

**Bernhard / Grindel / Hinz / Kühberger (eds.)**

**GEORG ECKERT  
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Leibniz-Institut für internationale  
Schulbuchforschung

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# **Myths in German-language Textbooks**

**EDU | MERES**

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Roland Bernhard / Susanne Grindel / Felix Hinz /  
Christoph Kühberger (eds.)

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Their Influence on Historical Accounts from the Battle of  
Marathon to the Élysée Treaty**

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Roland Bernhard / Susanne Grindel / Felix Hinz / Christoph Kühberger

### **Editors' preface**

#### **Myths and sense-making in history textbooks: a window on cultures of history, knowledge and communication**

Across the globe, historical myths exert a decisive influence on the processes by which we make sense of our past and present. This volume, the result of a joint international research effort, represents an attempt to comprehensively explore and identify the presence of myths in history textbooks from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The findings it presents are indicative of the substantial relevance of this issue, neglected hitherto in research into educational media. Our intent is for the volume to serve as initial inspiration for systematic, critical analysis of textbooks and educational media with regard to the potential presence of myths and for the purpose of those myths' interrogation, a process which we hope this English translation will help initiate worldwide. The current lively interest in research into myth has yet to extend into the field of international history education research; yet in our age of ubiquitous 'fake news', teachers need now more than ever to be able to equip their pupils with tools for recognising and deconstructing myths. The capacity to critically analyse culture in general, and historical culture in particular, is part of the mature historical consciousness which all involved in history teaching seek to develop in learners, and an integral component of the politically aware citizen's skill set.

True to its practical aim of inspiring and supporting work with myths in history textbooks and the history classroom which will ultimately enable learners to advance skills for independent, reflective thinking and judgement, this volume provides, for the first time, a definition of the concept of 'historical myth' from the point of view of history education research. The Battle of Marathon, Arminius, the medieval 'flat earth', the Crusades, the triangular slave trade, Hitler as '*Führer*', the motorways of the 'Third Reich', and the Élysée Treaty are just some of the topics around which myths loom large in our collective historical consciousness. As stories that forge identities and endow events and communities with meaning, myths of the past, ancient and modern alike, supply interpretations of the world and points of orientation in the present. Which stories condense into myth, and how they change in the course of their careers, are issues whose relevance stretches beyond academic research into myth and reaches into

the history classroom, affecting how we do history and how we teach and learn about it. Accordingly, this volume's focus is how myths in textbooks guide, direct and impact our interpretations of historical events, and how textbooks 'work on myth'.<sup>1</sup> Aware that 'myth' is a complex, multi-layered concept, we set out in the volume's introductory chapter, 'Historical myth: a definition from the perspective of history education research', a comprehensive theoretical exploration of the issue, whose considerations underlie the individual chapters.

Textbooks are at the heart of the volume due to their role in passing on to new generations the cultural content of myths and because more recent editions in particular have begun to engage with mythic narratives and how best to handle them. Since their golden age in the final third of the nineteenth century<sup>2</sup>, history textbooks have been subject to suspicions of acting as generators of myth, perpetuating 'untrue' stories or serving as nationalistic 'mythomotors'.<sup>3</sup> In part, this mistrust stems from the fact that, ever since the genre came into being, textbooks' remit has included not only the communication of knowledge, but also the inculcation of community, identity and a sense of meaning. In the course of the nineteenth century, history textbooks for schools advanced to become an effectively ideal medium both for the popularisation of the findings generated by academic historians who were increasingly professionalising their field, and for undergirding the emergent European nation states with apposite master narratives. Within the institutional framework of the state school systems in development at that time, history textbooks gained authority, and technological advances in printing endowed them with reproducibility and helped them to spread. In rural areas, they often served whole families as shared reading matter. All this made history textbooks ideal media for the generation of narratives that bestowed meaning on circumstances and events, and, above all, for the establishment of national myths.<sup>4</sup> Today's textbooks have yet to throw off all the vestiges of this tradition, in part due to the unbroken role of the nation state as the key giver of direction and orientation even in societies with high levels of immigration. Established expectations of how we interact with the past can lead individuals or socie-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009 (1979).

<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Das deutsche Schulgeschichtsbuch 1700–1945*, 3 vols., Berlin: LIT, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Assmann, 'Mythomotorik der Erinnerung. Fundierende und kontrapräsentische Erinnerung', Wilfried Barner, Anke Detken und Jörg Wesche (eds.), *Texte zur modernen Mythentheorie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003, 280–286.

<sup>4</sup> On France, cf. Suzanne Citron, *Le Mythe national. L'histoire de France revisitée*, Ivry-sur-Seine: Éditions de l'atelier, 2008 (1987).

ties to reject more factual and plausible accounts of history as insufficiently gripping or lacking definition and contrast.

As well as identifying whether textbooks generate and perpetuate myths, our field is called, particularly in relation to more recently published educational media, to uncover the nature of their interactions with mythic narratives and the extent to which they cast light on their structures. This is not simply a matter of unmasking ‘untrue stories’. At least as important in this context is the engagement of history education research with myth in the intent of establishing a thoroughly evidenced basis for research in this area which will enable us to perceive and interpret the political and cultural significance of myths beyond their historical truth or otherwise; such a fundament is what will render myths’ function in our historical consciousness accessible to analysis. In this way, the work of cultural studies on the concept of myth may help the field of history education research to test that concept’s relevance to its central concerns and therefore explore questions including the extent to which textbooks perpetuate myths’ continuous reworking and retelling and their share in the deconstruction of historical myths which have held sway in the past. Finally, exploring the myths at large in history textbooks reminds us again of the former’s ongoing relevance in and to our day.

The analysis of historical myths is promising in three principal respects: These myths are barometers of their societies’ engagement with the past and of how these societies retrace the origin of communities and groupings to collective identities, be it retrospectively in the recourse to common roots or in looking forward together in a utopian spirit and striving towards shared aims. In other words, myths tell us about *historical cultures*; noting a society’s treatment of the past and the events, individuals and circumstances on which it lays the mantle of myth points us to the things it considers worth remembering and preserving. It is against this backdrop that Felix Hinz explores the battles of Marathon as well as the Battle of Tours/Battle of Poitiers. Hansjörg Biener’s essay traces changes in accounts of the First Crusade, reflecting along the way on whether the concept of ‘myth’ might be analytically barren in comparison to that of ‘narrative’. Anticipating these considerations, the volume’s introductory chapter explores this matter in detail with reference to the theories of Jörn Rüsen.

Myths also speak of how societies respond to, discursively condense, and popularise academic and scientific advances. The influence of historians' and archaeologists' research findings on responses to the myth of Arminius is at the heart of the chapter by Björn Onken, while Roland Bernhard illustrates various facets of the popularisation of knowledge and notions about medieval society and its alleged flat-Earth belief as they emerge in the myths around the globe produced in the late 1400s by Martin Behaim. Susanne Grindel's chapter follows the establishment of a colonial order of knowledge rooted in the firm belief in Europe's superiority and its invention of 'Africa' as a mythic counter-locus; Tobias Kuster examines the state of the knowledge transported in textbooks about National Socialist employment policy in the context of that regime's construction of motorways. As each of these chapters demonstrates in a range of ways, a society's mythic narratives reflect its choices as regards its treasury of knowledge, its acts of canonisation and of repudiation by neglect; myths, then, have a lot to tell us about *cultures of knowledge*.

A third striking aspect of myths is their character as a form of mass communication of matters political and beyond; the way in which myths fill out deficits in identity and legitimacy, speak to latent or manifest mindsets or sensitivities of entire societies, and transmit worldviews and values points to their heightened relevance to *cultures of communication*. The fact of communicating via myth and the character which this communication takes on together bear eloquent witness to a society's constitution, as Christoph Kühberger demonstrates through the example of the 'Hitler myth'. Julia Thyroff's chapter seeks to identify the cultures of communication at the roots of Switzerland's self-image via analysis of textbook accounts discussing the country's role in the two world wars, while Markus Furrer embarks on an analogous endeavour in relation to Switzerland in the Cold War. The chapter by Christine Pflüger retraces the rise in German textbooks of a foundational myth around the Franco-German Elysée Treaty of 1963.

This volume is the first to explore comparatively these three dimensions of historical myth to the twin ends of providing impetus to research in this area and igniting interest in and work on promising new theoretical and practical concepts, within both cultural studies and history education research. Our hope is that it will help act as a springboard for international, interdisciplinary work that takes forward the ideas and concerns at its heart.

An approach to myths from the perspective of history education research, itself proceeding from the principles of historical thought, is not without its limitations. Hans-Jürgen Pandel has astutely pointed out that it cannot always be the aim of history teaching to ‘destroy’ each and every myth, as to do so would be to silence any contribution to historical culture we might otherwise be able to make.<sup>5</sup> Historical thinking rests on the pillars of a paradigm drawn from the discipline of academic history, one of whose core components is the critical interrogation of historical narratives. This approach, meritorious and necessary as it is, does tend to obscure from view the positive qualities of mythic narration. The field of postcolonial studies has made us aware on more than one occasion of the limits of approaches in the European-led Enlightenment tradition of rationality. This volume, however, is closer to an Enlightenment-influenced tradition of academic history.

Myths, then, will not always call for ruthless debunking as a sole or primary response. Teachers should stress to their pupils that myths can represent an expression of what are legitimate needs or desires and that some of their effects, from specific points of view, may merit affirmative assessment; these might include social cohesion and identity formation. Pupils’ first encounter with a historical matter will not always be best served by turning it into the supersession of a mythic narration. It will remain essential, however, to uproot entrenched collective narratives that have solidified into myth, breaking them open to enable learners to access their emotionally charged core, which may well bear relation to their everyday lives. Once made visible, the power of historical myths – and analogously that of myths of the present and future – can become accessible, in the history classroom, to strategies for its appropriate handling, the learning of which is a further string to the bow of the young person whose schooling has equipped him or her with the capacity to reflect upon and form considered judgements about our history.

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<sup>5</sup> Hans-Jürgen Pandel, ‘Legenden – Mythen – Lügen. Wieviel Fiktion verträgt unser Geschichtsbewusstsein?’, *Geschichte lernen* 52, 1996, 15–19, 19.

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Roland Bernhard / Susanne Grindel / Felix Hinz / Johannes Meyer-Hamme

## Historical myth: a definition from the perspective of history education research

### Myth: approaching the concept

Even before we embark on the endeavour of defining historical myth, we note in relation to various disciplines that the concept appears elusive; in other words, to borrow Odo Marquard's way of putting it, '[m]yth is currently polymorphically controversial.'<sup>1</sup> The debate around myths and their critique is as old as myth itself.<sup>2</sup> The term's original incarnation was simply as the Homeric equivalent – i.e. not the opposite – to *logos* and thus meant, plainly and simply, 'word'. The enduring nature of the debate around what myth is arises partially from the fact that there is no such thing as a general history or universal theory of myth<sup>3</sup>; conversely, any attempt to synthesise, even in part, the various discourses from fields such as philosophy and cultural, literary and historical studies is doomed to failure without being preceded by the establishment of a consensus on a valid field of meaning. The difficulty of the endeavour would seem to make reductive simplifications inevitable. Put, then, in very general terms, a myth, in the context of the humanities, might make reference to the following discursive fields:

- In colloquial usage, which draws on Plato's *Politeia*, a 'myth' is an untrue story which many regard as true, that is, a historical error, a fable, legend or indeed an out-and-out lie.<sup>4</sup>
- In a sacral context, from a classical humanist or ethnological perspective, a 'myth' refers to a story of gods and heroes, which in association with the latter falls into the genre of saga.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Odo Marquard, 'Lob des Polytheismus', Wilfried Barner, Anke Detken and Jörg Wesche (eds.), *Texte zur modernen Mythenlehre*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012, 222–238, 222.

<sup>2</sup> Annette Simonis, 'Mythenlehre und -kritik', Ansgar Nünning (ed.), *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze – Personen – Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1998, 388–390, 388.

<sup>3</sup> Christoph Jamme, 'Mythos', Helmut Reinalter and Peter J. Brenner (eds.), *Lexikon der Geisteswissenschaften. Sachbegriffe – Disziplinen – Personen*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2011, 571–577, 572.

<sup>4</sup> One topical example that seeks to show that many of the things we think we know about history are myths is David Haviland's *Why Was Queen Victoria Such a Prude?... and other historical myths and follies*, London: Thistle Publishing, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. particularly Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1998 (Paris 1965); Eliade, *Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1988 (Paris 1963).

– In usage associated with political reference points, the term ‘myth’ stands for an embellished story whose purpose is to consolidate power and dominion, which links it to ideology.

In practice, these three fields of definition will frequently overlap. Various subjects and objects have the potential to become myth; they include historical figures, fictional characters, events, places, ideas and institutions. In his *Mythologies*, published in 1957, Roland Barthes demonstrated the reach and validity of the mythic concept beyond the canons of the ancient classics. In Barthes’ terms, we should avoid confusing a myth with a historical error: ‘Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflection.’<sup>6</sup> It is not the case that myth is a primitive pre-form of history; instead, it runs parallel to it. In the same way, there is no such thing as a progression from *mythos* to *logos*. The definition of myth as myth is contingent not upon its content, but on the way in which it contains and presents the mythical. Barthes sees the boundaries of myth as consisting not in content, but in form.<sup>7</sup> The decisive element of myth is the way in which it creates meaning, by, for instance, offering an interpretation of the world, transmitting norms from generation to generation or social group to social group, providing models for the acceptance and assumption of an identity, or reducing complexity. Barthes’ concept of myth defines them as semiotic orders which allow something that has come into being and evolved to appear as something eternal and immutable. Myth presents societal conditions as ‘natural’ by denying their inherent historicity. In this context, the concept of a ‘historical myth’ appears oxymoronic; myth always relates to the past<sup>8</sup>, yet within the myth, time stands still.<sup>9</sup>

The particular speciality of historical myths is the creation of narrative cohesion within a specific community and the reconnection of the present to a past that infuses it with meaning. Herfried Münkler is one author who has emphasised this legitimising character of myths, which manifests in their affirmation of an existing political order and their

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<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, tr. Annette Lavers, New York: Hill and Wang, 1984, cited from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/myth.html>, last accessed 27 January 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Roland Barthes, *Mythen des Alltags*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964, 85. Reissue: Frankfurt am Main, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, ‘Die Struktur der Mythen’ (1955), *Mythentheorie*, 59–74, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2010, 124–125.

conferment of an identity upon a community.<sup>10</sup> Myths fulfil a wide range of functions in the nation-building process and in the drawing of boundaries which set an order apart from its surrounding competitors. They are anything but innocuously ‘edifying tales’; they are narratives ‘whose concern is not historical truth, but political significance.’<sup>11</sup> The clearest manifestation of myths’ power appears in the interaction of their narrative, its visual intensification and its ritual performance. Historical monuments and memorials are particularly apposite sites at which these different dimensions of myth intersect; they give a myth a permanent location and a visual form, as well as serving as a focal point for its regular renewal in acts of commemoration. Political myths and rituals are often closely interconnected,<sup>12</sup> the ritual bringing the myth to life in the present and keeping it alive, and the myth, in turn, lending the ritual its legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> Rituals as societal events set apart from the everyday and performed repeatedly translate myth’s function as a generator of meaning into people’s real-life experiences. The bond the myth creates between a collective – a nation or other group – and a particular interpretation of that collective’s past receives affirmation and reinforcement from the continuous and unchanging repetition of the associated rituals,<sup>14</sup> which thus give rise to a sense of belonging and have the potential to provide an emotional security and support which in its turn reinforces the myth the ritual calls to life.<sup>15</sup>

The boundary between historical and political myth is fluid. Yves Bizeul defines political myths as narratives of origins or acts of foundation linked to the ‘salvific history of a political community’<sup>16</sup> and attests to them a sacred dimension emerging from the fact that ‘national myths tell of the willingness of [a community’s] ancestors to sacrifice themselves for the commonwealth.’<sup>17</sup> In Bizeul’s account, these myths have a historical

<sup>10</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Herfried Münkler, ‘Geschichtsmysen und Nationenbildung’, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (ed.), *Dossier Geschichte und Erinnerung*, 28.3.2008. <http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/geschichte-und-erinnerung/39792/geschichtsmysen?p=all>, last accessed 15 May 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the chapters on myths surrounding Hitler and the myth of the German *Reichsautobahn* in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> On the relationship between ritual and myth, cf. Yves Bizeul, ‘Theorien der politischen Mythen und Rituale’, Bizeul (ed.), *Politische Mythen und Rituale in Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 2000, 15–19.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rüdiger Voigt, ‘Mythen, Rituale und Symbole in der Politik’, Voigt (ed.), *Symbole der Politik – Politik der Symbole*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich 1989, 9–37, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Yves Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder Institut, 2006, 3–14, 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

background which they simultaneously transcend, and they differ from the narratives produced by historians in that they evince a ‘constitutive excess’<sup>18</sup>.

We might also identify these characteristics in historical myths; the decisive difference appears to consist in their societal function. In a typology of political myths in accordance with their fundamental and mediatory functions, Heidi Hein-Kircher observes that such myths target political communities in the needs for meaning and direction they exhibit at the time of the myths’ emergence.<sup>19</sup> We might distinguish historical myths from utopias or ideologies in a similar manner. A myth does not conceptualise an ideal community of the future; instead, it mobilises societal forces. Myth differs from ideology in its tendency towards advancing integration, as opposed to ideology’s thrust towards the division and reproduction of existing orders. Nevertheless, myths, as Bizeul points out, may be pressed into the service both of ideology and of utopia.<sup>20</sup> Myths, then, are not propaganda, but rather the expression of legitimate needs with the potential to fall victim to misuse and propagandistic or ideological instrumentalisation.

We establish, having gone through the considerations above, that it is difficult to define historical myth to the precise exclusion of other, related phenomena, such a definition, if it be possible at all, may only be achieved on the basis of that of its content and functions whose purpose is to satisfy a community’s need for historical reassurance. In this context, the task with which historical myths are charged is more extensive than simply evoking or affirming the myth’s content. If they are to attain a significance which forges community, they need to provide multiple social groups with points of connection to sources of societal self-reassurance, particularly in times of crisis and radical change. Concisely put, in the apposite words of the political and cultural scientist Claus Leggewie, they need to be ‘functioning’ narratives.<sup>21</sup>

The chapter of this volume on the ‘myth’ of the First Crusade calls into question the potential of the concept of myth to aid fruitful analysis and proposes the term ‘narrative’

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Heidi Hein-Kircher, ‘Überlegungen zu einer Typologie von politischen Mythen aus historiographischer Sicht – ein Versuch’, Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder Institut, 2006, 407–424.

<sup>20</sup> Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, 10. Bizeul terms ideology a phenomenon with an ‘either/or’ structure; *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Cited after Heidi Hein-Kircher, ‘“Deutsche Mythen” und ihre Wirkung’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 63, 13–14 (2013), 33–38, 33.

as an alternative (p. 180), an understandable view in light of the multi-layered nature of ‘myth’ as a concept and of the difficulty, as outlined above, of a clear-cut definition. This said, were we to renounce the concept within history didactics and textbook and educational media research, we would simultaneously renounce participation in a field of research currently the focus of interdisciplinary discussion. An additional factor is the use of the term ‘myth’ in both popular and academic historical culture. A consensus exists within the discipline of history education research to the effect that history teaching should aim to enable pupils to engage critically with the products of the prevailing historical culture. In this spirit, the concept of myth encompasses an inherent potential which that of ‘narrative’ lacks, one of the reasons for which is the marginal role of the latter term in popular historical culture. History education and textbook research will therefore perceive high productive potential in exploring the concept of myth in a manner that promises to promote pupils’ development of a reflective and self-reflexive historical consciousness. One of the aims of this chapter is to attempt such an exploration.

### **The field**

Myths, and theoretical engagement with them, have received consistent academic attention since the 1950s at the latest. The four volumes of Levi-Strauss’ *Mythologiques* initially appeared in 1964, 1966, 1968 and 1971 and were the subject of a new and completed edition in German translation in 2008.<sup>22</sup> The intervening period saw repeated formulations, from a variety of perspectives, of the question as to the significance and workings of myths. Roland Barthes’ semiotic take on the subject understood myth as a system of communication and meaning and describes the dehistoricising of myth, and with it its assumption of inviolability, using linguistic means. In the 1970s, Claude Lévi-Strauss took an anthropological approach to the structural constitution and cultural significance of myth, pointing out that its fundamental components always revolve around antagonistic oppositions familiar to all societies, such as nature/culture or good/evil; these elements, or mythemes, are capable of various permutations across space and time and contain the expression of interculturally shared features of mythic narration. It is this constitution in which the polyvalence of myth consists. This structural perspective on myth, with its emphasis on myths’ intercultural commonalities, opens up the topic’s potential for cultural studies in a particularly striking way.

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<sup>22</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologica I–IV*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008 (Paris 1964–71).

A view from religious studies was provided by Mircea Eliade, who classified mythic narratives in the sacral realm, identifying them as engaging societies' existential foundations, placed beyond doubt as inviolable or sacred stories. This approach furnishes an explanation for the ongoing relevance of myth in a modernity which maintains a self-perception as, in the main, post-mythic, enlightened and rational.<sup>23</sup>

A contribution of philosophy to the debate came from Hans Blumenberg, who stressed the potential of myths to enable people to distance themselves from what appears as a frightening, overwhelmingly greater force or power and therefore to successfully cope with reality. He regards 'work on myth' as a struggle for 'significance' and a sense of meaning.<sup>24</sup> Research on memory, meanwhile, is represented by Jan and Aleida Assmann's reminder of the function of myths in collective memory, driving development in 'hot' societies as they keep the memory of ruptures and revolutions alive and affirming continuity in 'cold' societies, where they neutralise transformations and impetus for change and stress the return of the status quo.<sup>25</sup> Recent publications with clear foci on modern myths point to the ongoing relevance and richness of academic engagement with the concept.<sup>26</sup>

Researchers' interest in myths has continued to rise in light of academic paradigm shifts and new approaches as practised by the discipline of cultural studies. The original arena<sup>27</sup> has now evolved into an interdisciplinary research space whose concern has extended beyond the matter of definitions, receptions and theories of the mythic. Two distinct developments are evident and merit mention in this context. The first is an emphasis on the inter- and transculturality of myths, seeking to illuminate the ways in which

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1998 (Paris 1965); Eliade, *Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1988 (Paris 1963).

<sup>24</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009 (1979).

<sup>25</sup> Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, 'Mythos', *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998, 179–200; Jan Assmann, 'Mythos und Geschichte', Helmut Altrichter et al. (eds.), *Mythen in der Geschichte*, Freiburg: Rombach, 2004, 13–28.

<sup>26</sup> Stephanie Wodianka and Juliane Ebert (eds.), *Metzler Lexikon moderner Mythen. Figuren, Konzepte, Ereignisse*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 2014; Brigitte Krüger and Hans-Christian Stillmark (eds.), *Mythos und Kulturtransfer. Neue Figurationen in Kunst, Literatur und modernen Medien*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013; Matthias Waechter, 'Mythos', version 1.0, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 11 February 2010, <http://docupedia.de/zg/Mythos>, last accessed 10 May 2019.

<sup>27</sup> The term's original definition largely took place in literary studies and philosophy. Peter Tepe, 'Terminologische Sensibilisierung im Umgang mit dem Mythos', Krüger/Stillmark, *Mythos*, 29–44. Karl Heinz Bohrer (ed.), *Mythos und Moderne. Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983; Gerhart von Graevenitz, *Mythos. Zur Geschichte einer Denkgewohnheit*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987.

mythic narratives, at the interface of divergent cultures, enter into relationships of reciprocal influence or begin to intermingle, how their individual components or mythemes recombine and evolve into transcultural myths.<sup>28</sup> The second represents a focal interest in the media through which myths communicate or indeed constitute themselves. Popular adaptations of myths in visual, auditory and performance-based media indicate that myths do not need a sophisticated epic narrative to unfold their effect. Translations of myth in/into media instead underline these myths' polyvalence, or adaptability. Their interpretive power, far from being lessened by their transference back and forth into different media, indeed experiences a boost via this process. Above all, these transferences/translations/transformations provide us with a living demonstration of the dynamism that drives the formation of myth.

This interdisciplinary research on myth, taking its cues from cultural studies, has also reactivated issues around the relevance of myth to the academic disciplines of history and history education research. It explores the relationship between mythic narratives and modern democracy by considering whether there remains a place for myths in democratically constituted, rationally based political orders and, if so, to which contemporary societal needs historical myths respond.<sup>29</sup> The colloquial, and reductionist, opposition between myths as false, fictitious or irrational narratives on the one side and, on the other, facts with empirical historical basis as the 'reality' from which they are to be distinguished continues to exert its influence in the background. It is these considerations which give rise to the question at the heart of this volume: whether myths have a rightful place in history textbooks for schools.

### **De-constructing myths<sup>30</sup>: a useful approach to myth in the history classroom**

It is evident that the expression in 1990 of the necessity of researching myth on an interdisciplinary basis<sup>31</sup> resonated within German-language cultural studies; the period

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<sup>28</sup> Waechter, 'Mythos', has examples of transnational myths.

<sup>29</sup> Chiara Bottici, 'Myths of Europe: A theoretical approach', *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society* 2 (2009), 9–33.

<sup>30</sup> The term 'de-construction' as used here refers to the FUER competency model of historical thinking (FUER stands for *Förderung und Entwicklung von reflektiertem Geschichtsbewusstsein*, that is, the promotion/nurturing and development of a mature/reflective historical consciousness). Cf. Andreas Körber, Waltraud Schreiber and Alexander Schöner (eds.), *Kompetenzen historischen Denkens. Ein Strukturmodell als Beitrag zur Kompetenzorientierung in der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Neuried: ars una, 2007. The model revolves around the analytical examination of historical narratives, having regard to the logics of construction, symbolic patterns and details they incorporate. This concept of 'de-construction' should not be confused with Derridean deconstruction.

that followed saw the advent of a specific research literature on historical myth<sup>32</sup> whose scope included the issue of myths in history textbooks.<sup>33</sup> The narrower debate in the subdiscipline of history education research, by contrast, took very little notice of the international discourse on myths and barely touched upon the concept of myth in its specific context. It appears as if the educational potential inherent in myth remains to be discovered. One indicator of this is the complete absence from the subdiscipline's canonical handbooks and guides of explicit entries on myth. This said, it is worth citing Karl-Ernst Jeismann's insistence on the necessity of engaging with 'norms and value judgements, desires and expectations which, incarnated in ideas around history, may petrify into "truths" unawares or may find themselves consciously instrumentalised as privileged historical knowledge'<sup>34</sup>, which we could read as covering the category of myth.

We note some exceptional cases in which researchers in history education have explored myths in 'society's historical consciousness', that is, historical culture. In 1996, Hans-Jürgen Pandel presented an initial attempt at a categorisation of myths, legends and historical untruths for history teaching, identifying myth as a 'counterfactual' or 'pseudo-story' within the dichotomy of fiction/reality.<sup>35</sup> In accordance with this approach, Pandel's rationale for teaching about myth in the history classroom relates to the objective of familiarising pupils with differences in genre – "true history" versus "fictitious history".<sup>36</sup> He further asserts that pupils should be familiar with myths in order to ena-

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<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Link and Wulf Wülfing, 'Einleitung', Link/Wülfing (eds.), *Nationale Mythen und Symbole in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Strukturen und Funktionen von Konzepten nationaler Identität*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991, 7–15, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Eugen Kotte, 'Geschichtswissenschaftliche und geschichtsdidaktische Mythosforschung', Jürgen Joachimsthaler and Eugen Kotte (eds.), *Kulturwissenschaften. Konzepte verschiedener Disziplinen*, Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2010, 103–125. Cf. also Volker Dotterweich (ed.), *Mythen und Legenden in der Geschichte* (Universität Augsburg: Schriften der Philosophischen Fakultäten der Universität Augsburg; Nr. 64: Historischsozialwissenschaftliche Reihe), Munich: Vögel, 2004; Helmut Altrichter et al. (eds.), *Mythen in der Geschichte*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2004, 13–28.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmysen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Eckert. Die Schriftenreihe 134), Göttingen: V& R unipress, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Karl-Ernst Jeismann, 'Didaktik der Geschichte. Die Wissenschaft von Zustand, Funktion und Veränderung geschichtlicher Vorstellungen im Selbstverständnis der Gegenwart', Erich Kosthorst et al. (eds.), *Geschichtswissenschaft. Didaktik – Forschung – Theorie*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977, 9–33, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Hans-Jürgen Pandel, 'Legenden – Mythen – Lügen. Wie viel Fiktion verträgt unser Geschichtsbewusstsein?', *Geschichte lernen* 52 (1996), 15–19, 16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

ble them to join the debate within and around historical culture.<sup>37</sup> We note here that Pandel identifies the aesthetic dimension of myths as one reason for their power in historical consciousness<sup>38</sup> – a matter to which we will return below. Pandel’s conception of myths received criticism from Karl Filser as approaching them ‘in a primarily pejorative sense’<sup>39</sup>; Filser argued that a cultural studies-driven approach does not stop at simply equating myths with tall stories in need of pushback and having their cover blown. In 2010, Pandel disrupted the uncomplicated opposition between history and myths, defining the latter as ‘particular forms of narrative which cannot be pinned down to specific content.’<sup>40</sup> Filser, meanwhile, sees the value of myth in the classroom as its capacity to introduce pupils via specific examples to European historical culture and cultures of memory, thus raising levels of ‘general historico-political knowledge’<sup>41</sup> and promoting the development of a mature and considered European awareness.

More recently, Eugen Kotte has returned to the topic, supplying a synthesising overview of the discourse around myth in academic history and history education research. One of the conclusions to which this discourse has come thus far is that myths point to past realities and act ‘deliberately and decidedly [to] generate meaning in relation to contemporary issues’<sup>42</sup>, exploiting people’s need for a sense of direction and orientation and constructing societal identity via reductive interpretations that tend to elide complexity. The upshot of this action may be to legitimise or delegitimise, or to provide a *tableau vivant* of canonical values.<sup>43</sup> In all cases, they encompass both ‘the factual and the fictitious’.<sup>44</sup> If we are to progress substantially beyond the capacity to distinguish a ‘true story’ from a ‘fiction’, we need to engage pupils with historical attitudes and alignments and trigger historical thinking; consideration of the extent to which specific historical narratives are (or might be) in fact myths seems eminently suitable for catalysing such a

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 19. Fourteen years after this, Pandel makes reference in this context to ‘competency/skills in historical culture’ (*geschichtskulturelle Kompetenz*): Hans Jürgen Pandel, *Historisches Erzählen. Narrativität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag, 2010, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Pandel, ‘Legenden – Mythen – Lügen’, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Filser, ‘“Wenn die Vergangenheit sich nicht fügt...” Nationale Mythen im Geschichtsunterricht?’, Volker Dotterweich (ed.), *Mythen und Legenden in der Geschichte*, 267–289, 268.

<sup>40</sup> Pandel, *Historisches Erzählen*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Filser, ‘Vergangenheit’, 285.

<sup>42</sup> Eugen Kotte, ‘Geschichtswissenschaftliche und geschichtsdidaktische Mythosforschung’, Jürgen Joachimsthaler and Eugen Kotte (eds.), *Kulturwissenschaften. Konzepte verschiedener Disziplinen*, Munich 2010, 103–125, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 124.

process, whose ultimate end is developing learners' capacity to de-construct history.<sup>45</sup> We also need, however, to establish criteria for identifying myths in this context which can help this process on its way and enable pupils to perceive the power of myths to supply direction and orientation.

With these considerations in mind, and building on work by Jörn Rüsen, what follows will propose a theoretical basis, drawing on and aligned with the needs of history education research, for the examination of narratives to the end of identifying their mythic character and its extent. It will encompass both analysis targeting these historical narratives' plausibility or otherwise and a probing of the functions – outlined above as relevant to our endeavour – of these narratives in societal historical consciousness. It appears to us that both these dimensions are of import if we are to reliably identify historical myths as such.

An initial approach to the concept of 'historical myth' from the point of view of history education research might comprehend such a myth as a historical narrative familiar to the society in which it circulates, whose 'truth' is more or less acknowledged<sup>46</sup>, yet whose plausibility, on closer inspection, appears problematic. Useful guidelines, drawn from historical theory, for the assessment of a historical narrative's plausibility are the criteria for evaluating *Triftigkeit*, which we shall render here as 'plausibility', proposed by Jörn Rüsen<sup>47</sup> and well-known within the discipline of history education research. Rüsen distinguishes between empirical, normative and narrative *Triftigkeit*, and ascribes to a historical narrative the capacity to be considered 'true' (at least until further notice), in the sense of 'plausible', if we can regard all three of these criteria as having been met. Put roughly, a historical narrative can be deemed plausible<sup>48</sup> if a) it does not contradict the assertions in the sources known to the reader (empirical plausibility), b) the presentation(s) of identity and construction of meaning within the narrative, and concomitantly the (individual and/or societal) orientation achieved by the engagement with the past that has referenced the narrative, can command consensus (normative plausibility), and

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<sup>45</sup> Andreas Körber, Waltraud Schreiber and Alexander Schöner (eds.), *Kompetenzen historischen Denkens*.

<sup>46</sup> As myths make reference to realities, they are received as 'true stories'. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Grundzüge einer Historik, Teil: 1., Historische Vernunft: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, 85–116.

<sup>48</sup> Other theoreticians have conceived of similar schemes; an important influence on Rüsen's work in this context was Hermann Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse. Analytik und Pragmatik der Historie*, Basel: Schwabe, 1977.

c) the contextual coherence between narrated details from the past and the derivation from these of meaning for the future, and therefore the narrative's guiding thrust, appear sound (narrative plausibility).<sup>49</sup> A historical narrative acknowledged as 'true' by a society, then, may in fact be a historical myth if:

a) the assertions it brings forth are in evident contradiction to historical sources or are fictions generated to fill gaps where no sources are available; this withdraws the narrative's foundation. A lack of empirical plausibility impels us to label such a narrative as a myth;

b) the putative meaning offered by the myth does not make sense, or makes sense no longer. In this way, values and orientations recognised by a society may become myths when the meaning drawn from them, albeit generative of broad consensus in the past, now fails to attract that consensus because of shifts in the frameworks of that society's recognition of legitimate meaning. Thus denied its power to create consensus, the narrative loses its normative plausibility and becomes a historical myth;

c) retrospective attachments of meaning to past events lead to their evaluation in terms which we might, for example, deem an over-inflation of their importance; the consequence is uncertain narrative plausibility and therefore the narrative's classification as a historical myth.

In accordance with these considerations, we propose, as the first and primary component of a historical myth, a lack of plausibility, of *Triftigkeit*. The simplest criterion to apply is a); it is relatively easy to classify narratives without empirical plausibility as myths. Myths whose property as such derives from category b) occur, *inter alia*, in artefacts of past historical culture representing ascriptions of meaning to which virtually nobody would assent today. There are not a few monuments and memorials from centuries past whose underlying narrative, were it examined in this light, might well prove, from our present-day perspective, a myth. Examples of myths classified in category c) include the myths of origin found frequently in historiography, which, while they may be able to point to demonstrable details, over-emphasise these to the extent that the narrative's interpretation as the inception of a sustained development appears to call itself into question.

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<sup>49</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Zeit und Sinn. Strategien historischen Denkens*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990 (second edition: Frankfurt am Main: Digital Humanities online, 2012), 98.

We admit that the definition of myth outlined here is not yet sufficient insofar as it fails to provide a satisfactory answer as to why particular narratives of impaired or problematic plausibility have still drawn broad societal consensus in the past, or indeed continue to do so today. Such an answer necessitates exploration of the key factor that is the functions served by these historical points of orientation in the ‘historical consciousness [present] in society’<sup>50</sup>. Without such a function, the narrative is effectively nothing but a story of dubious plausibility; it is not until it has achieved recognition as an ‘articulation of historical consciousness in the life of a society’<sup>51</sup>, and in so doing meets the needs of specific societal collectives for direction, identification and orientation, that it attains the status of myth. We therefore acknowledge the necessity of adding to the definition given above a further one with a more focal concern with the function of historical myths within historical cultures. As above, we refer here to a theory articulated by Jörn Rüsen, that of the three dimensions of historical culture.<sup>52</sup> Rüsen’s proposal is to distinguish three dimensions of the action of historical consciousness in generating societal meaning; he names these dimensions as aesthetic (‘beauty’), political (‘power’) and cognitive (‘truth’). In his view, a historical narrative becomes effective within historical culture when it meets criteria of coherence in all three of these dimensions. The criteria for plausibility outlined above reference the cognitive dimension only and serve to differentiate within it. The other two dimensions have yet to receive such differentiating criteria.<sup>53</sup>

The cognitive dimension, then, revolves around the matter of the plausibility or otherwise of historical narratives. The aesthetic dimension, by contrast, engages the fascination exercised by the past in the sense of the ‘aesthetic in the historical’.<sup>54</sup> Rüsen names

<sup>50</sup> Karl-Ernst Jeismann, ‘Didaktik der Geschichte. Die Wissenschaft von Zustand, Funktion und gesellschaftlicher Veränderung geschichtlicher Vorstellungen im Selbstverständnis der Gegenwart’, Kosthorst (ed.), *Geschichtswissenschaft. Didaktik – Forschung – Theorie*, 9–33, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Jörn Rüsen, ‘Geschichtskultur’, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46 (9), 1995, 509–521, 513.

<sup>52</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2013, additionally proposes a total of four *Triftigkeiten*, including ‘moral *Triftigkeit*’ (58ff.), and five dimensions of historical culture (234ff.), adding to the dimensions discussed above a moral and a religious dimension. An enquiry into the extent to which these facets amount to dimensions, and therefore merit inclusion in this context, would overstep the remit of this chapter, is, however, an important lacuna to be filled.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Johannes Meyer-Hamme, *Historische Identitäten und Geschichtsunterricht. Fallstudien zum Verhältnis von kultureller Zugehörigkeit, schulischen Anforderungen und individueller Verarbeitung*, Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag, 2009, 48.

<sup>54</sup> Rüsen, ‘Geschichtskultur’, 514.

the ‘formal coherence’ and ‘pragmatic intuitiveness [*Eingängigkeit*]’ of historical memory as the two elements traditionally conceived of as ‘beauty’ in this context.<sup>55</sup> The aesthetic dimension breathes life into a narrative and empowers it to unfold its impact.<sup>56</sup> In relation to historical myths, then, we might ask why a specific historical culture perceives them as possessed of beauty and which aesthetic components confer upon a non-plausible narrative a life and aura that gives it the quality of myth. Regarding the political dimension of historical culture, meanwhile, we note that political power and dominion always showcases itself in symbols redolent with history and that the narratives underlying such symbols act to provide a historical foundation for the consent of those subject to that power.<sup>57</sup> Such narratives invite de-construction because this process brings to the fore the extent to which history falls victim to political instrumentalisation and simultaneously how political power is legitimised on historical grounds. The political dimension also supplies an arena for exploring which values myths are intended to transmit and channel.

Each of these three dimensions is present in every historical narrative and each is necessarily inherently linked to the others. ‘There is no historical memory that is not determined by all three regulatives.’<sup>58</sup> We would do well, in the course of these considerations, to pay attention to the idea that within historical culture, where specific needs for direction and orientation exist, one of the three dimensions may become dominant. In the presence of certain contextual conditions, the political dimension (‘power’), for example, may influence the other two to the extent that the criteria in force within them – such as the injunction to ‘truth’ in the sense of a rationale that can be followed and assented to – cannot come into their own. This situation may give rise to ‘problematic expressions of historical memory’.<sup>59</sup> Subsequent effects of the political dimension’s acquisition of predominance may be a ‘politicisation’ of historical memory, while the aesthetic dimension’s ascendancy may ‘aestheticise’ it and an ‘ideologisation’ of that memory may come about when the cognitive dimension finds itself predominating.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 517.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

These considerations come to our aid as we seek to comprehend the emergence, establishment and functions of myths. We find ourselves dealing with a myth when the political or aesthetic dimension dominates, or instrumentalises, the cognitive dimension of historical memory to such an extent that the story as narrated fails an examination of its plausibility, its *Triftigkeit*. This approach enables us, alongside interrogating the empirical, normative and narrative plausibility of historical narrations relevant to historical culture, to seek to cast light on the purposes, within historical culture, which they fulfilled at their inception, and fulfil now, in relation to the aesthetic and political dimensions - that is, respectively, to the need for 'stories elegantly told and full of life' and the power to prevail in discourse on the past. The question here revolves around the creative, political and academic components underlying the narrative and its unfolding of impact within historical consciousness.

### **Mythical thinking and awareness of myths in the history classroom**

History textbooks currently in use in schools make explicit reference to myths and their genesis, frequently in relation to the engagement with historical culture now called for in curricula. The tasks presented to pupils in association with this material usually consist in analysing and trying to de-construct these myths. The intention frequently underlying them appears to be the 'demystification' of the myth to pupils, true to the unbrokeably preeminent premise that myths are incompatible with a rational, enlightened worldview. But is this indeed the case? Our struggle with defining the concept of myth at the outset of this chapter is likely matched by the difficulty of identifying its opposite. Science? Reason? Truth? Culture? Each of these terms has made repeated appearances in the literature around myths, yet none is satisfactory, as none can dispense with myth itself. The Enlightenment, which perceived in myth the backwardsness and gloom of idolatry, cannot be described as a caesura in respect to myth without substantial reservations.<sup>60</sup> Hayden White's work, at the latest, has reminded us that historiography is not solely a science, much as it likes to assert this of itself, but also, in every case, an art within which fictions and myths have a significant part to play. It is quite simply impossible to think about history on a completely rational basis, that is, without the supplementary action of imagination, conferring and creating meaning and indubitably related

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<sup>60</sup> 'There is no work which offers more eloquent testimony of the mutual implication of enlightenment and myth than that of Homer, the basic text of European civilization', Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, transl. Edmund Jephcott, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, 45-46.

to fantasy and therefore to fiction. People's need for myths has not and will never die out; it seems that myths are part of the human condition. Evidently mindful of this context, Odo Marquard has termed the history of the process of demythologisation as itself a myth, that is, 'the myth of the ending of myths' (*Mythenbeendigungsmythos*).<sup>61</sup>

So what exactly takes place when we de-construct myths in school history textbooks? For one, the process holds the promise that we might indeed gain closer insights into the character and functions of myths and into the conditions and circumstances in which they come into being. Yet it also gives these myths a new lease of life. Their adaptable outer forms – the innumerable varieties in which they can be told – aside, myths, at their extremely durable core<sup>62</sup>, represent the archetypal matrices of stories<sup>63</sup> transporting a message that makes a direct and powerful appeal to the hearer. Even if it appears that societal or cultural change has left them for dead, they retain the ability, if we deliberately or inadvertently shake them awake or if circumstances conspire to rouse them, to rise phoenix-like all of a sudden and clothe themselves in a new narrative that inspires and mobilises.<sup>64</sup> History textbooks, adhering to the general supposition that the age of nationalism is past, typically cite national myths; yet such myths are far from being dead. Why, after all, would textbook authors choose them for examination if nobody were familiar with at least their bare bones, and if those authors were not of the view that awareness of their message was an indispensable component of historical and political education? We might even go as far as to assert that history is only able to unfold powerful effects when it condenses into myths – myths that, believed or disbelieved, are ubiquitous in their familiarity and assumed relevance and invite societal subjects to take up a stance on them. The 'debunking' of a historical myth hitherto generally regarded as credible continues to be a noteworthy event that makes the media.

The Assmanns' concept of collective memory might – we could say – locate myth in parallel to cultural memory. In the communicative memory of the living, history retains its polyvalence and the debate around its meaning is live; there follows the 'floating gap', and succeeding it either memory maintained via a small elite of storytellers or,

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<sup>61</sup> Marquard, 'Polytheismus', 223 and 230.

<sup>62</sup> Hans Blumenberg, 'Arbeit am Mythos' (1979), *Mythentheorie*, 194–218, 194.

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Mythen des Alltags' (1957), *Mythentheorie*, 91–105, 92.

<sup>64</sup> Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, 'Mytho-phorie. Formen und Transformationen des Mythos' (1994), *Mythentheorie*, 290–300, 299.

extending far beyond this select circle, myth, with its – we may safely assume – much more emphatic effect on historical consciousness than that which science and research, as one manifestation of cultural memory, are able to exert.<sup>65</sup> We have very little chance of being able to empirically establish how myths unfold their impact in a society. Ernst Cassirer points out that ‘[w]e can truly overcome [myth] only by recognizing it for what it is [*Erkenntnis und Anerkennung*]: only by an analysis of its spiritual structure can its proper meaning and limits be determined.’<sup>66</sup>

Over and above the aspects addressed thus far, we might also seek to analyse the functions of myth at an economic level. The harnessing of myths for production or publication, in book or cinematic form, is potentially extremely lucrative. Another reason, then, for the ongoing transmission of myths from generation to generation is the profit to be made from this form of story-telling. Links suggest themselves between this level of analysis and the aesthetic and political dimensions discussed above. The beauty of myths – in the sense of their intuitive graspability – is a major factor in their appeal to many audiences and these audiences’ willingness to pay for the privilege of consuming their latest incarnation. In other words, the economic arena gives us an additional potential societal function of myths to explore in the classroom.

We see, then, that myth is alive and well, sustained perhaps primarily by people’s need for direction and orientation in an increasingly fast-paced, heterogeneous, confusing world where long-established boundaries and structures are shifting, changing and dissolving.<sup>67</sup> Young people are generally in search of themselves and their identities, with puberty a prime period for the development of hero-worship and attachment to idols deemed attractive role models. Myth is one potential source of such points of reference and orientation. Teachers intending to explore myths with pupils in the first stage of secondary education, then, are likely to find a natural abundance of intrinsic motivation for the topic.

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<sup>65</sup> ‘It is not by its history that the mythology of a nation [*Volk*] is determined but, conversely, its history is determined by its mythology’, Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 2: Mythical Thought*, transl. Ralph Manheim, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1955, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, xvii.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Blumenberg speaks of work on myth; but one could equally speak of the work of the myth if one follows this fascinating performance [of myth] throughout history, with people struggling in vain to rid themselves of it, only for it to catch up with them time and again.’ Kurt Hübner, ‘Die nicht endende Geschichte des Mythischen’ (1986/87), *Mythentheorie*, 251–261, 259.

One of this volume's primary, or initial, concerns is to present to the reader the content of selected myths. We have considered it appropriate in this context to establish a set of potential characteristics of myths, and summarise them again here:

- impaired or problematic empirical, normative and/or narrative plausibility (*Triftigkeit*)
- formal coherence and pragmatic intuitiveness (aesthetic dimension)
- appellative character (especially in a political and/or moral regard)
- variation of themes (notable frequency of war as a theme, as a metaphor representing antagonism between principles)
- a 'sacred' core, i.e. one that is not questioned, but believed uncritically
- an archetypal matrix of stories
- a timeless/cyclical basic pattern, existent before and beyond actual history

If we consider the needs of those teaching about historical narratives with relevance to historical culture in the later stages of secondary schooling, we might arrive, pragmatically, at the following sets of questions for separate exploration to the end of a more nuanced learning process:

1. To what extent does, or did, the story told here possess societal relevance? What are/were its societal functions? Whose needs did/does it serve, and what is the nature of those needs? What does it seem to promise in the way of generating historical significance and meaning (in the sense of a 'message for the future')? In this, whom it is addressing?

Teachers might wish in this context to critically explore approaches taken from modern theories of myth on the functions and purposes of myths, examining them to establish their usefulness for historical matters. Questions that arise in this context include whether myths hold up a mirror to nature (as in Shakespeare)<sup>68</sup>; dispel fears<sup>69</sup>; legitimise societal practices and institutions<sup>70</sup>; represent the antagonism between two oppositional concepts or terms<sup>71</sup>; describe an archetypal story of origin<sup>72</sup> or seek to deny the role of chance in the world.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Joseph Campbell, 'Schöpferische Mythologie' (1968), *Mythentheorie*, 164–174, 166.

<sup>69</sup> Hans Blumenberg, 'Arbeit am Mythos' (1979), *Mythentheorie*, 194–218, 194.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher G. Flood, 'Politischer Mythos. Eine theoretische Einführung' (1996), *Mythentheorie*, 303–315, 308.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Duva Burke, 'Mythos, Dichtung und Philosophie' (1960), *Mythentheorie*, 139–159, 151 and 153.

2. Can we consider this story, narrated in this way, as possessing empirical, normative and narrative plausibility?
3. To what extent was or is this narrative the expression of a societal need for direction, orientation or cohesion around specific content or values? To what extent did or does the narrative serve political or aesthetic functions of such a need or needs? Is this narrative a monomyth (determined by a one-sided perspective and labelled ‘dangerous’ by Odo Marquard, or a polymyth (with a multiplicity of potential interpretations)?<sup>74</sup> And, relatedly, how do political myths arise, mutate and eventually die?
4. Which media have in the past, or currently, proved to be particularly adept at generating myths? (It will probably be particularly useful to focus on mass media).<sup>75</sup> What has been the precise role of history textbooks in the development of myths?

Processes of inter- and transcultural comparison of myths may attempt to identify and interpret similarities and differences.

The thoughts detailed above are hopefully indicative of the potential of myth as a topic and approach in historical processes of learning. Inasmuch as historical myths offer numerous opportunities for history classes to focus on the function and action of history in society, they promise learning experiences that go far beyond simply distinguishing ‘true’ from ‘made-up’ stories, serving to promote a mature and reflective historical consciousness in pupils. Teaching more advanced secondary school students to de-construct myths can impart an important insight that we might formulate thus: The shape and state of historical narratives as we know them today, and as they appear in textbooks as manifestations of historical culture, do not stem solely from the reconstruction by historians of an ‘objective’ story from the sources. Instead, the history that eventually prevails in historical culture has reached this position under the influence of aesthetic and political factors, because history is always about giving individuals orientation and serving the present and the future – not least in history textbooks, which follow a curriculum laid down by political decision-makers. Jan Assmann suggests that myths draw ‘their form, significance and resonance [...] from present-day needs for meaning’.<sup>76</sup> Teachers, then,

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<sup>72</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Die weltgründende Funktion des Mythos und der christliche Offenbarungsglaube’ (1988), *Mythentheorie*, 265–276, 275.

<sup>73</sup> Cassirer, *Philosophie*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Marquard, ‘Polytheismus’, 226.

<sup>75</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Das Medium ist die Massage. Ein Inventar medialer Effekte* (1967), Stuttgart: Tropen, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Jan Assmann, ‘Mythos und Geschichte’, Helmut Altrichter et al. (eds), *Mythen in der Geschichte*, 13–28.

may usefully and fruitfully explore in the classroom questions around the formation of national identities, or the drawing of boundaries between a nation and other communities, via myth; around myths' mining of self-aggrandising glorification and pejorative and adversarial images of the 'other'; around their manipulative potential, their susceptibility to political misuse or their entertainment value. A 'mythic consciousness', after all, represents, on all the evidence, a fundamental form of all types of intellectual and spiritual culture.<sup>77</sup> A treatment of the aesthetic dimension of myth might seek to introduce the economic dimension by challenging students to consider who makes money with the rendering of myths into media, and how.

We end on a note of warning: An unfortunately unavoidable methodological issue in this context resides in the fact that fundamentally, a myth cannot be pinned down, one of its key characteristics being its living polyvalence. It contrasts thus with the limitations of the history classroom, forced as it is to work with individual, separate, written or visual preservations of a myth which strictly speaking can never represent the myth itself, but only selected manifestations of it. This tends to 'degrade [myth] to the level of a standardising and reified object of intellectual production'.<sup>78</sup> Living myths elude any attempt to fully grasp them empirically. We should therefore take care not to conflate material reproduced in history textbooks with 'the myth itself'.

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<sup>77</sup> Cassirer, *Philosophie*, XI.

<sup>78</sup> Wunenburger, 'Mytho-phorie', 291.

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Felix Hinz

### **White dwarves in the firmament of historical consciousness?**

#### **Marathon/Salamis and Tours/Poitiers as European myths of deliverance**

What is Europe? Europe is a political myth. However we attempt to define ‘Europe’, we find ourselves confronted each time with a dispiriting result, leading eventually to an insight into the fact that it, like all other continents, is in fact a construct. Consideration of the essence of Europe – of what it consists in – leaves us with less to go on than we might initially, impulsively assume. Europe is without natural or otherwise clearly defined geographical, demographic, religious or cultural bounds. An attempt to define the cultural essence of ‘Europe’ somewhat more vaguely, as a commonwealth of values, reveals the notion of liberty at the myth’s core, in terms of the identity it evokes, standing alongside the concepts of democracy, equality and individuality.

The discursive antithesis to ‘Europe’, as a construct, is ‘Asia’, as illustrated in the oldest and roughest idea of the world to issue from Europe, exemplary in Hecataeus of Miletus (c. 560 - c. 480) who posits only Europe and, as a catch-all for anti-Europe, Asia. If the myth of ‘Europe’ is to be believed, this view of the world should actually be the other way round; the myth asserts, after all, that Asia was there first, enabling Europe to separate and emancipate itself from it as the apogee of humanity. The development thus delineated in accordance with this myth commenced in Athens, continued in Rome, and unfolded successively thereafter in Carolingian Franconia, Renaissance Italy, revolutionary France, and so on to its present-day culmination in the EU. The thread running through this teleological monomyth of European history is the consistent claim that all these developments strove towards the extension and consolidation of liberty and individuality<sup>1</sup>, with all their hard-won achievements under repeated threat from ‘Asia’, which, albeit rich in population and resources, and certainly not without expressions of high culture, is precisely not the embodiment of that liberty and individuality that is at the heart of ‘Europe’. ‘Asia’ is barbarism, ‘Europe’ (or, these days, ‘the West’) is civilisation – this is the essence of the myth which continues to flourish in pointed whispers today. ‘Asia’, as Europe’s nemesis, has come in many guises over the course of history:

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<sup>1</sup> Odo Marquard, ‘Lob des Polytheismus. Über Monomythie und Polymythie’ (1979), Wilfried Barner, Anke Detken and Jörg Wesche (eds.), *Texte zur modernen Mythen Theorie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012, 222–238, 228.

that of the Persian Empire (at Marathon in 490 BCE and Salamis 480 BCE), the Huns (in 451 CE at the Catalaunian Fields), the Mongolians (at Liegnitz in 1241), Bolshevism and, time and again ever since it came into being, Islam (Tours and Poitiers in 732; Vienna in 1529 and 1683). This complicates, at least when we look back on history, the assertion that Islam is an integral part of Europe; while migration and globalisation have doubtless made it so today, the fact remains that 'Europe' in its present form would never have emerged without 'Asia' or 'Islam' as bogeyman counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Resistance to 'Asia' was the one thread holding together, not only the various Hellenic tribes, but also, for instance, the Germanic tribes and the Romans, indeed the Protestants and the Catholics even during the continent's religious wars.<sup>3</sup>

A substantial component of the 'Europe' myth consists in the notion that it needed time and again to be rescued from threatened destruction at the hands of 'Asia'. This chapter will explore manifestations of this strand of the myth by examining the assertions made in school history textbooks from Germany about two battle myths<sup>4</sup> around such supposed rescues: the battles in question are, first, those at Marathon (490 BCE) and Salamis (480 BCE) against the Persians (coming from the east), and, second, that of Tours and Poitiers (732 CE) against the Arabs (coming from the south). Both these myths, each steeped in august tradition, claim that a defeat would have seen 'Europe' overrun, occupied and robbed of its liberty, that is, of its existence, which amounts from a European point of view to a historical catastrophe whose aversion turns the myths' protagonists into glorious heroes.

The first part of this chapter will provide a brief outline of what we know about the events in question and of how those alive at the time evaluated them. I will then proceed, on this basis, to highlight some particularly resonant assessments of the events from nineteenth-century German school history textbooks which illustrate the myth's vitality at the apex of its power. The chapter's second part will analyse the treatment of

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<sup>2</sup> More detail on this phenomenon is in Thomas Kaufmann, 'Kontinuitäten und Transformationen im okzidentalen Islambild des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts', Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit (eds.), *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011, 287–306.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., for example, from the Protestant perspective, Martin Luther, *Heerpredigt wider die Türken* (1529), and from the Catholic point of view, Abraham a Santa Clara, *Auch eine Heerpredigt wider die Türken, oder: Auff, auff Ihr Christen! Das ist: eine bewegliche Anfrischung der christlichen Waffen gegen den türkischen Bluteigel* (1683).

<sup>4</sup> On this concept, cf. Joseph Fontenrose, *Python, A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959.

these historical events in history textbooks currently in use in schools. After citing exemplary text from history textbooks in use in academically selective secondary schools (*Gymnasien*) in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia immediately prior to that state's 'G8' reform of academic secondary schooling, I will embark upon a systematic analysis of textbooks used in the new 'G8' system.<sup>5</sup> More precisely, the analysis involves the materials approved in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state, for the first stage of secondary education at *Gymnasien* in accordance with core curricula for the shortened G8.<sup>6</sup> I have chosen to focus on material for *Gymnasium* because this is fundamentally likely to go into most detail on the events, and to conduct the main analysis on G8 materials because, while these continue to aim at an educational elite, the compression to which curricula have been subject in the course of the reform promises insights into which topics have fallen victim to the consequent necessary reduction.

The textbooks studied are as follows:

Table 1: History textbooks analysed

Textbook	Publisher	Mentions Marathon / Salamis?	Mentions Tours and Poitiers?
<i>Horizonte</i> , vol. 1, Ulrich Baumgärtner and Klaus Fiebig (eds.), Braunschweig 2007	Westermann	no	yes (one mention on a map)
<i>Mosaik. Der Geschichte auf der Spur</i> , D 1, Joachim Cornelissen, Martin Ehrenfeuchter, Christoph Henzler, Michael Tocha and Helmut Winter (eds.), Munich 2008	Oldenbourg	yes (with an illustration)	no
<i>Das waren Zeiten</i> , vol. 1, Dieter Brückner and Harald Focke (eds.), Bamberg 2008	C.C. Buchner	yes	no
<i>Forum Geschichte kompakt</i> , vol. 1, Hans-Otto Regenhardt (ed.), Berlin 2010 (2008)	Cornelsen	yes (Greco-Persian Wars mentioned in a subsidiary clause, no further explanation)	no
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen</i> , vol. 1, Michael Sauer (ed.), Stuttgart/Leipzig 2010	Klett	yes (with an illustration)	yes

<sup>5</sup> 'G8' is the shorthand generally used in Germany for a reform of secondary schooling which has shortened the number of years from the beginning of the first stage of secondary education (in most states year 5) to the examinations for the university entrance qualification (*Abitur*; *allgemeine Hochschulreife*) from nine (i.e. years 5 to 13) to eight (i.e. years 5 to 12). Some states have kept or reverted to the nine-year system, while some maintain the eight-year course.

<sup>6</sup> My source was Bildungsportal des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Verzeichnis der zugelassenen Lehrmittel: Gymnasium: Sekundarstufe I: Geschichte*, [http://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/Schulsystem/Medien/Lernmittel/GymnasiumG8/index.html#A\\_50](http://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/Schulsystem/Medien/Lernmittel/GymnasiumG8/index.html#A_50) (last accessed 1 September 2016).

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**Europe saved in the east? – The battles of Marathon and Salamis, 490/480 BCE****The facts**

In 490 and 480 BCE, the Persian rulers Darius I and Xerxes each attempted to conquer the Hellenic *poleis* on the territory of present-day Greece and incorporate them into their empire, as they had done with those of Asia Minor. Athens' support for the Ionian Revolt of 499/98 explains the fact that, from the beginning, the Persian offensives were primarily directed against that *polis*, which, democratically governed, considered itself to be fighting for 'freedom'. The Attic citizens were not willing to submit to the ultimate rule of a king, however benign that rule proved to be, and they risked everything, without further compelling cause, in their determination to remain free from such submission.<sup>7</sup> These are the incipient events of the European myth of liberty.

When the Persian forces landed in the bay of Marathon in 490 BCE, the Athenians, considerably weaker in numbers, decided not to wait for the arrival of the approaching Spartans; their hoplites ran heavily armed to meet and engage the Persians, who carried lighter weapons and had not yet had time to enter a formation. The subsequent Athenian victory was improbable and for that reason alone attained the epithet of 'legendary': Losing only 192 of their men, the Athenians succeeded after hard battle in creating mass panic among the Persians, who fell in their thousands or fled to their ships.

The Persian Empire sought to avenge itself for this humiliation. In the year 480, the emperor Xerxes undertook a further attempt to subjugate Athens and Sparta in particular. Once again, it was democratic Athens, not the Spartan warrior state, that foiled the Persian offensive. Clear-headedly deeming their victory at Marathon to have been a non-reproducible stroke of fortune, the Athenians, on the advice of their strategist Themistocles, had focused their energies on constructing a powerful fleet. Consciously risking the pillage of their city, they took their new triremes to the bay of Salamis to set a trap for the Persian fleet. Their superiority in numbers was the downfall of the Persians, who found themselves without sufficient room to manoeuvre in the bay. Without the logistical support of the fleet, the large Persian land army in Greece was lost.

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<sup>7</sup> Christian Meier has observed of Athens' resolution, democratically arrived at, to support the Ionians against the Persians: 'What they planned was pure adventure.' Christian Meier, *Athen. Ein Neubeginn der Weltgeschichte*, Berlin: btb, 1997, 224.

Thus it was Athens and not Sparta that decisively shaped what was later to evolve into the European spirit of freedom. Sparta was a monarchically governed, bellicose *polis* predicated on the oppression of other Greeks. At Marathon, the Spartans had been left able only to pay homage to their Athenian rivals for supremacy in battle. It is to be noted that they had been willing, as well as defending the Isthmus of Corinth, to fight side by side with the Athenians for Attica. In 480, in a bid to make up for their failure at Marathon, they resolved, at Thermopylae much further north, to face the Persian army virtually alone, affirming in their sacrificial deaths their claim to supremacy. This act of reckless bravery likewise laid the foundations for a myth, albeit one later applauded by totalitarian and fascist regimes rather than providing part of the basis for the idea of Europe.

It is important at this juncture to observe that the Greeks did not in fact consider themselves Europeans; instead, they regarded themselves as that refugium of civilisation located, as it were, between 'Europe' and 'Asia' and, as Aristotle opined, uniting in itself the best of both worlds.<sup>8</sup>

What would have happened if Darius and Xerxes had proved victorious? This is a question of great import, yet difficult to answer today. The demise of Sparta would likely have not been a ruinous loss, in terms of Europe's subsequent development. Athens, by contrast, would presumably have seen the establishment of a *tyrannis* sympathetic to the Persians, who would not have let it be more than simply one city among many. Democracy, Attic tragedy, political rationality, and the architecture of the Acropolis were all epiphenomena of the victory over the Persians. The fact that radical Attic democracy is barely comparable to today's Western democracies, and its aggressive policies incompatible with the Western values of the present, does nothing to lessen the ongoing vitality of the myth that these two battles brought into being.

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<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* VII, 7: 'Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill, and therefore they retain comparative freedom, but have no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent.' Cited in German in the school textbook *Europäische Geschichte. Quellen und Materialien*, Hagen Schulze and Ina Ulrike Paul (eds.), Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuch Verlag, 1994, 30; English translation: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.7.seven.html> (last accessed 30 January 2019).

### How the sources interpret the facts

The victories over the Persians had further significant sequelae on other levels. The Greeks' pride in the Athenians and the successes attained later against the Persians by the Delian League gave Europe the inception of its history (in the sense of *historia rerum gestarum*) by inspiring Herodotus, the 'father of historiography', to write his *Histories*, whose key themes were the Greco-Persian Wars, or, put differently, Europe's struggle against Asia. His historical opus remains to this day one of the discipline's most monumental; he had taken as his formal model the Greek epics, thus creating a history which presented the Athenians in the manner of Homeric heroes.<sup>9</sup> The years after Salamis seemed to spread out before Athens a glorious vista of future progress, albeit one characterised by an 'unparalleled Athenocentric cultural imperialism' which, in the pursuit of its ends, 'consciously accepted the falsification of myths, indeed practically fuelled them via art and the great tragedies', as Michael Siebler commented relatively recently in a full-page article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*<sup>10</sup> - its publication, and the space it commanded, point to the fact that the myths of Marathon and Salamis remain of relevance in contemporary historical culture.

Presumably likewise influenced by these Attic 'falsifications', or indeed foundations, of myths, Herodotus, on their basis, made a sustained contribution to generating more. Referring back to sacral traditions of myth, he attributed, thus suggests Hans Blumenberg, the 'idea' of the 'earth-shattering conflict' to the envy and resentment harboured by Zeus, whose power was more limited than that of his mythic predecessors, towards humanity.<sup>11</sup>

Herodotus places these words into the mouth of Xerxes:

[i]f we conquer [the Athenians] - and those too who live as their neighbours [...] then the limits of Persian territory will be brought to border the sky [...] There will be no more lands left beyond our frontiers for the sun to shine upon. [...] we will together cross the length and breadth of Europe and mould it all into a single land.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Oswyn Murray, *Das frühe Griechenland*, Munich: dtv, 5<sup>th</sup> edition 1995, 357.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Siebler, 'Als Athen zur Großmacht wurde. Wo tobte die Schlacht von Salamis?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 April 2015, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Blumenberg, 'Arbeit am Mythos' (1979), in: *Texte zur modernen Mythentheorie*, 191–218, 198.

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 7 (8), tr. Tom Holland, Penguin, 2013.

Herodotus gives as little account of the provenance of his insight into Xerxes' intentions as he does of the precise shape of his, or (attributedly) Xerxes', idea of Europe at this juncture. In Herodotus' work, as this passage exemplifies, a new distinction emerges between the civilised Hellenes and the 'barbarians', a multi-layered and multi-faceted trope. Herodotus' associations with this epithet emerge in the following passage, an account of an incident supposedly taking place during the Persian forces' crossing of the Hellespont:

The distance between Abydos and the shore opposite is seven stades. Once the straits had been bridged, however, a great storm erupted, and smashed the bridges to pieces. – When Xerxes was informed of this, his anger was so terrible that he ordered his men to give the Hellespont three hundred lashes of the whip, and to drop a pair of fetters into the sea. [...] those who were laying on the lash were certainly ordered to speak to the sea with the insolence so typical of Barbarians. 'O bitter water, this is done to you by your master as punishment for the wrong you did him, despite his never having done you the slightest harm. King Xerxes will cross you, whether you wish it or not. [...]' Such, then, was the punishment inflicted by Xerxes upon the sea – and as for those responsible for the bridging of the Hellespont, he had them beheaded.<sup>13</sup>

It is apparent that Herodotus casts Xerxes as a presumptuous tyrant who sought to enslave not only the peoples of other nations, but indeed the forces of nature, and whose dominion had no basis in right or justice. The whip and fetters have effectively been his emblems ever since.<sup>14</sup> Athens, by contrast, had since the dawn of time stood on the 'foundations of foreign power brought under control'.<sup>15</sup> Each and every Greek fought out of conviction to defend his political freedom. Xerxes, by contrast, once he 'had reached the European shore [...] watched his army make the crossing under the whip.'<sup>16</sup>

### **Interpretations in history textbooks from nineteenth-century: Germany**

The observation that wars had a particularly important role to play in the age of nationalism is barely earth-shattering. In a study analysing myths of political significance in 17 European nations and the USA, Dieter Langewiesche concludes that 65 of 90 myths are related to warfare.<sup>17</sup> Our case is likewise. The outcome of the Greco-Persian Wars

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 7 (34-35).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the vivid illustration of this in the Xerxes of Frank Miller's graphic novel *300*, Ludwigsburg: cross cult, 2006 (original: Dark Horse Comics, 1998) or its film dramatisation (*300*, USA 2006, dir. Zack Snyder).

<sup>15</sup> Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, 205. Poseidon is said to have struck the Acropolis with his trident in order to stake his claim to the city, and in so doing left the sphere befitting him. As the myth tells us, the only effect of this attempted act of domination was that a seawater source came into being and was symbolically neutralised by Athena's planting of an olive tree.

<sup>16</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 7 (56).

<sup>17</sup> Dieter Langewiesche, 'Krieg im Mythenarsenal europäischer Nationen und der USA. Überlegungen zur Wirkungsmacht politischer Mythen', Nikolaus Buschmann and Dieter Langewiesche (eds.), *Der Krieg*

found itself laden with such exalted significance to Europe's destiny that – although the English generally took a critical stance towards ‘the continent’ even back then – the liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) could announce: ‘The battle of Marathon, even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings.’<sup>18</sup> It should come as no surprise to us, then, that German textbooks deemed the event at least as significant.

Implicitly referencing Herodotus, a work entitled *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Völker und Staaten des Alterthums* (1824) described the battle of Marathon as a ‘struggle of global significance between freedom and servitude.’<sup>19</sup> In the strikingly openly expressed spirit of the German *Vormärz*, which obviously had little time for ‘great kings’, the textbook speaks of ‘a handful of republican heroes, under their Miltiades [who was] fired up with [the ideals of] freedom and fatherland, [who] repelled the Persian hordes at Marathon.’<sup>20</sup> After 1848, while a few voices continued to champion liberty, those critical of democracy rose to influence; Friedrich Zurbonsen, for instance, writing in volume one of *Das Altertum* (1895), asked:

Which outstanding Athenians died miserable deaths? Miltiades, the victor at Marathon, condemned, of his wounds; Themistocles, triumphant at Salamis, banished, by suicide, [etc.] – The reason for their fate lies in the unstable and jealous character of Attic democracy.<sup>21</sup>

After the foundation of imperial Germany, the myth's interpretation shifted to the effect that it attributed the Athenians' strength not to their republican constitution, but to their putative racial superiority. The following passage appeared in numerous history textbooks of the time: ‘So was the most glorious victory won, so was the fatherland protected by the strong arm of its *hero sons* from the *servitude* into which the *presumption of a foreign ruler* threatened to cast it’.<sup>22</sup> Books issued during the First World War placed

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*in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003, 13–22.

<sup>18</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions, Political, Philosophical, and Historical*, vol. 2, London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1875, 283.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Friedrich August Reuscher, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Völker und Staaten des Alterthums*, Berlin: Amelang, 1824, 198.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Zurbonsen, *Geschichtliche Repititionsfragen und Ausführungen. Ein Hilfsmittel für Unterricht und Studium. Erster Teil: Das Altertum*, Berlin: Nicolai, 3. Auflage 1895, 17.

<sup>22</sup> The italics are authorial; examples of textbooks containing the passage are Woldemar Dietlein, *Bilder aus der Weltgeschichte. Ein Hilfsbuch beim biographischen Geschichtsunterricht für Lehrer und ein Lesebuch für Schüler*, Braunschweig: Friedrich Wreden, 1871, 49; Jakob Carl Andrä, *Erzählungen aus der griechischen und römischen Geschichte. Ein Lehr- und Lesebuch für den ersten Geschichtsunter-*

particular emphasis on the Athenians' courage. The decisive common factor throughout was the struggle's depiction as not just about Athens, but about the whole of Europe<sup>23</sup>; the discourse, as well as locating the Athenians in Europe culturally, effectively equated them with the European spirit, or with what it stood for. A textbook of 1874 asserts:

From time immemorial, Athens became the seminary of heroic virtue, of love of one's country [...], in one word, of all that fills the outline of humanity. [...]  
It was here that the waves of Persian power broke on the shore at Marathon; [...]  
To the lover of the ancient world, Athens is a holy Palestine, whose name ignites in his soul the epitome of beauty, greatness and excellence [...].<sup>24</sup>

Another author waxes yet more lyrical still:

The heroism of humanity [displayed here] and the love of country ennoble the savage scenes of battle [, turning them] to a victory of the spirit whose consequences for the history of human development are entirely incalculable. For these struggles between Orient and Occident [*des Morgen- und Abendlandes*] are not a quotidian campaign of conquest; instead, they are a dispute of the deepest and most inward human interests. At Marathon und Thermopylae, at Salamis and Plataea, the Greeks not only subdued the armies of Darius and Xerxes, they won for Europe the victory of the spirit, of liberty, the primacy of education, for which we, those who follow them so much later, owe them no lesser gratitude than did their own descendants [...].<sup>25</sup>

The selection in 1896 of the marathon race, one artefact of the mythology that has formed around the eponymous battle<sup>26</sup>, as a discipline in the modern Olympic Games in homage to that victory of liberty is not incidental. The new Olympic idea seeks to promote peace and reconciliation among peoples, hence the difficulties regularly caused when a host state proves guilty of despotism. The 26-mile race is one event which repeatedly recalls this spirit of freedom; it appears to have taken its place alongside the historical tradition as the most abundant living source of the Marathon myth.<sup>27</sup>

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*richt an höheren Lehranstalten*, Leipzig: Voigtländer, 8<sup>th</sup> edition 1895, 56 (a number of further editions appeared with no changes to this passage in the years to 1918).

<sup>23</sup> 'Europe has these Greek victories to thank for its not having become the trophy of the Asian despots and for not having been inhibited by these in the development of its culture.' Emilie Döring, *Hellas. Geographie, Mythologie, Geschichte und Culturgeschichte von Alt-Griechenland für den Schul- und Selbstunterricht*, Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1876, 245.

<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Pütz, *Vergleichende Erd- und Völkerkunde in abgerundeten Gemälden für Schule und Haus gesammelt und bearbeitet*, vol. 1. Cologne: DuMont-Schauberg, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1874, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Christian Oeser, *Weltgeschichte für das weibliche Geschlecht. Erster Theil: Geschichte des Alterthums*, neu bearbeitet unter Mitw. von Georg Weber, Leipzig: Georg Brandstetter, 5<sup>th</sup> edition 1861, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Björn Onken, 'Die attische Polis', Gerhard Henke-Bockschatz (ed.), *Kompaktwissen Geschichte*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Hans W. Giessen, *Mythos Marathon: Von Herodot über Bréal bis zur Gegenwart*, Landau: Verlag Empirische Pädagogik, 2010.

### **Interpretations in history textbooks for *Gymnasien* in North Rhine-Westphalia, 1990-2013 (prior to introduction of G8 system)**

More recent textbooks have been reluctant to glorify battles. An issue-based treatment of the topic of Marathon/Salamis, with highly pedagogical intent, appears in the 1999 textbook *Zeiten und Menschen*: ‘Why do people go to war? How can we prevent wars?’<sup>28</sup> There remained much about freedom in the discussion, but the pathos was gone. In the spirit of the intercultural turn, textbooks were now taking a primarily value-neutral approach to Persian culture. The text of these books no longer spoke of ‘servitude’; in one book, issued by the educational publisher Klett, the Persians even appeared as liberators:

The Persian king permitted the subjugated peoples to retain their religions and customs. The Persians even hold a place of honour in Jewish historical memory, because they brought [the Jews’] long-lasting exile to Babylon to an end and permitted them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup>

The description of the circumstances that sparked the outbreak of the Greco-Persian Wars reads as an apologia of Darius:

Of course the Persian king could not put up with parts of his empire setting up on their own. But this was exactly what the Greeks in Asia Minor had done, in his view, when in 500 BCE they revolted, for reasons he did not understand, led by the city of Miletus. It was unthinkable to the Persian king that he might allow these quarrelsome Greeks to continue with these activities.<sup>30</sup>

Faling a long way from their nineteenth-century pedestal as republican ‘hero sons’, then, the now ‘quarrelsome Greeks’ were accused of fomenting war for trivial reasons despite their actually rather good life under Persian dominion. The Greek *poleis*, including those in the motherland and here particularly Sparta, were charged with pure lust for power, to counter which Darius sent – as the book is at pains to stress – a ‘not very large army’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Hans-Jürgen Lenzian and Wolfgang Mattes (eds.), *Zeiten und Menschen*, Bd. 1, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999, 176.

<sup>29</sup> Ursula Fries, Peter Gautschi et al.: *Geschichte und Geschehen*, Leipzig: Klett, 2006, 97.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 97–98.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 98. Leading historians assume a total of 90,000 men, of whom (naval forces and baggage aside) 25,000 were foot soldiers and 800 mounted. (Meier, *Athen*, 247.) It is barely imaginable that the Greek resisters would have been able to mobilise anywhere near this number.

### Interpretations in current history textbooks for *Gymnasien* in North Rhine-Westphalia (for G8 system)

Neither the Greco-Persian Wars nor the rise of the Carolingians are among the ‘obligatory content areas’ listed in the current core history curriculum for the G8 system in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.<sup>32</sup> We can barely speak of surprise, then, at the discovery that the battles of Marathon and Salamis no longer play a significant role in the history textbooks in use. There is not a single G8 textbook that continues to claim the Athenians saved Europe with their victories. *Horizonte* makes no mention of them. *Forum Geschichte kompakt* contains a passage, headed ‘Athens changes’, within which we find the succinct assertion that the Athenians built a splendid temple dedicated to their patron goddess, without whose succour ‘the courageous struggle of the Greeks against the Persians [would have been] unsuccessful’.<sup>33</sup> Without any background information or further explanation, pupils cannot hope to understand this allusion.

This by-the-by remark is indicative of the tenacity of myths; they do not simply fade away without trace. Odo Marquard goes so far as to deem them – relatively - immortal.<sup>34</sup> Textbooks typically deal with inopportune myths by avoiding explicit reference to these old patterns of interpretation within their principal text while giving them voice and space in additional material and then failing to call them into question in pupil tasks. Traditional interpretive patterns appear most clearly in *Zeiten und Menschen*, which states: ‘In Greeks’ consciousness, [the Greco-Persian Wars] stand for the conjoint battle of the civilised Occident [*sic; des zivilisierten Abendlandes*] against the empire of unfreedom in Asia [*sic; das Reich der Unfreiheit in Asien*]. In their eyes, the Persians were uncivilised barbarians’.<sup>35</sup> This passage is eloquent in terms of its points of reference; it begins by speaking, not of an interpretation held by present-day Europeans, but simply of ‘Greeks’ consciousness’, then strikingly changes tack by stating these Greeks were of the view that they had defended the civilised West, das ‘*zivilisierte Abendland*’. *Abendland*, as a term and a concept, in fact points to an intermingling of Roman, Christian and Germanic facets and to the era of the Crusades, another major arena of conflict

<sup>32</sup> Qualitäts- und Unterstützungsagentur – Landesinstitut für Schule Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.) Kernlehrplan Geschichte, correct as of 7 September 2015, <http://www.schulentwicklung.nrw.de/lehrplaene/lehrplannavigator-s-i/gymnasiumg8/geschichte-g8/kernlehrplan-geschichte/stufen-der-anforderungen> (last accessed 1 September 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Hans-Otto Regenhardt (ed.), *Forum Geschichte kompakt*, vol. 1, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2010, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Odo Marquard, *Lob des Polytheismus*, 223.

<sup>35</sup> Lambert Austermann and Hans-Jürgen Lenzian (eds.), *Zeiten und Menschen*, vol. 1, Gymnasium Nordrhein-Westfalen, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008, 106.

between ‘Europe’ and ‘Asia’.<sup>36</sup> The text continues, laden, perhaps, with a subtle political message for future citizens of Europe: ‘The Greco-Persian Wars had shown that the Greeks needed fear no power as long as they took concerted action.’<sup>37</sup>

The mention of the Greco-Persian Wars found in the textbook *Geschichte und Geschehen* appears at first glance to serve simply to explain the fact that Athens was able to set up a thalassocracy. This said, the battle of Salamis still occupies almost half of one of the textbook’s pages, in the shape of a striking reconstructive illustration by Peter Connolly which, with its perfect, athletic bodies, shining helmets and dynamic triremes, gives a fresh lease of life to the mythic imagery of Greek heroism.<sup>38</sup> *Mosaik* goes further, at least in terms of space, exploring the Greco-Persian Wars in a double-page spread which includes a rough reconstructive sketch evidently based on Connolly’s depiction and, taking (as does its model) the Attic point of view, showing the Athenians sinking the Persian-Phoenician fleet. The accompanying text explains laconically that the Persians had established a large kingdom and suppressed a rebellion incited by a number of Greeks, whereupon Darius ‘swore’ to take ‘revenge’ on the Athenians for supporting the rebels. Without explaining the significance of the ensuing battle of Marathon, the text labels the Attic victory in said battle ‘incredible’.<sup>39</sup> Among the materials on the opposite page is a passage from Herodotus’ account of Xerxes explaining his plans to his council of war, including these words: ‘I am going to [...] march an army through Europe and into Greece [...] to punish the Athenians’<sup>40</sup> The passage points to the circumstance, discussed above, that the Greeks did not regard themselves as part of Europe, alongside simultaneously suggesting that Xerxes’ campaign did not actually pose a threat to Europe. The excerpt ends with the words we cited earlier: ‘[i]f we conquer [the Athenians] - and those too who live as their neighbours [...] then the limits of

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the chapter in this volume on the ‘myth’ of the First Crusade; also Felix Hinz, *Mythos Kreuzzüge. Selbst- und Fremdbilder in historischen Romanen 1786–2012*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Austermann and Lenzian, *Zeiten und Menschen*, vol. 1, 2008, 106. The subsection in which this text is found bears the title ‘The Greco-Persian Wars: Greeks fighting together [or: ‘side by side’]’ (*Die Perserkriege: Griechen kämpfen gemeinsam*), while the succeeding subsection is called ‘The Peloponnesian War: Greeks fighting one another’ (*Der Peloponnesische Krieg: Griechen kämpfen gegeneinander*).

<sup>38</sup> Michael Sauer and Rolf Brütting (eds.), *Geschichte und Geschehen*, vol. 1, Stuttgart/Leipzig: Klett, 2010, 88; cf. Peter Connolly, *Die griechischen Armeen*, Hamburg: Tesseloff, 1978, 42–43.

<sup>39</sup> Joachim Cornelissen, Martin Ehrenfeuchter, Christoph Henzler, Michael Tocha and Helmut Winter (eds.), *Mosaik*, D 1, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008, 98.

<sup>40</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 7 (8); cited in German in Cornelissen et al., *Mosaik*, 99.

Persian territory will be brought to border the sky'.<sup>41</sup> What is left out here is Xerxes' intent to subsequently, after an envisaged conquest of Athens, 'cross the length and breadth of Europe'. While it is evident that pupils are not supposed here to discern the idea (the self-same idea underlying the myth) of Europe's deliverance, they are still presented with the account, to no apparent significance or purpose, as an 'incredible series of events' (*unglaubliches Geschehen*). No pupil could be blamed for wondering at this juncture why they are being called upon to learn about these matters.

The case is similar in *Das waren Zeiten*, whose cover bears a central image of the temple to Nike erected as a thank offering for the victory at Salamis and facing in that city's direction. The dedication of two pages of this textbook to the Greco-Persian Wars ('Greeks against Persians') is unsurprising in the light of the conservative and classical-humanist emphasis attributed to its publisher, C.C. Buchner. The book justifies its inclusion of the topic by linking it to content area number 3 of the North Rhine-Westphalian core curriculum, 'What ancient people knew about one another', with its sub-field 'Intercultural connections and influences (e.g. Herodotus or Alexander's campaign and empire)'; it titles its text with the headings 'Two worlds collide' (in German the slightly less drastic-sounding *Zwei Welten treffen aufeinander*, literally 'Two worlds meet') and 'Ignorance creates prejudice'. In this spirit, the book, obscuring its pedagogical motivation behind the sources, comments thus on the Greeks: 'They deemed the enormous power held by the great kings to be tyranny submitted to with contemptible "servility" by [their] subjects.'<sup>42</sup> The resonant heading 'What the Greeks were fighting for' encompasses, on a page containing historical materials, a passage from Herodotus depicting a dialogue in Susa between two Spartan messengers and the Persian commander Hydarnes, with the latter waxing lyrical on the benefits of Persian dominion and attempting to convince the Spartans to surrender. These, however, reply with pride: 'Granted, with slavery you are perfectly familiar – but not so with liberty. Does it taste sweet, or not? You have no idea! If you did, you would be advising us to fight in its cause, not with spears, but with battleaxes!'<sup>43</sup> The textbook fails to contextualise the quotation by reminding readers that both Hydarnes and the Spartans were acting in the service of their kings, meaning the statement must have less impact than the same one from the mouths of Athenians, who managed their political destiny without a king. It

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Dieter Brückner and Harald Focke (eds.), *Das waren Zeiten*, vol. 1, Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 2008, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 7 (135), cited in German in Brückner and Focke, *Das waren Zeiten*, 70.

compounds this error by giving pupils the following associated task: ‘In M1 [the relevant quotation], Herodotus describes the opposition between Persians and Greeks. Name it.’<sup>44</sup> The work called for here is essentially one of reproduction, not of critical questioning around whether the Spartans’ – or rather Herodotus’ – attitude might not in fact be readable as presumptuous and self-righteous. Such critique, were it to take place, would make for a real intercultural teaching moment in a way the task set does not.

We see, then, that, despite having fallen from favour politically, the myth of Europe’s deliverance at Marathon and Salamis remains alive, legitimised at times via somewhat illogical reference to the core curriculum.

### **Europe saved in the west? – The battle of Tours and Poitiers (732 CE)**

#### **The facts**

In the year 711, Arab and Berber Muslims had conquered the Visigothic Kingdom via *coup de main* and subsequently, meeting no significant resistance, pushed forward across the Pyrenees, installing themselves in Septimania and particularly in the city of Narbonne. Proceeding from this base, they undertook numerous raids across the region south of the Loire as far as Luxeuil, entering an intermittent alliance with the Duke of Aquitaine against Franconia, which at that time was gaining in strength. In 732, the Moors, led on one of these raids by Abderrahman and heading towards the rich pilgrim destination at the grave of St Martin of Tours, were confronted a short distance from the city by the Frankish *major domus* Charles Martel at the head of a large army. In engaging the Moors, he had ventured outside the Merovingian sphere of power, with the intent of winning an important victory to the end of, first, expanding Franconia to the detriment of Aquitaine, and, second, strengthening his own dynasty’s position.

Researchers have come to varying conclusions on the degree of threat posed by Abderrahman’s campaign.<sup>45</sup> While he will not have been planning to conquer Franconia in its

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Leopold von Ranke remained of the view that the Arabs under ‘Caliph Hisham’ had ‘continued to [strive for] complete world domination’ and that Charles Martel’s significance lay in his having prevented this from coming to pass. Leopold von Ranke, *Weltgeschichte* [1881–1888], *Bd. 8: Die arabische Weltherrschaft und das Reich Karls des Grossen*, Michael Horst (ed.), Vienna/Zurich/Hamburg/ Budapest: Guttenberg-Verlag Christensen & Co., 1928, 303. More equivocally, Schieffer asserted that, ‘on a sober assessment’ of the ‘idea of a decision of world historical import that, back then, saved the Occident from

entirety, he was likely to have been conducting a test of the Frankish capacity to resist him with military means. If Charles Martel had lost the battle as decisively as he in fact won it, the Frankish would have found themselves in an acutely difficult situation.

As it was, the Frankish triumph was not unexpected to the victors; Charles, experienced in battle tactics and unable to afford a defeat, took the time – several days – to accurately assess his adversary. The substantial losses the Arabs sustained in this battle, including Abderrahman himself, were noteworthy to contemporary observers, who nevertheless initially regarded the battle as simply one of Charles' many victories. It is important in our context to additionally observe that the battle was not part of a religious war and that the Frankish did not identify as 'European' in the present-day sense.

In the period that followed, the Arabs undertook several further raids through the southern part of the territory covering today's France, but their expansionist efforts turned overall towards the western Mediterranean, which fact removes any real justification for the claim that Tours and Poitiers represented the deliverance of 'Europe'.<sup>46</sup> The Carolingians, however, subsequently enabled the Frankish force to prevail in the south and eventually succeeded in dethroning the Merovingians.

### **How the sources interpret the facts**

An anonymous Visigoth source from the year 754 describes the battle of Poitiers as a triumph of the 'Europenses' over the 'Arabes'.<sup>47</sup> The exact meaning of 'Europenses', a

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Islam', 'some reservations [were] certainly' appropriate. Rudolf Schieffer, *Die Karolinger*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne: Kohlhammer, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1997, 45. Becher likewise considers it an 'exaggeration' to speak of the 'deliverance of the West'; Matthias Becher, *Karl der Große*, Munich: Beck, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2000, 35. Fried, whose view is similar, additionally emphasises the function of Charles' victory in disrupting the momentum and force of the Arabs' attacks. Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte. Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024*, Berlin: Ullstein, 1998, 251–252. Eberhard Serauky, from a point of view more closely aligned with the Arabs, comes to an entirely different conclusion, claiming the battle did not even represent 'an unequivocal Frankish victory': 'further, this battle changed nothing of import. [...] The slackening interest in Franconia and the growing incapacity to undertake major campaigns arose from the internecine Islamic conflict between the Arabs and the Berbers.' Eberhard Serauky, *Geschichte des Islam. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Wirkung. Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin: edition q, 2003, 230–231.

<sup>46</sup> The call of Arab commanders such as Abderrahman for the banner of the Prophet to be raised over the Vatican was not as far-fetched at the time as it may sound now. In the year 810, the Arabs took Corsica; Sicily was in Arab hands between 827 and 1091; there were many Arab raids between approximately 800 and 1000 along the Italian and Provençal coasts; and the Arabs attacked Rome in 843 and plundered it in 846.

<sup>47</sup> Andreas Fischer, *Karl Martell. Der Beginn karolingischer Herrschaft*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012, 119.

word occurring also in the continuation of Isidore of Seville's chronicle of the Goths<sup>48</sup>, nevertheless remains unclear. Andreas Fischer's supposition is that it refers solely to Franks and Burgundians.<sup>49</sup> A different emphasis is in evidence in the *Annales Mettenses (priors)* of the early eighth century, which depict Charles as the defender of the Roman nation.<sup>50</sup> The *Vita Caroli Magni* of Einhard, finally, was the first work to ascribe to Abderrahman an intent, indeed a plan to achieve general conquest.<sup>51</sup> The second author to continue the Chronicle of Fredegar, who worked under Charles Martel's half-brother Childebrand, was the one to bathe the battle in a religious light, seeing in the Frankish a new Israel.<sup>52</sup> Charles' epithet 'Martellus', by contrast, was not associated with his victory over the Arabs until the eleventh century, from which point the leading interpretation of the battle cast it as part of a religious struggle and Charles as a sort of proto-crusader.<sup>53</sup>

### Interpretations in history textbooks from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany

Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) was primarily responsible for the image of Charles Martel as 'triumphant over Islam'<sup>54</sup> that meets us in history textbooks of the nineteenth century. This period also gave birth to Martel's depiction, evidently not drawn from the sources, as a giant literally swinging a hammer, or an axe. Nineteenth-century German history textbooks, as in the case of Marathon and Salamis, perpetuate a European myth of deliverance in relation to these events, declaring them to have saved not only Franconia, but indeed Europe and the West. Much the same properties attributed to the Persians reoccur here in relation to the Arabs. A textbook from 1885 evokes the image of the Arabs, 'with a monstrous army', crossing the Pyrenees 'to force their religion and their dominion on all Europe'.<sup>55</sup> A book published one year later even considers the

<sup>48</sup> 'Continuatio Hispana', Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi*, vol. 11, Berlin: Weidmann, 1894, 323–368, 361f.

<sup>49</sup> Fischer, *Karl Martell*, 119.

<sup>50</sup> 'Annales Mettenses priores', Bernhard von Simson (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 10*, Hanover/Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1905, 1–98, 25, 27f., 30f.

<sup>51</sup> Einhard, 'Vita Karoli Magni', Oswald Holder-Egger (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 25*, Hanover/Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1911, 4.

<sup>52</sup> Fischer, *Karl Martell*, 192.

<sup>53</sup> Hugo von Flavigny, 'Chronicon', Georg Heinrich Pertz (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores 8*, Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1848, 280–503, 125 f.

<sup>54</sup> Fischer, *Karl Martell*, 120.

<sup>55</sup> ['Von einem hessischen Schulmanne'], *Bilder aus der vaterländischen Geschichte für hessische Schulen*, Mainz: Franz Frey, 1885, 20. Similar assertions appear in French textbooks, for instance here: 'Par la



Fig. 1: Charles Martel in [‘Von einem hessischen Schulmanne’], *Bilder aus der vaterländischen Geschichte für hessische Schulen*. Mainz: Franz Frey 1885, 20<sup>56</sup>

battle as ‘one of the most crucial in the history of the world’.<sup>57</sup> A noteworthy nationalistic rationale for such an assessment makes its appearance in a textbook published in 1892, which credits Charles’ triumph at Poitiers with having saved ‘Christian-German culture from Islam’.<sup>58</sup> The instrumentalising adoption of the victorious Charles by German historians (doing as French ones had understandably done) is clearly in evidence here; the following passage from a textbook of 1839 may serve as an illustrative example: ‘Audaciously, with a death-defying enthusiasm, the Arabs stormed, but immovable as walls, as the North Pole’s eternal ice, the Germans stood’.<sup>59</sup>

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victoire de Tours, Charles Martel sauva non-seulement la Gaule franque, mais encore l’Europe civilisé’, M. L’Abbé Courval, *Histoire de Moyen Age. A L’Usage de la Jeunesse*. Paris: Poussielgue, 1868, 151.

<sup>56</sup> Substantially similar illustrations depicting Charles Martel swinging a ‘hammer’ appeared in French school history textbooks of the time; cf., for example, S. M., *Premières Notions d’Histoire de France. Cours élémentaire*. Lille: Desclée 1901, 33. The illustrations were modelled on paintings from the galleries at Versailles.

<sup>57</sup> Jakob Wychgram, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die mittleren und oberen Klassen höherer Mädchenschulen sowie für Lehrerinnen-Seminare. II. Teil: Mittlere und neuere Geschichte*, Berlin: Hofmann, 1886, 19.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Schillmann, *Schule der Geschichte. 2. Teil: Von Augustus bis zur Reformation. Untertertia*, Berlin: Nicolai, 1892, 24.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Nösselt, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte für Bürger- und Gelehrerschulen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Geschichte. Theil 2*, Leipzig: Ernst Fleischer, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1839, 24. A sample of French school history textbooks revealed no instances of conscious reference to the Franks as ‘French’; the textbooks declared Charles Martel to be France’s saviour all the same, as in Victor Duruy, *Histoire de L’Europe Du Vingtième siècle a la fin du XIII (395–1270)*. Paris: Hachette, 1879, 159: ‘Mais sa plus grande gloire fut d’avoir sauvé la France.’

At this point, the battle's figuration in terms of a holy war is unequivocal: 'At this time, the Arabs, or Moors, had burst into Europe, had conquered Spain and were now seeking to subjugate the Franks in order to destroy Christianity altogether.'<sup>60</sup> A textbook from the same year reassures its reader that Christian Europe did not suffer this fate:

This victory won by Charles in October of the year 732 is one of the sweetest in human history, for it saved Europe's liberty, protected the independent development and constitution of individual nations, and, greater still, it preserved the adherents of the divine religion of Christ from subjection to servitude to the teachings of Mohammed. Ever since then, Charles has been acclaimed as a great hero of Christendom, and he has been given the laudable name of Martel or Hammer, because he unleashed crushing blows on the barbarians at Tours as if with the hammer of God.<sup>61</sup>

Another textbook, issued in 1896, stressed that the victory was the triumph 'not only [of] the Frankish kingdom over Moorish Spain, but [of] Christianity over Islam, the cross over the crescent'.<sup>62</sup>

### **Interpretations in history textbooks for *Gymnasien* in North Rhine-Westphalia, 1990-2013 (prior to introduction of G8 system)**

More recent textbooks are reticent, as in the case of Marathon and Salamis, with interpretations of the battle as 'Europe's deliverance'. Yet here, too, the myth appears to die hard; in many instances, its core, cut off from its significance and meaning, seems to have simply been retained, as if textbook authors were reluctant to part with it, and as if it were self-explanatory. The textbook *Zeitreise*, issued in 2008, may stand as an example, with its discussion of the Carolingian majordomos headed 'Clovis' successors'. It contains this passage: 'At the outset of the eighth century, one of them, Charles Martel, succeeded in demonstrating his strength. In the year 732 he triumphed at Poitiers over Muslim armies of Arabs who had attacked the kingdom from the south.'<sup>63</sup> It is barely conceivable that pupils will be able to perceive in this information any relevance to any-

<sup>60</sup> Carl Wolf, *Kleine vaterländische Geschichte für die Hand der Kinder in Volksschulen*, Langensalza: Hermann Bayer & Söhne, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1883, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Adolf Hechelmann, 'Geschichte des Mittelalters', Theodor B. Welter (ed.), *Weltgeschichte für höhere Lehranstalten*, vol. 2, Münster: Cöpppenrath, 30<sup>th</sup> edition 1883, 49.

<sup>62</sup> Ernst Kornrumpf, *Vaterländische Geschichtsbilder. Ein Hilfsbuch für den Geschichtsunterricht in preussischen Volks- und Bürgerschulen*, Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1896, 27. Textbooks in France contained similar discourses, as here: 'Il comprenait bien d'ailleurs que la cause qu'il allait défendre était la cause de la chrétienté.' G. Bezeze, A. Lesieur, *Récits de L'Histoire de France. Moyen Age*, Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1881, 85.

<sup>63</sup> Sven Christoffer, Helmut Heimbach et al. (eds.), *Zeitreise*, vol. 2, Leipzig: Klett, 2008, 18; a history and geography textbook published in France in 2005 contains strikingly similar wording: 'En 732, l'un d'eux, Charles Martel, arrête une attaque des Arabes / Poitiers.' Rachid Azzouz, *Histoire Géographie Vingtième*, Paris: Magnard, 2005, 46.

thing in particular. Other history textbooks imply that the Arabs were engaged, not in a campaign of conquest, but in a relatively innocuous raid – which may make pupils wonder why Charles Martel sought to stop them with all the forces at his disposal. The ‘deliverance of Europe’ – evidently rejected as a value judgement – is replaced here by the notion that Martel had blocked ‘Arab expansion’. In a display of borderline self-abnegation, some material discusses the battle in virtually the same breath as lauding the superiority of Arab culture. Evidencing a shift in sympathies from the Frankish power to Arab culture, *Forum Geschichte* (2009) asserts:

The expansion of Arab dominion came to a standstill in 732, when Frankish armies, led by Charles Martel, beat [...] the Saracens. [...]

Culture wars? [*Kampf der Kulturen?*]

In al-Andalus, Muslims, Jews and Christians lived side by side under Arab rule. [...] This led to culture and the sciences being much further evolved in al-Andalus than [they were] in the rest of Europe. The major driver of this was Islamic culture, which was more advanced than Occidental [culture] in many areas of philosophy, medicine, astronomy and mathematics.<sup>64</sup>

### **Interpretations in current history textbooks for *Gymnasien* in North Rhine-Westphalia (for G8 system)**

The once-flourishing myth around Charles Martel and the battle of Tours and Poitiers receives much less attention today than do the Athenian triumphs at Marathon and Salamis, and cannot be found at all in most textbooks for G8 *Gymnasium* in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.<sup>65</sup> Westermann, the publisher of *Horizonte*, evidently neglected in this textbook to remove from a map used in previous publications the battle’s date and location, so that it appears there without any further mention or explanation.<sup>66</sup> The only other textbook in our sample which references the event is *Zeiten und Menschen*, as follows: ‘The most prominent *major domus* was Charles Martel, who succeeded in the year 732, at the head of a Frankish army, in repelling the Arab advance into Central Europe.’<sup>67</sup> The noteworthy aspect of this assertion is its implication that, had he not

<sup>64</sup> Hans-Otto Regenhardt (ed.), *Forum Geschichte*, vol. 7, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2009, 98.

<sup>65</sup> A sample of current French textbooks reveals that, from 2012 at the latest, there are textbooks in that country which omit completely any mention of the battle of Tours and Poitiers. Books written specifically for integrated history and geography appear to be leading the way in dropping the topic.

<sup>66</sup> Ulrich Baumgärtner (ed.), *Horizonte* Geschichte Gymnasium (G8) Nordrhein-Westfalen, vol. 1, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2007, 142.

<sup>67</sup> Austermann and Lenzian, *Zeiten und Menschen*, vol. 1, 2008, 200; the wording in a joint Franco-German history textbook is similar: ‘Leur progression en Europe est cependant stoppée, en 732, à la ba-

done so, the Arabs would have got much further into ‘central Europe’, a term the book leaves effectively undefined: it is geographically unfeasible that it refers to central France, so the suggestion remains that Martel had saved Europe, and perhaps Germany.

Where explicit ideas of Europe’s deliverance persist, authors abdicate responsibility for them to the interpretation of unnamed sources and avoid taking up a position themselves. This strategy is apparent, for instance, in *Geschichte und Geschehen*: ‘In 732, at the battle of Poitiers, they [the Arabs] were beaten by the Franks. The Europeans saw this as the Christian Occident having been saved from the Muslims.’

Textbooks, seeking to do justice to the curricular expectation that history teaching render historical culture visible to pupils, frequently highlight and take issue with national myths as such.<sup>68</sup> No such process takes place in the G8 textbooks for North Rhine-Westphalia when it comes to the Charles Martel myth. It does, however, occur in a textbook for non-selective secondary schools in the state of Hesse, *Geschichte entdecken*, published by C.C. Buchner in 2014. The book carries, headed with the question ‘Charles Martel – saviour of the West?’ (*Karl Martell – Retter des Abendlandes?*), an excerpt from a work by the historian Karl Ferdinand Werner:

Did Charles Martel save the Occident at Poitiers? [...] It goes without saying that the forests of northern France were not under threat of long-term conquest; the Arabs were unable to settle there, and they had no wish to do so. [...] The south of France was indeed liberated from the Mohammedans [*sic*], but was subjugated by Charles instead.<sup>69</sup>

Referring to Merovingian Franconia as ‘forests’, thus implicitly characterising the Franks as backwoodsmen with all that suggests, is in itself anything but value-neutral. Further, the assertion that it ‘goes without saying’ that the Arabs would rejected the idea of settling there – why should they have done? - has no basis in the sources. Defining Charles Martel as effectively the occupying power turns the tables completely, implicitly dubbing the Carolingians imperialists whose aggressive striving for expansion was to be repudiated. The task subsequently posed to pupils, ‘Notice how a present-day historian assesses Charles Martel’s victory. What rationale does he present for his evalua-

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taille de Poitiers.’ Rainer Bendick (ed.), *Histoire/Geschichte. L’Europe et le monde de l’Antiquité à 1815*, Stuttgart: Klett & Paris: Nathan, 2011, 90.

<sup>68</sup> Cf., for example, various chapters in this volume.

<sup>69</sup> Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Die Ursprünge Frankreichs bis zum Jahr 1000*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1989, 369.

tion?’, does not call for the exercise of critical judgement, and there is no further material on the page which might aid pupils in coming to their own conclusions. All they are required to do here is to reiterate in silent awe an opinion contrasting with previous interpretations which were at least of comprehensible significance.

We witness here the same phenomenon we came across in relation to Marathon and Salamis: Without the interpretive context of ‘Europe’s deliverance’, that is, if Tours and Poitiers represented nothing more than one of several victories chalked up by a Carolingian majordomo, the entire episode appears as if the textbook could just as well do without it. There is no attempt to critically examine the myth’s former functions, which may have become obsolete in the present.

In general, a trend is noticeable in these current textbooks for the Carolingians, notwithstanding the fact that we may reckon them with some justification among Europe’s founding fathers, to suffer increasing marginalisation, a fate particularly affecting the one for whom, due to his effective rule as uncrowned king, the dynasty is rightly named. It may be that the topic of Charles Martel is too Germanocentric for the present zeitgeist, while the Athenians, heroes of Marathon and Salamis, were at least democrats and, thanks to Herodotus, radiant with the nimbus of Homeric epic, placing them beyond suspicion in the category of the classics. It would seem, however, in today’s climate of widespread fears around a renewed influx of refugees from the Arab world and the ‘creeping Islamisation of Europe’, that the topic of Charles Martel remains unfinished historical business.

### **Conclusion**

If we interpret our findings in their political context, we might pick up on the evident political undesirability, at present, of European boundary-drawing to the end of excluding the ‘foreign’; the European Union, after all, holds its historically unique commitment to peace at the heart of its self-concept. In the past as now, liberty is a core aspect of Europe’s idea of itself, in the spirit of the Enlightenment and, at the latest with the advent of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in a universal sense. With the demise of imperialism and colonialism, and particularly with the rise of globalisation, increased immigration of Muslims, and Islamist terrorism targeting Europe and the West, Europe has found itself faced with a task unparalleled in history thus far, that of

creating truly integrated societies. Today's European population is reluctant to admit the fact that Europe owes its wealth primarily to its bellicose and expansionist past; the world beyond Europe, however, has not forgotten this uncomfortable circumstance. 'We', present-day Europeans, consider ourselves to be reformed characters in contrast to our pre-Enlightenment past. 'Europe' – perhaps more precisely 'Western Europe' – no longer seeks to rule by force, but instead be 'the world power of hearts'.<sup>70</sup>

Have the myths around the 'deliverance of Europe', then, had their day? Alongside those explored in this chapter, there are the myth of the battle of the Catalaunian Fields (in the year 451, against Attila's Huns), the Battle of Lechfeld (955, against the Hungarians), and the repulsion of the Ottomans at Vienna in 1529 and 1683. Any assumption of these myths' obsolescence is likely to be driven by a great deal of wishful thinking, in light of the current explosive situation at Europe's borders. Is there any hope of success in peacefully resolving the Ukrainian conflict or coping with the continuing refugee crisis? In case violence should reignite at the boundaries of Europe or a barbed wire-ringed 'Fortress Europe' become a permanent political reality, the old myths of the continent's defence are being kept in reserve, decontextualised, defused of meaning, yet anything but decommissioned. Whether they, like white dwarves in the firmament of historical consciousness, will radiate their forcefields in empty space for a while before finally disappearing completely from history textbooks, or whether they will rise again in a new political dispensation and shine as radiant stars pointing Europe's way into its future, remains to be seen. It is not for nothing that Jean-Jacques Wunenburger attests to myth the retention of its 'archetypical matrix', even in apparent death, 'on the basis of which the imagination creates, renews and reconstructs stories'.<sup>71</sup> Explicit attempts to deconstruct myths in history textbooks are likelier to boost the creative power of self-generation inherent to myth than to effectively damp it down; it is, after all, the moment of narration that endows the myth with the fascination, and appeal to our psyche, that inspires and sustains its life.

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<sup>70</sup> Romain Kirt, *Die Weltmacht der Herzen. Zukunftsszenarien für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2009.

<sup>71</sup> Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, 'Mytho-phorie. Formen und Transformationen des Mythos' (1944), *Texte zur modernen Mythentheorie*, 290–300, 299.

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Björn Onken

## The myth of Arminius (*Hermann*) in German textbooks between 1800 and 2000

### Introduction

For centuries, many Germans have been taking great pride in the mythic memory of Arminius, alias *Hermann der Cherusker*, giving his story a particularly prominent and special place among the myths of the German nation. As early as the end of the first century CE, the Roman senator Tacitus lauded this Germanic hero as ‘*liberator haud dubie Germaniae*’, that is, ‘doubtless the liberator of Germania’. In Tacitus’ account, the ‘barbarian’ peoples continue to sing Arminius’ praises even at the time of his writing<sup>1</sup>, that is, almost a century after the great battle, in the year 9 CE, in which Arminius led a Germanic contingent to inflict a devastating defeat on a Roman army headed by Quinctilius Varus. In late antiquity, the fame of Arminius and his warriors waned, and both the man himself and the works of Tacitus, in which he received laudatory mentions, had largely been forgotten by the medieval period<sup>2</sup>, with the exception of the extremely dubious theory that Arminius served as the model for the figure of Siegfried von Xanten in the Nibelungen saga.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the humanism of the early modern period and the concomitant search for classical texts to rediscover that Tacitus’ writings re-entered scholarly discourse. A manuscript presumably found in a monastery at Fulda brought his ethnographic work *Germania* to prominence in the mid-fifteenth century. And in a similar fashion, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, one single manuscript from a German monastery enabled the first five volumes of Tacitus’ *Annals*, which contained depictions of battles waged by Arminius, to spread. These two texts, soon joined by further sources from the ancient world<sup>4</sup>, brought the Germanic peoples to scholarly notice once again and inspired considerable interest, especially in Germany, in the struggle against Rome. The eventual upshot of this renewed attention was the emer-

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 2, 88.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher B. Krebs, *Ein gefährliches Buch. Die »Germania« des Tacitus und die Erfindung der Deutschen*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2012, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus Kösters, *Mythos Arminius. Die Varusschlacht und ihre Folgen*, Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2009, 286.

<sup>4</sup> There is a collection of the classical sources in Walther Lutz (ed.), *Varus, Varus! Antike Texte zur Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008.

gence of a German national myth glorifying Arminius and his Germanic warriors as noble forefathers of the contemporary Germans.<sup>5</sup>

Historical and archaeological research has made thorough attempts to reconstruct both the historical events<sup>6</sup> around the Roman-Germanic conflict and the history of their impact.<sup>7</sup> These attempts have included the small-scale studies by Rainer Riemenschneider, Miriam Sénécheau and Thomas Storrer on the depiction of Arminius' battle with Varus in textbooks from Germany<sup>8</sup>; these three studies' limited scope, however, has prohibited them from undertaking more than a marginal engagement with key aspects of the issue.<sup>9</sup> They accurately report the elevation of Arminius and the Germanic tribes to the status of national myth in textbooks issued in Germany between 1871 and 1945, followed by the successive predominance of a demythologised depiction after the Second World War. This finding correlates well with the overall development of nationalistic sentiment in Germany, although closer inspection points us to specific nuances of which we should be aware. Looking back to the early nineteenth century presents us with a fresh perspective on the textbooks of that century's end. In addition to this, extant studies

<sup>5</sup> Kösters, *Arminius*, 33–206.

<sup>6</sup> Most recently Dieter Timpe, 'Die "Varusschlacht" in ihren Kontexten. Eine kritische Nachlese zum Bimillennium 2009', in: *HZ* 294 (2012), 593–652; Boris Dreyer, *Orte der Varuskatastrophe und der römischen Okkupation in Germanien. Der historisch-archäologische Führer*, Darmstadt: Theiss Verlag, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Landesverband Lippe (ed.), *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht. Mythos*, Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag, 2009; Rainer Wiegels (ed.), *Verschlungene Pfade. Neuzeitliche Wege zur Antike*, Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2011; Jonathan Roth, *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht. Jubiläum eines Mythos? Eine kulturanthropologische Fallstudie zur Erinnerungskultur*, Münster: Waxmann, 2012; Ernst Baltrusch (ed.), *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht. Geschichte – Archäologie – Legenden*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012; Christian Heuer, "'Pfad der Zeit" – Versuch einer Archäologie der Varusschlacht', Markus Bernhardt and Björn Onken (eds.), *Wege nach Rom. Das römische Kaiserreich zwischen Geschichte, Erinnerung und Unterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2013, 203–220; Michael Dallapiazza, 'Arminius', in: Peter von Möllendorf et al. (eds.), *Historische Gestalten der Antike. Rezeption in Literatur, Kunst und Musik. Der neue Pauly Supplemente é*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2013, 108–120.

<sup>8</sup> Rainer Riemenschneider, 'Le mythe national de la bataille du Teutoburg dans les manuels scolaires allemands', Michel Reddé and Siegmund von Schnurbein (eds.), *Alésia et la bataille du Teutoburg*, Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2008, 133–152; Miriam Sénécheau, 'Als Arminius frech geworden ... Reportage: Varusschlacht in Schulbüchern', *Archäologie in Deutschland* 26, 3 (2010), 64f.; cf. also Sénécheau, 'Die Germanen sind wieder da. Archäologische, didaktische und gesellschaftspolitische Perspektiven auf ein altes Thema in neuen Lehrwerken', *Archäologische Informationen* 35 (2012), 219–234; Thomas Storrer, 'Deutungsmuster in Schulbüchern beider deutscher Staaten über die nahe beieinander liegenden Jahre 9 und 1944', Bettina Alavi and Jan-Patrick Bauer (eds.), *Geschichtslernen – Innovationen und Reflexionen: Geschichtsdidaktik im Spannungsfeld von theoretischen Zuspitzungen, empirischen Erkundungen, normativen Überlegungen und pragmatischen Wendungen*, Festschrift für Bodo von Borries zum 65. Geburtstag, Kenzingen: Centaurus, 2008, 13–42.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the studies on depictions of the Romans and the Germanic peoples in German textbooks do no more than touch upon the battle; cf. Elisabeth Erdmann, *Die Römerzeit im Selbstverständnis der Franzosen und Deutschen. Lehrpläne und Schulbücher aus der Zeit zwischen 1850 und 1918*, Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1992, 208–212; Dirk Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen. Germanendarstellungen in Schulgeschichtsbüchern von 1871 bis 1945*, Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2013.

have taken insufficient account of developments in academic research into the battle when analysing textbooks. Riemenschnieder and Sénécheau proceed rightly from the premise that textbooks are key indicators of national historical cultures<sup>10</sup>; however, little work has taken place thus far on the textbook production process<sup>11</sup>, which recent studies have found to be determined by inherent logics of which textbook analysis needs to take greater account than is currently the case.<sup>12</sup> These insights have the potential to open the way, via revisiting the battle's depiction in German textbooks, both to the discovery of additional facets to the history of the *Hermann* myth's impact and to a fresh view on the fundamental assessment of textbooks as sources of insights into historical cultures. When selecting textbooks for analysis for this chapter, I took care to include publications that have been in widespread use, as well as identifying specific examples to illustrate the entire spectrum of depictions in textbooks of each sub-period within the era of our interest. This manner of proceeding identifies the study as a contribution to historical textbook research as defined by Bernd Schönemann and Holger Thünemann.<sup>13</sup>

The analysis in this chapter will begin at the outset of the nineteenth century, to the end of identifying traces of the myth's recasting in the Napoleonic period. The section that follows this will attempt to filter out this narrative's mythic elements from its empirically plausible content, a process of significance due not least to the ongoing presence of components of myth in many Germans' idea of the battle at Teutoburg Forest. The chapter will subsequently proceed, on this basis, to analyse textbooks from imperial Germany, the era in which the adulation around Arminius reached its apex, and then textbooks from the Federal Republic of Germany to the year 2000. Mindful of the fact that both the myth itself and the academic consensus on the battle were subject to

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<sup>10</sup> Riemenschnieder, *Le mythe national*, 133; Storrer, *Deutungsmuster*, 13; cf. Bernd Schönemann and Holger Thünemann, *Schulbucharbeit. Das Geschichtslehrbuch in der Unterrichtspraxis*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2010, 21f., and Simone Lässig, 'Wer definiert relevantes Wissen? Schulbücher und ihr gesellschaftlicher Kontext', Eckhardt Fuchs, Joachim Kahlert and Uwe Sandfuchs (eds.), *Schulbuch konkret. Kontexte – Produktion – Unterricht*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2010, 199–218.

<sup>11</sup> Björn Opfer, 'Zwischen Markt, Politik und Wissenschaft. Wie entsteht ein Schulbuch für die Oberstufe?', Martin Clauss and Manfred Seidenfuss (eds.), *Das Bild des Mittelalters in europäischen Schulbüchern*, Berlin: Lit, 2007, 117–124; Wolfgang Menzel, 'Wie schreibe ich ein Schulbuch?', Eckhardt Fuchs, Joachim Kahlert and Uwe Sandfuchs (eds.), *Schulbuch konkret. Kontexte – Produktion – Unterricht*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2010, 219–228.

<sup>12</sup> Sabrina Schmitz-Zerres is currently working on a doctoral thesis on ideas of the future in German textbooks as part of the German Research Foundation (DFG) Research Training Group 1919, 'Precaution, provision, prediction: managing contingency'.

<sup>13</sup> Bernd Schönemann, *Schulbucharbeit*, 22–28; cf. also Etienne Schinkel, 'Schulbuchanalyse', *GWU* 65 (2014), 482–497.

change during the period covered, the analysis takes account of the historical development of each.

### **The *Hermann* myth at the beginning of the nineteenth century**

The sixteenth-century rediscovery of Arminius fitted seamlessly into the surge of nationalism that unfolded in the dawning modern period. The German humanists' concept of 'nation' now leant, more emphatically than it had in the medieval era, on the practice of boundary-drawing to distinguish the national self from others; in the Reformation period, northern German Protestant scholars led the way in drawing such boundaries in order to distance themselves from the Roman-influenced institutions of the papacy and the *Kaiser*. It was in this course that Arminius advanced in the sixteenth century to the status of a national hero, soon given the fictitious German name *Hermann* (resonant of 'Heer-mann', literally 'man of an army') to cleanse him of any Roman traces. Nationality, or its attribution, however, was not the sole or necessarily central point for potential identification produced by the scholarly discourse of the time; others included socio-economic status, religious denomination and regional territory.<sup>14</sup>

The mid-eighteenth century brought change. Around 1740, a number of authors produced plays about Arminius which evidenced their contemporaries' increased interest in this historical figure, one of whose primary associations was with the connection between patriotism and warfare.<sup>15</sup> For all the eighteenth-century discourse around nation was a multi-faceted one and remained semantically equivocal<sup>16</sup>, this period was showing signs of what would later be deemed key characteristics of nineteenth-century modern nationalism, such as the 'sacralisation of the fatherland as the highest legitimising authority, including the demand that one sacrifice one's life for it.'<sup>17</sup> An early German proponent of a modern form of nationalism was an academic schoolteacher (*Gymnasialprofessor*) from Zweibrücken, Johann Valentin Embser (1749-1783), who in 1779 published a polemic against *Die Abgötterei unsers philosophischen Jahrhunderts: Erster Abgott ewiger Frieden*, that is, 'the idolatry of our philosophical century, the first

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<sup>14</sup> Ute Planert, 'Wann beginnt der „moderne“ deutsche Nationalismus? Plädoyer für eine nationale Sattelzeit', Jörg Echternkamp (ed.), *Die Politik der Nation: deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg und Krisen, 1760–1960*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009, 25–59, 35–39.

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Martin Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland. Die deutsche Nation im 18. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000, 91–144.

<sup>16</sup> Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland*, 407f.

<sup>17</sup> Planert, 'Wann beginnt der „moderne“ deutsche Nationalismus?', 53.

idol of which is enduring peace'. Embser's title indicates that his work ran counter to a prevailing tendency in contemporary discourse. The views his book set forth, however, were soon to command a majority, or at least to become capable of so doing. Embser accorded to nationalism a privileged place in the canon of values, true to his belief that 'love of the fatherland, contempt for foreigners, national pride, bravery and patriotism – [were] the primary virtues of the nations'.<sup>18</sup> While Embser did mention Arminius<sup>19</sup>, the Cheruscan leader was absent from his list of heroic captains of their peoples, comprising Gustav Vasa, Frederick of Prussia, and Achilles.<sup>20</sup>

The German experience of the Napoleonic period served to focus the national discourses of the previous century on an idea of the nation as an imagined alliance of battle. The breakup of the Holy Roman Empire, the dissolution of a number of territories, the direct occupation of German regions and the associated hardships brought about by the Continental System, the imposition of levies, and recruitment drives<sup>21</sup> acted to galvanise the emergence of an idea of nation which endowed that nation with the mission of liberating the 'Germans' from French rule. A large number of prominent contemporary intellectuals, such as Heinrich von Kleist, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Ernst Moritz Arndt, Theodor Körner and the textbook author Gabriel Bredow, drew inspiration from a militant form of nationalism in their engagement with Napoleon. Substantial swathes of the population remained unaffected by this zeitgeist during the Napoleonic era itself, but a groundswell of nationalism was becoming apparent<sup>22</sup>; the Prussian military reformists of the time considered that an idea of nation, were it to successfully spread, could mobilise greater military potential than would typically be leveraged in a society based on estates (*Stände*)<sup>23</sup>, and eventually succeeded in gaining the support of the king, who, while he equated the 'fatherland' with Prussia, was not unwilling to

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<sup>18</sup> Johann Valentin Embser, *Die Abgötterei unsers philosophischen Jahrhunderts. Erster Abgott: Ewiger Friede*, Mannheim: Schwan, 1779, 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus und Nationalstaat*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000, 198.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Ute Planert's recommendation in this light is to define a '*Sattelzeit*' (a term originally coined by Reinhard Koselleck to define the period of transition from early modernity to the modern age) of modern nationalism from 1740 to 1830; cf. Planert, 'Wann beginnt der „moderne“ deutsche Nationalismus?', 27.

<sup>23</sup> Heinz Stübig, 'Berenhorst, Bülow und Scharnhorst als Kritiker des preußischen Heeres der nachfrierizanischen Epoche', Peter Baumgart et al. (eds.), *Die preussische Armee zwischen Ancien Régime und Reichsgründung*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008, 107–120, 118.

make tactical use of German nationalism.<sup>24</sup> We cannot correctly term the Wars of Liberation popular wars; this notwithstanding, the discourse around nationalism during this period provided a core for nationalist writings in later nineteenth-century Germany.

The triumphant *Hermann* supplied a blindingly obvious historical model for the Germans' struggle against the French. With his coronation as emperor, Napoleon had quite literally crowned his diverse endeavours to place himself within Roman tradition, which made it easy for his German adversaries to identify him with the Roman invaders. The German nationalists, meanwhile, were pleased to cast themselves as descendants of the Germanic tribes in light of the numerous positive qualities with which Tacitus' *Germania* had endowed them alongside the more barbarian traits. They pinpointed the birth of the German nation at Arminius' forging of an alliance of Germanic peoples, and considered it their mission to restore to this nation its lost unity, that it might regain its historic strength and power. Once Napoleon was defeated, the *Hermann* myth no longer had a direct political use; the ongoing disunited state of Germany, however, continued to fuel the nationalist movement and with it the narrative of triumph in the Teutoberg Forest and the myth arising from it.<sup>25</sup>

Were textbooks a pure reflection of bourgeois historical culture, we would expect those of 1806 to 1814 in Germany to prominently feature the Arminius myth. In fact, they contain little in the way of eulogising text on the Germanic Wars. This circumstance is presumably related to the existence of admirers of Napoleon among the German bourgeoisie<sup>26</sup> and the alliances in place between him and, primarily, the governments of the states comprising the Confederation of the Rhine. Preußen likewise was careful not to provoke the French to all too great an extent once the peace of Tilsit had come into force in 1807.<sup>27</sup> When war against Napoleon broke out in 1814, the long lead times for textbook production made it impossible to bring them quickly into line with the contemporary bellicose rhetoric. Some textbook authors, however, managed to evade the censors and take a distinctly nationalistic tone in their depictions of the battle with Varus. In 1810, Karl Stein (1773-1855), a teacher at the renowned *Cölnisches Gymnasium*

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, *König in Preußens großer Zeit. Friedrich Wilhelm III. der Melancholiker auf dem Thron*, Berlin: Siedler, 1992, 372f.

<sup>25</sup> Andreas Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik. Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen am Beispiel des Hermannsmythos*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995, 111–199.

<sup>26</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009, 169.

<sup>27</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos*, 146f.

in Berlin<sup>28</sup>, published a textbook whose account of the history of Augustus contained the innocuous aside that ‘from the word *imperator* [...] the word *empereur* arose’, thus creating, apparently in all innocence, a link to Napoleon, and subsequently proceeding to explain of the *imperator* Augustus: ‘Under him, the Romans invaded Germany, initially with success. [...] They built many towns and cities [*Städte*] here.’<sup>29</sup> While these statements are unlikely to have upset the French, fifteen pages later on, summing up his discussion of Augustus, Stein tells his reader that ‘once in his time, the Romans were soundly beaten by the Germans.’<sup>30</sup> The authorities could not have objected to this victory being mentioned at this point in the textbook; but in the classroom, a nationalistically inclined teacher could bring the two pieces of text together within a lesson, thus turning the battle waged by the ancient ‘Germans’ [*Deutschen*] into a model for revolt against the *empereur* Napoleon.

The patriotic headmaster Gabriel Gottfried Bredow (1773–1814), of Eutin<sup>31</sup>, chose to publish his 1804 textbook in Altona, near Hamburg, a location where he would have little need to consider French sensibilities due to the fact that Denmark did not become an ally of Napoleon until 1807 and, in any case, did not operate formal censorship procedures<sup>32</sup>. The result was unfettered nationalist pathos such as imbues the following passage:

After this, a stepson of Augustus [Drusus] pushed forward as far as the Elbe, part of the land between the Rhine and the Danube became a Roman province, and all seemed so peaceful that Quinctilius Varus intended to introduce Roman courts and [the Roman] language. This offended the Germans [*die Deutschen*], [they found] especially the rods and axes [carried by Varus’ licitors] [offensive]: They unite under Hermann, lure Varus into the forest, set upon him and the greatest part of the proud Roman army is killed, in the year 9 after Christ’s birth. It is to this victory that Germany owes its freedom and to which we owe the fact that we are German and that the German language is still spoken in the world.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, ‘Das deutsche Schulgeschichtsbuch 1700–1945. Die erste Epoche seiner Gattungsgeschichte im Spiegel der Vorworte. Band 2: Dokumentation der Vorworte und Lehrbücher 1700–1870’, *Eckert. Beiträge* 2013/1, <http://repository.gei.de/handle/11428/185>, Fn. 242, last accessed 16 May 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Stein, *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte für die Jugend. Zunächst zum Gebrauche für Söhne und Töchter aus den gebildeten Ständen und für Schulen*, Berlin: Hayn, 1810, 121.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Bredow was appointed to a university chair at Helmstedt in 1804, and subsequently went to Frankfurt an der Oder (in 1811) and later to Breslau (present-day Wrocław). Cf. Henry A. Smith, ‘Gabriel Gottfried Bredow. Konturen eines Bildes’, Frank Baudach and Günter Häntzschel (eds.), *Johann Heinrich Voß (1751–1826). Beiträge zum Eutiner Symposium im Oktober 1994*, Eutiner Forschungen 5, Eutin: Struve’s Buchdruckerei und Verlag, 1997, 327–346.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Bohn, *Dänische Geschichte*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001, 89.

<sup>33</sup> Gabriel Gottfried Bredow, *Merkwürdige Begebenheiten aus der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte. Für den ersten Unterricht in der Geschichte, besonders für Bürger- und Landschulen*, Altona: Hammerich,

Bredow's work soon found a wide reach, totalling 37 editions by 1880, long after its author's death. The power exerted by the ideas Bredow put into words at as early a stage as the nineteenth century's outset finds reflection, *inter alia*, in an outline of world history from Kempten in southern Bavaria – so almost as far away geographically from Altona as it is possible to get and still remain on German speaking territory – published by a local *Gymnasialprofessor*, Anselm Andreas Kaspar Cammerer, in 1815, soon after Napoleon's fall. This work, which appeared in a total of five editions to 1840, contained the following passage, strikingly similar in wording to Bredow's account:

Now the west of Germania was in line for conquest. The Romans pushed forward as far as the Elbe, built forts and forced the Germans to adopt the Roman language and laws. At this, the Germans' [*der Germanen*] sense of freedom stirred and rose. Hermann or Arminius, son of the Cheruscan prince Segimer, laid traps for the proud Romans, lured them deeper into the country and, in the Teutoburg Forest in the year of our Lord 9, destroyed almost the entire enemy force – a core army of 20,000 men.

It is to this great victory that Germany owes its freedom, and to which we owe the fact that we are German and that the German language is still spoken in the world. It is true that 7 years later (16 AD), the Romans pushed forward again as far as the Weser, and won a victory over the Germans, but as they withdrew, a part of [their] fleet and army was lost. From this time forward, the Romans' attacks on the Germans of these regions ceased.<sup>34</sup>

### **Distinguishing mythic from empirically plausible elements of the *Hermann* narrative**

Any analysis of the Germanic-Roman conflict as a myth must first identify what exactly makes its narrative a myth. I proceed, drawing on the definition of myth at the commencement of this volume, in the assumption that a myth consists in an object, an event or a human figure glorified (to serve the myth's function) on the basis of largely vague, irrational notions (that contravene criteria of *Triftigkeit*, or plausibility) that attains legendary character (via repetition of the narrative).<sup>35</sup> This approach is in line with the fundamental argument, set out in the chapter which proposes this definition, that points to embellished narratives as a key emphasis of this volume and perceives their use for the consolidation of power as characteristic of the political interpretive instrumentalisation

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1804, 52f. The switch to the present tense at 'They unite...' occurs in the German original. One of Bredow's sources is likely to have been Michael Ignaz Schmidt, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Band 1, Ulm: Stettinische Buchhandlung, 1785, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Anselm Andreas Kaspar Cammerer, *Grundriß der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte: für Schulen und zur Selbstbelehrung*, Kempten: Kösel, 1815, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Dudenredaktion, *Das Fremdwörterbuch, Duden*, vol. 5, Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut & F.A. Brockhaus, 9<sup>th</sup> edition 2007, 689.

of myths.<sup>36</sup> Going by this definition, we understand a myth as a narrative which, while more or less acknowledged as ‘true’, proves on closer inspection to be of dubitable plausibility.<sup>37</sup> The analysis of a myth therefore requires the identification of its embellishments and its political implications. This means that, when looking at depictions in textbooks from the early nineteenth century, we can only characterise as mythic those parts of the narrative embellished or overly aggrandised by those writing at the time, that is, those parts which went beyond content recognisable as empirically plausible around the year 1800. It is therefore sensible to analyse the Arminius myth in textbook narratives, not from the vantage point of present-day research, but in line with what the narrative’s contemporaries knew. Until well into the eighteenth century, the authors of ancient Greece and Rome were considered authoritative; accordingly, pre-1800 depictions of the battle against Varus mostly adhered closely to their accounts.<sup>38</sup> The reconstruction of the events that thus emerged was notable for its fidelity to the sources; in our case, this means that the sequence of events outlined by Bredow and Cammerer commands acceptance to this day.<sup>39</sup> In relation to various other facets of the narrative, however, particularly where they involve subjective assessments and interpretations, the historiographical discipline has come to a wide range of conclusions over the decades and centuries<sup>40</sup>, creating fertile ground for the springing up of a myth. The precise location of the battlefield is the subject of debate, as is the historical significance of the event itself.<sup>41</sup> Bredow’s rationale for according the ‘battle of the Teutoburg Forest’ out-

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<sup>36</sup> See p. 12 of this volume.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Kuhlmann and Helmuth Schneider, ‘Die Altertumswissenschaften von Petrarca bis zum 20. Jh.’, Kuhlmann and Schneider (eds.), *Geschichte der Altertumswissenschaften. Biographisches Lexikon. Der Neue Pauly Supplemente* 6, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2012, XV–XLVII, XXX; Karl H. L. Welker, ‘Die Varusschlacht in der Geschichtsschreibung des 18. Jahrhunderts’, Rainer Wiegels (ed.), *Verschlungene Pfade. Neuzeitliche Wege zur Antike*, Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2011, 9–23, 12. A significant example is discussed at *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> There is, however, no solid basis in the sources for the parts of this narrative referring to the Romans’ policies as occupiers. It is highly unlikely that the attempts to introduce ‘the Roman language’ of which Bredow makes generalising mention will actually have taken place.

<sup>40</sup> A concise overview of the issues relating to reconstruction of the events from the sources is in Michael Sommer, *Die Arminiusschlacht. Spurensuche im Teutoburger Wald*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2009, 77–90.

<sup>41</sup> The currently predominant view in the literature is that this victory did not have a decisive influence on the course of the war; cf. Reinhard Wolters, ‘Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald. Varus, Arminius und das römische Germanien’, Ernst Baltrusch (ed.), *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht. Geschichte – Archäologie – Legenden*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012, 3–21, 18. Dieter Timpe calls the battle against Varus an ‘impactful event’ (*‘einschneidendes Ereignis’*), an accurate assessment in light of the ensuing Roman retreat to the far side of the Rhine, yet one which leaves open the matter of its decisiveness or otherwise to the war; cf. Timpe, *Varusschlacht*, 648. The most recent work to argue for a decisive influence is Sommer, *Arminiusschlacht*, 168.

standing importance is the ‘Romans’ own account’<sup>42</sup>, which is presumably a reference to Tacitus’ assertions on Arminius as cited above and to further notes to be found in the ancient classics.<sup>43</sup> Bredow himself, who in 1799 had evidently yet to be caught up in the rapture of nationalist pathos, provides proof that divergent views were not unthinkable at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. In his *Handbuch zur Alten Geschichte*, Bredow assigned considerably lesser impact to the Roman defeat, ascribing greater significance to the victory of Germanicus, who, in Bredow’s account, had beaten Arminius, buried the mortal remains of the Romans who had fallen under Varus, and enjoyed popularity among his soldiers and among citizens, eventually being summoned back to Rome at the behest of the jealous Tiberius.<sup>44</sup>

It is not least Tacitus whose paean to Arminius does not leave out his later defeats at the hands of Germanicus; and it is Tacitus’ account that locates the real reason for the cessation of the Romans’ Germanic campaigns in Rome itself. Tacitus claims that Tiberius recalled Germanicus on the grounds that he had taken sufficient revenge and that the continual losses among the Romans were a dreadful business, adding that the Germanic tribes should be left to their internecine feuds. We are told by Tacitus that Germanicus obeyed although he ‘knew that this was all hypocrisy, and that through envy he was torn away from a harvest of ripe glory.’<sup>45</sup> Tacitus regards Arminius as Germania’s liberator not because of his victory in the year 9 CE, but due to his tireless resistance thereafter, whose eventual success benefited from the political scheming in Rome.<sup>46</sup>

The first overly glorifying and therefore mythical element of Bredow’s account, then, is the claim that Arminius’ victory decided the course of the war. Compelling evidence of the myth’s grip on authors appears in Cammerer, who, confusingly, tells of a Roman victory subsequent to the allegedly decisive Germanic triumph. Taking Cammerer at his word, we must ascribe the Germans’ attainment of their liberty not to the victory in the

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<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Gottfried Bredow, *Umständlichere Erzählung der wichtigeren Begebenheiten aus der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte. Für den ersten Unterricht in der Geschichte, besonders für Bürger- und Landschulen*, Altona: Hammerich, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1806, 292.

<sup>43</sup> Sueton, *Augustus* 23, 2; Florus, *Geschichte*, 2, 30.

<sup>44</sup> Gabriel Gottfried Bredow, *Handbuch der alten Geschichte*, Altona: Hammerich, 1799, 577.

<sup>45</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 2, 26 (Oxford: Talboys, 1839).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Wolters, *Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*, 18.

Teutoburg Forest, but in fact to Roman losses on the retreat, of which we hear no details in Cammerer's account, with classical sources citing a further battle and a storm surge.<sup>47</sup>

A second mythic component of Bredow's narration is the romanticising equation of the Germanic warriors in the Varus confrontation with 'Germans', closely associated with his belief that German culture would not have come to fruition without Arminius' heroic endeavour. In uniting the originary strength and power of the German nation, Arminius, the rebel leader, attains the status of first German in history, and that history bestows on him the fictitious German name of *Hermann*.<sup>48</sup>

The most evident conflict between this element of the myth and empirical plausibility emerges from the terms *Deutsche* and *Germanen*. The difficulty of identifying the first *Deutsche* in history reveals itself in the circumstance that, ever since modern German nationalism came into being, the debate has raged over when precisely the Frankish became a German empire, with proposed dates ranging from the mid-ninth to the commencement of the twelfth century. None of these dates has enabled the creation of a direct, unbroken line of continuity between 'the Germans' and the ancient Germanic tribes.<sup>49</sup> *Germanen* is more problematic yet. Early modern authors aligned themselves with the writers of imperial Rome, who termed *Germani* the tribes living on the east of the Rhine, including some on its western bank, without any precise knowledge of these populations. Caesar used the criterion of language to distinguish between the Germanic tribes and the Celts, unaware in so doing that the territories of linguistically related peoples covered a much greater area than that in which he assumed the *Germani* to live. As early as late antiquity, the catch-all term *Germani* had fallen into general disuse among the Romans, who instead referred to the region's peoples using more specific names, such as Alemanni, Franks and Goths<sup>50</sup>; the lack of sources indicative of the existence of a sense of community or identity among the *Germani* fits with this practice.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 1, 64–70.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. additionally, on the myth surrounding the figure of Arminius, Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 139–141.

<sup>49</sup> Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Reich – Volk – Nation. Die Entstehung des deutschen Reiches und der deutschen Nation im Mittelalter', Almut Bues and Rex Rexheuser (eds.), *Mittelalterliche nationes – neuzeitliche Nationen. Probleme der Nationenbildung in Europa* (Quellen und Studien 2), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995, 73–102, 87f., available online at [https://www.perspectivia.net/receive/ploneimport\\_mods\\_00011586](https://www.perspectivia.net/receive/ploneimport_mods_00011586), last accessed 16 May 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Pohl, 'Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert – Identifikationen und Abgrenzungen', Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer and Dietrich Hakelberg (eds.), *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung 'germanisch-deutsch'* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 34), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 163–182, 170–174.

<sup>51</sup> Bruno Bleckmann, *Die Germanen*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009, 14 f.

The archaeology of the early modern period permitted only very vague ideas of who the Germanic tribes were. In the nineteenth century, the discipline of pre- and ancient history had yet to professionalise; it was not until 1902 that Berlin's university acquired its first – extraordinary – chair in German archaeology, whose inaugural incumbent was Gustaf Kossina. This was a period of the predominance of nationalistic ideologies in research into prehistory in most areas of Europe, which meant that 'ethnic' interpretations of finds fitted seamlessly into the discourse.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Kossina endeavoured to typify specific groups of finds as 'Germanic' and to identify archaeological cultural regions with defined boundaries which, in his reading, had been home to culturally and anthropologically homogeneous populations<sup>53</sup>, an approach which, while not without its detractors<sup>54</sup>, also had numerous advocates.<sup>55</sup> In the course of the twentieth century's second half, the superiority of the sceptics' arguments become apparent; the finds to date do not permit the unequivocal definition of a 'Germanic' culture.<sup>56</sup> What 'emerges', as Walter Pohl observes, is that 'the concept of *Germanen* [...] has in every age been misleading and ridden with contradictions.'<sup>57</sup> The principal reason for the term's continued use today is its long-standing tradition.

Alongside matters of terminology, other considerations militate against the equation of *Germanen* with Germans, an equation whose origins lie in the humanist scholars of Central Europe who wished to claim for themselves a noble and glorious past by adopting as their ancient ancestors the tribes of Tacitus' *Germania*. As late as the eighteenth century, the assumption that the origins of *Germanen* and those of Germans were inti-

<sup>52</sup> Sebastian Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie. Geschichte, Grundlagen und Alternativen* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 42), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 24f.; Bruce Trigger, *History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>53</sup> Heinz Grünert, *Gustaf Kossina (1858–1931). Vom Germanisten zum Prähistoriker. Ein Wissenschaftler im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2002, 71–74.

<sup>54</sup> Grünert, *Gustaf Kossina*, 115–121; Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 97.

<sup>55</sup> Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 86f.

<sup>56</sup> Claus von Carnap Bornheim, 'Hans Jürgen Eggers und der Weg aus der Sackgasse der ethnischen Deutung', Heiko Steuer (ed.), *Eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft. Deutsche Prähistoriker zwischen 1900 und 1995* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 29), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001, 173–198; Heiko Steuer, 'Das völkisch Germanische in der deutschen Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung. Zeitgeist und Kontinuitäten', Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer and Dietrich Hakelberg (eds.), *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung 'germanisch-deutsch'* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 34), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 357–502.

<sup>57</sup> Pohl, *Germanenbegriff*, 177; Pohl, *Die Germanen*, Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte 57, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004, 1–7; Bleckmann, *Die Germanen*, 15–41; Meinhard-Wilhelm Schulz, 'Sind die Germanen nur eine Fiktion?', *Geschichte für heute* 2, 4 (2009), 15–30, 24.

mately related had by no means achieved general acknowledgement as valid<sup>58</sup>; it was the rise of German nationalism at the outset of the nineteenth century that elevated the *Germanen* to permanent prime status among the Germans' historical forefathers. A speech given by Ernst Moritz Arndt on 13 July 1807 may serve to illustrate the rationale behind this ascription:

*Germanen*, what a name, and what a people! Many more are alive today; we are not the only ones with honourable claim to the title. The Scandinavians on the islands and peninsulas, most of the British, the French, the Spanish, the Italians – all the principal, most educated and most noble nations of Europe stem from them or are mixed with their heritage. But we men of the German tongue, between the Alps, the Rhine, the Vistula and the North Sea, we inhabit the old heartland of the *Germanen*, we speak their language.<sup>59</sup>

The use of language as the key criterion for identification with a specific nation was additionally able to draw on the notion that the Germans, while also possessing Roman, Celtic and Slavic roots, were predominantly Germanic. Conversely, in German nationalists' view, the predominance of Romanic language in the interaction between the Franks and the indigenous population of western Europe was an indicator of the substantial loss of Germanic identity in these regions and hence the rationale for identifying the French more closely with the Romans.

Yet less empirical plausibility is apparent in the identification of the Germanic men who fought against Varus with 'the Germans' than in the more general equation of 'Germans' and *Germanen*. This former identification pushes the myth virtually to its limits; for the classics tell us effectively at first glance that not even all the Germanic tribes living between the Rhine and the Elbe had united behind Arminius.<sup>60</sup> In addition to this, some of the descendants of those who fought the battle left their homelands in the Migration Period, when the Lombards crossed present-day Lower Saxony on their southward journey and, soon thereafter, large numbers of Saxons departed for England. Charlemagne's Saxon Wars claimed numerous victims among those who had remained behind, killed in battle, mass executions and deportations, while Frankish colonists arrived.<sup>61</sup> It is to be expected that the population of northern Germany around the year

<sup>58</sup> Ingo Wiwjorra, *Der Germanenmythos. Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006, 56.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>60</sup> The Cheruscan prince Segestes, for example, betrayed his daughter, Arminius' pregnant wife, to the Romans, enabling Germanicus to take her prisoner; cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 1, 57.

<sup>61</sup> Hans Jürgen Nitz, 'Historische Kolonisation und Plansiedlung in Deutschland', Nitz, *Ausgewählte Arbeiten*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1994, 66–76.

1800 included people descended from Arminius' Germanic force; yet it is doubtful, and will have been even to those alive two hundred years ago, that they would have been in the majority. However, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that researchers gave a definitive answer in this matter.

The mythic embellishment of the *Hermann* narrative, then, consists in an overestimation of the battle's military and political significance and in the idea of a direct line of ancestry running from the Germanic warriors to the later Germans, turning the figure of *Hermann* into the putative deliverer of German culture and father of the German nation, an idol ripe for political instrumentalisation. The depth of this myth's roots in the German collective memory, even today, in the early twenty-first century, is apparent in the public debate which arose in 2006 around an ambiguous comment made by the director of Berlin's German Historical Museum to the effect that the battle against Varus was the 'Big Bang of German history'.<sup>62</sup> The highly popular books and television programmes produced by Peter Arens from the history unit of the German public service television broadcaster ZDF also currently feature much talk of the close connection between the *Germanen* and the Germans<sup>63</sup>, with academic backing from Alexander Demandt<sup>64</sup>, whose historian colleagues, however, are reluctant to concur with his views. The media response to the conference on myths held in Braunschweig from which this volume emerged bears most eloquent witness to the profound public interest and passion this topic continues to raise in present-day Germany.<sup>65</sup>

### **The *Hermann* myth in German textbooks, 1871-1945**

Andreas Dörner has detailed the way in which the *Hermann* narrative became the key founding myth of the new German *Reich*, one indicator of which was the pomp and circumstance of the celebration held in 1875 for the new monument to the battle, located near the town of Detmold; *Kaiser* Wilhelm I was in attendance.<sup>66</sup> In view of the rever-

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<sup>62</sup> Hans Ottomeyer, 'Die Erfindung der deutschen Nation. Eine europäische Geschichte', Landesverband Lippe (ed.), *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht. Mythos*, Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag, 2009, 140–148.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Arens, *Kampf um Germanien: Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*, Frankfurt: Eichborn Verlag, 2008, 24–33; Peter Arens and Stefan Brauburger, *Die Deutschlandsaga: Woher wir kommen. Wovon wir träumen. Wer wir sind*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 2014, 49f.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander Demandt, *Über die Deutschen – eine kleine Kulturgeschichte der Deutschen*, Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 2007, 29.

<sup>65</sup> Examples are: [http://www.focus.de/familie/schule/schulen-wenn-der-ur-deutsche-nichtur-deutsch-ist\\_id\\_4323605.html](http://www.focus.de/familie/schule/schulen-wenn-der-ur-deutsche-nichtur-deutsch-ist_id_4323605.html), last accessed 16 May 2019; *Braunschweiger Zeitung*, 6 December 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos*, 155; Kösters, *Mythos Arminius*, 242; among the authors who diverge from this perspective, perceiving a decline in the *Hermann* myth's significance at the end of the nineteenth

ence surrounding *Hermann* and his political uses in the service of identity formation in the new state, it is, at least initially, a matter of surprise that the textbooks of the *Kaiserreich* fail to canonise the mythic elements of the narrative; instead, they contain a wide variety of accounts. From 1880 onwards, the space devoted to the Germanic peoples grew<sup>67</sup> and references to them as *Deutsche* were not rare occurrences<sup>68</sup>; alongside them, however, stood more muted depictions which restricted themselves to identifying the Germanic peoples as the Germans' ancestors<sup>69</sup> – a connection implicitly present not least in the rather marginal role taken by the former in almost all textbooks' chapters on the ancient world, giving way to more detailed depictions at the commencement of the succeeding units on German history.<sup>70</sup>

While some textbooks of imperial Germany do glorify the battle of the Teutoburg Forest<sup>71</sup>, numerous more do not develop to any great extent the myth of a decisive struggle.<sup>72</sup> Germanicus' campaigns find frequent mention, occasionally interpreted as a renewed Roman attempt at the conquest of Germania which was not without realistic prospect of success. A textbook by Joseph Dahmen is unequivocal in its repudiation of the

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century, are Reinhard Wolters, *Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2009, 193 f.; Michael Sommer, *Arminiuschlacht*, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Erdmann, *Römerzeit*, 201.

<sup>68</sup> Examples include: Immanuel Frohnmeyer, *Leitfaden der Geschichte für die unteren und mittleren Klassen höherer Lehranstalten*, Stuttgart: Verlag von Carl Krabbe, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1892, 63; Adolf Hechelmann, *Welters Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte für höhere Lehranstalten, Erster Teil: Geschichte des Altertums*, Münster: Verlag der Coppenrathschen Buch- & Kunsthandlung, 40<sup>th</sup> edition 1894, 219f.; Ludwig Kahn Meyer and Hermann Schulze, *Anschaulich- ausführliches Realienbuch. Für einfache Schulverhältnisse*, Ausgabe C, Bielefeld, Leipzig: Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 22<sup>nd</sup> edition 1899, 2; David Müller, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes in kurzgefaßter Darstellung zum Gebrauch an höheren Unterrichtsanstalten und zur Selbstbelehrung*, Berlin: Verlag von Franz Vahlen, 8<sup>th</sup> edition carried out by Rudolf Lange 1902, 14; Jakob Carl Andrä, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für höhere Mädchenschulen. Zweiter Teil: Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Leipzig: R. Voigtländers Verlag, 8<sup>th</sup> edition 1907, 8f. Cf. Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 137; other forms of depiction are not discussed here.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Dahmen, *Leitfaden der Geschichte für höhere Mädchenschulen und Lehrerinnenseminare*, Erster Teil, Leipzig: Ferdinand Hirt und Sohn, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1900, 91–106; Wilhelm Martens, *Leitfaden der Geschichte für die mittleren Klassen höherer Lehranstalten, Band 2. Geschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Hanover: Verlag von Manz und Lange, 7<sup>th</sup> edition 1908, 1–6; Friedrich Neubauer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für höhere Lehranstalten, Teil II, 1 (Geschichte des Mittelalters)*, Halle an der Saale: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 19<sup>th</sup> edition, nos. 127,000–128,000, 1913, 1–8.

<sup>70</sup> Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 283.

<sup>71</sup> Kahn Meyer and Schulze, *Realienbuch*, 2; Gottfried Eckertz, *Hilfsbuch für den Unterricht in der deutschen Geschichte*, Mainz: C. G. Kunze's Nachfolger, 7<sup>th</sup> edition 1877, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Andrä, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte*, 9; Hans Stich, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die oberen Klassen der Gymnasien, I. Teil: Das Altertum*, Bamberg: C. C. Buchners Verlag, 6<sup>th</sup> edition 1910, 220; Wilhelm Martens, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die oberen Klassen höherer Lehranstalten*, Hanover: Verlag von Manz & Lange, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1901, 191; Friedrich Neubauer, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für höhere Lehranstalten, III. Teil*, Halle an der Saale: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 19<sup>th</sup> edition 1912, 175; David Müller, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes in kurzgefaßter Darstellung zum Gebrauch an höheren Unterrichtsanstalten und zur Selbstbelehrung*, Berlin: Verlag von Franz Vahlen, 8. Auflage carried out by Rudolf Lange 1902, 14; Friedrich Junge, *Leitfaden für den Geschichtsunterricht in Real-, höheren Bürger- und Mädchenschulen*, Berlin: Verlag von Franz Vahlen, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 1907, 81.

battle's decisive significance; in its account, 'Germanicus [considered he would] need another year [...] to complete Germania's subjugation. But Tiberius [...] decreed that the Rhine was to remain the boundary between the Roman Empire and Germania.'<sup>73</sup>

A degree of distance from the myth expresses itself in the inconsistency with which textbooks, for all they laud the victor of the battle, use the name *Hermann* (cf. Welter, Kahnmeyer/Schulze). Some authors, faithful to classical tradition, stick to the name of Arminius (Neubauer, Müller, Frohnmeyer), which on occasion is Germanised to Armin (Stich, Dahmen, Andrä, Martens). It is evident, then, that although the historical culture of the time would lead one to expect greater resonance and presence for the *Hermann* myth, the textbooks of the *Kaiserreich* appear to fundamentally consider the battle's significance as relative, they do not use the name 'Hermann' with any regularity, and they do not consistently propose direct links between the Germanic tribes and the Germans. Closer study of this aspect of the topic doubtless promises to turn up further fascinating insights.

In establishing these facts, we will do well to remember that historiography made great strides towards transformation into an academic discipline in the course of the nineteenth century and that accounts of the Germanic-Roman conflict emerged in this context that provided academic evidence to corroborate less exalted and more down-to-earth views of the battle. In 1883, Leopold von Ranke, a highly acclaimed historian of his time, published a volume on the history of the Roman emperors that attributed the Germanic tribes' retention of their liberty to political considerations undertaken by Tiberius<sup>74</sup>; the influential historian and classicist Theodor Mommsen, in the fifth volume, published in 1885, of his widely-read *Römische Geschichte*, likewise cut the battle's significance down to size.<sup>75</sup> Although teachers at late nineteenth-century German higher

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<sup>73</sup> Dahmen, *Leitfaden der Geschichte*, 95; cf. also Hechelmann, *Welters Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte*, 339.

<sup>74</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, 3. *Theil. Das altrömische Kaisertum*, 1. *Abtheilung*, Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1883, 31.

<sup>75</sup> Stefan Rebenich: 'Die Urgeschichte unseres Vaterlandes – Theodor Mommsen, die Reichslimeskommission und die Konstruktion der deutschen Nationalgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert', Michel Reddé and Siegmund von Schnurbein (eds.), *Alésia et la bataille du Teutoburg* (Beihefte zur Francia 66), Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2008, 105–120. As late as 1871, however, Mommsen had hailed the battle as a 'turning point in world history'; cf. Theodor Mommsen, 'Die germanische Politik des Augustus', Mommsen, *Reden und Aufsätze*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1905, 316–343, 341. Another voice highly critical of Arminius is Friedrich Koepp, *Die Römer in Deutschland*, Bielefeld, Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1912, 24–26. Austrian textbooks likewise depict the wars between the Germanic tribes and the Romans in a more factual tone than does Bredow; cf. Elisabeth Monyk, *Zwischen Barbarenklischee und Germanenmythos. Eine Analyse österreichischer Geschichtslehrbücher zwischen 1891 und 1945*,

schooling establishments generally held affirmative views on their country's united, monarchical status, they also regarded themselves as academics and rejected the notion of subjecting what took place in the history classroom to political or societal strictures.<sup>76</sup> The foundation of the *Kaiserreich* appears, in addition to this, to have marked a shift in textbook production practices from a fundamentally 'Christian-Germanic' attitude, acquired in the wake of the Napoleonic period, on the part of the authors to a greater sense of commitment to academic and scientific principles.<sup>77</sup> At this time, textbook production was becoming an increasingly professional operation; a number of publishers whose repertoires included academic titles, giving them close connections to the research world, earned themselves solidly established places in the textbook market.<sup>78</sup> In this way, the support in academia for a more cautious, less ebulliently enthusiastic assessment of the battle against Varus developed an impact on history textbooks and the history classroom, although it would be a bridge too far to view in this a general process of demythologisation, the capacity for which nineteenth-century academic research had yet to attain.

The Weimar Republic saw the transmutation of the *Hermann* narrative from a myth of origin to a myth of deliverance, a process which may have engendered a concomitant shift in emphasis among the mythic elements in textbook accounts, but is unlikely to have brought about their fundamental change<sup>79</sup>; exploring this further is beyond this

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Vienna: Lit, 2006, 291. An account after the myth's own heart appears in Gottlob Egelhaaf, 'Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Walde', *Deutsche Rundschau* 140 (1909), 409–423.

<sup>76</sup> Joachim Rohlfes, 'Deutscher Geschichtsunterricht im 19. Jahrhundert', *GWU* 55 (2004), 382–400, 395; Björn Onken, 'Die athenische Demokratie in Schulbüchern des kaiserlichen Deutschlands unter Wilhelm II.', Dagmar Bussiek and Simona Göbel (eds.), *Kultur, Politik und Öffentlichkeit. Festschrift für Jens Flemming*, Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2009, 215–229, 218. We are unable to identify in relation to the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest the operation of the process, observed as a general phenomenon in the history classroom by Barbara Hanke, by which national/patriotic objectives overshadow and eclipse the principle of good academic practice. Cf. Barbara Hanke, *Geschichtskultur an höheren Schulen von der Wilhelminischen Ära bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg. Das Beispiel Westfalen*, Berlin: Lit, 2011, 39f.

<sup>77</sup> Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 48–63.

<sup>78</sup> Georg Jäger, 'Der Schulbuchverlag', Jäger (ed.), *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Das Kaiserreich 1871–1918*, Teil 2, Frankfurt am Main: MVB Marketing- und Verlagsservice des Buchhandels, 2003, 62–102, 79–84; Thomas Keiderling, 'Der Schulbuchverleger und sein Autor. Zu Spezialisierungs- und Professionalisierungstendenzen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', Heinz-Werner Wollersheim et al. (eds.), *Die Rolle von Schulbüchern für Identifikationsprozesse in historischer Perspektive*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002, 87–95, 95; Volker Titel, 'Die Marktsituation des Schulbuchhandels im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', Wollersheim, *Identifikationsprozesse*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002, 71–86.

<sup>79</sup> Riemenschneider perceives continuity in the myth's depiction, although he has previously identified a strong association between imperial Germany and nationalistic narratives; cf. Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 137. Changes in the portrayal of the Germanic peoples are certainly in evidence, but do

chapter's remit. The National Socialists considered the myth a tradition useful for reinforcing a German nationalist mindset and amenable to a fusion with their racial ideology.<sup>80</sup> Some leading Nazi figures, such as Heinrich Himmler, promoted a downright Germanic cult; the belief spread, including into textbooks, that these peoples represented the origin of the European civilisations.<sup>81</sup> This said, National Socialist propaganda did not accord the myth a central role. The key importance of Nordic elements in his racial ideology notwithstanding, Hitler prized ancient Greece and Rome more highly than Germany's early historic population. From 1936 onwards, moreover, the Axis with Italy prohibited any all-too-elaborate remembrance of the battles against the Romans.<sup>82</sup> Hitler's lukewarm attitude to the myth even allowed for the emergence of less strongly Germanophile voices; *Epochen deutscher Geschichte*, a history book written by the Tübingen-based professor Johannes Haller, a man well-disposed towards the Nazi regime, and first published in 1922, saw a number of new editions in the years after 1933, despite Haller's detailed explanation that he was commencing with the Middle Ages because he did not consider the Germanic peoples to be part of German history.<sup>83</sup> Similar statements appear in the first volume, issued in 1934, of *Deutsche Geschichte*, by the self-supporting scholar Johannes Bühler.<sup>84</sup> Such tendencies did not gain predominance in the discourse to 1945.

### The Arminius myth in post-1945 German textbooks

The turning point of 1945 brought about a profound caesura in German perceptions of the battle against Varus, as traditional nationalism, in the wake of its shattering abuse by the Nazis, lost its previous function as the foundation of German collective identity.<sup>85</sup> German governments post-1945 no longer had any call for obsolete myths of nation, such as that around *Hermann*. The young Federal Republic's political leaders located themselves in a 'Christian Occident' which built the country a bridge to the democratic Western world without forcing its power elites to renounce traditional conservative val-

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not appear to have a decisive impact on the depiction of the battle with Varus. Cf. Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 101–140.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Sievertsen, *Die Deutschen und ihre Germanen*, 162–189.

<sup>82</sup> Johann Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus und die Antike*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2014, 81–85.

<sup>83</sup> Johannes Haller, *Epochen der deutschen Geschichte*, new edition, nos. 62–67,000, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1941, 11–13.

<sup>84</sup> Johannes Bühler, *Deutsche Geschichte. Urzeit, Bauerntum und Aristokratie bis um 1100*, Berlin, Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1934, 3f.

<sup>85</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, 'Nationalismus, Nationalstaat und nationale Frage in Deutschland seit 1945', Winkler and Hartmut Kaelble (eds.), *Nationalismus – Nationalitäten – Supranationalität*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993, 12–33, here: 15.

ues completely.<sup>86</sup> In light of this shift, research on perceptions of the myth frequently identifies a ‘break in continuity’ initiating the period after 1945.<sup>87</sup> In a contrasting view, Volker Losemann has pointed to continuities in both academic and popular historical culture.<sup>88</sup> Examination of the period’s textbooks appears to favour Losemann<sup>89</sup>; pupils continued to learn about the battle, as an event in Roman history, and the change of direction which rang in the historical policy of the new Federal Republic is much less visible in textbooks – at least as far as the Arminius myth is concerned – than the idea of a ‘break in continuity’ might lead one to expect. Notwithstanding the general eschewing of nationalistic pathos and of direct equation between the Germanic peoples and the Germans, and the fact that the notion of direct lines of ancestry running from the former to the latter largely remained unspoken in this period<sup>90</sup>, it is not possible to perceive a true paradigm shift in this respect, at least not initially. None of the textbooks from the 1950s analysed for this chapter explicitly disavows the myth, in contrast to the approach taken before the 1945 caesura by Haller and Bühler, who were well aware that most readers would assume a close association between *Germanen* and Germans by virtue of the weight of tradition and of putative evidence of geographical and linguistic continuity.

Alongside relatively plain and factual depictions<sup>91</sup>, we still find, in some textbooks that were in widespread use in the Federal Republic’s early years, assessments of the battle as having saved Germanic culture from Romanisation. An example is found in *Ges-*

<sup>86</sup> Axel Schildt, ‘Das “christliche Abendland” als Zentrum politischer Integration in der Frühzeit der Ära Adenauer’, Tilman Mayer (ed.), *Medienmacht und Öffentlichkeit in der Ära Adenauer*, Bonn: Bouvier, 2009, 39–54.

<sup>87</sup> Wolters, *Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald*, 198f.; Dörner, *Politischer Mythos*, 362; Sénécheau, *Als Arminius frech geworden*, 64.

<sup>88</sup> Losemann, *Denkmäler, völkische Bewegung*, 258. A further representative of this tendency is Hans Erich Stier, who had taken up a chair in ancient history in Münster in 1936 and continued to advance nationalistic views after 1945; see Hans Erich Stier, *Deutsche Geschichte im Rahmen der Weltgeschichte*, Berlin/Darmstadt/Vienna: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1958; Hans Erich Stier, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Peter Funke and Gustav Adolf Lehmann, Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1979.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. also Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 146.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Benedikt Nett, *Aus deutscher Vergangenheit. Schülerarbeitsbuch*, Donauwörth: Verlag Ludwig Auer, 1952, 18. The book’s authorial text consistently uses the term *Germanen*, but a pupil task includes the statement: ‘Armin the Cheruscan (Hermann) is the first great German whose name still remains known today.’ Cf. additionally Wolfgang Hug, *Geschichtliche Weltkunde 1*, Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1975 (first edition: 1974), 84. We should avoid setting too much store by the title of one of its chapters, ‘*Römer in Deutschland*’, as cited in Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 138. The reference may simply be geographical in nature, as in a number of more recent publications of the same name; cf. Andreas Thiel, *Die Römer in Deutschland*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Karl Watermann (ed.), *Maier-Schirmeyer Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die Oberstufe höherer Schulen, Bd. 1: Aus der alten Welt*, Bonn: Verlag Johannes Borgmeyer, 1951, 135.

*chichtlicher Unterrichtswerk*, authored by Robert Hermann Tenbrock and Hans Erich Stier:

In the late autumn of the year 9 AD, this man [Armin] succeeded, in the Teutoburg Forest (presumably in the area south of Pymont), in the course of a three-day battle, in not [simply] beating, but destroying three elite legions under the command of Varus. The forces of Italy were unable to replace this army of veterans, despite the suppression of the Pannonian revolt shortly before this. This meant that Augustus was forced to abandon the front at the Elbe and focus on the Rhine-Danube line, which was more difficult to defend. The Rhine regions saw the stationing of the largest number of Roman troops in the empire, which substantially contributed to its flourishing. But Germania remained free and Germanic tradition was preserved as an independent entity alongside the Roman world. After Augustus' death, the crown prince Germanicus, son of Drusus, strove in vain, in three campaigns against Armin, to reverse the decisively cast fortunes of the year 9.<sup>92</sup>

In light of this depiction, a belief in its fundamental mythic basis narrative<sup>93</sup>, that is, that the *Germanen* were the Germans' forefathers – a notion left implicit here, but widespread at the time - suffices to reactivate the full effect of the myth of deliverance through victory in the year 9 CE.

The import is similar in one of the most successful textbooks of the 1950s and 1960s:

Through their triumph in the Teutoburg Forest, the *Germanen* escaped the fate of Romanisation and were able to continue developing their own character. However, they now found themselves without an incentive to engage with a higher culture, which delayed their ascent to global historical significance.<sup>94</sup>

What is different, and notable as an indicator of a perspectival shift, here is the idea that Romanisation might have brought about civilisatory progress.<sup>95</sup> A little prior to this quotation, another change occurs in the depiction of the Roman campaigns as driven, not by the desire for conquest, but by Augustus' wish to 'secure [the] borders' of the empire.<sup>96</sup> Leaving these adjustments, and greater linguistic reticence, aside, textbook

<sup>92</sup> Robert Hermann Tenbrock and Hans Erich Stier, *Geschichtliches Unterrichtswerk. Urzeit und Altertum bis zu den Karolingern, Oberstufe I*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1956, 165.

<sup>93</sup> On the concept of the *Basisnarrativ*, see Peter Gautschi, Markus Bernhardt and Ulrich Mayer, 'Guter Geschichtsunterricht – Prinzipien', Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.), *Handbuch Praxis Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2012, 326–348, 332–334.

<sup>94</sup> Karl Leonhardt and Gerhard Bonwetsch (eds.), *Grundriss der Geschichte. Kletts Geschichtliches Unterrichtswerk, Ausgabe B, Band I*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1956, 139f. Falk Pingel classes this book as one of the most successful textbooks in the FRG's first decade; cf. Pingel, 'Geschichtslehrbücher zwischen Kaiserreich und Gegenwart', Verband der Geschichtslehrer, represented by Paul Leidinger (ed.), *Geschichtsunterricht und Geschichtsdidaktik vom Kaiserreich bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift des Verbandes der Geschichtslehrer zum 75jährigen Bestehen*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1988, 242–260, 251.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. S  n  cheau, *Als Arminius frech geworden*, 65.

<sup>96</sup> Riemenschneider and S  n  cheau also point out this change, which Riemenschneider perceives as taking until the 1980s to complete; cf. Riemenschneider, *Le mythe national*, 146, and S  n  cheau, *Als Arminius*

authors and producers remain in the myth's thrall, effectively undermining the new Federal Republic's official historical policy, although it must be observed that the authorities charged with textbook approval processes appeared not to stand in their way. The textbooks reveal quite plainly that the change of hearts in this new German state occurred, not by simply flicking a switch in the period between the end of the Second World War (1945) and the Federal Republic's foundation (1949), but via a longer process.<sup>97</sup> It was not until the close of the 1960s that, influenced by the social movement that cohered around the year 1968, a fundamental and encompassing change unfolded in the depiction of the battle in West German textbooks. One exemplification of this change appeared in a new edition, issued in 1970, of the textbook *Reise in die Vergangenheit* by Hans Ebeling and Wolfgang Birkenfeld:

Time and again, Germanic tribes had crossed the Rhine or the Danube in their search for land and had entered/invaded the Roman provinces [*waren in die römischen Provinzen eingedrungen*]. Time and again, fierce battles had been the result. In order to finally bring about peace, the Roman emperor Augustus decided to have his legions conquer the Germanic territories as far as the Elbe. The conflict dragged on for around thirty years without a decisive victory. In the year 9 AD, a large Roman army was even annihilated by the Germanic forces. In the end, the Roman emperors abandoned their plan to subjugate the Germanic peoples.<sup>98</sup>

This narrative no longer maintains any connection to the *Hermann* myth; erasing the heroic figure of Arminius entirely, it takes the Roman point of view in naming the Germanic incursions into Roman provinces as the *casus belli*. This change of direction in textbooks came concomitant to the arrival of new points of view in history didactics<sup>99</sup> and to the commencement of an academic debate on the events. In the same year as the

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*frech geworden*, 65. The debate among historians around the motives behind the Roman campaigns to Germania is ongoing; cf. Timpe, *Varusschlacht*, 605. Textbooks very often cast Rome in the role of the aggressor, both in the 1980s and thereafter; cf. Harro Brack et al. (eds.), *Geschichte*, Bamberg: C. C. Buchner Verlag, 1985, 127; Erich Goerlitz and Joachim Immisch (eds.), *Zeiten und Menschen*. New edition B, vol. 1: *Kulturen und Reiche am Mittelmeer*, Paderborn: Schöningh und Schroedel, 1984, 146; Jochen Martin and Norbert Zwölfer, *Geschichtsbuch 1*, Berlin: Cornelsen-Velhagen & Klasing und Hirschgraben Verlag, 1986, 173 (also the new edition issued in 1997, 80); Joachim Cornelissen et al., *bsv Geschichte I N*, Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, 1987, 140; Guiskard Eck et al., *Zeitreise I*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1998, 126; Anne Frey et al. (eds.), *Zeit für Geschichte I*, Hanover: Schroedel, 2000, 164; Hans-Otto Regenhardt (ed.), *Forum Geschichte I*, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000, 179; Thomas Bergeron der Heide and Hans-Gert Oomen (eds.), *Entdecken und Verstehen I*, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000, 131.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. also Rainer Riemenschneider, 'Das Geschichtslehrbuch in der Bundesrepublik. Seine Entwicklung seit 1945', Klaus Bergmann and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), *Gesellschaft, Staat, Geschichtsunterricht. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Geschichtsdidaktik und des Geschichtsunterrichts von 1500 bis 1800*, Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1982, 295–312, 299.

<sup>98</sup> Hans Ebeling und Wolfgang Birkenfeld, *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, new edition, Braunschweig: Westermann, 1970, 120

<sup>99</sup> Ulrich Mayer, 'Neubeginn oder Wiederanfang? Geschichtsdidaktik im Westen Deutschlands', Wolfgang Hasberg and Manfred Seidenfuß (eds.), *Modernisierung im Umbruch. Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtsunterricht nach 1945*, Berlin: Lit, 2006, 99–112, 112.

publication of the book containing the above-cited excerpt, a noted study by Dieter Timpe denied the figure of Arminius his prior nimbus as a figure of heroic nationalism by deeming him a Roman mutineer.<sup>100</sup> The development that led to this reinterpretation had begun as early as the outset of the 1960s, when Reinhard Wenskus' work on Germanic tribal formation had opened the way for an increasingly critical view on the concept of *Germanen* as a single ethnic category, and the early 1970s, when Klaus von See issued the first of a series of publications illuminating the ideological backdrop to Germans' ideas of the *Germanen*.<sup>101</sup> Thus reassessed, *Hermann* re-entered the sphere of public historical culture with a new context of associations. Heinrich von Kleist's play *Die Hermannsschlacht* was staged in Bochum in a new interpretation<sup>102</sup> which, for all it drew considerable critical attention, failed to restore the work to anything like its former literary centrality. In 1975, in a publication celebrating the *Hermann* monument's centenary, the Munich-based professor Thomas Nipperdey proceeded from an assumption that the battle was 'no longer even part of [the canon of] knowledge and education'.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, the 1970s also saw more traditional textbook accounts of the Germanic Wars<sup>104</sup>, which did not necessarily amount to position statements on historical policy. The *Zeiten und Menschen* textbook series, published by Schöningh, continued in the 1970s to carry accounts of the 'personally courageous' Arminius, whose actions had ensured that 'Germania east of the Rhine remained free'<sup>105</sup>, thus transporting the at least implicit suggestion that he was also the saviour of German culture. The passage, however, was taken from a predecessor textbook for early secondary education, *Geschichtliches Unterrichtswerk*, to the end of reducing the work involved in producing the new publication. Its provenance is evident in the largely word-for-word reproduction of the

<sup>100</sup> Dieter Timpe, *Arminius-Studien*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1970. Timpe's interpretation did not gain universal acceptance as valid, but has boosted the process of Arminius' demythologisation and deheroicisation; cf. Losemann, *Denkmäler, völkische Bewegung*, 258.

<sup>101</sup> Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes*, Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 2<sup>nd</sup> unamended edition 1977; Klaus von See, "'Hermann der Chersucker" in der deutschen Germanenideologie', von See, *Texte und Thesen. Streitfragen der deutschen und skandinavischen Geschichte* (Frankfurter Beiträge zur Germanistik 38), Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003, 63–100.

<sup>102</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos*, 370 f.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, 'Zum Jubiläum des Hermannsdenkmals', Günther Engelbert (ed.), *Ein Jahrhundert Hermannsdenkmal 1875–1975*, Detmold: Naturwissenschaftlicher und historischer Verein für das Land Lippe, 1975, 11–32, 11.

<sup>104</sup> Franz Bahl (ed.), *Spiegel der Zeiten I*, Frankfurt, Berlin, Munich: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1978, 158f.

<sup>105</sup> Robert Hermann Tenbrock and Arnold Voelske (eds.), *Zeiten und Menschen. Urzeit – Mittelmeerkulturen und werdendes Abendland (bis 900 n. Chr.)*, Ausgabe B, Band 1, Paderborn: Schöningh und Schroedel, 1970, 136; 11 further editions carrying this wording appeared to 1984.

excerpt, without even a correction of the inconsistency in the protagonist's naming (first 'Arminius', later 'Armin'). The leading involvement of Arnold Voelske in authoring and compiling both works may have been a factor here.<sup>106</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s saw, in some instances, the relegation of the Roman-Germanic conflict to merely marginal treatment in textbooks and curricula. The loss of significance sustained by Arminius' battle in official German historical culture and the arrival of a new generation of teachers in the history classroom each had their part to play in this development. The brevity with which some textbooks now touched upon the topic occasionally had the paradoxical effect of restoring the battle to the status of a decisive moment, as the imperative of content reduction had often seen Germanicus' campaigns culled from the text.<sup>107</sup> By the 1990s, the myth had lost so much of its former significance that textbooks which made no mention at all of the battle were coming onto the market.<sup>108</sup> At the dawn of the new millennium, archaeological finds made in the previous years in the Kalkriese area brought the Germanic Wars back into German public consciousness, with a subsequent ripple effect on textbooks. Some recently issued curricula include the explicit direction to teach about the battle's mythic romanticisation.<sup>109</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has explored depictions of the battle at Teutoberg Forest in German textbooks of various eras, from the Napoleonic period via the *Kaiserreich* to the Federal Republic up to the year 2000. The analysis has uncovered a multiplicity of interconnections between textbooks and contemporary discourses. It has demonstrated the wide reach, at the outset of the period under study, of the myth of *Hermann*, encompassing the aggrandisement of the battle to a decisive confrontation and of the Germanic warriors commanded by Arminius to the famed, originary heart of the German people. Text-

<sup>106</sup> Hans Erich Stier and Arnold Voelske, *Geschichtliches Unterrichtswerk. Urzeit und Altertum, Mittelstufe I*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Hanover: Hermann Schroedel Verlag und Ferdinand Schöningh, 1957, 139f.

<sup>107</sup> Goerlitz, *Zeiten und Menschen*, 1984, 146; Friedrich Jahr et al.(eds.), *Geschichte und Geschehen I*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1986, 153; Veit Sturm (ed.), *Geschichte und Geschehen I*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1995, 166; Eck, *Zeitreise*, 126; Regenhardt, *Forum Geschichte*, 179; Christine Dzubieli et al. (eds.), *Geschichte und Geschehen. Einführungsphase Oberstufe Nordrhein-Westfalen*, Stuttgart, Leipzig: Klett, 2014, 22f

<sup>108</sup> Bernhard Askani and Elmar Wagener (eds.), *Anno I. Von der Vorgeschichte bis zum frühen Mittelalter*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 1994; Hans-Jürgen Lenzian and Rolf Schörken (eds.), *Rückspiegel. Woher wir kommen – wer wir sind. Von den Anfängen der Menschheit bis zum Ende des Römischen Reiches*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997; Hans-Jürgen Lenzian (ed.), *Zeiten und Menschen I*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Miriam Sénécheau, 'Die Germanen sind wieder da. Archäologische, didaktische und gesellschaftspolitische Perspektiven auf ein altes Thema in neuen Lehrwerken', *Archäologische Informationen* 35 (2012), 219–234.

books also evince the perpetuation of this national myth in the German *Kaiserreich* and a process of demythologisation in the period after 1945. A closer look at these phases brings the need for nuance to our attention. None of these three primarily analysed periods saw a particular version of the myth prevail in the textbook landscape; depictions in textbooks consistently, and noteworthy, span a spectrum. It appears especially striking that, amid the prominence given to the myth in the historical culture of imperial Germany, some textbooks depict the battle in a fashion much more factual and sober than does the extremely widely read work by Bredow from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Further divergences emerge: The myth's influence on the textbooks published around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century appears to have been weaker than one might expect in light of the prevailing research consensus with regard to contemporary historical culture. Further, the adherence to the myth in evidence in numerous textbooks of the early Federal Republic clashes with the hitherto widely held assumption of the comprehensive disappearance of the mythic *Hermann* from national German historical culture after 1945 and points rather towards the continuities on which Volker Losemann had directed a spotlight. Such discrepancies between textbooks and other sources which bear witness to historical culture should prompt us first and foremost to greater caution when using textbooks as such sources. They reiterate the fact that textbooks are not necessarily direct expressions of the contemporary zeitgeist, but instead the result of a process, itself underresearched to date, which unfolds in a multifactorial context with a frequent time lag between developments in academic history and historical culture and their manifestation in the books themselves.<sup>110</sup> The 1970s editions of *Zeiten und Menschen* is a case in point from this chapter. The discrepancies explored in this study additionally impel us to take more care, when we analyse perceptions of Arminius' battle, to ensure that we do not have metaphorical (or literal) monuments blocking our view of other, less ostentatiously expressed attitudes within our society. Research into the myth of *Hermann* may need to emancipate itself to a degree from our national poets, the battle's monument and the notion of 1945 as a zero hour, a *Stunde Null*, of German history.

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<sup>110</sup> Lässig, *Schulbücher und ihr gesellschaftlicher Kontext*, 199f.

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Roland Bernhard

## **Martin Behaim of Nuremberg: the 'real discoverer of America'? German textbooks of the 18th to 21st centuries and the myth of the flat Earth**

*Without him, we would not be in India today.  
Without him [there would be] perhaps no Christopher Columbus,  
without him [there would be] definitely no spherical image of the earth, no globe. Ah, Behaim!*  
'Der Erdapfel des Martin Behaim. Eine Geschichte um einen deutschen Raum-Eroberer',  
*SS-Leitheft-Kriegsausgabe*, Jahrgang 7, Folge 3b, 1940, 11

### **Introductory considerations**

There is probably no country in the world where someone has claimed that the 'discovery of America' is down, not to Christopher Columbus or Leif Eriksson, but to a German – Martin Behaim of Nuremberg. Except, that is, for Germany. The figure of the man who created what has been alleged to be the world's first globe is the epitome of a German *lieu de mémoire*; his fame extends far beyond his city of birth, which has a monument to Martin Behaim, a street and a school named after him. In 1992, the German federal postal service issued a stamp commemorating Behaim. It should be of little surprise to us, then, that such a household name appears in numerous textbooks from various German states. Recent work in international textbook research has demonstrated that the Behaim narrative has served the 'generation of meaning via mythomotor'<sup>1</sup> within historical culture.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will cast light on the patterns in accordance with which this generation of meaning takes place in relation to the Behaim myth as it lives in societal historical consciousness, and its narrative structures. It will further explore the functions served by this narrative within historical culture, focusing primarily on textbooks, understood in this context as manifestations of historical culture. Additionally, the chapter, drawing on the myth of Behaim as an exemplary case, will examine how teachers might harness the potential of historical myths in textbooks to encourage pupils to develop a mature and self-reflective historical consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> On the concept of the mythomotor, cf. Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmymthen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013; building on this, Hansjörg Biener, 'Käseglocke und Erdscheibe – Der lange Abschied von einem falschen Weltbild', *Arbeitshilfe* (2014), 95–105.

### ‘Martin Behaim of Nuremberg’ in German historical culture

A stamp issued in 1992 by the German federal postal service features several of the elements which characterise the manifestation of historical culture as the ‘practically operative articulation of historical consciousness in the life of a society’<sup>3</sup> and, correspondingly, the discourse within textbooks in relation to Behaim. The German Post Office’s stamp commemorates, with reference to Martin Behaim, the five-hundredth anniversary of the making of the first globe, complete with the legend ‘500 Jahre Erdglobus’ (literally: 500 years [of] the world globe’) and its implication that globes have in fact only been in existence for 500 years and that the ‘*Erdapfel*’ (literally: ‘earth apple’) created by Behaim was the first. It is entirely in this spirit that textbooks of our twenty-first century tell readers that Behaim, in his home city of Nuremberg in the year 1492, constructed the world’s first globe<sup>4</sup>, which had represented a ‘culminating achievement’ (*Höhepunkt*) in the scientific development of the time.<sup>5</sup> Until Behaim came, runs this narrative, Europe was in the Middle Ages; and ‘[i]n the Middle Ages scholars were certain that the earth was flat.’<sup>6</sup> Yet Martin Behaim was ‘convinced that the earth had a spherical shape; in 1492 in Nuremberg, he built the first globe.’<sup>7</sup>

A second component of the Behaim narrative in historical culture reflected in the stamp’s design is its implicit reference to Christopher Columbus and the ‘discovery’ of America. The commemoration of Columbus’ western voyage five hundred years previously loomed large in the year 1992; the inclusion of that date, the ‘year of Columbus’, alongside a globe is rich with potential for corresponding associations. Many textbooks likewise make this connection between Columbus and Behaim: ‘Martin Behaim of Nuremberg produced an image of the world in spherical form – before America was discovered’, says one.<sup>8</sup> Another references Behaim’s globe in its assertion that the earth was already ‘pictured in the form of a sphere even before Columbus’ first voyage to America.’<sup>9</sup> Other depictions cast Behaim as a source of inspiration for Columbus:

<sup>3</sup> Jörn Rüsen, ‘Geschichtskultur’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46 (1995), 509–521, 513.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Frey et al., *Zeit für Geschichte 2*. Braunschweig: Westermann, 2004, 100.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Osiander and Jürgen Vorläufer, *Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule 7*, Troisdorf: Bildungsverlag Eins, 2009, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Sven Christoffer et al., *Zeitreise 1. Differenzierende Ausgabe (Niedersachsen)*, Stuttgart, Leipzig: Klett, 2012, 172.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Joachim Cornelissen et al., *Mosaik. Der Geschichte auf der Spur*, Munich, Düsseldorf, Stuttgart: Klett, 2005, 94.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

In the fifteenth century, the Italian geographer Toscanelli and Nuremberg's Behaim, like some of their colleagues, were working on the assumption that the earth had a spherical form. Their knowledge spread among sailors and at the courts of rulers. Proof exists that Columbus, later celebrated as having discovered America, read their writings before leaving on his voyages.<sup>10</sup>

A third component of the Behaim narrative in evidence here is related to a putative change in how people conceived of the world at the dawn of the modern age. The typical assumption is that Behaim and Columbus had something to do with the overcoming of a scientifically 'dark age' in which people considered the earth flat. The globe stands as a powerful symbol of this triumph of the new view on the world; featuring it on the stamp evokes the assumption, deeply rooted in historical culture, that at the close of the fifteenth century, a few people, exceptional in their time, knew the earth was a sphere. A range of textbooks verbalise this assumption along the following lines: 'Martin Behaim, of Nuremberg, was certain, especially after his voyage with Bartolomeu Diaz, that the earth was not flat, but spherical.'<sup>11</sup> Or, as Behaim was sure 'that the earth was not flat', he constructed 'an "earth apple".'<sup>12</sup> Or, while in medieval Europe 'the Christian faith [dominated] every aspect of life'<sup>13</sup> and 'the medieval view of the world held by the Church [...] [was that] the earth [was] a disc floating on the ocean'<sup>14</sup> – which explained why sailors went 'to sea in fear of sailing too far out onto the open waters and falling off the edge of the world'<sup>15</sup> – the advent of the modern age brought a scientifically based 'new way of thinking'<sup>16</sup>, which came to prevail 'when more and more scholars put forward the view that the earth was not flat, but a sphere'.<sup>17</sup> And: 'This discovery was illustrated by a globe which the merchant Martin Behaim commissioned in Nuremberg in 1492.'<sup>18</sup> As I will detail in the further course of this chapter, none of these asser-

<sup>10</sup> Frey et al., *Zeit für Geschichte* 2, 116.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Ebeling and Wolfgang Birkenfeld (eds.), *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit 7/8 (Thüringen)*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2013, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Ralf Tieke et al., *Durchblick 1 (Rheinland-Pfalz)*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2010, 204.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Berger-von der Heide and Gert Oomen (eds.), *Entdecken und Verstehen 1*, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000, 202.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Funken and Bernd Koltowitz (eds.), *Geschichte plus (Brandenburg)*, Berlin: Volk und Wissen/Cornelsen, 2008, 13. Behaim's globe is discussed on page 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Berger-von der Heide and Oomen, *Entdecken und Verstehen 1*, 202.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 206. See also Edward Grant, 'Science and Theology in the Middle Ages', in: David Lindberg und Ronald Numbers (eds.), *God and Nature. Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1986, 49–75; Rodney Stark, *Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History*, West Conshohocken, Pa.: Templeton Press, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Other versions of this story hold that Columbus reached the conclusion that '[t]he earth has the form of a sphere [...] 'around 1480' (Werner Loch et al., *Geschichte erkunden 2*, Koblenz-Gondorf: self-published, 2011, 89) or it had indeed taken until the sixteenth century for astronomers such as Copernicus to recognise 'that the earth is a sphere and circles the sun', which 'at that time [was] an outrageous assertion' (Christoffer et al., *Zeitreise 1*, 172).

tions, taken from a range of German-language textbooks, possesses any plausibility whatsoever.

Having noted the key features of Behaim's myth in current German historical culture, we move on to approaches to the depiction of historical events as outlined by Jan Assmann, who distinguishes two ways of proceeding. The first is reading a text as history, which gives rise to the question: 'What are the historical facts behind this narrative?'<sup>19</sup> It is also possible to read the text as a myth, which, alongside the matter of the narrative's truth, entails asking who is telling the story and 'in which historical situation, motivated by the needs for meaning of which present' it is being told.<sup>20</sup> The key here, then, is to interrogate a specific narration as to its function within historical culture and to analyse the reasons behind the broad-based societal acceptance with which this narration meets.

The Behaim narrative, as it appears in textbooks, is a historical myth, and this chapter will analyse it as such, reflecting as it does so on the relevance of its findings to the history classroom to the end of linking the topic of myths with the process of historical learning and providing a view on an issue of great import to history teaching from the perspective of the discipline of history education research. In so doing, it intends to fill a research gap evident in the almost complete absence of the issue of myth from that discipline's research.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Jan Assmann, 'Mythos und Geschichte', Helmut Altrichter et al. (eds.), *Mythen in der Geschichte*, Freiburg i.B.: Rombach, 2004, 13–28, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Until 2013 there was only a small amount of work revolving around myth and its potential to promote students' learning. It includes: Hans-Jürgen Pandel, 'Legenden – Mythen – Lügen. Wieviel Fiktion trägt unser Geschichtsbewusstsein?', *Geschichte lernen* 52 (1996), 15–19, 16; Eugen Kotte, 'Geschichtswissenschaftliche und geschichtsdidaktische Mythosforschung', Jürgen Joachimsthaler and Eugen Kotte (eds.), *Kulturwissenschaften. Konzepte verschiedener Disziplinen*, Munich: Meidenbauer, 2010, 103–125; Hans Jürgen Pandel, *Historisches Erzählen. Narrativität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag, 2010, 72. The relative lack of literature on the topic prompted me to explore myths in textbooks from various angles; cf. Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmysen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013; Roland Bernhard, 'Der Eingang des Mythos der flachen Erde in deutsche und österreichische Geschichtsschulbücher im 20. Jahrhundert', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 64 (11/12), 2013, 687–701; Roland Bernhard, 'Deonstruktion des Mythos' der flachen Erde – Information, Quellen und Materialien zur Entschlüsselung der Erzählung über die flache Erde des Mittelalters in Schulbüchern', *Historische Sozialkunde* 2, 2014, 42–51; Roland Bernhard, 'Sensation statt reflektiertes Geschichtsbewusstsein – Deutungsmuster zu Hexenverfolgungen im Kontext von Katholizismus und Protestantismus in aktuellen österreichischen Geschichtsschulbüchern', Roland Bernhard et al. (eds.): *Luther und die Reformation in internationalen Geschichtskulturen. Perspektiven für den Geschichtsunterricht*, Göttingen: V&R unipress 2017, 135–166; Roland Bernhard, Susanne Grindel, Felix Hinz and Johannes Meyer-Hamme, 'Was ist ein histori-

### **Dimensions of the Behaim narrative: aesthetic, political and cognitive strategies for the generation of meaning**

The seminal work of Jörn Rüsen traditionally enumerates three dimensions of the generation of meaning undertaken by historical consciousness.<sup>22</sup> The analysis that follows, operationalising these dimensions, will examine the Behaim narrative for aesthetic, political and cognitive strategies aimed at creating meaning, to the end of enhancing our understanding of the myth's structure and societal functions.

### **Aesthetic narrative strategies: the 'beauty' of the Behaim monomyth**

Jörn Rüsen's system, convergent with the discussion in this volume's opening chapter, defines what we might call 'beautiful' or aesthetically pleasing historical narratives as appealing to the hearer's emotions.<sup>23</sup> Their tangible form may be an experience or a work of art. Beauty, in this sense, is the central category of meaning encompassed by the aesthetic dimension of historical culture. Rüsen explains: 'This refers to the ability of these representations to effectively appeal to the mind and spirit of their addressees, to the extent that they take into themselves the form in which the representation appears and can work it into the frame of reference guiding their practical, day-to-day lives.'<sup>24</sup> The coherence of a narrative is the crucial criterion determining this quality of form. An individual exposed to a historical representation perceives the narrative coherence of that representation's form as possessed of a beauty which endows it with a living spirit and suffuses the narrative with the power to exert an impact.<sup>25</sup> It goes almost without saying that such narratives find themselves retold more frequently than others, therefore gaining a firmer place in historical culture than stories whose lesser 'beauty' prevents them from generating a comparable effect.

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scher Mythos? Versuch einer Definition aus kulturwissenschaftlicher und geschichtsdidaktischer Perspektive', in: Roland Bernhard et al. (eds.), *Mythen in deutschsprachigen Geschichtsschulbüchern*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017, 11–31.

<sup>22</sup> Rüsen, *Geschichtskultur*, 514. In 2013, Rüsen added to his concept a moral and a religious dimension of historical culture, bringing the total number of dimensions to five. In so doing, he notes the 'decisive' importance of the original three to any attempt to locate the institution of historical research in historical culture. Jörn Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2013, 235. I also used Rüsen's concept to analyze the narratives about Galileo Galilei in history textbooks: Roland Bernhard, 'Galileo Galilei, der Wandel des Weltbildes und die Meistererzählung von der wissenschaftlichen Revolution in Bildungsmedien und Wissenschaft, *Geschichte für heute* 4, 2015, 50–59.

<sup>23</sup> While this represents a very narrow definition of 'beauty', its use in the analysis of historical narratives may be considerable.

<sup>24</sup> Rüsen, *Historik*, 236.

<sup>25</sup> Rüsen, *Geschichtskultur*, 515

The Behaim narrative, in connection with Columbus, meets numerous criteria for ‘beauty’ in this sense. It is simple, highly memorable, features an unequivocally normatively recognisable ‘before’ and ‘after’ phase (medieval/modern period) and clearly identifiable ‘good’ and ‘bad guys’ (the proponents of the ‘sphere’ and the ‘flat’ theory respectively), with the former performing the heroic feat of effecting revolutionary change. Additionally, the story encompasses elements of an ‘aesthetic of horror’, such as medieval sailors’ fear of falling (off the edge of the world) into a dark void, part of the panoply of childhood terrors and as such redolent with a trepidatious fascination.

The Behaim story as told in textbooks frequently operationalises archetypal narrative structures of the type found in young adult fiction or numerous feature films. The concept of the archetype, as formulated by Jung, ‘indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere’.<sup>26</sup> In Jung’s view, certain ideas manifest almost everywhere and in virtually every time period, suggesting themselves to the individual consciousness with great force. As – in Jungian theory – concepts innate to human beings, they typically appear, *inter alia*, in fairytales and myths.<sup>27</sup> Research into mythology terms such archetypes ‘motifs’.<sup>28</sup> Building on key works from anthropology and literary studies, the academic theory of film dramaturgy has explored archetypal narratives on account of their intuitiveness and proposed their use as structural frameworks for producing entertaining and engaging films. A recently published guide to film dramaturgy<sup>29</sup>, for instance, references Joseph Campbell’s work on myth and its illumination of the striking similarities shown by the structures of myths across cultures and chronological eras.<sup>30</sup> Campbell proceeds from the assumption that the same images appeal to all human beings and that particular archetypal narrative patterns repeat continuously; such a pattern is, in Campbell’s terms, a ‘monomyth’.<sup>31</sup> The ideal appropriateness of the monomyth’s structure for film dramaturgies has seen screenwriting courses conducted on its basis since the 1980s. The guide to film dramaturgy mentioned above refers to Campbell and his description of a monomyth’s structure:

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<sup>26</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, cited in Adriana Braga, ‘Mind as Medium: Jung, McLuhan and the Archetype’, *Philosophies* 2016 (1), 220–227, 223.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Carl Gustav Jung, *Archetypen*, Munich: dtv, 14th ed., 2008, 109.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Kerstin Stutterheim and Silke Kaiser, *Handbuch der Filmdramaturgie: das Bauchgefühl und seine Ursachen*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, Anchor, 1991.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

The hero leaves the ordinary, quotidian world and journeys to a space of supernatural wonders, where he confronts and prevails over fabulous powers and fights his way to a decisive victory; then he returns from his mysterious journey with the power to bestow blessings upon his fellow human beings.<sup>32</sup>

The monomyth sends its hero on a journey away from home, has him (or her) overcome 'the resistance of dark powers', and reinvigorate 'long-lost and long-forgotten powers', that they might serve to transform the world.<sup>33</sup> The heroic journey ends with the hero's return and with blessings for those who had remained behind at home. The protagonist, then, must prevail in a battle or struggle, after which he 'returns, changed, to the everyday world; he has reached the next level of consciousness.'<sup>34</sup>

This model of the heroic journey works best in fantasy and sci-fi films, which, the guide tells us, 'are closest to myths'<sup>35</sup>, but also in action movies. In Jörn Rüsen's terms, we would have to accord such archetypal narrative structures the label of 'beauty' at least in view of their provision of maximum intuitive graspability (*Eingängigkeit*). Stories of this kind speak to our senses, consist of information delivered in a form amenable to our brains, and, so to speak, are 'within us' from the outset.

The narrative of Behaim and Columbus is such a monomyth. Columbus' voyage is the journey of the mythic *heros* who overcomes the resistance of dark forces, that is, the refusal of malign powers to renounce the notion that the earth is flat. Martin Behaim with his globe comes to his inspirational aid. Columbus' voyage west is his transition into this other world in which challenges await – such as overcoming the fear of falling off the edge of the earth – and his 'discovery of America' a glorious triumph over the 'dark medieval powers'. Columbus returns with a new consciousness, bestows his blessings and does his part, in concert with Behaim and other protagonists, in propagating a scientific revolution that transforms the world.

This intuitively graspable story possesses a narrative structure ubiquitous worldwide and in all epochs, in myths and beyond. As we have seen, the entertainment industry creates feature films in accordance with this structure, works which engage and excite audiences' interest. A story of this kind is likewise ideal for bringing to life in the class-

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<sup>32</sup> Stutterheim and Kaiser, *Filmdramaturgie*, 128.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Stutterheim and Kaiser, *Filmdramaturgie*, 130.

room. In my view, this narrative beauty is one of the factors which have enabled myths to survive and thrive in historical culture and to dominate our cultural memory to the extent they do. History teaching can harness this insight by identifying ‘beautiful’, that is, intuitively graspable (*eingängig*) aspects of historical narratives. One question to explore in this context may be the extent to which a narrative resembles the typical dramaturgies of popular film productions. The concept of the monomyth represents a useful instrument for this analysis.

### **Political narrative strategies: Behaim, a ‘German’ myth**

Historical/political myths always contain components of fact and fictionality.<sup>36</sup> The process by which narrative becomes myth sometimes unfolds at the behest of a specific objective, the ‘generation of a mobilising, motivating and directional momentum’<sup>37</sup> which Jan Assmann terms *Mythomotorik*, or the mythomotor. The dynamism associated with the mythomotor is of interest to any attempt to analyse a narrative for underlying political strategies of the generation of meaning. It seems sensible in this spirit to seek to identify the discourses within which a story is – purposely – embedded. I use the term ‘discourses’ here to refer to ‘statements which organise systematically in relation to a specific topic and are characterised by homogeneous (not identical) repetition’<sup>38</sup>. Questions that arise in this context might revolve around how the myth’s specific ‘knowledge’ about Behaim – in this case, that contained in textbooks – came into being in the process of history, and within which discourses this knowledge created political meaning for particular collectives.

Jörn Rüsen ascribes a central place, within the political dimension of historical culture, to historical thinking in the power struggles determining people’s relationships to themselves and others, struggles revolving around the legitimacy of the power relations and dispensations within which people have to live.<sup>39</sup> An analysis of the Behaim myth carried out within this context will seek to pinpoint the discourses in which the narrative occurs and, relatedly, the collectives whose needs for direction and orientation the myth met and in so doing secured its frequent telling and retelling and thus its aggregation of the ‘power’ to prevail within historical culture.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Kotte, *Mythosforschung*, 124.

<sup>37</sup> Assmann, ‘Mythos’, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus, 2008, 92–93.

<sup>39</sup> Rüsen, *Geschichtskultur*, 238.

The supposed connection between Behaim and Columbus is traceable to the polyhistor Johann Christoph Wagenseil, a professor at the university of Altdorf who in 1682 published a speech that was to exert an influence on German-speaking societies' image of Behaim for centuries to come and acted as the founding moment of a specific discourse around the figure. Wagenseil's eulogy for a descendant of Martin Behaim asserts that the deeds of the latter, 'albeit thus far unnoticed, confer honour both on his city of birth and on all of Germany.'<sup>40</sup> Wagenseil links Behaim to Columbus in a rather idiosyncratic manner: 'Martinus [Behaim] found the isles of America before Christopher Columbus and before Fernan Magellan the strait that bears his name.'<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Wagenseil declares Behaim to be the real 'discoverer' of America, complaining in this context of an injustice: 'But enormous fame has transported the names of Columbus and Magellan throughout all regions of the world with great fanfare, yet not [that of] our countryman, although he is deserving of a rank at least equal to that of the gods of the seas.'<sup>42</sup>

This is the inaugural moment of the myth which links Behaim in some way with the discovery of America. In the subsequent period, various contemporary encyclopaedias repeated Wagenseil's claims<sup>43</sup>, creating a firm place for the alleged connection between Behaim and Columbus at the heart of the Behaim narrative. This discourse sought to construct a 'German hero', a desire particularly evident in a textbook from the end of the eighteenth century, written by Lorenz Westenrieder:

As for German trade and art, in the 15th century it continued in the fullest bloom, so that the Germans in this and in the next century were considered the first inventors of all useful and valuable things. [...]

In fact, there was no honourable and significant invention which had not originally stemmed from the Germans, of which we shall present only a little [of the available] proof here.<sup>44</sup>

One example of such 'proof' offered by Westenrieder is '[...] the discovery of America [...] or the West Indies, whose first discoverer was in fact the patrician (born at Nurem-

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<sup>40</sup> Johann Christian Wagenseil, *Sacra parentalia D. Georgii Fredericii Behaimi de Schwarzbach*, Altdorf 1682, 8. Translation in Richard Henning, 'Martin Behaim's angebliche Vorentdeckung Amerikas und der Magellanstraße um (1487)', Richard Henning, *Terrae Incognitae IV*, Leiden 1956, 391–418, 394, cited in Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 62.

<sup>44</sup> Lorenz Westenrieder, *Abriß der deutschen Geschichte. Ein Lese- und Lehrbuch*, Munich: Lindauer, 1798, 186–187

berg in 1430) Martin Behaim'.<sup>45</sup> In an account positively supplying a logical conclusion to these putative facts, we are told that Germans of the time had called for the renaming of America after Behaim, as 'Occidentalem Bohemiam', and the Strait of Magellan as 'Fretum Bohemicum'.<sup>46</sup> After all, Behaim had

really found what is now America and the Fretum Magellanicum first [...] regardless of the greater honour of discovery and naming conferred thereafter on Magellano and Americo Vesputio, against which many have passionately argued [...].<sup>47</sup>

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, political claims entered the narration, building on the interpretation of Behaim that had arisen and established itself in the previous few hundred years. In the age of imperialism, when a handful of nations divided the world among themselves, the figure of Martin Behaim served to remind Germans that a German, too, had a share in Europe's expansion into, and exploitation of, the rest of the world. This narrative posited that Behaim, and through him German scholarship, had laid the foundations for Europeans' highly successful endeavours of discovery at the outset of the modern age. Nuremberg's city librarian, Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany, described the intent underlying his biography of Behaim as follows:

Alongside this, my volume is intended, in a time where honourable contest jealously guards the achievements of one's own nation in relation to this or that discovery to the general good, to help remind the world that it was German scholarship that made it possible for those famous sailors of the close of the Middle Ages to venture further out into the ocean.<sup>48</sup>

The nationalistic overtone now evident in the Behaim myth's narration shows through in Ghillany's comments. In this way, the figure of Behaim served to prepare the ideological way for German colonial policy. A key element of the myth in this context was the notion that Behaim had taken part in the voyage of the Portuguese sea captain Diogo Cão in 1484/85, making him one of the contingent who had discovered the mouth of the Congo River.<sup>49</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, a Portuguese-German academic dispute arose around Behaim's 'achievements' in relation to these voyages of discovery, with the Portuguese literature playing down his alleged influence and German researchers intensifying his heroicisation. Finally, on 11 July 1935, the German historian Hed-

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>46</sup> Georg Andreas Will, *Nürnberger Gelehrtenlexikon*, Nuremberg: Lorenz Schüpfel, 1755, 85.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany, *Geschichte des Seefahrers Ritter Martin Behaim nach den ältesten vorhandenen Urkunden bearbeitet*, Nuremberg: Bauer und Raspe, 1853, III.

<sup>49</sup> Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 54f.

wig Fitzler published an article in the regional newspaper *Fränkischer Kurier* to the end of ‘defending Martin Behaim’s honour’. She asserted that Behaim certainly did take part in Diogo Cão’s voyage:

They set up a pillar there to take possession of the land for Portugal, and thus Behaim was the first German to set foot in that place in which, four hundred years later, the German flag was to fly over the unforgotten German South West [today’s Namibia].<sup>50</sup>

Peter Bräunlein, whose research on Behaim’s life and work is virtually unparalleled, has observed that this was not only a matter of defending Behaim’s ‘honour’, but also an attempt to resurrect old, now obsolete claims to the former colony of German South West Africa, in German possession between 1884 and 1915.<sup>51</sup>

Hitler, well aware of the potential offered by Behaim’s *Erdapfel* for staging political and ideological theatre, purchased the fabled globe using personal funds during preparations for the *Reich* Party Congress of Labour held in 1937, handing it over to the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*, where it remains today. At the parade held to mark the Congress, Hitler positioned himself exactly opposite the Behaim house.<sup>52</sup> The eighty-fourth annual report of the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*, issued in January 1938, waxes lyrical about the ‘positively world-historical significance of our globe’, a ‘unique monument to that increasingly submerged old world’ which contains ‘all the intellectual power’ ‘which overcome this old [dispensation]’.<sup>53</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Behaim receives a place in a narrative of scientific revolution at the dawn of the modern age: ‘[...] for the scientific requisites for the discovery of America are owed not least to Nuremberg, which thus made its intellectual energies available to other lands.’<sup>54</sup>

National Socialist propaganda went beyond this, inserting the figure of Behaim as a German conqueror of land into its justification for the Second World War, interpreted as a legitimate expansion of German *Lebensraum*. Soon after the war’s outbreak, the Nazi propaganda periodical *SS-Leitheft* declared:

<sup>50</sup> M.A.H. Fitzler, ‘Eine Ehrenrettung Martin Behaims. Die Fahrt mit Diogo Cão zur Walfischbucht 1485’, *Fränkischer Kurier*, 11 July 1935, no. 190, 8; cited in Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Germanisches Nationalmuseum, *84. Jahresbericht*, Nuremberg, Januar 1938, 20–24, 23, cited in Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 156.

We Germans have withdrawn from the world for all too long a time [...]. If we want to know what German vision once meant, may we take Martin Behaim as our pattern and example.<sup>55</sup>

The world, continued the magazine, was ‘not [being] sold in Augsburg and not in Nuremberg [...] but divided out there, across the oceans. And there the Germans are left empty-handed.’<sup>56</sup> For this reason, states the article, it should not be forgotten that ‘the first image of our Mother Earth was produced by a German, for Germans, in German script.’<sup>57</sup> The title of this issue of the *SS-Leitheft*, lauding Behaim as a ‘German conqueror of space/land’ (*deutscher Raumeroberer*), points to Behaim’s intended function here as a model for German soldiers.

It might be possible at this juncture to advance the hypothesis that the National Socialists’ instrumentalisation of the Behaim narrative, and the consequent prominence of the associated myth, had a part to play, alongside the idea of scientific revolution, in the establishment in German historical cultures of the myth of the flat Earth. Studies have shown that at least that myth took until the mid-twentieth century to achieve blanket coverage in German textbooks.<sup>58</sup> In any case, it is true that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century textbooks made much less of Behaim than present-day ones do. An analysis of 414 eighteenth- and nineteenth-century textbooks (to 1871)<sup>59</sup> conducted for this chapter found mentions of Behaim in only 26 of them<sup>60</sup>, contrasting with the majority of today’s

<sup>55</sup> ‘Der Erdapfel des Martin Behaim. Eine Geschichte um einen deutschen Raum-Eroberer’, *SS-Leitheft-Kriegsausgabe*, 7, 3b (1940), 11, cited in Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 168.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Roland Bernhard, ‘Der Eingang des Mythos der flachen Erde in deutsche und österreichische Geschichtsschulbücher im 20. Jahrhundert’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 64 (11/12), 2013, 687–701.

<sup>59</sup> This analysis of German history textbooks used the GEI-Digital database (as of 25 February 2015) and included all pre-1871 works available in the database at the time of the query, which searched for the term ‘Behaim’ in the text.

<sup>60</sup> The textbooks that mention Behaim are as follows: Johann Matthias Schröckh, *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte für Kinder*, Leipzig: Weidmann und Reich, 1779, 370; Johann Matthias Schröckh, *Johann Matthias Schröckhs öffentlichen Lehrers der Geschichte zu Wittenberg Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte*, Berlin: Nicolai, 1795, 379; Lorenz Westenrieder, *Abriß der deutschen Geschichte. Ein Lese- und Lehrbuch*, Munich: Lindauer, 1798, 186; Johann Gottfried Woltmann, *Die Weltgeschichte für die Jugend*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2<sup>nd</sup> amended edition 1807, 50; Traugott Gotthilf Voigtel, *Julius August Remer’s Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte für Akademien und Gymnasien*, Halle: Hemmerde und Schwetschke, 1811, 344; Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölit, *Die Weltgeschichte für gebildete Leser und Studierende*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1813, 22; Ernst Hold, *Die Weltgeschichte für die Jugend bis auf die neuesten Zeiten*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1818, 251; Johann Kaspar Müller, *Dr. Johann Kaspar Müller’s Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte*, Bamberg/Würzburg: Goebhardtsche Buchhandlungen, 1818, 348; Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölit, *Die Weltgeschichte für gebildete Leser und Studierende*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1824, 17; Carl Wilhelm Böttiger, *Die allgemeine Geschichte für Schule und Haus*, third, extended edition, Erlangen: Heyder, 1827, 166; Friedrich Nösselt, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte für Töchter Schulen und zum Privatunterricht heranwachsender Mädchen*, Breslau: Max, 1827, 212; Johann Heinrich Mey-

textbooks in which he figures.<sup>61</sup> We would be likely to attain findings of great interest from a qualitative and quantitative assessment of depictions and perceptions of Behaim in twentieth- and twenty-first-century textbooks, preferably linked to an examination of whether the twentieth-century surge of interest in Behaim stemmed from increased attention to him provoked by National Socialist propaganda or whether the rise in interest occurs earlier, prior to 1933, or later, after 1945. It may also be that the myth did indeed return to its present-day significance in textbooks after the Second World War, in relation to the denazification process and/or to what we might today call the rebranding of Nuremberg, which in the post-war period found itself internationally subject to the epithet ‘Nazi shrine’.<sup>62</sup> The ‘most German of all German cities’ – thus Nuremberg’s Nazi-era mayor Willy Liebel<sup>63</sup> – hosted the NSDAP’s *Reich* party congresses from 1927 onwards<sup>64</sup>; there was also its shameful association with the Nuremberg race laws of 1935. In the post-war period, Nuremberg’s political leaders, businesses and citizenry attempted to put aside its image as a ‘Nazi city’ and reinvigorate its erstwhile attractiveness via a new set of associations.<sup>65</sup> Their need to find symbols uncontaminated by the National Socialist period may have led them to recast Behaim as a ‘Western’, progressive scientist.

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nier, *Erzählungen aus der Geschichte der europäischen Völker*, Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1827, 219; Heinrich Rockstroh, *Erzählungen aus der älteren und mittleren Geschichte zum ersten gründlichen Unterricht in der Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1829, 857; Friedrich Nösselt, *Kleine Weltgeschichte für Töchterschulen und zum Privat-Unterrichte heranwachsender Mädchen*, Breslau: Max, 1830, 55; Ludwig Wachler, *Ludwig Wachler’s Lehrbuch der Geschichte zum Gebrauche in höheren Unterrichts-Anstalten*, Breslau: Graß, Barth, 1838, 26; August Wilhelm Grube, *Charakterbilder aus der Geschichte und Sage*, Leipzig: Brandstetter, 1852, 253; Carl Winderlich, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig: Wigand, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (*bis auf d. neueste Zeit fortges., verm. u. berichtet*) 1852, 465; Peter Friedrich Kirchmann, *Geschichte der Arbeit und Kultur*, Leipzig: Meyer, 1858, 172; Carl Winderlich, *Uebersicht der Weltgeschichte in synchronistischen Tabellen*, Breslau: Kern, 1859, 45; Moritz Spiess, *Für einen einjährigen Unterricht in einer mittleren Klassen berechnet*, Hildburghausen: Nonne, 1861, 170; Wilhelm Pütz, *Historische Darstellungen und Charakteristiken*, Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1862, 625; Wilhelm Pütz, *Die Geschichte der neuern Zeit*, Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1864; August Wilhelm Grube, *Wiederholungsbuch zu den Charakterbildern aus der Geschichte und Sage*, Leipzig: Brandstetter, 1865, 40; Bernd Diedrich Wilms, *Mnemonische Bearbeitung der Welt- und Cultur-Geschichte*, Flensburg: Herzbruch, 1867, 103; Friedrich Nösselt, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte für Töchterschulen und zum Privatunterricht heranwachsender Mädchen*, Breslau: Max, 14<sup>th</sup> amended and extended edition Auflage 1867, 302; Arnold Schaefer, *Geschichtstabellen zum Auswendiglernen*, Leipzig: Arnoldi, 1870, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmysen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Eckert. Die Schriftenreihe 134), Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013, 105–110.

<sup>62</sup> Werner K. Blessing, ‘Nürnberg - ein deutscher Mythos’, Helmut Altrichter et al. (eds.), *Mythen in der Geschichte*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach 2004, 371–396, 392.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. also Dieter Wuttke, *Nürnberg als Symbol deutscher Kultur und Geschichte. Ein Vortrag*, Bamberg: Kaiser, 1987.

<sup>65</sup> Blessing, *Nürnberg*, 392.

Continuities, however, remained, at least in part, in the interpretation of the Behaim figure after the war. His construction as a scientist had been a feature of German nationalist, colonially orientated and National Socialist readings of the myth; it was likewise a key element of the post-war version, albeit aiming to generate a different meaning. We see, then, that the myth of Behaim as a leading figure in the modern-age scientific revolution has the capacity to create completely divergent fields of meaning and identification and therefore to function in various ways as a ‘mythomotor’. This versatility is possibly one of the reasons for the Behaim myth’s unbroken tenacity in historical culture. The analysis of historical narratives to the end of identifying their functions in the political context is a procedure of great value in the history classroom. Assmann has observed that ‘myths draw their form, significance and resonance [...] from present-day needs for meaning; the duration of their life is identical to that of these needs.’<sup>66</sup> It would be of great benefit in our context to reflect on this insight in the classroom, by, for instance, exploring responses to Behaim during the course of history and comparing the various meanings drawn from the myth with those we find in textbooks of today.

### **The cognitive dimension: is the Behaim narrative empirically plausible?**

The decisive criterion within the cognitive dimension of historical culture according to Jörn Rüsen is ‘truth’, in the sense of the ‘traceability to fact of all statements on the past of humanity.’<sup>67</sup> In Rüsen’s terms, the cognitive dimension revolves around qualities of historical narratives definable as ‘plausibility’, ‘*Triftigkeit*’ (cf. the chapter in this volume on the definition of historical myth) or ‘traceability to fact’ (*Begründungsfähigkeit*) as used above<sup>68</sup>, the property of making intersubjective sense (*intersubjektive Nachvollziehbarkeit*)<sup>69</sup>, and ‘the ability [of a narrative] to generate assent [to it] (*Zustimmungsfähigkeit*)’<sup>70</sup>. If the quality of the myth thus formulated is not present, yet the narrative still enjoys general societal acceptance as ‘true’ and finds repetition within historical culture in response to various needs for direction and orientation, it meets the definition of a historical myth (cf. again the introductory chapter of this volume).

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<sup>66</sup> Assmann, *Mythos*, 15–16.

<sup>67</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Historik*, 236.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 60ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

Rüsen names a number of levels on which we can describe the extent to which a narrative makes intersubjective sense. His original set of distinct criteria in this context comprised empirical, normative and narrative *Triftigkeit*, each of which recognises a narrative as endowed with discipline-specific properties.<sup>71</sup> What follows will analyse the Behaim narrative in relation to each of these three types of *Triftigkeit*.

Empirical *Triftigkeit* revolves around the ‘factual nature (*Tatsächlichkeit*) of the events told in the narrative’.<sup>72</sup> A narrative is capable of generating assent when it can demonstrate a ‘verifiable relation to facts’<sup>73</sup> which can be established methodically via critical examination of the sources. Accordingly, narratives which contradict historical sources cannot be credited with empirical *Triftigkeit*. The discussion that now follows will seek to establish whether it is possible to substantiate textbook narratives around Behaim on this empirical plane by analysing individually each component of the Behaim narrative within historical culture as identified and detailed earlier in this chapter.

### **Behaim’s *Erdapfel*: the first globe in history?**

Contrary to the claim frequently encountered in textbooks, Behaim’s globe was not the world’s first. Globes were evidently in existence in classical antiquity; we further know of several from the late Middle Ages, before Behaim’s time, examples mentioned in the literature being a globe produced by Jean Fusoris from the year 1432 and one made by Guillaume Hobit in the 1440s. Another known incident is the presentation by Nicolaus Germanus of a globe for the Vatican’s new library as a gift to Pope Sixtus IV in the year 1477.<sup>74</sup> Behaim’s *Erdapfel* is the oldest *surviving* globe of which we are aware to date; insofar as sources prove the existence of older globes, it does not merit description as the first.

### **Did Behaim inspire Columbus?**

Textbooks tell their readers that Behaim knew Columbus, advised him, or, at the least, inspired him in some way. The academic literature on Behaim points out, however, that the earliest date at which the two could possibly have met was the year 1484, at which

<sup>71</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Zeit und Sinn. Strategien historischen Denkens*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990, 92ff. In 2013, Rüsen added the criterion of theoretical *Triftigkeit*: Rüsen, *Historik*, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Rüsen, *Historik*, 59.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Denis E. Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, 113

point Columbus' plan had matured and he had no need of encouragement or inspiration of any kind.<sup>75</sup> Further, Columbus never mentions Behaim in any of his notes or writings – and neither, indeed, does he discuss the matter of whether the earth be flat or spherical.<sup>76</sup> It is instead the case that the idea of sailing west to reach India was in the air at the end of the fifteenth century, with the period 1431 to 1492 seeing numerous demonstrable attempts to get to India or China via the western route.<sup>77</sup> Columbus simply took the general expansion of exploration into the Atlantic one step further than had others<sup>78</sup> and arrived in America by chance, due to a miscalculation. There is therefore no empirical proof for the putative connection between Behaim and Columbus, and indeed it does not make sense; Columbus and the other explorers of the time had no need of Behaim.

### **Did Behaim consign the notion of the flat Earth to history?**

The third principal element of the Behaim narrative, the highly popular notion that, at the dawn of the modern age, a scientific revolution swept away the medieval flat-earth concept, lacks any empirical plausibility, as a view of the world as a flat 'disc' prevailed neither in Behaim's lifetime nor at any point in the preceding latin Middle Ages. Consensus on this has been in place in the German-language and international literature for several decades.<sup>79</sup> In the former area, Reinhard Krüger, a Stuttgart-based specialist in Romance language and culture, provided important impetus, analysing a large corpus of medieval sources to demonstrate that the writings of all influential medieval thinkers – church fathers, popes, natural philosophers, mystics, and so on – who have left sources to posterity, and which sources have been preserved, refer entirely by-the-by to the earth as a sphere.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the idea, so widespread in historical culture, of ecclesiasti-

<sup>75</sup> Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 83.

<sup>76</sup> Bernhard, *Hispanoamerika*, 72.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Bräunlein, *Martin Behaim*, 84.

<sup>78</sup> Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 8–9.

<sup>79</sup> The following titles represent a small selection of the work published on this topic: Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians*, New York: Praeger, 1991; Louise M. Bishop, 'The Myth of the Flat Earth', Stephen J. Harris and Bryon Lee Grigsby (eds.), *Misconceptions about the Middle Ages*, New York, London: Routledge, 2008, 97–101; Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Raum und Raumvorstellungen im Mittelalter: 30. Kölner Mediaevistentagung vom 10. bis 13. September 1996 in der Universität zu Köln (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 25)*, Berlin: DeGruyter, 1998; Rudolf Simek, *Erde und Kosmos im Mittelalter. Das Weltbild vor Kolumbus*, Munich: C.H. Beck 1992; Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, 'Die Kugelgestalt der Erde in der Kartographie des Mittelalters', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 58 (1976), 77–95; Brigitte Englisch, *Ordo orbis terrae: die Weltsicht in den Mappae mundi des frühen und hohen Mittelalters (Orbis Mediaevalis 3)*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002; Peter Aufgebauer, 'Die Erde ist eine Scheibe. Das mittelalterliche Weltbild in der Wahrnehmung der Neuzeit', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 57, 7/8 (2006), 427–441.

<sup>80</sup> Reinhard Krüger, *moles globosa, globus terrae und arenosus globus in Spätantike und Mittelalter. Eine Kritik des Mythos von der Erdscheibe*, Berlin: Weidler, 2012, 68.

cal propagation of the flat-earth theory has no basis whatsoever in the sources. At no point in history did the Church regard the earth as flat.<sup>81</sup>

Narrative *Triftigkeit*, as a criterion of intersubjectivity, centres on the explication of an artefact of meaning which is capable of generating assent.<sup>82</sup> The question arises in this connection of the context placed around a specific narrative, or, put differently, the historical question a narrative is seeking to answer. The Behaim narrative, as it appears in textbooks, supplies an answer to the question ‘What’s “modern” about the modern age?’ Whereas the Middle Ages – thus runs the narrative – were a time of darkness and obscurity for knowledge and scholarship, the dawn of the modern era brought the rise of a handful of great men who finally surmounted this ‘old, barbaric age’. One of them – the narrative continues – was Martin Behaim, who gave the world his new, exclusive knowledge of the earth’s spherical form and in so doing provided substantive momentum to the scientific and scholarly revolution. The story’s embedded context is an overarching narrative drawing a direct line from the philosophical school of humanism, via the early modern age’s inventions and discoveries and the Reformation to Copernicus and Galileo Galilei. Behaim’s globe and the supersession of the medieval flat-earth theory, alongside the ‘discovery’ of America and Copernicus’ heliocentric model, are constitutive components of this master narrative – a ‘founding narrative’ of modernity<sup>83</sup>, a conglomeration of narratives lacking empirical plausibility, each propping up the others. Behaim’s place in this mythic aggregation is not founded on fact, and it does not make sense. If people of the medieval period really did assume the world was a sphere, and globes were in existence before Behaim’s time, the – in this context all-important – question must arise as to why textbooks should laud so prominently a German who happened in the year 1492 to produce one of the period’s many globes. The retrospective attachment of meaning to Behaim and this globe is non-plausible insofar as it either makes no sense in itself or rests on narratives with no basis in empirically demonstrable fact; the Behaim myth depends on the myth of the flat Earth to give it a voice.

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. the notably early work by the distinguished historian of science Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957, 108.

<sup>82</sup> Rösen, *Historik*, 62.

<sup>83</sup> Assmann, *Mythos*, 19.

In relation to normative *Triftigkeit*, our focus should be on identifying the possibilities for finding meaning and identity with which a story presents us and the direction or orientation an individual or collective, engaging with the past in the form of this story, gains in the sense of a ‘message’ or an instruction for future action.<sup>84</sup> The Behaim narrative is linked to a performative self-display of a scientific modern age whose intent is to draw boundaries between itself and the medieval period: “‘Medieval’ is virtually a synonym of all that is obscure, backward, reactionary.”<sup>85</sup> The Behaim narrative, as it is told in textbooks, serves to support the alleged superiority of ‘our times’: ‘Among the fundamental convictions of modernity is the belief that, in the Renaissance, we Europeans emancipated ourselves, by the light emanating from the ancient classics, from the dullness and asininity of the Middle Ages.’<sup>86</sup> In this manner proceeds the reproduction of discourses which express a ‘need for the performance of superiority and *modernitas* towards the *aetas media*’<sup>87</sup> and which saw ‘older’ history and culture dispensed with as early as in the Renaissance period. In this narrative, the ‘good guys’ (the ‘us’ of scientific modernity), thanks to the achievements of Behaim, Columbus, Copernicus and Galilei, were able to prevail over the backwardness and bigotry of the medieval ‘Other’. We cannot thus attain normative plausibility if we do not undertake a process of historical ‘reflection on and validation of [our] perspective’<sup>88</sup> which will ‘make transparent’ the ‘central problems of orientation in the context of the present time’ that are associated with a specific narrative<sup>89</sup>, and instead paint pictures of an ‘obscure’ medieval period with the intent of showcasing the superiority of our own era.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> On normative *Triftigkeit*, cf. also Christoph Kühberger, ‘Normative *Triftigkeit*’, Christoph Kühberger and Dirk Mellies (eds.), *Inventing the EU. Zur De-Konstruktion von »fertigen Geschichten« über die EU in deutschen, polnischen und österreichischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2009, 154–196.

<sup>85</sup> Aaron Gurjewitsch, *Das Weltbild des mittelalterlichen Menschen*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1978, 6.

<sup>86</sup> Krüger, *moles globosa*, 58.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Rösen, *Historik*, 61.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> On this issue, in relation to normative *Triftigkeit*, cf. also Waltraud Schreiber, ‘Schulgeschichtsbücher als Grundlage für die Methodenentwicklung’, Waltraud Schreiber et al. (eds.), *Analyse von Schulbüchern als Grundlage empirischer Geschichtsdidaktik*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013, 38–65, 44; Michael Sauer, *Geschichte unterrichten. Eine Einführung in die Didaktik und Methodik*, Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2003, 64f. On the Middle Ages in the history classroom, cf. Wolfgang Hasberg and Uwe Uffemann, *Mittelalter und Geschichtsdidaktik. Zum Stand einer Didaktik des Mittelalters*, Neuried: ars una, 2002.

**Conclusion: The aestheticisation and politicisation of historical memory; the potential of the Behaim myth in the history classroom**

It is unequivocally evident from the discussion above that the narrative around Martin Behaim, as it appears in German textbooks as manifestations of historical culture, cannot stand up to scrutiny of its *Triftigkeit*. The further circumstances that the narrative, first, is societally accorded ‘truth’, and second, frequently finds itself reiterated and reproduced, qualify it for classification as a historical myth. This myth’s establishment within historical culture, and its tenacity once there, are connected to political and aesthetic factors, to the extent that aesthetic and political strategies for the generation of meaning predominated over cognitive strategies at the time the myth came into being and during the process of its firm embedding in historical culture. Rösen terms this dominance of aesthetic or political strategies for the generation of meaning over cognitive ones ‘aestheticisation’ and ‘politicisation’ respectively.<sup>91</sup> In this spirit, we can perceive in current textbook narratives about Behaim the presence of ‘problematic utterances of historical memory’.<sup>92</sup> This narrative is a ‘German’ myth, possessed of ‘beauty’ to the extent that its underlying structure is an archetypal one also at the foundations of myths from a diverse range of countries, fairytales, and modern feature films. The myth of Behaim, as it appears in textbooks, is accordingly a monomyth of this type.

This chapter’s purpose was to provide a multifaceted exploration of the master narrative which has grown around Behaim and de-construct it in its property as myth. Concluding, we find ourselves facing again the question of how this and similar myths, engaged with in the history classroom, can benefit our pupils’ historical learning.<sup>93</sup> In our century, the discipline of history education research has come in increasing unison to the conclusion that achieving the global aim of history teaching, that is, preparing the way for pupils’ development of a mature historical consciousness, necessarily entails centring one’s teaching around such historical thinking practices.<sup>94</sup> The pupils we encounter in our classrooms are living in a world increasing all the time in interculturality, plurality and interconnectedness, with the result that they will be confronted throughout their

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<sup>91</sup> Rösen, *Geschichtskultur*, 517f.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Roland Bernhard, ‘Teaching to think historically using textbooks. Insights for initial teacher education drawn from a qualitative empirical study in Austria’, *Educatio Siglo XXI* 36 (1), 2018, 39–56.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Christoph Kühberger, *Kompetenzorientiertes historisches und politisches Lernen. Methodische und didaktische Annäherungen für Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung*, Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2<sup>nd</sup> amended edition 2009.

lives with the need to reorientate themselves, readjust their practices and notions, and engage with ‘lifelong learning’. History education, then, cannot regard the primary purpose of history teaching as simply supplying packages of knowledge; teachers need, instead, to promote pupils’ capacity to interact with historical information appropriately and intelligently and develop an active, structuring command of historical knowledge, selecting and assessing information on the basis of a sound rationale.<sup>95</sup> In a period in which history is all around us everywhere we go, and we all have instant access online to the lion’s share of the available historical knowledge in an unstructured and unverified state, we need to know, teach, and learn how to handle history, and how to handle historical culture.

Myths’ contribution to this task is their ability to school learners’ domain-specific methodological skills in terms of their ability to uncover and establish answers to historical questions through a process of de- and reconstruction narratives. This ability should include pupils’ capacity to scrutinise their textbooks – as manifestations of historical culture – and the interpretations contained therein<sup>96</sup>. As touched upon above, history lessons can usefully focus on historical myths per se and the societal contexts in which history comes into being. Why do we depict history today in this or that specific manner? What are the factors (aesthetic, political, etc.) influencing a particular historical representation? In relation to Behaim, such a process might, for instance, involve deconstructing the stamp discussed at the beginning of this chapter, using it as a springboard for reflection on Behaim, Columbus and the myth of the flat Earth. Along with the stamp, pupils could be given a discussion of globes before Behaim’s time, and medieval illustrations showing the earth as a sphere, alongside textbooks which attribute to Behaim the production of the first globe. An accompanying task might be formulated thus: ‘Can you explain why Behaim’s globe is so important that it even appears on official German stamps – and in your textbook – 500 years after it was made?’ This manner of proceeding would present pupils with, to use Rolf Schörken’s terms, an utterly ‘abrasive’ (*aufgeraute*)<sup>97</sup> total picture, whose obvious contradictions strike them on sight.

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<sup>95</sup> Schreiber, *Analyse*, 52.

<sup>96</sup> Sylvia Mebus, ‘Wie wahr ist Geschichte im Lehrbuch? Zur De-Konstruktion von Darstellungen in Geschichtslehrbüchern als Aufgabe des Geschichtsunterrichts’, Waltraud Schreiber and Sylvia Mebus (eds.), *Durchblicken. Dekonstruktion von Schulbüchern*, Neuried: ars una, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and updated edition 2006, 36–43, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Rolf Schörken, ‘Das Aufbrechen narrativer Harmonie. Für eine Erneuerung des Erzählens mit Augenmaß’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 48 (1997), 727–735, 731.

The realisation that what the stamp, and their textbook, are reproducing is nothing but a historical myth is likely to initiate in pupils a process of reflection that matures their engagement with textbooks as artefacts of historical culture.

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Susanne Grindel

## The myth of colonialism: European expansion in Africa

### Remaining relevant: The colonial myth

Time and again, mythic narratives have exalted and glorified the history of European expansion; there has been particular emphasis on the colonisation of Africa, lauded in countless works of European culture from art and sculpture to architecture and literature, and in popular culture and mass media, as a civilising mission and the fulfilment of a duty to go forth and modernise.<sup>1</sup> This cultural output has never completely glossed over colonialism's more malign side; Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, a haunting account of Europeans' progress into Africa's inner reaches, figures its protagonists' journey up the Congo as a confrontation with the foreign and Other and with the murkier depths of the human condition.<sup>2</sup> Such depictions notwithstanding, the myth of modern colonialism as a European success story remains alive and well, and continues to exert its effect.

As late as 2007, the then French president Nicolas Sarkozy updated and reprised this narrative of progress and modernisation. During a state visit to France's former colony Senegal, speaking before an audience from Dakar's Cheikh Anta Diop University, he described Africans as living in harmony with nature, but showing no interest in progress or in furthering human development, which dynamism he ascribed, as did his forebears in the colonial period, to Europeans alone. African and French intellectuals responded with outrage to this patronising approach and its resurrection of a Hegelian idea of history, which they had believed consigned to the past, that equated Africa with backwardness.<sup>3</sup> Additional recent proof of the colonial myth's continued vitality came in 2011, in

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<sup>1</sup>Michael J. Wintle (ed.), *Imagining Europe: Europe and European Civilisation as Seen from its Margins and by the Rest of the World, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Brussels: Lang, 2008; Wintle, *The Image of Europe: Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography throughout the Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Norton Critical Edition, 2016 (first published 1899).

<sup>3</sup>Nicolas Sarkozy, 'Allocution de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, président de la République, prononcée l'université de Dakar (26.7.2009)', Adame Ba Konaré (ed.), *Petit précis de remise / niveau sur l'histoire africaine / l'usage du président Sarkozy*, Paris: Découverte, 2009, 343–355; the volume likewise contains the critical response to the speech from African historians. Cf. further: Jean-Pierre Chrétien (ed.), *L'Afrique de Sarkozy. Un deni d'histoire*, Paris: Karthala, 2008; Makhily Gassama and Zohra Bouchentouf-Siagh (eds.), *L'Afrique répond à Sarkozy. Contre le discours de Dakar*, Paris: P. Rey, 2008. Translations of selected discussions of the topic and of Sarkozy's speech are in Peter Cichon, Reinhart Hosch and Fritz Peter Kirsch (eds.), *Der undankbare Kontinent? Afrikanische Antworten auf europäische Bevormundung*,

the shape of a book titled *Civilization: The West and the Rest* and authored by the influential British historian Niall Ferguson<sup>4</sup>, and the subject of great attention in the UK, struggling with its postcolonial demons, and beyond. An earlier work of Ferguson's, *Empire*, bore a subtitle which serves as a concise formula of his position on colonialism: 'How Britain Made the Modern World'.<sup>5</sup> Ferguson perceives the British Empire as having been the engine of an unprecedented mobilisation of people, markets and knowledge whose civilisatory achievement far outweighed any negative aspects of the colonial project. In his view, while the Empire served as the dynamic driver of change, the world beyond Europe remains static, out of time, and in need of European intervention.<sup>6</sup> Both the French president and the British historian frame their argument in terms of a dichotomy which casts the European colonial powers as bestowers of progress and modernity and the colonies as mere recipients of these achievements and benefits. In so doing, they hark back to notions of Africa as a backward continent without a history of its own.

In the course of Europe's colonial conquests, scholars of Africa, reinterpreting European knowledge about the continent as it was before the colonial era, had established a negative image of African history and African societies which tended to negate African cultural achievements or attribute them instead to allegedly technically and culturally superior 'civilised' peoples who had migrated to the continent. Pre-colonial Africa's flourishing towns and cities, powerful kingdoms, forms of rule based on feudal systems and featuring highly organised military structures, and civilisations - some of which used written script and highly developed metal processing procedures - did not fit into the narrative of Africa's need for colonial rule that it might be liberated from its lack of history and culture. An example of the suppression of this knowledge about Africa is the rediscovery of the ruined city of Great Zimbabwe by European researchers towards the end of the nineteenth century. Radiocarbon dating has placed the origins of this former capital of the defunct Kingdom of Zimbabwe in the eleventh century; up to 18,000

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Hamburg: Argument-Verl. 2010, 37–56; a review of the volume is in Henriette Hanke Güttinger, 'Afrika weist den französischen Imperialismus zurück. Afrika antwortet Sarkozy – Gegen die Rede von Dakar', *Zeit-Fragen*, no. 31, 2. August 2011, <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/de/ausgaben/2011/nr-31-vom-282011/afrika-weist-den-franzoesischen-imperialismus-zurueck.html>, last accessed 24 February 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Civilization. The West and the Rest*, London: Lane, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World*, London: Lane, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> A critique of Ferguson's view can be found in Jon Wilson, 'Niall Ferguson's imperial passion', *History Workshop Journal*, 56,1 (2003), 175–183; Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, 'New Imperialism oder Liberal Empire? Niall Fergusons Empire-Apologik im Zeichen der Anglobalization', *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 3, 1 (2006), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1-2006/id=4525>, last accessed 24 February 2019.

people lived here, in the kingdom's political and economic centre, making their living from breeding cattle, mining for gold, and trade with Persia and China. Until well into the 1960s, however, European researchers continually denied the indigenous origin of the ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage site, seeking instead to trace them to the influence of supposedly more advanced Arab or Phoenician cultures from the north.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence of attempts to reinforce or revitalise the colonial myth comes to our notice in a broad range of arenas of public life. The impact of European states' colonial experience on their political spheres, the representation of their history, and their academic scholarship has diverse manifestations; the examples I have cited above demonstrate their ongoing power which extends beyond the phase of decolonisation and brings its influence to bear on current approaches to foreign policy, historical self-perceptions, and canons of knowledge. Seen in this context, the colonial myth appears as current as it has ever been, particularly in view of the mythic structures and patterns which dominate its narratives, reducing the complexity of power relations to simple binary oppositions and obscuring via boundary-drawing the interconnections which comprise cultural encounters.

### **Postcolonialism and global history**

Approaches from global history resist these attempts to revitalise the myth by insisting on the character of colonialism in Africa as a story of intra- and inter-African and – European entanglements and interconnections. 'Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself.'<sup>8</sup>, observed Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, American historians of Africa, at the end of the 1990s, advocating on this basis for a research agenda that would leave behind the straightforward dichotomy of the rulers and the ruled-over and desist from the distinction between imperial and colonial spheres of action, instead bringing both sets of putative oppositions together. Postcolonialism and research into cultural transfer have likewise offered key stimuli for the colonial myth's deconstruction; this work has rendered us incapable of telling the story of European expansion as a narrative of progress

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<sup>7</sup> Walter Sauer, 'Vergessene Glanzzeiten. Afrika geschichtsloser Kontinent?', Katja Böhler and Jürgen Hoeren (eds.), *Afrika. Mythos und Zukunft*, Freiburg: Herder, 2003, 39–48, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', Cooper and Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009 [orig. 1997], 1–56, 1.

without being egregiously reductive. These developments notwithstanding, it is impossible to overlook the continued vacillation of this expansion's general interpretation between its mythic formulation and the accounts formed in the light of global history, and, against this backdrop, to fail to take account of the ongoing powerful influence of myths in historical culture, which should and does prompt us to explore the ways in which particular media of that historical culture engage with myth. Textbooks, or, more precisely, history textbooks are a prime exemplar of such a medium. Their primary purpose and perception as educational media takes nothing away from their function as barometers of the exclusivity or inclusivity of predominant societal narratives and of the type of historical thinking which underlies public historical culture.

The potential of textbooks, then, as an illuminating object of research into issues of historical culture stems, first, from their selection, canonisation or delegitimisation of knowledge, that is, from their control of what goes to make for history.<sup>9</sup> It comes further from textbooks' provision of, so to speak, an instruction manual for interpreting and drawing meaning from historical information, be it a history laden with myths and homogenising master narratives or a history struggling to give rise to a multi-dimensional historical thinking as described by Jörn Rüsen and others.<sup>10</sup> The usefulness, in this context, of exploring how history textbooks handle myths arises from the capacity of this process not only to transport the myths themselves, but also to render them visible and legible, that is, to educate learners in what we might call myth literacy and in understanding the functions they fulfil.<sup>11</sup> Put differently, we are seeking here to understand

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Höhne, *Schulbuchwissen. Umriss einer Wissens- und Medientheorie des Schulbuchs*, Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 2003; Michael W. Apple (ed.), *The state and the politics of knowledge*, New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003; Simone Lässig, 'Wer definiert relevantes Wissen? Schulbücher und ihr gesellschaftlicher Kontext', Eckhardt Fuchs et al. (eds.), *Schulbuch konkret. Kontexte – Produktion – Unterricht*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2010, 199–215; Felicitas Macgilchrist and Marcus Otto, 'Schulbücher für den Geschichtsunterricht', Version 1.0, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte; available online at <http://docupedia.de/zg/Schulbuecher>, last accessed 24 February 2019; Staffan Selander (ed.), *Textbooks and Educational Media. Collected Papers 1991–1995*, Stockholm: International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM), 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichtsbewusstsein. Psychologische Grundlagen, Entwicklungskonzepte, empirische Befunde*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2001; Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2013; Peter Seixas, 'Progress, Presence and Historical Consciousness: Confronting Past, Present and Future in Postmodern Time', *Paedagogica Historica* 48, 6 (2012), 859–872; Klaus Bergmann, *Multiperspektivität. Geschichte selber denken*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2008 [orig. 2000]; Linda Symcox and Arie Wilschut (eds.), *National History Standards. The Problem of the Canon and the Future of Teaching History*, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2009; Peter Lee, 'Historical Knowledge and the National Curriculum', Hilary Bourdillon (ed.): *Teaching History*, London: Routledge, 1995 [orig. 1994], 41–48.

<sup>11</sup> On textbooks as disseminators of myths, cf. Chiara Bottici, 'Myths of Europe: A Theoretical Approach', *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society* 1, 2 (2009), 9–33, 20f.

how history textbooks respond, on the one hand, to the need within historical culture for grand narratives<sup>12</sup> and, on the other, to the scholarly need for knowledge based in demonstrable fact; we are asking how much in the way of myth textbooks need, and how much in the way of global history they actually supply.

This chapter will attempt to find the answers via exemplary exploration of European expansion and colonialism in Africa during the heyday of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century. After a brief outline of the function of myth in history textbooks<sup>13</sup>, it will examine in greater detail spatial, narrative and image-related, or pictorial, manifestations of the colonial myth in history textbooks from states that were once European colonial powers – specifically England, France and Germany – from the beginning of the twentieth century onward. The chapter concludes with a look at current textbooks in the context of our primary concerns around historical culture and perceptions of and responses to myths.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-François Lyotard perceived the postmodern era as bringing an end to grand narratives which had the capacity to generate meaning, due to the loss of credibility this period inflicted upon overarching patterns (such as God and reason) used to explain the world and its phenomena which staked a claim to all arenas of life. He recognised, however, the continued existence of a need for narratives which provide orientation. Jean-François Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen*, Peter Engelmann (ed.) and Otto Pfersmann (tr.), Vienna: Passagen, 2012 [orig. *La condition postmoderne*, 1979].

<sup>13</sup> Cf. this volume's introductory chapter, including its discussion on the definition of myth.

<sup>14</sup> This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive quantitative textbook analysis; rather, it seeks to take a comparative historical approach to European history textbooks' treatment of and influence by the colonial myth. On analysing recent history textbooks from Germany, cf. Anne Kerber, 'Kolonialgeschichte in deutschen Schulbüchern – kritisch oder kritikwürdig?', Helma Lutz and Kathrin Gawarecki (eds.), *Kolonialismus und Erinnerungskultur. Die Kolonialvergangenheit im kollektiven Gedächtnis der deutschen und niederländischen Einwanderungsgesellschaft*, Münster: Waxmann, 2005, 81–94. Post-colonial approaches including critiques of racism and likewise relating to German history textbooks can be found in Elina Marmer, Papa Sow and Aram Ziai, 'Der "versteckte" Rassismus – "Afrika" im Schulbuch', Elina Marmer and Papa Sow (eds.), *Wie Rassismus aus Schulbüchern spricht. Kritische Auseinandersetzung mit 'Afrika'-Bildern und Schwarz-Weiß-Konstruktionen in der Schule – Ursachen, Auswirkungen und Handlungsansätze für die pädagogische Praxis*, Weinheim, Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2015, 110–129; Elina Marmer and Aram Ziai, 'Racism in the teaching of "development" in German secondary school textbooks', *Critical Literacy: Theory and Practices* 9 (2015), available online at <http://criticalliteracy.freehostia.com/index.php?journal=criticalliteracy&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=165&path%5B%5D=141>, last accessed 16 May 2019; Marion Davenas, *Kolonialismus in Geschichtsschulbüchern. Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklung der Darstellung der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte in deutschen Schulbüchern für den Geschichtsunterricht*, unpublished Master's dissertation, Humboldt-Universität, Political Science, Otto Suhr Institute: Berlin, 2013.

### What purposes do myths serve?

Myths have multiple uses for engaging pupils with the past in history textbooks and the history classroom. Among them are their refreshment of cultural knowledge drawn from happenings and narratives of origin in classical antiquity and their readability as expressions of religious tradition.<sup>15</sup> Beyond this, myths represent a type of collective remembering which enables us to retrace and identify the property of history as a construct. Pupils at an advanced stage of schooling can work with myths to gain insights into '(so-ciety's) interaction with history and the associated specific forms of remembrance' and to be encouraged to explore the 'nature of the world and of human individuals as historical beings and the capacity of history to tell the truth'.<sup>16</sup> Indirectly, their exploration can also create links with the term of 'myths' in its colloquial sense, outlined in this volume's opening chapter, as untrue stories, 'tall tales' or singular, exaggerated phenomena.

Success in this endeavour will depend on an underlying definition of myth whose reach is sufficient to encapsulate all these aspects. 'A definition aligned with cultural elitism, which restricts the quality of myth to a specific time period and specific, classical cultural context' would be of little use for exploring 'the purposes served by historical memory and our interaction with it'<sup>17</sup> in the history classroom. A more inclusive, encompassing concept of myth, which, influenced by modernity, enters into a thorough encounter with its history and theory and with how people and societies have responded to it, seems the least we need in this regard. We might thus argue, in line with the thought of Roland Barthes, that the concept of 'myths' by no means refers exclusively to a canon of plots and narrations from classical antiquity, instead, its distinguishing characteristic resides in the way in which myths give linguistic expression to historically demonstrable and fictitious events, people and places, ideas and happenings. Barthes' scrutiny of the everyday, laden as it is with collective, unconscious significances, gave birth to his theory of myth in modernity<sup>18</sup>, which defines a myth as a 'type of speech', a

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<sup>15</sup> Bavarian State Ministry of Education, Science and the Arts, *Lehrplan für das Gymnasium in Bayern*, Munich: State Institute for School Quality and Education Research, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2010, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Lower Saxony Ministry of Education, *Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium. Geschichte*, Hildesheim, 2011, see here 'Geschichts- und Erinnerungskultur', 34.

<sup>17</sup> Stephanie Wodianka and Juliane Ebert, 'Vorwort', Wodianka and Ebert (eds.), *Metzler Lexikon moderner Mythen. Figuren, Konzepte, Ereignisse*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 2014, V.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, tr. Annette Lavers, New York: Hill and Wang, 1984, cited from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/myth.html>, last accessed 11 February 2019.

system of communication, or the way in which a society speaks of manifestations of reality, charges them with meaning and essentialises them.<sup>19</sup>

The modern concept of myth, then, is broad in meaning in terms of the contextual framework outlined above, within which its definitions seek to pinpoint its functions. Myths act to generate meaning by supplying interpretations for the way things are in the world, passing norms and values down from generation to generation, presenting us with figures and models for identification, and reducing complexity.<sup>20</sup> They bind a society together via narrative and forge links from the present back to a significant past. In this sense, they are founding narratives; they have the potential to reinforce political structures and orders. Herfried Münkler terms them ‘cognitive and emotional resources availed of by politics’<sup>21</sup>, needed and called upon most of all when a society faces structural caesurae. Differentiating between historical and political myths is a difficult endeavour, with the distinction evident only in regard to their function and purpose. Yves Bizeul proposes a definition of political myths as narratives of origin or of acts of foundation linked to the ‘salvific history of a political community’<sup>22</sup>, which gives them a sacral dimension; particularly a nation’s political myths ‘tell of the willingness of [a community’s] ancestors to sacrifice themselves for the commonwealth.’<sup>23</sup> They harness societal energies by virtue of exaggerated exaltation and a ‘constitutive excess’.<sup>24</sup> The degree of significance requisite for the formation of a community around a myth, however, only sets in when that narrative goes beyond simply evoking the quality of the mythic and provides as many groups as possible within a society with points of connection to sources of societal self-reassurance.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Hans Blumenberg regards myths as supplying a way to comprehend reality and distance oneself from frightening and overpowering forces. In his terms, ‘work on myth’ is a struggle for ‘significance’ and a sense of meaning. Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, 133 passim. See also Rudolf Wansing, ‘Mythos’, Nicolas Pethes and Jens Ruchaz (eds.), *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2001, 392–393, 392. Cf. the following passage and the introductory chapter to this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Die Mythen der Deutschen*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Yves Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2006, 3–14, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, 5.

<sup>24</sup> It is in this that Bizeul perceives a characteristic differentiating myth from utopia on the one side and from ideology on the other. In his account, a myth does not conceptualise an ideal future community; instead, it mobilises societal forces, and it advances integration rather than focusing, like ideology, on the division and reproduction of existing orders. Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, 10, 12.

### The colonial myth

European expansion gave rise to a colonial myth which we can examine in the light of the definitions and aspects of myth outlined in the previous sections. As well as providing cohesion and integration to a nation, this myth retraces divergence and competition within Europe and beyond to a unifying narrative. The myth's core characteristics are an assumption of civilisatory superiority on the part of the Europeans and an assertion that the course of modernisation has an inevitable, irresistible momentum. It exalts the history of European expansion to the status of a mythic process that created order from chaos and brought progress and culture to the world's hitherto allegedly backward regions. The myth casts the Europeans of the colonial period as bearers of the 'white man's burden', consisting in the imperative to civilise and thrust upon them by reason of their superiority; in so doing, it dispenses with contingent factors and embeds the events of the colonial era in a historical teleology.

These properties locate the colonial myth among myths of ideas or spatial myths, depending on whether we consider Europe more of an idea or more of a space. In her typology of myths, Heidi Hein-Kircher describes the spatial myth (*Raummythos*) as defining or producing space(s), particularly in relation to border regions<sup>25</sup> which might conceive of themselves as outposts of civilisation or, as in the case of Poland, as *antemurale christianitas*, the last bastion of Christianity in the East. The colonial myth showcases the European space as a locus of progress with boundaries continuously expanding into *terra incognita* as colonisation pushes on.<sup>26</sup> The definition of the myth of ideas (*Ideenmythos*) is apposite to the colonial myth in terms of its missionary self-belief and its absolutism, as visible in its claim of universal validity for the European notions of development and modernity.

What, then, sustains this myth, and what are the factors that have surrounded European expansion with this mythic status? Proceeding from Roland Barthes' assertion that it is

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<sup>25</sup> Heidi Hein-Kircher, 'Überlegungen zu einer Typologie von politischen Mythen aus historiographischer Sicht. Ein Versuch', Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder Institut, 2006, 407–424, 412. Chiara Bottici distinguishes between cultural and political myths; Chiara Bottici, 'Myths of Europe. A Theoretical Approach', *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society*, 1 (2009), 9–33; Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myths*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Chiara Bottici and Benoit Challand, *Imagining Europe: Myth, memory, and identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> The North American variant of this spatial myth is the frontier myth; cf. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, New York: Henry Holt, 1921 (1893).

not content that is crucial to the mythic, but form, this chapter approaches this question from the threefold perspective of the colonial myth's constitution in spaces, narratives and images.

### Spaces

A key component of the colonial myth is the fiction of empty space, defining and imagining the territories to be colonised as *terra nullius*, blank space on a map waiting to be first drawn and then completed by the colonial powers.<sup>27</sup> This endeavour of turning *terra incognita* into familiar territory involves European pioneers, missionaries, soldiers, traders, officials, settlers, scholars and scientists, whose acts of recording, measuring and naming both close their own gaps in knowledge and progress beyond them by lifting these territories into the consciousness of the world as a whole. From this perspective, colonial conquest amounts to an act of creation, of adding new regions to the known world. Ignoring, knowingly or otherwise, the existing names of rivers, mountains, deserts and geographically significant formations, the colonial penetration of African space forges a European image of Africa, turning Africa itself into a myth.<sup>28</sup> Part of this myth asserts the purely European provenance of the knowledge and skills deployed in this creative act of discovering and naming a new continent, and systematically condemns to oblivion the indigenous knowledge without which no expedition would have been possible.<sup>29</sup> This process of preparing a stage for European travellers to and in Africa to appear as possessors of knowledge requires the discursive dissolution of entanglements and interconnections and their replacement with dichotomies. The conferment by a European of a European name on the territory, meanwhile, lays a claim to dominion and sets up 'Europe' in the African space – a process which we might regard as a variation on the mytheme of *terra nullius*. Looked at through this lens, colonialism, not content with having brought new lands into being, drove their development to the extent that they rose to the status of civilised nations and economic powers. In this way, as an influential history textbook by Jules Isaac and Albert Malet put it, '[d]es nouvelles

<sup>27</sup> An example is the 'Map of the British Empire' (1886), which, leaving all non-British territories blank, drew the Empire as a globe-spanning endeavour for liberty, fraternity and cooperation. Susanne Grindel, "so viel von der Karte von Afrika britisch rot zu malen als möglich". Karten kolonialer Herrschaft in europäischen Geschichtsschulbüchern des 20. Jahrhunderts', Vadim Oswalt and Peter Haslinger (eds.), *Kampf der Karten. Propaganda- und Geschichtskarten als politische Instrumente und Identitätstexte*, Marburg: Herder Institut, 2012, 258–287, 259.

<sup>28</sup> Winfried Speitkamp, 'Afrika', Wodjanka und Ebert, *Lexikon moderner Mythen*, 6–9.

<sup>29</sup> Rebekka Habermas and Alexandra Przyrembel, 'Einleitung', Rebekka Habermas and Alexandra Przyrembel (eds.), *Von Käfern, Märkten und Menschen. Kolonialismus und Wissen in der Moderne*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013, 9–26.

Europes se sont [...] formées sur d'autres continents'; new European formations, 'new Europes', arose on other continents.<sup>30</sup>

The supposedly uninhabited territories within which Europeans settled served as spaces for the projection of an idealised community of settlers who created a homeland untainted by the impositions and indignities of modern society and amenable to their indulgence in a romanticised national identity. This new overseas home from home can even surpass its European models. In addition to this, the British and German citizens living, for instance, in the colonial settlements in Kenya or German South West Africa have not been lost to the nation through emigration, quite to the contrary; they remain a demographic resource for the metropole, which gives them, in the colonies, 'a home on German [or British or French, as the case may be] soil'<sup>31</sup>. The colonial myth, then, casts both the colony itself and the community of settlers as integral parts of the motherland. One particularly apposite example of this is Algeria, which during its more than 130 years of subjection to colonial rule was viewed as a continuation of France beyond the Mediterranean, '*un prolongement de la France*' or, indeed, a 'new France' coming into being, '*une nouvelle France en formation*'<sup>32</sup>. Other settler colonies, as we have seen, likewise attracted such perceptions.

In this discourse, the settlers embodied values, such as simplicity, tenacity and intrepidity, regarded as the true, unadulterated character traits of the European motherland.<sup>33</sup> A concomitant of idealised depictions of this type in German textbooks is a view of Ger-

<sup>30</sup> Jules Isaac et al., *Cours d'histoire Malet-Isaac de 1848 à 1914. Classe de Première*, Paris: Hachette, 1961, 368. Albert Malet established the textbook's reputation as its lead author in the period 1902-1914; his co-author Jules Isaac continued it after the war, from 1923, under the title of *Cours Malet-Isaac*. Characterised by its academic, factual style, numerous maps and illustrations, and patriotic point of view, the book was reissued in 2012 in a special edition for a general audience, conferring upon it – had it not achieved such a status a long time previously – the property of a national *lieu de mémoire*, specifically of the '*mémoire scolaire française*' (preface to 2012 edition). It is comparable in this to the '*Petit Lavis*', the eponymous Ernest Lavis's well-known history textbook for early secondary-level education. Cf. Jeannie Bauvois-Cauchepin, *Enseignement de l'histoire et mythologie nationale. Allemagne-France du début du XXe siècle aux années 1950*, Bern: Lang (L'Europe et les Europes, 2), 2002.

<sup>31</sup> David Müller, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes in kurzgefaßter, übersichtlicher Darstellung zum Gebrauch an höheren Unterrichtsanstalten und zur Selbstbelehrung*, Berlin: Franz Dahlen, 21<sup>st</sup> edition 1919, 533.

<sup>32</sup> André Alba et al., *Cours d'histoire Malet-Isaac. Histoire contemporaine depuis le milieu du XIXe siècle*, Paris: Hachette, 1930, 390 and 401.

<sup>33</sup> Bradley D. Naranch, 'Inventing the Auslandsdeutsche: Emigration, Colonial Fantasy, and German National Identity 1848–71', Eric Ames et al. (eds.), *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, 21–40; Daniel Joseph Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad: Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002; John Lonsdale, 'Kenya: Home Country and African Frontier', Robert A. Bickers (ed.) *Settlers and Expatriates. Britons Over the Seas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 74–111.

man expatriate culture, termed *Auslandsdeutschtum*, which rested on notions of quintessentially and unchangingly German tradition. The practice of ‘German customs’ bridged the gap between the Germans back home and the settlers overseas. A Weimar-era history book defines ‘as *Auslandsdeutsche* all those Germans [...] who have found a new homeland as settlers in foreign cultures [*Volkstum*], but who have remained aware of their bond with German culture and German consciousness [*Volksbewusstsein* (sic!)] by preserving the German language and German customs and traditions’<sup>34</sup>. The textbook numbers the *Auslandsdeutsche* at 30 million and deems them essential to the German nation’s cultural survival. A map of the ‘German national and cultural territory’ (*deutscher Volks- und Kulturboden*), with central Europe as its point of reference, reinforces the German assertion of expansive settlement in marking large tracts of land, particularly to the east of imperial Germany’s border, either as continuous *deutscher Kulturboden* or as ‘pockets and islands of German people and culture’ (*Streu- und Inseldeutschtum*). This map, painting as it does a picture of a nation extending far beyond its borders, is readable as a blueprint for Germany’s aggressive eastward expansion in the National Socialist period and the Second World War.<sup>35</sup>

### Narratives

A further central element of the colonial myth appears in the narrative of European dynamism and African stasis. Resting on discursive oppositions and the drawing of boundaries, it assigns to Europe the role of an active subject and to the colonies that of passive objects of European efforts to civilise and modernise. While this is obviously the case for depictions of colonialism founded on and transporting hegemonic perspectives, it is also in evidence in representations which attempt to cast a positive light on colonised peoples. The British writer, historian and sociologist Herbert George Wells, author of world-famous works of science fiction such as *War of the Worlds*, produced a history textbook, published in 1925, which brought a universalising approach to bear on history and largely succeeded in avoiding the Eurocentric and racist representations typical of the time, yet did not manage to exclude mythic elements from its account of colonial expansion:

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<sup>34</sup> Otto Boelitz, *Das Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtum. Seine Geschichte und seine Bedeutung*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1930, 3. Map of ‘German national and cultural territory’, *ibid.*, appendix. The preface to the first edition, published in 1926, takes a particularly culturally nationalistic tone in its argumentative claim on the lost colonies as culturally still part of the *Reich*.

<sup>35</sup> Guntram H. Herb, ‘Das größte Deutschland soll es sein! Suggestive Karten in der Weimarer Republik’, Haslinger and Oswalt (eds.), *Kampf der Karten*, 140–151.

[Africa] was a continent of black mystery; only Egypt and the coast were known. Here we have no space to tell the amazing story of the explorers and the adventurers who first pierced the African darkness, and of the traders, settlers, and scientific men who followed in their track. Wonderful races of men like the pygmies, strange beasts like the okapi, marvellous fruits and flowers, and insects, terrible diseases, astounding scenery of forest and mountain, enormous inland seas and mountains, gigantic rivers and cascades were revealed – *a whole new world*.<sup>36</sup>

Wells references here two key components of the colonial myth. First, he leverages the fascination of the foreign, exotic and other, the ‘black mystery’ as which Africa presents itself to the Europeans. His language redolent with imagery, he tells of ‘[w]onderful races of men’, ‘strange beasts’, ‘marvellous fruits and flowers’, ‘astounding scenery’, ‘enormous inland seas and mountains’, and ‘gigantic rivers and cascades’, thus citing a mythic image of Africa, formed in Europe, whose principal emphasis rests on its outstanding natural beauty. Second, he speaks of Europeans’ active exploration of the continent, that is, the ‘amazing story of the explorers and the adventurers who first pierced the African darkness’, whose thirst for knowledge, daring and desire to advance progress enabled wonderful things to be ‘revealed’ and roused the continent from its ahistoric, dreamlike stasis. A narrative of this kind allows no room for contact and conflict between the indigenous population and the arrivals from without; instead, it evokes an idea of Africa as a continent resting inert in itself and completely subject to the eternal cycle of nature.<sup>37</sup>

Parts of more recent textbooks have retained these dichotomies and the image of an Africa steeped, or stuck, in its traditions; they appear in descriptors such as ‘economic backwardness’ when referring to post-colonial African societies or in accounts of stagnant development and governments mired in kleptocratic practices.<sup>38</sup> Issues that affect dynamic, Western states in Europe, such as urbanisation and the rapid growth of metropolitan urban centres, appear, in these accounts, not to occur in African states. An inordinate focus in textbooks on issues that are supposedly specific to Africa amounts to the subtle perpetuation of the tradition/modernity opposition.

### Images

<sup>36</sup> Herbert George Wells, *A Short History of Mankind for Schools*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1925, 170-172.

<sup>37</sup> Speitkamp, *Afrika*, 5; cf. also this work’s remarks on the Hegelian idea of history contained in this narrative and evoked by Sarkozy in his speech of 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Bahr et al. (eds.), *Horizonte II. Vom Absolutismus bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2006, 286.

The image of the ‘foreign’ and diametrically ‘other’ is an integral component of the colonial myth, an alterity appearing in the form of the savage, the irrational, of physicality or emotionality, and providing an opposition to the European image of itself: barbarian, atavistic Africa versus civilised, enlightened Europe. Such discourse goes beyond merely justifying European expansion overseas and ennoble it as a shared European task, as evident in a German textbook from the year 1929 which told learners that their country took part ‘along with the other great nations in colonisation and – by suppressing the slave trade – in solving a cultural challenge posed to humanity.’<sup>39</sup> Textbooks from England were likewise at this time evoking a European community of civilisation in their emphasis on the Europeans’ determination ‘to stamp out this wicked trade in human beings, and the horrible cruelties connected with it.’<sup>40</sup> Visualising these imaginations, related illustrations featured side by side with drawings of civilisatory achievements such as railways<sup>41</sup> or black-and-white photographs showcasing the technical superiority of the great European cities.<sup>42</sup> The deployment of this illustrative tradition continued long after the colonial empires ceased to be.<sup>43</sup>

I will focus here on two specific aspects of the use of images and imagery, first, the voyeuristic putting on show of the ‘Other’ in ethnographic contexts, and, second, the description of this Other as an adversary in a battle or struggle. The distortive image of foreign peoples that found their audiences via colonial exhibitions, the popular press, and advertising for colonial goods in Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century did not start appearing in textbooks as critically intended source material, aimed at rendering processes of mythification visible and reversing them wherever possible, until the 1990s. By contrast, representations of the colonised ‘Other’ framed as ethnographic information have been at work since the beginning of the twentieth century, emphasising difference between Europeans and non-Europeans and amplifying this boundary-

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<sup>39</sup> Alfred Maurer, *Weltgeschichte von 1815–1926. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Geschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Lehrbuch der Geschichte für höhere Schulen*, Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1929, 115.

<sup>40</sup> H. W. Palmer, *Our Empire Overseas*, London: Blackie and Son, 1928, 230.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Peter Hill and John Charles Wright, *British History, 1815–1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, 272–273.

<sup>43</sup> For a German-language discussion of the theory of images underlying these considerations, and the distinction between *Bild* and *Abbild*, cf. the work of Klaus Sachs-Hombach; a good introduction is Sachs-Hombach, ‘Zur Theorie einer interdisziplinären allgemeinen Bildwissenschaft’, *Visual History. Online-Nachschlagewerk für die historische Bildforschung*, 7. Oktober 2014, <https://www.visual-history.de/2014/10/07/zur-theorie-einer-interdisziplinären-allgemeinen-bildwissenschaft/>, last accessed 24 February 2019.

drawing effect as more knowledge about colonised populations arrived in Europe; local cultures appear in these depictions as throwbacks to a past which merits consignment to the history books.<sup>44</sup> It is a logic which justifies the violence inherent in the colonial process as action against a barbarian belligerent, enabling the definition as legitimate force of France's brutal expansion in the north of Africa against a '*population belliqueuse*'<sup>45</sup>, the scorched-earth tactics deployed in the war on the Bantu peoples, the destruction of the South African empire of the 'warlike Zulus'<sup>46</sup>, and the colonial wars waged on the Herero and Nama in German South West Africa. This discourse describes the Tuareg as fearsome warriors whose resistance France overcame to expand its dominion in the Algerian Sahara, bringing Algeria completely under its rule and incorporating its West African colonies in an uninterrupted French territory.

Tall and muscular, of dusky hue, the Targi dress in blue or white cotton cloth. Drawing the front of their turbans into their faces leaves only their eyes visible, the cloth or veil (*tagelmust*) protects their mouths and nostrils from sandstorms or evil spirits. The Targi is armed with a lance, a straight sabre and a large shield of antelope hide. Mounted on a dromedary, the warrior is followed by his page.<sup>47</sup>

The tone of fascination in evidence here at the Tuareg's exoticism encompasses both a note of respect at their capacity for combat and a shade of superiority in regard to their superstition.

As they pushed along the Niger, the French colonial forces faced a renowned military leader in the shape of the West African ruler Samory Touré, whose sultanate was around half the size of France and whose army numbered 40,000 men. The detailed account in the *Cours Malet-Isaac* of Samory's defeat and capture at the hands of the French *capitaine* Gouraud and a unit of 200 *tirailleurs sénégalais* – an infantry division of the French colonial troops from the West African colonies –, the description of Samory and an accompanying photograph of him, closely guarded, yet not bound and standing tall, encompasses notions of the foreign, savage and barbarian. The account depicts Samory as an intelligent and wily warlord who regarded the cruelties he committed as inevitable concomitants of war, a view he shared, according to the textbook,

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<sup>44</sup> Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, 'Kolonialismus und Modernekritik', Anika Keinz et al., *Kulturelle Übersetzungen*, Berlin: Reimer, 2012, 183–199, 194.

<sup>45</sup> Alba, *Cours Malet-Isaac*, 393.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. the image of a Zulu warrior in Rodert John Unstead, *A Century of Change. 1837-Today*, London: Black, 1964, 95.

<sup>47</sup> Alba, *Cours Malet-Isaac*, 395; detailed picture caption.

with the black peoples across Africa.<sup>48</sup> Samory's trade in people earned him the epithet of 'fearsome' or indeed 'ferocious slaver' (*'féroce marchand d'esclaves'*)<sup>49</sup>. The trail of blood and destruction this narrative condemns him of leaving behind him, and his refusal to enter into negotiations with France, serve here as legitimation for fighting him 'to the last'. The respect for the defeated enemy signalled in the textbook's imagery and narrative acts to shine a still clearer light on the assumed civilisatory superiority of the French.

### **Responses to the myth and historical culture**

I conclude this chapter by returning to the issue, raised at its outset, of the relationship between how we respond to myths – and express that response in media and discourse – and our historical culture. The object of our interest here is the treatment in more recent English, French and German history textbooks of traditional mythifications and the need in historical culture for 'grand narratives'<sup>50</sup>, and these textbooks' engagement, in their exploration of the history of European expansion, with current approaches in postcolonial and global academic history. Developments in the discipline, and current debate within society around the colonial period's heritage, make a smooth and unbroken continuation of the colonial myth unlikely, and indeed there is no such tendency in evidence in textbooks. This said, myths are resilient by nature, and this chapter has highlighted their tenacity in its introductory exploration of the colonial myth's ongoing relevance and in its subsequent analysis of the spatial, narrative and image-related dimensions of its continued subliminal vitality and activity. Myths transform complex interrelations and entanglements into clear and simple structures, and they meet societal needs for meaning and identification, especially in times of rupture, transition and change. History textbooks need to confront such popular narratives and their tendency to eliminate historical contingency, to simplify and abridge, with a challenge, or an alternative, that renders visible the entangled and complex state of historical interrelationships and demythologises history. At the same time, they need to give pupils the tools to recognise myths and to read them as such and in so doing to become aware of their purpose – a purpose possessed of its own legitimacy. In the long run, textbooks capable of suc-

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Jean-François Lyotard's discussion of the 'postmodern condition' perceived the integrative thrust of the Enlightenment's and idealism's meta-narratives as having failed. Jean-François Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen*, Peter Engelmann (ed.) and Otto Pfersmann (tr.), Vienna: Passagen, 2012 [orig. *La condition postmoderne*, 1979].

cessfully mounting such a challenge will help raise new generations of historical thinkers and aid in the deconstruction of myths without generating new ones.<sup>51</sup>

This deconstruction can, however, be a painful business, as demonstrated by the findings of postcolonial academic history, which have accorded to colonised peoples the status of historical subjects, given them fitting attention and liberated them from their hitherto assigned position as passive objects. Current textbooks are called upon to take on these new perspectives and uncover the crucial importance of collaboration between colonial officials and local elites in establishing colonial rule. In so doing, they can undermine the colonial myth in a twofold manner, providing an apposite counterpoint to the long-cherished European self-image of colonial ‘powers’ by highlighting the metropolises’ limitations, and similarly contradicting the non-European states’ sense of being the losers of colonial history by illuminating up the colonies’ role in their rule from without.

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<sup>51</sup> There is further discussion of the endeavours in history textbooks from nations once colonial powers to leave behind colonial myths and stereotypes about Africa in Susanne Grindel, ‘Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts of History Textbooks’, Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger and Maria Grever (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 259–273.

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Roland Bernhard / Jutta Wimmmler

## Invisible Africans? The triangular trade myth in German and Austrian history textbooks

It was from this perspective of paternalism that writers began to restudy European contact with the rest of the world. The result was a narrative filled with stories of violence and exploitation, based on a minimum of research and an ignorance of the archival sources.

Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, xix

### Theoretical context

In recent decades, the field of history education has arrived at, and come to emphasise, the insight that learning about history consists in preparing the way for the development of a historical consciousness with the capacity to reflect maturely on past events<sup>1</sup> by following, comprehending and independently undertaking acts of ‘historical thinking’, a central component of which is the critical questioning of existing historical narratives – ‘ready-made (hi)stories’<sup>2</sup> or ‘national master narratives’<sup>3</sup> and their concomitant ‘historical orientations’<sup>4</sup> and tendencies to generate meaning. Recognising and reflecting on the property of history as a construct is a key component of historical thinking. It is true that history is always an interpretation of the past guided by what is inevitably a small selection of the complete body of sources of which we are aware in the present – itself a fraction of the possible sources we might have available to us – and therefore must remain an interpretation<sup>5</sup>. This does not, however, mean that it does not matter which (hi)story prevails in this interpretation. The field of history education, particularly as it operates internationally, has rejected as insufficient such epistemological positions which accord to history the status of nothing but an arbitrarily established narrative whose claim to

<sup>1</sup> Andreas Körber, Waltraud Schreiber and Alexander Schöner (eds.), *Kompetenzen historischen Denkens. Ein Strukturmodell als Beitrag zur Kompetenzorientierung in der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Neuried: ars una, 2007; Christoph Kühberger, *Kompetenzorientiertes historisches und politisches Lernen. Methodische und didaktische Annäherungen für Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung*, Innsbruck/Vienna: Studienverlag, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Christoph Kühberger and Dirk Mellies (eds.), *Inventing the EU. Zur De-Konstruktion von ‘fertigen Geschichten’ über die EU in deutschen, polnischen und österreichischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau-Verlag, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Körber and Johannes Meyer-Hamme, ‘Historical Thinking, Competencies, and their Measurement. Challenges and Approaches’, Kadriye Ercikan and Peter C. Seixas (eds.), *New Directions in Assessing Historical Thinking*, New York: Routledge, 2015, 89–101, 89.

<sup>4</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2013, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Chapman, ‘Historical Interpretations’, Ian Davies (ed.), *Debates in History Teaching*, London: Routledge, 2011, 96–108.

truth is comparable with the narratives generated by writers of fiction.<sup>6</sup> A further, indeed a key component of historical thinking is the independent evaluation of a particular narrative's representativeness, or, put another way, its 'empirical, narrative and normative cogency'.<sup>7</sup> This evaluation proceeds using criteria derived from the academic historical discipline. History teaching that equips pupils to 'see through', and in so seeing comprehend, existing historical accounts makes history relevant to those pupils' lives. This, at least, is the assumption commonly held in the academic field of history teaching. The Anglophone discourse terms this type of reflective historical consciousness a 'criticalist epistemic stance'<sup>8</sup>, which encompasses the ability to critically analyse historical cultures and to deconstruct potential historical myths which have formed in them.

Achim Landwehr concurs, identifying, with reference to Michel Foucault, the remit of academic history in the critical questioning of dominant historical narratives and the illumination of the power structures inherent therein.<sup>9</sup> It is in this context that the substantial didactic potential of engagement with a society's prevailing myths reveals itself, with history textbooks representing an extremely significant manifestation of historical culture. It might justifiably astonish us that, in a context in which interdisciplinary research on myths has been booming for decades, it is not until the last few years that the issue of historical myth has overcome its almost complete absence from the discourse on history education in German-speaking areas, an absence disturbed by just a handful of exceptions.<sup>10</sup> As if to document this absence, the German-speaking standard manuals

<sup>6</sup> Hayden White, 'Der historische Text als literarisches Kunstwerk', Christoph Conrad and Martina Kessel (eds.), *Geschichte schreiben in der Postmoderne. Beiträge zur aktuellen Diskussion*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994, 123–157; Liliana Maggioni, Patricia Alexander and Bruce Van Sledright, 'At a crossroads? The development of epistemological beliefs and historical thinking', *European Journal of School Psychology* 2 (1/2), 2004, 169–197; Richard Harris and Katharine Burn, 'English history teachers' views on what substantive content young people should be taught', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 48, (4), 2016, 518–546; Bruce Van Sledright and Kimberly Reddy, 'Changing Epistemic Beliefs? An Exploratory Study of Cognition Among Prospective History Teachers', *Tempo e Argumento* 6 (11), 2014, 28–68; Rösen, *Historik*.

<sup>7</sup> Jörn Rösen, *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik. Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, 85–116.

<sup>8</sup> Liliana Maggioni, Bruce Van Sledright and Patricia Alexander, 'Walking on the borders: A measure of epistemic cognition in history', in: *The Journal of Experimental Education* 77 (3), 2009, 187–214, 196.

<sup>9</sup> Achim Landwehr, *Die anwesende Abwesenheit der Vergangenheit. Essay zur Geschichtstheorie*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2016, 247–262.

<sup>10</sup> Hans-Jürgen Pandel, 'Legenden – Mythen – Lügen. Wieviel Fiktion verträgt unser Geschichtsbewusstsein?', *Geschichte lernen* 52 (1996), 15–19, 16; Karl Filser, "'Wenn die Vergangenheit sich nicht fügt..." Nationale Mythen im Geschichtsunterricht?', Volker Dotterweich (ed.), *Mythen und Legenden in der Geschichte*, Munich: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 2004, 267–289, 268; Eugen Kotte, 'Geschichtswissenschaftliche und geschichtsdidaktische Mythosforschung', Jürgen Joachimsthaler and Eugen Kotte (eds.): *Kulturwissenschaften. Konzepte verschiedener Disziplinen*, Munich: Peter Lang Verlag, 2010, 103–125, 118.

on history education research still do not contain any entries explicitly revolving around myth.

In recent years, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Germany, has begun to explore the issue of myth in textbooks and history teaching, hosting, in December 2014, an international conference<sup>11</sup> which represented a first comprehensive attempt to approach the topic primarily through the lens of history teaching. The conference's proceedings demonstrated that German and Austrian textbooks frequently persist in a proclivity to reproduce historical myths and that an academic engagement with the matter of myth promises fascinating findings. The edited volume in which those proceedings were published provided the first instance of a definition of the 'historical myth' from the perspective of the discipline's teaching.<sup>12</sup> The relative lack of literature on the topic was a chance to explore myths in textbooks from various angles.<sup>13</sup> A study arising from the Austrian CAOHT research project which has confirmed, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, the importance of textbooks as the central media in the history classroom<sup>14</sup> likewise points to the urgency of a sustained and thorough exploration of myths in textbooks.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.gei.de/veranstaltungen/termindetails/news/detail/News/geschichtsmymthen-in-europa-chancen-und-herausforderungen-im-geschichtsunterricht-5-und-6- deze.html>, last accessed 25 January 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Bernhard, Susanne Grindel, Felix Hinz and Johannes Meyer-Hamme, 'Was ist ein historischer Mythos? Versuch einer Definition aus kulturwissenschaftlicher und geschichtsdidaktischer Perspektive', in: Roland Bernhard, Susanne Grindel, Felix Hinz and Christoph Kühberger (eds.), *Mythen in deutschsprachigen Geschichtsschulbüchern. Von Marathon bis zum Élysée-Vertrag*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017, 11–31.

<sup>13</sup> See my chapter on Martin Behaim and the flat Earth myth in this volume. See also Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmymthen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013; Roland Bernhard, 'Der Eingang des Mythos der flachen Erde in deutsche und österreichische Geschichtsschulbücher im 20. Jahrhundert', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 64 (11/12), 2013, 687–701; Roland Bernhard, 'Dekonstruktion des Mythos' der flachen Erde – Information, Quellen und Materialien zur Entschlüsselung der Erzählung über die flache Erde des Mittelalters in Schulbüchern', *Historische Sozialkunde* 2, 42–51; Roland Bernhard, 'Galileo Galilei, der Wandel des Weltbildes und die Meistererzählung von der wissenschaftlichen Revolution in Bildungsmedien und Wissenschaft', *Geschichte für heute* 4, 2015, 50–59.

<sup>14</sup> Roland Bernhard, 'Das Schulbuch als Leitmedium des Geschichtsunterrichts in Österreich. Empirische Ergebnisse einer Triangulationsstudie und einige Schlussfolgerungen für die LehrerInnenbildung', in: Bernhard, Roland et al. (eds.): *Das Geschichtsschulbuch: Lernen – Lehren – Forschen*, Münster/New York: Waxmann (forthcoming); Roland Bernhard, Christoph Bramann and Christoph Kühberger, *Verwendung des Geschichtsschulbuches durch Schüler/innen und Lehrer/innen. Empirische Hauptergebnisse des Mixed-Method-Projektes CAOHT* (in preparation); Roland Bernhard, 'Teaching to think historically using textbooks. Insights for initial teacher education drawn from a qualitative empirical study in Austria', *Educatio Siglo XXI* 36 (1), 2018, 39–56; Roland Bernhard and Christoph Kühberger, "'Digital history teaching'"? Qualitativ empirische Ergebnisse aus 50 teilnehmenden Beobachtungen zur Verwendung von Medien im Geschichtsunterricht', Thomas Sandkühler et al. (eds.): *Geschichtsunterricht*

### Textbooks and the transatlantic slave trade

A case study on a highly popular twenty-first-century Austrian textbook came to the startling conclusion that one of its pages alone contained nineteen factual errors. That page revolved around the topic of the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>15</sup> This alarming state of affairs has found virtually no response, however, in textbook research, which thus far has paid scant attention to the slave trade's depiction in educational media. Work on racism has touched upon the topic in the context of analysing images of Africa in German and Austrian textbooks.<sup>16</sup> Those studies which have appeared to date point to the sensitivity of textbook depictions of Africa and the risk that they might perpetuate colonial discourses tinged with racism, frequently without conscious intent and even in depictions which aim to critique colonialism. Such discourses emerge in one-sided portrayals of Africa as a continent of catastrophes whose inhabitants are passive victims of history without their own history or agency. The research literature has coined the term 'Afro-pessimism' to describe this phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> A comprehensive, specialist academic study of textbook chapters on the transatlantic slave trade remains a lacuna in historical research, specifically research into historical didactics; a cooperative, Austrian, German, English and Swiss project, currently in its preparatory phases, will aim to fill it.

This chapter will provide an exploratory analysis of one aspect of this issue, the idea, and concomitant visualisation, of the transatlantic slave trade as a 'triangular trade' and the associated discourses. In its currently dominant form, the 'triangular trade' model may be outlined as follows: The same ship travelled, first from Europe to Africa, then from Africa to America, and finally from America to Europe. The triangle thus traced by the ships themselves manifested likewise in their cargo: The range of manufactured Eu-

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*im 21. Jahrhundert. Eine geschichtsdidaktische Standortbestimmung*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2018, 425–440.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Bernhard, *Geschichtsmychen über Hispanoamerika. Entdeckung, Eroberung und Kolonisierung in deutschen und österreichischen Schulbüchern des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013, 13–15.

<sup>16</sup> Elina Marmer, "Man denkt, man kann sich alles erlauben, weil sie Schwarz sind". Schüler\_innen afrikanischer Herkunft über Rassismus in ihren Schulbüchern', Karim Fereidooni and Meral El (eds.), *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017, 557–572; Elina Marmer, 'Rassismus in deutschen Schulbüchern am Beispiel von Afrikabildern', *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 36 (2), 2013, 25–31; Elisabeth Dulko and Anke Namgalies, "'Repräsentationen" Afrikas in deutschen Schulbüchern am Beispiel des Schulfachs Geschichte (Sek I und II) – eine Stichprobenanalyse', *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik*, 37 (4), 2014, 9–14; Katharina Hummer, *Die Darstellung Afrikas in Schulbüchern für Geschichte und Geografie*. Degree dissertation, University of Vienna, Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Marmer, 'Rassismus in deutschen Schulbüchern', 26–28.

ropean products brought by a ship to Africa was exchanged for slaves whom the same ship then took to America; on the final leg of its journey, the ship carried back to Europe the produce of slave labour on plantations. On various grounds, this conventional idea of a ‘triangular trade’ has been the object of criticism from researchers in recent decades, critique articulated from the 1970s onwards in the formula of the ‘myth of the triangular trade’.<sup>18</sup> In a seminal work published in 1999, the historian Herbert Klein engages in a thorough exploration of this myth<sup>19</sup>, which he regards as comprising a number of strands or partial myths relating to maritime transport, commodity flows, product ranges, the value of the various goods, the ‘Middle Passage’ and the definition of the relationship between transatlantic trade in general and the slave trade. While emphasizing the fact that all these myths arose in the wake of the increasing, and indubitably necessary, critique of Western imperialism in the course of the twentieth century, Klein denounces their basis, which he describes as ‘a minimum of research and an ignorance of the archival sources’, and points out that, as becomes apparent on closer inspection, ‘the “triangle trade” idea is essentially incorrect’.<sup>20</sup>

### Sample and data analysis

The work described in this chapter draws on a corpus of six German and ten Austrian textbooks. Of the German textbooks, three are approved for the use in a West German state (Baden-Württemberg) and three in a state formerly part of East Germany (Saxony-Anhalt).<sup>21</sup> The Austrian textbooks are from the holdings of the University College of Teacher Education Vienna, and represent all current textbooks for the first stage of sec-

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Gilman M. Ostrander, ‘The Making of the Triangular Trade Myth’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 30 (4), 1973, 635–644.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, xix–xx.

<sup>20</sup> Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 101. We should mention at this juncture that the debate is yet to be entirely settled, and that we do not wish to create the impression of confronting archaic depictions with a new, critical truth. Instead, we present interpretations that are valid for the time being, arising from the examination of the sources currently available and capable of substantial consensus among academic historians. The depictions critiqued here do not attain the character of myths through their lack of empirical cogency alone; instead, and above all, they acquire this character due to the function fulfilled by their associated narratives in the prevailing historical culture (see, in this context, the introductory definition of myth in this volume, alongside the discussion of partial aspects of myths below).

<sup>21</sup> In Germany, control of education rests at the level of individual federal states. The study analysed the following textbooks from Germany (each preceded by the abbreviation by which the text identifies it): Baden-Württemberg: D1: *Das waren Zeiten 2* (Buchner 2017); D2: *Forum Geschichte 7* (Cornelsen 2017), D3: *Geschichte 7* (Schöningh 2017); Saxony-Anhalt: D4: *Geschichte und Geschehen 2* (Klett 2006); D5: *Zeitreise 2* (Klett 2006); D6: *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit 7/8* (Westermann 2016); this last-mentioned work was unavailable in the edition approved for Saxony-Anhalt, for which reason we used the edition for the states of Berlin and Brandenburg. We specifically chose to focus on states in which European expansion is a curricular topic, and took care when selecting textbooks to ensure various publishers were represented.

ondary education available in that institution's library which discuss the slave trade. We defined 'current' textbooks as those published in or after the year 2000.<sup>22</sup>

This research was and is intended as an exploratory study and makes no claim to the provision of a complete or representative survey of discourses around the slave trade in Austrian and German textbooks. Instead, its aim was to search for the presence in textbooks of discourses current academic history would deem problematic, in order to attain initial insights into an area of textbook research on which little work exists to date. Our analysis of the relevant text used the MaxQDA program, via which we ran several coding operations on the passages in order to identify whether they contained manifestations of or associations with the classical 'triangular trade' myth. Where this was found to be the case, we worked inductively to pinpoint the arguments used in the textbooks; as the analysis progressed, we developed a system of categories, drawing on methods from the field of qualitative data analysis, to structure our findings.<sup>23</sup>

## Findings

The analysis indicates that the myth of the 'triangular trade' remains alive and well in current textbooks. Via a deductive approach, it pointed to patterns of interpretation which the research literature has described as partial myths comprising the 'triangular trade' myth. Inductively, meanwhile, it found further mythic narratives which supported that myth's central idea. The following discussion of our findings proceeds in relation to four key areas:

1. The description and visualisation of the transatlantic slave trade as a 'triangular trade'.
2. The assertion that Europe's contribution to this trade consisted in cheap manufactured goods, while Africa's was restricted to slaves only.
3. The presence of stereotypical and academically unsound interpretive patterns and various partial myths on the causes, initiators and protagonists of the slave trade.
4. The description, particularly in textbooks from Germany, of the slave trade, and slavery itself, mostly as phenomena primarily involving males, obscuring from view the

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<sup>22</sup> The study analysed the following textbooks from Austria (each preceded by the abbreviation by which the text identifies it): Ö1: *Bausteine 3*, 2008; Ö2: *Ganz klar 3*, 2007; Ö3: *Geschichte für alle 3*, 2009; Ö4: *Geschichte live 3*, 2009; Ö5: *Mehrfach Geschichte Anwenden 3*, 2014; Ö6: *Mehrfach Geschichte Wissen 3*, 2014; Ö7: *Netzwerk Geschichte 3*, 2005; Ö 8: *VG3neu*, 2007; Ö9: *Zeitbilder 3*, 2012; Ö10: *Zeitenblicke 3*, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Siegfried Lamnek, *Qualitative Sozialforschung*, Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2010, 443.

millions of women taken to America and sold as slaves in the context of the transatlantic slave trade.

### Textbooks and the ‘triangular’ transatlantic slave trade

The term ‘triangular trade’ features frequently in textbooks from Germany and Austria, and in some instances receives a typified depiction in visual diagrams such as this one:

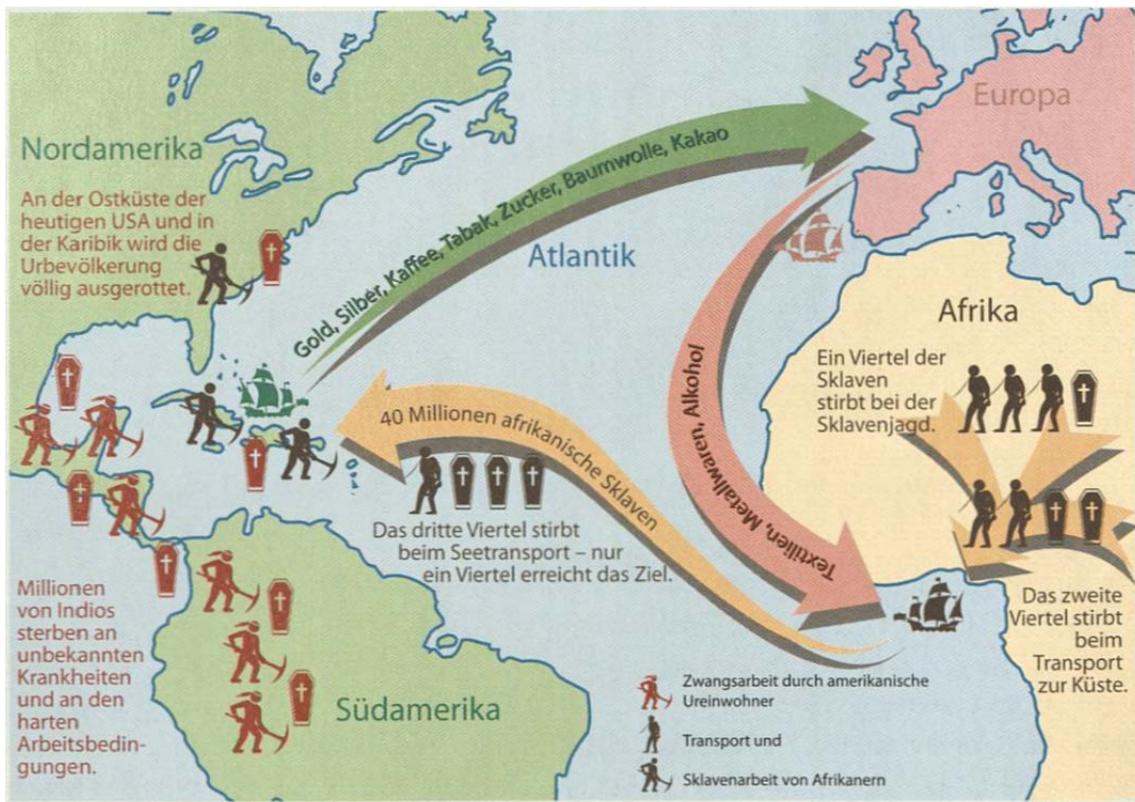


Fig. 1: Visual representation of the slave trade in textbook Ö8, 19.

Descriptions of the trade as triangular proceed, for instance, as follows:

First they filled [their ships] in Europe with goods, which they exchanged for slaves at trading posts in West Africa [...] The Africans then purchased at slave markets were crammed into the slave ships below deck and taken to America on voyages lasting weeks. [...] In America, the ships reloaded with goods; in the Caribbean, for example, [these were] cane sugar, tobacco and cotton, which were then used in the manufacture of processed goods in Europe. [...] This economic model, which linked Europe with Asia [*sic*] and America and which allowed [traders] to earn a lot of money, was called the (transatlantic) triangle trade. (D3, 130-131)

The idea that the same ships, each time fully loaded with cargo, travelled first from Europe to Africa, from there to America, and then back to Europe was the subject of lively discussion as early as the 1950s, particularly so with relation to the English trade. A debate arose over the matter of whether slave ships, in this context specifically English

crafts, took on return cargo in America after the slaves were sold, or sailed for Europe in ballast. A further point of controversy was whether slave ships were in fact suitable for transporting goods.

The most evident upshot of this discussion was that the answers to these questions varied in accordance with the region(s) and period(s) of time involved.<sup>24</sup> Consensus emerged on the – at best small – fraction of total goods cargo from America to Europe carried by slave ships. Most trade in goods took place using designated ships which sailed exclusively between Europe and America.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, direct trade flourished between America and Africa, and was by no means limited to one direction only, nor to slaves. Another of Klein's findings was that, of 195 Dutch slave ships that ran into port in America in the course of the eighteenth century, 65 returned to Europe in ballast (primarily sand and water), while 52 carried a small 'symbolic' cargo and only about a third sailed fully loaded.<sup>26</sup> The case of France is similar, in that, for reasons of logistics, more ships travelled, and more frequently, between Europe and America than between the latter and Africa.<sup>27</sup>

The textbooks' complete removal from the picture of bilateral trade with Africa, including Europe-bound return cargo, is evident above all in visual representations, which tend to give rise to the impression that Africa had nothing to offer Europe and America apart from slaves. In fact, European trading ships imported West African products directly to Europe. Gold, ivory and the spice maniguetta were desired goods, as were ostrich feathers, ambergris, palm wine and oil, leather goods, rice, millet, dyes and gum arabic. This last-mentioned product provides a particularly useful illustration of direct trade between Africa and Europe. Leaving from France, which enjoyed optimum access to the gum trade of Senegal and Mauretania, ships sailed for Senegambia to the explicit end of acquiring gum and returning directly to Europe to sell their cargo in various ports

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<sup>24</sup> Cf., for instance, Richard Bert Sheridan, 'The Commercial and Financial Organization of the British Slave Trade, 1750–1807', *Economic History Review* 11 (2), 1958, 249–263; Walter E. Minchinton, 'The Triangular Trade Revisited', Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (eds.): *The Uncommon Market. Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, New York etc.: Academic Press, 1979, 331–352.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Klein, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Guillaume Daudin, 'Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context. The Case of Eighteenth-Century France', *The Journal of Economic History* 64 (1), 2004, 146. This was also the case for Dutch trade; cf. Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 172.

such as Hamburg, Rotterdam and La Rochelle.<sup>28</sup> In other words, we should not make the mistake of underestimating European demand for West African goods.

*Mit dem Warenaustausch zwischen den spanischen und portugiesischen Kolonien und Europa begann der weltweite Handel der Europäer. Historiker sprechen deshalb von der „ersten Globalisierung“ im 16. Jahrhundert, also von der Entstehung eines Handels, der die ganze Welt miteinschließt.*

- *Wie funktionierte der transatlantische Dreieckshandel?*
- *Welche Bedeutung hatte die Sklaverei für die Alte und die Neue Welt?*

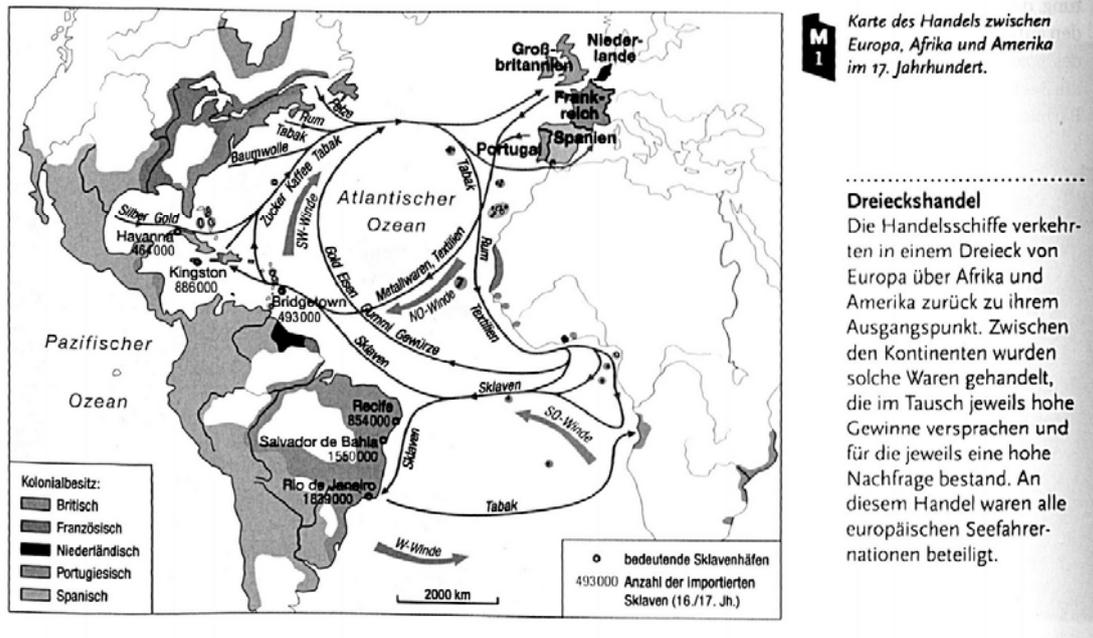


Fig. 2: Visual representation of ‘triangular trade’ in textbook D2, 32.

A partial – and, as we shall see, necessarily limited – exception to the general situation in the textbooks appears in textbook D2. The map reproduced in Fig. 2 above allows pupils to form a more nuanced view of the transatlantic trade of the time, by, for instance, including direct exports from Africa to Europe. The map also mentions African products such as iron, gum and spices, which counters the common reduction of Africa’s significance in trade to the typical trinity of gold, ivory and slaves. An excerpt from the secondary literature included on the textbook’s succeeding page supports this somewhat more complex view, detailing as it does the importance of maniguetta pepper as a ware for export. While the map fails to show internal American or African trade, it does at least point to the existence of direct trade between Africa and America beyond the slave trade. This said, we note a striking discrepancy between the description the

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jutta Wimpler, *The Sun King’s Atlantic. Drugs, Demons and Dyestuffs in the Atlantic World, 1640–1730*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017, 47–55; Jutta Wimpler, ‘From Senegal to Augsburg. Gum Arabic and the Central European Textile Industry in the Eighteenth Century’, *Textile History* 50 (forthcoming).

textbook carries immediately adjacent to the map and the map itself. The text speaks of a ‘triangular’ system of shipping which is not apparent on the map. This puzzling contrast between visual and textual representation is indicative of the way in which the prevalence of the ‘triangular trade’ myth is less of a help than a hindrance to an accurate understanding of the phenomenon.

### **The myth of ‘cheap European tat’ exchanged for slaves**

Another strand of the ‘triangular trade’ mythic agglomerate is the myth of the African societies allegedly paid off, in the context of the slave trade, with ‘cheap tat’, ‘trinkets’ and ‘junk’ from Europe. In this context, expressions such as ‘manufactured products from European factories’ and, specifically, ‘glass beads’ feature repeatedly and prominently.<sup>29</sup>

In Europe, the ships were laden with cheap wares, materials, weapons and alcohol. They sailed for the West African coast. (Ö5, 85)

First, in Europe, they took on board goods to exchange for slaves at West Africa’s trading posts, e.g. firearms, steel, cotton materials, alcohol, glass beads and other manufactured products. (D3, 130-131)

In work published in 2008, Jochen Meissner, Ulrich Mücke and Klaus Weber presented an overview of the then current state of research on the transatlantic slave trade. Commenting critically on highly popular accounts, of the type cited above, in which European slave traders ‘dazzled Africans with third-rate goods and cheap tat and persuaded them thus to sell their compatriots’, the authors surmise that ‘a cultural or indeed racist prejudice towards Africans [might] lurk beneath [such depictions] – as if [Africans] had not been in a position to comprehend these goods’ value and act rationally in response.’<sup>30</sup> This stereotype of chaotic, underdeveloped and irrational African society, implicitly contrasted with a well-organised European society in which rational thought predominates, is similarly likely to underlie the notion, encountered on occasion, of European slave traders having depopulated entire stretches of African coastline, effectively abducting their inhabitants – a *reductio ad absurdum* of the concept of the slave ‘trade’. Such ideas likewise leave their mark in the assertion, frequently found in the textbooks in our sample, that Europeans had ‘conquered’ parts of West Africa. We

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also D1, 98; D6, 277; Ö9, 52; D1, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Jochen Meissner, Ulrich Mücke and Klaus Weber, *Schwarzes Amerika. Eine Geschichte der Sklaverei*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008, 64.

should stress at this point that West Africa was not colonised until the later nineteenth century. In the centuries preceding this, Europeans required the permission of African rulers to set up their relatively small-scale trading posts on the coast, and usually paid taxes to local leaders. Any activity by Europeans in pre-colonial Africa necessitated cooperation with, or at the least the tolerance of, local authorities.<sup>31</sup> In this context, the notion that African traders would have allowed themselves to be hoodwinked with inferior wares is unconvincing.

We might corroborate this impression by taking a look at the example of textile goods, which, in view of the flourishing textile industries in pre-colonial West Africa, had primary importance for trade on the external and indeed internal African market. African traders purchased high-quality linens and Indian cotton stuffs from Europeans. Some products were inexpensive to buy for Western Europeans because they were produced in low-wage regions, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe. This was the case both for most linens and for the infamous glass beads which have become a synecdoche of the ‘tat’ allegedly palmed off onto the Africans. Venice, Holland and France produced glass beads for the West African market, as did areas of what today are Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic.<sup>32</sup> It does appear that these beads were indeed inexpensive to produce, but that does not automatically mean that they were of no value, as Stanley Alpern concisely points out: ‘To call cheap but pretty beads rubbish is to see them through the eyes of a Western sophisticate, not those of an African consumer.’<sup>33</sup> In many West African societies, beads threaded onto strings and other adornments functioned as key status symbols, and had done so long before their populations came into direct contact with Europeans. Such beads were made from various materials, such as stone, bone and the shells of ostrich eggs. Glass beads from Europe came to West Africa as early as the medieval period, via trans-Saharan trading routes.<sup>34</sup> Portuguese traders who in the fifteenth century began to sell Venetian or Bohemian glass beads were therefore adapting to pre-existing consumer practices. A lack of research currently obscures a full and detailed view on the matter, but it appears to be the case that glass beads from Europe, rather

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<sup>31</sup> John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World 1400–1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 74; Meissner, Mücke and Weber, *Schwarzes Amerika*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley B. Alpern, ‘What Africans got for their Slaves. A Master List of European Trade Goods’, *History in Africa*, 22, 1995, 5–43, 22. The role of Central Europe in Atlantic trade has attracted increasing attention in recent years. See, for instance, Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft (eds.), *Slavery Hinterland. Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley B. Alpern, ‘What Africans got for their Slaves’, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Beads may have made their appearance in West Africa even earlier than this; see Christopher R. DeCorse, ‘Beads as Chronological Indicators in West African Archaeology. A Reexamination’, *BEADS. Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 1 (1), 1989, 41–53, 41.

than being destined for purchase as luxury goods by local elites, advanced the spread of bead-based jewellery and adornments in further sections of society than had worn them previously. Christopher DeCorse also points out that beads imported to Africa were ‘modified’ locally, being smoothed, sanded or cut, made smaller or polished, or heated to change their colour or increase their transparency. Archaeologists have also found evidence demonstrating that some beads had additional holes added or existing holes widened.<sup>35</sup>

The textbooks also frequently cite rum as a product exported by Europeans. Rum, however, was an exclusively American product – as its key raw ingredient molasses, i.e. cane sugar, might indicate – and generally went from there to Africa without a detour to Europe. There is a tendency in the textbooks, quite apart from this fact, to substantially overestimate the importance of rum to the West African market, presumably due above all to the fact that it was the principal export product of English-controlled North America for African trade. Alpern observes that it comprised only a small part of this trade overall.<sup>36</sup> Tobacco likewise came to Africa direct from America, or, more precisely, Brazil, despite the cultivation in West Africa of a tobacco variety native to North America.<sup>37</sup> It is unsurprising in this context that European pipes also made an appearance in trade with Africa.

Trade in arms has been subject to similar levels of overestimate, particularly in relation to firearms and gunpowder. Johannes Postma, in calculations relating to the activities of the Dutch West India Company on the ‘Slave Coast’ of present-day Benin, estimates that, at the outset of the eighteenth century, only around 20 of a total of 2,000 slaves were purchased for gunpowder and firearms, with 800 bought for cowry shells, a widespread currency of the time, and 1,180 for various textiles and cloths. Some ships carried no weapons whatsoever in their cargo.<sup>38</sup> It is impossible, from both a spatial and a temporal point of view, to make general assertions on the importance of firearms in West African warfare practices; they figured significantly more prominently on the Gold Coast (today’s Ghana) than in the region stretching from what is now Senegal to Côte

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<sup>35</sup> DeCorse, ‘Beads as Chronological Indicators’, 47–48.

<sup>36</sup> Alpern, ‘What Africans got for their Slaves’, 25. On the significance of alcohol in trade with Africa, see also Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Alpern, ‘What Africans got for their Slaves’, 26.

<sup>38</sup> Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 103.

d'Ivoire<sup>39</sup>, and, even in this area, what Thornton has referred to as the 'gunpowder revolution' did not set in until the final years of the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup> Wherever they were used, firearms merely supplemented other types of weapons, rather than supplanting them.

A strand of this myth whose persistence and significance should not be underestimated consists in the assumption that processes of manufacture were limited to Europe, with the effect that Europe traded in ready-made products while Africa and America sold raw materials and slave labour. In fact, as outlined above in relation to glass beads, manufacture and refinement absolutely did take place in West Africa. It is instructive in this context to point to the trade in iron; the Senegambia region in particular imported substantial amounts of this metal from Europe. Calculations by Philip D. Curtin have found that iron amounted to around half of the total import volume from Europe to this region in the seventeenth century. Senegambian smiths fashioned further products, especially agricultural implements, from the iron ore. An iron-based currency subsequently came into being in the region.<sup>41</sup> Silver also arrived via the Europeans in Senegambia and other West African regions, where it found use as currency and in jewellery production.<sup>42</sup> Copper and brass goods likewise enjoyed great popularity, and usually served to create further products; the famous, intricate Akan goldweights from what is now Ghana are one renowned example.<sup>43</sup> Europe, then, alongside delivering manufactured products to Africa, supplied raw materials and half-finished wares which were subsequently worked on further locally.

### **The slave trade's causes, initiators and protagonists**

Textbooks also employ partial myths when outlining the causes and discussing the protagonists of the transatlantic slave trade. One such recurring mythic strand is the construction of the slave trade overall as primarily a Spanish phenomenon, which builds on

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500–1800*, London/New York: Routledge, 1999, 61.

<sup>40</sup> There is a detailed discussion of warfare on the territory of the contemporary Gold Coast in Ray A. Kea, *Settlement, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*, Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, 130–168. See also Kea, 'Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of African History* 12 (2), 1971, 185–213.

<sup>41</sup> Philip D. Curtin: *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa. Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975, 312.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Copper likewise found use as a currency in certain regions; see Klein: *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 111.

<sup>43</sup> See Timothy F. Garrard: 'Akan Metal Arts', *African Arts* 13 (1), 1979, 36–43, and Garrard, *Akan Weights and the Gold Trade*, London/New York: Longman, 1980.

the notion that slaves were imported to replace the indigenous inhabitants of Hispanic America killed off en masse by the diseases the Spanish had introduced. The demise of the indigenous population, comments one textbook, had given the Spanish ‘the fateful idea of bringing slaves from sub-Saharan Africa [*schwarzafrikanische Sklaven*] into the country’ (Ö4, 31). In numerous textbooks, the topos of the indigenous population of Hispanic America having been too physically weak for ‘European work’, necessitating the importation of Africans for these labours, appears to have taken on a life of its own, as here:

[As] the natives [*die Einheimischen*] were too weak for the hard labour [involved], people from sub-Saharan Africa [*Schwarzafrikaner*] were brought from Africa to America as slaves. (Ö3, 15)

However, the indigenous population could not handle the strenuous nature of mining or intensive farming. Many died from the rigours of the work. But by this time, Europeans had also conquered [*sic*] large West African coastal regions. In order to continue to make as much profit as possible, Europeans abducted slaves from there and took them to America. (D1, 76)

We note that the indigenous populations referred to here are Aztecs and Incas, whose civilisational achievements had given rise, as the Spanish conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo reported, to ‘astonished admiration’ among the new arrivals.<sup>44</sup> Other work has discussed these stereotypical depictions of indigenous Americans, whom textbooks summarily dismiss as ‘noble savages’ in the Rousseauian sense and construct as antithetical to the hardworking European.<sup>45</sup> In this context, some Austrian textbooks assert that a Spaniard who had lived in Hispaniola since 1502, Bartolomé de las Casas, was the founder of the transatlantic slave trade, or indeed of the slave trade in general:

He had the idea of taking sub-Saharan Africans [*Schwarzafrikanerinnen und Schwarzafrikaner*] to America as slaves. Considering them physically stronger, and therefore better suited to arduous physical work, las Casas planned to have them replace the native population as a labour force. (Ö9, 19)

Some textbooks present the view that the Catholic Church had taken a decisive role in the slave trade and had a ‘leading part in the crimes committed by the Spanish’ (Ö8, 18). Building on the myth around las Casas, a textbook from the year 2000 (not part of our

<sup>44</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España. Manuscrito Guatemala*, ed. José Antonio Barbón Rodríguez. México, D. F., Madrid: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005, 218.

<sup>45</sup> See Bernhard, *Geschichtsmymthen*, 149–156.

sample) went so far as to claim: ‘The original initiator of the slave trade was the Catholic Church – [it was] intended to lessen the burden [of labour] on the native Indios’.<sup>46</sup>

A brief glance at the chronological course of events suffices to reveal these interpretations as baseless in empirical fact. The slave trade *per se* had existed in Africa for centuries prior to las Casas and to the advent of the Spanish in the ‘New World’. John Thornton stresses that the Europeans arrived in a market controlled by Africans and established before transatlantic slave trading began. Europeans first entered into the existing intra-African slave trade in order to gain access to gold at the ‘Gold Coast’ (i.e. Ghana). Such access was contingent upon the Europeans offering desirable wares; yet, just as in Asia, their own range of goods excited little interest among Africans. They therefore purchased slaves at the ‘Slave Coast’ (i.e. Benin) and exchanged them for the coveted precious metal at the ‘Gold Coast’. Impelled by the apparent lack of collective awareness around these facts, we repeat them concisely here: European ships acquired slaves in Africa who were subsequently exchanged for gold in another coastal region of Africa. It was these acts that marked the entry of Europeans into intra-African slave trading. ‘[...] [T]he slave trade (and the Atlantic trade in general) should not be seen as an “impact” brought in from outside and functioning as some sort of autonomous factor in African history.’<sup>47</sup>

Correcting a further inaccuracy widespread in our sample, we note that not Spain, but rather Portugal had been exploring Africa’s coastline from the first half of the fifteenth century, at whose midpoint – incidentally decades in advance of las Casas’ birth – they began to sell African slaves in Europe.<sup>48</sup> Portuguese traders were soon entering into contracts with African rulers along the coast and joining the local slave trade under terms stipulated by Africans. Lawrence A. Clayton has described how, by 1502, when the young las Casas reached America, Europeans had been purchasing slaves in Africa and transporting them to Europe for half a century.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the emergence of the slave trade across the Atlantic was unrelated to las Casas and his intervention. The transatlantic slave trade, that is, the transportation of slaves across the Atlantic, was

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<sup>46</sup> Gerhard Huber and Erlefried Schröckenfuchs, *einst und heute 6*, Vienna: Westermann, 2000, 84.

<sup>47</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence A. Clayton, *Bartolome de las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 136.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

likewise in operation in 1516, when las Casas did indeed advocate the import of black and white slaves to America from Spain<sup>50</sup>, a position for which he expressed regret in a work composed decades later.<sup>51</sup> The Spanish crown permitted the transportation of African slaves from Europe to the ‘New World’ as early as 1501<sup>52</sup>, and extended this approval to the direct route from Africa in 1511. In the latter year, las Casas began to advocate for the rights of indigenous Americans; at this point, there were already slaves, albeit relatively few in number, in Hispanic America.

The depiction in textbooks of Spain as the initiator of the transatlantic slave trade and on occasion of the slave trade *per se* also obscures the fact that during its first 150 years, the transatlantic slave trade was largely in the hands of Portuguese and Brazilian actors, with England taking over the leading role in the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> Slave ships did not sail to America under the Spanish flag until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup> Contrary to the accounts found in the textbooks, the Spanish were not actively involved in the transatlantic slave trade until this point in time. Until around 1800 Denmark was transporting slaves at rates amounting to multiples of the Spanish figure. Further, the total number of slaves taken to the British colonies of the ‘New World’ was over double that transported to Hispanic America.<sup>55</sup> Officially, Spain in fact had no direct access to the West African market, leaving it dependent on what was known as the *Asiento de Negros*, a contract of monopoly negotiated with the Spanish crown which set out terms regarding the provision of African slaves to the Spanish colonies. Portugal was the original holder of this monopoly, or *asiento*; contracts with England, Holland and France came later.<sup>56</sup> It is possible that textbooks’ persistence in perpetuating the myth of Spain as the slave trade’s original protagonist may be related to the centuries-old, Hispanophobic discourse around the so-called ‘Black Legend’.

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<sup>50</sup> Clayton, *Bartolome de las Casas*, 135.

<sup>51</sup> Paulina Castañeda Delgado (ed.), *Obras completas Bartolomé de las Casas*, Vol. 5, Sevilla, 1989–1999, 2190–2191. Clayton presented a thorough deconstruction of this myth in 2010 (cf. Clayton, *Bartolome de las Casas*).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Esteban Mira Caballos, ‘Las Licencias de esclavos negros a Hispanoamérica (1544–1550)’, *Revista de Indias* 54 (201), 1994, 273–297, 274.

<sup>53</sup> David Eltis, ‘The volume and structure of the transatlantic slave trade. A reassessment’, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, 2001, 17–46, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Eltis 2001, 43.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 45; Meissner, Mücke and Weber, *Schwarzes Amerika*, 86–87.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale. The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish America in the Early Seventeenth Century*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011, 1–16. Peer Schmidt has produced a comprehensive study of the ‘Black Legend’ in German-speaking regions. Cf. Schmidt, *Spanische Universalmonarchie oder ‘teutsche Libertet’*. *Das spanische Imperium in der Propaganda des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Stuttgart: Franz-Steiner-Verlag, 2001.

## Gender

A further aspect of the ‘triangular trade’ myth as manifest in textbooks relates to the extensive exclusion of women from the picture. There is a tendency for accounts of the slave trade to depict it as a phenomenon driven – on both the European and the African sides – by men and affecting men.<sup>57</sup> Textbooks from Germany appear to adhere particularly obstinately to this notion, at least to the extent that they – unlike some of their Austrian counterparts – do not use representative language, thereby opening up their text to an interpretation that concludes that slaves were primarily men. One textbook, to cite an example, quotes an article from the website of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* which asserts:

It was the young and strong, overwhelmingly male, who were abducted to the coast. They were the most lucrative and there was a greater chance of bringing them to America alive. Many single women, older and weaker people were left behind – a population drained of its lifeblood, virtually unable to cultivate their fields or hunt, and without warriors to defend them against hostile tribes. (D3, 132)

The online article cited above contains a number of erroneous and problematic assumptions, of which we will discuss two here. The first is its reduction of the slave trade to a trade in young men, the second is the implication that men, in West African societies, were the ones to hunt, make war, and till the fields, as well as being capable of more and greater labours. This Eurocentric notion builds on modern ideas around gender roles which do not translate directly to pre-modern African societies. Indeed, Oyèroónké Oyèwùmí calls into fundamental question the assumption that West African societies conceived of social roles as biologically determined.<sup>58</sup> However one views her argument, scholarship on pre-colonial West African societies strongly suggests that men and women were equally involved in agriculture, trade and warfare.

The matter of gender and age distributions among the victims of the transatlantic slave trade was subject to extensive debate among researchers in the 1990s. The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database prepared the ground for the finding that the proportion of female slaves trafficked transatlantically was notably high, particularly when compared to other

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<sup>57</sup> For a critical exploration of this phenomenon, see Claire C. Robertson and Martin S. Klein (eds.), *Women and Slavery in Africa*, Madison/London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Oyèroónké Oyèwùmí: ‘Visualizing the Body. Western Theories and African Subjects’, Oyèroónké Oyèwùmí (ed.), *African Gender Studies. A Reader*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 3–21, 10.

processes of migration.<sup>59</sup> In 1993, Eltis and Engerman came to the conclusion that overall, the ratio of male to female slaves was two to one<sup>60</sup>, which, given a total of approximately 12 million exported slaves, indicates that four million women were affected. At certain times and in certain regions, the ratio could very well be one to one. Eltis and Engerman stress that women were very frequently put to work on plantations and that there was little difference in the prices fetched by male and female slaves. Some researchers have pointed out that the expertise attained by women in a number of pre-colonial West African societies in fields such as agriculture, trade and the construction of dwellings was highly sought after and translated into specialist knowledge and skills for plantation work.<sup>61</sup>

European purchasers, then, had plenty to gain from regularly acquiring female slaves. A further factor was the Europeans' reliance, as outlined above, on the African side of the business, which in some instances was not willing to sell only male slaves. The trans-Saharan slave trade, which primarily sold women from some West African regions to slave owners in Islamic countries, is an additional issue to consider in any assessment of the transatlantic slave trade's impact on sex ratios in West Africa.<sup>62</sup> It is worth re-emphasising at this juncture that the impact of the slave trade, in all its forms, on sex ratios in West African societies varied greatly from region to region, and that generalisations are therefore unhelpful. It is worth noting at this point that scholars have arrived at a consensus concerning the total number of slaves taken from Africa to America since the publication of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database in the 1990s<sup>63</sup>. The German textbooks in our sample, which generally cite numbers of around ten million, are noticeably closer to this consensus (approx. 12 million) than their Austrian counterparts, some of which speak of 40 (Ö8, 19) to 100 (Ö5, 85) million transported slaves.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf., *inter alia*, G. Ugo Nwokeji, 'African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (1), 2001, 47–68, 47.

<sup>60</sup> David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman: 'Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663–1864', *Economic History Review* 46 (2), 1993, 308–323, 308, 321.

<sup>61</sup> A useful overview of the debate is provided by David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, 'Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men?', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (2), 1992, 237–257. A particularly good discussion of the importance of female slaves in cultural and technical transfer is in Judith Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery. Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Women fetched higher prices than men in the trans-Saharan trade. See, for example, Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 63–65.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.slavevoyages.org/>, last accessed May 16, 2019.

### Discussion of findings

Our study has revealed that the accounts of the transatlantic slave trade currently found in school textbooks from Germany and Austria suffer from a number of concerning issues. The case is broader and more comprehensive than simple factual error; we have identified manifestations in these accounts of a fundamentally non-nuanced and poorly informed image of Africa. In a manner lacking empirical basis, the textbooks in our sample, taken as a whole, depict Africa as a locus of incapacity, inferiority and chaos, with Africans reduced to the role of victims, primitive, naïve and irrational in their beliefs and without a history of their own, and thus constructed as an antithesis to the Europeans. The textbooks thus evidently adhere to the discursive field of ‘Afro-pessimism’. The notion that a handful of Europeans had the power to impose their will upon pre-colonial African societies, a familiar topos of extra-European history, is widespread in the textbooks we examined and resembles the idea, likewise frequently found in textbooks, that Hernán Cortés was able to subdue the Aztec empire with a force of about 500 men and Francisco Pizarro achieved the conquest of Peru with only around 150.<sup>64</sup>

We will conclude here by offering initial proposals for alternative textbook accounts, some of which would necessitate significant structural changes were they to find implementation in textbooks, while others are realisable within existing structures. Our first proposal is to desist completely from use of the term ‘triangular trade’ due to its tendency to stand in the way of, rather than opening up, a genuine understanding of the issues. Our analysis of Fig. 2 above (D2) provides an emphatic demonstration of this muddying of the waters; the terminology of the ‘triangular trade’ undermines even the relatively complex and nuanced visual depiction of the transatlantic trade that appears in this map. Indeed, the term virtually forces textbook authors to activate the myth’s various partial strands in order to explain it. We are of the view that the terms ‘transatlantic trade’ and ‘transatlantic slave trade’ in textbooks, each clearly defined, would be more helpful. Visual representations of the topic should avoid reducing this trade’s complexity in such a way as to support or perpetuate familiar stereotypes around Africa and the notion of European superiority.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Bernhard, *Geschichtsmysmen*, 149–156.

Second, we urge textbook authors and editors to exercise greater sensitivity when selecting textual and visual sources. It is noticeable that textbooks frequently make use of sources from the (late) nineteenth century, i.e. from the colonial era, for the illustration of pre-colonial and early modern events and conditions. This situation calls upon historical research to provide a corpus of appropriate sources for history teaching and textbooks. We presume to offer a limited number of suggestions in this context, such as, for textual sources, the corpus of seventeenth-century German-language travelogues from West Africa compiled by Adam Jones.<sup>65</sup> The collection is edited in English translation, but many of the originals are available online via Google Books. A further useful source that is likewise accessible online is a German-language travelogue written in the eighteenth century by Paul Erdmann Isert.<sup>66</sup> Another eighteenth-century source, from the perspective of a West African slave trader, is an edition (in English) of the diary of Antera Duke.<sup>67</sup>

While it is indisputably the case that pre-colonial visual sources on the process of slave trading in West Africa are difficult to find, this circumstance should not excuse their substitution by nineteenth-century illustrations. We propose instead the use and simultaneous critique of images from contemporary West African travelogues and the encouragement of pupils to reflect, for instance, on European publishers' rationales for considering particular scenes as worthy of illustration and others not.

In the longer term, we would welcome considerations around potential structural changes in textbook accounts of this topic which would give greater room to pre-colonial Africa and disrupt stereotypical assumptions about the continent. The inclusion of the histories of pre-colonial African kingdoms and empires alongside those of the Aztecs, Incas and Maya may well prove helpful in this context. The coastal kingdoms of Benin (present-day Nigeria) and Kongo would furnish particularly instructive examples. In other phases of history education, further African kingdoms contemporary with the European Middle Ages, such as Mapungubwe and Zimbabwe in the south and Gha-

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<sup>65</sup> Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History 1599–1669*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983.

<sup>66</sup> Paul Erdmann Isert's *Reise nach Guinea und den Caribäischen Inseln in Columbien* (1788). An English edition edited by Selena Axelrod Winsnes is *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade. Paul Erdmann Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia (1788)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>67</sup> Stephen D. Behrendt, A.J.H. Lathan and David Northrup (eds.), *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

na/Mali/Songhai (Mauretania/Mali today), might usefully find a place in curricula. German-language secondary literature on pre-colonial African history which is in line with the current state of research remains rare; we plan a research project which, among other tasks, will attempt a synthesis of work in this area to date.

We present these proposals, and the study from which they arise, in the awareness and conviction that consistent inclusion of and engagement with Africa in history teaching in our schools is far from being an unimportant side issue in light of the evident parallels between historical accounts of Africa redolent with stereotypes and current prejudices towards the continent and its populations. In this spirit, we intend this chapter as illuminative groundwork for an impetus to change.

### **Textbooks sampled**

- D1: Brückner, Dieter and Julian Kümmerle (eds.), *Das waren Zeiten 2*, Buchner 2017.
- D2: Cornelißen, Hans-Joachim and Claudia Tatsch, *Forum Geschichte 7*, Cornelsen 2017.
- D3: Gawatz, Andreas and Andreas Grießinger (eds.), *Geschichte 7*, Schöningh 2017.
- D4: Brückmann, Asmut et al., *Geschichte und Geschehen 2*, Klett 2006.
- D5: Christoffer, Sven et al., *Zeitreise 2*, Klett 2006.
- D6: Birkenfeld, Wolfgang and Hans Ebeling (eds.), *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit 7/8*, Westermann 2016.
- Ö1: Bachlechner, Michael, Conny Benedik, Franz Graf, Franz Niedertscheider and Michael Senfter, *Bausteine 3*, Österreichischer Bundesverlag 2008.
- Ö10: Karl Vocelka et al., *Zeitenblicke 3*, Westermann 2010.
- Ö2: Peper, Ines, Franz Christian Weber and Reinhard Wolf, *Ganz klar 3*, Westermann 2007.
- Ö3: Monyk, Elisabeth, Eva Schreiner and Elisabeth Mann. *Geschichte für alle 3*, Olympe 2009.
- Ö4: Pramper, Wolfgang, Elfriede Windischbauer and Helmut Hammerschmid, *Geschichte live 3*, Veritas Verlag 2009.
- Ö5: Graf, Margot, Martina Vogel-Waldhütter and Franz Halbartschlager, *Mehrfach Geschichte Anwenden 3*, Veritas Verlag 2014.
- Ö6: Graf, Margot, Martina Vogel-Waldhütter and Franz Halbartschlager, *Mehrfach Geschichte Wissen 3*, Veritas Verlag 2014.
- Ö7: Hofer, Jutta and Bettina Paireder, *Netzwerk Geschichte 3*, Veritas Verlag 2005.
- Ö8: Lemberger, Michael, *VG3neu*, Bildungsverlag Lemberger 2007.

Ö9: Scheucher, Alois, Anton Wald and Ulrike Ebenhoch, *Zeitbilder 3*, Österreichischer Bundesverlag 2012.

Ö10: Huber, Gerhard and Erlefried Schröckenfuchs, *einst und heute 6*, Vienna: Westermann, 2000.

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Hansjörg Biener

## The ‘myth’ of the First Crusade

### Introduction: what this chapter sets out to do

‘Myths’ re-collect and locate events their narrators consider to be of significance beyond their contemporary time and space. ‘To a substantial extent, they detach historical experience from the specific circumstances in which it arose and reshape it into stories transcending the temporal context and passed down through the generations.’<sup>1</sup> The loss of cohesive power incurred by religious myths over the last two centuries has seen the increasing arrival of political myths on the scene<sup>2</sup>:

We can [define] a political myth [...] as an emotionally charged narrative which ‘reads mythically’ specific historical events and circumstances, that is, interprets reality not in accordance with the facts, but instead in a selective and stereotyped manner, thus endowing it with a nimbus of historicity. [...] This process leaves these events and circumstances to be interpreted in a way which causes the mythic narration to neglect or ‘overlook’ other [events and circumstance]s.<sup>3</sup>

Any attempt to consider the presence of mythic content in depictions of the Crusades in textbooks leads us directly into an entangled set of divergent and conflicting interpretations of the events and their significance to our day. Jerusalem is a mythic locus for three world religions, a flashpoint of competing claims, resting on foundations temporal and spiritual, whose resolution is complex even within one faith, as in rights of use over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and appears impossible in an inter-faith context, as with the Temple Mount.

A pope’s cry of ‘God wills it!’, the bloody conquest of Jerusalem, the clash of barbaric crusaders with Islamic civilisation – going by representations of the Crusades in history textbooks, this appears to be the extent of what pupils learn about these events. Previous studies from the years 1986 and 2004, conducted by Monika Tworuschka and Neşe Ih-

<sup>1</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, Munich: Beck, 2006, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Notably, Mathias Berek, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit*, Wiesbaden: Hassowitz, 2009, 14, speaks in this context not of myths, but of new traditions.

<sup>3</sup> Heidi Hein-Kircher, ‘Überlegungen zu einer Typologisierung von politischen Mythen aus historiographischer Sicht – ein Versuch’, Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder, 2006, 407–424, 408; cf. the discussions of terminology in Annette Zgoll and Reinhard G. Kratz, ‘Von Blumenbergs “Arbeit am Mythos“ zu Leistung und Grenze des Mythos in Antike und Gegenwart’, Zgoll and Kratz (eds.), *Arbeit am Mythos*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013, 1–12.

tiyar respectively, found that the history textbooks they analysed took a less than favourable view of the Crusades.<sup>4</sup> A diachronic analysis of textbooks for foundational secondary education in Bavaria points to an attitude of critical distance from as early as the 1920s; textbooks for religious education join their historical counterparts, evaluating the Crusades as a stain on church history.<sup>5</sup> A sense of interculturality has attached to the treatment of the Crusades in textbooks only insofar as it depicted an encounter between modern and medieval Europe as essentially a meeting of strangers. Studies arising from a project on depictions of Christianity in textbooks from the Islamic world<sup>6</sup>, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and published from 2005 onward, touched upon the Crusades; in 2011, Wolfram Reiss, one of these studies' authors, analysing representations of European history, culture and politics in six Arab countries, listed in the context of Egypt a number of stereotypes that spanned school subjects in a range of iterations: '1. The Christian Occident is [depicted as] the 'arch-enemy' of Arab/Islamic culture. 2. Europe is the culturally less advanced [of the two]. 3. The Islamic Orient is forced to defend itself against the Christian Occident's imperialist ambitions.'<sup>7</sup> With the exception of Christian textbooks in Lebanon, this pattern is typical, with only textbooks from Palestine showing less of a tendency to depict Europe as an antagonist other, a tendency arising more from the colonial period than from the era of the crusades; yet the liberation of al-Quds from the crusaders by Salah ad-Din's troops serves 'Islamists' and others as a central memory inspiring a renewed, present-day struggle for the liberation of Jerusalem.

This chapter draws on two monographs I have published on the depiction of and response to the Crusades in German curricula and textbooks, but focuses, in keeping with

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<sup>4</sup> Monika Tworuschka, *Analyse der Geschichtsbücher zum Thema Islam*, Braunschweig: Georg Eckert Institut 1986, 202 and 215; Neşe İhtiyar, Safiye Jalil and Pia Zumbrink, 'Der Islam in deutschen Schulbüchern (1995–2002)', *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 26 (2004), 223–288, 230.

<sup>5</sup> Hansjörg Biener, *Die Kreuzzüge in Lehrplan und Schulbuch*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2011 [a diachronic analysis of history curricula and textbooks for *Volks-* and *Hauptschulen* in Bavaria since the First World War]; Biener, *Die Kreuzzüge in Religions- und Geschichtsbüchern*, Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014 [a synchronic analysis of all textbooks approved in the states of Bavaria, Brandenburg and North Rhine-Westphalia as of 15 September 2014].

<sup>6</sup> Wolfram Reiss, *Die Darstellung des Christentums in Schulbüchern islamisch geprägter Länder: Ägypten und Palästina*, Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2005; Patrick Bartsch, *Die Darstellung des Christentums in Schulbüchern islamisch geprägter Länder: Türkei und Iran*, Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2005; Jonathan Kriener and Wolfram Reiss, *Die Darstellung des Christentums in Schulbüchern islamisch geprägter Länder: Libanon und Jordanien*, Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012; findings for Algeria and Syria await publication.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfram Reiss, 'Das Bild des Anderen. Die Darstellung Europas und seiner Geschichte in arabischen Geschichtsbüchern', *geschichte für heute* 4, 4 (2011), 5–16, 6: Stereotype, 7–11: Erläuterungen.

the volume’s theme, specifically on the use in history didactics of the concept of myth in relation to the First Crusade.

### The textbooks

The diversity of education systems resulting from the federal structure of German education, which is in the control of its sixteen federal states, means that any rigorous analysis of German textbooks needs first to clearly define which textbooks are analysed to ensure that the findings are transferrable to other contexts. The analysis that follows refers to all textbooks approved for use in delivering the core history curriculum for *Realschulen*, issued in 2011, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), which, as the most populous German state, is a key textbook market; editions approved for NRW are often simultaneously passed for use in other states or serve as a basis for other state-specific textbook editions. The curriculum for academically selective secondary schools (*Gymnasien*) was issued in 2007 and thus older than that for *Realschulen* and vocationally-oriented secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*); for the latter school type, however, only one new history textbook has been approved, while comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschulen*) have to make do with books for other types of schools. For school year 7, the year in which the curriculum stipulates teaching about the Crusades, five textbooks appeared in the academic year 2011/12: *denkmal Geschichte 2* (published by Schroedel)<sup>8</sup>, *Entdecken und verstehen 2[3]*<sup>9</sup> and *Geschichte Real 2*<sup>10</sup> (both Cornelsen), *Geschichte und Gegenwart 2* (Schöningh)<sup>11</sup> and *Zeitreise A2* (Klett)<sup>12</sup>. In 2012, the textbook *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1* (Westermann)<sup>13</sup>, covering the curricular period including the Crusades, likewise received approval for *Realschulen* despite its ‘con-

<sup>8</sup> *denkmal Geschichte 2*, Braunschweig: Schroedel, 2011, 48–49: ‘Die Kreuzzüge’, 50: ‘Die Eroberung Jerusalems’, 51: ‘Die Folgen der Kreuzzüge’.

<sup>9</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen 2[3]*, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2012, 22–33: ‘Die Kreuzzüge – Kriege im Namen Gottes?’ 22–23: ‘Welche Ziele verfolgten die Kreuzfahrer?’, 24–25: ‘Was geschah bei der Eroberung Jerusalems?’, 26–27: ‘Methode: Textquellen vergleichen’, 28–29: entdecken: ‘Die Kreuzzüge – eine reine Männersache?’, 30–31: ‘Wie lebten die Christen unter Saladin?’, 32–33: ‘Methode: Ein persönliches Werturteil bilden’.

<sup>10</sup> *Geschichte Real 2*, Berlin: Cornelsen, 2012, 34–35: ‘Kreuzzüge: Der Kampf um Jerusalem’, 36–37: ‘Begegnung der Kulturen’, 38–39: ‘Geschichte aktiv’.

<sup>11</sup> *Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, Braunschweig: Schöningh, 2012, 44–45: ‘Kreuzfahrer ziehen ins Heilige Land’, 46–47: ‘Auf nach Jerusalem – Zeitgenössische Quellen erzählen Geschichte’, 48–49: ‘Zweimal Jerusalem: Auf die Perspektive kommt es an’, 50–51: ‘Judenverfolgungen – Auch das gehört zu den Kreuzzügen’, 52: ‘Bilanz: Die Kreuzzüge – so wie wir sie heute sehen’.

<sup>12</sup> *Zeitreise A2*, Stuttgart/Leipzig: Klett, 2011, 34–35: ‘Gewalt im Zeichen des Kreuzes’, 36–37: ‘Muslime und Christen im Heiligen Land’.

<sup>13</sup> *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2012, 216–217: ‘Gläubige gegen Gläubige’, 218–219: ‘Die Eroberung Jerusalems’.

sistent [alignment] with the core history curriculum for *Hauptschulen* in North Rhine-Westphalia'.<sup>14</sup>

### Contexts: historians' view on the Crusades

Nine hundred years after the crusaders conquered Jerusalem, the editors of a volume on the city in the medieval period regard the recent consensus of condemnation as unequivocal:

After the Second World War, against the backdrop of the colonial empires' dissolution and of the Holocaust, the Crusades acquired from several quarters the repute of having been, at best, proto-imperialist endeavours, and, at worst, wars of expansion and annihilation driven by racial hatred. The massacre that took place at Jerusalem on 15 July 1099 served more than any other incident, alongside the pogroms of 1096, as exhibits to this judgment. The Crusades, the relations of power and dominion to which they gave rise, and particularly the Kingdom of Jerusalem thus advanced to the status of a negative foil to a better Europe, purged of its prior sins.<sup>15</sup>

The attacks of 11 September 2001, committed against what al-Qaida regarded as 'modern crusaders', and the need for reassurance that arose in their wake, brought forth new controversies around a number of events long considered to be beyond debate, such as the massacre at Jerusalem; these discussions picked up on the reassessment of the crusades in the colonial and post-colonial period.<sup>16</sup> It was evidently time for a new survey of the situation; the book published in 2010 by Thomas Asbridge, however, comes to a conclusion that might surprise us considering the work's over 700-page length:

Perhaps the crusades do have things to tell us about our world. Most, if not all, of their lessons are common to other eras of human history. [...] But the notion that the struggle for dominion of the Holy Land – waged by Latin Christians and Levantine Muslims so many centuries ago – does, or somehow should, have a direct bearing upon the modern world is misguided. The reality of these medieval wars must be explored and understood if the forces of propaganda are to be assuaged, and incitements to hostility countered. But the crusades must also be placed where they belong: in the past.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1. Lehrermaterialien*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2012, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Dieter Bauer, Klaus Herbers and Nikolas Jaspert, 'Vorwort', in Bauer, Herbers and Jaspert (eds.), *Jerusalem im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, Frankfurt: Campus, 2001, 7–9, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Alongside new editions of classics such as Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 10<sup>th</sup> edition 2005, publications included Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008; Christopher Tyerman, *Die Kreuzzüge*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2009; Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2010; Jonathan Phillips, *Heiliger Krieg*, Munich: DVA, 2011; Rodney Stark, *Gottes Krieger*, Berlin: Hoffmann und Tolkemitt, 2013 (here a tendency towards apologia is in evidence); Paul Cobb, *The Race for Paradise*, Oxford: University Press, 2014 (taking an Islamic perspective on the events).

<sup>17</sup> Asbridge, *Crusades*, 'Conclusion: The Legacy of the Crusades'.

Likewise, and unlike al-Qaida, Christopher Tyerman also takes the view that the Crusades are best left in the past, because the land and the cause for which a crusader lived, died or killed 'held truths for his time, not ours.'<sup>18</sup> This said, we should remain alert to transmutations of the idea of crusade and to its reprises in our modern age.<sup>19</sup> In the Arab context, 'the Crusades' continue to possess a symbolic power as a story seeking continuation, inviting renewed struggle for Jerusalem's liberation. Al-Qaida and the so-called 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' were not the first to have taken up the idea. In his book *Kreuzzug und Djihad*, first published in 1999 and reissued with a new foreword after the 11 September attacks, Bassam Tibi, a political scientist who was born in Damascus and works in the West, observes:

Anyone who knows Oriental languages and can read the Islamic press of our day knows the tenacity with which hostile Islamic images of the Christian West proliferate [...], [and] that, in the present-day Islamic public sphere, every error committed by the West [...] is almost automatically linked to the Crusades and interpreted as a sign of their continuation.<sup>20</sup>

The notion of Jerusalem's liberation as unfinished business likewise underlies the Statue of Saladin erected in the Syrian capital Damascus in 1992, which has entered into the illustrative repertoire of history textbooks without being accompanied by commentary noting and raising awareness of its function<sup>21</sup>. Actually, the statue is 'about' Saladin only in the eyes of the Western observer, who does not take into account that, from an Arab point of view, Jerusalem has once again been occupied, for all too long, since the state of Israel was founded.<sup>22</sup>

No textbook analysis can legitimately commence without having referred to the curriculum or curricula whose delivery they are intended to serve. In our case, that curriculum is the core history curriculum for *Realschulen* in North Rhine-Westphalia, introduced between 2011 and 2013 and focusing on the development of 'competencies' via nine fields of content. The topic of 'Europe in the Middle Ages' is taught in years 6 and 7 of schooling, with the latter including the sub-topic of 'Living together, side by side and in conflict at the edge of the Occident: Christians, Jews and Muslims'.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Tyerman, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Felix Hinz (ed.), *Kreuzzüge des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Bassam Tibi, *Kreuzzug und Djihad*, Munich: Goldmann, 2001, 130–131.

<sup>21</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen 2[/3]*, 31; *Zeitreise A2*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 593–600.

<sup>23</sup> *Kernlehrplan für die Realschule in NRW. Geschichte*, Frechen: Ritterbach, 2011, 10.

The notion emerges here of an ‘Occident’ (*Abendland*) as the (essentially mythic) ‘community of European peoples, shaped by classical antiquity and the Christian faith’, with a counterpart in the Islamic ‘Orient’ (*Morgenland*)<sup>24</sup>; the image of that Occident’s ‘edge’ as a space of the collision of cultures makes marginal phenomena of Europe’s Jewish and Islamic heritage. The competencies whose acquisition the teaching of the topic is intended to support likewise contain perspectives we might regard as questionable:

Knowledge:

Pupils [learn to]

- describe the encounter between cultures in Moorish Spain as an example of successful coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims
- describe the encounter between cultures during the Crusades, having regard to the faiths’ claims to sole and supreme validity.

Judgement:

Pupils [learn to]

- assess and evaluate the Crusades from a contemporary Christian and Muslim perspective and from a present-day point of view.

The questionable notions identified here are that of a ‘successful coexistence’ in al-Andalus, which is redolent of myth, and its implicitly prompted opposition to the cultural conflict in Syria/Palestine. The concept of ‘the faiths’ claims to sole and supreme validity’ is notably vague and requires interpretation; it is not specified as referring to a claim to sole and supreme truth, or claims to power or to the sole representation of the divine in persons, such as the Vicar of Christ. We might turn to *Geschichte Real*, comparing across its editions, to witness the effect of this curricular notion on textbook production. We notice the deleterious reduction of the issue of the dialogue among the faiths, with the double page devoted in 2003 to complex religious, historical and societal background factors turning in 2012 to a single page which simply lists inter-faith and inter-denominational conflicts and attributes them to each faith’s ‘claims to sole and supreme validity’. In the 2003 edition, a second double page explored efforts at dialogue, while in 2012 the textbook merely cites four principles from the theologian Hans Küng’s *Projekt Weltethos* as an ‘attempt [*sic*] towards more tolerance’. The 2003 edition’s account defined religions and denominations as a part both of the problem and of the solution; in 2012, they are only part of the problem.<sup>25</sup>

Table 1: Assessments of organised religions’ capacity for peace, *Geschichte Real*, 2003 and 2012

<i>Geschichte Real 1</i> 2003 [NRW RS-1994]	<i>Geschichte Real 2</i> 2012 [NRW RS-2011]
Peace and mutual understanding among people of	Many religions have a tendency to consider their

<sup>24</sup> Duden 1/6 A-Ci, Mannheim etc. 1976, 39, vs. Duden 4/6 Kam-N, Mannheim etc. 1978, 1819.

<sup>25</sup> *Geschichte Real 1*, Berlin 2003, 266, vs. *Geschichte Real 2*, Berlin 2012, 37.

different faiths is a lovely idea – yet has never been a matter of course, and is still not to this day. Officially, there is no organised religion or denomination today which still encourages its members to hate [other groups] and commit violent acts. On closer scrutiny, however, we notice that a great number of explosive historical, political and social issues become still more volatile and hazardous when religious differences are added to the mix.	teachings, their forms of prayer, and their pious customs to be the only correct ones. Among the reasons for this – but not the only one – is that traditions that often go back centuries tend to cement individuals’ convictions. Things get more difficult when [religions] stake a claim to the only valid ‘truth’, which is often attributed to divine revelation set out in holy [ <i>sic</i> ] scriptures.
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If this were only about the ways in which traditions become absolute and about their scriptural setting-in-stone, it would be sufficient to deconstruct these ‘truths’ from a perspective critiquing religion, with the ultimate aim of fundamentally secularising society, rather than inviting pupils to ‘invent’ rules for better coexistence among faiths<sup>26</sup>.

### **The textbooks’ shared narrative of the Crusades**

The space taken up by the Crusades in the textbooks ranges between two and twelve pages. An attempt to extract from these sections a majority or consensus narrative results in a story which, by and large, commences in Jerusalem, holy city of three faiths, to which Christians were able to undertake pilgrimages even after its Islamic conquest in the seventh century. This changed in the eleventh century, when the Seljuqs prevented pilgrims from gaining access. In 1095, Pope Urban II, speaking in Clermont, called upon Christians to liberate Jerusalem, an appeal heard and acted on by many; most textbooks include a piece of text from a source at this point. There is no information on the position of weakness in which Urban found himself, gaining no military benefit from the crusaders and dealing with schism both between the Western and the Eastern Church and within the former; nor do textbooks discuss the ecclesiastical practice of weighing, in the process of imposing penance, dangers and tribulations endured in crusade against sins committed by an individual.

Unlike earlier works, these textbooks do not mention the Crusades’ leaders; a myth of great men appears, alongside other considerations, to fall victim to a lack of space.<sup>27</sup> Most books include the pogroms in the Rhineland associated with the Crusades. Continuing, the narrative tells pupils that, after suffering substantial losses on their journey, the remains of the crusading armies of knights captured Jerusalem with much blood-

<sup>26</sup> *Geschichte Real 2*, Berlin 2012, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Wolfzettel, ‘Gottfried von Bouillon. Führer des ersten Kreuzzugs und König von Jerusalem’, Inge Milfull and Michael Neumann (eds.), *Mythen Europas. Mittelalter*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004, 126–142.

shed, an account all books corroborate using a Christian-authored source, with three also adding a piece of text by Ibn al-Athir. The narrative describes as direct consequences of these events the emergence of crusader states, which proved unable to sustain themselves in the long term, and the Christians’ confrontation with the superiority of Islamic culture.

Overall, these depictions stick to the tried-and-trusted, including errors old and new.<sup>28</sup> Comparing editions often reveals the removal of authorial text and/or materials, presumably to make room for additional introductory pages, ‘appetisers’ and closing sections intended to enable pupils to self-assess their learning.

### **Reconstructions: the papal call to crusade**

Although there are factors that speak against the use of sources on Urban II’s speech in Clermont as the Crusades’ catalysing moment – specifically, its tendency to revolve the story around the papal figure and issues with the authenticity of the information that has reached us –, such an approach is not without merits or justification. All history textbooks analysed here, with the exception of *Zeitreise A2*, include the call to crusade, depicted triptych-like as the evocation of a horror scenario, the injunction to liberate Jerusalem, and the promise of eternal life<sup>29</sup>; in all textbooks, the source is Robert the Monk, who himself comments that Pope Urban II uttered ‘this and [things] like it’.<sup>30</sup> The tasks set for pupils generally relate to the pope’s bellicose rhetoric.<sup>31</sup>

The books do not engage with contemporary rationales as to why God willed the crusade (or why such a will was considered legitimate). Or rather, they describe the audience as responding to Urban with the cry of ‘Deus vult’. If they were to explore such rationales, they might succeed in raising awareness around current justifications of wars and conflicts; for the concept of ‘just war’ in fact does everything but justify the Cru-

<sup>28</sup> There is a detailed discussion in Biener, *Die Kreuzzüge in Religions- und Geschichtsbüchern*, 503–565 (books for *Realschule*).

<sup>29</sup> The books marked \* point out the provenance of the source as much later than the events in question: *denkmal Geschichte 2*, 48; *\*Entdecken und verstehen 2[3]*, 22; *Geschichte Real 2*, 34–35; *\*Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, 46; *\*Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, 216.

<sup>30</sup> Arno Borst, *Lebensformen im Mittelalter*, Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1973, 320.

<sup>31</sup> *denkmal Geschichte 2*, 48: ‘Promises the Pope made’; *Entdecken und verstehen 2[3]*, 22: ‘Arguments put forward by the Pope to convince his listeners to join the crusade’ and the negative image of Muslims; *Geschichte Real 2*, 34: ‘what feelings the speech is supposed to inspire in its audience’, ‘Why should the “people of the Franks” go to the Orient?’; *Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, 47: ‘Methodenschulung’; *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, 217: ‘how Pope Urban II sought to persuade people to crusade’.

sade, because it shines a light on the arguments for and against and brings them into the forum of debate.

Table 2: Controversial applicability of the criteria of ‘just war’ to the call to crusade

Criterion	How criterion is met	Counter-argument
legitimate authority ( <i>legitima potestas</i> )	unquestionably – in the context of Gregorian thinking – the Pope	The Pope is a spiritual leader, not a secular authority. Cf. the Investiture Controversy
just cause ( <i>causa iusta</i> )	reconquest – after a period of penitence – of the Christian holy sites	God does not divulge His sovereign will to humans.
right intention ( <i>recta intentio</i> )	restoration of the divine order of things	It appears that God’s will has been to give Jerusalem into the hands of the Muslims.
proportional means ( <i>debitus modus</i> )	participation in crusade a factor in the expiation of sin	doubts expressed by contemporaries in crusaders’ spiritual steadfastness; additionally, in our modern age, concerns with the violent means employed

Because of the space required for even a much-abridged version of the Pope’s speech, in addition to the issues surrounding its non-contemporaneous written record and the interpretation thereof, it might be of greater benefit to cite the relevant determination of the Council of Clermont as a source; doing so provides a near-contemporaneous and theologically correct witness to the promise – linked to true repentance of sin – of a remission of ecclesiastical penance, which both crusaders and textbook authors are frequently tempted to confuse with the forgiveness of sin and a guarantee of eternal life – these remain in the gift of God alone.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Heinrich Hagenmeyer (ed.), *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, Innsbruck: Wagner, 1901, 216.

### The massacre at Jerusalem

The question of whether the conquest of Jerusalem, from a contemporary point of view, went beyond the typical uses of medieval warfare<sup>33</sup> remains the subject of considerable debate. In 2010, Thomas Asbridge, arguing against the traditional perspective which claimed a general massacre had taken place, asserted:

By the thirteenth century, the Iraqi Muslim Ibn al-Athir estimated the number of Muslim dead at 70,000. Modern historians long regarded this figure to be an exaggeration, but generally accepted that Latin estimates in excess of 10,000 might be accurate. However, recent research has uncovered close contemporary Hebrew testimony which indicates that casualties may not have exceeded 3,000, and that large numbers of prisoners were taken when Jerusalem fell. This suggests that, even in the Middle Ages, the image of the crusaders' brutality in 1099 was subject to hyperbole and manipulation on both sides of the divide.<sup>34</sup>

If a city surrendered, the practice was to negotiate a costly withdrawal, as in the reconquest of al-Quds in 1187, when the annihilation at Hattin of the largest-ever crusader army had destroyed all prospect of successful defence. If, as in Jerusalem in 1099, no surrender was forthcoming, the city was taken by force and the conquering army sought to capture whatever they could. The textbook *Entdecken und verstehen* contains a hint of the orderly taking of possession despite the surrounding chaos, in the assertion of Fulcher of Chartres 'that whoever entered a house, whether he be rich or poor, was not threatened by another Frank'.<sup>35</sup> Three textbooks use the account of a Norman crusader as their textual source.<sup>36</sup> An analysis of omissions points towards a tendency to distort the narrative by failing to mention futile attempts to storm the city, the destruction of one of two siege towers, and the robust resistance of the Islamic forces, even once the crusaders had already entered the city. The crusaders thus appear as murderers descending uninhibited on men, women and children and as greed-driven plunderers who subsequently proceeded to thank their God for their ill-gotten gains, while the Muslims are cast as unresisting victims. The Norman's claim that nobody had ever seen or heard of such a bloodbath<sup>37</sup> is part of this topos.<sup>38</sup> It is debatable, in light of the ubiquitous practices of warfare at that time and their belief in being on a divine mission, whether the

<sup>33</sup> Among those who doubt this was the case are John France, *Victory in the East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 325–366, 'Jerusalem: triumphant ending', 355; Kaspar Elm, 'Die Eroberung Jerusalems im Jahre 1099', Bauer et al. (eds.), *Jerusalem im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, 31–54, 42–46.

<sup>34</sup> Asbridge, *Crusades*, ch. 3, 'The Sacred City'.

<sup>35</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen* 2[3], 27.

<sup>36</sup> *denkmal Geschichte* 2, 50; *Geschichte und Gegenwart* 2, 48–49; *Zeitreise A2*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> *denkmal Geschichte* 2, 50.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the many examples from the Crusades era, including such that are not accounts of the Crusades themselves: Malte Prietzel, *Kriegführung im Mittelalter*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006, 109–118: 'Das Plündern als Symbol des Sieges', 118–129: 'Die Opfer des Kampfs als Maßstab für den Sieg'.

conquerors would have been troubled by a sense of having done wrong in their killings and appropriation of others' property. There were indeed instances of negotiation and adherence to contractual obligations, such as in the safe conduct out of the city granted to the city's governor Iftikhar al-Dawla, which enabled Raymond IV of Toulouse to gain possession of the Tower of David. Accordingly, after the crusaders' victory over the Egyptian relief force, Ascalon offered its surrender to Raymond. He accepted. The result was that Ascalon remained a Muslim bastion until 1154.

The sources currently available to us indicate little response in the Islamic world to the conquest of Jerusalem; three teams of textbook authors, for lack of more contemporaneous sources from an Islamic perspective, therefore cite Ibn al-Athir, writing more than 100 years later<sup>39</sup>, a text Bassam Tibi recalls reading at school himself<sup>40</sup>. Francesco Gabrieli's volume of sources gives the figure of '70,000' dead at the al-Aqsa mosque alone with a question mark<sup>41</sup>; all textbooks examined, by contrast, repeat the number – the population of a typical city of the time – as a fact. Only one textbook includes the safe conduct for the Egyptian governor mentioned by Ibn al-Athir.<sup>42</sup>

An exploration of the rationales in operation at that time requires attention to the comments, cited in two textbooks<sup>43</sup>, in which the archbishop William of Tyre, born in the Holy Land and looking back eight decades at the time of writing, says of the bloodshed on the Temple Mount: 'It was indeed the righteous judgment of God which ordained that those who had profaned the sanctuary of the Lord by their superstitious rites and had caused it to be an alien place to His faithful people should expiate their sin by death and, by pouring out their own blood, purify the sacred precincts.'<sup>44</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen* mentions this 'righteous judgment of God', but does not engage in discussion of it.<sup>45</sup> A closer approach to good practice appears, by contrast, in *Reise in die Vergangenheit*

<sup>39</sup> *denkmal Geschichte 2*, 57; *Entdecken und verstehen 2*[/3], 27; *Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, 49.

<sup>40</sup> Tibi, *Kreuzzug und Dihad*, 132: 'To this day, Muslims read this report by Ibn al-Athir in their history lessons – I too recall having read it during my schooldays in Damascus. This teaching keeps the memory of the Crusades alive, and it accordingly helps sustain the attitude that arises from [it].'

<sup>41</sup> Francesco Gabrieli (ed.), *Die Kreuzzüge aus arabischer Sicht*, Zurich/Munich: Artemis, 1973, 49.

<sup>42</sup> *denkmal Geschichte 2*, 57.

<sup>43</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen 2*[/3], 24; *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, 218.

<sup>44</sup> William of Tyre, 'The Capture of Jerusalem', cited in Martin Perry (ed.), *Sources of the Western Tradition*, vol. 1, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012, 239.

<sup>45</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen 2*[/3], 27.

heit, which calls upon pupils to ‘[d]efine what the author of [the source] Q1 understands by “creating order”’.<sup>46</sup>

The notion that a place can be cleansed by blood, or sins expiated by the deaths of the sinners<sup>47</sup>, is crucial to the specific contemporary perspective on the events. It was an idea shared by Muslims, as evidenced in comments on the reconquest of al-Quds in 1187<sup>48</sup> and Acre in 1291<sup>49</sup>. As foreign as it is to us, awareness of the rationale underlying it is what makes citing such texts useful. It is an important insight that, if there is to be any hope of reducing violence and violent tendencies, we need, without losing our abhorrence of both the violence itself and the way in which some chroniclers appear to revel in it, to address the rationales employed by those who have committed violent acts in past and present and the cultural embeddedness of that violence.

### The ‘Orientalisation’ of the Franks

Fulcher of Chartres’ claim that, as early as ‘around 1100’, not long at all after the conquest of Jerusalem, ‘peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims came to pass’, should have aroused suspicions among the editorial team of the textbook *Entdecken und verstehen*.<sup>50</sup> *Geschichte Real* is no more accurate in its citation of the date ‘1110’<sup>51</sup>, as Fulcher in fact makes reference to a solar eclipse in 1124, which, he asserts, should be of no surprise to us in light of the greater miracles wrought by God on earth:

<sup>46</sup> *Reise in die Vergangenheit 1*, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Regina Günther (ed.): *Ibn Dschubair: Tagebuch eines Mekkapilgers*, Stuttgart: Thienemann, 1985, 50–56: ‘Über das Rote Meer nach Dschidda (1183)’, 55: ‘The lands of God which most merit cleansing by the sword and the washing away of their stains and impurities by bloodshed in the divine cause are the lands of the Arabian peninsula. For it is they which slacken the commandments of Islam and fail to respect the property and blood of the pilgrims. [...] May God soon rectify this and purify the place by destroying these iniquitous heretics among Muslims by the sword of the Almohads, defenders of the faith, the party of God [cf. Surah 5:56], the proponents of right and truth.’

<sup>48</sup> Gabrieli, *Die Kreuzzüge aus arabischer Sicht*; cf., *inter alia*, 195: Salah ad-Dīn’s secretary Imād ad-Dīn [12<sup>th</sup> century]: ‘Islam wooed the bride Jerusalem [...] to make the Christians’ semantrons fall silent and hear once again the Islamic call to prayer rise, to remove [from Jerusalem] the hand of the infidel by the right hand of faith, to cleanse it of all foulness of those races, of the stain inflicted by these lowest of humanity, to strike dumb their spirits in silencing th[eir] bells.’

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 409 Abu’l-Mahasin [15<sup>th</sup> century] ‘How wonderful it is to see that God the Sublime worked the reconquest of Acre on the same day and at the same hour as the Franks had taken it [...]; the Sultan assured the Franks of safety and then had them killed, as the Franks had done to the Muslims; so did God the Sublime avenge Himself on their descendants.’

<sup>50</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen 2*[3], 25.

<sup>51</sup> *Geschichte Real 2*, 36.

Consider how, in our time, God has transformed the Occident into the Orient. We who were Occidentals have been made into Orientals. Those who were once Romans or Franks are today Galileans or inhabitants of Palestine. Those once hailing from Reims or Chartres [have] become citizens of Tyre or Antioch. We have already forgotten our places of birth. Most of us no longer know of them, or, at the least, no longer hear of them. The one owns houses and servants as if he had inherited them in accordance with family law. Another has married a woman who is not his compatriot, but instead Syrian or Armenian, and sometimes even a Saracen who has received the grace of baptism.<sup>52</sup>

To take Fulcher's exclamation of praise to God for Christians' life in the Orient as proof of the crusaders having passed through a cultural transformation or indeed of reconciliation between the faith communities would be to misread him. His observation that arrivals from the West 'sometimes even' married baptised Saracen women indicates that any marriages to local women among the Franks were to Christians and that inter-faith marriages were unthinkable to Fulcher. The textbook *Entdecken und verstehen* omits the point about baptism, which places the question to pupils on 'how, according to [the source] Q2, rapprochement and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims came to be', on an erroneous basis. *Geschichte Real* fails to engage with the problem altogether; its abridged version of the source text only mentions Syrian women. *Zeitreise* is another textbook to achieve reconciliation by false representation, carrying a fictitious dialogue lamenting the lack of peace and presenting the interlocutors as models of amity and indeed of balance and reconciliation between the faiths. The text adds 'Th[is] dialogue between the elderly crusader Fulcher and the Muslim Usama is a work of fiction. But thoughts and ideas like those expressed here really did occur in the Holy Land back then.'<sup>53</sup> The fictitious edifice nevertheless shatters as soon as we subject to a closer reading the source texts by Fulcher and Usama given on the textbook's opposite page. There is no overlap between the two men in terms of life stage; at the time of writing, Fulcher is an old man, who composed the text cited in 1124 at the earliest – as is evident from its reference, not included in the textbook quotation, to a specific solar eclipse. Usama, meanwhile, is young, and had first fought the Franks in 1119. There is little basis here for 'friendship' or indeed a reconciliation between religions to the degree suggested by the authors. Five of the seven tasks for pupils that follow these materials call on them to engage with the dialogue and the source texts, to the end of writing a 'letter of protest to the Pope about the misdeeds of newly arriving crusaders'.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Heinrich Hagenmeyer (ed.), *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127)*, Heidelberg: Winter, 1913, 748–749 (author's translation from the Latin).

<sup>53</sup> *Zeitreise A2*, 36–37, 'Muslime und Christen im Heiligen Land', 36.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Recent textbooks have been making increasingly frequent use of illustrations in a juvenile style, and an 'illustration from a book for young people' – from a series in fact aimed at older primary school children –, featured in *Geschichte Real* and showing a Frank dressed as an Oriental, is indicative of this trend.<sup>55</sup> The depiction is disputed by Joshua Praver's account of 'the world of the crusaders', according to which styles of dress in fact did not adapt:

The Franks and their wives wore silk, taffeta, brocade, cotton, wool and gauzy muslin, but not cut to Oriental patterns. [...] The Franks' sense of ethnic identity even drove them to forbid non-Franks to wear clothing made in the European style. This continued adherence to Frankish customs also manifests in their rejection of the Oriental practice of wearing a beard.<sup>56</sup>

### **'Contemporary criticism of the Crusades'**

The extent to which the crusaders had right on their side was a matter of debate at the time as now. In a practice typical of products from the Cornelsen publishing house, *Entdecken und verstehen* cites a cleric from Würzburg on the secular motives driving the Second Crusade.<sup>57</sup> The notion of evaluating one event via critique of another which took place fifty years after the original one stands in contradiction to the temporal differentiation and distinction whose acquisition is part of history teaching's purpose. Those who, at the time, preached the Crusades' justification or were part of their armies may have attributed failures to impure motives and a lack of religious integrity, and did indeed do so; in the modern age, many assessments of the Crusades regard the cloak of religion used to dress up the motivating greed as simply the icing on the cake of the entire reprehensible, violent endeavour.

Objections were, however, lodged at the time on theological principle. Two textbooks cite critique from observers of the Third Crusade, the inclusion of the date (1188) alerting readers to the chronological gap separating this material from the principal topic of the First Crusade.<sup>58</sup> The thrust of Ralph Niger's argument is not the enforcement of a prohibition on taking life, but rather the eternal salvation of the unbaptised Saracens:

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<sup>55</sup> *Geschichte Real* 2, 36: 'Kreuzfahrer. Jugendbuchillustration'; according to 256: 'From [the children's factual book series] 'Was ist was?' – Die Kreuzzüge, Tessloff 1993', 23.

<sup>56</sup> Joshua Praver, *Die Welt der Kreuzfahrer*, Bergisch Gladbach: Bastei, 1979, 154.

<sup>57</sup> *Entdecken und verstehen* 2[3], 23; *Geschichte Real* 2, 35.

<sup>58</sup> *Zeitreise A2*, 35; *Geschichte und Gegenwart* 2, 49.

That the Saracens should not be slaughtered, but repelled.

[Contestation] Should the Saracens be slaughtered? Or has God, because he gave them Palestine, permitted them to possess it in perpetuity[?]

[Biblical passage as a basis for the line of argumentation] God says: 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked', [but that he turn from his way and live. Cf. Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11]

[Argument] They [the Saracens] are human beings in the same state as we also are.

[First answer] They are to be repelled and driven from our property, because all laws permit the repulsion of force with force. But with careful integrity, lest the means of defence exceed the just measure.

[Second, continuing answer] They are to be pierced with the sword of the divine Word [cf. Hebrews 4:12], that they might freely, and without compulsion, come to the faith [and thus to eternal life], for God abhors acts of coercion and forced service.<sup>59</sup>

This text provides an exemplar of the latent meanings which we need to consider if we are to make appropriate use of a textual source. The labels inserted guide the modern-day reader through the stages of the discussion require attention in this context, as, still more, does the theological language, whose abbreviations, familiar to educated readers of Ralph Niger's time, are a mystery to modern ones. Translating '*homines eiusdem conditionis naturae*' as 'human beings of the same natural constitution as we'<sup>60</sup>, might tempt us to read the phrase as meaning 'The Muslims are people like us'<sup>61</sup>, where, at the least, 'They are God's creatures as are we' is significantly more apposite. Greater justice is done to the Biblical verse cited and to the continuation of the answer relating to the conversion of the Saracens if we understand the phrase as '*homines eiusdem conditionis naturae humanae iustitia originali destitutae*', that is, 'human beings in the same state as are we, that is, robbed of their original justice by the Fall'. A preference for conversion over combat was likewise a principle on the Islamic side of the conflict, in the form of a prescription to provide the non-Muslim with an opportunity to convert prior to the commencement of battle. The treatment of 'heretics' was merciless on both sides, due to the jeopardy in which their apostasy was perceived to cast those of orthodox faith; Ralph Niger was one contemporary figure to consider their annihilation the most appropriate form of action against them.<sup>62</sup> This is another reason for the inaccuracy of 'They are people too' as a summary of Niger's scepticism towards the crusading endeavour; any argument proceeding on a general humanitarian basis would have had to include 'heretics' in its admission of the right to life. The teacher's edition of *Geschich-*

<sup>59</sup> Ludwig Schmugge (ed.), *Radulfus Niger: De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis ierosolimitane (1187/88)*, Berlin: DeGruyter, 1977, 196 (author's translation; the author has confirmed the interpretation presented here in correspondence with Ludwig Schmugge, March 2010).

<sup>60</sup> *Geschichte und Gegenwart* 2, 49.

<sup>61</sup> *Zeitreise A2*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Schmugge, *Radulfus Niger: De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis ierosolimitane (1187/88)*, 65 and 192.

*te und Gegenwart* is therefore hasty, to say the least, in its précis of the source: 'The cleric Ralph Niger rejects the conversion by force and the murder of those of other faiths.'<sup>63</sup> A task in *Zeitreise* relating to the source in question expects pupils to produce an 'affirmative commentary' on the equal value of Christians and Muslims and on non-violence – an at best inaccurate reflection of Ralph's position.<sup>64</sup>

### Discussion

If we define a myth as not simply a story impaired by inaccuracies, but as 'an emotionally charged narrative which "reads mythically" specific historical events and circumstances, that is, interprets reality not in accordance with the facts, but instead in a selective and stereotyped manner'<sup>65</sup>, by virtue of which, in the minds of those who disseminate it, it is to generate collective direction and orientation of values, ideas and behaviours, then we can indeed perceive in history textbooks a myth of the First Crusade. On analysis, the textbooks this chapter has analysed, those approved for use in delivering North Rhine-Westphalia's 2011 history curriculum for *Realschule*, disclose precipitately concluded apparent self-evidencies or conscious authorial decisions which turn their depiction of the Crusade from foundationally informative, providing potential for pupils to build on it with later and more complex study, to the narration of a myth, value-laden, preserved, so to speak, in aspic, and generative of identity via the drawing of boundaries. The stable narrative of the First Crusade, as present in these textbooks, appears to run as follows: the Church's cry of 'Deus vult', alien to our understanding; a 'massacre' at Jerusalem, reprehensible to our morality; the apparent process of 'Orientalisation' as a mark of acknowledgement of Islamic civilisation's superiority; and 'contemporary critique' of the Crusades as legitimation for our modern-day repudiation of these events. This interpretation fails to take the rationales of the time into account and transports present-day interests and value judgements into the past.

These textbooks formulate the Crusade's socio-political significance in their praise of *convivencia* in Moorish Spain and their negative image of all the Crusades in relation to the state of religious coexistence in today's Germany. The lessons to be learned appear to revolve around tolerance and the repudiation of violence committed in the name of

<sup>63</sup> *Geschichte und Gegenwart 2. Lehrerband*, Braunschweig: Schöningh, 2012, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Zeitreise A2. Begleitband*, Stuttgart/Leipzig: Klett, 2011, 19.

<sup>65</sup> Heidi Hein-Kircher, 'Überlegungen zu einer Typologisierung von politischen Mythen aus historiographischer Sicht – ein Versuch', 408.

religious faith. We note, in the context of the 'clash of civilisations', that such objectives have been in place since before the 11 September attacks. Despite, for instance, the separate topic units for Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the *Realschule* curriculum of 1994<sup>66</sup>, the corresponding textbooks tended to discuss all three religious cultures within one chapter, even interconnecting their depictions on occasion, a manner of proceeding which led pretty much inevitably to the question of how adherents of different faiths coexist today. The differences and divergences, however, are significant, as are their effects on the myth. The liberation of al-Quds in 1187 continues to claim mythic status in specific Arab or Islamic contexts. On the Western side, the reconquest of Jerusalem in 1099 no longer holds particular significance for the Christian churches, and the only use of the Crusades in a Central European secular context is to highlight how much one is not like those medieval crusaders over there.

In the Arab/Islamic world, the mythic event is linked to more recent stories of oppression by, and liberation from, Western European dominion, by virtue of which it takes its place in an overarching narrative, spanning the ages, of the clash of Islamic civilisation with Occidental barbarity. In the perception of the West, repudiating the Crusades is concomitant to distancing oneself from the ecclesiastically-dominated, backward obscurity of the Middle Ages, along with a less confidently presented affirmative story detailing the historic supersession of a politics determined by religious considerations.

### **Problematic narratives or a 'myth' to debunk?**

The discourse around myth originates from religious studies and as such is highly apposite to training a spotlight, in textbook analysis, on narratives which seek to align collectives with a specific worldview and the interests inherent in these narratives' perpetuation. At the same time, the generic property of myth as a narrative of origin requires that we perceive these narratives' inherent logic and their rootedness in our life before we move on to critique such as the highly influential drive for demythologisation which has been unfolding in Central European Protestant theology. The question does arise here, however, as to whether we actually need myth, which after all has been imported from the discipline of cultural studies, to describe phenomena of historical culture; after all, it is less crucial to the general debate around 'collective memory and cultures of

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<sup>66</sup> *Richtlinien und Lehrpläne für die Realschule in NRW. Geschichte*, Frechen: Ritterbach, 1994, 73: 'Christentum als Kultur und politische Kraft', 74: 'Islam als Kultur und politische Kraft', 75: 'Judentum als Kultur und gesellschaftliche Kraft'.

memory'<sup>67</sup> than the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann might suggest, while in the realm of political science, the legitimising function fulfilled by myths calls precisely for their delegitimation: 'The political myth, which has caused so much harm again and again during the course of history, should therefore always be subject to interrogation by the unmasking logos.'<sup>68</sup>

An approach to textbooks driven primarily by subject-related academic or socio-political concerns will readily make use of the concept of 'myth' in its pejorative sense, as a fiction. It could indicate a depiction to which socio-political relevance attaches yet which reduces complexity to an extent unacceptable to academic standards, prejudices its audience's judgement in a manner incompatible with the retention of an independent evaluation – which may violate the injunction upon teachers not to expose their pupils to indoctrination – and in so doing presents us with a manner of doing history incapable of pointing the way to a mature future societal historical consciousness. This said, any depiction of history essentially has the property of a construct, so that it is impossible to oppose 'myths' with a standard type of narrative; were such a narrative to exist, it would inevitably itself take on the status of a narrative of origin. If we, as history didacticians, wish to provide a factual, balanced and constructively critical assessment of textbooks, we would be well advised to use the more neutral terms of 'narratives' and of their analysis, guided by what have become the principles at the heart of our endeavour, such as multi-perspectivity and the exploration of issues from various sides of the argument.<sup>69</sup> It is in this spirit that this chapter has placed particular emphasis on the internal logics of the ways in which past ages justified, waged, critiqued or avoided warfare; it is our view that teachers' guides to textbooks, at the least, should provide more and closer information on these matters, thus enabling teachers to consider them more profoundly together with their pupils. Recognising method at work in apparent madness – and be it a method of madness – and attempting to understand the path of the logic thus expressed

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<sup>67</sup> Mathias Berek, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009; Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Yves Bizeul, 'Politische Mythen', Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.): *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Herder, 2006, 3–14, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Klaus Bergmann, *Multiperspektivität*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2000. See also the discussion, via the example of Islam in the history and religious and ethics education classroom, Hansjörg Biener, *Herausforderungen zu einer multiperspektivischen Didaktik* [on curricula], Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2006; Biener, *Herausforderungen zu einer multiperspektivischen Schulbucharbeit*, Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2007.

is not tantamount to accepting that logic as valid, and as such we should not be afraid of undertaking this endeavour.

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Julia Thyroff

### **Switzerland's role in the world wars: how current history textbooks reproduce, supersede and deconstruct the neutrality myth**

Switzerland has acquired a general reputation as a country standing apart from war, an island, so to speak, of neutrality amid the storms of conflict, retaining its liberty and engaging in mediating and humanitarian activity.<sup>1</sup> Some years ago, public debate brought this image of a neutral and disinterested Switzerland – at least as far as the Second World War (WW2) went – into sustained and vigorous question.<sup>2</sup> This new discursive dispensation condemned the country for having turned Jewish refugees away, acted as an accessory to the Nazis' crimes and entered into egregious dealings with the regime, in so doing having unnecessarily prolonged the war, and in the final analysis perhaps even having made questionable its much-vaunted neutrality.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter has at its core the myth of Switzerland's neutrality and its partial deconstruction, explored via accounts of the country's role in the two world wars which appear in current history textbooks. It will endeavour to establish the position accorded in these textbooks to the neutrality myth and the extent to which they reproduce or, alternatively, seek to dismantle it.<sup>4</sup> The concept of 'myth' as employed here draws on Jan Assmann's definition as 'a story one tells in order to give direction to oneself and the world', a 'foundational story' which legitimises the existing order by implying continui-

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<sup>1</sup> On the traditional image of 'Switzerland as a special historical case', see Thomas Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten – und was dahinter steckt*, Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2015, 12f., 172–188. Nicole Peter and Nicole Burgermeister, 'Der Holocaust und die Schweiz. Konkurrierende Erinnerungen im intergenerationellen Dialog', in Béatrice Ziegler et al. (eds.), *Die Schweiz und die Shoa. Von Kontroversen zu neuen Fragen*, Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2012, 19–28, 28, have identified a pattern of interpretation that affirms Switzerland as having 'distinguished itself by humanitarian actions despite sacrifices of its own' in WW2.

<sup>2</sup> See Jakob Tanner, 'Die Krise der Gedächtnisorte und die Havarie der Erinnerungspolitik. Zur Diskussion um das kollektive Gedächtnis und die Rolle der Schweiz während des Zweiten Weltkriegs', in: *Traverse. Zeitschrift für Geschichte/Revue d'histoire* 6, 1 (1999), 16–38; Thomas Maissen, *Verweigerter Erinnerung. Nachrichtenlose Vermögen und Schweizer Weltkriegsdebatte 1989–2004*, Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung – Buchverlag, 2005; Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 185–188.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of coexisting reproductive and 'dismantling' components of myth draws on earlier work in Michel Schultheiss and Julia Thyroff, "'Friedensinsel" in der "Einigkeitsprobe". Eine Untersuchung von aktuellen Geschichtslehrmitteln zur Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg', Konrad J. Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler (eds.), *Der vergessene Krieg. Spuren und Traditionen zur Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2014, 291–306, 303. This chapter, in its emphasis on neutrality, explores more closely one of the previous study's central foci, adding to that work depictions of the Second World War and further textbooks.

ty between past and present.<sup>5</sup> Myths, as this volume's opening chapter likewise sets out, act to generate orientation, legitimation and identity.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, it is not an adequate response to 'myths' to simply equate them with 'fiction'. Myths are not merely, in Jan Assmann's terms, the opposite of a factual story<sup>7</sup>, or, expressed in a less positivist manner via a category defined by Jörn Rüsen, the opposite of a narrative possessing empirical *Triftigkeit*.<sup>8</sup> As Thomas Maissen observes, the creation of a simple 'opposition between time-honoured myths and the progressive, educative revelation of what really lies behind them' must fail in comprehending the phenomenon as a whole.<sup>9</sup> Oppositions such as these would refer to a specific concept of history which believes in 'correct' narratives in the first place. Instead, the understanding of myths used in this chapter proceeds in the first instance from their constitution as narrative constructs among numerous others.

Myths may be highly adaptable over time, mutable and much given to ambiguity. Others, however, may be highly condensed and unambiguous to an extent that an academic view must regard them as questionable. Some myths – I again turn to Thomas Maissen – stake claim to 'timeless validity', and the identity they hold out to their hearers 'tends to be of a pleasing kind', glossing over weaknesses.<sup>10</sup> All this means academic history needs to retain a critical spirit, a readiness to uncover exaggerations and omissions.<sup>11</sup>

In this conflict-laden space comprising identity-forming yet reductive narratives and critical attempts to put them in their historical place, this chapter's remit is to identify the position or positions taken by history textbooks, in specific relation to the myth of Swiss neutrality. Its first main section will provide a synthesising overview of the current state of research in the field; what follows this will outline the findings of a cross-sectional analysis of textbooks used in today's Swiss history classrooms.

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 59.

<sup>6</sup> Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 7–15.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 6th ed., 2007, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 7. All quotations from German-speaking literature used in this chapter have been translated into English.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

### Myths around Switzerland's role in the two world wars: research to date

My first endeavour is to survey the current status of work around myths in the Swiss collective memory, particularly where they relate to the country's role in the two world wars. The literature speaks frequently of the myth, first, of Swiss neutrality, and, second, of a nation ready and able to defend itself, yet simultaneously prepared to offer humanitarian assistance to others.<sup>12</sup> Jakob Tanner has pinpointed roots of these myths in late nineteenth-century Switzerland, where, as in other European states at that time, a tendency to invent 'traditions' and generate a nation-state-based identity was in full flow.<sup>13</sup> Tanner names key components of the '*Confoederatio helvetica* as an imagined community' as being democracy, federalism and neutrality, along with independence, ability and readiness to defend itself, and internal cohesion, the latter factors supposedly stemming not least from the country's geographical position and its conduciveness to a 'reinforcement of [the Swiss] national self-identity via its locatedness in the natural system of fortification offered by [its] mountainous territory'.<sup>14</sup>

My next step is to enquire into the extent to which textbooks have incorporated such components of Swiss self-identity, along with others. The work of Markus Furrer, which forms this chapter's key point of reference, has provided extensive findings on myths in Swiss history textbooks<sup>15</sup>, three of which are of relevance to this chapter due to their reference to Switzerland's role in the world wars: the myth of neutrality ('*Neutralitätsmythos*'), the myth of the National Redoubt ('*Réduitmythos*'), and the myth of Switzerland as the Good Samaritan ('*Samaritermythos*').<sup>16</sup> Put concisely, these myths, seen in concert, tell of a neutral Switzerland prepared to defy the threat of war and yet retaining its humane values. Furrer further finds little to no evidence that the events at home and abroad at that time cause textbooks to call this notion of neutrality into ques-

<sup>12</sup> Cf., as discussed below, Markus Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch – zwischen Überhöhung und Verdrängung. Leitbilder der Schweizer Nationalgeschichte in Schweizer Geschichtslehrmitteln der Nachkriegszeit und Gegenwart*, Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2004, 258ff. Cf. also Maissen's recent work on the contextualisation and deconstruction of the narrative depicting a Switzerland marked by neutrality, readiness to act in its defence, and willingness to come to the aid of the persecuted; Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 104–115, 162–188.

<sup>13</sup> Tanner, 'Die Krise der Gedächtnisorte', 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The analysis in this chapter primarily references Furrer's *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, and additionally, at various junctures, Furrer, 'Die Weltkriege des 20. Jahrhunderts und ihre Funktion im nationalen Narrativ von Schweizer Geschichtslehrmitteln', Markus Furrer and Kurt Messmer (eds.), *Kriegsnarrative in Geschichtslehrmitteln. Brennpunkte nationaler Diskurse*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2009, 149–165.

<sup>16</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 258–267.

tion or to explicitly perceive its relativity.<sup>17</sup> Jonas Morgenthaler has identified a comparable triad of myths in accounts of the First World War (WW1) in textbooks; he gives these as the motifs of neutrality (*'Neutralität'*), readiness to national defence (*'Wehrhaftigkeit'*), and compassionate charity (*'Barmherzigkeit'*).<sup>18</sup> Both authors uncover these myths via a comparative historical analysis of textbooks, with Morgenthaler commencing his longitudinal comparative study with interwar textbooks and Furrer's beginning with works post-1945.

These textbook studies have highlighted the long-term stability and continuity of these myths. Furrer highlights intermittent changes in emphasis over the decades within the context of this continuity and the onset of a partial erosion in more recent publications, evidently linked, *inter alia*, to the important caesura of the public debate around Switzerland's role in WW2 that unfolded in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Changes perceived in history textbooks of and after this time include an increasing tendency to put up for debate the neutrality long taken as a set-in-stone given, a shedding of light on the interplay between resistance and conformity, a loss of significance incurred by the topics of redoubtability and military threat, and the fading of notions of Switzerland as an island of peace and mercy. New areas opening up, as identified by the studies, have been, to cite examples, anti-Semitism, economic cooperation with the German *Reich*, and restrictive policies of admission for refugees<sup>20</sup>; the last-cited topic, finds Furrer, indeed first appeared in textbooks of the 1980s, in advance of public debate on the issue.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1990s, a discussion around dormant assets in Swiss banks sparked controversy around the hitherto reigning narrative of a neutral, humanitarian nation<sup>22</sup> which eventually led the Swiss parliament to appoint a commission, the Independent Commission of Experts (Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz – Zweiter Weltkrieg (UEK)),

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 238, 260.

<sup>18</sup> Jonas Morgenthaler, "Gleich einer Insel im wogenden Meere ...". Das Bild der Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg in Schweizer Geschichtsbüchern von 1917 bis heute', Markus Furrer and Kurt Messmer (eds.), *Kriegsnarrative in Geschichtslehrmitteln. Brennpunkte nationaler Diskurse*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2009, 45–63, 49–56

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 149–150, 157–161; Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 266 f.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. (here and previous section) *ibid.*, 149–150, 157–161; Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 260 f., 266; Morgenthaler, *Gleich einer Insel*, 49–58.

<sup>21</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 266.

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen. Die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen*. 2. Ausg., Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 2006, 66; Tanner, *Die Krise der Gedächtnisorte*, 30. There is a detailed reconstruction of the debates in Maissen, *Verweigte Erinnerung*, 2005.

whose work revealed that Switzerland had operated a restrictive policy towards refugees, failed to provide assistance to those persecuted during the war, and been distinctly reticent when it came to restoring property and assets to victims after the war's end.<sup>23</sup> Historians had previously cast a critical light on Switzerland's role in WW2, which circumstance leads Jakob Tanner to speak of a 'situation of conflict' between historiography on the one side and Swiss collective memory and its associated politics on the other.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning in the 1990s, Switzerland incrementally engaged with a new, self-critical self-concept, at least in its official political sphere, albeit not comprehensively in its collective memory.<sup>25</sup> The research conducted by Nicole Peter and Nicole Burgermeister on historical conceptions around Switzerland's role in WW2 in multi-generational families<sup>26</sup> found an ongoing notion of 'a Switzerland subject to pressing affliction, yet distinguished through its humanitarian actions despite its own sufferings and sacrifices'. The attitudes thus recorded also included a view of the Shoah as a 'German matter' and wide-ranging, cross-generational resistance to the idea of critical exploration of Switzerland's actions during WW2. The study's authors observe that it was 'less [the interviewees'] generational identity than [their] socio-economic background and [their] political and ideological leanings [that] play[ed] a decisive role in the[ir] interpretation of this past'; in other words, this was not a matter of lines of conflict running between the so-called 'active service generation' and their descendants. Accordingly, the authors diagnose, in relation to Swiss attitudes to the Shoah, a 'gulf', evident across the generations, 'between the imperative to remember and the actual practices of that remembrance'.<sup>27</sup>

The work of both Tanner on the one hand and Peter and Burgermeister on the other shines a spotlight on a space of conflict encompassing interpretations of Switzerland which hold deep roots and retain great tenacity within collective memory, facing com-

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<sup>23</sup> Béatrice Ziegler, 'Sektion: Über die Sackgasse bisheriger Perspektiven hinaus', Ziegler et al. (eds.), *Die Schweiz und die Shoa. Von Kontroversen zu neuen Fragen*, Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2012, 129–132, 129f.; Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – Second World War (ICE), *Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report*, Zurich, 2002, [www.uek.ch/en/schlussbericht/synthese/uekd.pdf](http://www.uek.ch/en/schlussbericht/synthese/uekd.pdf), last accessed 21 February 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Tanner, *Die Krise der Gedächtnisorte*, 30, 30–33.

<sup>25</sup> Ziegler, *Über die Sackgasse bisheriger Perspektiven hinaus*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Peter and Burgermeister, *Der Holocaust und die Schweiz*.

<sup>27</sup> Here and previous section: Peter and Burgermeister, *Der Holocaust und die Schweiz*, 22, 28.

petition from the findings of academic history. By no means, however, do I wish to set up, or support the notion of, a dichotomous opposition between historical research and collective memory which might regard the latter as categorically tangled up in, and the former as *per se* unblemished and unfettered by, myth. Academic accounts of history likewise have their highly concentrated, low-volatility narratives that purport to provide orientation and direction; a study by Konrad Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler provides the requisite proof by illuminating specific components, remaining reasonably unsusceptible to change over periods of decades, in the historiography of Switzerland's role in WW1.<sup>28</sup> This 'dominant narrative', as the authors term it, encompasses the depiction of the period in question as a time of political neutrality for Switzerland; discussions of the infringements committed against this neutrality by individual political actors do not lead to systematic reflection on how that 'neutrality' is understood in light of the economic entanglements between Switzerland and combatant nations.<sup>29</sup> Further, it includes the mythic strand that casts WW1 as a period of social and cultural tension, first, between rich and poor, and additionally, between the country's German-speaking and Franco-phone parts in consequence of divergent senses of connection and loyalty to the country's neighbours Germany and France.<sup>30</sup> This particular story prepares the way for a retrospective interpretation which, as Markus Furrer observes, perceives Switzerland as emerging triumphant with steadfast stability from its time of trial under these social and cultural conflicts, as having, in other words, 'proved itself [in the] era of catastrophe'.<sup>31</sup>

The position of current history textbooks amid this entangled scene of decades-old myths and their deconstruction in the recent past is of interest to us because history textbooks, by virtue of their genre, always span the boundaries and intersections between various areas of memory culture; one might indeed describe them as 'hybrid'<sup>32</sup> creations with functions of mediation between the academic discipline of history and the wider public, in the course of which they take account of political interests.<sup>33</sup> Textbooks

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<sup>28</sup> Konrad J. Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler, 'Dominantes Narrativ und drängende Forschungsfragen – Zur Geschichte der Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg', *Traverse. Zeitschrift für Geschichte/Revue d'histoire* 18, 3 (2011), 123–141.

<sup>29</sup> Kuhn und Ziegler, *Dominantes Narrativ*, 123, 129f.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–124, 128–131.

<sup>31</sup> Markus Furrer, 'Die Schweiz erzählen – Europa erzählen – die Welt erzählen ... Wandel und Funktion von Narrativen in Schweizer Geschichtslehrmitteln', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 59, 1 (2009), 56–77, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Morgenthaler, 'Gleich einer Insel', 47.

<sup>33</sup> There are striking examples of the relationship between textbook development and politics in Peter Gautschi, 'Geschichtslehrmittel: Wie sie entwickelt werden und was von ihnen erwartet wird', *Zeit-*

provide insights into ideas of the past that are accepted in society at large and a view of the canonical content that society deems it desirable or necessary to pass on to its next generation.<sup>34</sup> One of my purposes in this chapter is to examine the extent and manner of history textbooks' response to the debates outlined here, and the image of Switzerland in the world wars which they present to their readers. Do they reprise the long-standing myths researchers have identified, or do they critique them, put them into perspective, and reflect on their content and *raison d'être*? Markus Furrer's groundbreaking study *Die Nation im Schulbuch*<sup>35</sup> is now over a decade old; the intervening period has seen various new publications and revisions to Swiss textbooks, which makes it timely to revisit the issue, as does the currently increasing focus on skills and competencies within history didactics, which has not passed textbook design by unnoticed. The implementation of a deconstructive approach to the myths which determine and direct our views and values is a highly charged field with great potential to usefully instruct us in how to deliver competency-based history classes suffused with awareness of the constructs on which historical consciousness rests; as such it merits increased and closer attention going forward.<sup>36</sup>

### **Current textbooks: between myth and its deconstruction**

This chapter is based on a cross-sectional sample of German-language textbooks for the first stage of secondary education (*Sekundarstufe I*) which include the topics of the First and/or Second World War. As the research for the initial German version of this article was mainly conducted in 2014 and 2015, the text refers to textbooks current during that period. The sample encompasses works which have been listed as obligatory (in cantons which issue official directories of textbooks) and optional or recommended titles (from cantons that do not prescribe specific textbooks for history teaching).<sup>37</sup> A subsequent

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*schrift für Geschichtsdidaktik. Jahresband 2006*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2006, 178–197; on characteristics of textbooks, see also Schultheiss and Thyroff, *Friedensinsel in der Einigkeitsprobe*, 292.

<sup>34</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 64; Saskia Handro and Bernd Schönemann, 'Zur Einleitung', Handro and Schönemann (eds.), *Geschichtsdidaktische Schulbuchforschung*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2011, 3–12, 4f.

<sup>35</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*.

<sup>36</sup> I extend my grateful thanks to Roland Bernhard for his inspiring suggestion to explore a potential connection between competency-based teaching and changes in the treatment of myths in history textbooks and teaching and learning materials.

<sup>37</sup> The Swiss education system is federally organised, with responsibility for selecting textbooks resting with the cantons. Cantons take differing approaches to the status of these selected materials, which may, depending on the canton in question, have obligatory, 'alternative obligatory', recommended or optional status; some allow schools free choice. See Interkantonale Lehrmittelzentrale ilz, *Lehrmittelstatus in den deutsch- und mehrsprachigen Kantonen der Schweiz und im Fürstentum Liechtenstein. Bericht*,

generation of textbooks, compiled and published in accordance with the new curriculum 'Lehrplan 21' (*Durchblick, Gesellschaften im Wandel und Zeitreise*), is not yet included in the sample.

The process of selecting titles in accordance with these criteria produced an initial group of 16 textbooks, listed in Table 1. A further stage of the sampling process reduced the sample in accordance with two additional criteria. I first restricted the sample to recent textbooks, that is, those whose date of publication (or of current or most recent edition) fell in the period subsequent to the debates of the 1990s, making them, for the most part, more recent than Markus Furrer's seminal research. Some titles published much less recently, currently still in use or being phased out in certain cantons, did not find entry into the analysis in the closer sense, instead serving exemplary and comparative purposes at specific points in the study.

In addition to this, I excluded from the analysis titles which, although they discussed the period of WW1 and/or WW2, did not explore the specific situation of Switzerland.<sup>38</sup> Three of the twelve titles which include treatment of the WW1 period do not look at Switzerland at all, and a further one limits itself to an account of the General Strike of 1918 without exploring Switzerland's role during the war. Similarly, two of the fourteen books which discuss WW2 pay no attention at all to Switzerland. Accordingly, these were excluded from the analysis.

Table 1: List of textbooks screened

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Publication year of edition included in sample</i>	<i>First edition published in</i>	<i>Mentions WW1</i>	<i>Mentions CH in WW1</i>	<i>Mentions Swiss General Strike</i>	<i>Mentions WW2</i>	<i>Mentions CH in WW2</i>
<i>Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte</i>	H. Meyer, P. Felder, J.-C. Wacker	Lehrmittelverlag Zürich (LMV ZH)	2005	1998	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Berneck: Rheintaler Druckerei und Verlag AG, undated, 6. I compiled the sample for the study presented in this chapter on the basis of lists of textbooks I was able to access online in the autumn of 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Markus Furrer distinguishes three typical forms of history textbooks in the Swiss context: 'purely national/Swiss histories, purely general or world histories, and mixed [formats] which combine general and Swiss history' (Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 82); he notes a general reduction over time in the proportion of Swiss history content (Furrer, *Die Schweiz erzählen*, 67). The second of these types, world histories which make no mention of Switzerland at all, is not represented in the initial sample of 16 textbooks. The sample consists primarily of mixed formats with a small number of histories of Switzerland. Some of the mixed textbooks discuss the Swiss role in the world wars, while others do not. The latter were therefore excluded from the analysis.

<i>Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart 3</i>	H. Meyer, P. Schneepli	LMV ZH	1991	1991	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<i>Echo Informationen zur Schweiz</i>	E. Maurer	Klett und Balmer	n/a	n/a	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<i>Geschichte der Neuzeit</i>	J. Hodel et al.	ILZ, LMV ZH	2009	2009	yes	no	no	yes	no
<i>Geschichte unserer Zeit. Erster Weltkrieg</i>	M. Thurnherr	Sauerländer	2006 (5 <sup>th</sup> amend-ed ed.)	1968	yes	yes	yes	no	no
<i>Geschichte unserer Zeit. Hitlers Weg in den Krieg</i>	K. Bächinger	Sauerländer	2006 (9 <sup>th</sup> amend-ed ed.)	1968	no	no	n/a	yes	yes
<i>Geschichte unserer Zeit. Zweiter Weltkrieg. Überfall</i>	J. Benz	Sauerländer	2006 (9 <sup>th</sup> amend-ed ed.)	1968	no	no	n/a	yes	yes
<i>Geschichte unserer Zeit. Zweiter Weltkrieg. Wende und Zusammenbruch</i>	J. Weiss	Sauerländer	2006 (10 <sup>th</sup> amend-ed ed.)	1968	no	no	n/a	yes	yes
<i>Hinschaun und Nachfragen</i>	B. Bonhage, P. Gautschi, J. Hodel, G. Spuhler	LMV ZH	2006 (amend-ed ed.)	2006	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<i>Menschen in Zeit und Raum 9</i>	R. Argast, A. Binnenkade, F. Boller, P. Gautschi	Lehrmittelverlag Aargau (LMV AG), ILZ	2005	2005	yes	no	no	yes	yes
<i>Reise in die Vergangenheit IV. Unser Zeitalter der Revolutionen und Weltkriege</i>	H. Ebeling	Westermann	1966	1966	yes	no	no	yes	no
<i>Spuren – Horizonte. Mensch – Raum – Zeit – Gesellschaft</i>	U. Bräm, M. Reuschenbach, D. Stemmler, H.-P. Wyssen	LMV ZH, Schulverlag ILZ	2008	2008	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
<i>Vergessen oder Erinnern. Völkermord in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>	P. Gautschi, H. Meyer	LMV ZH, ILZ	2002 (minimally amend-ed ed.)	2001	no	no	n/a	yes	yes

<i>Weltgeschichte im Bild 9</i>	H. Bühler, H. Utz	LMV AG	2004 (8 <sup>th</sup> ed.)	n/a	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<i>Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen 7</i>	P. Ziegler	LMV ZH	1986 (minimally revised ed.)	1981	yes	yes	no	no	no
<i>Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen 8</i>	P. Ziegler	LMV ZH	1983	1983	yes	no	yes	yes	yes

The final sample, thus compiled, encompassed a total of eleven titles. These are marked in grey in table 1. On these I proceeded to undertake a literature-led hermeneutic and comparative analysis<sup>39</sup> covering authorial text and materials such as textual and visual sources.<sup>40</sup> The analysis restricted itself to considering those components classed as associated with its area of interest, Swiss neutrality. The approach taken was deductive in nature inasmuch as it proceeded to examine the sample on the basis of the myth of neutrality as a known quantity drawn from the research literature, primarily from the work of Markus Furrer.<sup>41</sup> The separate yet closely related myths of a compassionate and a defensively robust Switzerland formed tangents to the analysis' primary focus and therefore came in for marginal consideration. What follows will outline selected findings, discussed separately in relation to each of the world wars.

Before I come to this section, I wish to highlight two overarching observations that emerged from the analysis. The first relates to the almost complete absence, in the works analysed, of explicit definition around the term and concept of neutrality, which, while it makes repeated appearances, principally occurs in statements embodying what are clearly imagined as self-evidencies<sup>42</sup>, along the lines of the sloganlike 'Switzerland remains neutral' in *Echo. Informationen zur Schweiz*.<sup>43</sup> Only one textbook, throughout

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of hermeneutic methodology, see, for example, Christian Rittelmeyer and Michael Parmentier, *Einführung in die pädagogische Hermeneutik*, Mit einem Beitrag von Wolfgang Klafki, Darmstadt: WBG, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> An account of the process of systematisation in history textbook analysis is in Alexander Schöner, 'Die Eichstätter Schulbuchanalysen. Zur Methode kategorialer Inhalts- und Strukturanalysen', Waltraud Schreiber et al. (eds.), *Analyse von Schulbüchern als Grundlage empirischer Geschichtsdidaktik*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013, 66–89, 71f

<sup>41</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 258–260.

<sup>42</sup> As observed by Furrer, *ibid.*, 232–239, 258, 260.

<sup>43</sup> Ernst Maurer, *Echo. Informationen zur Schweiz*, Zug: Klett, 5th edition 2005, 4. A similarly laconic summary appears thus in an older textbook: 'Neutral Switzerland was not drawn into the war, yet it was not spared its effects'; Peter Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen 7*, Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, minimally revised edition 1986, 130.

its depictions of WW1 and WW2, offers an exploration of what 'neutrality' actually means.<sup>44</sup>

The second is the fact that, where the textbooks discuss Switzerland in relation to the world wars, they do so in separate chapters, away from sections on the course of the war abroad.<sup>45</sup> These chapters are headed 'Switzerland and the First World War'<sup>46</sup>, 'Switzerland – an island'<sup>47</sup>, or 'Switzerland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century'<sup>48</sup>, and appended to geographically broader views of the wars, or indeed presented as separate parts of the book.<sup>49</sup> My aim is now to explore the extent to which this organisational sequestration appears concomitant to notions of Switzerland as an island of neutrality, disinterested in and disengaged from the events of the wars.

### Switzerland in the First World War

Such images of insularity seem to be out of favour in current textbook accounts of Switzerland in WW1, which instead focus on the diverse contemporary interrelationships between the country and other nations, raising the issue both of existing bonds of sympathy and amity with neighbouring countries and of economic interdependencies; the section that follows will detail and illustrate this via examples.

There is a consensus across almost all works analysed that, at the time of WW1, German-speaking Switzerland had a sense of affinity with the German *Reich*, while the country's Francophone regions felt loyalty to France, a state the textbooks interpret as having been deleterious to Switzerland's internal unity and neutrality. This motif of division likewise emerges in the historiography of WW1; Konrad Kuhn and Béatrice

<sup>44</sup> *Menschen in Zeit und Raum 9* includes a brief definition of armed neutrality. Regula Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum 9*, Buchs: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Aargau, Interkantonale Lehrmittelzentrale, 2005, 62.

<sup>45</sup> On the practice of placing accounts of Swiss history in separate sections, see Furrer, *Die Schweiz erzählen*, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Markus Thurnherr, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Erster Weltkrieg*, Oberentfelden: Sauerländer, 5<sup>th</sup> amended edition 2006, 59.

<sup>47</sup> Josef Weiss, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Zweiter Weltkrieg 2. Teil. Wende und Zusammenbruch*, Oberentfelden: Sauerländer, 10<sup>th</sup> amended edition 2006, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Hans Bühler and Hans Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild 9*, Aarau: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Aargau, 8<sup>th</sup> edition 2004, 100.

<sup>49</sup> The pattern is similar in the oldest works currently still approved for use, in which headings read, for instance, 'Switzerland 1918–1939', Peter Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen 8*, Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 1983, 27; 'Switzerland in the Second World War', Helmut Meyer and Peter Schneebli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart 3*, Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 1991, 149; 'Switzerland during the Second World War', Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen 8*, 164.

Ziegler have identified in it a 'stress test emerging from cultural circumstances'.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the last century, textbooks, as previously demonstrated in Jonas Morgenthaler's work, had likewise repeatedly made reference to tensions between the German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland<sup>51</sup>; thus emerges an interpretive pattern of decades-long tenacity which has retained its almost universal level of coverage even in more recent works. It expresses itself in metaphors speaking of a 'chasm between the [different] parts of the country'<sup>52</sup>, in diverse variations on the theme of a 'rift' (*Graben*, the same term rendered with 'chasm' above) between the German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland ("Graben" zwischen Deutsch und Welsch<sup>53</sup>, "Graben zwischen Deutsch und Welsch"<sup>54</sup>, 'Graben zwischen Welsch- und Deutschschweiz'<sup>55</sup>), and in an assertion of 'tensions between the [country's] linguistic groups'<sup>56</sup>. Most textbooks present this 'rift' as a given, an objective fact; the most they do in the way of a caveat is to add scare quotes in various permutations (see above). One publication implies that the idea of a rift refers only to a contemporary assessment of the situation: 'The tensions were so significant that people spoke of a rift between the different parts of the country and some observers of the time believed the unity of the state to be under threat.'<sup>57</sup>

Two textbooks in the sample carry a cartoon headed 'Switzerland: A symbolic representation' and illustrating the alleged chasm (see Fig. 1)<sup>58</sup>; published in 1917 in the satirical magazine *Nebelspalter*, it depicts a playing card showing what at first glance appear to be two point-symmetrical figures. Closer inspection reveals differences between the two sections of the card, with the labels 'deutsch' and 'welsch' identifying them as representing Switzerland's German- and French-speaking parts, had not the stereotypical German/French features and attributes of the figures done that job already. The Swiss cross each figure wears on its lapel is the only connecting element in evidence. Their military affinities differ, with one figure labelled 'Entente' and the other 'Mittelmächte' (Triple Alliance). Captions in the textbooks which include this cartoon describe it as

<sup>50</sup> Kuhn and Ziegler, *Dominantes Narrativ*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Morgenthaler, *Gleich einer Insel*, 52–55.

<sup>52</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Thurnherr, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Erster Weltkrieg*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Helmut Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 2005. 93.

<sup>55</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 105.

<sup>56</sup> Maurer, *Echo*, 4. An older publication speaks in this context of a 'deep cleft'; Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 7, 130.

<sup>57</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 40; Meyer et al. *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 93. On the interpretation of this and a further cartoon referencing Switzerland's position in WW1, see Schultheiss and Thyroff, *Friedensinsel in der Einigkeitsprobe*, 300.

representing 'traditional clichés arranged in pairs of opposites', *Hinschauen und Nachfragen* additionally points out that it 'exaggerates' the differences.<sup>59</sup> There is no attempt, however, to interpret the cartoon more thoroughly in the context of its time, nor to reflect on the cultural ascriptions it contains and, for instance, on the extent to which they overstate elements that act to divide identity from identity and in so doing exaggerate unifying intragroup commonalities.



Fig. 1: Cartoon headed 'Switzerland: A symbolic representation (*Die Schweiz: Eine symbolische Darstellung*)', originally published in *Nebelspalter. Humoristisch-satyrische Wochenschrift*, Zurich, 10 November 1917.

Some textbooks make explicit mention of the issues and challenges to Swiss neutrality raised by diverging support for the belligerents, as here:

A state's policy of neutrality does not demand "neutral attitudes" of its citizens, who are permitted to attach their sympathies to the one or other party to the conflict. Should, however, diverging collective sympathies develop in specific parts of a [neutral] country, the state's policy and its population's internal cohesion may be called into question.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 93; Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 93f.

Another book asserts: 'Violations of neutrality loomed [...] all the larger for the fact that the German-speaking part of Switzerland primarily hoped for a German victory, while Romandy wished to see France triumph.'<sup>61</sup> Several textbooks additionally flag as problematic the sympathies for Germany held by various prominent political and military figures of the time.<sup>62</sup> Others reference the 'rift' in the context of entanglements between Switzerland and other states, but do not explicitly make the connection with the issue of neutrality.<sup>63</sup>

A further form of interrelationship between Switzerland and other nations discussed in the textbooks, alongside divergent sympathies with neighbouring states, relates to Switzerland's economic ties with, or, put differently, economic dependence on other countries, which – in contrast to the issue of diverging support for warring states - textbooks do not expressly deem problematic in relation to Swiss neutrality.<sup>64</sup> This finding corresponds to the absence, as identified by Konrad Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler, of this link between economic entanglements and potential encroachment on neutrality from the historiographical 'dominant narrative'.<sup>65</sup> Notably, the sample evinces instances of the argument in reverse, with some works diagnosing, not a loss of neutrality due to economic cooperation, but a loss of economic freedom due to neutrality. This idea manifests in these or similar terms: 'The price of neutrality, then, was the loss of economic freedom.'<sup>66</sup> Arguments following this line include the alleged restriction on Switzerland's economic dealings imposed by its neutrality, or the suggestion that the latter forced it to enter into cooperation.<sup>67</sup> This manner of argumentation casts neutrality, to a degree, as an independent variable upon which Switzerland's economic activity was contingent, and – in the case of the textbooks – leaves out the reverse conclusion, that is, the possible impact of economic relations upon neutrality. It might prove surprising that only one, older publication, issued in 1991, mentions the fact that, during the war,

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<sup>61</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 105.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 94; Thurnherr, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Erster Weltkrieg*, 58.

<sup>63</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> See similar findings in Schultheiss and Thyroff, *Friedensinsel in der Einigkeitsprobe*, 172.

<sup>65</sup> Kuhn and Ziegler, *Dominantes Narrativ*, 129.

<sup>66</sup> Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 94.

<sup>67</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 105. A similar line of argumentation appears in the older publication by Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 7, 130.

parts of the Swiss economy made considerable profits from trade with the belligerent nations.<sup>68</sup>

A further facet of the Swiss mythic triad – the myth of Switzerland as a peaceful, humanitarian refuge amid the tumult of war – is noticeable by its almost complete absence from the sample. Humanitarian aid, in relation to WW1, receives a mention in only one publication, which attributes it to the Red Cross, but not to Switzerland as a distinct actor.<sup>69</sup> Older textbooks frequently feature the island image in relation to WW1, as identified by Jonas Morgenthaler.<sup>70</sup> The current sample, however, largely fails to include any images, as reproduced in other textbooks, of postcards showing Switzerland as an island of peace surrounded by the rough seas of war.<sup>71</sup> There is, then, neither reproduction nor critique of this well-known myth in evidence.<sup>72</sup> Only one book features a postcard showing Switzerland as an island (see Fig. 2), in what is evidently and emphatically deconstructive intent. The naming of the myth here comes with the simultaneous



Fig. 2: 'Gleich einer Insel im wogenden Meere': postcard from 1914 (Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern, inventory no. 44721, photo: Stefan Rebsamen)

<sup>68</sup> Meyer and Schneepli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 25.

<sup>69</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 40; also in Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 7, 131.

<sup>70</sup> Morgenthaler, *Gleich einer Insel*, 50.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Schultheiss and Thyroff, *Friedensinsel in der Einigkeitsprobe*, 297–299.

<sup>72</sup> Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 162–170, provides a historian's view of the narrative of humanitarian Switzerland.

caveat of the impossibility of survival in complete isolation. The textbook refers to the island metaphor as a 'national self-image', commenting: 'But Switzerland would not have survived as an island. It needed its neighbours so it could import food and raw materials and sell its exports. Throughout this whole epoch [the period of the world wars, J.T.], this tension between isolation and global entanglement remained.'<sup>73</sup>

### Switzerland in the Second World War

Moving to depictions of Switzerland in WW2, the analysis finds in the textbooks the narrative of a nation ready and prepared to defend itself against attack from without<sup>74</sup>, although only one work contains a piece defining the concept of armed neutrality on which this notion rests.<sup>75</sup> A key topic in these materials is what is known as the *Rütli-rapport*, a gathering of Swiss army officers on the legendary Rütli to the end of rallying them to Switzerland's defence should such be needed. Depictions of this event vary considerably across the sample. *Weltgeschichte im Bild 9* carries an account of the rally which evidently seeks via the use of attendee voices to reconstruct the event's spirit, *Menschen in Zeit und Raum* takes a drier, more factually-based approach, including a photograph of the event.<sup>76</sup> A study by Karin Fuchs reports that this image appeared in various older textbooks of the 1960s and 1970s, before it disappeared from newer works and then returned in *Menschen in Zeit und Raum*, now as a visual source rather than an illustration.<sup>77</sup> Its caption serves to deconstruct the event it depicts, noting that the rally had 'symbolic' character, being deliberately held at this particular, historically resonant place with the aim of 'presenting the image of a Switzerland at arms, prepared to defend itself'<sup>78</sup>. Summarising textbooks' treatment of this image, then, the analysis notes partial reproduction and partial deconstruction.

Further facets of the neutrality theme appear in the textbooks. Numerous works discuss limitations on Switzerland's independence from other nations under the oppositional set

<sup>73</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 34.

<sup>74</sup> Josef Benz, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Zweiter Weltkrieg 1. Teil. Überfall*, Oberentfelden: Sauerländer, 9. korrigierte Auflage 2007, 41; cf. older books still licensed for classroom use: Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 8, 165ff.; Meyer and Schneebli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 149.

<sup>75</sup> Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild 9*, 111f.; Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum 9*, 62.

<sup>77</sup> Karin Fuchs, 'Die Darstellung des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Bildern – Schweizer Schulgeschichtsbücher im internationalen Vergleich', Markus Furrer and Kurt Messmer (eds.), *Kriegsnarrative in Geschichtslehrmitteln. Brennpunkte nationaler Diskurse*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2009, 117–129; 118–122, 126–128.

<sup>78</sup> Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum 9*, 62.

of keywords ‘conformity [*Anpassung*; ‘adaptation’ would be another possible rendering, and the precise nuance is between the two] and resistance [*Widerstand*]’.<sup>79</sup> Chapter headings include ‘*Anpassung und Widerstand*’<sup>80</sup>, ‘How much conformity, how much resistance?’ (*Wie viel Anpassung, wie viel Widerstand?*)<sup>81</sup>, and ‘Conforming to survive’ (*Anpassung zum Überleben*)<sup>82</sup>. They introduce units devoted to discussing, for instance, Swiss economic cooperation with the German *Reich*, frequently cast as a necessity, entered into under duress, for securing Switzerland’s supply of essentials, as here: ‘Now, Switzerland found itself forced to trade with Germany, as it was surrounded by the Axis powers.’<sup>83</sup> This discourse evokes an image of Switzerland as largely critical of Germany, yet compelled to enter into economic relations with it in order to feed its population.<sup>84</sup> Suggestions of these economic entanglements’ questionability, be it in moral terms or in relation to the Swiss policy of neutrality, are isolated.<sup>85</sup> Parelles are evident here to the sample’s accounts of WW1, with emphasis placed on Swiss dependence on other nations and instances of cooperation mentioned, but not confronted or contrasted with the idea of neutrality.<sup>86</sup> This tendency is also in evidence in relation to accounts of inclinations among the Swiss population at large, media or political scene to express sympathies with one or the other party to the war; notably, the textbooks, in contrast to the same topic’s iteration in relation to WW1, make no links between such affinities and linguistic or regional identities within Switzerland.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, the books do not conjure up an image of Switzerland as a bastion of internal unity, unbuffered by the tempestuous waves of world war. Instead, they highlight links

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Furrer, *Die Weltkriege des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 159. This pair of oppositions is familiar in historiography. Cf. in this respect Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten*, 178.

<sup>80</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 12; Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum* 9, 62; Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 8, 169; Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 118.

<sup>81</sup> Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 125. Similarly in an older textbook, Meyer und Schneebli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 154: ‘Conformity - how far to go?’ (*Anpassung – wie weit?*).

<sup>82</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 118.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. In a comparable fashion, an older textbook asserts that, Swiss territory being surrounded by the Axis powers, its imports and exports were inevitably subject to control by these; Meyer und Schneebli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 150.

<sup>84</sup> Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum* 9, 63; Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 117 f.; Peter Gautschi and Helmut Meyer, *Vergessen oder Erinnern. Völkermord in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Zürich: Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 2<sup>nd</sup> minimally amended edition 2002, 66.

<sup>85</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 118.

<sup>86</sup> In a similar vein to Kuhn and Ziegler’s findings for the historiography of WW1; Kuhn and Ziegler, *Dominantes Narrativ*, 123, 129 f.

<sup>87</sup> Benz, *Geschichte unserer Zeit. Zweiter Weltkrieg Überfall*, 42f.; Argast et al., *Menschen in Zeit und Raum* 9, 63. An older book proceeds analogously: Meyer und Schneebli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 85, 150, 154.

between Switzerland and other states and direct a spotlight on external influences; the associated risk to neutrality, however, only features from time to time, making the depictions of WW2 similar to those of WW1 in this respect.

Five textbooks from the sample reference the controversies outlined in the early part of this chapter around Switzerland's role in WW2. One of them, *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, has the sole purpose of informing pupils about the recent discoveries<sup>88</sup>; its 'Geschichte kontrovers' section (approximately translatable as 'History from differing points of view') details the debates themselves.<sup>89</sup> Among the references to the controversies in the other four textbooks is the observation in *Weltgeschichte im Bild 9* that new findings on the trade in gold between Nazi Germany and Switzerland cast a shadow of moral dubiety on the latter: 'How far [...] the relationship – understandable from an economic point of view – with an unscrupulous regime could go, has been a difficult lesson for the Swiss population in recent years due to the discovery by historical researchers that not only machinery and coal, but [also] gold was delivered [by Germany to Switzerland].' Later on in the same text comes the passage: 'Was it [...] stolen currency that Germany sold to Switzerland? Did Switzerland, in omitting to ask serious questions about its origins, become guilty of receiving stolen goods?'<sup>90</sup> In raising the matter of morals, the textbook fails to go into any depth on the issue by, for instance, exploring the compatibility or otherwise with Swiss neutrality of trading in gold and foreign currency with the National Socialists. The matter of the gold's origins likewise receives no specificity, only the comment that people could 'generally have known that the Gestapo practised extortion on people in Germany and the occupied territories'<sup>91</sup>.

This instance gives rise to the question of the extent of the critique to which today's textbooks subject the old myth of disinterested Switzerland, or, put differently, of exactly how much deconstruction is going on in the materials the pupils are learning their history from. Analysis of the sample compiled for this chapter demonstrates a degree of openness, in principle, to the inclusion of critique, as exemplified by the discussion in numerous textbooks of Switzerland's restrictive policies on admission of Jewish refu-

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<sup>88</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*; Zur Entstehung des Lehrmittels: Gautschi, *Geschichtslehrmittel*, 182.

<sup>89</sup> Bonhage et al., *Hinschauen und Nachfragen*, 62–79.

<sup>90</sup> Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild 9*, 118f.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

gees to the country – which nevertheless appears in textbooks in some instances as early as the 1980s and 1990s<sup>92</sup>, that is, as Furrer identifies, prior to the debates of the 1990s.<sup>93</sup> The image of Switzerland as a ready dispenser of humanitarian aid, by contrast, appears largely departed from textbooks currently in use.

### Conclusion

Reviewing the findings outlined here, it is evident that the traditional myth casting Switzerland as an island of neutrality which stood steadfast in the storms of world wars and emerged therefrom completely unaffected and unchanged finds, in history textbooks currently in use in Switzerland, both reiteration and equivocation. Accounts of Switzerland's manifold interrelationships with the foreign parties to the conflict, for instance, raise issues of divergencies in loyalties within Switzerland and of political and economic intertwinements. The discussion of such matters does not always prompt links to the matter of Switzerland's neutrality; where this does happen, at least in relation to WW1, it is primarily with reference to a narrative in evidence in history textbooks for most of the last century, that of a Switzerland divided in its sympathies for the warring parties along its regional and linguistic lines.

The textbooks do make tentative attempts to reassess or indeed call into question the notion of Switzerland's independence in light of its economic relations with its neighbours during WW1 and WW2 and specifically its cooperation with Germany. It is a discourse that casts Switzerland as surrounded by the powers its encircled position forced it to work with economically. Little is said on the subject of the benefits to the Swiss economy accrued from substantial export revenues, and no systematic linking takes place between economic relationships and the issue of neutrality. Likewise, an explicit consideration of neutrality as a concept is notable by its almost complete absence from the sample's accounts of Switzerland in the world wars. This alerts us to the applicability of numerous aspects of the neutrality myth as defined by Markus Furrer to the sample studied here. Furrer found that neutrality did not represent a distinct topic or issue in Swiss textbooks, but instead appeared in a fragmentary fashion as a static, effectively natural entity, remaining 'attached to a surface phenomenon that lends itself

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<sup>92</sup> Ziegler, *Zeiten, Menschen, Kulturen* 8, 176–180; Meyer and Schneepli, *Durch Geschichte zur Gegenwart*, 156–158; Bühler and Utz, *Weltgeschichte im Bild* 9, 120 f.

<sup>93</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 266.

readily to the formation of myth'.<sup>94</sup> In this context, Furrer observed a treatment of the world wars as periods in which this neutrality was put to the test.<sup>95</sup> In my sample, too, the findings indicate that 'neutrality' finds the occasional casual mention, and so, here and there, do instances of its violation, but there is almost no attempt to explicate and reflect on the underlying premises of such a policy. In other words, the term appears, in textbooks, as a keyword without substance; its conceptual constitution remains unclear, it is subject to neither illumination nor interrogation, and it thus remains virtually untroubled by any analytical endeavour.

This finding brings us full circle to the question, outlined in this chapter's opening part, of the response of textbooks to a process, initiated from without, of the disruption and reconfiguration of myth. Do textbooks continue to resort to the time-honoured myths passed down over the decades, or do they seek to critique and reflect upon them, drawing on new insights? The analysis in this chapter suggests that the answer must be an equivocal one. The public debates of the recent past on Switzerland's role in WW2 have not passed newer textbooks by unnoticed, as is evident in their attempts to put the familiar myth into a degree of perspective and supplement the traditional historical canon of topics with new research-led arrivals such as interrelationships in foreign trade and refugee policies. Another change is apparent in the inclusion in some works of the debates themselves and even, on occasion, the explicit naming of familiar myths as myth.<sup>96</sup> By contrast, some traditional topics, such as Switzerland at arms, mobilisation, and the Redoubt, tenaciously retain at least a foothold in textbooks.

Associated with this tendency is the continued omission, as discussed above, of virtually any explicit reflection on or critique of the concept of neutrality.

The findings therefore report, not a radical change of direction in the Swiss textbook landscape, but rather a plurality of components from decades-old myths alongside initial approaches to their deconstruction, while others appear to have faded away. It is a conclusion whose ring of plausibility resonates all the more robustly in the light of the societal functions commonly assigned to history textbooks: their remit to assist pupils in their enculturation alongside an expectation increasingly raised in recent years that they aid them in forming a mature historical consciousness capable of reflecting on the past

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 232–239, 258, 260, quotation: 238.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>96</sup> Meyer et al., *Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte*, 143.

and the present.<sup>97</sup> Textbooks face the challenge of finding their way between these often contradictory demands. Were their sole task the promotion of identity, their unquestioned repetition and reproduction of myths might even be considered conducive to their aims. Were they, by contrast, charged exclusively with enabling pupils to develop a mature historical consciousness, they would likely prioritise above all else the deconstruction and interrogation of such myths. The analysis of the sample carried out for this chapter would tend to place them at various points on a continuum between these two extremes.

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Christoph Kühberger

## **The problem of personalising history: myths around Hitler in Austrian history textbooks – exploring the issue via qualitative and quantitative methods**

### **Approaching the issue**

The careful acts of philological calibration that take place around ‘myth’, and the associated complaints relating to its inadequacies and overextensions, are perennial components of academic discourse approaching a concept of this nature.<sup>1</sup> Mindful of this phenomenon, I will in what follows use the term ‘myth’ in line with its definition, proposed in this volume’s opening chapter, as a ‘narrative formation of symbols’<sup>2</sup> accepted by substantial social groups as narratives that shape identities, provide orientation and serve to direct these groups’ actions (myths’ ‘pragmatic potency’<sup>3</sup>). This chapter, then, also uses ‘myth’ as – in Hans-Jürgen Pandel’s terms – a ‘concept of critique’ for the naming of non-plausible accounts without any empirical basis in sources and/or ‘characterised by the over-magnification of historical events with no justification in fact’.<sup>4</sup> I additionally consider it helpful to the purposes of this chapter to regard myth as a narrative construct, marked by reduced complexity and in most cases collectively established and sustained in historical consciousness<sup>5</sup>, which, ‘in relation to a context of original incipency, eschatological finitude or the taking of a historical course, implies or lays claim to decisive relevance.’<sup>6</sup> A crucial factor in this definition is the quality of such a

mythically narrated story [...] [that] does not seek to convince via the presentation of rational or empirical evidence, but appeals to people’s emotions and seeks to inspire in them a belief in the truth of what is narrated.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf., *inter alia*, Anette Völker-Rasor, ‘Mythos. Vom neuen Arbeiten mit einem alten Begriff’, Völker-Rasor and Wolfgang Schmale (eds.), *MythenMächte – Mythen als Argument*, Berlin: Verlag Spitz, 1998, 9–32, 9ff.; Stephanie Wodianka, *Zwischen Mythos und Geschichte. Ästhetik, Medialität und Kulturspezifität der Mittelalterkonjunktur*, Berlin: DeGruyter, 2009, 13ff.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik. Der Hermannmythos. Zur Entstehung des Nationalbewusstseins der Deutschen*, Hamburg: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996, 43; cf. also the opening chapter of this volume.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Jürgen Pandel, *Historisches erzählen. Narrativität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2010, 73.

<sup>5</sup> Andreas Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik*, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Weber, ‘Historiographie und Mythographie. Oder: Wie kann und soll der Historiker mit Mythen umgehen?’, Völker-Rasor and Schmale, *MythenMächte – Mythen als Argument*, 65–87, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Matthias Waechter, ‘Mythos, Version: 1.0.’, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 11 Februar 2010, <http://docupedia.de/zg/Mythos?oldid=84641>, last accessed 6 September 2016.

It is additionally of importance to take into account the abbreviative, symbolically distilled character of narratives of this type, responded to and reproduced with a degree of variation due to its narrow core, evincing fixed content.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘Hitler myth’, whose case this chapter presents, manifested as a *political myth* in the twentieth century’s first half, from the 1920s onward<sup>9</sup>, and mutated in the post-war period to a *historical myth* which experienced its most impactful shattering in the discussion within the academic discipline of history teaching relating to the debate around history’s personalisation. As a *historical myth*, the myth of Hitler has sent out, as far as our twenty-first century, offshoots which this chapter will explore in its analysis of Austrian history textbooks currently in use. It is a dynamic phenomenon subject to diachronic change.<sup>10</sup>

### The political myth

During the National Socialist period, a ‘mythic system’<sup>11</sup> was in place, composed of numerous political myths each of which fulfilled a specific function in stabilising the regime’s power. The myth of Hitler represents a central component of this conglomeration of symbolic politics. I will identify its core with primary reference to the historian Ian Kershaw and to my own work on Hitler’s role at heavily staged National Socialist events and political ceremonies due to their readability as microcosms of a highly concentrated politics of symbolism.<sup>12</sup>

As in many instances of myths around a specific individual, public perceptions of Adolf Hitler as a political actor fell under the strong influence of his presentation in various media; his ‘myth’ is less about who he was, in terms of his life and psychological makeup, or what he did, than the communication of his actions and his past in a way targeted at generating meaning, in which National Socialist propaganda had a key part

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<sup>8</sup> Weber, *Historiographie und Mythographie*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Kershaw identifies Hitler’s cult of personality as having originated in the year before the failed Beer Hall Putsch. Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’: Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, 22. Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 1999, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik*, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Hardtwig, ‘Der Bismarck-Mythos. Gestalt und Funktion zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Wissenschaft’, Hardtwig (ed.), *Politische Kulturgeschichte der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918–1939*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005, 61–90, 88.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’*; Christoph Kühberger, *Metaphern der Macht. Ein kultureller Vergleich der politischen Feste im faschistischen Italien und im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Berlin: Lit, 2006; cf. also Christoph Raichle, *Hitler als Symbolpolitiker*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2014.

to play.<sup>13</sup> From the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 onward, Hitler's supporters successively exalted him to the status of a political hero whose cult showed quasi-religious characteristics, crediting him with the power to effect the German nation's salvation by his decisions and his political actions. The political myth thus generated, through its heady brew of Hitler's background, experience in the battlefield, the actual political idea he stood for, a putative willingness to sacrifice himself for that idea, his imprisonment and his activism, placed him on a pedestal as the saviour of Germany's present and future. Within the NSDAP, this 'Führer myth' had 'the clear function of compensating for the lack of ideological unity and clarity within the different factions of the Nazi Movement.'<sup>14</sup> Beyond the Party, its purpose was to create a shining example. In this way, in line with Andreas Dörner's view, the myth, as a construct of meaning, generates

a perspective on the world by cutting into the melee of confused empirical data, setting structural preferences therein, and providing answers to arising 'why's. The addition of meaning endows the world, be it a present reality or a future vision, with evidency and plausibility; it points out that something is as it is, as opposed to being otherwise; it provides a rationale for why it is so; and it assures us that it is good. [...] [Myths] not only make political realities perceptible, but also undergird them with structures of plausibility and confer meaning upon activity in which one is involved.<sup>15</sup>

Assent to meanings produced via this process is related to people's readiness 'to accept specific formations of ideas because they fit with [the associated] belief system and have the capacity to support it.'<sup>16</sup>

Adolf Hitler was certainly the subject of a messianic cult of personality which painted him, the 'Führer', as Germany's saviour. The National Socialist propaganda machine sought to reinforce this image by using, for travel on occasions such as election campaigns, the relatively new invention of the aeroplane, whose innovative character made it slot seamlessly into a drama in which the 'messiah' descended from heaven to his people. A de facto effect of this strategy was to increase Hitler's presence (or omnipresence) in Germany due to the boost it gave to the speed of his travels. In this way, it be-

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the similar approach taken to the case of Benito Mussolini by Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario*, Bari: Laterza, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik*, 52f.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Tepe, 'Entwurf einer Theorie des politischen Mythos', *Mythos No. 2. Politische Mythen* (2006), 46–65, 59.

came perfectly possible to feel as if one had had a religious-psychological experience which framed Hitler as a saviour.<sup>17</sup> One attendee at such an event remembers:

Hitler arrived in a convoy of cars. Everyone got out and then he walked at the head of all the people. Like a sort of procession they climbed to the top of the Bückeberg. Then he gave a speech and got into an aeroplane that was ready and waiting and flew off. As if he had been taken up into the clouds. Like a prophet.<sup>18</sup>

The use of visual images and their aesthetic communication also sought to help create this impression, a function particularly strikingly in evidence in Karl Stauber's painting *Es lebe Deutschland!*, which we cite here as an exemplary instance of this form of aesthetic myth-creation, an artistic manifestation of Hitler's pseudo-religious exaltation. It shows Hitler, in a dynamic pose, holding aloft a swastika flag and clenching his left fist, and marching at the head of a sea of loyal Party members, bathed in radiant sunlight of the kind familiar from depictions of saints in Catholic iconography; Hitler appears to be anointed with the 'Holy Spirit'.<sup>19</sup> As Dörner puts it, '[a]esthetic orchestration is the foundation of the effect the staging of a myth unfolds, and makes its acceptance by a society highly probable.'<sup>20</sup> Political rituals and their regular repetition thus enjoy the deserved repute of being highly effective forms of myth communication, which likewise are associated with a political aesthetic. 'Anniversaries, political solemnities, etc. transform the simple veneration of a political hero into a cult of personality in the specific sense', argues Peter Tepe.<sup>21</sup> A detailed discussion of the ceremonies staged by this political cult would go beyond the remit of this chapter; mentioning them – which include the 9 November events in Munich to commemorate the Beer Hall Putsch, the harvest festivals at Bückeberg and the Reich Party Congresses – must suffice, but should not be left out here.<sup>22</sup>

These examples remind us once again that ultimate questions of the meaning of life find themselves inscribed in political myths, which can thus precipitate the birth of a 'civil

<sup>17</sup> Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Vienna: Rizzoli, 6<sup>th</sup> edition 1974, 458f.

<sup>18</sup> Eyewitness account of a clerical employee, born 1917, cited in Walter Kempowski, *Haben Sie Hitler gesehen?*, Munich: Knaus Verlag, 1973, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Horst Möller et al. (eds.), *Die tödliche Utopie. Bilder, Texte, Dokumente, Daten zum Dritten Reich*, Munich: Verlag Dokumentation Obersalzberg, 1999, 27.

<sup>20</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Tepe, *Entwurf einer Theorie des politischen Mythos*, 65; cf. a similar line of argumentation in Heidi Hein, 'Historische Mythos- und Kultforschung', *Mythos No. 2. Politische Mythen* (2006), 30–45, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Kühberger, *Metaphern der Macht*; Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole, 1923–1945*, Vierow bei Greifswald: SH-Verlag, 1996.

religion'.<sup>23</sup> The view of Hitler as a 'messiah', or, put differently, as a 'political hero exalted in a mythical or religious sense', was, of course, also related to his political deeds in Germany, including the creation of employment and infrastructure and the re-introduction of compulsory military service, which provided foundational support for the myth from a different arena.<sup>24</sup> Ian Kershaw, writing in *Spiegel* magazine, cites in this context a speech given by Hitler in the *Reichstag* on 28 April 1939:

I have overcome Germany's former chaos, restored order, increased production dramatically in all areas of our national economy [...] I have succeeded in reintegrating all the seven million unemployed which so troubled all our hearts in useful production enterprises [...] I have not only unified the German people politically, but also armed it militarily, and I have continued attempting to rid us, page by page, of that treaty whose 448 articles contain the basest violation ever committed upon peoples and individuals. I have returned to the Reich the provinces of which we were robbed in 1919, I have brought home millions of deeply unhappy Germans torn away from us, I have restored the thousand-year-old historic unity of German *Lebensraum*, and I have [...] striven to do all this without bloodshed and without imposing upon my people or others the misery of war. I have done this [...] as a worker and a soldier of my people, just 21 years ago an unknown, of my own strength [...]<sup>25</sup>

In this excerpt, Hitler frames himself as sole agent of National Socialist policy. His claim of having changed the course of German history completely single-handed is, of course, absurd. The fascinating aspect of this litany of what most ordinary contemporary Germans will have considered astounding personal successes attained by the 'Führer' is the fact that he lists national 'achievements' rather than key principles of his worldview.<sup>26</sup> There are sources drawn from the history of everyday life which reflect this perspective and, despite their often excessively flowery and embellished style, have an 'authentic ring [...] reflecting again a tendency not uncommon in politically "unsophisticated" sections of the population to personalize their feelings of gratitude by attributing whatever social benefits the Third Reich had brought them directly to Hitler as their author and instigator.'<sup>27</sup> Peter Tepe pinpoints here a fundamental path which the process of mythologisation can take; people who idolise an individual as a political hero

<sup>23</sup> Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und Symbolische Politik*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Kühberger, *Metaphern der Macht*, 319.

<sup>25</sup> Ian Kershaw, 'Hitler-Mythos', *Spiegel Special Geschichte* 1 (2008), 103–113, 106.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. This view suggests that the political Hitler myth carried, alongside its other characteristics, the property of a 'myth of validation' (*Beglaubigungsmithos*; Heidi Hein) which serves to confirm the validity of actions, ideas and ideologies. Hein, *Historische Mythos- und Kultforschung*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*, 2001, 67. The sources related to the cult of Hitler, accused of essentially propping up the myth, were diverse in nature, and did not stem only from official propaganda. Cf. Thomas Mergel, 'Führer, Volksgemeinschaft und Maschine. Politische Erwartungsstrukturen in der Weimarer Republik und dem Nationalsozialismus 1918–1936', Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed.), *Politische Kulturgeschichte 1918–1939*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005, 91–127, 123; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1836: Hubris*, London: Penguin, 2001.

may tend to ascribe to this individual more or greater positive achievements than are his or her proper due, a phenomenon leading, in its most extreme form, to a view in which the attainment of a great political objective appears as the work of the idol alone.<sup>28</sup> It was this process which caused Hitler's person to merge with the political purpose of the movement he headed<sup>29</sup>, the echoes of which extended far beyond the end of the Second World War. While the process had its roots in the NSDAP's beginnings, it continued via the charisma of office conferred upon Hitler on becoming chancellor in 1933 and upon the 'Führer' as a variant form of the presidential office in 1934, and was given substantial momentum by National Socialist propaganda.<sup>30</sup> Ian Kershaw places as early as the autumn of 1930, when Hitler was rising to media prominence, that turning point from the 'fetish' of a small and fanatical political grouping to a broad-based cult around Hitler which millions of Germans associated with hope for a dawning new age.<sup>31</sup>

### **The historical myth and its rupture**

The political Hitler myth continued its career after 1945 in a variety of iterations; a number of argumentations of the time remained convinced of Hitler's alleged centrality to the National Socialist system. Some historical strands of interpretation, without continuing to support Nazi ideology, worked on the assumption that Hitler's personality, his ideas and his strength of will would be able to explain the phenomenon of National Socialism. This view attracted the epithet of 'Hitlerism'<sup>32</sup>:

Behind such an interpretation is in general a philosophy which stresses the 'intentionality' of the central actors in the historical drama, according full weight to [...] [their] action. This type of thinking obviously characterizes biographies of Hitler, as well as 'psychohistorical' studies. It also, however, underlies some outstanding non-biographical studies of Nazism.<sup>33</sup>

Kershaw considers that the concentrated focus on Hitler inescapably associated with biographical approaches such as that of Joachim Fest<sup>34</sup> means that preventing 'the extreme personalization of complex issues' becomes impossible due to their concomitant

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<sup>28</sup> Tepe, *Entwurf einer Theorie des politischen Mythos*, 59. Tepe additionally argues that political heroism and hero-worship is anthropologically inherent to humans: 56.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kühberger, *Metaphern der Macht*, 320.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London etc.: Bloomsbury, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2015, 83.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Fest, *Hitler*.

reduction to ‘questions of Hitler’s personality and ideology’.<sup>35</sup> Psychohistorical engagement with the topic demonstrates this still more clearly; the psychologist Manfred Koch-Hillebrecht, in his book *Homo Hitler*, writes thus of his subject:

His disastrous policies can be comprehended most readily by regarding them as the direct expression of a malign, ruthless, disingenuous and egomaniacal personality. His manifesto may have contained halfway reasonable rudiments, but his personality turned it all into evil.<sup>36</sup>

Psychohistorical interpretations ultimately explain the war and the Holocaust as rearing their heads from Hitler’s psychological constitution, as coming about through his ‘oedipal complex, monorchism, disturbed adolescence, and psychic traumas’.<sup>37</sup>

Others have attempted politological explorations of the topic, such as Karl Dietrich Bracher’s ascription to Hitler of a central role within the National Socialist state<sup>38</sup>, and historically-based assessments such as that by Klaus Hildebrand on the monocratic structure of the so-called Third Reich.<sup>39</sup>

The time-honoured type of historiographical narrative which, in line with the traditional historiography of individual personalities and rulers, attributes the power to shape and drive events, and to impact and ‘create’ reality, to a handful of mostly male decision-makers – in this case Hitler – has fallen into disrepute in our day and age. This degree of historical personalisation, as evident in historicism, resists, as Klaus Bergmann observes, the insight of historical theory that,

to speak in Marx’s terms, circumstances determine the actions of people to a greater extent than the other way round [...]. [Personalisation] also runs counter to the intent of historical science to conceive of the past as an interrelation within which all people, in their doings and their being-done-to, are encompassed.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 84. Kershaw’s preface to his biography of Hitler engages with the problem; he reports having been driven ‘to considering whether the striking polarization of approaches could not be overcome and integrated by a biography of Hitler written by a ‘structuralist’ historian – coming to biography with a critical eye, looking instinctively, perhaps, in the first instance to downplay rather than to exaggerate the part played by the individual, however powerful, in complex historical processes.’ Kershaw, *Hitler*, preface.

<sup>36</sup> Manfred Koch-Hillebrecht, *Homo Hitler. Psychogramm des deutschen Diktators*, Munich: Siedler, 1999, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen um Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie*, Munich: Piper, 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Kershaw, *Der NS-Staat*, 119f.

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Bergmann, ‘Personalisierung, Personifizierung’, Bergmann et al. (eds.), *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, 1997, 298–300, 298.

A number of prominent nineteenth-century figures, including Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Heinrich von Treitschke<sup>41</sup>, located in the personalities of ‘great men’ a potentiality to shape history. Bergmann, however, counters:

Conceiving of history as the result of actions carried out by dominant personalities saves one the intellectual effort of uncovering and analysing the complex interrelations and dialectical relationships among factors that exert an influence on history; [it also] creates an opportunity to conjure up seemingly plausible interpretations for the past and, above all, for the present with its mounting complexity and opacity.<sup>42</sup>

Hans-Ulrich Wehler summarises the issue as it relates to Hitler thus:

It is not Hitler’s individual psychopathology that is the actual problem, but the state of the society which allowed him to rise and, until April 1945, to rule.<sup>43</sup>

History didactics eventually forswore personalisation, primarily in the course of its somewhat belated engagement with a study published by Ludwig von Friedeburg and Peter Hübner in 1970<sup>44</sup>, which collected empirical findings to demonstrate that the image of history held by contemporary young Germans was primarily a personality-led one:

Historical events and their contexts are depicted in overinflated categories of everyday experience, if they are not reduced completely to the normal categories of ‘immediate’, so-called concretist experience – which takes place mostly among younger children, aged up to about thirteen. These [categories] are largely limited to defining all historical events and societal conditions as always the result of the actions and intentions of individual figures.<sup>45</sup>

Klaus Bergmann’s short book *Personalisierung im Geschichtsunterricht*, engaging with Friedeburg and Hübner’s work, identified via scrutiny of the traditions of history didactics problematic developments stemming largely from uncritical acceptance of premises from developmental psychology, particularly the staged model proposed in the 1950s by Heinrich Roth, which had little empirical basis.<sup>46</sup> In the spirit of a fundamentally demo-

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Klaus Bergmann, *Personalisierung im Geschichtsunterricht – Erziehung zur Demokratie?* Stuttgart: Klett, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1977, 17 ff.; Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*, Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 11 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Bergmann, *Personalisierung im Geschichtsunterricht – Erziehung zu Demokratie?*, 18f.

<sup>43</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ‘Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Psychoanalyse’, *HZ* 208 (1969), 529–554, 141.

<sup>44</sup> Barbara Caine presented similar arguments in relation to biographical research in the academic discipline of history; cf. Caine, *Biography and History*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ludwig von Friedeburg and Peter Hübner, *Das Geschichtsbild der Jugend*, Munich: Juventa Verlag, 1970, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Heinrich Roth, *Kind und Geschichte. Psychologische Voraussetzungen des Geschichtsunterrichtes in der Volksschule*, Munich: Kösel, 1955.

cratic and emancipatory approach to the discipline, Bergmann denounced the tendency of personalised history to obscure young people's view into the extent of the political sphere of influence which is in fact open to an individual and to block, with the figures of 'great men', insight into the economic, political and cultural structures 'within which the actions of individuals, groups or classes take place.'<sup>47</sup> In addition to this, continues Bergmann, personalised history negates the opportunities open to all members of a society to enter into political participation, as well as preparing the way for a potential denial of responsibility, be it sole or shared, for political developments within a society and ultimately threatening to degrade into an apologia for political misdeeds.<sup>48</sup> Bergmann argues that the gulf between those who shape politics and 'make history' and those subject to the action of these processes descending from above promotes a passive view of the world and results in the development of passive citizens.<sup>49</sup> Heinrich Roth's seemingly unconsidered proposal of didactic solutions in the 1950s in the context of 'elementarising' the historical resulted in consequences whose impact unfolded over decades and persists to this day:

Saying *Hitler-Reich* instead of '*Drittes Reich*' does not falsify [history], it just elementarises [it]. It is not unhistorical to attempt to create an understanding of the supra-individual by individualising it, that is, symbolising it and bringing it to life in representative individuals [that stand for the supra-individual].<sup>50</sup>

Roth considers doing this a 'justified aid to understanding' which

is entirely apposite to the fact [...] that in one individual acting, or representing his time, on behalf of the rest, the whole of contemporary history, the entire objective content which interests us in each case, becomes vivid and comprehensible on a personal level.<sup>51</sup>

By narrowing his focus to the issue of teachability, Roth, considered from a present-day vantage point, misses the narrative foreshortenings, condemned in subsequent debates as impermissible and twisting of the facts, which are particularly active in the case that is at the centre of this chapter, endowing the figure of Hitler with sole and all-encompassing agency in National Socialist history.

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<sup>47</sup> Bergmann, *Personalisierung im Geschichtsunterricht – Erziehung zur Demokratie?*, 41.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 55f.

<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Roth, *Kind und Geschichte. Psychologische Voraussetzungen des Geschichtsunterrichts in der Volksschule*, Munich: Kösel, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1958, 110.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Over a long period of time, Austrian textbooks faithfully reproduced these tendencies, whose roots I locate in strands of development within the disciplines of history and history didactics. Textbooks of the 1970s, which in Reinhard Krammer's view are largely on this discursive level, might stand as an exemplar:

They continue to lay sole blame for the crimes of the Nazi era (with a notable paucity of attention to the genocide against the Jews, which tended to receive mentions in passing) to Adolf Hitler, whose detestation of all things of 'non-German race' and whose loathing of 'world Jewry' revealed 'unmistakable signs of a profoundly disturbed inner life'. 'Unambiguously pathological traits' – that was textbooks' diagnosis on closer inspection of Hitler's character. The only figures to whom a degree of shared responsibility was attributed were a handful of men whom Hitler gathered around himself and who likewise exerted a malign influence on the German people, 'cold fanatics', men driven by ambition, cynics and fantasists [...] dubious figures, some of them criminal or having gone off the rails.<sup>52</sup>

This type of pathologising personalisation, which, additionally, usually tended to gloss over the nationalities of the actors it showcased, painted a picture of criminals without accomplices or accessories, with the blame placed squarely, above all, on Adolf Hitler, or, at most, the leadership of the SS and/or a small number of prominent National Socialist repeatedly mentioned by name.<sup>53</sup> On one single page of an Austrian textbook published in 1997, Reinhard Krammer finds a total of 39 phrases which cast Hitler as virtually sole agent of National Socialism:

'How Hitler created Greater Germany.' 'How Hitler deceived the world.' 'How Hitler realised his [idea of] Greater Germany.' 'First, Hitler looked for allies.' 'In 1936, Hitler and Mussolini ...' '... Hitler entered into an alliance with Italy and Japan against...' '... Hitler supported General Franco ...' 'Hitler exploited the opportunity...' '... the Condor Legion, which Hitler had established to support Franco...' '... to Hitler's most complete satisfaction...' 'Name Hitler's allies...' 'Now Hitler turned his attention to...' '... the conference at Munich at which the Sudetenland was handed over to Hitler...' '... Hitler announced' 'Hitler's acquisitions of territories [sic!]' 'That Hitler had deceived the world, ...' 'Thus Hitler had...' 'Hitler's troops invade...' 'could not stand by and watch Hitler's quest for expansion...' '... to react to Hitler's ambitions to become a great power...' 'How Hitler [turned] Europe into a battlefield...' 'but Hitler pushed through Belgium...'.<sup>54</sup>

### Twenty-first-century Austrian textbooks

The approach I propose to take to current textbooks for early secondary education (specifically year 8 of schooling) in Austria will entail drawing a clear distinction between two areas of the matter. The first is their engagement with the *political myth*, that is, the

<sup>52</sup> Reinhard Krammer, 'Nationale Amnesie und die Strategie des Geschichtsunterrichtes. Ein österreichischer Sachverhalt', Christian Giordano et al. (eds.), *Trugschlüsse und Umdeutungen. Multidisziplinäre Betrachtungen unbehaglicher Praktiken*, Münster/Vienna: Lit, 2009, 55–66, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Krammer, *Nationale Amnesie und die Strategie des Geschichtsunterrichtes*, 57.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 60; Krammer consciously refrains from giving his source, as his intent was to show a typical case.

extent to which the textbooks explicitly consider the mythification of Hitler, in the sense defined above, and explore it via source criticism – the focus, therefore, being on the past; the second is their exploration of the *historical myth*, or, in other words, the extent to which the textbooks' historical accounts of the National Socialist period, as historical narratives, deploy narrative strands or aspects which accord to Hitler sole agency in National Socialist policy and primary responsibility for acts committed and conditions endured during that era. Here, by contrast, the focus is on history, as distinct from the past.

### The corpus

The corpus of textbooks analysed includes all thirteen Austrian textbooks named in the official list issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education for the academic year 2014/15 as works approved for teaching the subject *Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung* (history and social studies/political education).<sup>55</sup> All books are approved for use in the more vocationally oriented *Neue Mittelschule/Hauptschule* and in the academic *gymnasiale Unterstufe*; the corpus therefore covers all types of school at lower secondary level, with the exception of special schools. In line with the national curriculum for *Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung*, likewise valid for both school types<sup>56</sup>, I analysed chapters of year 8 textbooks of which National Socialism and its rise were express topics. These textbooks devoted between 14.1 % and 27.5 % of their space to this topic, with an average value of 21.2 %, and numbers of pages covering the issue ranging from 23 to 46, on average 31.7.<sup>57</sup>

Analysis of these pages took place, on the one hand, via quantitative recording of all phrases and headings in the books' authorial text which contained 'Hitler' as a subject or object; this also included 'Führer' and the associated pronouns and possessive determiners, in phrases such as 'his ideology'. In order to cast an intermittent spotlight on the intertextual relationships between the books' narratives and their supporting visual materials, the analysis also counted the number of images of Hitler used in the books, both from sources (photographs, paintings, cartoons) and as reconstructive drawings or simi-

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. [https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/schulbuch/schulbuchlisten\\_2014\\_2015.html](https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/schulbuch/schulbuchlisten_2014_2015.html), last accessed 6 September 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Amendment to Austrian School Organisation Act, BGBl. I, Nr. 116/2008, 8.8.2008.

<sup>57</sup> The use of A4 format for the publication of Austrian history textbooks makes the numbers of pages in each easily comparable. The sole exception here is the edition of *Geschichte und Geschehen* for *Mittelschule*, which has a somewhat smaller format than the other books in the corpus.

lar.<sup>58</sup> The content thus located also underwent qualitative content analysis to the end of identifying, via the application of pre-determined categories, those parts of the textbooks which explored the political Hitler myth or discussed Hitler as an actor.

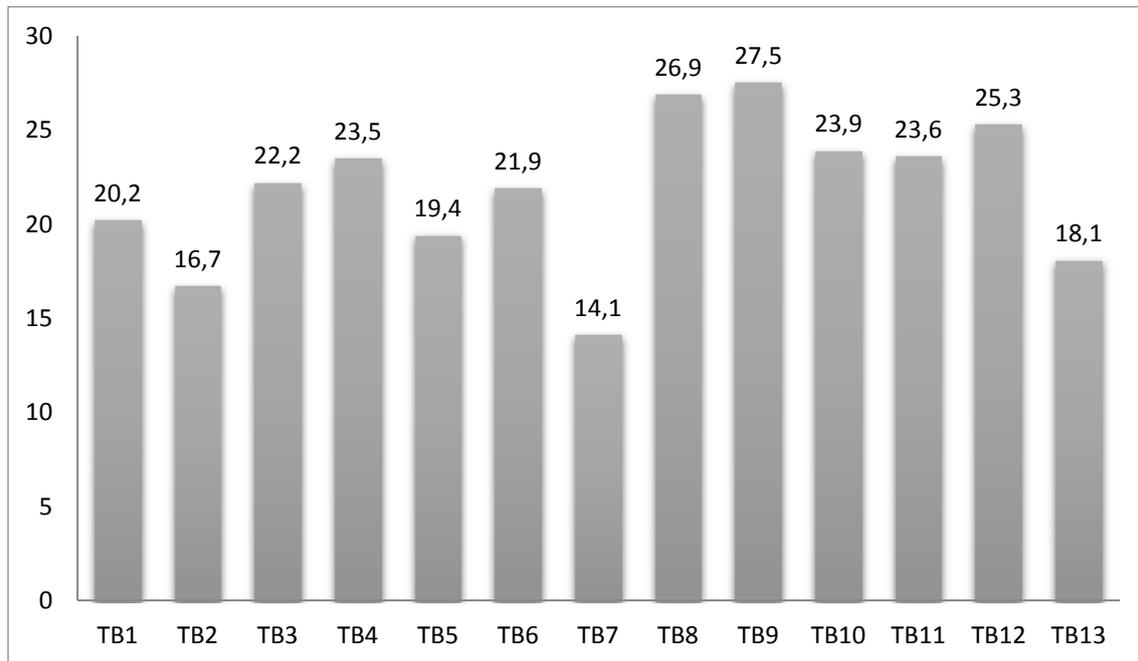


Fig. 1: proportions of pages dedicated to the topic of National Socialism in the corpus' year 8 textbooks (in percent)

### The political Hitler myth in Austrian textbooks

A survey of the political myth in the textbook corpus, that is, accounts exploring the cult around the 'Führer', reveals that only eight of thirteen books contain such accounts. Two of these approach the topic implicitly by including propaganda material relating to or originating from this cult along with a critical exploration via brief commentary and tasks for pupils; *Bausteine 4* (TB 1) carries a photograph from the 1936 Reich Party Congress and one of Hitler greeting a young girl, while *netzwerk geschichte @ politik 4* (TB 10) features two propaganda posters ('*Jugend dient dem Führer*' from 1939 and '*Es lebe Deutschland*' from 1935) as visual sources for critical analysis.<sup>59</sup> The other textbooks make more explicit mention of the 'Führer' myth in their headings and authorial text; this takes place in its most concise form in *Geschichte für alle 4* in a subsection on schools in the National Socialist period: 'The "cult of the Führer" was visible everywhere in schools. The Hitler salute, pictures of Hitler, swastikas and flag ceremonies

<sup>58</sup> This chapter is not intended to provide closer analysis of intertextuality; cf.. Christoph Kühberger, 'Multimodale Narration. Bild-Text-Graphik-Kommunikation in Geschichtsschulbüchern', Eva Matthes and Carsten Heinze (eds.), *Das Bild im Schulbuch*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2010, 43–55.

<sup>59</sup> TB 1, 28; TB 10, 37.

loomed large in schools' everyday routine.<sup>60</sup> *Geschichte schreiben 4* (TB 8) writes similarly: 'The state was headed by Adolf Hitler, the *'Führer'*, who was the subject of almost religious reverence and a cult of stardom.'<sup>61</sup>

Five further textbooks write at considerably greater length on the topic: *Durch die Zeiten 4* (TB 3), *ganz klar: Geschichte 4* (TB 5), *Geschichte live 4* (TB 7) and *Geschichte und Geschehen 4* (TB 9) (cf. Fig. 2).

<p>TB 3: <i>Durch die Zeiten 4</i>, 36</p> <p>The cult around the <i>Führer</i></p> <p>Everything revolved around the <i>Führer</i>, Adolf Hitler. His word was law. He was glorified as the saviour of the nation, as a knight fighting evil. Numerous streets and squares were named after him; from 1933 onwards, all state officials had to give the Hitler salute. A large part of the population did so too, voluntarily. Refusing to give the Hitler salute could be seen as criticism and lead to arrest.</p>
<p>TB 5: <i>ganz klar: Geschichte 4</i>, 35</p> <p>The <i>Führer</i> myth</p> <p>The high level of support for the <i>'Anschluss'</i> [of Austria in 1938] was closely linked to many people's admiration for Adolf Hitler. He was the strong, integrating force in the National Socialist system of power and domination. The <i>'Führer'</i> was omnipresent in everyday life (the <i>'Heil Hitler'</i> greeting); his picture was disseminated using all means of modern propaganda.</p>
<p>TB 7: <i>Geschichte live 4</i>, 48</p> <p>The <i>Führer</i> cult and propaganda</p> <p>From 1927 onwards, Hitler increasingly consolidated his absolute domination within the [Nazi] Party. After Hindenburg's death, he called himself <i>'Führer und Reichskanzler'</i>, from 1939 onwards simply <i>'Führer'</i>. The <i>Reichswehr</i>, and after it state officials, had to swear an 'oath of loyalty' to Hitler personally. The cult around Hitler expressed itself in many forms, for instance in the renaming of numerous streets and squares, in enthusiastic paeans of praise by writers, and in the dissemination of pictures of Hitler. Every individual was supposed to blindly and completely obey the <i>'Führer's'</i> will. Pictures and diary entries from this period prove that many people allowed themselves to be pulled along and blinded by the enthusiasm. But there were some who saw through the regime to its criminal tendencies.</p>
<p>TB 9: <i>Geschichte und Geschehen 4</i>, 52</p> <p><i>'Führer, command, we will obey'</i></p> <p>'He is truth itself. He has the gift of seeing what remains hidden from the eyes of others', the [Nazi] propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels claimed of Hitler. Hitler's glorification was built up in accordance with a plan. Everyone should submit themselves to faith in the <i>Führer</i>. In order to exclude in advance any doubt as to whether the <i>Führer's</i> commands were right, he was said to have superhuman qualities. The cult around the <i>Führer</i> made him into a 'substitute god' and National Socialism into a 'substitute religion'. The <i>Führer</i> cult, however, was not only built up through organised National Socialist propaganda or by pressure from above. Many Germans and Austrians whipped themselves up into hysteria when Hitler made a public appearance somewhere or when the state or official bodies celebrated the <i>'Führer's</i> birthday'. The dynamics of the <i>Führer</i> cult developed from those in power to ordinary people. They had the effect the National Socialists wanted: Many people came to regard the <i>Führer</i> as a symbol of the German people's unity and cohesion. Phrases that became proverbial, like 'The <i>Führer</i> will know what he's doing!' and 'The <i>Führer</i> is sure to do the right thing!', show that a large number of people trusted in his [alleged] infallibility. This is also apparent in the fact that the response to obvious injustice or unambiguous crimes committed by the National Socialists was often 'If the <i>Führer</i> only knew about that...'</p>

Fig. 2: Textbook passages on the political Hitler myth

<sup>60</sup> TB 6, 50.

<sup>61</sup> TB 8, 34.

Overall, while this topic area appears in a little over 60 % of Austrian history textbooks, its depiction is not particularly extensive. Two textbooks, *Geschichte live 4* (TB 7) and *Geschichte und Geschehen 4* (TB 9), are the exception, with the first detailing the topic on one whole page and the second on two.

### **The historical Hitler myth in Austrian textbooks**

Exploration of the historical (as opposed to the political) Hitler myth in history textbooks entails examining their narratives on the past as to how they treat the figure of Hitler and establishing the role they attribute to him in the history of National Socialism. I have attempted a quantitative approach to this matter by proceeding from the assumption that an accumulation of occurrences of Hitler's name<sup>62</sup> as the subject and object of sentences in the textbooks' authorial text represents an ascription of centrality to Hitler in these historical accounts. Sentences in textbooks act as the smallest textual cognitive structural unit of historical narration, at which level we can identify<sup>63</sup> the importance assigned to Hitler, including instances in which he is mentioned multiple times within one sentence or group of sentences. Comparing the number of mentions of Hitler in this sense to the total number of pages each textbook devotes to the topic of National Socialism reveals substantial differences in the frequency with which the books mention Hitler (see Fig. 3).

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<sup>62</sup> I also counted instances of the words 'Führer', 'he [i.e. Hitler]', 'Hitler-Deutschland', 'Hitler-Stalin-Pakt' and 'his [i.e. Hitler's] ideology', but not 'Hitler-Jugend' (Hitler Youth) or its abbreviation 'HJ'.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Heinz Vater, *Einführung in die Textlinguistik*, Munich: Fink, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2001, 64.

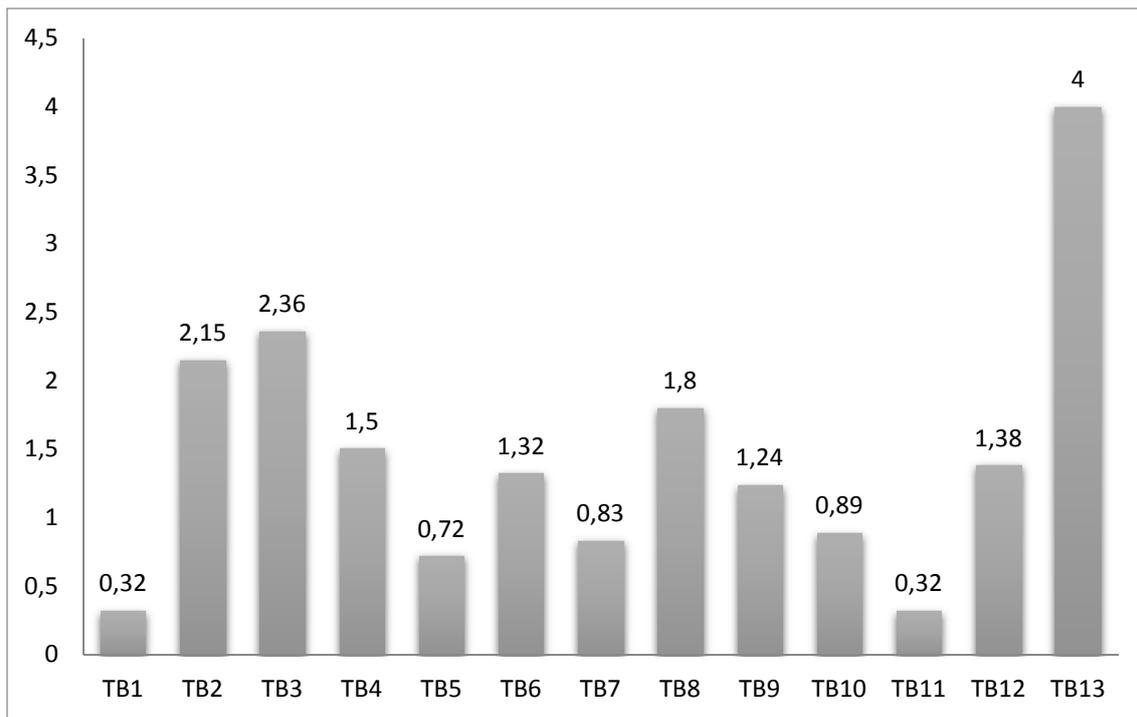


Fig. 3: Average numbers of mentions of ‘Hitler’ per page on National Socialism

I achieved greater precision in the analysis by distinguishing sentences and phrases in accordance with whether they feature Hitler as the agent of what is being described or semantically assign this role to him (an example might be ‘So, in June 1941, he ordered the attack on the Soviet Union despite the non-aggression pact.’<sup>64</sup>) or whether they in-

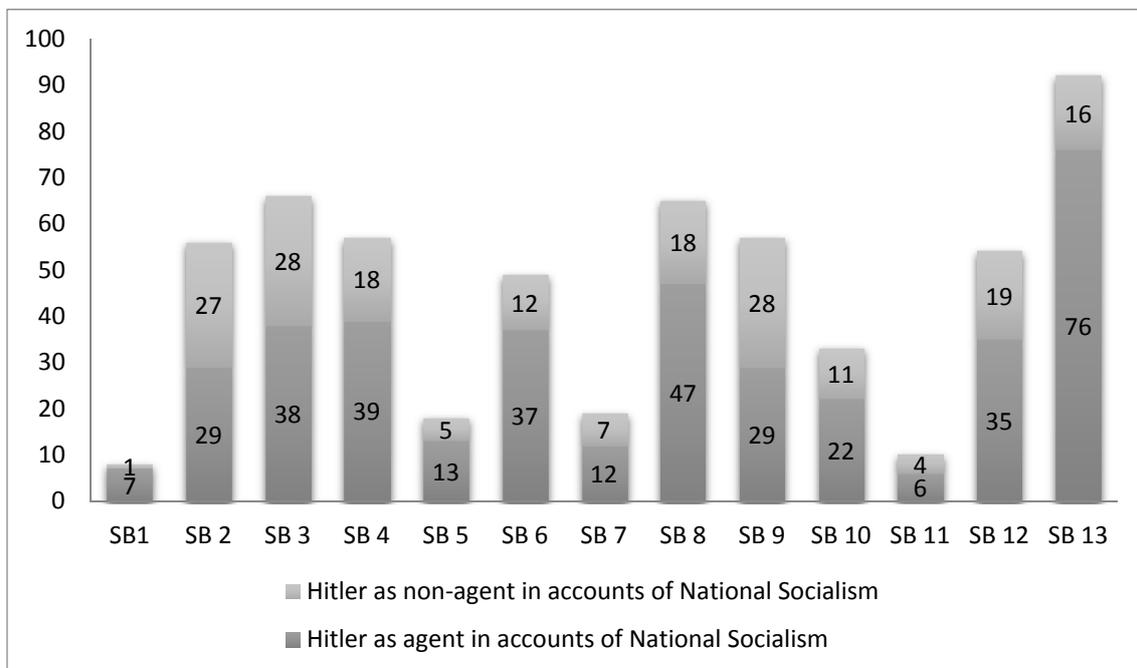


Fig. 4: Agency and non-agency of Hitler in accounts of National Socialism

<sup>64</sup> TB 6, 76.

clude him as an object (an example: ‘Shored up by Hitler, Mussolini later also conquered Albania.’<sup>65</sup>). This analysis casts a spotlight primarily on those textbooks which ascribe to Hitler a particular level of agency in their historical narration (see Fig. 4), an approach which raises questions given the discussion around personalised history in the discipline of history didactics. Again, the view on historical narratives thus opened to us becomes complete when we link it to the size of the textbooks’ sections on National Socialism; as Fig. 4 indicates, the textbooks TB 13, TB 3, TB 2 and TB 8 are those with the most noticeably increased frequency of mentions with agency ascribed. The most striking of these is textbook TB 13 (*Zeitfenster 4*), which averages 3.3 mentions of Hitler per page. The reasons for this are evident in the emphases and structure given to the textbook’s account of the period, three facets of which are of particular significance:

- a) The textbook’s depiction of the period links Adolf Hitler’s life very closely to the rise of the NSDAP and of its ideas.
- b) In its reduction of National Socialist ideology to Hitler’s personal worldview, particularly to statements in *Mein Kampf*, the textbook gives rise to the impression that Hitler was to a considerable extent the sole progenitor of Nazi thought.
- c) The accounts frequently make use of asymmetrical narrative modes which figure Hitler as acting for Germany, the German government or the National Socialists, as here: ‘In mid-October, Hitler had to deal with the attack on Great Britain, after the loss of hundreds of planes’<sup>66</sup>.

While this approach provides us with initial insights, it does not recommend the drawing of hasty conclusions; some textbooks, with TB 13 being a good example, present a massively personalised account of National Socialism centring around the person of Hitler in one subsection while barely mentioning him in another. The chart below, recording findings drawn from TB 13, is indicative of the fact that Hitler’s dominance does not extend evenly across all areas of the history of National Socialism as it appears in textbooks. In TB 13, the political history of the NSDAP, especially its rise, is intertwined extremely closely with Hitler’s person – one page even features a total of 25

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<sup>65</sup> TB 2, 63.

<sup>66</sup> TB 13, 57.

mentions<sup>67</sup> -, the account of the persecution and mass murder of the Jews leaves Hitler out<sup>68</sup>, and the text on the Second World War features a reduced number of citations of Hitler as the agent of the action.<sup>69</sup>

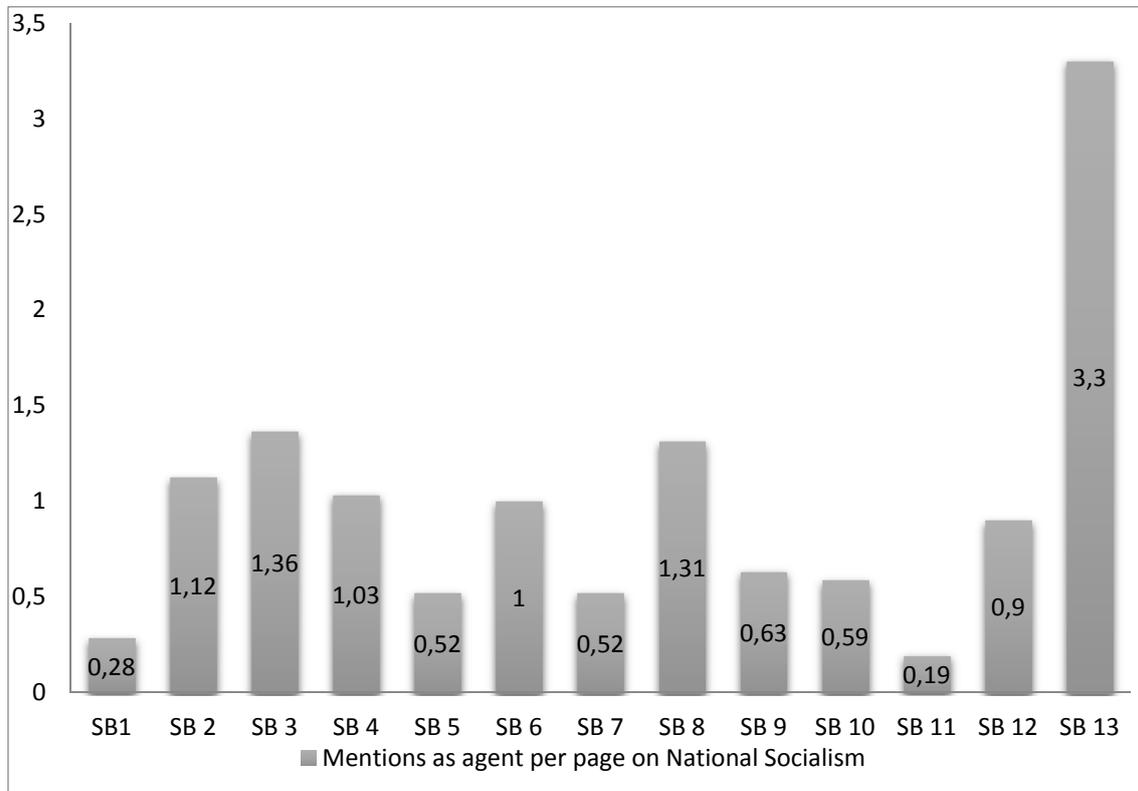


Fig. 5: Mentions as agent per page on National Socialism

Further contextual exploration of this finding therefore involves identifying the areas of the topic in which mentions of Hitler as agent are more frequent than elsewhere. I tested this by designating four example topic areas: (a) the NSDAP's assumption of power (*'Machtergreifung'*); (b) the Holocaust/persecution under the Nazi regime; (c) the Second World War (WW2); (d) resistance to the Nazis.

A comparison of all four topic areas across all textbooks in the corpus, as a form of systematic overview of the Austrian textbook market in this respect (Fig. 7), shows an unequivocal trend towards positioning Hitler as a central figure who takes on agendas of action in the various historical narratives analysed, or, put differently, acts as a key representative figure for circumstances and developments in the National Socialist period,

<sup>67</sup> TB 13, 50.

<sup>68</sup> TB 13, 62–67.

<sup>69</sup> TB 13, 56–61.

particularly in the areas of the *Machtergreifung* and WW2. The subsections on resistance to National Socialism, by contrast, tend to feature a passive Hitler, and he appears almost completely absent from accounts of the Holocaust and persecution; six

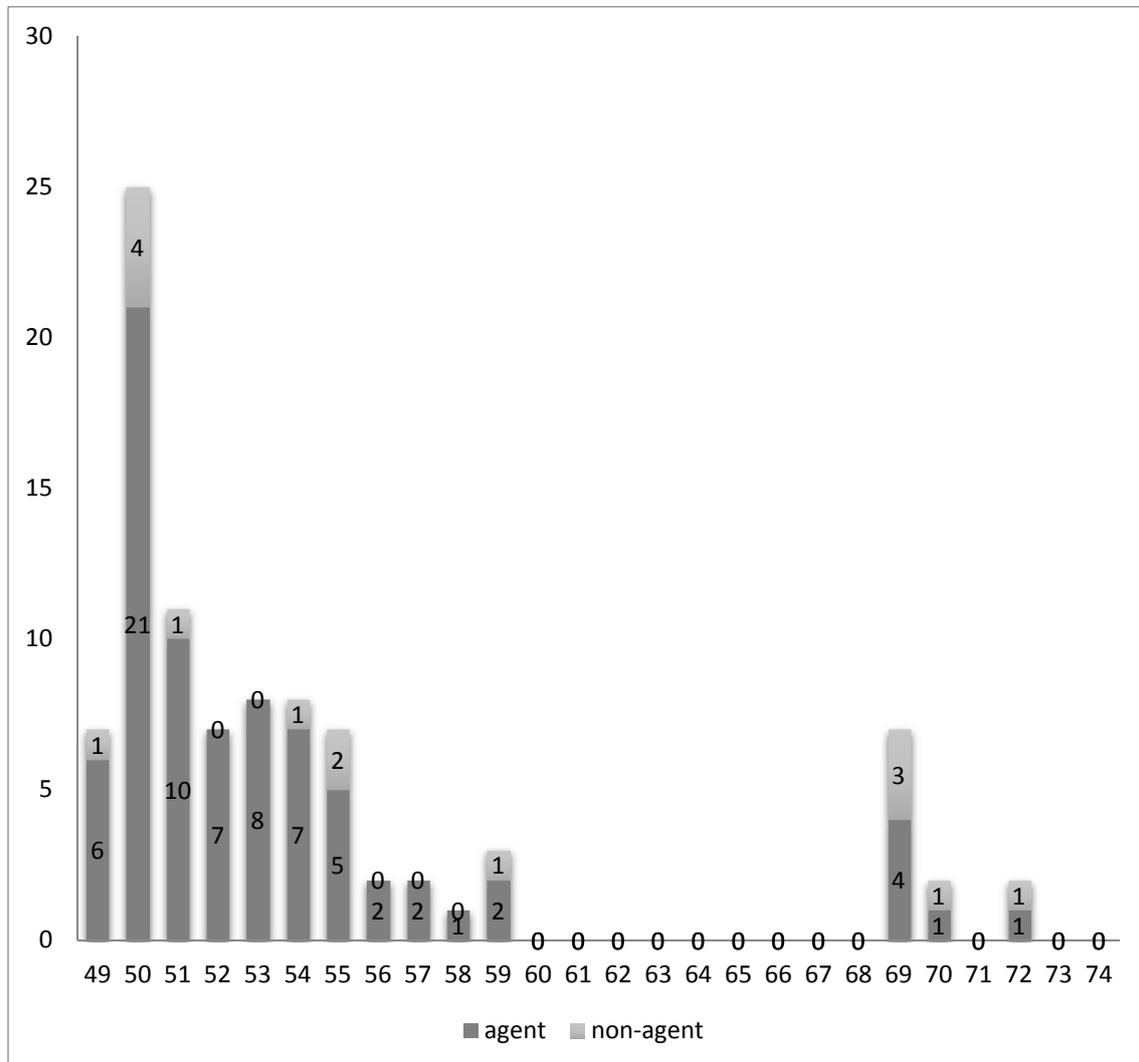


Fig. 6: Frequency of mentions of Hitler in TB 13's chapter on National Socialism

textbooks discuss this latter area without mentioning Hitler at all. I would propose at this juncture the interpretation that these divergences in frequency of personalisation in regard to Hitler are related, perhaps primarily, to differences in levels of reflective consideration in academic history and historical culture; accounts of the Holocaust and the persecution unleashed by the Nazis, much more than other facets of National Socialist history, have faced condemnation for over-personalisation, with critics pointing out that not Adolf Hitler alone was responsible for the mass murder of Jews, but a system of

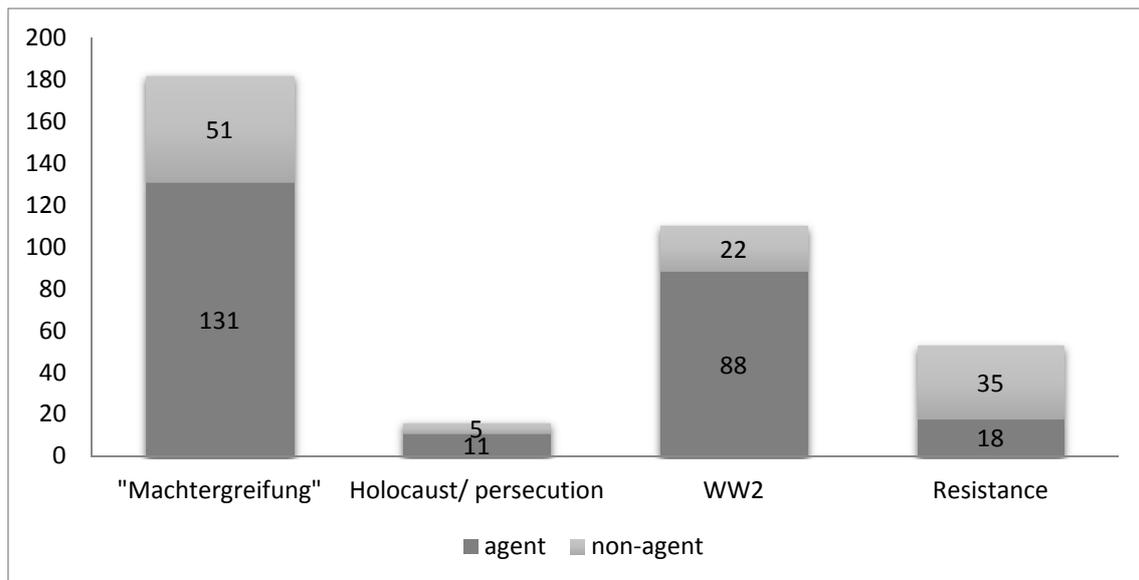


Fig. 7: Selected subsections of all textbooks and mentions of Hitler as agent/non-agent

perpetrators and those who looked on.<sup>70</sup> I would not argue that my findings were indicative of a tendency among Austrian textbooks to suggest that Hitler did not know about the persecution and genocide against the Jews; no textbook takes this position. What we do see from the analysis is that they ascribe these acts and responsibility for them to the ‘Nazi regime’ or the ‘National Socialists’.

I am of the view, in this context, that a similarly critical approach to other areas of the history of National Socialism in textbooks would reap dividends; it would be of import to explore which entities, linguistically or semantically, carry responsibility for particular developments or circumstances, without allowing interpretive distortions to gain influence.

In our day and age it is not sufficient, when examining history textbooks, to take account only of the authorial text. Given the diversity of media a textbook may contain or include, we need also to look at the visual material which accompanies that text. It may well be a fair assumption that a personalising approach to the past will make use of supporting visual media.<sup>71</sup> Comparison, from textbook to textbook, of the numbers of pic-

<sup>70</sup> The issue of onlookers or bystanders appears – with the caveat that I have not undertaken a close analysis of this topic area – to feature relatively infrequently in Austrian textbooks.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Ina Markova, ‘Balancing Victimhood and Complicity in Austrian History Textbooks. Visual and Verbal Strategies of Depicting the Past in post-Waldheim Austria’, *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society* 3 (2011), 58–73.

tures used in the textbooks' sections on National Socialism that feature Hitler results in the perhaps surprising finding that, in most cases, it is not those textbooks whose text makes the most frequent mentions of Hitler that most numerously use such pictures; these latter are textbooks 3, 8, 9 and 10.

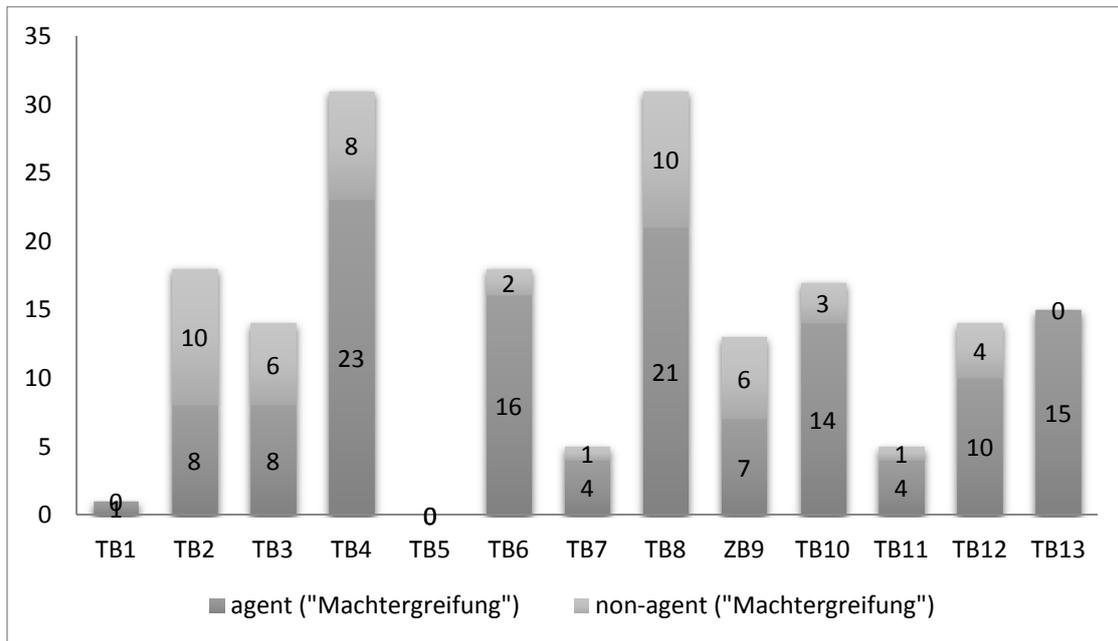


Fig. 8: Subsections on the *Machtergreifung* and Hitler as agent/non-agent

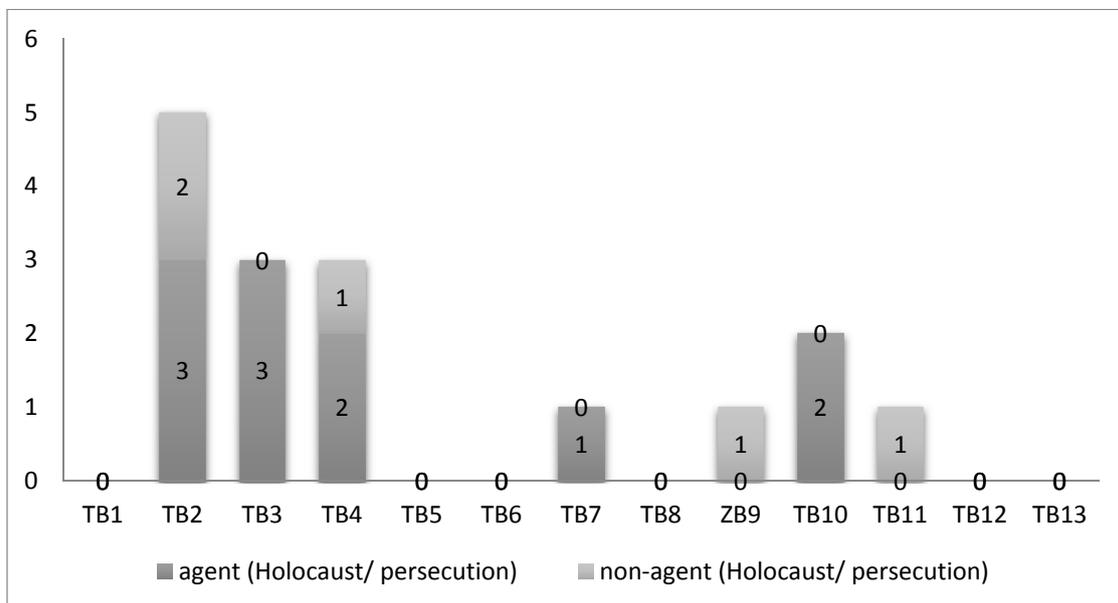


Fig. 9: Subsections on the Holocaust/persecution and Hitler as agent/non-agent

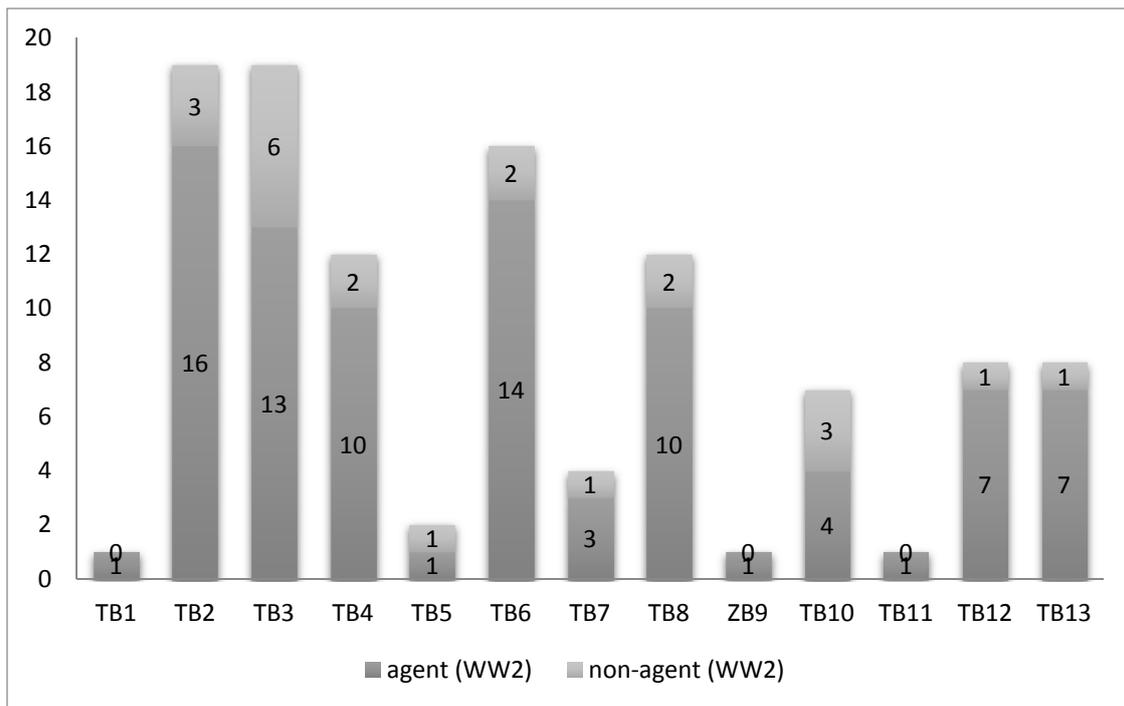


Fig. 10: Subsections on WW2 and Hitler as agent/non-agent

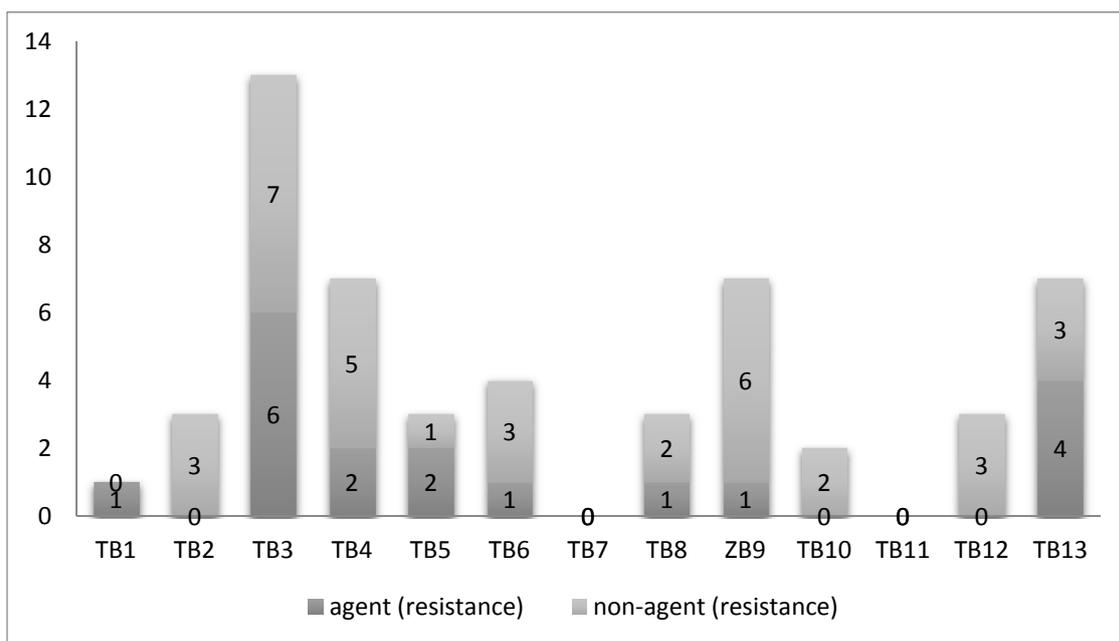


Fig. 11: Subsections on resistance to National Socialism and Hitler as agent/non-agent

**Returning to the historical Hitler myth: its explicit exploration in the textbook corpus**

In a finding I, at least, had not been expecting, two passages in the textbooks analysed emerged which engage explicitly with the historical myth of Hitler. *Geschichte live 4* (TB 7) and *Durch die Zeiten 4* (TB 3) each contain a paragraph of authorial text which

raises the issues around ascribing sole agency to Hitler from a post-1945 perspective.

Maria Ecker, writing in TB 7, comments:

This *Führer* cult may have been a factor in the continued focus on Hitler's person in reports and documentaries about the National Socialist period after 1945. This created the false impression that Hitler was solely responsible for all [Nazi] actions.<sup>72</sup>

Bernd Vogel and Birgit Strasser, writing in TB 3, likewise critique the tendency to personalise National Socialism at the end of the textbook's chapter on the topic:

People have tried many times to make Adolf Hitler and his closest entourage responsible for all the atrocities committed. But his reign of terror was only possible because it was supported by influential figures from business, the military, officialdom and, in the final analysis, the people at large.<sup>73</sup>

Yet this explicit approach to the problem contrasts with the finding that TB 3 is one of the textbooks in the corpus which mentions Hitler with increased frequency, specifically 2.36 times per page. This notwithstanding, the two textbooks cited above do, in explicitly – albeit briefly - raising the issue of Hitler-centrism, open up possibilities, as well as

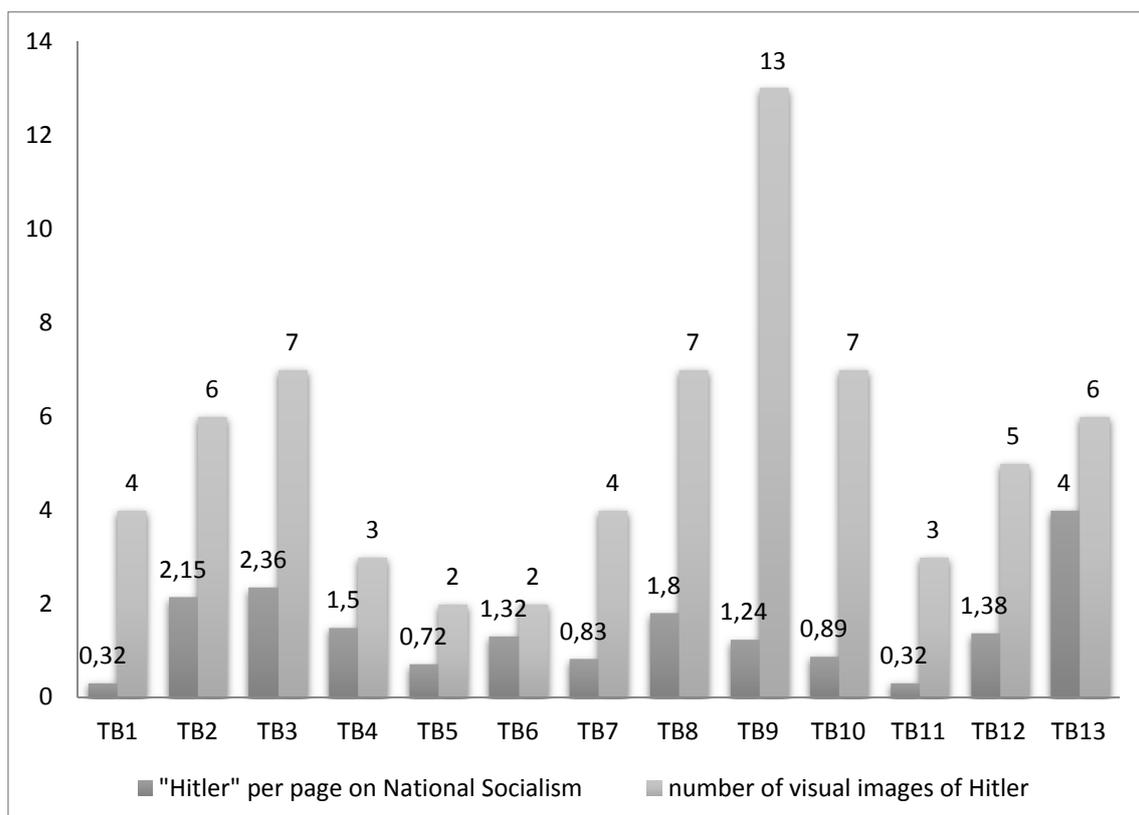


Fig. 12: Average number of mentions of 'Hitler' per textbook page on National Socialism and number of visual images of Hitler

<sup>72</sup> TB 7, 48.

<sup>73</sup> TB 3, 76.

meeting the expectation formulated through recent developments in German-language history didactics that history teaching seek to actively create awareness among pupils of historical culture, in this case issues around a widespread interpretation of the National Socialist period.<sup>74</sup>

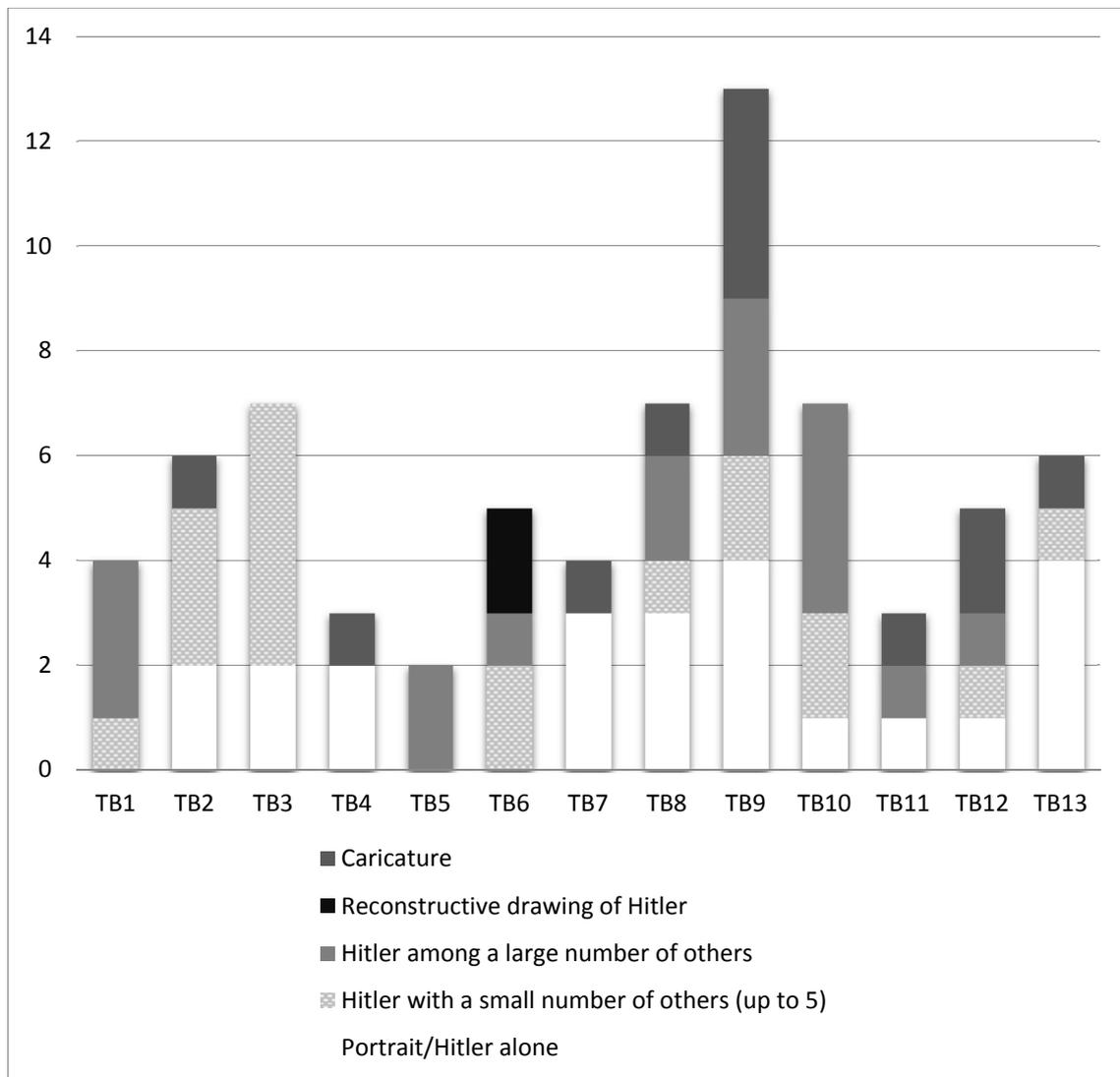


Fig. 13: Types of visual images of Hitler

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Michael Sauer, *Geschichte unterrichten. Eine Einführung in die Didaktik und Methodik*, Seelze: Klett-Kallmeyer, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 2013, 24; Christoph Kühberger, *Kompetenzorientiertes historisches und politisches Lernen. Methodische und didaktische Annäherungen für Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung*, Innsbruck/Vienna: Studienverlag, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2015, 50; Nicola Brauch, *Geschichtsdidaktik*. Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter, 2015, 75.

### Concluding remarks

In the research presented in this chapter, I set out to discover whether myths around Hitler continue to feature in Austrian history textbooks as ‘narrative formations of symbols’ (to speak with Andreas Dörner), as interpretations with little plausibility which effect an ‘over-magnification’ (to use Hans-Jürgen Pandel’s terms) of a historical entity, event or phenomenon; our findings point to the fact that they do. The primary form in which they manifest seems to be that of the political myth, whose core components arose in the National Socialist period and which cast Adolf Hitler – not least via the orchestration of a cult of personality around him – as a messianic hero, or as the all-encompassing agent of and in National Socialist Germany. It is therefore, of course, of no surprise to find history textbooks discussing aspects of the National Socialist Hitler myth’s creation and maintenance, such as the ‘*Führer*’ cult and propaganda strategies. We should hear alarm bells, however, when we survey the empirical findings set out in this chapter which point to the sizeable and evidently entrenched proportion of personalised depictions that populate textbooks’ authorial narratives on National Socialism. In other words, in some textbooks in particular, Adolf Hitler appears as the agent of the narrative to a massive extent, giving rise to the impression that he, via his actions, was personally and solely responsible for numerous developments and events. In this way, a number of textbooks ascribe to Hitler a role with elevated importance in driving and effecting actions; such a role, depicted in this manner, must encounter criticism from a historian’s perspective, as well as falling short, especially in light of the view developed by Klaus Bergmann, in terms of the teaching of history. All caveats regarding the need for careful, critical assessment of the quantitative findings notwithstanding, the average numbers of mentions of Hitler as an agent from the textbooks’ sections on National Socialism, ranging between 0.19 and three times per page, provide us with initial clues as to the divergence in this area among in the textbook corpus. The extreme case is represented by a textbook page which mentions Hitler a total of 25 times.

Further, more profound insights emerge from the analysis of Hitler’s ascribed agency in relation to various topic areas, which found a strong intertwinement of the transferral of power to the Nazis (the so-called *Machtergreifung*) and the rise of the NSDAP with Hitler as an agent, contrasting with the almost negligible extent to which accounts of the Nazi regime’s acts of persecution and the Holocaust ascribe agency to Hitler. Nine of thirteen textbooks name Hitler in the latter context only once, or not at all.

In my view, these findings prompt urgent and sustained reflection within the field of history didactics as to the appropriateness in our twenty-first century of presenting to our pupils Adolf Hitler as the explanatory key driver of what was a process that enfolded and engulfed the whole of German society. My suspicion is that the phenomenon of personalisation calls for a more general debate, beyond the issue of National Socialism's history. The textbooks' depictions of the Holocaust appear to demonstrate the effectiveness of specific critique; what the remainder of our findings, however, points out is that insights arrived at in one area of learning about history do not automatically transfer to other areas of history or historiography.

To conclude this chapter, I would caution, as a history didactician, that an empirical snapshot of this kind should not lead us to potentially inaccurate conclusions about textbooks as a medium in general. There will always be different ways of telling, and writing, history. 'True history', in this sense, is impossible. I would argue, however, for a thorough consideration of the extent to which textbooks should be making this problem part of their remit as media for the purpose of learning. I would consider it desirable for textbooks – beyond the approaches to the issue evident in two textbooks from this corpus and cited above – to attempt to contrast, within one volume, divergent manners of depiction and interpretation, to the end of enabling pupils to identify the problem. History teachers can already work with their pupils in this way by undertaking comparative explorations of different history textbooks and their narratives. Such work, however, does not discharge the duty of textbook publishers to reflect more closely on the narratives they issue, especially those relating to 'hot' historical issues, and to revise them where this appears necessary.

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TB 1: Bachlechner, Michael et al. *Bausteine 4. Geschichte, Sozialkunde, Politische Bildung*, Vienna: öbv, 2012.

TB 2: Ebenhoch, Ulrike et al. *Zeitbilder 4. Vom Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges bis zur Gegenwart. Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung*, Vienna: öbv, 2014.

TB 3: Vogel, Bernd and Birgit Wallner. *Durch die Zeiten, 4. Klasse*, Vienna: Hölzel, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2009.

TB 4: Huber, Gerhard and Ernst Gusenbauer. *einst und heute 4. Chronologisch. Geschichte, Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung*, Vienna: E. Dörner, 2012.

- TB 5: Bailer-Galanda, Brigitte et al. *ganz klar: Geschichte 4*, Vienna: Jugend & Volk, 2008.
- TB 6: Monyk, Elisabeth et al. *Geschichte für alle. 4. Klasse*, Vienna: Olympe, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2012.
- TB 7: Ammerer, Heinrich et al. *Geschichte live 4*, Linz: Veritas, 2010.
- TB 8: Gidl, Annelise. *Geschichte schreiben 4. Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung*, Vienna: E. Dörner, 2012.
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Tobias Kuster

### **The myth of the *Reichsautobahn*: historical learning and the challenge of entrenched historical concepts**

#### **‘It wasn’t all bad in National Socialism...’**

Around ten percent of the population of today’s Germany agree with the assertion that National Socialism had its good sides, while a further twenty percent would express at least partial agreement.<sup>1</sup> This stubborn notion had an outing into the forum of German public debate in 2007, when Eva Herman, a presenter with the German public service broadcaster ARD, made a now-notorious remark on Nazi Germany: ‘...but motorways were built back then, and we travel on them today.’<sup>2</sup> The construction of motorways, linked in the popular mind with the eradication of unemployment, is one of the first topics to come up when everyday conversation turns to ‘positive sides’ or ‘achievements’ of National Socialism. As Richard J. Evans observed: ‘The motorways were perhaps the most durable of the propaganda exercises mounted by the Third Reich; they survive to the present day.’<sup>3</sup>

After outlining the current state of research on the myth of the *Reichsautobahn*, this chapter, using as examples history textbooks from the German state of Hesse, will analyse the extent to which the interaction of the historical learning process with a persistent myth, visually and narratively transmitted via textbooks, results in that myth’s reproduction or its deconstruction.

#### **The myth, its facts and fictions**

At the basis of political myths lie narratives, usually emotionally charged in nature, which depict historical realities in a manner not commensurate with the facts and, in so supplying a distorted interpretation of the past, generate a sense of meaning, of or for

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Oliver Decker, Marliese Weißmann, Johannes Kiess, Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte in der Krise. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010*, Bonn: Brandt Verlag, 2010, 74; Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte im Umbruch. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2012*, Bonn: Dietz, 2012, 30, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Wippermann, *Autobahn zum Mutterkreuz. Historikerstreit der schweigenden Mehrheit*, Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 2008, 19–22, 28–30.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*, London: Penguin, 2012.

political communities, which relates to the present day.<sup>4</sup> The myth of Hitler as ‘*Führer*’, with its mytheme centring on him as ‘saviour of the German people’ appointed by ‘Providence’, and the associated circumstance of motorway construction and creation of full employment as symbols of modern technology and economic progress, serve as preeminent specimens of this character of political myth. The example of Hitler allows us to retrace the workings of the process, on the one side via staged propaganda measures, on the other via the acts of projection undertaken by large parts of the contemporary population, resulting in Hitler’s magnification and his endowment with polyvalent functions as the ‘executor of the people’s will’.<sup>5</sup> The central mytheme of this mythic set is the assertion, spread by National Socialist propaganda and believed to this day, that the motorway, creating a network of connections between major cities, was an invention and achievement of Hitler’s, an idea condensed into a myth of creation in the propagandistic formula ‘*Straßen des Führers*’. Its components are the defeat of mass unemployment, the ambition of ‘motorising the German people’, the alleged military significance of the motorways for the transport of troops and materials, and the high aesthetic value of the project’s implementation, fusing nature with technology and conducted in accordance with principles of landscape preservation.

A collection of diagrams and sketches for reproduction on the blackboard in the history classroom, issued in 1938, manipulatively brought together and distilled these facets of the myth within an overarching context, thus casting a historical-didactic aspect on the myth’s construction (Fig. 1). Entitled ‘*Die Straßen des Führers*’ (the *Führer*’s roads), it refers directly to a speech of Hitler’s on promoting motorisation made at the International Motor Show on 11 February 1933, in which he listed his third goal as the ‘realisation of a generous plan for the construction of roads’. Elsewhere in the speech, he commented ‘Just as the horse and cart once forged its paths, the railway built the tracks it needed, so must automobile transport receive the motorways [*Autostraßen*] it needs.’ The left-hand part of the set of sketches focuses on technical progress and achievement, while the myth of symbiosis between nature and technology and the project’s aesthetic

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Yves Bizeul, ‘Politische Mythen’, Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn (eds.), *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Marburg: Verlag Herder Institut, 2006, 3–14, 5–7.; Heidi Hein-Kircher, ‘Politische Mythen’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 11 (2007), 26–31, 26f. Cf. also the opening chapter of this volume.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ian Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’: Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Cf. also the chapter in this volume on myths around Hitler. Cf. also the chapter by Christoph Kühberger in this volume.

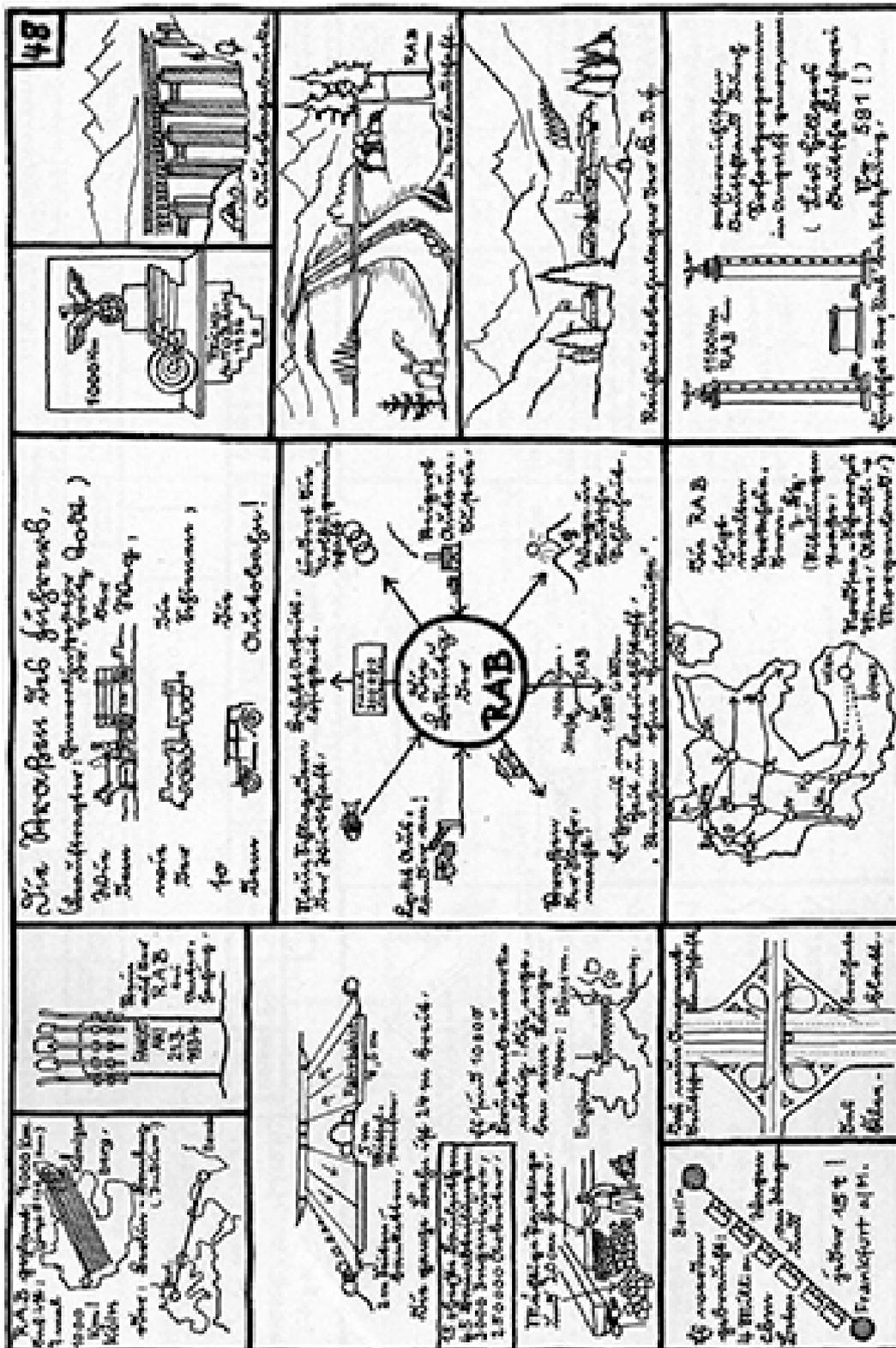


Fig. 1: 'Die Straßen des Führers' (Arno Gürtler and Fritz Thost. Zeichenskizzen zum deutschen Geschichtsunterricht. Zweiter Band: Von der Reformation bis zur Regierungszeit Friedrichs des Großen. Von der Französischen Revolution bis zur Gegenwart. Leipzig: Verlag Ernst Wunderlich, 1938, 48)

dimension dominate on the right. The sketches include a map showing a planned network of 7,000 kilometres in length; the figures regarding the materials and workers needed emphasise the power and monumentality of the endeavour. The central sketch stresses the benefits to the economy, the military, the ‘community of the German people’ and to the unemployment figures (‘around 300,000 workers’ will be required). The drawing of the projected network in the lower central portion of the image carries an ideologically-motivated reference to ancient Germanic routes (‘*Nibelungenstraße*’). This method elevates the banal to the status of a continuity imbued with historical import and charges it with myth. A substantial part of these images’ purpose was to make the *Reichsautobahn*, in the minds of pupils, stand for the modernity of National Socialism.

The motorway, then, was principally a symbol whose inscribed meanings unfolded a powerful propagandistic effect. As early as the spring of 1932, Hitler, in an NSDAP panel discussion about economic policy, made the following comments regarding a job creation programme:

There are two ways of relieving, indeed even removing a state of want: either by actually eradicating the want – which isn’t always possible, at least not immediately – or by removing the sense of want! And that is possible, if done correctly! Inspiring faith, hope and love, you are right, is our primary task. [...] The sense of overcoming [the want] will then work the miracle of eradicating the want all by itself!<sup>6</sup>

In reference to this example, Hitler is describing the core function of political myth, of which Jan Assmann’s definition is as follows:

Myth is a story one tells in order to give direction to oneself and the world – a reality of a higher order, which not only rings true but also sets normative standards and possesses a formative power.<sup>7</sup>

The narrative, created by National Socialism, of overcoming want and unemployment, at its core the visual image of the motorway construction works and the rows of workers shouldering spades, appeared to correspond to reality as the German economy recov-

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<sup>6</sup> Cited in Henry Ashby Turner Jr. (ed.), *Otto W. Wagener, Hitler aus nächster Nähe. Aufzeichnungen eines Vertrauten 1929–1932*, Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1978, 331 (the discussion included Otto Wagener, Bernhard Köhler and Gregor Straßer); cf. Hans Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte (Bd. 4), Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten 1914–1949*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003, 645f., who cautions us not to underestimate the effect of psychology and the propagandistic formula ‘*Arbeitsschlacht*’ (battle of labour) which created a ‘fact of consciousness’ (*Bewusstseins-tatsache*) that exerted a positive influence on the economy.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 59–60.

ered, thus laid claim to truth and lost its recognisability as myth; it does not matter whether a ‘foundational story’, to use Assmann’s terms, is fact or fiction. In coming to this new status, the narrative activated a system of stabilising and identity-forming emotions which wilfully obscured any view of the actual cause-and-effect mechanisms behind the economic recovery, including Germany’s rearmament; after years of disorientation, a new beacon of direction was emerging, provided by National Socialism. The regime proved highly skilful in exploiting the fact that works were proceeding simultaneously at a number of locations within the *Reich*, enabling the showcasing of economic and propagandistic effects in a variety of regions and deploying visualisations of the complete planned network in order to underline the project’s monumental nature and overshadow the incremental character of the progress in many areas. ‘The motorways offered propaganda a unique advantage: They were ubiquitous spatially, and omnipresent temporally.’<sup>8</sup> The stabilising effect upon the system of state investment in local infrastructures should not be underestimated, and is evident in the decline in opposition to the regime in electoral districts where works were proceeding<sup>9</sup>; as well as bringing benefits to the local building and other trades, the project presented residents with a good deal of potential for identification with the *Autobahn*’s modernity and its linking of their localities to other parts of the *Reich*. On a national scale, the work represented economic boom and labour market consolidation at home, while attracting prestige abroad for its perceived status as a modern ‘major technical achievement’.

### The ‘*Führer*’s roads’

One of the forerunners of the *Reich* motorways was Berlin’s *Automobil-Verkehrs- und Übungs-Straße* (AVUS), opened to the public in 1921. Europe’s first motorway proper was the *Autostrada* running from Milan to the northern Italian lakes, a road notable for its many offshoots and branches, realised in 1924 by the engineer and motorway pioneer Piero Puricelli. The USA also saw its first motorway-like roads opening in the 1920s. Germany’s first motorway was the *Kraftwagenstraße* between Cologne and Bonn, 18 kilometres long and without junctions, opened in 1932 by Cologne’s mayor Konrad

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<sup>8</sup> Detlev Humann, ‘*Arbeitschlacht*’. *Arbeitsbeschaffung und Propaganda in der NS-Zeit 1933–1939*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011, 100.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Nico Voigtländer and Hans-Joachim Voth, *Highway to Hitler*, University of Zurich. Department of Economics, Working Paper no. 156 (May 2014, revised in January 2019), 14f., 38–40. The analysis here is based on the election of November 1933, no longer held under free conditions, and the referendum of August 1934, staged after Hindenburg’s death and after the establishment of single-party rule.

Adenauer. Just one year later, the National Socialists demoted it to the status of an ordinary road.

From 1924 onward, the private organisation *Studiengesellschaft für den Automobilstraßenbau* (STUFA) had been laying the theoretical foundations for an extensive network of ‘*Nur-Autostraßen*’, that is, roads exclusively for automobiles. An association founded in 1926, the *Verein zur Vorbereitung der Autostraße Hamburg – Frankfurt – Basel* (HAFRABA), sought to plan a motorway connecting those cities. By the end of the 1920s, the term *Autobahn*, modelled on the word *Eisenbahn* for the railways, had come into use, displacing ‘*Nur-Autostraße*’. Before 1933, the HAFRABA association had completed a detailed plan for roads that did not cross others and divided sets of lanes for each direction as a network of automobile routes. The plans’ realisation by HAFRABA, as it existed at that point, was as doomed as was the Weimar Republic<sup>10</sup>, in which period the NSDAP still believed motorway planning had been an ‘un-German idea’ in the hands of a ‘high capitalist and Jewish cartel of interests’, on which grounds it echoed the German Communist Party in rejecting the motorways as ‘luxury roads’.<sup>11</sup> After 1933, the National Socialists took on, extended, and completed the existing plans for a network of motorways in Germany, claiming authorship by dubbing them ‘Adolf Hitler’s roads’. The HAFRABA association became the ‘*Gesellschaft zur Vorbereitung der Reichsautobahnen*’ (GEZUVOR).

Legislation issued on 27 June 1933, the *Gesetz über die Errichtung eines Unternehmens ‘Reichsautobahnen’* (Law on the Establishment of a Company ‘*Reichsautobahnen*’), enabled the foundation in August of the same year of the *Gesellschaft Reichsautobahnen* as a subsidiary of the German railway company *Deutsche Reichsbahn-Gesellschaft*. On 30 June, Hitler had appointed Fritz Todt as the ‘General Inspector of German Roads’. It was above all Todt who disseminated the myth of Hitler as the originator of the planned motorway network and deployed his power to prevent other narratives from prevailing: ‘In Landsberg, as early as 1923, the *Führer* set out his fundamental views on the building of German motorways[,] and the *Reichsautobahnen* in their distinct charac-

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Richard Vahrenkamp, *The German Autobahn 1920–1945. Hafraba Visions and Mega Projects*, Lohmar: Josef Eul Verlag, 2010, 44–46.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kurt Kaftan, *Der Kampf um die Autobahnen. Geschichte der Autobahnen in Deutschland 1907–1935*, Berlin: H. Wigankow Verlag, 1955, 16–18, 113–116, 124–127, 165–168; Martin Kornrumpf, *HAFRABA e.V. Deutsche Autobahn – Planung 1926–1934*, Bonn: Kirschbaum, 1990, 8–10, 44, 48, 65, 82.

ter remain [...] always a German creation.’<sup>12</sup> Publications or information referencing the background to the project and the idea’s development were suppressed.

### Technology and the landscape

The *Reichsautobahn* had its firm place in National Socialist ideology, serving, according to Todt, the ‘self-realisation of the [German] race and the *Reich*’. The regime’s intent was for the incorporation of technology into the German landscape, along with creating access to the various parts of Germany in the spirit of modern mobility, to fuse culture, nature and technology into a ‘complete national work of art’ (*völkisches Gesamtkunstwerk*).<sup>13</sup> Roads were planned to run harmoniously, yielding panoramic views, with specific points for their enjoyment at particularly impressive bridges, or long straight stretches through the forest; this refiguration of motoring as an opportunity to experience nature is another instance of the realisation of propagandistic objectives in glorifying the experience of driving. Campaigns pushed motoring as effectively a high-speed form of hiking (*‘Autowandern’*) on ‘roads of natural beauty’, an ideal activity for ‘experiencing and enjoying the beauties of our land’; these associations forged an almost perfect link with the back-to-nature *Lebensreform* movement. ‘Landscape advocates’ installed at all fifteen of the project’s main management authorities had the job of ensuring that the motorways did not ‘blight’ the landscape and that the works would produce ‘harmony between nature and technology’. Legislation banned advertising along the motorways. These professed intentions notwithstanding, there was little about the project which protected or preserved nature and the landscape; instead, it conceived of the latter as one part of an aesthetic whole comprising on the other side the motorway and its technical innovation, a unit subject to modelling by ‘landscape architects’. It would be ahistorical to interpret this attitude to landscape in the spirit of a present-day,

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Fritz Todt to Willy Hof, 15 October 1937 (BArch R 4601/1107); for the detailed correspondence on the issue of the originator’s identity, cf. Karl-Heinz Friedrich, ‘Ein sehr, sehr guter Rat’, <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Virtuelle-Ausstellungen/Ein-Sehr-Sehr-Guter-Rat/ein-sehr-sehr-guter-rat.html>, last accessed 10 May 2019; Franz W. Seidler, *Fritz Todt. Baumeister des Dritten Reiches*, Munich: Herbig, 1986, 127ff. (on Seidler’s views, some of which are problematic, cf. Reiner Ruppmann, ‘Rezension zu: Forschungsstelle für Straßen- und Verkehrswesen (ed.): *Die Autobahn. Von der Idee zur Wirklichkeit*. Vienna 2005 / Kreuzer, Bernd: *Tempo 130. Kultur- und Planungsgeschichte der Autobahnen in Oberösterreich*. Linz 2005’, *H-Soz-Kult*, 13 February 2006, <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-7241>, last accessed 16 May 2019). Cf. also Erhard Schütz and Eckhard Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn. Bau und Inszenierung der ‘Straßen des Führers’ 1933–1941*, Berlin: Ch. Links, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2000, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Schütz and Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn*, 124–135; Charlotte Reitsam, *Reichsautobahnen im Spannungsfeld von Natur und Technik. Internationale und interdisziplinäre Verflechtungen*, Munich, 2006, 91–93, 96–98.

ecologically-inspired concept of nature preservation.<sup>14</sup> The ideological concepts underlying the routes chosen emerges fully in the strikingly different intentions formulated for the construction of motorways in occupied territories, such as Holland, Belgium and Poland, where consideration for the ‘beauty of the landscape’ gave way to emphasis on the roads’ ‘military character’. Motorway construction, like every other technical achievement and indeed every other area of life under National Socialism, thus served the needs of an aggressive policy of expansion and conquest.<sup>15</sup> The map of the *Reichsautobahn* symbolised the *Reich*’s extent and its national unity. Conducted in accordance with the latest technological knowledge and standards, the project generated new experiences and solutions which themselves gave rise to technical innovations for the wider field of road construction. This all took place, however, under an ideological premise, were we, today, to undertake technical or aesthetic evaluations of the motorways without considering that premise, we would risk perpetuating the National Socialist myth.<sup>16</sup>

### The economy and unemployment

By the end of 1936, some areas of the employment market in the so-called Third Reich were suffering from a lack of skilled labour, and unemployment had fallen from the approximately six million ‘visible’ unemployed recorded in January 1933 to about 1.6 million.<sup>17</sup> The regime was benefiting from the austerity measures, wage and tax policies, and investment plans of its predecessor governments and from the global and domestic economic recovery in progress at that time. Key measures aimed at boosting

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Claudia Gabriele Philipp, ‘Die schöne Straße im Bau und unter Verkehr’, Rainer Stommer (ed.), *Reichsautobahn. Pyramiden des Dritten Reiches. Analysen zur Ästhetik eines unbewältigten Mythos*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1982, 111–134, 112–115; Dietmar Klenke, ‘Autobahnbau und Naturschutz in Deutschland. Eine Liaison von Nationalpolitik, Landschaftspflege und Motorisierungsvision bis zur ökologischen Wende der siebziger Jahre’, Matthias Frese and Michael Prinz (eds.), *Politische Zäsuren und gesellschaftlicher Wandel im 20. Jahrhundert, regionale und vergleichende Perspektiven*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996, 465–498, 470f., 479f.; Thomas Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama. Verkehrswege und Landschaftsveränderung in Deutschland von 1930 bis 1990*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002, 115–118, 75–77, 187–190, 203–205; cf. Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn 1930–1970*, New York: Berghahn, 2007, 127–129.

<sup>15</sup> Fritz Todt, in a speech given on 31 August 1940 at an architects’ conference at Plassenburg. Cf. Karl-Heinz Ludwig, *Technik und Ingenieure im Dritten Reich*, Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum/Droste, 1979, 341–344; Thomas Zeller, ‘Landschaft als Gefühl und Autobahn als Formel. Der Autobahnbau in der frühen Bundesrepublik als Abgrenzungsversuch gegen die “Straßen Adolf Hitlers”’, *Werkstatt Geschichte* 21 (1998), 29–41, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Vahrenkamp, *The German Autobahn*, 114, 206–209.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Markus Promberger, ‘Mythos der Vollbeschäftigung und Arbeitsmarkt der Zukunft’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 14–15 (2012), 30–38, 31–33; Ulrich Herbert and Lutz Raphael (eds.), *Statistiken zu Detlev Humann: ‘Arbeitschlacht’. Arbeitsbeschaffung und Propaganda in der NS-Zeit 1933–1939*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011, 13, 16f.; Norbert Frei, *Der Führerstaat. Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft 1933 bis 1945*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013, 98–104.

what was increasingly becoming a state command economy included support for the construction of new housing, direct or indirect subsidies to businesses for taking on new employees, what these days would be called workfare for the unemployed in public projects, infrastructure measures financed on credit as effectively job creation projects, and what were known as marriage loans (*Ehestandsdarlehen*) which acted to push women out of the job market. As early as 1934, the introduction of general military service (with the addition, from 1935 onward, of a six-month compulsory period of work with the Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*, RAD) before military service commenced), the substantial recruitment of staff to the end of expanding the bureaucracy of the innumerable National Socialist organisations, and the soaring levels of state spending on arms had all likewise been serving to reduce unemployment. The effects of violence and terror, and the manipulation of the unemployment figures, also had their part to play.<sup>18</sup> Spending on arms ballooned from about eight percent of state expenditure in 1933 to over fifty percent in 1935 and had reached sixty percent in 1938/39. As early as 8 February 1933, Hitler, in a meeting with his cabinet, unofficially set the ‘restoration of the German people to full capacity to defend itself’ as a government priority for the subsequent five years, expressly stating that any state-run job creation measures would require assessment in the light of this necessity. The subsequent funding of the motorways via deficit financing eventually amounting to 4.525 billion Reichsmark had only been possible due to the anti-democratic decision-making processes in place in the Nazi state.<sup>19</sup> The standard of living in Germany was, on objective measures, lower than it had been before the economic crisis had commenced; wages were likewise low, as was the production of consumer goods due to the German economy’s focus on rearmament-related industries. Framing it in propaganda campaigns, the National Socialists lever-

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hermann Weiß, ‘Arbeitslosigkeit’, Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Legenden, Lügen, Vorurteile. Ein Wörterbuch der Zeitgeschichte*, Munich: dtv, 13<sup>th</sup> edition 2006, 27–29, and Werner Abelshauser, ‘Kriegswirtschaft und Wirtschaftswunder. Deutschlands wirtschaftliche Mobilisierung für den Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Folgen für die Nachkriegszeit’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 47 (1999), 503–538, 505–512. Both authors emphasise the prominent part economic policy decisions and job creation measures had to play in the dramatic and, in comparison to other countries affected by the global economic crisis, emphatically rapid reduction of unemployment in Germany. Abelshauser ascribes ‘competence on the subject’ to Hitler in this area, failing to pay sufficient regard to those measures implemented via force and terror. Contrastingly, Albrecht Ritschl, ‘Hat das Dritte Reich wirklich eine ordentliche Beschäftigungspolitik betrieben?’, *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* I (2003), 125–140, 129–132, 139f., and Christoph Buchheim, ‘Das NS-Regime und die Überwindung der Weltwirtschaftskrise in Deutschland’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 56, 3 (2008), 381–414, 384, 387, 391, 397, 409, attest only a minor influence to Nazi state-run job creation programmes and National Socialist economic policy in Germany’s economic recovery.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Friedrich Hartmannsgruber, ‘... ungeachtet der noch ungeklärten Finanzierung’. Finanzplanung und Kapitalbeschaffung für den Bau der Reichsautobahnen 1933–1945’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 278 (2004), 625–681, 654–660.

aged the *Reichsautobahn* project as, above all, an instrument of ‘mental rearmament’. The key consideration here was the German economy’s focus on future war, with falling unemployment effectively a byproduct of these preparations.<sup>20</sup> In 1933, the workforce for the motorway’s first section numbered approximately 1,000, swelling to 4,000 by December of that year; the figure jumped again to a total of 84,000 workers across the *Unternehmen Reichsautobahn* in 1934. When the workforce directly employed on the motorway reached its all-time high, in 1936, it stood at 125,000, contrasting with 1.8 million remaining unemployed. By December 1938, the workforce numbered 91,000, and 3,000 kilometres of motorway were in use.<sup>21</sup> By the time work was halted in early 1942, 3,860 kilometres had been constructed, falling far short of the goal of 7,000 km (12,000 if Austria were included). These are the facts at the heart of the myth. The construction of the motorways was not primarily about job creation, but was part of the ‘National Socialist *Aufbau* programme’; it did have a supporting effect, albeit limited, on the economic recovery via its need for suppliers, mechanical engineering and construction materials and the spread of the motor vehicle which it encouraged, but its contribution to falling unemployment figures was of no great import.<sup>22</sup>

### Motorising Germany

On 11 February 1933, Hitler officially opened the International Motor Show, marking the occasion by announcing measures for the promotion of motor vehicle ownership and road construction. In 1935, there were 16 cars in Germany for every thousand inhabitants, compared with 204 in the USA, 49 in France and 45 in Great Britain. The rise in the total number of cars in Germany to 1.2 million by 1938 did not see it catch up with the French, British and US figures, a situation which led the Highway Commissioner of Michigan to remark in 1938, ‘Germany has the roads while we have the traffic.’<sup>23</sup> None of the workers employed on the motorway construction project could afford a car of his

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Adam Tooze, *Ökonomie der Zerstörung. Die Geschichte der Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, Munich: Siedler, 2007, 37–40, 45–47, 55; Buchheim, *Das NS-Regime*, 402–404; Humann, ‘*Arbeitsschlacht*’, 712–715. On the methods and compulsion employed in the economic preparations for war and the so-called ‘*Arbeitsschlacht*’, cf. Klaus Behnke (ed.), *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade) 1934–1940*, Salzhausen: Verlag Petra Nettelbeck, 1980, 1934, 22–25, 214–216, 581–584.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Detlev Humann, ‘*Arbeitsschlacht*’, 96–99; Ulrich Herbert et al. (eds.), *Statistiken*, Tab. Anh.\*/33, 83; Ludwig, *Technik und Ingenieure*, 334 f.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Tooze, *Ökonomie der Zerstörung*, 69–72.; Ritschl, *Beschäftigungspolitik*, 128–130.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Zeller, *Driving Germany*, 52; cf. Bruce E. Seely, ‘Der amerikanische Blick auf die deutschen Autobahnen. Deutsche und amerikanische Autobahnbauer 1930–1965’, *Werkstatt Geschichte* 21 (1998), (Themenheft Netzwerk Autobahnen), 11–28, 22 and 24; Vahrenkamp, *The German Autobahn*, 92–97.

own. The plan behind the ‘KdF-Wagen’ (the abbreviation standing for *Kraft durch Freude*) developed by Ferdinand Porsche in 1934 was to change this and get ‘a people on wheels’. Savings plans at five Reichsmark per week promised people car ownership after just under five years. Wolfsburg, however, ended up producing not ‘Volkswagen’ cars, but approximately 55,000 military vehicles known as *Kübelwagen*, as well as 15,000 amphibious versions, for the *Wehrmacht*; at this stage, two-thirds of its workforce were forced labourers engaged in armaments and munitions production. The savers never received their cars and the promise of a ‘people on wheels’ failed to materialise into reality.

### **Military use of the motorways**

Hitler had written in *Mein Kampf*: ‘We will be virtually unable to resist the general motorisation of the world, which will overwhelmingly direct the course of events in the next war’.<sup>24</sup> In a memorandum for the NSDAP issued in December 1932 and entitled *Straßenbau und Straßenverwaltung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (also known as ‘*Braune Denkschrift*’), Todt summarised what he perceived as the deficits in the state of road construction at that time and presented proposals for its planning, funding and execution going forward. He undergirded his argument for the project’s necessity as part of the ‘*Reich*’s reconstruction’ by stressing, along with its job creation potential, its strategic benefits, claiming that 100,000 requisitioned motor vehicles could transport 300,000 troops and their kit from the *Reich*’s eastern to its western border within two nights. He was at pains to emphasise that the motorways’ ‘route[s] and design [were] proposed in accordance with military considerations.’<sup>25</sup> This approach, in line with Hitler’s *Grundplan*, was preaching to the converted and Todt successfully propagated this interpretation in the years that followed, not least to the end of legitimating the project in the eyes of the largely sceptical military. In its initial years, the motorway construction project was firmly linked to the objective of rearming and motorising Germany. During the war, however, the bulk of military transports took place via the railways, whose fuel-saving operation and extensive networks were to its advantage in this respect. The *Reichswehr* pointed out the problem of the motorways potentially serving to

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<sup>24</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Zwei Bände in einem Band*, Munich: Frz. Eher Nachf., 548–552<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1940, 748.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Seidler, *Fritz Todt*, 30, 97–100; Wolfgang Wirth, ‘Einführung’, Forschungsgesellschaft für Straßen- und Verkehrswesen (ed.), *Die Autobahn, Von der Idee zur Wirklichkeit*, Cologne: FGSV Verlag, 2005, 5–23, 11–13; Karl-Heinz Ludwig, ‘Technik’, Wolfgang Benz, Hermann Graml, Hermann Weiß (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, Munich: dtv, 5<sup>th</sup> edition 2007, 283–302, 289f.

guide enemy aircraft, with their broad, light-coloured lanes acting as clearly visible connecting lines between the major cities and also providing invasion routes for foreign troops. In many places, the roads were painted in camouflage shades after the outbreak of war. An additional problem manifested in the constitution of the motorways' surfacing, which as a rule was too thin to take heavy military plant, for which, in addition, numerous bridges were unsuitable and parts of many routes too steep. Many leading military personnel considered the motorway project to be withdrawing valuable resources, such as workers and steel, from the production of armaments, and the view of the *Reichsautobahn's* military utility, widespread to this day, is not consistent with the facts, despite intermittent phases during planning and construction in which it held credence.<sup>26</sup>

### **Working conditions and protest against the project**

The workforce engaged in the motorway construction was subject to a high level of physical strain and danger. Up until the end of 1935, to increase the job creation effect, the works made little use of heavy machinery, meaning the construction involved large amounts of heavy manual labour, one of whose effects was a rise in cases of 'clay shovellers' fracture'<sup>27</sup>. The workers lived in militarily organised 'work camps', some of them located very far from the construction sites, with poor food and unsanitary conditions, which made the job more unattractive still. The high numbers of accidents on site bore witness to the lack of health and safety provisions; until 1938, the fatal accident rate was one worker per six kilometres of road constructed. In what we today recognise as a display of its cynicism, the regime systematically instrumentalised the deaths in ritualised ceremonies for those who had 'fallen in the labour battle' and corresponding monuments to their heroic sacrifice. The rate of pay for those conscripted to the job was on about the same level as unemployment benefit or indeed below, once expenses for such things as accommodation, food or clothing had been deducted.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hansjoachim Henning, 'Kraftfahrzeugindustrie und Autobahnbau in der Wirtschaftspolitik des Nationalsozialismus 1933 bis 1936', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 65 (1978), 217–242, 241f.; Seidler, *Fritz Todt*, 136ff.; Hans-Peter Sang, 'Technik und Staat im Dritten Reich', Armin Hermann and Hans-Peter Sang (eds.), *Technik und Staat*, Düsseldorf: VDI Verlag, 1992, 137–160, 157f.; Dietmar Klenke, 'Autobahnbau in Westfalen von den Anfängen bis zum Höhepunkt der 1970er Jahre – Eine Geschichte der politischen Planung', Wilfried Reininghaus and Karl Teppe (eds.), *Verkehr und Region im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Westfälische Beispiele*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999, 249–270, 253ff.; Axel Doßmann, *Begrenzte Mobilität. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Autobahnen in der DDR*, Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2003, 32–34.

<sup>27</sup> After weeks of repetitive shovelling, many of the workers, run down and often malnourished, suffered muscle weakness and fatigue fractures of the lower cervical or upper thoracic vertebrae.



Fig. 2: *Reichsautobahn* under construction, in Radeburg (Saxony), 1937; a four-metre-high dam is built with manual labour (SLUB/Deutsche Fotothek, Walter Möbius)

All these conditions meant that incidences of workers going absent without leave or reporting in sick, protests, and spontaneous strikes were no rarity. Workers tried to avoid being sent to the motorway, even at the cost of losing state benefits. People referred to the *Reichsautobahn* as the ‘road of hunger and misery’, and leaflets, posters and inscriptions appeared reading ‘With these wages and this pigswill, we’ll be done sooner than the motorway’ and ‘The motorway, it kills us dead; tomorrow we’ll all vote red [Communist/socialist]!’ The regime responded to the strikes and acts of resistance with police checks or Gestapo investigations and, on numerous occasions, by sending the culprits to concentration camps.<sup>28</sup> In sum, the *Reichsautobahn*, for most workers and particularly with regard to the earthwork, was not at all a desirable job, with many of those who did it leaving before six months were up; the images and narratives issuing from the National Socialist propaganda machine served primarily to aid the construction

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Behnke, *Deutschland-Berichte* (Sopade), inter alia, 1935, 344–46, 786–789; 1936, 735–737, 1584–1587; these sources contain detailed accounts of the conditions on various motorway construction sites and responses of the workers, site management, and/or the Gestapo. Also Karl Lärmer, *Autobahnbau in Deutschland 1933 bis 1945. Zu den Hintergründen*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975, 96–99; Werner Fehl, “Die Autobahn wird immer glätter, die Bonzen immer fetter”. Streiks und kollektives Protestverhalten von Autobahnarbeitern 1934 und 1935’, Oliver von Mengersen et al. (eds.), *Personen, soziale Bewegungen, Parteien*, Heidelberg: Manutius Verlag, 2004, 203–230, 205–209; Reiner Ruppmann, *Schrittmacher des Autobahnzeitalters. Frankfurt und das Rhein-Main-Gebiet*, Darmstadt: Hessisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, 2011, 267–270.

of a ‘national community’ of workers grateful to have finally been restored to ‘earning their daily bread’.

### Forced labour

In 1938, the labour shortage amounted to approximately half a million workers; of the 500,000 registered unemployed, only 100,000 were physically able to undertake work without limitations. Once the war had begun, the use of forced labourers, concentration camp inmates and prisoners of war became more frequent.<sup>29</sup> Before the war, Todt took the view, informed by Nazi racial ideology, that no Jews must be permitted to help build ‘the *Führer*’s roads’.<sup>30</sup> By the second year of the war, however, these convictions fell by the wayside in the face of the increasingly evident shortage of labour. In the Reich Main Security Office in Berlin, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the *Sicherheitsdienst*, dropped his resistance to putting Jews to work on the motorways and, on 1 November 1940, issued to General Inspector Fritz Todt a special permit for the ‘deployment of Jewish labourers in the construction of the *Reichsautobahn* [at] Frankfurt an der Oder’.<sup>31</sup> The events that followed are significant and little known in the history of the motorways’ construction. First, as outlined above, Jewish forced labourers were set to work on the motorways despite the initial, ideologically-based rejection of the idea. Second, the *Reichsautobahn* authority organised and maintained an extensive system of its own camps; third, around 4,000 Polish Jews were put to work on the motorways in Germany’s ‘*Altreich*’, in contradiction to orders given by Hitler and the Reich Main Security Office.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Schütz and Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn*, 86f.; Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des ‘Ausländer-Einsatzes’ in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches*, Bonn: Dietz, 1999 (new edition), 47–50.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Wolf Gruner, ‘Juden bauen die “Straßen des Führers”’. Zwangsarbeit und Zwangsarbeitslager für nichtdeutsche Juden im Altreich 1940 bis 1943/44’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 44 (1996), 789–808, 789f.; Seidler: *Fritz Todt*, 104f.; Dieter Maier, ‘Arbeitsverwaltung und nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in den Jahren 1933–1939’, Götz Aly et al. (eds.), *Arbeitsmarkt und Sondererlaß. Menschenverwertung, Rassenpolitik und Arbeitsamt*, Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1990, 62–155, 116.

<sup>31</sup> The document (an ‘express letter’ signed by a Müller representing Heydrich) can be found in Susanne Heim et al. (eds.), *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945, Bd. 4. Polen, September 1939 – Juli 1941*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011, 430 (Dok. 190) and 45; a facsimile is in Schütz and Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn*, 85.

<sup>32</sup> Wolf Gruner, ‘Die Arbeitslager für den Zwangseinsatz deutscher und nichtdeutscher Juden im Dritten Reich’, *Gedenkstättenrundbrief* 81 (1997), ‘4. Kapitel: Zu den Arbeitslagern für nichtdeutsche Juden im Altreich (außer Schlesien) 1939–1943/44’, 12–20, [http://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/nc/gedenkstaetten-rundbrief/rundbrief/news/die\\_arbeitslager\\_fuer\\_den\\_zwangseinsatz\\_deutscher\\_und\\_nichtdeutscher\\_juden\\_im\\_dritten\\_reich-1/](http://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/nc/gedenkstaetten-rundbrief/rundbrief/news/die_arbeitslager_fuer_den_zwangseinsatz_deutscher_und_nichtdeutscher_juden_im_dritten_reich-1/), last accessed 7 September 2016, contains a list of the camps; cf. Schütz and Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn*, 86f.; Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama*, 64; Hermann Rafetseder, ‘Autobahnbau – verschiedene Facetten der Zwangsarbeit bei einem speziellen Prestigeprojekt’, Hermann Rafetseder (ed.), *NS-*

### Numbers of workers as of 30 November 1941

The Jewish labourers were kept in inhumane conditions in the *Reichsautobahn* authority's special 'Judenlagern' and forced to perform extremely heavy manual labour for twelve hours a day. They received insufficient food and were frequently subject to physical mistreatment.<sup>33</sup>

Table 1: Statistics on the deployment of labourers by the *Reichsautobahn* construction management authorities which used Jewish forced labourers within the territory of the *Reich*

Authority	Total work-force	Core work-force	Unemployed German workers detailed to project	POWs	Prisoners serving penal sentences	Poles	Czechs	Jews
1. Berlin	6,099	669	-	866	258	624	2	3,552
2. Wroclaw (Breslau)	13,469	1,164	969	3,347	-	1,246	2,875	3,823
3. Gdansk (Danzig)	2,218	200	151	1,158	20	-	-	601
[...]								
9. Hanover	413	220	39	100	4	4	4	1
[...]								
11. Cologne	1,352	350	430	131	91	-	-	35
Total	60,638	8,066	7,918	20,333	3,160	2,942	3,430	8,012

Source: Gruner, *Juden bauen*, 795.

### Visual narration

The power of visual images to touch the emotions, thoughts and actions of their beholders takes them beyond their immediately evident purpose of reflecting, documenting and passively re-presenting history. As Horst Bredekamp observes, 'an image-act' generates facts by giving birth to images' (Horst Bredekamp). Images can generate their own reality and in so doing make history. As an element of communicative acts, they are inextricably and powerfully linked to historical processes. They also serve as proofs of the purpose or objective associated with whatever they depict or represent. We should therefore, in the spirit of 'visual history', seek in the history classroom to train our pupils' skills in this regard by an approach to images which, alongside explaining the backdrop to the image's coming into being and its significance as a historical document, illuminates its iconic power and the process of the creation of meaning sparked by its publication, constructing significations, giving life to narrations, and supplying momen-

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*Zwangsarbeits-Schicksale. Erkenntnisse zu Erscheinungsformen der Oppression und zum NS-Lagersystem aus der Arbeit des Österreichischen Versöhnungsfonds. Eine Dokumentation im Auftrag des Zukunftsfonds der Republik Österreich*, Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag, 2014, 356–361.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Heim, *Verfolgung und Ermordung*, 45; Gruner, *Juden bauen*, 791f., 804.

tum to action. In so doing, we should not neglect to analyse current practices around the use of images in the media culture within which our pupils lead their everyday lives, not least to the end of promoting in them a critical awareness and helping them to find their way confidently around their history.<sup>34</sup> After all, ‘[w]hat we know about Nazism, we know first and foremost through pictures, images.’<sup>35</sup> The visual depiction of Hitler conducting the ground-breaking ceremony for the first stretch of *Reichsautobahn* at Frankfurt am Main/Main-Süd – Darmstadt on 23 September 1933 has entered the mythic gallery of images held by the German collective memory as a ‘foundational act’.<sup>36</sup> During the precisely choreographed ceremony, Hitler personally took a spade to earth that had previously been discharged from a tipper, during which he was photographed numerous times from a range of perspectives.<sup>37</sup> The iconic image represents an apogee in Hitler’s styling as the hands-on, can-do ‘premier worker of his people’; the propaganda press employed it first and foremost to channel workers’ identification with the regime. The ‘ground-breaking’ act came to symbolise Hitler’s personal appreciation for the labour and dedication of each and every individual and signalled that he was just as much a part of the ‘community of the nation and its endeavours’ (an approximate contextual rendering of *Volks- und Leistungsgemeinschaft*) as were they. The image represents a symbolic fusion of the mythemes of the so-called Third Reich’s dynamism and modernity, of the National Socialist triumph over unemployment, of the rebuilding of the German nation through the work of the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’, and of the action-ready ‘People’s Chancellor’. This instance of the extreme personalisation of a historical event effectively turns into its own reverse in Hitler’s departure from the level of the personal

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gerhard Paul, ‘Visual History und Geschichtsdidaktik – Grundsätzliche Überlegungen’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 12 (2013), 9–26, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Hans-Ulrich Thamer, ‘Macht und Wirkung nationalsozialistischer Bilder’, Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed.), *Bilder im Kopf. Ikonen der Zeitgeschichte*, Cologne: DuMont, 2009, 18–29, 20.

<sup>36</sup> The image is viewable online at [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichsautobahn#/media/File:Bundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_183-R27373\\_Reichsautobahn\\_Adolf\\_Hitler\\_beim\\_1.\\_Spatenstich\\_bei\\_Frankfurt.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichsautobahn#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-R27373_Reichsautobahn_Adolf_Hitler_beim_1._Spatenstich_bei_Frankfurt.jpg), last accessed 23 February 2017. Original caption (translation): ‘Adolf Hitler on 23 September 1933, leading the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the *Reichsautobahn* route Frankfurt/Main – Darmstadt-Mannheim, as a means of pushing down unemployment. Behind Hitler are *Gauleiter* Jakob Sprenger, NSKK-Korpsführer Adolf Hühnlein, head of the National Socialist Motor Corps, and General Inspector of German roads, Engineer Fritz Todt [Scherl Bilderdienst, photographer unknown, Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst – Zentralbild].’

<sup>37</sup> National Socialist propaganda disseminated a snapshot taken almost simultaneously by Heinrich Hoffmann, which captured a smaller view of the scene; it does not include the workers shown on the left-hand side, leaving Hitler alone and centre-stage as a ‘worker of the fist’.

and entry into the symbolic.<sup>38</sup> In the years that followed, the regime took every opportunity that presented itself for an opening or inauguration ceremony in order to stage new media events around the motorway project and disseminate their visual representations.<sup>39</sup>

The well-known advertisement designed by Robert Zinner, frequently featured in textbooks to the present day, provides a visual representation of the fusion, and the shared significance, of the technical and the aesthetic within the propaganda around the motorways.<sup>40</sup> A bright, winding road runs harmoniously through a mountainous forest landscape, and there is a parking place and viewing platform combined, marked by a pillar featuring an imperial eagle, conveniently at hand for those wishing to stop and admire the monumental arched stone bridge bearing the road aloft. There were many sections of the road on which safety considerations came second to matters of landscape aesthetics. Breathtaking views into valleys, demonstrations of feats of bridge engineering and visits to places of outstanding tourist interest were what was wanted, and very steep sections of road, increased risk of accidents, long detours from what would have been more direct routes, and significant interference in that very landscape were evidently a small price to pay for the attainment of ideological goals, the primary one of which was the creation of a ‘landscape monument for eternity’, which, as a ‘symbol of sublimity’, was to reflect the greatness of the German nation. This act of – in more than one sense - landscape engineering forged a visual link between the contemporary faith in technological progress in harmony with nature and the desire for individual mobility in one’s own car with the hope of a prosperous future which would include going on holiday. It gave a physical form to the idea of *Autowandern* in Germany’s natural and

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Rudolf Herz, *Hoffmann & Hitler, Fotografie als Medium des Führer-Mythos*, Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1994, 262f.; Ruppmann, *Schrittmacher des Autobahnzeitalters*, 255f.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Thomas Lange, ‘Die “Straßen des Führers”. Ein fortwirkender Propagandasieg des “Dritten Reiches”’, *Geschichte lernen* 57 (1997), 42–47; the photographs of the Frankfurt-Darmstadt motorway’s inauguration on 19 May 1935 (47), like those of the 12 November 1933 referendum (46) serve merely illustrative purposes in this textbook and do not have a pupil task attached..

<sup>40</sup> The advertising poster issued by the *Reichsbahnzentrale für den deutschen Reiseverkehr*, 1938, is viewable online at <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/reichsautobahnen-in-deutschland-um-1936.html>, last accessed 28 February 2019. The poster shows the 288-metre-long bridge over the river Saale at Hirschberg/Rudolphstein on the Berlin-Munich *Reichsautobahn*, completed in 1936 and known today as the ‘Bridge of German Unity’ due to its position spanning the boundary between the federal states of Thuringia and Bavaria, once the border between East and West Germany. (Design: Robert Zinner, Berlin, c. 1936, 119 x 84 cm, bpk/Kunstabibliothek, SMB/Dietmar Katz).

cultural landscape as a tourist pursuit, and served, with full intent, as a foil for the visions of the future cherished by its beholders.<sup>41</sup>

### Textbooks and the *Autobahn* myth

Surveying a cross-section of textbooks currently in use in history classrooms in the German federal state of Hesse reveals no consistent picture in terms of what materials make an appearance and which strategies attempt to deconstruct the myth.<sup>42</sup> Some books do not mention the motorways at all, or merely as a marginal note in connection with National Socialist economic policy, and nine textbooks use no images related to the project. Of the remaining ten books, the tasks for pupils include the following images: the Robert Zinner poster from around 1936 (footnote 40); the 1933 ground-breaking ceremony, in a large (footnote 36) and a smaller version; ‘Workers close to completing a new section of the *Reichsautobahn*’ (1936); the inauguration of the Munich-Salzburg motorway (1936); ‘A newly established flak section (anti-aircraft defence) heading to Berlin via the motorway’ (undated); and two different advertisements for the ‘KdF-Wagen’ (1938/39).

The textbooks which do not use visual sources share, in the main, a didactic approach to the issue<sup>43</sup>, embedding statistics on the German economy between 1928 and 1939 within the topics of National Socialist economic policy, rearmament and preparations for war. The information given visualises data on public investment (including such matters as the rise in spending on arms), the increase in national debt and in industrial and armaments manufacturing, and the fall in the unemployment figures; books for advanced

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Doßmann, *Begrenzte Mobilität*, 236–238; Richard Vahrenkamp, *Autobahnbau in Hessen bis 1943*, Darmstadt: Ph. Reinheimer, 2007, 90–94; Peter Reichel, ‘Die “Volksgemeinschaft”. Nationaler Sozialismus als bildliches Versprechen’, Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder* (2 vols). Vol. 1: 1900–1949, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 444–453, 452f.

<sup>42</sup> I selected textbooks for analysis (twelve for the first and seven for the second stage of secondary education) from the textbook catalogue issued by the state of Hesse, which serves us well as a representative example for Germany as a whole because it runs both an eight- and a nine-year programme of secondary *Gymnasium* education (‘G8’ and ‘G9’); further, the depiction of the topic in issues of the books intended for other states differs only in insignificant respects. Cf. <https://kultusministerium.hessen.de/schule/weitere-themen/lernmittelfreiheit/schulbuecherkataloge>, last accessed 7 September 2016.

<sup>43</sup> *Horizonte II, Geschichte für die Sekundarstufe II in Hessen*, Westermann, 2010, 330, 337; *Zeiten und Menschen, Geschichte Oberstufe 2*, Schöningh, 2006, 163f.; *Denk mal Geschichte 4*, Schroedel, 2013, 56 f.; *Forum Geschichte 4*, Cornelsen, 2011, 122; *Geschichte entdecken 4*, C.C. Buchner, 2014, 40, 84f.; *Entdecken und Verstehen 4*, Cornelsen, 2014, 72–75; *Mosaik F4*, Oldenbourg-bspv, 2013, 98–101; *Histoire/Geschichte*, a Franco-German textbook for the final years of *Gymnasium* (Klett, 2008), does not include any sources on the topics of job creation and the motorways, and its authorial text names motorway construction as part of the Weimar Republic’s schemes to boost the economy (270). It is also the only book in the sample not to include statistics on unemployment or the rise in spending on arms after 1933. Its reductionist account – related to the limitations of a binational history textbook – differentiates it from the other works in the sample.

secondary education (*Sekundarstufe II*) often supplement these facts with details on individual consumption and/or wage ratios and profit margins. These figures, and the pupil tasks which accompany them, consistently explain the economic recovery as the result of the rearmament measures and unsound deficit financing. On occasion, the books' authorial text directly addresses the mythic character of the 'Nazi economic miracle', describes the construction of the motorways as part of the preparations for war, or relates it to strategic aims, pointing to its additional purpose as a job creation scheme and factor in the reduction of unemployment. Central components of the myth find themselves presented as facts, thus effectively 'retold'. There are isolated instances of correction of other counter-factual narratives, such as that around the significance of the 'KdF-Wagen', the Nazis as 'inventors' of the motorways, and the alleged high standard of living during the 'Third Reich'.

One textbook for first-stage secondary education uses the images at Figs. 3 and 4 in relation to National Socialist economic policy and falling unemployment.<sup>44</sup> An informative piece of text commences by explaining the latter's exploitability for Nazi propaganda purposes. The book's treatment of the motorway project is typical, categorising it as a job creation mechanism, and providing additional explanations for the reduction in the unemployment figures, such as the reintroduction of military service and the Reich Labour Service. Notably, the book cites the fall in unemployment as related to the increase in Hitler's popularity. The tasks set for pupils on the sources at Figs. 4 (Q 1 in the textbook) and 3 (Q 2) have the dual purpose of helping them deconstruct the myth of the motorway's 'invention' by the Nazis and enabling them to recognise and formulate the 'message', and therefore the meaning, of the ground-breaking ceremony photograph, which comes with a note on its publication in numerous daily newspapers of the time. This approach effects a powerful visual foregrounding of the motorways' propagandistic function, and the combination of image, text and task only manages to bring about a partial deconstruction of the myth. Most of the information required for proper source criticism – data on its photographer, size, original caption, who commissioned it, and so on – is missing. The use of visual images proves notably more problematic in the eponymous work for advanced secondary pupils<sup>45</sup>, which includes a photographic collage, compiled in 1936 by or on behalf of the National Socialists, featuring the ground-breaking photograph with an inset showing a motorway in use, with the intent of show-

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<sup>44</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen* 4, 134.

<sup>45</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen Oberstufe*, 405, 407.

casing the motorways as a job creation measure. The book asks pupils to carry out independent research and assess the collage critically. My assumption is that this approach is unlikely to reveal the image's propagandistic message to its full and sustained extent. The lack of any direct contrast supports the image's perception as validating the comment in the text about the motorway as a job creation measure. The illustrative use of the ground-breaking photograph in the context of economic policy and unemployment reduction has the effect of amplifying the problematic personalisation of complex historical phenomena and standing in the way of any deconstruction of the myths around Hitler and the motorways.<sup>46</sup>

The textbooks' authors make relatively frequent use of Robert Zinner's advertisement for the motorways, but none of them comment on the specific constitution of this source<sup>47</sup>, and only one raises the ideological considerations underlying the construction project as documented by the poster and uses them to deconstruct the myth.<sup>48</sup> In all other instances, the source serves a solely illustrative purpose. The accompanying authorial text, while it identifies as such the myth of the National Socialists' success in the economic policy arena, fails to draw on the propaganda that gave birth to the myth and of which the image is an example. In this way, the textbooks deny pupils the opportunity to comprehend from its roots the myth's causality, alongside the goals and functions of the supporting propaganda, and to come to what is the core of historical learning via the development of narrative literacy.

One textbook features a motorway inauguration scene, of the Munich-Salzburg route, in connection with factual information on the defeat of mass unemployment.<sup>49</sup> The description of the image refers to the propagandistic objective of events like the one it shows, but this cannot deflect from the powerful visual statement the source makes and the fact that the source-text combination here, at least on a superficial reading, serves to validate the notion of the motorways' role in virtually ending unemployment. Another book makes extremely notable use of an image showing a flak unit travelling on, and completely filling, part of a motorway towards Berlin. The book deems the expansion of the motorways as an attempt to drive demand for cars and links it to job creation and rearmament. It is correct in its observation that the plans for the roads came into being

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Christoph Kühberger, 'Hitler: Personalisation in historical representation and no end', *Public History Weekly* 3, 10 (2015), <https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/3-2015-10/hitler-personalisation-in-historical-representation-and-no-end/>, last accessed 16 May 2019.

<sup>47</sup> *Das waren Zeiten* 4, 69; *Kursbuch Geschichte*.

<sup>48</sup> *Buchners Kompendium Geschichte*, 352.

<sup>49</sup> *Horizonte* 9, 108.

in the Weimar Republic, but fails to mention the fact that the 7,000-kilometre expansion plan remained incomplete. Learners are not asked to work with the source in any way, and the image's message unequivocally reinforces the myth of the *Reichsautobahn*'s military significance.<sup>50</sup>

Two textbooks take a different direction, featuring a picture of motorway construction workers at manual labour.<sup>51</sup> Informative text explains that the motorways' construction helped eradicate unemployment as part of a comprehensive package of measures to this end. Overall, we note here, as elsewhere, a didactic strategy at work whose intent is to debunk the myth of the Nazi 'economic miracle' using statistical information on rearmament and state debt. The book fails to grasp the opportunity to access the set of myths around the *Autobahn* via the choice of image; no source analysis takes place, and information or tasks relating to the photographers and their aims are not in evidence. The pupils are expected to glean information from the book's text, which the photograph simply – seemingly – validates. The time-limited, yet deliberate renunciation of heavy machinery in the construction process would have been a rewarding field for closer exploration and the development of pupils' judgement. Apart from this, the book does not explain, or direct pupils to find out about, the activity shown in the image. Left wondering whether the workers really did build the motorway with hammers, pupils retain the strong visual impression of a manually labouring workforce who had National Socialist economic policy to thank for their jobs. What is missing here is any questioning of the notion that excluding heavy machinery from the construction process had boosted the economy.

Overall, my analysis of Hesse's history textbooks found an almost exclusive linking of the topic of the *Reichsautobahn* with the issue of job creation, usually located in the context of the fight against mass unemployment and the boost to the economy achieved by rearmament and deficit financing. Informative text dominates the books' explanatory endeavours; pupils are rarely encouraged to engage independently with the sources featured, nor to reconstruct and retell events. The visual sources are, without exception, official National Socialist propaganda images, and for the most part their messages remain untroubled by analysis and interpretation as examples of propaganda or as historical sources; instead, the books appear to use the images' content to illustrate points set

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<sup>50</sup> von... bis 4, 131.

<sup>51</sup> *Mitmischen* 3, 110, and *Zeitreise* 4, 56. Shown are workers close to completing a new section of *Reichsautobahn* (1936); 'concrete knockers' manually smoothing out the top layer of concrete. See also Schütz and Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn*, 73.

out in the text. Tasks for pupils are frequently not aimed at standing in the way of an affective response to the images and a deconstruction of the associated myth by providing points to think about. In my view, there is an urgent necessity in this context for pupil tasks apposite to helping learners understand how these images became part of an iconographic tradition, indeed themselves assumed the status of icons.<sup>52</sup> A further worry occurs in relation to the informative text, which frequently fails to effect a complete separation of fact from fiction. The choice of material and the underlying didactic concept prohibit the reconstruction of propagandistic intentions and the analysis of the narrative structure characterising historical myths of this kind, as well as blocking any reflection on present-day functions of the narratives around the *Autobahn* myth and therefore its potential deconstruction. The glossing over of facets of the topic such as compulsion, terror and ideology tends likewise to promote the myth's retelling rather than its dismantling.

## Conclusion

There is no more effective way of demasking a myth than by analysing the sources which tell of its emergence. The greater the number of components of a myth we pay attention to when we examine it, the stronger the counter-narrative. The analysis of textbooks' treatment of the myth is indicative of a dual central problem: first, that this treatment is not in fact aimed at deconstructing the myth, and second, that there is scant exploration of the project's darker sides<sup>53</sup> – an omission characteristic of the processes by which myths come into being and secure their survival to the next generation. In light of this finding, I would therefore wish to propose that textbooks pay increased and detailed regard to communicating the following in relation to this topic:

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Günter Kaufmann, 'Neue Bücher – alte Fehler, Zur Bildpräsentation in Schulgeschichtsbüchern', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 51 (2000), 68–87, 69, 83–85; Bodo von Borries, 'Nationalsozialismus in Schulbüchern und Schülerköpfen. Quantitative und qualitative Annäherungen an ein deutsches Trauma-Thema', Markus Bernhardt et al. (eds.), *Bilder – Wahrnehmungen – Konstruktionen, Reflexionen über Geschichte und historisches Lernen*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2006, 135–151, 140–143; Christoph Hamann, 'Sehpunkte und Bildkompetenz. Zur Ikonografie des Nationalsozialismus im Unterricht', Hanns-Fred Rathenow et al. (eds.), *Handbuch Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2013, 187–204, 193f.

<sup>53</sup> The most comprehensive current, competency-based teaching materials focusing on de-constructing the set of myths of which this is part can be found in Markus Bernhardt, 'Produzieren für den Krieg. Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus', Christian Heuer, Hans-Jürgen Pandel, Gerhard Schneider (eds.), *Der Nationalsozialismus. Unterrichtseinheiten standardbasiert und kompetenzorientiert* (3 vols), vol. 2, 'Ausgrenzung und Vernichtung', Berlin: Cornelsen, 2010, 8–43. An example of an exploration of the *Reichsautobahn* as a myth, with informative text and an image as a source, is in *Kurshefte Geschichte, Der Nationalsozialismus, Die Zeit der NS-Herrschaft und ihre Bedeutung für die deutsche Geschichte*, Cornelsen, 2011, 54. The pupil tasks included here enable learners to explore this historical topic in accordance with the facts.

- The National Socialists did not invent the *Autobahn*.
- The motorways did not take a significant role in the eradication of mass unemployment or in advancing the economy.
- The project's funding was unsound and led to state debt of over 4.5 billion RM.
- The motorways did not serve important military purposes during the war.
- The mass motorisation envisaged in connection with the motorways' construction failed to materialise.
- The notion that the project's realisation brought about harmony between technology and nature owed more to propaganda than to reality.
- The conditions under which those employed on the construction sites had to work ranged from very difficult to inhumane.
- The construction works involved significant numbers of forced labourers, prisoners of war and Jewish prisoners.
- The *Autobahn* had a significant role within the National Socialist state propaganda machine. Even today, the media continues, in an unconsidered manner, to depict the *Autobahn* as an example of dynamic modernity, reprising its National Socialist-era aesthetic and artistic representation in photographs, paintings and posters.
- The myth remains active, that is, its narrative fulfils purposes existent in our time, such as needs for national identification.

While it is obvious that textbooks cannot examine all these matters to the same depth, I consider it necessary and important that they concern themselves with providing a comprehensive impression of National Socialist policy. It is incumbent on history textbooks, where they discuss the *Reichsautobahn*'s construction, to illuminate to learners its propagandistic instrumentalisation and its mythic exaltation within the Nazi state; without this information to guide them, today's generations of young people cannot hope to recognise the evidently entrenched nature of this particular mythification. It would be of importance, additionally, for history didacticians to monitor and, where necessary, critique the realisation of this remit. The extent of present-day textbooks' limitation of the topic to economic issues is notable, as is the lack of attention devoted to the motorways' alleged military purpose, working conditions on the sites, forced labour, and propagandistic aspects. Textbook authors should treat propaganda images relating to the motorways with the same critical caution as currently applied to pictures of the Holocaust's

perpetrators or excerpts from Nazi film newsreels; the caveat that accompanies the use of these two latter as proofs and explanations of historical events hangs over the employment of the former as illustrations or as acts of visual witness. As documents of National Socialist self-promotion and mythification, they are part of counter-factual narratives, and need to be shown to be such in the history classroom. As things stand, any attempts to deconstruct the myth remain partial, the visual reiteration of these powerful images of propaganda appears alongside a mix of facts and fictions, and the topic becomes less of a help than a hindrance to the development of narrative literacy or a mature historical consciousness.

It appears pressing to advise against the use of propaganda images as confirmation of the information in the text (and thus implicitly as representations of a reality) and as reconstructions of content; instead, they should be in textbooks as what they are, propaganda materials, whose analysis can strengthen pupils' methodological skills. As well as providing information and adding to their declarative knowledge, such an approach would enable pupils, within a framework of competency-based teaching, to arrive at their own judgements and learn how to critique ideologies.<sup>54</sup> One promising procedure might entail creating a contrast between differing perspectives by increasing use of 'counter-images', particularly of the visual type, which might relate to working conditions on the motorways, forced labour, or the destruction of natural habitats, and might go some way towards dealing with the issue of the lack of alternative visual sources on this topic.

I offer as a concluding thought the fact that there is likely nobody to whom it would seriously occur to claim that the SS had 'not been all bad' because their invention of the rear pedal reflector for the bicycle was continuing to make our roads safer to this day.<sup>55</sup> Yet too many voices still repeat the assertion that not everything about National Socialism was bad on account of the motorways. Countering this, in my view, requires us to talk more about those facets of the topic that few ever mention, and correct those that

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Michael Sauer, 'Hitler im Bild. Nationalsozialistische Fotopropaganda', *Geschichte lernen* 91 (2002), 29–32, 29; Sauer, *Bilder im Geschichtsunterricht. Typen – Interpretationsmethoden – Unterrichtsverfahren*, Seelze-Velber: Klett/Kallmeyer, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2012, 163, 173–176; Bernd Schönemann and Holger Thünemann, *Schulbucharbeit. Das Geschichtslehrbuch in der Unterrichtspraxis*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2010, 85f., 178–180; Peter Gautschi, 'Anforderungen an zukünftige Schulgeschichtsbücher', Michele Barricelli, Axel Becker, Christian Heuer (eds.), *Jede Gegenwart hat ihre Gründe. Geschichtsbewusstsein, historische Lebenswelten und Zukunftserwartungen im frühen 21. Jahrhundert*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2011, 164–176, 175f.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Benz, 'NS-Mythen, an die Deutsche immer noch glauben', *Die Welt*, 21 October 2007), <http://www.welt.de/kultur/article1282653/NS-Mythen-an-die-Deutscheimmer-noch-glauben.html>, last accessed 7 September 2016; Hermann Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS*, Berlin: Metropol, 2003, 198–200.

have been distorted. National Socialism was a double-faced beast, its glossy surface inextricably linked to its egregious brutality. Myths such as that of the motorways are narrative throwbacks to the propaganda of that glossy surface and of what kept the regime functioning for as long as it did. Their deconstruction, including, and especially, in the key medium of the history textbook, remains crucial for breaking through that surface and revealing the inhumanity of the ideological ambitions underneath.

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### **Myths in the Cold War: the Swiss case**

In Switzerland, the outbreak of the Cold War sustained and reinforced developments and attitudes that came into play in the interwar period, in the context of the ‘Spiritual National Defence’ movement, and extended through the Second World War (WW2). The National Socialist *bête noire* gave way seamlessly to the sense of threat perceived to exude from communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular, allowing Switzerland to retain its historical self-image as a small state threatened from without yet wedded to its freedom, and to commit its citizens to upholding internal cohesion.<sup>1</sup> As well as reinforcing the emergence of myths which from the nineteenth century’s final quarter onwards were coalescing into a national master narrative<sup>2</sup>, the Cold War acted in Switzerland to generate new myths. This chapter sets out to explore and illuminate this process, first outlining the societal functions of myth, and subsequently retracing the emergence of a new state of threat in Cold War-era Switzerland and highlighting the ways in which the responses of Swiss society and policy to the associated fears and concerns created fertile ground for the germination of myths in the classroom and in wider society.

#### **Myth and its functions: an anticipatory exploration**

We may define myths as interpretive narratives and as functional components of ideologies. Political myths, the class of myths to which my subject here belongs, are, to speak with Jeffrey Verhey, integral and therefore inherent parts of modern-day political culture, acting as crucibles for the shared notions of a collective constituted along ethnic, political or religious lines.<sup>3</sup> Modern societies use them as frameworks within which they find direction and develop and promote a sense of cohesion, and tend to regard them as naturally and implicitly underlying their societal cultures, as ‘going without saying’. It seems that societies have retained this susceptibility to fall under the spell of myth this

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peter Gilg and Peter Hablützel, ‘Beschleunigter Wandel und neue Krisen’, Comité pour une Nouvelle Histoire de la Suisse (ed.), *Geschichte der Schweiz und der Schweizer. Studienausgabe*, Basel: Schwabe, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2006, 821–968, 889.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Markus Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch – zwischen Überhöhung und Verdrängung. Leitbilder der Schweizer Nationalgeschichte in Schweizer Geschichtslehrmitteln der Nachkriegszeit und Gegenwart*, Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2004, 285–290.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Verhey, *Der ‘Geist von 1914’ und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000, 22.

day – a circumstance which promises ripe insights from a comparative approach to the Cold War era.

A myth is always a construct, even where it references historical events. To cite two examples, the figure of William Tell is the invention of the fifteenth-century intellectual and politician Hans Schriber, who had enjoyed a classical humanist education<sup>4</sup>, and the neutrality myth achieved its breakthrough thanks to the Zurich city archivist and university teacher Paul Schweizer, who in 1895 was the first to present a thoroughly researched historical work that retraced Swiss neutrality to time-honoured traditions.<sup>5</sup> These instances demonstrate the close intertwinement of key Swiss myths with history and its telling. Constructs they may be, and as such divergent from reality, yet myths constitute and stabilise that reality on a societal level, and are thus not without their impact on the political world of action<sup>6</sup> – indeed, to have such an impact is one of their core functions. In creating consensus, they act to bind and preserve fragile societies against potential dissolution, a purpose which appears of significance to Switzerland as a nation carried by the voluntary will to cohesion. Myths always contain claims to truth which demand absolute assent and put themselves beyond critique, which complicates the matter of their debunking; this primary faith response makes them relatively inaccessible to historical-critical interrogation of their content and truth. Individuals refuse to renounce them, nor will they accept rational counter-arguments as a sole basis for such a renunciation. At the collective level, meanwhile, myths have the principal purpose of avoiding the discomfort of giving difficult answers to difficult societal questions.<sup>7</sup> They eschew coincidence, and they represent the anthropological need for the discovery of meaning in the historical process. In this way, myths shore up ideologies by providing a narrative to suit the specific values and notions which serve to transport and transmit those ideologies. Myths, then, in the final analysis, represent a combination of memory and values<sup>8</sup>, tightly interlaced with historical images<sup>9</sup>, which latter we can

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<sup>4</sup> Volker Reinhardt, *Schweizer Mythen. Der Stoff aus dem die Mythen sind – oder auch nicht*, Zurich: Vontobel-Stiftung, 2014, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 219.

<sup>6</sup> Verhey, *Der 'Geist von 1914'*, 22–23.

<sup>7</sup> Eugen Kotte, 'Not to Have Ideologies But to Be One'. *Die Gründungsgeschichte der USA in amerikanischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern aus den Jahren 1968–1985*, Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1997, 392.

<sup>8</sup> David Tréfas, 'Verdrängtes Gedenken. Der Erste Weltkrieg in Schweizer Tageszeitungen', Konrad J. Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler (eds.), *Der vergessene Krieg. Spuren und Traditionen zur Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2014, 153–163, 154f.

define as metaphors of established notions around, and interpretations of, the past (as per Jörn Rüsen) and which act as forces shaping cultures of memory. Like myths, such historical images are always the product of their time and place, fragmentary entities drawn from the trove of the historical. Their driving mode is not careful deliberation of arguments for and against, but rather that of promise and prophecy, which go forth from these narratives to the end of mobilising and gathering political forces and forge a path to the making of decisions in accordance with their thrust.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Cold War: a new sense of threat**

There is extensive consensus among historians today that the Cold War's effect on Switzerland was to coalescing it into a united community of defence of a kind not seen in the objectively far more threatening WW2 period. The Manichean structure underlying the Cold War's central opposition served an important internal purpose in Swiss society, drawing its divergent conservative and Social Democratic factions into an overarching unity. The political elite's evident reliance on the bogeyman of communism enabled it to conduct a passive foreign policy in the protective shadow of the Western alliance and simultaneously pursue what appeared, or was claimed, to be an autonomous route. Critics of this policy and intellectuals such as the writer Max Frisch and the historian Jean Rudolf von Salis frequently found little welcome for their concerns. Many Swiss people shared the fear of communism as a supposed threat, and most historians agree today that the dominant conception of that threat was an exaggerated one. After 1948, the dualism of anti-communism, with its clearly defined categories of good and evil, came to cast its influence on all arenas of life. It eventually attained the status of a guiding precept for political thought, planning and action which critics considered to tip into the manifestation of 'totalitarian' societal traits; in 1961, von Salis warned, in a speech whose text was subsequently published: 'You don't fight the Inquisition with the Inquisition.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Markus Furrer, 'Geschichtsbilder in Migrationsgesellschaften', Charlotte Bühl-Gramer et al. (eds.), *Antike – Bilder – Welt. Forschungserträge internationaler Vernetzung, Elisabeth Erdmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, 2013, 217–232, 225.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Herfried Münkler, 'Die politischen Mythen der Deutschen', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 51, 2 (2007), 160–172, 171.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Rudolf von Salis, 'Die Schweiz im Kalten Krieg. Referat an einer Tagung des Philipp Albert-Stapfer-Hauses in Lenzburg (1961)', von Salis (ed.), *Schwierige Schweiz. Beiträge zu einigen Gegenwartsfragen*, Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1968, 187–205, 199.

Once initiated, then, the belief in the communist threat became circular, fear of a dogmatic ideology leading into a dogmatic response, and its prompting of calls for new defence measures informed a policy that characterised the entire Cold War period. There was a widespread sense that it would take little to ignite a new world war, like a spark in a powder keg, and paradoxical twin zeitgeists dominated the early post-war period in particular – the paralysing fear of ‘the bomb’ and the uplifting prospect of better standards of living, in connection with a specific optimism related to a belief in human progress. Historians relate these strands of the public mood to the triangular relationship of material consumption, the Cold War, and the societal consensus.<sup>12</sup> The Expo held in Lausanne in 1964 presented its visitors with the question: ‘How can this country survive nuclear war?’ The contemporary answer was the ‘concrete hedgehog’, an army pavilion intended to demonstrate Switzerland’s readiness to defend itself. Its foyer featured sheets of steels that had been riddled with bullets to symbolise the destructive power of war, while the lower floor of this ‘Fortress Switzerland’ spoke of safety and security. The pavilion’s representation of a Switzerland at arms was intended to give the message that, however small, this state would survive, and survive alone.<sup>13</sup> A further upshot of the widespread fear of communism was its effect on large swathes of the Swiss middle classes, convincing them to afford to their country’s population at large a significant improvement in their standard of living and to advance the establishment of a welfare state in competition with the socialist model of social security.

### **Anti-communism and myth formation**

Any attempt to understand and interpret the formation of myths in this era will benefit substantially from a closer look at the phenomenon of anti-communism; the two are two sides of the same coin. For both sides – as identified by Bernd Stöver - public opinion was a key factor in the Cold War, and its mobilisation one of its express aims, as well as a necessity for the conflict’s conduction.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Walter Leimgruber, ‘Die Schweiz zwischen Isolation und Integration’, Walter Leimgruber and Gabriela Christen (eds.), *Sonderfall? Die Schweiz zwischen Réduit und Europa. Begleitband*, Zurich: Schweizerisches Landesmuseum, 1992, 18–33.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold Künzli, ‘Die Neurose des Igels’, Walter Biel et al. (eds.), *Expo 64: Trugbild der Schweiz*, Basel: Basilius Presse, 1964, 35–49.

<sup>14</sup> Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947–1991*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007, 429.

One approach to the task of defining anti-communism might conceive of it as at once an ‘attitude’ and an ‘idea’<sup>15</sup>, comprising values, myths, and articles of faith. In a certain and doubtless arguable sense, we might regard it as a form of ‘ideology’ in itself, albeit one without the consistency attributable to ideologies per se. Founded on myths, this anti-communist ‘ideology’ draws energy and substance from a multiplicity of phantasms and irrational fears and from the creation of a complete counter-model to communism. The term thus remains as elusive in its essence as does communism itself. Accordingly, anti-communism encompasses a plethora of components, realities, motives, and economic, philosophical and religious worldviews, many of them mutually contradictory and charged with differing associations by political groupings across the spectrum.

Anti-communism’s period of chronological currency stretched from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the Cold War. Its primary function was identity-forming, and its additional effect of legitimising societal conformism constitutes a significant reason for its success in Swiss society with its intermittent fragility. During the Cold War era, its stabilising and cohesive function was particularly acute; replacing the political paradigm of class struggle, which had been influential well into the inter-war period, the model of even distribution of power across the political spectrum and the desire for consensus held sway during the decades following the end of WW2. Economic development was one driving factor in this change, as was internal societal pressure. Anti-communism served the purpose, *inter alia*, of intimidation via the amalgamation of all action stemming from the – de facto left-wing – opposition; in stigmatising dissent, its binary division of the world and, accordingly, of all political issues gave rise to a sense of predictability. The overwhelming Swiss anti-communist consensus resided on the dual representation of an internal and external foe, thus binding together a Switzerland that had become uncertain of its identity and feared a loss of unity still more than it did communism.<sup>16</sup> In other words, 1945/46 did not represent a caesura to a new societal position, but rather a return to an old dispensation, the anti-Bolshevism of the inter-war period. The dominant flavour of Swiss anti-communism was value-based; religious cir-

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<sup>15</sup> Brigitte Studer, ‘Antikommunismus’, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*: <http://www.hlsdhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D27836.php>, last accessed 7 September 2016.

<sup>16</sup> François Fayet, ‘Ist Antikommunismus tagtäglich ein Gegenstand der Geschichtsforschung? Das Beispiel der Schweiz’, Michel Caillat et al. (eds.), *Geschichte(n) des Antikommunismus in der Schweiz*, Zurich: Chronos, 2009, 23–36, 31.

cles, sections of the middle classes, and other groupings saw a threat to the fundamental values underlying Western civilisation. Within Swiss society, the Cold War, and the resulting anti-communism, increased internal cohesion, acting as a worldview that drew a boundary between that society and a demonised external and internal enemy.

This anti-communist attitude materialised in specific political action in Switzerland, as evidenced in its initial refusal to recognise the USSR - with no establishment of diplomatic relations until 1946 -, in the consensus maintained by anti-communism in the country, and in the continuation of the practice of state collection of data on individuals and organisations (*'Fichieren'*) until the end of the Cold War, in whose course secret documentation was made on every twentieth Swiss citizen and every third resident citizen of other states. This latter scandal broke in 1989, not uncoincidentally at the tail-end of this monumental Manichean conflict.

Anti-communism's original basis consisted in a vertically structured antagonism among the classes, which realigned to a horizontal form when the East-West conflict broke out and proved so adaptable, in terms of its politico-geographical manifestations, that it stepped completely into the shoes of the conventional constructs of inclusion and exclusion that had dominated the pre-modern era and, up to this point, the modern age. It contained traces of racial biologism – in the form of a vehement anti-Slavism -, echoes of folklore ideologies with culturalist emphasis, such as epics and myths of liberation, and hints of specific religious layers of meaning resonant of the apocalyptic battle with the Antichrist, now mutated into the figure of the Marxist atheist. All these elements boosted its power and effect in a way not witnessed in other, previous sets of values to which Swiss society turned.<sup>17</sup> A striking sentence, almost an aside, in a history textbook published in 1974, authored by Franz Meyer, reflects the discursive antagonism of the time: 'At the UN and in the [Allied] Control Council, Stalin showed his friendly Asian smile time and time again.'<sup>18</sup> This counts as mild in the scheme of things, as does the tone in other history textbooks; daily newspapers, which in this period affiliated themselves to a political party, argued in a much more polemical fashion, warning of the 'de-

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<sup>17</sup> Kurt Imhof, 'Wiedergeburt der geistigen Landesverteidigung: Kalter Krieg in der Schweiz', Kurt Imhof et al. (eds.), *Konkordanz und Kalter Krieg. Analyse von Medienereignissen in der Schweiz der Zwischen- und Nachkriegszeit*, Zurich: Seismo, 1996, 173–247, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Franz Meyer, *Wir wollen frei sein. 'Weltenweit und heimatreu'*, vol. 3, Aarau: Sauerländer, 1974, 329.

Christianisation of the Occidental people'<sup>19</sup> or, put in a more secularised manner, of the threat posed to European civilisation by communist barbarity.<sup>20</sup>

### **Manifestations of myth and their emergence in the Swiss case**

The Cold War, as a distinct epoch, first made an appearance in Swiss history textbooks at the end of the 1960s. The precise temporal definition of this period of 'global confrontation[,] with [its individual] national stories'<sup>21</sup>, however, is not necessarily a simple matter. Some, including Wilfried Loth, regard it as a state of matter rather than an era, while others speak 'of a radical age' (Bernd Stöver) lasting from 1947 to 1991.<sup>22</sup> It is this latter definition on which I will draw in defining the Cold War as a conflict based on a politico-ideological opposition; in relation to Switzerland, our exemplary case for this chapter, two principal developments emerge in relation to myths and their formation:

- a) the extension, or transferral to a new generation, of pre-existing myths;
- b) the formation of new mythological components or fragments, which I will be referring to as 'historical images'.

### **Myth extensions: what they set out to do and the responses they elicit**

The fundamental constitution of the Swiss culture of memory consists of myths which, albeit small in number, are substantial in their effect.<sup>23</sup> Their origins primarily lie, or are assumed to lie, in the late medieval period, and their continuity across the ages is striking. Their modern-day forms have taken on life and shape since the inception of modern federal Switzerland in 1848; the crises and caesurae brought by the twentieth century, from the world wars to the Cold War, and the concomitant phases of existential threat have given them great cultural resonance. They show us why and how a national master narrative born at the end of the nineteenth century dominated in the country for a period of around a century, until the end of the 1970s. At this point, the hypothesis suggests itself that the Cold War had its part to play in perpetuating the image of history at the root of this narrative. What follows will identify these classic myths and, with consistent

<sup>19</sup> *Vaterland*, 17 November 1943.

<sup>20</sup> *Luzerner Tagblatt*, 29 April 1948.

<sup>21</sup> David Lowe and Tony Joel, *Remembering the Cold War: Global Contest and National Stories*, New York: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Wilfried Loth, *Was war der Kalte Krieg? Annäherung an ein unbewältigtes Erbe*, <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/roehrigw/lva/ws9596/texte/kk/dhm/was.html>, last accessed 7 September 2016; Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947–1991*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Reinhardt, *Schweizer Mythen*, 121.

reference to teaching and learning materials for the history classroom, retrace their consolidation or, alternatively, their transformation in the Cold War period.

These myths are:

- the Swiss myths of freedom and liberation (including William Tell and the *Rütli* *Schwur*)
- the neutrality myth
- the myth of redoubtability, readiness for defence

All three of these sets of myths fit seamlessly into the discursive arena of the Cold War. The remit of this chapter does not stretch to a detailed discussion of their backgrounds and origins; I will instead provide a brief contextual overview of the Cold War period and identify the myths' functions in terms of their property as 'stories for use' (to speak with Guy Marchal; '*Gebrauchsgeschichte*').<sup>24</sup>

These myths' principal heyday came in the era of the Spiritual National Defence movement, which had grown in response to the inter-war threat posed by fascism and National Socialism and opposed a 'Swiss' culture and 'Swiss' values to these totalitarian ideologies. Some historians extend the period into the 1960s; the emergence after 1945 of a new sense of threat from communism allowed the movement to segue smoothly into a second phase, with a new focus, and also prepared the way for subsequent developments towards political internal stabilisation. The fall of these mythified historical images, however, did not wait for the end of the Cold War; by the 1980s, at the latest, profound societal change successively robbed them of significance.

During the main Cold War period, the three traditional sets of myths listed above took prominent places in the teaching of Swiss history<sup>25</sup>, as is evident in the successful collection conducted by Swiss schoolchildren in 1954 for the restoration of the Tell's Chapel and the Hohle Gasse.<sup>26</sup> Even at the time, however, such campaigns and the attitudes underlying them did not remain without their critics; the Swiss UNESCO Commission perceived and denounced an over-emphasis on national history in the country's

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Guy P. Marchal, *Schweizer Gebrauchsgeschichte. Geschichtsbilder, Mythenbildung und nationale Identität*, Basel: Schwabe, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Nadine Ritzer, *Der Kalte Krieg in den Schweizer Schulen. Eine kulturgeschichtliche Analyse*, Bern: hep-Verlag, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

schools as early as the 1950s. The response to such criticism was slow, with textbooks not substantially changing their tune until the 1980s.<sup>27</sup> This means that the myths outlined above were able to establish for themselves a firm and powerful place in the Swiss culture of memory; the section that follows will explore its manifestations.

### **Myths of freedom (Tell, *Rütlichschwur*)**

The Swiss ‘myths of freedom’ relate to William Tell, the legendary *Rütlichschwur*, and additionally the Federal Charter of 1291, discursively framed as a founding document of the Swiss confederacy. These myths, as myths of origin, have been predominant in the Swiss national master narrative since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Their effect is both exclusive and integrative; the twentieth century, repeatedly shaken by rupture and catastrophe, saw their star rise. During the Cold War era, they stood for the freedoms associated with democratic citizenship and for the continued right of the small Swiss state, heavily influenced by conservative middle-class values, to exist and hold its ground. Its self-image was that of a refugium of liberty, threatened by communism in the Eastern Bloc and beyond. A sense reigned that ‘Swiss customs and culture’ represented an absolute opposition to ‘communism’, with the latter regarded as ‘alien’ to the former and communists among the Swiss population branded as traitors. Textbooks prominently feature this group of myths, yet not in direct or explicit connection to the Cold War; indeed, the Cold War itself, in relation to Switzerland, remained unmentioned by Swiss textbooks for a long time, or, put differently, while textbooks raised the Cold War itself as a topic, they neglected to do so in the context of Switzerland, which in its turn receives an isolated treatment, walled in by its exclusive and excluding myths.<sup>28</sup>

### **The neutrality myth**

The myth of Swiss neutrality can likewise trace its inception to the 1880s, with its state archivist Paul Schweizer, and advanced, in the course and wake of the twentieth century’s world wars, to a core element of Swiss national self-identification. In the post-WW2 period, i.e. in the incipient Cold War era, neutrality appeared to be set in stone in

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 281–283.

<sup>28</sup> Markus Furrer, ‘Gebrochene Geschichten des Kalten Krieges – Narrative und der Umbruch 1989–91 in Schweizer Geschichtswerken’, Eva Matthes and Silvia Schütze (eds.), *‘1989’ und Bildungsmedien*, (Beiträge zur historischen und systematischen Schulbuchforschung), Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2016, 278–287.

the contemporary historical consciousness<sup>29</sup> as a ‘cover memory’ (to put it with Christof Dejung) for the country’s actions during WW2. Max Petitpierre, the Swiss foreign minister whose tenure dominated the post-war era’s first decade, declared ‘neutrality and solidarity’ as the Swiss state’s watchwords, thus elevating neutrality to the key maxim driving Swiss foreign policy. It was not until the Cold War was over that it became publicly known how exceedingly restricted the scope of a neutral country in the East-West conflict had been, and which compromises had been forced upon Switzerland as a ‘Western neutral’ power. The Hotz-Linder Agreement of 1951 committed Switzerland to heavy, US-imposed legal restrictions on trade with Eastern Europe. Despite this, the country continued to uphold the maxim of neutrality, thus glossing over the limitations placed upon its sovereignty.

References to neutrality feature pre-eminently in textbooks for history and political and citizenship education. Textbook chapters on the Cold War frequently stress Switzerland’s neutrality, which the 1974 textbook cited above describes as an ‘individual characteristic’<sup>30</sup> of Switzerland and which widespread public discourse framed as ‘perpetual’. Until well into the 1970s, the state took direct influence on the historiography of its neutrality<sup>31</sup>, and the content of textbooks did not diverge greatly from that of state doctrine on the subject. In spite of the evidently Western positioning of Switzerland observable in the textbooks, they ascribe responsibility for the Cold War confrontation to both superpowers: ‘Both powers pursue imperialist global policies. Russia has entered the Mediterranean. America patrols the Pacific and has entrenched itself in the Far East. The Swiss people’s comment is: *Es ist Hans was Heiri* [i.e. it amounts to the same thing; colloquially in English perhaps ‘it’s six of one and half-a-dozen of the other’]!’<sup>32</sup> References to neutrality policy are in clear evidence in contemporary textbooks for political and citizenship education; during the Cold War era in particular, ‘armed neutrality’ was a principle held to be above question. In textbooks, discussions of neutrality policy and the call for a strong, well-appointed army appear to go hand in hand.<sup>33</sup> The books reveal various instances of the mythologisation of neutrality, as in its linking to

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Andreas Suter, ‘Neutralität. Prinzip, Praxis und Geschichtsbewusstsein’, Manfred Hettling et al. (eds.), *Eine kleine Geschichte der Schweiz*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998, 133–188, 179.

<sup>30</sup> Meyer, *Wir wollen frei sein*, 383.

<sup>31</sup> Sacha Zala, ‘Geltung und Grenzen schweizerischen Geschichtsmanagements’, Martin Sabrow et al. (eds.), *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Große Kontroversen seit 1945*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003, 306–325, 308.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, *Wir wollen frei sein*, 338.

<sup>33</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 223.

the Battle of Marignano (1515), whose myth asserts that the heroic defeat sustained by the members of the Old Swiss Confederacy, and their alleged awareness that they had overstretched themselves on this occasion, led them to withdraw and to practise neutrality henceforth.

### **The myth of robust defence (Winkelried, Réduit, etc.)**

The discourse of ‘total threat’ initiated during WW2 survived and thrived into the Cold War, with the ongoing propagation of ‘total national defence’ and of the image of the citizen-soldier at arms; there had never previously been a time in Swiss history during which so many men, to such a late age, were included in military conscription.<sup>34</sup> The country’s Réduit fortress was an integral part of Switzerland as a ‘hedgehog’, non-attacking but sharp in defence, an image that first surfaced in WW1; the concept’s continuation was in evidence in the civil defence facilities erected in the 1970s, and Switzerland led the world in terms of its financial investment in nuclear bunkers for the civilian population.<sup>35</sup> In Lucerne, a ‘monster bunker’ with a capacity of 20,000 came into being.<sup>36</sup> Switzerland thus not only received, but effectively became a ‘space of protection’, as the title of a publication of 1988 put it.<sup>37</sup> As late as 1989, the Swiss government was responding to the initiative for the army’s abolition that had emerged within the country, the Group for a Switzerland Without an Army, in these terms: ‘Switzerland doesn’t have an army, it is an army.’<sup>38</sup>

The central symbol of Swiss readiness to defend itself, in military service and the history classroom alike, remained Arnold von Winkelried, the hero of the Battle of Sempach in 1386, who is said to have thrown himself into the pikes of his army’s adversaries in order to open a breach for his side to follow and overcome their opponents. The Cold War period, accordingly, was not short of stirring references to this legendary figure’s sacrificial death. It was not until the 1980s that the Winkelried figure found itself sub-

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Bruno Wägli, *Die Schweizerischen Militärminister von 1848–2008. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Bundesstaates*, doctoral thesis, Universität Freiburg/Schweiz, Bern: self-published, 2014, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Jakob Tanner, ‘Totale Verteidigung im bedrohten Kleinstaat. Vom Luftschutz der Zwischenkriegszeit bis zur Zivilschutz-Konzeption 1971’, Peter Albrecht et al., *Schutzraum Schweiz. Mit dem Zivilschutz zur Notstandsgesellschaft*, Bern: Zytglogge, 1988, 59–110, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Thomas Seger, *Zivilschutz in der Stadt Luzern. Vom Szenario des totalen Kriegs zur Konzeption der Not- und Katastrophenhilfe*, Luzern: UD Medien AG, 2013, 110–139.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Albrecht et al., *Schutzraum Schweiz. Mit dem Zivilschutz zur Notstandsgesellschaft*, Bern: Zytglogge, 1988.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Thomas Maissen, *Schweizer Heldengeschichten – und was dahinter steckt*, Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2015, 183.

ject to widespread questioning in relation to history teaching.<sup>39</sup> The Winkelried myth took a predominant role in textbooks, no doubt due at least in part to its usefulness in Cold War discourse; in contrast to William Tell, a myth frequently named openly as myth, Winkelried enjoyed, into the 1980s, a repute as a real individual vouched for by the sources, which circumstance sustained the figure's mythic vitality.<sup>40</sup>

### **Predominant images in the formation of new myths**

A separate group of myths does not encompass the classic ones detailed above and derived from the medieval period, but instead relates to interpretations and derivations arising from the image of history held within a specific zeitgeist, many of which have taken their place in the text of materials for the history classroom. This section will not attempt a comprehensive study of their manifestations, but rather a sample of their occurrences. These images, or components of myth, are as follows:<sup>41</sup>

- the ‘commitment to modernity’;
- political concordance and consensus;
- prosperity, affluence and traditional middle-class values, with a tendency towards an ‘arrogance (or, put less pejoratively, a sense of superiority) in exceptional situations’.

### **The ‘commitment to modernity’**

During the Cold War, the Swiss ‘commitment to modernisation’, or perhaps also ‘duty to modernise’, represented a ‘norm without alternatives’.<sup>42</sup> At that time, the world could be divided, virtually without remainder, into a democratic West and a socialist East. In this age of ideologies (Karl Dietrich Bracher), theories of modernisation, their mutual competition notwithstanding, were a commonality to both adversarial parties to the conflict, and served both as a foundational basis. In Switzerland, anti-communism, linked firmly with a focus on progress, advanced to become a societal model whose legitimation was almost beyond question, and which did not hit a crisis until the late 1960s. Economic growth and the Cold War acted in concert to generate a concept of advancement designed to create consensus and embraced by an integrative ideal of modernity.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bruno Häfliger, *Sempach 1386. Informationen für den Unterricht*, edited by the Erziehungsdepartement des Kantons Luzern, Lucerne: Kantonaler Lehrmittelverlag, 1986.

<sup>40</sup> Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 251.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Markus Furrer, *Die Apotheose der Nation. Konkordanz und Konsens in den 1950er Jahren*, Urs Altermatt et al. (eds.), *Die Konstruktion einer Nation. Nation und Nationalisierung in der Schweiz, 18.–20. Jahrhundert*, Zurich: Chronos, 1998, 101–118.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Aleida Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen? Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitenregimes der Moderne*, Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2013, 82.

The text of contemporary Swiss history textbooks is redolent of this spirit. A book authored by Eugen Halter and issued in 1972 provides a strikingly illustrative example. Its account of the Cold War to date is accompanied by illustrations showcasing modern Swiss buildings and the first moon landing. Its sections on the Cold War, generally kept short, tend primarily to reflect the competition between the world's two defining systems and the profound conviction of being on the right side of history and of progress.<sup>43</sup>

### **Consensus and concordance**

Historians characterise the 'long 1950s' as a period of consensus and increased material consumption in the shadow of the Cold War. The predominant economic and socio-political settings of the time blended with the influence of economic growth and conformist political forces to create ideal conditions for the emergence of widespread political consensus and of the concordance system of Swiss government. In 1959, a multi-party government came into being, in accordance with what became known as the 'magic formula', whose proportional composition remained in place until 2003. During the Cold War era, consensus and concordance gained the status of political myths, and virtually all internal conflict found itself glossed over. Against the contrasting backdrop of increasingly ideologically driven discourse on the global stage, ideologies lessened their hold on the three main Swiss party-political tendencies, the Free Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. Figured as a Swiss particularity and virtue, the concordance concept surfaced in history and political/citizenship education textbooks in particular, where it developed mythifying traits.<sup>44</sup>

### **Prosperity, affluence and middle-class values**

In today's post-Cold War era, when nationally-oriented conservatives cite Switzerland as a success story *par excellence*, their point of reference is a country which, during the Cold War, combined affluence with distinctly middle-class values. The Helvetian self-image revolved around a neutral, materially exceedingly comfortable small-scale state.<sup>45</sup> Textbooks, however, only appear to reference this idea of Switzerland in isolated instances. There have been instances in which, in doing so, they have gone as far as what one might call an 'arrogance in exceptional situations', which appeared from time to

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<sup>43</sup> Eugen Halter, *Vom Strom der Zeiten*. Zweiter Teil, St. Gallen: Fehr'sche Buchhandlung, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1972, 177.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 258–260.

<sup>45</sup> Furrer, *Die Apotheose der Nation*, 103.

time during the First World War, when it occasionally developed a missionary fervour. It is not so much textbooks that transmit this mythology as a widespread public view of Swiss history.<sup>46</sup>

### **Conclusion; comparative points of reference**

Concluding and reviewing our overview of strands of Swiss myth old and new as they passed through the prism of the Cold War, we perceive that the classic myths, arranged in a triangular structure of freedom, neutrality and readiness for defence, were able during this period to seamlessly continue their perpetuation, dually emphasised and validated by the retrospective societal view on the Second World War and the perception of threat to Switzerland in the era of renewed tensions that took its course post-1945. Newly arising narratives with mythic traits – which I would prefer to term ‘historical images’ despite the blurred categorical boundaries – served above all to elucidate current and long-standing positions held by Switzerland and mobilise public opinion via simple interpretations and references to recent and contemporary history. Stereotypes and images of allegedly hostile entities abound in both strands. Notably, and in a manner evidential of their mythic character, many of these myths have entered into history textbooks.

The Cold War did not so much germinate new sets of myths as propagate the existing, typical narratives with their tendency to promote identification and expanded the sphere of their acceptance. It was not until the Cold War’s days were numbered that the strictures of the mythologising national master narrative began to slacken. At this time, schools started to renounce their previous ideal and remit of teaching a history around which pupils could form their identity and instilling images of history legitimised by the societal collective. In a development divergent from those seen in numerous other nations of Europe, where European myths of integration such as the Schuman Declaration and the Elysée Treaty gained traction, the Cold War’s effect on Swiss national myths was to strengthen those which had the effect of drawing boundaries and reinforcing isolationism. This tendency continues to influence and undergird the image of Europe predominant in today’s Switzerland.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Current history textbooks no longer reiterate such myths, quite to the contrary; where the anti-communism widespread in Cold War-era Switzerland becomes a subject of historical analysis, the country and its society find themselves confronted with, indeed cast into that ideological conflict. The end of the Cold War saw more emphatic pluralisation of the available historical images, while the loss of its common enemy destabilised Swiss society. Concern and unease about the threat of dependency – on Europe and the rest of the world – has risen; rather than releasing that concept of dependency from its state of ideological discredit<sup>47</sup>, the discourse continues to drive it into myth. Schools are no longer doing identity politics; conservative nationalist political parties have taken on that mantle, with considerable success. They advance a concept of history that picks up seamlessly where the Cold War's heyday left off and provides plenty of room for the old myths. Faced with this situation, the teaching of history must strive to further these myths' deconstruction, but should not neglect to teach about when and why modern societies resort to stereotypes and adversarial constructions of hostile entities, and how myths aid and abet them in doing so.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Joëlle Kuntz, *Die Schweiz oder die Kunst der Abhängigkeit. Zwischenruf*, Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2014, 11.

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Christine Pflüger

### The Élysée Treaty of 1963: the foundational myth of Franco-German friendship?

Franco-German reconciliation, ‘*la réconciliation franco-allemande*’, is a myth – this, at least, is the view put forward by Corine Defrance.<sup>1</sup> Numerous history textbooks would beg to differ, frequently abounding with descriptions of the Élysée Treaty, concluded in 1963, as a Franco-German ‘treaty of friendship’<sup>2</sup>, the decisive milestone in the two countries’ shared history, a sign of reconciliation and the foundation stone of their new amity. Textbooks’ accounts of the treaty’s inception locate it in a narrative evoking the end of a centuries-old ‘ancestral enmity’<sup>3</sup>, of a hostility finally succumbing to peaceful cooperation and friendship. The treaty, whose original title is ‘*traité sur la coopération franco-allemande*’, sets out terms for future Franco-German cooperation. The place of ‘*amitié*’ and ‘*réconciliation*’ within the document is limited to the joint declaration made by Adenauer and de Gaulle which precedes its text.<sup>4</sup> Is the Élysée Treaty, as it

<sup>1</sup> Corine Defrance, ‘Construction et déconstruction du mythe de la réconciliation franco-allemande au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle’, Ulrich Pfeil (ed.), *Mythes et tabous des relations franco-allemandes au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Mythen und Tabus der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Convergences Vol. 65), Bern etc.: Peter Lang Verlag, 2012, 69–85, 69–70.

<sup>2</sup> Examples are: *Geschichte Band IV Neueste Zeit*, Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1973 (for *Realschulen* in Bavaria), 126; *Wir erleben die Geschichte. Ein Arbeitsbuch für den Geschichtsunterricht*, Ausgabe A Band 3, Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, 1974/1975, 159; *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1997, 196; *Zeitreise 4* (für *Realschulen*), Leipzig: Klett, 2000, 140; *Das waren Zeiten 4. Das kurze 20. Jahrhundert, Unterrichtswerk für Geschichte an Gymnasien*, Sekundarstufe I, ed. Dieter Brückner and Harald Focke, Bamberg: C.C. Buchner Verlag 2009, 180; *Von der Teilung zur Einheit. Die Welt nach 1945*, Buchners Kolleg. Themen Geschichte, Bamberg: C.C. Buchner Verlag, 2003, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2005, 78; *erinnern und urteilen IV*. Unterrichtseinheiten Geschichte, Stuttgart: Klett, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1990, 159. *Geschichte und Geschehen 10* Ausgabe N [Niedersachsen] Gymnasium, Stuttgart: Klett, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1991, 209, describes the treaty as an ‘agreement of friendship’ (*Freundschaftsabkommen*).

<sup>3</sup> Examples are: *Geschichte und Geschehen 10* Ausgabe N; *Geschichte 4 G*, Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuchverlag, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1993; *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Defrance, *Construction et déconstruction*, 72. On the Élysée Treaty, cf. also Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil (eds.), *Le traité de l’Élysée et les relations franco-allemandes, 1945–1963–2003*, Paris: CNRS Editions, 2005. The treaty’s text can be found (in French and German) at <http://www.ambafrance-de.org/Text-des-Elysee-Vertrages> and <http://www.ambafrance-de.org/Texte-du-Traite-de-l-Elysee-22> (last accessed 3 March 2019). The following textbooks include the text of Adenauer’s and de Gaulle’s joint declaration (available in English at [http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=864](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=864); last accessed 4 March 2019): *Von der Teilung zur Einheit*, 179, identically in *Deutschland und die Welt nach 1945. Buchners Kolleg. Themen Geschichte*, Bamberg: C.C. Buchner Verlag, 2002, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2006, 177; the French language textbook *La Civilisation Française*, Frankfurt am Main: Hirschgraben Verlag, 1972, 338, includes the text in French, cited from Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache IV/1157, 26. III.1963. Textbooks give divergent information on the preamble determined by the German Bundestag as a component part of its act of ratification of the treaty. The two *Buchners Kolleg* volumes give its date as 15 June 1963, while *Europa im 20. Jahrhundert. Die europäische Einigungsbewegung und das Europa*

appears in school history textbooks, in fact a foundational myth of Franco-German friendship?

This chapter will seek to identify whether, and to what extent, the accounts of the Élysée Treaty and its creation found in German history textbooks amount to the retelling of a foundational myth.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, it will commence by comparing these accounts to a number of fundamental properties of foundational myth to establish the presence or otherwise of the latter in the former. I will then proceed to demonstrate, from the point of view of what we can call a critical concept of myth, that, despite what some textbook narratives appear to suggest, it is certainly not the treaty alone in which we can or should locate the ‘foundations’ of Franco-German amity; if a ‘myth’, in the sense of an erroneous account, were present, such exploration should be able to deconstruct it. Finally, against the backdrop of changes in textbook narratives over a period of forty years, I will attempt to identify and explicate those elements of mythic narrative which appear in these accounts, should indeed any be found. It emerges in the course of this analysis that it is not until the 1990s that significant features of mythic narrative become evident in the textbooks sampled, and that they occur in relation to the history of European integration; in this narrative context, the Élysée Treaty assumes the function of a ‘mythic past’.

### Characteristics of foundational myths

The theory of myth advanced by René Girard<sup>6</sup> posits the origin of all cultural coexistence which is subject to normative regulation as being an act of sacrifice. In Girard’s terms, the inception of anthropogenesis can be traced to a foundational lynching, or human sacrifice; an act obscured by cultural codification, yet remaining powerfully effective in the cultural memory, with the sacrificial victim’s apotheosis becoming part of the foundational narrative.<sup>7</sup> Mircea Eliade likewise regards myths as ‘sacred histor[ies]’<sup>8</sup>

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*der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte. Erarbeitet von Frank Bärenbrinker und Christoph Jakobowski*, Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag, 2004, 67, gives 16 May 1963.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also this volume’s introductory chapter.

<sup>6</sup> René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 (original edition: *La Violence et le sacré*, Paris: Grasset, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rudolf Wansing, ‘Mythos’, Nicolas Pethes and Jens Ruchatz (eds.), *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2001, 392–393; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*.

<sup>8</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1985, 30–44, 58–60, 85–99 and passim. Original edition: *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris:

which tell how a specific cultural grouping came into being, how it stood its ground in decisive phases of its development, and where to find the origins of the values it collectively acknowledges and holds as crucial to itself. In this spirit, Matthias Wächter names two ‘cardinal functions’ of myth as the integration of human communities and the endowment of the past and the present with meaning via acts of interpretation.<sup>9</sup> Wächter describes how, in newly established political structures, myths aid the formation of a collective identity and mobilise its direction into the future, and accordingly positions myth’s function within the symbolic political sphere.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, Wolfgang Kaschuba’s exploration of the rise and transformation of ‘foundation myths’ in the emergent states of post-civil war former Yugoslavia perceives these myths, as ‘sacred’ ‘narratives of invented collective biographies’ based on ‘tightly woven fabrics of data and ideologies, of semantics and aesthetics, of values and practices’, to ‘operate as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*’.<sup>11</sup>

### **Is the Élysée Treaty a *foundational* myth?**

Part of my purpose here must be to establish the nature of the myth, if there be one, in German textbook accounts of the Élysée Treaty’s origination, impact, key actors and implications; is it in fact foundational in nature? To the end of finding an answer, I analysed these accounts in accordance with the criteria discussed above, uncovering the societal ‘work on [the] myth’ (to speak with Hans Blumenberg) that takes place within them by simultaneously identifying structural elements of mythic narratives in the textbooks and seeking to pinpoint changes in the character of the narration over time.<sup>12</sup>

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Gallimard, 1965, cited in Matthias Wächter, ‘Mythos. Version: 1.0’, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 11 February 2010, <http://docupedia.de/zg/Mythos>, last accessed 7 September 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Wächter, *Mythos*, 4, comments: ‘As these narratives speak to the fundamental, existential components of a cultural context, no doubts are expressed in that context as to their truth’.

<sup>10</sup> Wächter, *Mythos*, 6, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Kaschuba, ‘The Emergence and Transformation of Foundation Myths’, Bo Stråth (ed.), *Myth and Memory and the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*. Series Multiple Europes No. 9, Brussels etc.: PIE Lang, 2000, 217–226, 218. On the function of foundational myths in identity formation, and on their role in identity politics, cf. *ibid.*, 221. Kaschuba explores mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion as part of the workings of foundational myths (*ibid.*, 226), mechanisms he also perceives as in use for the transformation of national ideologies into political power structures. Historians – so runs Matthias Wächter’s argument – who wish to fit the concept of myth to their needs will primarily seek to focus on the dimension of their temporal and cultural mutability, which will draw them to examining the socio-political functions of the ‘story’ and its narrative structure, imagery and medium. Wächter, *Mythos*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979.

The basis of the analysis was a small corpus of seventeen history textbooks published between 1969 and 2009, that is, in a period of forty years that was subsequent to the treaty's conclusion, by the major German textbook publishing houses Klett, Bayerischer Schulbuchverlag, Oldenbourg, Schroedel-Schöningh, Cornelsen, Diesterweg and Buchner. The corpus does not include an even spread of titles across these publishers, nor of editions for different German states or school types. The research presented in this chapter therefore makes no claim to the status of a full or representative study, but is instead intended as preliminary work<sup>13</sup>, and I will outline the findings as concisely as befits a chapter of this type. It is doubtless the case that the treaty gave rise to modes of cultural coexistence subject to normative regulation; our interest will be in establishing whether the narrative, as evinced in the textbook corpus, of how this coexistence arose contains elements of 'sacrifice', or of a 'narrative of sacrifice', or indeed of a 'foundational lynching'.

Textbook accounts of the backdrop to the treaty tell pupils that 'the two neighbouring peoples [of France and Germany] had fought each other for centuries'<sup>14</sup> or, in order to underline the agreement's necessity, emphasise the 'centuries of [...] hatred and bloodshed [...]'<sup>15</sup> between the two. To an extent, it is possible to regard the countless dead of these conflicts as the 'sacrifice' and the conflict itself as the 'fratricide' which, back in the mists of time, preceded the salvatory era of peaceful coexistence. A further perceptible element is the notion, to which Eliade accords a central status, of a civilisation's testing and survival at decisive points in its early history. Textbooks regularly place the treaty's genesis in the context of the referendum on the future of the Saarland in 1955 and the process, in the years that followed, of its integration into West Germany; the Franco-FRG economic cooperation within the European Coal and Steel Community; the integration of the new Federal Republic of Germany with the Western powers; and the debate around its rearmament. Each of these are depicted, in this context, as successful steps towards West Germany's maturation as a state. Finally – and not least – the textbooks incorporate elements of a mobilisation of energies for the future and normative impetus for the emergence of an identity from a perceivedly meaningful synthesis between that future, the past and the present day. Not content with depicting the Élysée

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<sup>13</sup> The corpus for the work presented here used University of Kassel library holdings. A representative study would, of course, require a significantly larger and more systematically compiled corpus.

<sup>14</sup> *Geschichte Band IV*, 'Neueste Zeit', 126.

<sup>15</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*, 196.

Treaty as the ‘foundation’ of ‘long-term cooperation’ and a ‘shared leadership role’<sup>16</sup> in Europe, textbooks lay upon young people - their primary readership - the expectation that they will forge new prospects for the future in awareness of the past. Young generations, as the forward-looking bearers of hope, are to perpetuate and consolidate this change of direction in thought and action: ‘Germany and France have fought many wars against each other in the course of their history. Find examples in your history book. *Do you understand now* how important it is for Franco-German friendship, particularly youth exchange, to be promoted and supported in all ways possible?’, the textbook *Erkunden und Erkennen*, published in 1969, rather pointedly asks its pupils (italics mine).<sup>17</sup> Even after the turn of the millennium, in 2002 and 2003, *Buchners Kolleg* was, along very similar lines, calling upon pupils to ‘[e]xplain the significance of work with young people in this context’.<sup>18</sup> Logic aside, the wording implies distinctly that work with young people *has* a significance in this context, which pupils are merely being asked to describe. The *Buchners Kolleg* books cite relevant excerpts from the treaty and its preamble, whose wording was undoubtedly influential on that used by the books’ authorial text and has promoted the treaty’s perception as a form of *mythe fondateur*:

The Chancellor of the Federal Republic [of Germany], Dr Konrad Adenauer, and the President of the French Republic, General de Gaulle, [...] Convinced that the reconciliation of the German people and the French people, ending a centuries-old rivalry, constitutes a historic event which profoundly transforms the relations between the two peoples, [...] Aware in particular that youth has recognized this solidarity [the ‘solidarity uniting the two peoples’, from a previous passage of the declaration] and is called upon to play a decisive part in the consolidation of Franco-German friendship, Recognizing that increased co-operation between the two countries constitutes an indispensable stage on the way to a united Europe [...] Have agreed to the organization and principles of co-operation between the two States [...].<sup>19</sup>

It appears, then, that some features of the textbook accounts of the treaty’s background and content do correspond to the properties of foundational myth as outlined above. Some of the wording used in textbooks likewise supports this view, one example being the assertion in one book that the Treaty ‘sealed’ the two countries’ new amity<sup>20</sup>, imply-

<sup>16</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 10*, Ausgabe N, 210.

<sup>17</sup> *Erkunden und Erkennen. Geschichte 3*, Hanover etc.: Hermann Schroedel Verlag, 1969, 160.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Deutschland und die Welt nach 1945*, 177. The selection of sources for excerpts, and the emphasis on the foundation of the Franco-German Youth Office and its significance for the two nations’ future relationship via activities such as intensified youth exchange, suggests that a process of the generation of meaning, in the spirit of a *mythe fondateur*, is at work here.

<sup>19</sup> *Deutschland und die Welt nach 1945*, 177; an identical quotation is in *Von der Teilung zur Einheit*, 179. English translation cited from [http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=864](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=864), last accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>20</sup> *Geschichte – kennen und verstehen 10* (for *Realschulen* in Bavaria), Donauwörth: Verlag Ludwig Auer, 1984.

ing a solemn declaration of an end to the old dispensation and the laying of a new foundation for relations going forward. This said, we can identify neither reference to a ‘foundational lynching’ nor the apotheosis of a sacrificial figure, unless we define the ‘centuries of war’ referred to in numerous textbooks as a ‘fratricide’ or a ‘lynching’ and the image of de Gaulle and Adenauer in Reims Cathedral, carried by several textbooks, as an ‘apotheosis’. We might well consider this photograph capturing the symbolic act of the mass of reconciliation held in Reims to serve the narrative’s sacralisation in the context of textbook accounts and indeed beyond, as proven by Valentin Rauer in relation to depictions of the event in the daily press.<sup>21</sup>

### **Is the Élysée Treaty a foundational *myth*?**

If we were to read the accounts of the Treaty in the textbook corpus through the lens of what has been called a ‘critical’ concept of myth<sup>22</sup>, which tends to define it as error or indeed falsehood and oppose it to a ‘reality’<sup>23</sup> and among whose proponents is Gilbert Ziebura<sup>24</sup>, our task as history didacticists would now be to deconstruct the ‘myth’ of the Treaty as the initiatory act of Franco-German amity, denouncing it as a non-plausible narrative, and re-construct a plausible one in its place around the rapprochement between France and Germany after the Second World War. We could undertake such an endeavour by taking account of all the initiatives and efforts towards Franco-German cooperation, rapprochement and reconciliation, advanced by policymakers, civil society, business, science, public and private bodies, which have been underway, often with considerable success, since well before 1963, and which provided a framework for the Treaty itself, its acceptance in French and German society at large, and its assessment by posterity as a key milestone in Franco-German relations. One of these initiatives originated with the history didacticist Georg Eckert, who entered into contact with the French association of history teachers in the late 1940s; regular meetings between French and German historians began taking place in 1948, and the directorate of the then *Relations culturelles de Mayence*, now the Leibniz Institute of European History

<sup>21</sup> Valentin Rauer, ‘Zwischen Kitsch und Trauma: Zur symbolischen Repräsentation transnationaler Versöhnungsrituale’, Hans Henning Hahn et al. (eds.), *Erinnerungskultur und Versöhnungskitsch* (Tagungen zur Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 26), Marburg: Verlag Herder Institut, 2008, 55–69, 58–62.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Rolf Parr, ‘Das System der deutschen Gründungsmythen. Von Napoleon bis zur Wende von 1989’, Matteo Galli and Heinz-Peter Preusser (eds.), *Deutsche Gründungsmythen*, Heidelberg: Verlag Winter, 2008, 23–36, 24.

<sup>23</sup> ‘[...] with the aim of separating the myth from a plane of reality always assumed to be existent in each case or unmasking it as a “lie”’; Parr, *System der deutschen Gründungsmythen*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Gilbert Ziebura, *Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen seit 1945. Mythen und Realitäten*, Stuttgart: Neske Verlag, revised and updated edition 1997.

(IEG) in the German city of Mainz, enabled the organisation of a meeting between the French and German history teachers' associations in Freiburg im Breisgau in the summer of 1950. One of the products of these encounters was the 'Franco-German agreement on contested issues in European history' (*Deutsch-französische Vereinbarung über strittige Fragen europäischer Geschichte*), concluded in 1951.<sup>25</sup> The agreement included the passage: '[The parties to the agreement] consider it necessary that textbooks take account of the existence in the eighteenth century of an intellectual movement whose aim encompassed the creation of a lasting peace (Leibniz, Abbé de St. Pierre, Kant)',<sup>26</sup> as well as the following:

[The parties to the agreement] consider it desirable to emphasise the long period of peaceful relations between the French and German governments from 1815 to 1859. During this period, large parts of the German bourgeoisie sympathised with the liberal ideas underlying the French Revolution [...].<sup>27</sup>

As these passages indicate, the agreement sought to create consensus, or at least a rapprochement of positions, in narratives on European history. The disregard for the tenets of this agreement apparent in post-1969 textbook narratives' emphasis on 'centuries' of war may suggest an implicit tendency towards the unconscious construction of the Élysée narrative as a foundational myth.

A further example of interest in this context relates to the development of twinning relationships between towns and cities, whose origins might appear eminently traceable to the Élysée Treaty, but which recent studies have identified in various initiatives and endeavours long before 1963. Alexander Meuschke's work on the partnership between the towns of Einbeck in Lower Saxony and Thiais in Val-du-Marne places as early as 1956 the inception of contact between the two, particularly between youth groups and amateur sports clubs, with a view to initiating a full twinning relationship, which was eventually formalised in June 1962. Other, more prominent studies drawing similar conclusions have included those authored by Corine Defrance and Jürgen Dierkes.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Deutsch-französische Vereinbarung über strittige Fragen europäischer Geschichte*. Reprinted from *Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht*, 1953, Braunschweig: Albert Limbach Verlag; reprinted March 1958, including a list of the media organs and periodicals which published the Franco-German historians' agreements in the years 1952 to 1955; *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Meuschke, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Institution 'Deutsch-französische Städtepartnerschaften' am Beispiel von Einbeck und Thiais*, unpublished degree dissertation, Kassel, 2014; Corine Defrance, 'Les premiers jumelages', *Lendemains* 84 (1996), 83–95; Corine Defrance, Michael Kießner

Then there was the lively scene of intellectual and political communication and exchange in the interwar period; the individual enumeration of the initiatives and encounters in this regard would exceed the scope of this chapter; I will limit myself to exemplary mentions of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann, the lecture tours undertaken by Paul Distelbarth<sup>29</sup>, and Pierre Bertaux, a French student who moved in Franco-German circles in 1920s Berlin and wrote accounts of his encounters with Walter Benjamin, Heinrich Mann, André Gide and others.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the examples go as far back as the period prior to the First World War (WW1); they include attempts to find diplomatic solutions to the political conflict between the two countries and, to name a prominent instance much-cited in connection with the commemoration of WW1's centenary, the efforts of Jean Jaurès and Rosa Luxemburg to promote peace.<sup>31</sup> This backdrop puts the treaty of 1963 into perspective as a

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and Pia Nordblom (eds.), *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945. Zivilgesellschaftliche Annäherungen*, Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2010; Jürgen Dierkes, 'Freundschaft ohne Grenzen? Die Städtepartnerschaft Borgentreich – Rue (1986)', Defrance, Kißener and Nordblom (eds.), *Wege der Verständigung*, 237–253.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Paul H. Distelbarth, *Das andere Frankreich. Aufsätze zur Gesellschaft, Kultur und Politik Frankreichs und zu den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1932–1952*, introduced, edited and with a commentary by Hans Manfred Bock, Bern etc.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Bertaux, *Un normalien à Berlin. Lettres franco-allemandes (1927–1933)*. Éditées, annotées et commentées par Hans-Manfred Bock, Gilbert Krebs et Hansgerd Schulte. Asnières: PIA & CAPP, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Much has been written on Franco-German relations in the twentieth century's first half, examples are Hans Manfred Bock (ed.), *Französische Kultur im Berlin der Weimarer Republik. Kultureller Austausch und diplomatische Beziehungen* (édition lendemains 1), Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2005; Yves Cohen and Klaus Manfrass (eds.), *Frankreich und Deutschland. Forschung, Technologie und industrielle Entwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1990; Corine Defrance, 'Société civile et relations franco-allemandes', Defrance, Kißener and Nordblom (eds.), *Wege der Verständigung*, 17–31; Ralph Erbar, *Quellen zu den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1919–1963 (Quellen zu den Beziehungen Deutschlands zu seinen Nachbarn im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert; Freiherr-vom-Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe; Band 6)*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003; Carine Germond and Henning Türk (eds.), *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe: From 'Hereditary Enemies' to Partners*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Hartmut Kaelble, *Nachbarn am Rhein. Entfremdung und Annäherung der französischen und deutschen Gesellschaft seit 1880*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1991; Gerhard Keiper, *Biographische Studien zu den Verständigungsversuchen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe III, Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften Band 734), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1997; Reiner Marcowitz, 'Attraction and Repulsion: Franco-German Relations in the "Long Nineteenth Century"', Germond and Türk, *Franco-German Relations*, 2008, 13–26; Katja Marmetschke, 'Ein Wendepunkt für die deutsch-französische Verständigung? Das Treffen zwischen dem preußischen Kultusminister C.H. Becker und dem französischen Erziehungsminister Anatole de Monzie im September 1925 in Berlin', Hans Manfred Bock (ed.), *Französische Kultur*, 2005, 37–51; Guido Müller, 'Pierre Viénot und das Berliner Büro des Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitees', Hans Manfred Bock (ed.), *Französische Kultur*, 2005, 53–67; Nathan N. Orgill, 'Between Coercion and Conciliation: Franco-German Relations in the Bismarck Era, 1871–90', Germond und Türk, *Franco-German Relations*, 2008, 49–59; Raymond Poidevin and Jacques Bariéty, *Frankreich und Deutschland. Die Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen 1815–1975*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982; Reiner Pommerin and Reiner Marcowitz (eds.), *Quellen zu den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1815–1919 (Quellen zu den Beziehungen Deutschlands zu seinen Nachbarn im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert Band 5; Freiherr-vom-Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe)*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997; Sylvain Schirmann, 'Franco-German Relations 1918–45',

link in what was already a much longer chain, which, however, garnered little attention in textbook accounts.

### **Changes in textbook depictions: The ‘work on myth’ of narrating the Élysée Treaty’s inception and establishing its significance**

The course of the forty years that elapsed between 1969 and 2009 have certainly seen changes in history textbooks’ discussions of how the Élysée Treaty came into being and their determinations of its significance; changes, therefore, in, what they offer pupils as materials from which to construct meaning around the event. Diachronic analysis casts light on the fluctuating influence on textbook narratives of the political dispensation of the day, contemporary didactic practices, and new research findings.<sup>32</sup> Alongside this, it may be illuminating to read the divergent variants of the narrative, in Hans Blumenberg’s terms, as ‘work on [the] myth’.

History textbooks of the late 1960s and early 1970s present a highly personalised narrative, depicting the Élysée Treaty as the result of the friendship between the statesmen Adenauer and de Gaulle and of their shared desire to reconcile and leave behind centuries of conflict<sup>33</sup>; works issued in the 1980s tend, in the first instance, to regard the Treaty as a friendship’s initiatory moment. Accounts of the 1960s and 1970s emphasise the role of Adenauer, the appreciation of France, through de Gaulle, for his actions, and the necessity of amity between Germany and France<sup>34</sup>; the 1980s, by contrast, saw textbooks contextualising Franco-German rapprochement and the Treaty’s genesis in relation to the tensions between East and West that dominated the world stage at the time, mutual economic interests, the matter of West German rearmament (itself framed in the context of the Korean War), and developments in the Saarland. Here, the Treaty appears

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Germond and Türk, *Franco-German Relations*, 2008, 75–88; Verena Schöberl, ‘Two “Naughty Siblings”’. France and Germany in the Public Discussion of the Interwar Period’, Germond and Türk, *Franco-German Relations*, 2008, 113–123; Dieter Tiemann, *Deutsch-französische Jugendbeziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Pariser Historische Studien, vol. 28), Bonn: Bouvier, Edition Rohrscheid, 1989; Klaus Wilsberg, ‘Terrible ami – aimable ennemi’. *Kooperation und Konflikt in den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1911–1914* (Pariser historische Studien, vol. 49), Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Our focus will lie not on these factors – at least not in detail -, but on the changes over time in the accounts of the treaty featured in textbooks.

<sup>33</sup> Cf., for example, *Geschichte Band IV, Neueste Zeit*, 126; *Wir erleben die Geschichte*, 158–159.

<sup>34</sup> Cf., *inter alia*, the pupil task (cited above) in *Erkunden und Erkennen, Geschichte 3*, 160: ‘[...] Do you understand now how important it is for Franco-German friendship, particularly youth exchange, to be promoted and supported in all ways possible?’ On de Gaulle’s acknowledgement of Adenauer’s role and achievement, see *Wir erleben die Geschichte*, 158–159.

as one step of many, with the particularity of being concerned with achieving a ‘long-term reconciliation’.<sup>35</sup> Some textbooks of the 1980s contain what we might term hybrid forms of these two types of narrative; *Geschichte – kennen und verstehen 10* for Bavarian *Realschulen*, published in 1984, categorises the Treaty’s conclusion as part of the process of political trust-building between the two neighbours in Europe, yet retains the discursive tone of a mythic founding narrative, declaring the Treaty to have ‘sealed [...] the bond of friendship between the two states’.<sup>36</sup>

A fascinating change, which appears to support or indeed confirm the hypothesis of mythification around the Treaty, comes as history textbooks move into the 1990s. For the first time, they begin to include the narrative of the transition ‘from “ancestral enmity” [which, at least, is given scare quotes] to amity’.<sup>37</sup> In this, the textbooks appear, in a manner of speaking, to regress to a point prior to the ‘Agreement on contested issues in European history’, within which Hermann Heimpel expressly denounced the discourse of ‘ancestral enmity’ as an ‘obsessive notion’.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the books begin to foreground the context of European integration, ascribing to the Élysée Treaty the function of a basis for the future EU, and locating it at the commencement of the process of ever-closer union. A further new addition in the textbooks of this era is their contextualisation of the Treaty in the political setting of post-war and 1960s France and an emphasis on de Gaulle’s role in the Franco-German ‘reconciliation’ (appearing in quotation marks in a number of books) while conceding that Adenauer had initiated the process,

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<sup>35</sup> Depictions of this kind appear, for example, in *Geschichte 4 Neueste Zeit* (Realschulen), Bamberg: C.C. Buchner Verlag, 1984, 142, and – completely identically - in *Unser Weg in die Gegenwart 4 Neueste Zeit* (Gymnasien), Bamberg: C.C. Buchner Verlag, 1984, 190. A task set for pupils reinforces this point of view.

<sup>36</sup> *Geschichte – kennen und verstehen 10*, 252; *Geschichte heute* (for *Hauptschulen* in North Rhine-Westphalia), school years 9/10, Hanover: Schroedel/Schoeningh Verlag, 1988, while it contextualises the treaty’s background and presents it as the upshot of a development, includes personalising elements in its account by virtue of the treaty’s depiction as partially the result of the personal bond between Adenauer and de Gaulle; *ibid.*, 178–179.

<sup>37</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 10*, 209, *Geschichte 4 G*, 211, and *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*, 196, to name three examples, refer to the Élysée Treaty as the ‘end point’ of the two countries’ ‘ancestral enmity’, a term which (with scare quotes) likewise occurs in *Zeitreise 4*, 140, with the divergence of the two governments or states now appearing as the actors in the narrative rather than Adenauer and de Gaulle alone. Textbooks of the 1990s frequently describe the treaty as the ‘end of [Franco-German] enmity’.

<sup>38</sup> *Deutsch-französische Vereinbarung über strittige Fragen europäischer Geschichte*, preface to the 1958 edition, 3. There is no evidence of such critique in any of the history textbooks analysed; the unexplained scare quotes represent the sole indication of any critical distancing.

with its implications of cooperation between the states and, in the long term, European integration.<sup>39</sup>

These textbook accounts evidently reflect the political and structural changes that had swept Europe beginning in 1989. *Geschichte 4 G* defines the Treaty in this context as having advanced to become a symbol of successful international rapprochement.<sup>40</sup> An added element in the depictions found in *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4* (1997) and *Zeitreise 4* (2001) is the dictum of Franco-German partnership as the ‘engine driving the processes of European unification’<sup>41</sup>, which extends to defining the Treaty as the ‘foundation’ of long-term cooperation and – as cited above – of a ‘shared leadership role’<sup>42</sup> in Europe for the two states. While *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4* and *Zeitreise 4* use the ‘engine’ metaphor as effectively a factual description, *Das waren Zeiten 4. Das kurze 20. Jahrhundert* informs readers that the image derives from a view put forward by the historian Edgar Wolfrum, who had termed close Franco-German cooperation the ‘locomotive of European integration’.<sup>43</sup>

From the turn of the millennium, textbook narratives, seeking greater nuance, renounce the discourse of ‘ancestral enmity’; a new narrative pattern<sup>44</sup> takes its place, figuring the Élysée Treaty as the ‘culmination’ of Franco-German rapprochement and reconciliatory endeavours.<sup>45</sup> While these accounts all supply explicit interpretations and associated suggestions of significance and meaning, the aim of the publication *Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* is to enable pupils to reach their own conclusions via its provision of source material and tasks to complete. Its focus is on analysing German and French

<sup>39</sup> Cf., for example, *erinnern und urteilen IV*, 159. *Unsere Geschichte Band 4*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 2<sup>nd</sup> amended edition 1991, labels the treaty the ‘commencement of a close bond’ between the two states.

<sup>40</sup> *Geschichte 4 G*, 211.

<sup>41</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*, 196; *Zeitreise 4*, 140.

<sup>42</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 10*, Ausgabe N, 210

<sup>43</sup> *Das waren Zeiten 4*, 180.

<sup>44</sup> On the use of the ‘narrative pattern’ concept in the construction of historical interrelationships, cf. Christine Pflüger, ‘Die Vermittlung von Erzählmustern und analytischen Kategorien im Schulgeschichtsbuch’, Saskia Handro and Bernd Schönemann (eds.), *Geschichtsdidaktische Schulbuchforschung*, (Zeitgeschichte – Zeitverständnis Band 16), Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006, 67–85.

<sup>45</sup> Examples are *Deutschland und die Welt nach 1945*, 78, and, with identical wording, *Von der Teilung zur Einheit*, 78: ‘[...] the close [German] solidarity with the French president Charles de Gaulle, that found its culmination in the treaty of Franco-German friendship concluded in 1963’. Both books likewise carry the similarly identical phrasing: ‘This was the end of a calamitous epoch within which, in the space of seventy years, Germans and French had waged war three times on one another’; *ibid.*, 182 and 184 respectively. All attempts at nuance in the two books notwithstanding, they refer here in a generalising manner to ‘Germans’ and ‘French’.

people's perceptions of one another since the post-war period. The tasks set for users apparently seek to counter mythification of Franco-German relations; they include the analysis of the symbolic resonance emanating from the well-known photographs of de Gaulle and Adenauer during mass in Reims on 8 July 1962 and of de Gaulle's state visit to Bonn in September of the same year.<sup>46</sup>

In a similar vein, the section on 'symbolic gestures and *lieux de mémoire* in the Franco-German relationship' located within chapter 17 ('Franco-German partnership – a success story?') of the German/French textbook *Histoire/Geschichte*<sup>47</sup> takes an approach that draws on the discipline of cultural studies, exploring symbolic structures and systems and featuring pupil tasks emphasising both memory and a focus on the future. One such task calls upon pupils to imagine themselves commissioned to plan the commemoration of the Élysée Treaty's fiftieth anniversary in the year 2013 and to select a location for the ceremony, having previously been exposed to a number of 'symbolically charged' loci related to the history of Franco-German relations<sup>48</sup>. They are to give reasons for their choice and explain their rationale for the symbolic significance they attach to the location in question. Students who cannot fall back on family connections to specific places, particular historical interests, or their own travels will find themselves making their selection from a pre-determined set of familiar *lieux de mémoire*, being Reims<sup>49</sup>, Versailles<sup>50</sup>, Verdun<sup>51</sup>, and perhaps additionally the two countries' current seats of government, Paris and Berlin. The book places its account of how the Treaty came to be in a section amounting to over 70 pages and entitled 'Teil 5: Deutsche und Franzosen seit 1945/Partie 5: Allemands et Français depuis 1945'<sup>52</sup>, which sets it, as in other textbooks cited above, in the context of the emergence of European political structures.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Europa im 20. Jahrhundert. Die europäische Einigungsbewegung und das Europa der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte*. Kurshefte Geschichte, Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag, 2004, 68 (pupil tasks) and 67 (photographs).

<sup>47</sup> *Histoire. L'Europe et le monde depuis 1945/ Geschichte. Europa und die Welt seit 1945. Deutsch-Französisches Geschichtsbuch*, Leipzig: Klett 2006, 294–307, 302–303.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 232–307.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

In sum, then, the narrative of the Élysée Treaty – how it came into being, what it means for the two countries and Europe – has mutated, between the 1960s and the turn of the millennium, from a foundational story of Franco-German amity, to a tale of overcoming ‘ancestral enmity’, to a depiction as a foundation (*Grundstein*; a rather static image) or, alternatively, the more dynamic narrative in which it serves, alongside friendship between France and Germany, as the ‘engine’ of European integration. This evident development prompts me to explore whether this transformation represents a societal ‘work on myth’ with the result of a transition from the foundational narrative of Franco-German friendship to the foundational myth of an increasingly integrated Europe.

### **Mythic structures: Adenauer and de Gaulle as ‘dioscuri’**

The practice of most history textbooks since the 1990s, which involves locating the narrative on the run-up to the Élysée Treaty’s conclusion in the context of the background to European integration, effects a significant change in the functions of Adenauer and de Gaulle as actors in the narrative. Accounts from textbooks issued in 1969, 1973 and 1974/75 continued to personalise the story to a notable degree, casting Franco-German reconciliation as a shared, and personal, aim of the two statesmen who led it<sup>54</sup> and in so doing bracketing them together in unity and perhaps similarity; by contrast, the narrative that anchors the treaty in the history of European integration endows the two men with the mythic function of *dioscuri*, of ‘Castor and Pollux’. In the theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss, *dioscuri* stand for the close link between two highly intertwined figures of very divergent character, which, despite the extent of their interconnection, retain a latent distinction.<sup>55</sup> Their perceived unity stems from their relation to a third property or entity, which in the case of de Gaulle and Adenauer is the reconciliation between the two nations they represent. Adenauer and de Gaulle held differing positions on matters of European union, pursued divergent interests, and had distinct ideas of what ‘Europe’ was and what its future relationship with the USA should look like; the third, connective element in their case was their accord on Franco-German friendship and cooperation, the two nations’ central role in Europe, and, as the culmination and manifestation of these, the Élysée Treaty.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Erkunden und Erkennen. Geschichte 3; Geschichte Band IV, Neueste Zeit; Wir erleben die Geschichte.*

A personalising tendency is likewise apparent in the account in *erinnern und urteilen IV*, 159. The book appeared as a first edition, with a publication date of 1990, but its copyright is dated 1981, which suggests that the relevant passages were taken unchanged from the 1981 edition.

<sup>55</sup> Cited after Parr, *System der deutschen Gründungsmythen*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Cf., for example, *Geschichte heute*; similarly in *Geschichte Band IV, Neueste Zeit*.

**‘Switching positions’: from ‘ancestral enmity’ to Franco-German amity**

Adenauer and de Gaulle’s status as *dioscuri* in the mythic narrative goes hand in hand with another structural component of such narratives as defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss, the ‘switch of positions’<sup>57</sup>, which sees the hero, in the course of the narrative, taking up opposing or contradictory positions. The more dramatic the change, such as from one extreme position to that at the opposite extreme, or the more frequently the switch takes place over a short period of time, the greater the effect of the oppositions’ integration within the figure of the mythic hero. Lévi-Strauss’ theory refers to the hero as an individual, but it appears applicable in our case to the two nations of France and Germany as they appear in textbook accounts; here, the change of position takes place in the transfiguration of relations ‘from “ancestral enmity” to amity’, or, alternatively, ‘partnership’.<sup>58</sup> The application of Lévi-Strauss’ theory helps explain why this narrative trope does not turn up in textbooks until the 1990s: this extreme switch of positions on the part of France and Germany has the effect of intensifying the impression of (in this case European) integration.

One way of augmenting the potential of myth to generate meaning and explain the world, and of extending that potential beyond the lifetimes of the mythologised figures, is to harness different myths together as closely as possible.<sup>59</sup> This happens in our case via the close links made in the narrative between the foundational stories of Franco-German friendship and of European integration, as well as via the various iterations, in text and image, of pairings of politicians as the symbolic ‘*couple francoallemand*’.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Cited from Parr, *System der deutschen Gründungsmythen*, 25–26.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. the various history textbooks’ wordings: *Geschichte 4 G*, 211, gives to the corresponding text the title ‘France and Germany: From “ancestral enemies” to friends’ and points to the treaty’s symbolic character. *Geschichte und Geschehen 10*, 209, speaks of the two countries having ‘overcome a centuries-old “ancestral enmity”’, while *Geschichte und Geschehen A 4*, 196, stresses that a ‘partnership’ has emerged ‘[f]rom the “ancestral enmity” which had led to hatred and bloodshed for centuries’. The quotation marks are as used in the books in all cases.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Parr, *System der deutschen Gründungsmythen*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Cf., for instance, the photographs of Charles de Gaulle und Konrad Adenauer (1961), Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (1978), François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl (1984), and Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder (2003) in *Histoire. L’Europe et le monde depuis 1945/Geschichte. Europa und die Welt seit 1945*, 306. The website ‘La France en Allemagne / Frankreich in Deutschland’ additionally names, as antecedents to de Gaulle and Adenauer, Robert Schuman and Adenauer, and Guy Mollet and Adenauer, and among their successors Georges Pompidou and Willy Brandt, and Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy. Finally, labelled ‘*un nouveau couple*’ and without a dedicated subsection, François Hollande and Angela Merkel receive a mention. <http://www.ambafrance-de.org/Presidents-et-chanceliers-suite>, last accessed 7 September 2016.

## Conclusion

After having highlighted the process by which the ‘myth of Franco-German reconciliation’ came into being in political discourse and in so doing deconstructed that myth, Corine Defrance<sup>61</sup> concludes with the question of whether shared remembrance of war in the context of an official day of commemoration and reconciliation might not risk the demise of history (*l’histoire*) – the history of the First World War and the story of reconciliation - at the hands of memory (*le souvenir*).<sup>62</sup> Defrance’s concern is that tying societal remembrance to a specific date might solidify and petrify that hi/story thus remembered, thus robbing it of that life which it needs to gain by its repeated fresh retelling from the perspective of every new present-day setting.

Defrance’s work focused on public speeches and statements given by politicians and on media discussion; accounts of history in textbooks, which have been at the heart of this chapter, do not tend to debate the introduction of days of commemoration and, at least as yet, very rarely touch upon the relationship between official remembrance, history and memory, but they do propose to their readers – school pupils – meanings to attach to historical events. The non-representative study presented in this chapter, having examined seventeen history textbooks issued in the years 1969 to 2009, has found that their accounts of the Élysée Treaty of 1963, its genesis, and its impact, particularly those from the early part of the period, are readable as the narration of a ‘foundational myth’ of Franco-German friendship and their diverse variants as ‘work on myth’, although, of course, one may choose to reject this reading. A further notable finding was the arrival fairly late, in the 1990s, of the central components of mythic narrative in the textbooks’ accounts; the ‘work on myth’ in progress here successively replaced the foundational narrative of amity with the story of Franco-German partnership as the key engine driving European integration. At this point, the Élysée Treaty appears to a degree as a ‘mythic’ past whose Castor and Pollux, Adenauer and de Gaulle, acted out a Franco-German switch of positions and integratively embraced opposing entities. It seems, then, that we may have witnessed the transformation of the narrative to the end of constructing a foundational myth for European integration.

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<sup>61</sup> Defrance, *Construction et déconstruction*. Two dates are at the centre of the debate around a ‘day of reconciliation’: 11 November as Armistice Day, and 22 January as the day of the Élysée Treaty’s signing.

<sup>62</sup> Defrance, *Construction et déconstruction*, 85.

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*Lehrerbd.*: teacher's book

*Schülerbd.*: pupil's book

*Sekundarstufe I*: first-stage secondary education (usually years 5-10)

*Sekundarstufe II/Oberstufe*: second-stage/advanced secondary education (usually years 11-12 (G8) or 11-13 (G9))

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## Illustrations

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p. 50: Charles Martel, from [‘*Von einem hessischen Schulmanne*’], *Bilder aus der vaterländischen Geschichte für hessische Schulen*. Mainz: Franz Frey 1885, 20. Available at [www.gei-digital.de](http://www.gei-digital.de). PURL: <http://gei-digital.gei.de/viewer/resolver?urn=urn%3Anbn%3Ade%3A0220-gd-5373852>. Public domain: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/deed.de>.

Roland Bernhard and Jutta Wimmeler, ‘Invisible Africans? The triangular trade myth in German and Austrian history textbooks’

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p. 146: Visual representation of the slave trade, Carlos Borrell Eikötter From Hans-Joachim Cornelissen and Claudia Tatsch, *Forum Geschichte 7*, Cornelsen 2017. © Cornelsen/Carlos Borrell Eikötter.

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p. 250: *Reichsautobahn* under construction in Radeburg (Saxony), 1937; a four-metre-high dam is built with manual labour (SLUB/Deutsche Fotothek/Walter Möbius).

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