Edited by Marjet Brolsma, Alex Drace-Francis,
Krisztina Lajosi, Enno Maessen, Marleen Rensen,
Jan Rock, Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez and Guido Snel

# Networks, Narratives and Nations

## Transcultural Approaches to Cultural Nationalism in Modern Europe and Beyond

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*Edited by*
*Marjet Brolsma, Alex Drace-Francis, Krisztina Lajosi, Enno Maessen, Marleen Rensen, Jan Rock, Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez and Guido Snel*

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# Introduction

## Of Networks, Narratives and Nations

*Alex Drace-Francis*

**Abstract**
Do narratives make nations, and if so, did networks make this happen? The notion that national and other group identities are constructed and sustained by narratives and images has been a widespread postulate for several decades now. This volume contributes to this debate, with a particular emphasis on the networked, transnational nature of cultural nation-building processes in a comparative European and sometimes extra-European context.

**Keywords**: national identity; cultural nationalism; literary genres; social networks; European identity

Do narratives make nations, and if so, did networks make this happen? The notion that national and other group identities are constructed and sustained by narratives and images has been a widespread postulate in the study of nationalism in Europe and beyond for several decades now. While some, more sociologically oriented theories have seen the creation of national cultures as a mere by-product of large-scale political and economic transformations, others have seen both the content and the form of national narratives as central to the process of creating identities.[1] A large body of literature has now appeared addressing questions of nation and narration, whether through edited volumes or monograph studies.[2]

1 Classic works arguing these respective theses were published in 1983: Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. For a review and a position statement, see Leerssen, "Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture."

2 In lieu of an exhaustive review of theories, suffice it to cite two influential collections: Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; and Berger, Eriksonas and Mycock, *Narrating the Nation*. The Brill book series *National Cultivation of Culture* showcases a variety of approaches.

Brolsma et al. *Networks, Narratives and Nations. Transcultural Approaches to Cultural Nationalism in Modern Europe and Beyond.* Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press 2022.
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This volume contributes to this debate, with a particular emphasis on the networked, transnational nature of cultural nation-building processes in a comparative European and sometimes extra-European context. It stresses the centrality and agency of literary, artistic and cultural practices and modes of representation. In one way or another, literary, cultural and historical narratives and artefacts have shaped national identities. They have done so not just as "content" accompanying a general sociohistorical process but by the specific nature of their means of representation and ways of transmission; and not just within but across linguistic communities.

The objects of study and interpretive methodologies applied in this collection are varied. Chapters deal inter alia not just with poetry, prose and political ideas but with painting, porcelain and popular song. They draw on examples in languages ranging from Icelandic, Arabic and German, to Irish, Hungarian, French and beyond. They study transcultural phenomena from the medieval and early modern periods to the modern and postmodern, with frequent attention to challenging conventional temporalities and periodizations. Some treat general themes and ideas, while others focus on quite specific texts, motifs or personalities. But all speak to the above questions . More particularly, all engage with and take inspiration from the work of Joep Leerssen, who for over forty years has been producing learned, challenging, innovative but also highly lucid and readable contributions to the comparative history of modern European literature and culture. Before introducing in more detail the contents and structure of the volume, and setting out its salient findings, a – necessarily brief and incomplete – review of the most relevant of Leerssen's principal areas of research, together with some of his more prominent publications and their theories, will help orient the reader.

Already in his MA dissertation, defended at the University of Aachen in 1979, Joep Leerssen offered an original account of the development of comparative literature in Great Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century. Unlike most interpretations before or since, this work sought to analyse the development of literary studies in Britain in a transnational light, taking into account both the internal national and linguistic diversity within the United Kingdom and the continental connections and networks of key protagonists. Published in German in 1984 in the Aachen-based *Contributions to Comparative Literature* book series (*Aachener Beiträge zur Komparatistik*), it remained little-known to specialists in British cultural history until it was finally revised and published in an English edition in

2019.[3] Leerssen went on to research the role of literary activity in forging an image of Irish nationality. Continuing his preoccupation with a multilingual and transnational approach but going back in time to the period before the nineteenth century, he interpreted both learned and popular configurations of Irishness across three linguistic traditions (Gaelic, Latin and English) while situating the Irish case in a comparative European context. His doctoral work on this topic was published in book form in 1986.[4] It was supplemented a decade later by a book-length study of Irish literary nationalism in the nineteenth century, which took up the themes of "remembrance and imagination" and combined a discursive approach to historical memory with analysis of literary images.[5]

In 1991, Leerssen was appointed to a professorship in European literature at the University of Amsterdam, in which capacity he played an important role in setting up the interdisciplinary teaching programme in European Studies. In line with the department's transnational preoccupations, he applied the methods of imagology and comparative literary and cultural history to a broader canvas. In terms of publications, this resulted in the survey work *Nationaal denken in Europa*, published by Amsterdam University Press in 1999. It bore a disarmingly modest subtitle, claiming to be simply "a cultural-historical outline" (*een cultuurhistorische schets*). But its interpretive boldness and thoroughgoing comparative approach meant that it furnished not just an outline but material for a broader interpretation of cultural nationalism in a European context. This potential was signalled in a programmatic article published in *Poetics Today* in 2000,[6] and more completely realized in the considerably expanded English edition, *National Thought in Europe*, put out by the same press in 2006. The volume was a success among students and scholarly readers for several reasons. Firstly, it provided a clearly written overview in a comparative and long-term framework. Secondly, it did not simply take its cue from the paradigmatic nation-building projects that unfolded in the larger countries, but attended to developments among smaller national groups and peripheral regions of Europe and showed that their history was part of an integrated story. Thirdly, it eschewed the pitfalls of "methodological nationalism" or country-by-country case studies, looking instead at processes such as the remediation of images across times,

3 Leerssen, *Komparatistik*; in revised form in English as Leerssen, *Comparative Literature in Britain*.

4 Leerssen, *Mere Irish & Fíor-Ghael*.

5 Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*.

6 Leerssen, "Rhetoric of National Character."

places and languages and the transmission of ideas about national culture through scholarly and popular networks. These approaches ensured that the book spoke not just to literary and cultural historians, but to those in nationalism studies who sought to understand the political significance of these phenomena from a sociological or historical viewpoint.[7] It came out in a third edition in 2020 and continues to inspire researchers today.

Always a catalyzing and collaborative spirit, Leerssen has not confined his output to single-author works. His analytical survey of national thought in Europe was underpinned and exemplified through the editing, in collaboration with Manfred Beller, of a handbook of *Imagology*, which brought together ample and wide-ranging material for the comparative cultural study of national character. The handbook drew on the paradigm of *Imagologie* established in German comparative literature circles; but the original concepts were extended to encompass a much wider frame of reference. The volume contained, along with overviews of key concepts, a series of articles covering the development of national and regional stereotypes, with accompanying bibliographies for further research; a series of theoretical/methodological entries surveying tropes, motifs and techniques of representation; and introductory surveys of different media, including not just standard literary genres but also popular ones such as cartoon strips, travel writing and cinema.[8]

In 2008, in recognition of his contributions to the field of comparative literary and cultural history, Joep Leerssen was awarded the Spinoza Prize (*Spinozapremie*, the annual award of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and generally considered the highest academic honour in the Netherlands).[9] With funds from this award, Joep was able to set up the Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms (SPIN) and to plan the *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe.* After a decade of writing, planning, coordinating and editing, this panoramic reference work was launched in digital and book formats in 2018. The *Encyclopedia* – or *ERNiE*, to cite its amiable acronym – surveys national cultures across Europe through a vast range of sources and media drawn from larger and smaller cultures alike. With its vast array of visual, textual and musical documents, survey articles, and studies of specific currents and fields of cultural production across over seventy cultural-linguistic communities in Europe written by

7 See, for example, the roundtable debate, with responses from the author, in Brinker et al., "Seventh Nations and Nationalism Debate."

8 Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*.

9 NWO, "Prof dr. J. Th. (Joep) Leerssen."

over 600 scholarly contributors, *ERNiE* provides a many-sided summation of Leerssen's approach to analysing culture in "space, time and cultural praxis."[10]

At this point, Joep Leerssen's colleagues considered it was time to take stock of this prodigious activity, not in the form of a conventional inventory or homage, but rather in that of a critical response, an applied evaluation of his postulations and paradigms in the form of new research.[11] At the beginning of 2020, we started "networking," and invited national and international scholars and collaborators to contribute chapters which spoke to one or other of the many threads of Leerssen's work, testing them, engaging with them critically, and also in several cases advancing them with new documentation, case studies or dialogical argumentation. The response was exciting: no fewer than twenty-six papers were received from international scholars in literary and cultural history and related fields. All of them engage with the broader theme of networks, narratives and the transnational configuration of national identities in a number of different ways. Many of them drew on new primary textual analyses or archival research; others innovated conceptually. The contributions, we believe, reflect new critical thinking. If the point of departure bore the familiar name of Leerssen, the destinations arrived at here were novel and various. Thematic areas nevertheless emerged clearly, and it was possible to identify clear strands of analysis around which to structure the volume.

## Structure and Thematics: Nations, Networks, Canons, Histories and Images

The first of these thematic areas, entitled simply "National Questions," groups together historical and sociological reflections by senior scholars on conceptualizations of culture and its role and function within nationalism studies. Peter Burke sets the stage by giving an overview both of the development of discourses and images of national character in early modern Europe, and of recent scholarship about it. Burke emphasizes – as do other contributors to this volume – questions of representation and perspective, the need for analysis of xenophilia as well as of xenophobia, and the extent to which national stereotype-formation processes have varied both across

10 Leerssen, *Encyclopedia*.

11 For SPIN, see https://spinnet.eu; on Leerssen's other activities, see the home page of Joep Leerssen, https://leerssen.nl/.

time and according to spatial and cultural contexts. Murray Pittock starts out from some general considerations of the constraints a "national" framework has placed on the writing of history in a modern European context. Then, by examining the particular case of Scotland in a comparative framework, he shows how the apparently transnational and comparative paradigms of nationalism studies tend towards a relativist position which neglects the role of premodern traditions and do not necessarily adopt a neutral position in defining what is "modern" and "national."

John Breuilly revisits the question of the role of cultural mobilization on the Rhine, both as a site of physical and cultural encounter and as a competing object and symbol of reverence in French and German discourse. While engaging with Leerssen's paradigm of transnational cultivation, he argues for a more political reading of the appearance of certain key texts, by approaching the question from the perspective of the biographies of key actors as well as of both immediate conjunctures and longer-term political traditions in German lands and France respectively. Finally, John Hutchinson looks at the function of European cultural nationalism in consciousness-raising in the non-European world, with particular attention to the ambivalent effects of the doctrines of two eighteenth-century philologists and theoreticians of culture – Herder and Sir William Jones – both in governing populations under imperial rule and in creating alternative readings of world history and memory that made room for global cultures. Looking particularly at anticolonial movements in Egypt and Afghanistan, Hutchinson considers the extent to which they were either anti-European or part of an expansion of European ideas.

The second section, "Networked Nations," considers in particular the role of networks in the formation, transmission and remediation of ideas of nationhood in a wide variety of geographical contexts and media. Ann Rigney focuses in on the cultural practices of socialist-anarchist circles in Britain and France in the 1880s. Culture, Rigney argues, is not only encoded in texts, but reproduced and re-embodied in performances. Her chapter shows how discourses manifest themselves across different media, such as singing and performance, as well as traditional outlets such as newspapers and journals. She also shows how national cultural artefacts were reappropriated and redefined by internationalist networks, promoting forms of transnational class- and cause-based solidarity that transcended and sometimes explicitly rejected national boundaries.

In another cultural context, Michael Kemper examines the attempts of Tatar mufti and nation-builder Rizaeddin Fakhreddinov to use the genre of the biographical compendium to develop a historical and territorial

identity for the Tatars in the Volga-Ural region over the period from 1900 to 1936. Spanning late imperial Russian and early Soviet rule, Fakhreddinov's compilatory efforts both depended on and consecrated a "national network," which, however, was no longer serviceable as an instrument for political mobilization under the later, Bolshevik dispensation. A third approach to the question of networks is adopted by Anne-Marie Thiesse, who surveys the development of artists' colonies in late nineteenth-century Europe. Covering sites from France and northern Italy to Hungary and Scandinavia, Thiesse observes both commonalities of practice across different artists' representations of "national originality," and personal connections between key actors in this typically *fin-de-siècle* artistic phenomenon. Marita Mathijsen offers a case study of a single Dutch-language literary journal, *De Muzen* (The Muses, originally called *Europa*). She shows that this journal rejected the culture of a circumscribed and self-sufficient Dutch *Vaderland* in favour of one in need of positioning itself in relation to, and sometimes in imitation of, other European literary currents. The prominent role of translation in this short-lived but influential national project was an outcome of the editors' understanding that a national literature could only establish a set of values and aesthetic criteria when placed in an international reading context.

The theme of networks is important to the overall argument of the volume, and engages with Leerssen's conceptualization of the rise of nationalism in several ways. As the contributors to this section demonstrate, national cultures developed in Europe in an atmosphere of enhanced social communication. But individual linguistic communities did not just talk among themselves – in fact their development was enabled by the existence either of supranational languages or of other factors facilitating mutual intelligibility and more generally enabling access to broader patterns of thought. People, texts, ideologies and motifs moved repeatedly and sometimes wilfully across political, linguistic and cultural boundaries. "Nationalness" emerged as a paradoxical consequence of this, as networks and processes of exchange bred stylistic similitude across groups claiming to be unique.[12] Moreover, the "wiring" of nationalism was not just geographical but related also to artistic genre: within national cultures, tropes and images were spread across different forms of representation, whether textual, visual, auditory or concerned with different media. Networking also took place between

12 For Leerssen's conceptualization of this process, see especially Leerssen, "Viral Nationalism"; for datasets exemplifying processes of transnational communication, see the section "Geographic Networks" in the online edition of Leerssen, *Encyclopedia*, at https://ernie.uva.nl/viewer.p/21/59/scenario/75/geo.

so-called high- and low-cultural output (a process which worked both ways) and between inward-directed nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

The third section, entitled "Canonicity and Culture," showcases several studies which both reconstruct and deconstruct particular processes of national canon formation by situating them in comparative contexts. Lotte Jensen looks at the problems of Dutch "literary icons," a topic which has gained prominence in the contemporary Netherlands, as in other countries, due to various government-led canon-building initiatives. Looking variously at authors, works and characters, Jensen demonstrates that several Dutch "icons" were forged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries not on purely Dutch templates but on textual and narrative sources adopted from German, British and sometimes French models. Diarmuid Ó Giolláin compares the development and institutionalization of folklore studies in late nineteenth-century Ireland and Italy. By considering these developments in the light of the colonial relations of both countries, Ó Giolláin shows how nationalists such as Douglas Hyde in the former country and Lamberto Loria in the latter owed their conceptions of the cultural and ethnic purity of their home countries at least partly to their experience conducting fieldwork in colonial, extra-European contexts, in North America and Eurasia, respectively. Eric Storm also takes a comparative approach, looking at both institutional developments and individual contacts and agents who came together at the end of the nineteenth century to revaluate and mediatize the figure of the artisan in various European countries.

The section concludes with three biographical case studies. Terry Gunnell sheds new light on the formation of Icelandic national culture through the examination of the role of painter Sigurður Guðmundsson and his personal social networks in the 1860s and early 1870s, including meetings with folklorist Jón Árnason and other figures from Iceland's burgeoning national movement, in different locations both in Iceland and Denmark. David Hopkin tells us about Emile Legrand – better known as a specialist in early modern Greek bibliography and folk epic – and his interest in folksong and lacemaking in his native Normandy. Focus on Legrand's apparently more dilettantish preoccupations sheds fascinating light on the way in which paradigms of cultural classification and interpretation travelled not only across national and regional boundaries but also across those of medium and genre. Meanwhile, Jo Tollebeek reviews a comparable but different individual French life trajectory, that of critic, connoisseur and collector Henry Havard. Havard's critical and promotional writings almost single-handedly initiated an international resuscitation of interest in early modern Delft porcelain in the second half of the nineteenth century. I say "almost," because, as

Tollebeek documents, this was once again a networked process, involving travel and transnational communication as well as national codification.

"Historicity and Narrative" is a significant component of most European cultural nationalisms today, and is treated in one way or another by a large number of contributors to this volume. Those gathered in this section pay particular attention to the interpretation of historical narratives in a wide range of contexts, from medieval Ireland to twentieth-century Brazil. In her chapter, Ann Dooley proposes an alternative dating for a fragment of an early Irish praise poem found in the fifteenth-century manuscript known as the Yellow Book of Lecan. She questions earlier attributions of the subject of the poem to the twelfth-century King of Connacht Toirrdhealbhach Ó Conchobhair, and suggests alternative solutions among figures from the fourteenth century. In doing so she also points out thematic and stylistic borrowings from European chivalric poetry, as part of a general European *translatio studii*. Also considering the revalorization of medieval poetry, Tom Shippey discusses nineteenth-century readings of the Old English poem *Widsith*, in particular that advanced by the German scholar Karl Viktor Müllenhoff. Shippey ascribes Müllenhoff's interpretation both to advances in comparative European philology and textual criticism and to his identification with his home region of Ditmarsh in Holstein, formerly part of Denmark, and for which he was eager to secure a cultural-historical place in the new pan-German canon emerging at the time of political unification. The processes of "historification"[13] and nationalization of iconic cultural works was, in these cases as in others analysed here, subject both to transnational and subregional influences.

Taking an approach from conceptual history, Balázs Trencsényi charts the fortunes of the idea of "crisis" in early twentieth-century political thought. Using a wide range of sources across languages, Trencsényi shows how this period witnessed "a new way of temporalization and dynamization of concepts undermining the linear modernist narrative and bringing back cyclical and other 'anti-modernist' visions of history" (p. 214). In this way he both deconstructs the modernists' own interpretation of what was happening and illustrates how various discursive currents around the concept of crisis influenced history itself. Krisztina Lajosi considers the controversial legacy of King Stephen I of Hungary. As the widely acknowledged founder of the medieval Hungarian kingdom, Stephen ought to have secured a comfortable place in the canon of national heroes. But as Lajosi

13 A term proposed by Harris, *Linguistics of History*. Its utility lies, among other things, in being applicable both to textual and non-textual representations of the past.

explains, his positioning there – effected across a wide range of genres from medieval chronicles to Baroque plays, nineteenth-century high opera and twentieth-century rock opera – was controversial and deeply interwoven with political ideologies in the respective periods. No less controverted are the legacies of historical trauma in Ireland, analysed by R. F. Foster in his contribution, in relation to three objects. The "buried tombstone" is that of a participant in the Rebellion of 1798 in Ulster – buried not to erase his memory but to prevent its desecration. The "melting iceberg" is the title of an installation by artist Rita Duffy, bringing an iceberg to the Belfast dock where the Titanic was once moored, and letting it melt. The "dodged bullet" refers to an uncertain incident in the author's own family history. Starting from these symbolic objects, Foster reflects on aspects of narrating and forgetting Irish national history, in comparison to other past-making processes in a European context. This section is completed by Ina Ferris, who focuses on Mario Vargas Llosa's 1981 historical novel *La guerra del fin del mundo* (The War of the End of the World). Ferris looks at the novel's treatment of the War of the Canudos in late nineteenth-century Brazil, both in relation to earlier Latin American treatments such as that in Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões* (The Backlands, 1902) and in terms of the overall paradigms of the historical novel as pioneered by Sir Walter Scott. In this way, the section showcases the huge variety of genres and media through which history is imagined across a wide range of locations and contexts and over a long time span.

The final section, "Imagology, Identity and Alterity," treats, like previous ones, a theme which echoes through many of the contributions, but brings together studies more particularly focused on self-other relations. As with the other sections, the sources used are wide-ranging: they include travel writing, fiction, historiographical discourses and visual representations, and in some cases the authors meditate on the relationship between them. Mary-Ann Constantine taps the unpublished journals of the well-known eighteenth-century British "home tourist," Thomas Pennant, to shed light on his visit to Ireland, via Wales, in 1754. She finds not only differing degrees of identification and othering, but also "an early thread in cultural Celticism" (p. 267). Constantine's chapter exemplifies how travel writing can be an incubator of essentialist notions of character and even race that find their way into later, formal cultural and anthropological discourses. Tom Dunne also writes about certain images of Ireland, but executed in a different medium, and several decades later. The paintings he studies, those of Dublin-born artist George Petrie, are not "hetero-images" in the classic acceptation of imagology. Rather, they partake of an auto-exoticizing gaze,

including through the adoption of the recently developed theories (and ideologies) of picturesque landscape painting. Claire Connolly returns to the theme of "the proximate other." Reviewing the imagological relationship between Wales and Ireland, she focuses partly on political strands in Celticist scholarship produced in Wales at the beginning of the twentieth century, but also refers to earlier sources such as the Dutch physician Gerard Boate, who produced the earliest natural history of Ireland but approached it symbolically via the view from Wales.[14] Michael Wintle rereads the novels of Scottish imperialist soldier, politician and writer John Buchan, paying attention to the Orientalist portrayal of Middle Eastern characters, with particular reference to categories such as religion and gender, but also to conceptions of continental identities (European and Asiatic). Hercules Millas returns to the conceptual vocabulary of nationalism with particular reference to the modes of image-formation that have coloured Greek-Turkish relations in the post-Ottoman period. And, concluding this section, and the volume, Manfred Beller offers an overview of images of Albania and Albanians in Western-language literature and travel writing in the modern period.

## Arguments and Advances

Taken together, the chapters themselves build up into a networked narrative or series of interlocking narratives about the phenomenon of cultural nationalism in modern Europe and elsewhere. Contributors treat the circumstances in which national cultures arose, with a concentration on the classic period of nation-building from the second half of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, but they also challenge standard sociological explanations in a number of ways. Firstly and perhaps most obviously, the comparative method enables researchers to surmount what Anthony Smith called methodological nationalism, the fallacy whereby "basic social data are always collected and evaluated in terms of large-scale entities called 'nation-states.'"[15] Contributors mostly identify the rise of national cultures not in the primordial roots of individual national pasts, but in processes of translation, travel (of both ideas and people), reinterpretation

14 The role of foreigners in elaborating topographical discourses is well-known, especially in colonial contexts, but little attention has been given to the role of Dutch and other topographers in the British Isles. Other examples include the first on-site drawings of Stonehenge, made by Lucas de Heere in 1573–75. See De Heere, "Corte Beschryvinghe."

15 Smith, "Nationalism and Classical Social Theory," 26.

and remediation through literary and cultural means across political borders as well as those of artistic genre. In doing so they make clear the centrality of cultural processes to the making of national identities. However, their findings do not lead to a simplistic endorsement of "modernist" theories either. Many of them situate the process of image-formation in a longer historical trajectory. We may speak perhaps not of a simple "invention of tradition" but of "traditions of invention" with roots in the early modern period, or, in the formula of one contributor, the "extension of tradition" as a longer-term process.[16]

Secondly, as already noted, the contributors are alive to the variety of genres and media in which image-formation takes place. Overall, the sources range from classical social-scientific affirmations concerning nations, through more liminal but important intermediary modes such as travel literature and popular song, or autobiographical and topographical writings, to a wide variety of visual and musical evidence. Material culture is not neglected, with attention paid not just to consecrated representational formats such as landscape painting but to objects such as porcelain and lace, or art installations. At the same time, genres that have been the more traditional focus of comparative literary research, such as fiction, theatre, poetry and epic, as well as broader historical narratives, find their place here. Numerous contributors work from unpublished sources. Several focus in different ways on the role of editorial or interpretive practices. The process of changing valorizations of different cultural styles, modes and materials is also considered at many points. Taken together, the volume offers the reader a special insight not just into images but into their making.

Thirdly, we hope the book offers the reader a good insight into the cultural geography of networks. This geography is not the universalist "monarch-of-all-I-survey," "from China to Peru,"[17] approach of normative social science; and in fact many of the studies gathered here focus on developments in northwestern Europe. In one light, that may be taken as a criticism, an admission of Eurocentrism.[18] But these chapters offer, we would submit, a northwestern Europe analysed and deconstructed in ways rarely seen before in previous studies.[19] The construction of Dutch national culture, for example, is shown to have taken place in dialogue and competition with

16 Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*; cf. Drace-Francis, *Traditions of Invention*. For "the extension of tradition," see Lajosi's chapter in this volume.

17 Lindsay, "Monarch-of-all-I-Survey"; Johnson, *Vanity*, 3.

18 De Bruin, Brolsma and Lok, *Eurocentrism*; Wintle, *Eurocentrism*.

19 On the fact that "western Europe" has remained an unmarked and underproblematized category in narratives of Europe, see Berger, "Western Europe."

German, French, British and other paradigms. Chapters focusing on culture in Britain and Ireland consider the role not only of the different national traditions (Scottish, Irish, Welsh, etc.) and languages, but of their complex interrelation; and not only with each other but with both continental European influences and the peculiar dynamics of colonialism. Western Europe emerges more provincialized, perhaps even more "Balkanized," than before.[20]

Other chapters, are, as already noted, much wider in their geography: contributors variously consider the making and at times unmaking of national cultures in Germany, Scandinavia, Hungary, Italy, Albania, Russian/Soviet central Asia and Latin America. Still others, such as those by Thiesse, Storm and Trencsényi, offer transnational comparative approaches to specific problems; or, in the case of those by Hutchinson, Ó Giolláin and Ferris, the relationship between European and non-European nationalisms and internationalisms. Overall, and irrespective of the geographical extent of the source material analysed, nearly every chapter illustrates in some way or another the transnational nature of national culture-making processes.

Finally, we believe this edited volume demonstrates that such an approach – combining insights from literary and visual analysis, imagology and cultural history, and from theories of nationalism and transnational networks – can also be very fruitful beyond the specific examples presented here and can enhance our understanding of contemporary Europe. Even a casual observer of the political scene in Europe today could hardly avoid noticing the ever-present role of cultural artefacts or historical imaginaries in structuring political debates and attitudes. Whether it is in controversies over the remembrance or forgetting of colonialism through statues and street names, the invocation and operationalization of stereotypes in discussions of migration and border policy, or the continuous remediation, meme-ification or instant GIF-ification of familiar tropes across new media, the networked narration of ideas about nations is clearly ongoing. Relatively few of the contributors treat contemporary political issues. And yet this exploration of the role of cultural prejudices and stereotypes, of historical narratives and memories, as well as of national thought and ideas of Europe, can help us make sense of present-day cultural politics and the current politicization of identity formation.[21]

20 Arguably in ways not envisaged by the postulations of Meštrović, *Balkanization*; or Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*. On "West-European Balkanization," see also Leerssen, "Culture, Politics and Borderlands."

21 Barkhoff and Leerssen, *National Stereotyping*.

Wide-ranging and diverse as it may be, a collection such as this cannot be exhaustive. Further study of other cultural phenomena, whether from different historical periods, in different genres and media, or in different languages or regions, could have enriched it. But by the work of gathering together these well-researched contributions the editors hope to have built on and advanced many of the hypotheses and approaches developed by Joep Leerssen, and to have done so in a spirit of critical dialogue directed not only to colleagues and collaborators but also to new generations of researchers into whose hands this book may fall.[22]

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