was therefore at the frontier, where different peoples met, that their members attained their sense of common belonging. And the Germans, far from being a precocious people, as nineteenth-century nationalists had supposed, had come to self-awareness relatively late, under the stimulus of pressures from more assertive eastern and western neighbours.[27] While the *Volk* may, therefore, have been possessed of an innate, timeless essence, its members' appreciation of that mysterious bond was stirred by historical encounters.[28] It was this historically-generated sense of collective belonging that above all mattered, since only with its attainment might a people gird itself for the centuries-long struggles for self-assertion to which it was predestined, against natural competitors.[29] A 'history of German self-consciousness', it was therefore argued, ought to have a central place in future accounts of the medieval period.[30]

The poisoned history of medieval collective consciousness recounted by interwar *Volksgeschichte* found an abrupt end with the fall of the Third Reich. For a long time thereafter, medieval peoples and nations were largely absent from the interests of German historians, in both east and west.[31] When they returned to prominence, in West-German medievalism of the 1970s and 1980s, it was to be through reversion to an earlier template: a search for the 'beginnings of German history' within political processes. By then, however, the narrowly German-national ~~perspective~~ agendas dominant for more than a century had been abandoned in favour of ~~viewpoints~~ justificatory programmes invoking and celebrating (in practice, western continental) 'Europe'. West-German scholarship in the field was also strongly influenced by the seminal study of barbarian ethnogenesis in the sub-Roman period,

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[26] Maschke, *Das Erwachen*, pp. 5-6, 49.

[27] Ibid., p. 30.

[28] Thus, e.g., Zatschek, 'Das Werden', 246, for Jan Hus as 'awakening' the 'primal urge' (*Urtriebe*) in the Czechs of Bohemia and giving them the *Stoßrichtung* against their German neighbours.

[29] For the alleged medieval *Volkstumskampf* between Germans and their eastern neighbours, see Karl Gottfried Hugelmann, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Wenden im deutschen Mittelalter: ein Beitrag zum Recht der Fremdsprachigen im mittelalterlichen Deutschen Reich', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte (Germanische Abteilung)* 58 (1938), 214-56 (here 234).

[30] Thus the account of the tasks confronting medievalists at the *Reichsuniversität* at Strasbourg, according to Hermann Heimpel: Ernst Schulin, *Hermann Heimpel und die deutsche Nationalgeschichtsschreibung* (Heidelberg, 1998), p. 262.

[31] Largely but not entirely: thus, e.g., Paul Görlich, *Zur Frage des Nationalbewußtseins in Ost-deutschen Quellen des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg/Lahn, 1964).

published in 1961 by Reinhard Wenskus.[32] Wenskus, and the distinguished succession of anthropologically-inspired early medievalists who followed him in the 'Vienna school', approached dark-age peoples as essentially artificial, composite, political bodies. The unities of blood and descent conjured up in the chronicles, they argued, were fictions: powerful myths, which served the purpose of binding together heterogeneous military elites in common loyalty to a ruler and his kin-group.[33] Here, it seemed, was a detoxified model of nation-making, which could be applied to account for the emergence and consolidation of ethno-political communities throughout the Middle Ages.

Developing this broader perspective in Germany was above all the work of the 'Marburg group', founded in 1972, with its research project, conducted under the banner of *Nationes*, which sought to examine evidence for 'the emergence of European nations in the Middle Ages'.[34] This programmatic claim (and its proponents made clear that it was more than a mere working hypothesis) was contestable from the start, and it was rendered more so by the appearance during the 1980s of a series of important Anglophone studies, arguing strongly for the modern origins of European nations.[35] These, however, were largely disregarded by German (as well as most non-German) medievalists at the time.[36] They did not prevent the *Nationes* project from winning significant official backing, with the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* in 1975 awarding it *Schwerpunkt* status, guaranteeing ten years of support.[37] Strong emphasis was placed upon the importance of interdisciplinarity – as it had

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[32] Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne and Graz, 1961).

[33] For Wenskus and the 'Vienna school', see Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 299-301, 313-14; for their influence upon *Nationes*, Helmut Beumann, 'Zur Nationenbildung im Mittelalter', in Otto Dann (ed.), *Nationalismus in vorindustrieller Zeit* (Munich, 1986), pp. 21-33 (here 29-30).

[34] Schlesinger, 'Die Entstehung der Nationen', pp. 50-7; Peter Johanek, 'Zu neuen Ufern? Beobachtungen eines Zeitgenossen zur deutschen Mediävistik von 1975 bis heute', in Peter Moraw and Rudolf Schieffer (eds.), *Die deutschsprachige Mediävistik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vorträge und Forschungen 62, Ostfildern, 2005), pp. 139-74 (here 146-8); and see also the end-of-project report by Helmut Beumann, 'Europäische Nationenbildung im Mittlelalter: Aus der Bilanz eines Forschungsschwerpunktes', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 39 (1988), 587-93.

[35] Prominent examples include: John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, 1982); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalsim since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990). For a critique, from a modernist perspective, of the ideas of medievalists on the subject, see John Breuilly, 'Changes in the political uses of the nation: continuity or discontinuity?', in Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (eds.), *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 67-101.

[36] There is some discussion of 'modernist' approaches from a medievalist's point of view, as well as brief examination of the work of the Marburg group, in Edward Peters, '"The infancy of celebrated nations": folk, kingdom, and state in medieval Europe', *Medieval Perspectives* 3.ii (1988), 18-37. For an attempt to bring 'modernists' and medievalists into dialogue on the subject of the nation, see Scales and Zimmer (eds.), *Power and the Nation*.

[37] Beumann, 'Europäische Nationenbildung', 587. For the growth of *DFG* support for projects in the medieval field, see Peter Johanek, 'Mittelalterforschung in Deutschland um 2000', in Hans-Werner Goetz and Jörg Jarnut

been in the very different enterprise of *Volksgeschichte*, half a century before. In contrast to that venture, however, not quite all the historians participating in the *Nationes* project were German. Yet the concentration specifically upon early German nation-making, while now far from exclusive, remained a strong element in the project.[38]

Quite new, by contrast, and in clear reaction against the approaches of the inter-war generation, was the way in which the earliest European nations (*nationes*) were now understood: as communities made wholly within history, whose cohesion, such as it may have been, was the outcome of *political* processes.[39] Particularly important was the establishment of increasingly stable monarchical regimes, which emerged out of the disintegration of the Carolingian empire in the ninth and tenth centuries.[40] The first European nations, on this view, were not the product of interactions, and emphatically not of conflicts, between neighbouring groups. They were not made at the frontier, but at centres of elite cultural production, specifically the court. The collective stereotypes and angry denunciations of neighbours, which earlier twentieth-century medievalists had so assiduously gathered from the chronicles, were now dismissed as irrelevant. All societies, it was now argued, even the most primitive, generated 'differentiation *topoi*', whose prevalence thus revealed nothing specifically about nation-formation.[41] Language, for Romantic nationalists the repository of the people's soul, was at best of variable and secondary importance in nation-making. *Nationes* were fundamentally soul-less and non-mysterious entities, their 'peoples' effectively reducible to 'bearer-groups' of clerical and secular courtier-elites, sharers in a common, power-affirming, memory culture.[42] Historical writings, within which those shared myths were embedded, were thus of central importance; but now, in contrast to the naïve approaches of earlier scholars, scrupulous emphasis was placed upon the limited, group-

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(eds.), *Mediävistik im 21. Jahrhundert: Stand und Perspektiven der internationalen und interdisziplinären Mittelalterforschung* (Munich, 2003), pp. 21-33 (here 22-3).

[38] See particularly Joachim Ehlers (ed.), *Ansätze und Diskontinuität deutscher Nationsbildung im Mittelalter* (Nationes 8, Sigmaringen, 1989). Important monographic studies of high-medieval German nation-making from the same period include: Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte: Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin, 1994); Joachim Ehlers, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Reiches*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1998).

[39] Joachim Ehlers, 'Die deutsche Nation des Mittelalters als Gegenstand der Forschung', in Ehlers (ed.), *Ansätze und Diskontinuität*, pp. 11-58 (here 23-4). Many of the preoccupations of the *Nationes* project, including its main geographical and chronological focus, found reiteration in Carlrichard Brühl and Bernd Schneidmüller (eds.), *Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Reichs- und Nationsbildung in Deutschland und Frankreich* (*Historische Zeitschrift* Beiheft 24, Munich, 1997).

[40] Joachim Ehlers, 'Nation und Geschichte: Anmerkungen zu einem Versuch', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 11 (1984), 205-18 (here 205); František Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter* (Nationes 3, Sigmaringen, 1980), p. 144.

[41] Ehlers, 'Nation und Geschichte', 208.

[42] Ehlers, 'Die deutsche Nation', p. 57.

specific, character of their reception.[43] The same cautious, de-mythologizing tendency is evident in the close attention which the project, which had a strong philological thrust, paid to the nuances of names, terms and concepts, as these appeared in the sources.[44]

The *Nationes* project was thus, like earlier (and subsequent) engagements with medieval peoples and nations, reflective of a particular moment in modern (west-) German history. It marked an end-point. Some of the studies written under its auspices were the work of scholars well advanced in years, including a handful who had come to adulthood during the National Socialist era.[45] Here was history for a divided Germany – for a nation with a past scrubbed clean of seductive myths, and perhaps, as Walter Schlesinger gloomily reflected, with no future at all, as Walter Schlesinger gloomily reflected.[46] If the German nation did have a future, however, it was one bound to that of the western neighbour, France, which was now presented as happier historical sibling rather than as malevolent ancient competitor. Among the key contributors to the *Nationes* project were specialists in French as well as German history, who thus turned their backs particularly upon the currents of earlier German scholarship which had viewed medieval France through a German-national lens.[47]

Here, too, was history shaped to fit comfortably within a modestly-proportioned European Community, in which the French voice was strong, and whose core lands still mirrored uncannily the ancient heartlands of the Carolingian empire. Common origins, Franco-German interdependence, and the leading role of the Carolingian successor-realms within a limited, multi-speed, core-and-periphery medieval Europe, seemed the points to emphasize.[48] It was the core that claimed prime attention: France and Germany presented contrasting, straight and crooked, paths of nation-making, proceeding from a shared

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[43] Ibid., p. 39.

[44] Hans-Dietrich Kahl, 'Einige Beobachtungen zum Sprachgebrauch von natio im mittelalterlichen Latein mit Ausblicken auf das neuhochdeutsche Fremdwort "Nation"', in Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder (eds.), *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter: Ergebnisse der Marburger Rundgespräche 1972-1975* (Nationes 1, Sigmaringen, 1978), pp. 63-108; Bernd Schneidmüller, *Nomen Patriae: die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie (10.-13. Jahrhundert)* (Nationes 7, Sigmaringen, 1987).

[45] The elements of continuity with earlier twentieth-century German scholarship are evident when the works of the *Nationes* group are read alongside the essays in Helmut Kämpf (ed.), *Die Entstehung des Deutschen Reiches* (Wege der Forschung 1, Darmstadt, 1956).

[46] Schlesinger, 'Die Entstehung der Nationen', pp. 34-5.

[47] Joachim Ehlers, 'Elemente mittelalterlicher Nationsbildung in Frankreich (10.-13. Jahrhundert)', *Historische Zeitschrift* [henceforth *HZ*] 231 (1980), 565-87. And see esp. Brühl, *Deutschland – Frankreich*, p. 78. Brühl's book, commissioned by Jacques Chirac while mayor of Paris, laid heavy stress on shared Franco-German Carolingian origins, while denouncing Germanocentric viewpoints. His main target was a late work in the German-nationalist tradition: Walther Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich in der Kaiserzeit (900-1270): Weltkaiser und Einzelkönige*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1974-75).

[48] Schlesinger, 'Die Entstehung der Nationen', p. 61. Much of the relevant literature is referenced by Jean-Marie Moeglin, 'Nation et nationalisme du Moyen Age à l'Époque modern (France-Allemagne)', *Revue historique* 301 (1999), 537-53.

Carolingian root. France offered a model and inspiration to Germans in the Federal Republic on their long and continuing, historical 'road westwards'.[49] Yet nation-making, the *Nationes* model also insisted, was largely self-generating, the product of political change and institutional growth – and in the German case inseparable from the history of the medieval *Reich*, with all its unique twists.[50] German medievalists once again turned inward, not outward, for the nation, to reflect, in chastened mood, on what now seemed a dark and fruitless *Sonderweg*.

Not for much longer, however. The events of 1989-1990 and what followed were to change everything, drawing the attention of scholars back once again to the frontier – but now to different, larger, but also more intimate, communities of belonging. The unification of Germany itself did not, as might have been expected, stimulate any new wave of interest in the medieval roots of German nation- or peoplehood.[51] That remarkable silence represents a break with a nearly two-centuries-old German historiographical tradition. The lack of attention by medievalists to the theme appears all the more significant when we note the massive proliferation during the same period, and particularly after the turn of the millennium, of studies engaging with medieval identities more broadly. Indeed, it was only during these years that the now-ubiquitous term 'identity' (*Identität*) itself became embedded in German academic discourse in the field.[52] By now, German medievalists were formulating increasingly nuanced, multi-layered conceptions of collective belonging, which sought to locate nations and peoples within more complex patterns of allegiance and identification.[53] It was no longer axiomatic that a major study of medieval constructions of ethnicity, of German authorship, would pay any attention at all to medieval Germans – let alone, as in times past, make them, as in times past, its sole object.[54] Yet radical change, as will soon become clear,

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[49] For a view of medieval German development resembling that of the *Nationes* group, within a broad panoramic view of German history, see Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. 1 (Munich, 2000), p. 4.

[50] Ehlers, 'Nationsbildung in Frankreich', 587.

[51] A fact several times noted in Michael Borgolte (ed.), *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende 1989* (*HZ* Beiheft 20, Munich, 1995); and see Johanek, 'Zu neuen Ufern?', p. 173.

[52] Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität: Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2000); Aleida Assmann and Heidrun Friese (eds.), *Identität* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

[53] Thus Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Reich – Volk – Nation: Die Entstehung des deutschen Reiches und der deutschen Nation im Mittelalter', in Almut Bues and Rex Rexheuser (eds.), *Mittelalterliche Nationes – neuzeitliche Nationen: Probleme der Nationenbildung in Europa* (Wiesbaden, 1995), pp. 75-101 (here 97, 101).

[54] A notable example, influential in post-Millennium scholarship in the field, is Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "nationes": Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1995). Kersken's 'Europe of nations' did not include Germany.

was accompanied by some notable recurring features – not least, in the connections still made or assumed between remote pasts and the imperatives of a political present.

Both new departures and hints at deep continuity are to be found in a succession of important monographs and collaborative works, addressing the theme of collective identities, which were published during the first decade of the third millennium. The following discussion concentrates on some of the more substantial and, for the trajectory of recent scholarship, revealing of these. They must, however, be read in context of a much fuller contemporary tide of interrelated publications, including numerous journal articles and papers in specialist collections, as well as further book-length studies, the work of the authors discussed here, their mentors and others.

Brief enumeration of the works to be considered highlights strong similarities not only in research questions and approach (and, indeed, chosen titles) but also in sources, periods of coverage, and geographical frames of reference. Volker Scior's influential study, *Das Eigene und das Fremde* (2002), examines constructions of identity and alterity by three Latin chroniclers who gave account of the northern and north-eastern frontiers of Christendom between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries: Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau, and Arnold of Lübeck. Constructions of 'the north' itself are the main concern of David Fraesdorff, whose *Der barbarische Norden* (2005) focuses on four Latin authors from the ninth to the twelfth centuries: Rimbert, author of a life of the missionary Ansgar, and Thietmar of Merseburg, as well as, again, Adam and Helmold. Andreas Mohr reviews a much larger number of Latin writers, who looked out upon various foreign worlds beyond the frontier from within the Carolingian empire between the eighth and the tenth centuries, in *Das Wissen über die Anderen* (2005). The construction of extended narratives of ethnic and dynastic-regnal origins is the focus of Alheydis Plassmann's *Origo gentis* (2006), which examines Latin chronicles written between the sixth and the twelfth centuries. Several of Plassmann's works, too, are drawn from and engage with the geographical margins of Christendom. Georg Jostkleigrewe, in his *Das Bild des Anderen* (2008), while also concerned with constructions of collective identity and alterity, adopts a focus seemingly more familiar for a German medievalist, upon mutual Franco-German portrayals, between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.[55] Although Jostkleigrewe also concentrates on narrative sources, his

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[55] This theme by no means lost its attractiveness in the post-*Nationes* era. See thus: Rainer Babel and Jean-Marie Moeglin (eds.), *Identité regionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du Moyen âge à l'époque moderne* (Sigmaringen, 1997); Joachim Ehlers (ed.), *Deutschland und der Westen Europas im Mittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 56, Stuttgart, 2002); Stefan Weiß (ed.), *Regnum et Imperium: Die französisch-deutschen Beziehungen im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2008).

main concern is not with Latin but vernacular texts. Thomas Foerster takes a more complex, multi-perspectival, approach to the relationship between alterity and selfhood in his *Vergleich und Identität* (2009). Again, the far north is a major focus and again the book's evidential base is furnished by narrative sources – mainly in Latin, but also in Germanic vernaculars – drawn largely from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, whereas other studies concentrate on the view of pagan or newly-Christian 'others' from established Christian centres inside the religious frontier, Foerster also considers identity-formation, through comparisons with the European core, within the northern lands themselves.

All these volumes are the published versions of doctoral dissertations. They also have other elements in common, not confined to aspects of content and approach. Inter-disciplinary graduate colleges had an unmistakably role in their making: particularly that of the University of Paderborn, on 'Travel Literature and Cultural Anthropology', as well as Erlangen's on 'Cultural Transfer in Medieval Europe' and Kiel's on 'Imagining the North' (*Imaginatio borealis*). A number of senior scholars with reputations in the study of medieval collective identities played a part in bringing them to fruition, notably Hamburg's Hans-Werner Goetz, who supervised two of the six dissertations. These studies, then, are the products of a highly interconnected specialist scholarly milieu. Their authors cite and respond to each other's arguments, so that to read them together is to gain the impression of following an on-going, evolving inter-textual discourse. Some of them insist strongly on the novelty of their perspectives, and on the break which their work represents with earlier scholarship.[56]

The *DFG* had an important role in fostering this conversation and in facilitating the new wave of studies of medieval collective identities. *DFG* support found expression not only in the sponsorship of graduate-studies programmes, but particularly via *Schwerpunktprogramm* 1173, which received funding from 2005 until 2012, on 'The Integration and Dis-integration of Cultures in Medieval Europe'. As well as nurturing individual studies, *SPP* 1173, led by Michael Borgolte (Berlin Humboldt) and Bernd Schneidmüller (Heidelberg), has published major collaborative volumes, bringing together the work of many young scholars.[57] The most ~~recent and~~ substantial of these collections, which is discussed within the present review, appeared in 2011, and represents the project-

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[56] Scior, *Das Eigene*, pp. 13-14; Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, p. 27. Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 13, contrasts the advances of contemporary approaches with (largely undefined) 'traditional scholarship'.

[57] One monographic study published under its auspices is Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*. A major intermediate statement of the project's findings is Michael Borgolte, Juliane Schiel, Bernd Schneidmüller, and Annette Seitz (eds.), *Mittelalter im Labor: Die Mediävistik testet Wege zu einer transkulturellen Europawissenschaft* (Europa im Mittelalter 10, Berlin, 2008).

team's definitive closing statement. Essays, the work of twenty-eight different authors, writing separately or in collaboration, were organized under three headings: 'Forms of Boundary-Marking and Constructions of Identity'; 'Difference as Cultural Practice'; and 'Boundary-Transgression as a Creative Process'. Taken together, these can be read as guides not only to the contents of this volume but to some of the salient preoccupations of German scholarship on medieval identities since 2000 more broadly.

Medieval peoples and nations occupy a variable role in these volumes, ranging from the central to the relatively marginal. Nevertheless, examining how authors engage with this theme has particular interest, for what it reveals about both change and continuity in the recent concerns of German medievalists. The ethnic groups encountered here have a sharply different character from the largely self-generated medieval political communities portrayed by contributors to the *Nationes* project. Political institutions and events, political actors, and broadly-conceived social groups command notably limited attention. And if medieval Germans receive little notice, the identity-forming role of the *Reich* is considered even less. Instead, the concentration is upon authors, upon relatively intimate communities of often clerical addressees, and, above all, on the texts themselves. Superficial acquaintance ~~seems to invite the suspicion of a return to~~suggests echoes of an earlier, troubled, tradition of German scholarship on the medieval *Volk*. Once again, the reader is taken out to the geographic margins, where collective selfhood meets the foreign. Cultural points of reference dominate, and imagined Otherness, conscious differentiation (*Abgrenzung*), and indeed conflict, are once more central elements in the picture. Nevertheless, it quickly becomes clear that these works do not ~~so much~~ represent in any sense a return to the tradition of *Volksgeschichte*, ~~as~~ but rather a further step out of its shadow.

For one thing, the *Volk* no longer looms large. On the whole, these studies are scrupulous almost to a fault in the respect which they pay the terminology of their sources, at least as it relates to medieval ethnic groups. In this, they are heirs to the meticulous *Begriffsgeschichte* that underpinned the *Nationes*-project. But while the use within individual texts of Latin ethnographic terms, such as *gens* (pl. *gentes*) and *nation* (pl. *nationes*), is often carefully delineated, the words themselves are commonly left untranslated. Plaßmann thus insists that her work is concerned with *gentes* but not with *nationes*, a term and concept

which she ascribes to the later medieval period.[58] The modern German-language vocabulary characteristic of earlier generations of studies is nervously handled. *Nation* is employed rarely, and then sometimes with clear unease; *Volk* finds somewhat more frequent but largely descriptive use.[59] Often, readers are left to decide for themselves which current terms might most appropriately identify the medieval groups under discussion.

It is a weakness of recent German (though not only German) studies that they make little attempt to establish theoretical clarity on the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood, or on the relative applicability of these concepts to medieval Europe.[60] Crucially, however, and in contrast to much that is still written on the matter by scholars elsewhere, their authors rarely take as their subject a group in any sense conceivable as the medieval antecedent of their 'own' people.[61] Partly for this reason, the long-familiar impulse to write the medieval history of ethnic groups as but one stage within larger, organic, long-term processes of national coming-into-being (an impulse which, for all their protestations to the contrary, *Nationes* scholars did not always resist) is now largely absent.[62]

These post-millennial accounts tend also to be firm in insisting that their subject-chroniclers did not offer anything as unmediated as 'perceptions' of medieval peoples (with the attendant, seductive, prospect of an accessible core of 'objective' insight for the historian to exploit).[63] Instead, they presented 'constructions', which as such reveal more about the

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[58] Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 13-18. The use of medieval terms to ~~stand for~~denote modern concepts is here problematic. Plaßmann implies (p. 18) that the Latin *natio* can stand straightforwardly for *Nation*, and thus for something different from, and later than, her always-untranslated *gens*. However, no such clear temporal distinction between the Latin terms is possible: *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. D.R. Howlett (Oxford, 1975-), pp. 1065-6 (*gens*) and 1888 (*natio*).

[59] The issue had been troublesome already in the *Nationes* era, with Joachim Ehlers insisting that *Volk* was too historically burdened to be usable, and others defending its continuing value: Barbara Hoen, *Deutsches Eigenbewußtsein in Lübeck: Zu Fragen spätmittelalterlicher Nationsbildung* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 22-3. The diminutive *Völkerschaften* is here preferred (e.g., for Slavs, Danes) by Scior, *Das Eigene*. How sensitive the issue of terminology remains is underlined by the fact that Fraesdorff was criticized by a German reviewer for his isolated recourse to *Lebensräume*, *Volksgruppen*, and *Volksgemeinschaft*: http://www.sehepunkte.de/2008/09/8437.html (viewed 25.10.2014).

[60] Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 13-18 attempts this, though without distinguishing sufficiently clearly between medieval terms and modern concepts. The applicability of modern terminology is also considered by Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, pp. 38-41.

[61] Another major study of medieval collective identities from this decade with nothing substantive to say about the Germans (despite their potential relevance to the author's theme) is Kordula Wolf, *Troja – Metamorphosen eines Mythos: Französische, englische und italienische Überlieferungen des 12. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich* (Berlin, 2009).

[62] Precisely their insistence that there was no 'straight path' from 'the post-Carolingian regna to the nations of modernity', but instead 'setbacks' and 'cul-de-sacs' points to a fundamentally processual mode of thought: Beumann, 'Zur Nationenbildung', p. 33. At the end of the twentieth century it was still possible, for example, to encounter the observation that 'the thirteenth century represents the epoch in which a Polish national consciousness *finally* [my emphasis] formed': Sławomir Gawlas, 'Die mittelalterliche Nationenbildung am Beispiel Polens', in Bues and Rexheuser (eds.), *Mittelalterliche Nationes*, pp. 121-43 (here 131).

[63] Scior, *Das Eigene*, pp. 143-4; Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 12.

medieval writer, his situation and his intentions (and perhaps about the constraints of the textual tradition within which he worked) than they do about the ethnic groups he invoked. 'A people', as the reader encounters it in medieval chronicle-texts, 'is a thought entity'.[64]

While these recent studies – in contrast to much of the work by the *Nationes* group – assert strongly the indispensability of notions of alterity, and therefore of other peoples, to medieval constructions of collective selfhood, these encounters with the Other are mostly treated as textual happenings, rather than as necessarily reflecting direct social contacts.[65] Their approaches to medieval peoples, moreover, rather than relying merely upon vague assumptions about the inevitability of inter-ethnic competition in the manner of *Volksgeschichte*, are driven by close engagement with contemporary and older works of cultural theory. Thomas Foerster quotes the Egyptologist Jan Assmann to the effect that 'we cannot contemplate our inner [here, collective] self, any more than we can our face, except in a mirror'.[66] Fredrik Barth is called upon to support the recurrent insistence in these studies upon the indispensability of boundaries against the Other to the construction of medieval selves.[67] Reinhart Koselleck's model of 'asymmetrical counter-concepts' is repeatedly invoked (though also criticized), as an approach to the rhetorical strategies of medieval writers in constructing foreign peoples.[68]

Both identity and alterity are conceived of as multi-layered, and their interrelation as complex. Medieval writers are shown to have had recourse to multiple 'part-identities' (*Teilidentitäten*), among which sense of nation or peoplehood often had a less formative role

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[64] Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 12.

[65] Thus Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, pp. 36-7, citing Scior. An exception here is Mohr, *Das Wissen*, esp. p. 330, with the (naïve) insistence that accounts of the Vikings in Frankish sources 'represent an expression of concrete, immediate experiences and encounters'. It is also revealing in this context that Mohr writes of his source-authors as 'reporters' and 'observers'.

[66] Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 8, quoting Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992). Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, p. 365, also cites Assmann on this matter, as well as Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).

[67] Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 8: Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (London, 1969), pp. 9-38; and see also Scior, *Das Eigene*, p. 10, citing Justin Stagl, 'Grade der Fremdheit', in Herfried Münkler (ed.), *Furcht und Faszination: Facetten der Fremdheit* (Berlin, 1997).

[68] For a more complex view of representations of pagans in medieval German literature than Koselleck's model allows (with representations lying 'on a scale between fascination and rejection, between integration into the Christian sphere and dis-integration out of it'), see Stephanie Seidl and Julia Zimmermann, 'Jenseits des Kategorischen: Konzeptionen des "Heidnischen" in volkssprachigen literarischen und chronikalischen Texten des 13. Jahrhunderts', in Borgolte, Dücker, Müllerburg, and Schneidmüller (eds.), *Integration und Desintegration*, pp. 325-75 (here 332, 375). See also: Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 186; and Reinhart Koselleck, 'Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe', in Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), pp. 211-59.

than did other, more concrete and localized, self-ascriptions.[69] These identities, moreover, as they are presented in recent studies, were subject to on-going processes of generation and re-making.[70] There was no fixed and settled point of view. Within those processes, specific moments of crisis affecting a writer, or affecting communities with which he identified, might have a particular role in stimulating and shaping his work's production.[71] Conceptions of other peoples were not immutable: there was for German chroniclers no single, inescapable way of portraying Danes or Wends. With changing times, depictions too might change.[72] The collective stereotypes repeated by many chroniclers are not (as some *Nationes* authors contended) irrelevant to understanding medieval collective identities; but their meanings and their deployment were complex, variable, and unpredictable.[73] Differentiation (*Abgrenzung*) did not invariably imply negative judgments on that which was being placed beyond the imagined boundary, still less a belief in the inevitability of ingrained opposition or conflict.[74]

Nor did alterity necessarily mean polar difference from the imagined self. On the contrary, chroniclers often constructed the Other from a projection of self-conceptions, to which 'foreign' groups were assumed fundamentally to correspond.[75] Carolingian Frankish writers imagined their neighbours in their own self-image, as peoples, each occupying distinct territories and subject to monarchical rulers – even when their social and political arrangements were in fact rather different.[76] Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century French chroniclers invoked a Germany which, constitutionally, tended to resemble France.[77] And even when they did not, their assumptions, and those of their German counterparts, were typically of amity and stability, not proto-Darwinian struggle, as a historical norm in the relations of their two peoples.[78]

Frontiers and frontier zones matter much, whereas they generally did not for late twentieth-century German scholarship on medieval nationhood. But, far from being mere fixtures, lying inert between unchanging, mutually-opposed national blocs, frontiers are now

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[69] Scior, *Das Eigene*, p. 26, drawing upon the work of Hans-Werner Goetz.
[70] Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 15: 'Identity-construction is a permanent process, within which myth-formation is constantly actualized'.
[71] Ibid., pp. 9-10. For the identity-forming role of crisis, see Carla Meyer and Christoph Dartmann, 'Einleitung', in Christoph Dartmann and Carla Meyer (eds.), *Identität und Krise? Zur Deutung vormoderner Selbst-, Welt- und Fremderfahrungen* (Münster, 2007), pp. 9-22.
[72] Mohr, *Das Wissen*, pp. 328, 331.
[73] Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 282-4; Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 15.
[74] Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 354-5; Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, p. 37.
[75] Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, p. 138.
[76] Mohr, *Das Wissen*, p. 325.
[77] Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, pp. 113-14, 156.
[78] Ibid., p. 382.

ascribed a dynamic role within fluid identity-forming processes, of variable, always provisional, outcome.[79] The making of new boundaries, on this view, is inseparable from the transgression and subverting of existing ones, and is a reflection of multiple on-going, dialectical, integrative and dis-integrative currents. This is just as true of mental frontiers, between the familiar and the foreign in all their guises, as it is of boundaries amenable to physical traversal.[80] Medieval writers, as these studies approach them, are themselves travellers to and beyond the frontier – in fact or (more commonly) in imagination.[81] Frontier societies are now approached in some accounts as zones not only (or indeed, mainly) of differentiation and segregation but of cultural transfer fluidity and – drawing on the fruits of post-colonial theory – as nurturing hybrid forms of identity.[82]

The frontiers that matter, moreover, in the mind and on the ground, are no longer primarily political borders, about which recent works have little to say. Rather, they are the leading edges of large cultural zones – represented particularly by those regions in which medieval Christians encountered the adherents of other religions.[83] Indeed, one of the

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[79] This in its turn reflects the development of new, more sophisticated conceptualizations of historical frontiers themselves, replacing the unilateral colonist's viewpoint, made famous by Frederick Jackson Turner, with approaches taking account of both sides: Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Kulturelle Grenzen in der Expansion Europas', *Saeculum* 46 (1995), 101-38 (here 112-13); Nikolas Jaspert, 'Grenzen und Grenzräume im Mittelalter: Forschungen, Konzepte und Begriffe', in Klaus Herbers and Nikolas Jaspert (eds.), *Grenzräume und Grenzüberschreitungen im Vergleich: Der Osten und der Westen des mittelalterlichen Lateineuropa* (Europa im Mittelalter 7, Berlin, 2007), pp. 43-70.

[80] For the self-Other relationship as a kind of mental frontier transaction, in which difference is dissolved through comparison, see Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 15.

[81] The influence of the Paderborn 'Travel Literature' graduate college is evident in more than one of these studies. Their approaches also reflect a longer-established interest among German medievalists in travellers, pilgrims, and their encounters with the foreign: Arnold Esch, 'Anschauung und Begriff: Die Bewältigung fremder Wirklichkeit durch den Vergleich in Reiseberichten des späten Mittelalters', *HZ* 253 (1991), 281-312. Studies of travellers and explorers are drawn upon substantively by Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, esp. pp. 15-19.

[82] Thus Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, p. 42, for the formative role of the passage of vernacular manuscripts across the Franco-German cultural-linguistic frontier. For cross-frontier travel as cultural process, see Dominik Waßenhoven, *Skandinavier unterwegs in Europa (1000-1250): Untersuchungen zu Mobilität und Kulturtransfer auf prosopographischer Grundlage* (Berlin, 2006); on cultural transfer generally, Stamatios Gerogiorgakis, Roland Scheel, and Dittmar Schorkowitz, 'Kulturtransfer vergleichend betrachtet'; Stefan Burkhardt, Margit Mersch, Ulrike Ritzerfeld, and Stefan Schröder, 'Hybridisierung von Zeichen und Formen durch mediterrane Eliten', both in Borgolte, Dücker, Müllerburg, and Schneidmüller (eds.), *Integration und Desintegration*, pp. 385-466, 467-557; on the concept of hybridity, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edn (London and New York, 2002); Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge, 2009); Osterhammel, 'Kulturelle Grenzen', 118-19. Some medievalists, applying insights drawn from transcultural and migration studies, have recently begun to call into question, as too rigid and one-sided, the concept of cultural transfer, however, positing instead the 'entangled' and processual chararacter, as well as the irreducible hybridity, of all culture: Michael Borgolte, 'Migrationen als transkulturelle Verflechtungen im mittelalterlichen Europa: Ein neuer Pflug für alte Forschungsfelder', *HZ* 289 (2009), 261-85 (here 268-70).

[83] Osterhammel, 'Kulturelle Grenzen', although concerned with early-modern European expansion, is a clear influence on recent medievalist approaches, as is Urs Bitterli, *Die 'Wilden' und die 'Zivilisierten': Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäisch-überseeischen Begegnung* (Munich, 1976). For religion as cultural frontier experience, see: Lutz E. von Padberg, *Die Inszenierung religiöser Konfrontationen: Theorie und Praxis der Missionspredigt im frühen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2003); and, in addition to his monographic

strongest convictions of these studies is in the prime importance of religion, and the institutions and textual and commemorative cultures in which religion was embedded, in nurturing and giving form to group identities.[84] Distinctions between (Latin) Christians and others became a template and foundation for further collective selves and alterities.

The profound reorientation in the approaches of German medievalists to the theme of collective identities during the past two decades calls for an explanation. A search for this explanation cannot be confined to the realm of scholarship alone. Increasingly intensive and extensive exchanges in the field are themselves indicative of a more general broadening of horizons. Already before the old century's close, medieval peoples were being made the focus of new, far-flung networks of collaborative research, in which German medievalists were prominently involved, exemplified by the 'Transformation of the Roman World' project, which ran from 1993 to 1998, supported by the European Science Foundation.[85] New centres of research drew young German scholars, imaginatively and physically, to the geographic margins of medieval Latin Europe. The Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of Bergen, funded from 2003 to 2013 by the Research Council of Norway, sponsored research on 'Periphery and Centre in Medieval Europe'.[86] Among Bergen's declared aims was to study medieval nation-making in the north as the outcome of cultural interaction and exchange. German medievalists participated alongside non-Germans in the numerous conferences and research colloquia inspired by the turn of the new millennium, and concerned with a high-medieval (and, implicitly or explicitly, contemporary) Europe of wider horizons and growing integration.[87]

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study reviewed here, Volker Scior, 'Kulturkonflikte? Christen, Heiden und Barbaren im früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Nordeuropa', *Das Mittelalter* 10 (2005), 8-27.

[84] Plaßmann, *Origo gentis*, p. 370. For the study of religious cultures as a programme for investigating integrative and dis-integrative moments across medieval Europe, see Michael Borgolte and Juliane Schiel, 'Mediävistik der Zwischenräume – eine Einführung', in Borgolte, Schiel, and Schneidmüller (eds.), *Mittelalter im Labor*, pp. 15-23. Constructions of religious difference are the focus of a monumental study by Hans-Werner Goetz, the culmination of much preceding work by the author on medieval identities and engagement with the Other: *Die Wahrnehmung anderer Religionen und christlich-abendländisches Selbstverständnis im frühen und hohen Mittelalter (5.-12. Jahrhundert)*, 2 vols (Berlin, 2013).

[85] http://www.esf.org/coordinating-research/research-networking-programmes/humanities-hum/completed-rnp-programmes-in-humanities/the-transformation-of-the-roman-world.html (viewed 01.11.2014); and see Wood, *Modern Origins*, pp. 315-17. Another cross-European collaborative venture originating in this period is the 'Making of Europe' monograph series, in which publishers from five different European countries (including Beck in Germany) collaborated to publish a series of landmark volumes, which appeared simultaneously in five different European languages. Among the books published in this series was Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1998).

[86] http://www.uib.no/en/cms/25294/coe-project-periphery-and-centre-medieval-europe (viewed 01.11.2014).

[87] Detlef Kattinger, 'Identität und Integration im Ostseeraum im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter', in Jörn Staecker (ed.), *The European Frontier: Clashes and Compromises in the Middle Ages* (Lund, 2004), pp. 115-26.

The broader perspectives of German scholarship since the 1990s are also indicated by its closer engagement with the writings of the Angloliterate world. While never wholly without importance, the influence of Anglophone scholarship on the *Nationes* group had been muted, and was subordinate to Franco-German exchanges. Again, the wider bibliographic vistas since the 1990s have coincided with, and nurtured, a renewed interest in frontiers as sites of identity-formation. A book which received considerable attention, although without gaining universal acceptance, was Robert Bartlett's *The Making of Europe*, published in English in 1993 and in German translation three years later.[88] But while Bartlett's account of a Christendom forged through colonial conquest and ruthless, systematic violence met with predictable resistance from German scholars, his vision of a high-medieval 'Europeanization of Europe' chimed better with emergent themes.[89] For it is necessary only to observe the geographical and thematic foci of recent German accounts of medieval identities for the influence of contemporary political aspirations and concerns to become abundantly clear.

Political and constitutional upheavals in Europe at the start of the twenty-first century raised questions both about the future of historic national identities and about their relationship with other, emergent forms of community.[90] Faced with dramatic and unpredictable change, medievalists looked for guidance and reassurance – and sought legitimacy for contemporary developments – in remote pasts. 'Europe is growing together', observed the co-contributors to the catalogue accompanying a landmark exhibition, *Europe's Centre around the Year 1000*, which toured various centres of post-Cold-War Europe in the millennial year itself.[91] As Peter Johanek observed shortly afterwards, the prominence of the theme of Europe among German medievalists at the century's close – not least, it might be said, in their engagement with collective identities – represented 'a departure for new

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[88] Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (London, 1993), trans. as *Die Geburt Europas aus dem Geist der Gewalt* (Munich, 1996).

[89] Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, ch. 11. For the influence of this theme on German (and Scandinavian) scholarship in the later 1990s, see: Kattinger, 'Identität und Integration', p. 116; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavier*, ch. 1. For critical perspectives on Bartlett, see: Gerogiorgakis, Scheel, and Schorkowitz, 'Kulturtransfer', p. 399; Michael Borgolte, *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt 1050-1250* (Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 237-9. It is not only German commentators who have judged his account of the frontier to be excessively focused on the colonist's viewpoint: thus, Patrick Geary, 'Reflections on historiography and the holy: centre and periphery', in Lars Boje Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000-1300)* (Copenhagen, 2006), pp. 323-9 (here 323).

[90] The millennial year was thus bracketed by the publication of ambitious and influential accounts of Europe's 'special path': Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford, 1996); Michael Mitterauer, *Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs* (Munich, 2003): Eng. trans. as *Why Europe? The Medieval Origins of its Special Path* (Chicago, 2010).

[91] Alfried Wieczorek, Johannes Fried, and Michael Müller-Wille, 'Europas Mitte um 1000', in Alfried Wieczorek and Hans-Martin Hinz (eds), *Europas Mitte um 1000*, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 2000), i.I-III (here p. I).

shores'.[92] And yet, although 'a new identity [was] emerging', this was occurring 'without suppressing [existing] national identities'. The endorsement of the millennial *Europe's Centre* exhibition by heads of state and national church leaders appeared to support this reassuring message: medieval peoples, too, were capable of harmonious integration into an expanding European community.

It was not only Germans whose engagement with medieval Europe reveals the influence of recent and impending events, as twentieth-century barriers came down and the states of eastern and east-central Europe prepared to join the EU. Medievalists whose expertise was in the history of those freshly-westernized lands now felt moved to locate their subjects on an expanded, European stage.[93] The authors of the volumes surveyed here must be viewed as participants in this same wider European historical ferment: the close attention which some of them paid to Latin Christendom's northern and eastern edges mirrors the geographical scope of contemporary political change. The shift in viewpoint fostered by current events proved fruitful. David Fraesdorff was able to show how the influence of modern east-west divisions had long blinded medievalists to the true character of a 'north' which in high-medieval understandings encompassed Baltic Slavs as well as Scandinavians.[94]

Yet Fraesdorff's book also indicates some of the dangers of viewing the past in the light of contemporary concerns. When it comes to speaking of Europe, it mixes up medieval with modern terms and concepts, contrasting a high-medieval 'old Europe', south and west of the Elbe, with lands to the north which he depicts as undergoing a 'Europeanization' process. It hardly needs stating that 'old Europe' (or indeed, 'new Europe', to say nothing of

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[92] Johanek, 'Zu neuen Ufern?', p. 173. For medieval 'European' identities, see: Bernd Schneidmüller, *Grenzerfahrung und monarchische Ordnung: Europa 1200-1500* (Munich, 2011), pp. 7-24; Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Die mittelalterlichen Destillationen Europas aus der Welt', in Tillmann Lohse and Benjamin Scheller (eds.), *Europa in der Welt des Mittelalters: Ein Colloquium für und mit Michael Borgolte* (Berlin, 2014), pp. 11-32 (and in on-line English-language abridgment as 'Fitting medieval Europe into the world: patterns of integration, migration and uniqueness', *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2014): http://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/transcultural/article/view/17446 (viewed 01.02.2015)); Michael Borgolte, Julia Dücker, Marcel Müllerburg *et al.* (eds.), *Europa im Geflecht der Welt: Mittelalterliche Migrationen in globalen Bezügen* (Europa im Mittelalter 20, Berlin, 2012).

[93] Thus Gabor Klaniczay, 'The birth of a new Europe about 1000 CE: Conversion, transfer of institutional models, new dynamics', in Johann P. Arnason and Björn Wittrock, *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissances* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 99-129 (here 100): 'The conversion of the Poles – especially the famous meeting of Otto III and Bolesław Chrobry … in Gniezno in March 1000 – could be considered as the representative event announcing that a new, extended Europe had been born'. See also Nora Berend (ed.), *Christianisation and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and the Rus' c.900-1200* (Cambridge, 2007), with further literature. It was all too much for some: for a highly sceptical view of 'Europeanization' around the turn of the millennium, see Przemysław Urbańczyk, '"Europe" around the year 1000 as seen from the papal, imperial and central-European perspectives', in Staecker (ed.), *The European Frontier*, pp. 35-9.

[94] Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 20-2.

'Europeanization') is a term nowhere to be found in the medieval sources.[95] Its use appears all the more ~~unhelpful~~ problematic when it is noted that Fraesdorff's whole point here is to argue that the Scandinavian and Slavic north were in the eyes of medieval churchmen like Adam of Bremen or Thietmar of Merseburg profoundly Other: the site of evil and, on biblical authority, the abode of the Devil himself.[96] While Scior shows that the judgments of such writers on the northern lands were in fact complex, their *difference* from their authors' own familiar worlds was generally agreed. *Europa*, in its (in any case, not very common) high-medieval usage, was rarely thought to extend to those strange and desolate parts.[97]

It might be objected that there were indeed processes at work in medieval Europe that the twenty-first-century scholar can call 'Europeanization', even if in their totality and significance these were unknown to contemporaries. The problem here is that reconstructing authentically the mental worlds of particular high-medieval writers, without introducing anachronistic elements, is a central aim of most of these studies. Abruptly to drop neologisms – and neologisms profoundly charged with twenty-first century concerns – into the midst of all that scrupulous *Begriffsgeschichte* is therefore problematic. It is rendered more so by the fact that, for all their sophistication in other respects, these recent German works are surprisingly old-fashioned in the geographical vantage points and textual windows from which they gaze out upon their expanded medieval Europe. To a remarkable extent, the (east-) Frankish centre still holds. Scior, Fraesdorff, and Mohr all contemplate their foreign landscapes and peoples, close at hand or more remote, through the eyes of Latinate Carolingian and post-Carolingian historiographer-clerics. Chroniclers from the lands between Meuse and Elbe figure to varying degrees in the other three monographs also.

It is clear that, following the infiltration of Catholic Christianity, literate churchmen dwelling beyond the northern and eastern margins of the Carolingian-Ottonian *Reich* began to identify their own peoples, too, with far-reaching notions of Christian community (regardless of whether or not we choose to call the process 'Europeanization'). Indeed, inspection of their

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[95] Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, p. 81, writes of a 'new Europe' of the eleventh century, encompassing Scandinavia, Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. For 'old' and 'new' medieval Europes in recent scholarship, see Klaus Herbers, 'Europa und seine Grenzen im Mittelalter', in Herbers and Jaspert (eds.), *Grenzräume*, pp. 21-41; an early and influential (but now contested) application of these categories is Peter Moraw, 'Über Entwicklungsunterschiede im deutschen und europäischen Mittelalter: Ein Versuch', in Uwe Bestmann, Franz Irsigler, and Jürgen Schneider (eds.), *Hochfinanz, Wirtschaftsräume, Innovation: Festschrift für Wolfgang von Stromer*, 2 vols. (Trier, 1987), ii.583-622.

[96] Fraesdorff thus claims (*Der barbarische Norden*, p. 126) that Scandinavia was from the end of the eighth century onward the object of projections of 'the Old-Testament horror-picture' onto 'the real Europe'; yet he has already made clear that 'Europe', in contemporary conception, was largely synonymous with the Carolingian empire.

[97] For 'Europe' in medieval writings see now the exhaustive study by Klaus Oschema, *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter* (Ostfildern, 2013).

writings reveals how different were their perspectives from the stereotypical constructions of their societies as peripheral and barbarous, as set down by chroniclers in the lands to their south and west (and charted in the works discussed here).[98] Tracing these expanding and evolving notions of Latin-Christian community, however, would require perspectives embracing both sides of the frontier, and engaging with the frontier itself as a site of cultural exchange – and not merely as a marginal strip, across which to contemplate the foreign. Yet only the book by Jostkleigrewe compares systematically the conceptions of their neighbour set down by writers inhabiting the two sides of a common frontier. The works by Plaßmann and Foerster are alone in examining chroniclers from both the edges and the core-lands of high-medieval Latin Europe. And only Foerster shows how in the twelfth century writers within a region beyond the limits of Carolingian-era Europe – Scandinavia – located themselves within larger imagined worlds by means of traditions (of historical writing) taken over from that Latin-European core. The processes of cultural transfer, transgression, and hybridization which figure repeatedly in the theoretical underpinnings to these works ~~receive only fairly modest attention in detail~~are less extensively addressed in practice.

'To look into the European past', as medievalists writing in the millennial year itself predicted, 'is to open up a vision of the European future'.[99] Visionary European futures hover about recent works rather as the spectral German nation-state did about nineteenth-century invocations of the *deutsche Kaiserzeit*. And while some still envisage an expanding high-medieval Europe of nations, others seek ever-closer union. This is nowhere more avidly pursued than in the publications issuing from *DFG Schwerpunktprogramm* 1173. The guiding spirits behind this venture made their agenda plain. Michael Borgolte elsewhere called upon historians to take up the challenge of building 'the edifice Europe' and to that end to be prepared to write avowedly present-centred history.[100] *SPP* 1173 unrolled this manifesto as grand project, the work of many well-directed junior hands. Interdisciplinarity, the watchword in ~~large-scale~~German research into medieval group identities ~~in Germany~~ since the 1920s, yielded to transdisciplinarity: *SPP* 1173's team were bold *Grenzgänger* –

[98] Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Sanctified beginnings and mythopoetic moments: The first wave of writing on the past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000-1230', in Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 247-73; Tore Nyberg (ed.), *Saxo and the Baltic Region* (Odense, 2004).

[99] Wieczorek, Fried, and Müller-Wille, 'Europas Mitte um 1000', p. III.

[100] Michael Borgolte, 'Vor dem Ende der Nationalgeschichten? Chancen und Hindernisse für eine Geschichte Europas im Mittelalter', *HZ* 272 (2001), 561-96 (here 580). The same author, however, has elsewhere (though again concerning medievalists' engagement with contemporary Europe) warned firmly against 'the political instrumentalization of historical scholarship': Michael Borgolte, 'Mythos Völkerwanderung: Migration oder Expansion bei den "Ursprüngen Europas"', *Viator* 41 (2010), 23-47 (here 25).

transgressors, roaming the <u>fluid</u> borderlands between disciplines.[101] Shifting attention to the geographic margins of medieval Europe was central to their purpose: 'Europe is no longer to be defined from its core [alone], but also, and particularly, from its frontiers'.[102] For it was there, amid the creative flux of many encounters and exchanges, that might best be observed innumerable interacting and counteracting 'integrative' and 'dis-integrative' moments at work. But, given their centrality to a present- (indeed, future-) centred vision of the medieval past, the long-term outcome of those encounters could not be allowed simply to remain open. Instead, it was the medievalist's job to show 'to what extent, in what fields, and by what means, European integration processes were successful already in the past'.[103] An integrated future demanded nothing less.

Meeting 'current challenges in politics and society', and negotiating the 'adaptions, anxieties, and conflicts' resulting from the dismantling of Cold-War barriers between east and west also had a cultural dimension. Clearly, a quest for truly unifying identities, high-medieval or contemporary, 'cannot start from national histories'.[104] Instead, its basis was to be that great cultural unifier (and divider) of the Middle Ages, religion: not the paganisms of the north, which had nurtured merely local and regional identities, but the three great monotheisms, since these were 'first-rate factors for European integration'.[105] A contemporary quest for European unities therefore also played its part in keeping viewpoints rooted in the medieval west and south, where those unifying religions had their ancient centres. But the strong orientation of *SPP* 1173 towards the Mediterranean, evident in its 2011 essay-volume, also reflected a concern to engage with issues of integration (and dis-integration) *within* Europe, and perhaps also in Europe's relations with its neighbours, in the troubled first decade of the twenty-first century. Religion was thus ascribed not merely an analytical but an instrumental role. The key question was 'whether a unitary culture formed by Christianity is *or ought to be* [my emphasis] the basis of a [medieval, but also

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[101] Borgolte and Schiel, 'Mediävistik der Zwischenräume', p. 20.

[102] Juliane Schiel, Bernd Schneidmüller, and Annette Seitz, 'Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa – eine Einführung', in Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller (eds.), *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 9-19 (here 11).

[103] Ibid., p. 10; Borgolte and Schiel, 'Mediävistik der Zwischenräume', p. 15: that different essays with different contributing authors reproduce not only the same arguments but the same wording indicates the manifesto-like quality of *SPP* 1173's programme.

[104] Schiel, Schneidmüller, and Seitz, 'Hybride Kulturen', pp. 10-11. The project leaders insisted that they were 'looking for larger unities than peoples, tribes and nations': Borgolte and Schiel, 'Mediävistik der Zwischenräume', p. 17.

[105] Borgolte and Schiel, 'Mediävistik der Zwischenräume', p. 18. For medieval European history as the product of the three monotheisms, see Michael Borgolte, *Christen, Juden, Muselmanen: Die Erben der Antike und der Aufstieg des Abendlandes 300 bis 1400 n. Chr.* (Berlin, 2006); and, for the author's reflections on his own intentions, Michael Borgolte, 'Über den Tag hinaus. Was nach dem Schwerpunktprogramm kommen könnte', in Borgolte and Schneidmüller (eds.), *Hybride Kulturen*, pp. 309-28 (here 311-12).

contemporary] European identity' – or whether, rather, a quest for 'future-oriented solutions' dictated that Islam in particular be incorporated more fully within the medievalist's vision of Europe.[106]

In publications under the banner of *SPP* 1173, 'Europe' at times fills the place once occupied by the German nation, as the point where current political *Wunschbilder* – visions of a historically-immanent 'we', inviting identification – overmaster otherwise scrupulously source-led history. The Middle Ages here become a resource for filling a perceived contemporary European myth-deficit – and even, potentially, a template for coping with the current and future stresses of globalization.[107] While the political agenda of *SPP* 1173 is less discernible in most of the monographic studies discussed here, they do share with its publications many elements of perspective and methodology, and they display comparable insights, as well as aversions and evasions. The benign and largely de-politicized vision of mutual Franco-German perceptions presented by Jostkleigrewe, for example, reflects not only the recent cultural turn in the study of medieval peoples but also a contemporary impulse to privilege indications of harmony over conflict. But the source-base upon which Jostkleigrewe builds his generalizations – vernacular historical literature – is peculiarly well-suited to sustaining the claims he wishes to advance. Were he to look more at Latinate writers – including the French and German authors of political treatises, a characteristic genre of the age – he would find that they were far from being mere slaves to their authorities; and he would encounter visions of the intimate Other distinctly more marked by elements of antagonism and competition.[108]

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[106] Schiel, Schneidmüller, and Seitz, 'Hybride Kulturen', p. 10.

[107] Wolfgang Schmale, 'Europa ohne Mythos', in Anette Völker-Rasor and Wolfgang Schmale (eds.), *MythenMächte – Mythen als Argument* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 133-56; and arguing for the potential of the Trojan myth to fill such a European role, Wolf, *Troja*, pp. 12, 292. The 'globalization' of medieval European history is adumbrated in Borgolte, Dücker, and Müllerburg *et al.* (eds.), *Europa im Geflecht der Welt*. Although presented (p. 7) as a concluding statement on the work of *SPP* 1173, this volume is better understood as a coda to that project, since it signals a significant change of emphasis from the preceding studies. Although the concern remains with 'integration' and 'dis-integration', there is now a stronger insistence on the need for a global, not merely a European, frame of reference. This, and the related theme of coping conceptually with (medieval, but also contemporary) migration and its cultural consequences, is addressed directly in an agenda-setting paper by Dirk Hoerder, '*Imago mundi* und *funds of knowledge*: Migranten schaffen Kulturen', in ibid., pp. 9-29. See also Stefan Burkhart, Thomas Insley, Margit Mersch, Ulrike Ritzerfeld, Stefan Schröder, and Viola Skiba, 'Migration: Begriffsbefragung im Kontext transkulturalistischer Mittelalterforschung', in ibid., pp. 31-43, with the reflection (p. 31) that 'a far-reaching paradigm-shift has in recent years taken place in the Germanophone historical disciplines under the influence of contemporary globalization'. They go on to trace its implications for medievalists. Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Schlusswort', in ibid., pp. 259-66 identifies (259-60) a series of currently on-going projects aimed at locating medieval Europeans within trans-cultural contexts. See also on this theme, Michael Borgolte and Matthias M. Tischler (eds.), *Transkulturelle Verflechtungen im mittelalterlichen Jahrtausend: Europa, Ostasien, Afrika* (Darmstadt, 2012).

[108] For some examples, see Len Scales, 'Purposeful pasts: Godfrey of Viterbo and later medieval imperialist thought', in Thomas Foerster (ed.) *Godfrey of Viterbo and his Readers* (Farnham, 2015: in press).

Instances of extreme negativity in chroniclers' judgments on other peoples – such as Helmold of Bosau's celebration of the expulsion and displacement of native Slav populations of twelfth-century Wagria by German settlers – are registered rather than explained in these studies.[109] Helmold's standpoint becomes merely one among a complex palette of responses to the Other to be found in chronicle texts – and not the most characteristic. While this may be so, such drastic attitudes still seem to call for some reflection from the modern reader. What inhibits this is the practice in recent studies of reading the sources as essentially cultural constructions of identity and alterity. Yet Helmold's attitudes to natives and settlers in the Baltic are a reflection of more than just one medieval author's mental universe. They reflect material developments afoot in his society, in the outcome of which Helmold had an urgent interest. The methodological filters adopted both in these monographic studies and in the short-essay contributions to the *SPP* 1173 volume do not allow their authors clearly to identify the workings of *power* behind their texts. Without that element, their delineations of medieval selfhoods and alterities can take on a somewhat inert, list-like character. 'Positive' and 'negative' stereotypes of others in the chronicles are noted, without sufficient consideration of how these might have functioned within medieval writers' argumentative strategies – and whether, within such strategies, we can confidently distinguish 'positive' from 'negative' at all.[110]

German medievalists have once again gone to the frontier in search of medieval peoples – but now, mostly not in search of the German people. The magnitude of the change in historical culture signalled by this shift of perspective should not be underestimated. But nor should it be supposed that the development is unconnected with the recent course of German history. On the contrary, precisely this altered focus confirms that Eckart Kehr's dictum, quoted in opening, retains its validity. Writing (or rather, not writing) about being German in the Middle Ages remains inseparable from being German in the here-and-now. Each successive generation of medievalists (not only in Germany) has brought its own perspectives to the understanding of medieval peoples and nations. Without exception, these shifting viewpoints have shown clear connections to the changing circumstances in which historians have

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[109] Scior, *Das Eigene*, p. 219, noting the 'asymetrically-structured' character of Helmold's account; also Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 352. For a more materialist reading of Helmold, see Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, pp. 136-7.
[110] Thus: Scior, *Das Eigene*, p. 337; Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*, pp. 265-71. For the difficulty of distinguishing 'positive' from 'negative' medieval stereotypes, see Len Scales, '*Germen militiae*: War and German identity in the late Middle Ages', *Past & Present* 180 (2003), 41-82.

written. So, judged by the volumes under review, what characteristic insights and oversights do early twenty-first century viewpoints disclose?

Let us take the latter first. The perspectives unfolded in recent works often (though not invariably) appear somewhat blind to the political, and to the role of institutions and institutionalised power, in shaping communities and nurturing identities.[111] Centres – 'peripheral' centres, but also 'central' ones – do surely matter, as the *Nationes* project insisted. It is not necessary to worship the *Machtstaat* in order to believe that the existence and deeds of kings – and even Roman-German emperors – had a part in shaping medieval identities: the varieties of formal and less formal collective activity that arose in response to, or in opposition to, their rule certainly did so. Their too-hasty dismissal (as tiresomely 'dis-integrative' moments, standing in the way of brave *communitaire* futures) threatens to obscure one of medieval religion's most powerful identity-forming conjunctions: with rulers, their courts, and their ideologies. Ethnicity, moreover, is less easily isolated from religion and culture, as well as from politics (and thereby minimized), than some of these studies imagine.[112] And while notions of the Other are never irrelevant to the construction of selfhoods, their medieval importance was more variable, and more bound up with other factors, than recent German works often acknowledge.

But the absence of elements familiar from earlier accounts of medieval nation-making also enables these volumes to illuminate other aspects of medieval selfhood with particular clarity. They offer unsettled visions for unsettled times, in which, following the collapse of the twentieth century's monolithic power-blocs, boundaries and identities appear as endlessly multiple, negotiable, and shifting: chimeral at one moment, terrifyingly compelling the next. On the whole, they convince when arguing that medieval identities ought to be understood as similarly protean.[113] Even the recurrent absence of an analysis of the workings of power perhaps reflects partly a recognition that power is elusive, in medieval as in contemporary

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[111] Plaßmann and Foerster take clear account of institutions of power, as at a more local level does Scior. Nevertheless, Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997), a book which, with its stress on the identity-forming role of common social and political action, remains highly influential for Anglophone writings on medieval collective identities, has had notably little impact on these studies.

[112] Thus Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 358-60.

[113] Indeed, there are tentative indications that, at least within the Germanosphere, that historiographical keyword of the new millennium, 'identity' itself, may, under the pressures of a globalizing scholarly literature, be destined for a shorter career than only recently seemed likely. In the view of some, its death-knell has been sounded by the rise of transcultural perspectives, viewed from which, in the words of one of the progenitors of this approach, 'nothing is really foreign any more': Wolfgang Welsch, 'Transkulturalität: Zwischen Globalisierung und Partikularisierung', *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 26 (2000), 327-51 (here 337). For a medievalist's view of the incapacity of 'identity' to capture what he regards as the hybrid and processual qualities of medieval cultures, see Borgolte, 'Migration als transkulturelle Verflechtungen', esp. 277-84,

societies: hard to isolate and pin down, since it takes so many forms. There is much to be said for starting, as the works under review start, with texts and their readers – and still more for starting, as they also do, with religion as a foundation for other medieval identities. In this present time, of volatile interactions between religions, nations and ethnicities, of the dissolution of some boundaries and the erecting of many others, German medievalists will continue to bring distinctive perspectives to bear. A review of the literature twenty years hence is sure to be instructive, in more ways than one.