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Nationhood From Below: Some Historiographic Notes on Great Britain, France and Germany in the Long Nineteenth Century

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On 12 February 1888 Georges Defuisseaux, a socialist politician from the Belgian town of Jemappes, received a compelling letter from Thomas Dumonceau, a French-speaking supporter from Wallonia, the francophone southern half of Belgium.[1] In the rambling, unpunctuated phonetic scrawl of the semi-literate, Dumonceau complained about a devastating change in his daily life. The Catholic government, so he claimed, had had the nerve to tamper with the Belgian coins and replace the national motto *L'union fait la force* ('United We Stand Strong') with a German text!

> [W]e miss on the coin of ten centimes [*L*]*'union fait la force* because the [B]elgian goverment saw that the people want to understand it and use it[.] [T]hey say that to prove to the [B]elgian people that he [= king Leopold II] is [G]erman he has marked it in [G]erman on all our coins and money[.] [B]ut we have too much red blood in our veins to be [G]erman[.] [N]o never will the [P]russians govern us.[2]

In the late 1880s there was some anti-German prejudice among Walloon socialists. Some feared that the loathed Kaiserreich would use the labour unrest in Belgium as a pretext to occupy the country, arguing that it could no longer vouchsafe for its own independence and neutrality. Leopold II, who was of German descent, and the whole Belgian establishment were suspected of having concluded secret treaties with Bismarck to surrender the country. Dumonceau was clearly under the spell of these rumours. But what had really happened?

Dumonceau was unaware of it, but a royal decree of 29 March 1886 had put an end to the exclusive use of French on coins. This was one of the language measures that had been issued since 1873, to grant some protection to the mother tongue of the 60 per cent of Belgians who spoke a Flemish–Dutch dialect. As of 1886, exclusively Dutch coins – beside the French – began to circulate in the country. In early 1888 Dumonceau had probably held such a coin for the first time in his life and mistook the Dutch motto *Eendracht maakt macht* for German.

This incident underscores the strength of banal Belgian nationalism (Billig, 1995). The omnipresence of coins and banknotes, with their national symbols, contributed to the penetration of the nation in daily life, thus ensuring its self-evident existence. As such, the smallest deviation from routine (in this case, one Flemish coin where there used to be only French) activates an otherwise unspoken identification with the fatherland. To a French-speaking Belgian such as Dumonceau, the idea of Belgium as a bilingual nation did not hold much appeal. It was so self-evident to him that he lived in a francophone country that he suspected the Flemish coins to be a foreign machination against his nationality.

Dumonceau's letter gives us a more direct view on how national identification worked in everyday life. Sources such as these and, more generally, studies exploring national identity from below have been underrepresented in research on nationalism in western Europe. Scholars have been slow to examine the nationhood of non-elite people and its construction in concrete circumstances at an everyday, personal level. Popular conceptions have been less problematized than the role of elites. Top-down processes are assumed as axiomatic, thus producing little interest in exploring forms of plebeian agency.

The underrepresentation of ordinary people in research on nationalism has at least three sides, parallel to three different interpretations we might ascribe to the concept of history from below.[3] First, it might refer to a methodological shift in perspective, from a bird's eye view to a ground level perspective. Practically this often means the study of national identification in specific, concrete micro-cases at the local level, using a host of different institutional, public and private sources that shed light on how nationhood is reproduced in everyday life; an eloquent example is Colley (1992). Second, it may pertain to a more conceptual approach, of writing history from the experience of people rather than inferring it from their surroundings or from the discourses that are addressed to them. This latter practice is problematic. The American historian Jonathan Rose gives the example of radio publicity in the interwar United States. Some scholars have inferred from sexist

radio advertisments that female listeners adopted conservative gender roles, but others have remarked that housewives saw these radio messages for what they really were: 'as just another sales pitch'. The point, Rose concludes, is that 'there is as much hard evidence for any of these readings [...], which is to say none at all; and we will get no closer to answering these questions unless we shift our attention from the text to the audience' (Rose, 2002 [2001], pp. 5–6). To address this issue, we might invoke a third form of history from below, one that is based on a more restricted heuristic interpretation and involves histories that use qualitative sources actually produced *by* ordinary people.

These three forms may coincide or overlap, but this is not necessarily the case. For example, a study from below of a local patriotic pageant does not have to be based on the experience of the people involved. It can, for instance, solely be founded on a reconstruction of the material environment: the number of spectators, the depicted scenes, the invested funds and so on. Or it can rely on a reading against the grain of newspaper or police reports to deduce the mental world of the pageant's participants and of bystanders. This, however, involves a certain risk: how can we reliably infer from external stimuli how people reacted in concrete real life situations? What was the impact on those attending a patriotic pageant and how did that influence their identifications both in the short and the long run? To answer this question we can turn to *history from below* in its second sense. The experience of local dignitaries, for instance, might offer insights into the construction of national identity at an everyday level. But then again, this is not necessarily *history from below* in its third sense. For that we need autobiographical documents from non-elite people from the lower middle or working classes, or from peasant milieus. Some scholars object to this last approach, because it supposedly overestimates autobiographical documents as a 'mirror of the soul', as an access to the 'true' and 'authentic' masses. Are materials written by ordinary people (such as pauper letters, requests to the authorities, naturalization applications, emigrants' or soldiers' correspondence) anything but highly ritualized or bureaucratized forms of writing in which the requisites of the genre completely overshadow the personal element? Do semi-literate people have something of interest to tell, or are the words they have committed to paper prompted by public writers or middle-class supporters? Indeed, the phrase 'nationhood from below' tends to elicit polemical reactions because some historians use it in a dichotomous sense. They see it as part of an absolute antithesis between chimeras created from above and conceptions authentically grown from below and, similarly, between deceptive elite sources *about*

the masses and genuine statements *by* ordinary people. It goes without saying that my argument does not rest on such idealized notions. Sources produced by commoners are certainly not unmediated voices. Yet neither are they more problematic than sources from other social circles. Admittedly, commoners did not always wield the pen themselves, but rather let other people write down their concerns. Moreover, they often tended to adapt their language when writing to the authorities or their superiors. Yet, in autobiographical documents from higher milieus, opportunism, conventionality and accommodation may also obscure deeper motives and views. Source criticism and a clear contextualization of one's records within their historic background are a must in every case. To exceed the merely anecdotal or illustrative level, autobiographical sources of ordinary people should not be used in isolation (just like their elite counterparts, for that matter). Ideally they are part of a broad array of other sources, giving (a direct or indirect) insight into these people's mentality, and their analysis is firmly embedded within, or takes issue with, the well-known macro-historical frameworks explaining the rise of nations and nationalism (industrialization and modernization). This in effect constitutes one of the central messages of this volume.

In the adoption of the three types of *history from below* to nationalism research, we can roughly distinguish a three-stage chronology. I will substantiate this argument by comparing the historiographies of Great Britain, France and Germany. In what we might call the 'classic' era of modern nationalism research, from the 1970s to the early 1990s, the dominant theoretical framework hinged on socialization, disciplining and indoctrination. In general, there was too strong an emphasis on construction *ex nihilo*. A whole array of nationalizing media at the disposal of states and elites (such as the military and the educational system) were thought to indoctrinate the masses to the extent that other loyalties (to region, city, class and so on) disappeared. Many studies overemphasized the production of national discourses in middle-class or elite sources, to the neglect of interpreting their popular reception and appropriation. The concurrent impact of the cultural and linguistic turns contributed to this research practice (see the introduction).

In the 1990s this rather monolithic and (uni)linear version of nation-building was questioned. Against the background of the Soviet implosion, ongoing European integration and globalization processes, and the growing impact of subaltern and postcolonial studies, attention turned towards conflict, resistance, unintended consequences of governmental strategies and multiple identifications. Scholars began to focus on the experience of the masses (often through micro-case studies at the

local level). The fragmentation of national identity and its interlacing with other group loyalties such as class, gender, religious, regional and (most recently) transnational identities became major concerns. Finally, in the last ten years some scholars have turned towards autobiographical documents from ordinary people to study nationhood from below.

When surveying such a rapidly expanding and wide-ranging field as the study of nations and nationalism, any reviewer who tries to chart the directions in which hundreds of scholars have meandered is likely to be rapped over the knuckles for overlooking specific contributions. A comprehensive survey is impossible; but, in any attempt to capture the general gist, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies are subordinated to the bird's eye view. The periodization I propose is a mere structuring tool tailored to the question at hand, not a procrustean bed on which the complex evolution of all nationalism research since the 1970s can be tied down. There are, of course, exceptions to this temporal framework. Research on war enthusiasm and on the British working classes, for instance, has studied nationhood from below well before the 1990s (see the Introduction).

1. The classic modernist era: the 1970s and 1980s

Common people were largely absent from nationalism research in the 1970s and 1980s. Hobsbawm acknowledged in 1990 'that we still know very little about what national consciousness meant to the mass of the nationalities concerned' (Hobsbawm, 1995 [1990], p. 130). The causes for this neglect can be traced back to the origins of 'modern' nationalism research, roughly the period between the publication of Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971) and Rogers Brubaker's *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992). The theoretical framework, developed by the likes of Kedourie, Brubaker, Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, Tom Nairn, Michael Hechter, Anthony Giddens, Michael Mann, Benedict Anderson and Miroslav Hroch, relied on the assumption that nations are 'cultural construct[s], forged and engineered by various elites' since the eighteenth century at earliest (Smith, 1998, p. 4). This paradigm emphasized top-down socialization and the superseding of old obsolete allegiances (to town, guild, region, religion and so on) by an overarching national identity. It often overstated the homogenizing impact of industrialization, bureaucratization and state formation, heavily relying on quantitative sources (figures on conscription, schooling, literacy, press circulation, transport revolutions and the like) and on testimonies from government officials, journalists, army

reports, language censuses or travel accounts. The classical example is Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1977), a brilliant *tour de force*, but with a heavy emphasis on top-down nation-builders such as the army and the school.[4] (Weber, 1977) The general overinsistence on top-down processes and indoctrination led several scholars to impose the nationalist rhetoric of elites and states onto the mentalities of the masses they addressed. In other words, the discourses of middle- or upper-class actors took on the status of shorthand referents for larger social groups' consumption and appropriation of nationalist attitudes.[5]

The groundbreaking *oeuvre* of the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch, for instance, is vulnerable to the critique of overlooking ordinary people. Hroch compared a number of 'small' national movements in nineteenth-century Europe (such as the Finnish in Russia, the Danish in Schleswig and the Flemish in Belgium). Using biographical data of the most active members of such groups, he described an evolution in which some of these movements developed from phase A (folkloric interest), through B (political agitation), to become a mass affair in their last stage C. This mass phase remains a vague concept, as Hroch has not really elaborated on it. In his recent book *Das Europa der Nationen* he pointed out the need to analyse 'people', but he called his own answers partial, contradictory and hypothetical generalizations (Hroch, 2005, pp. 109–110).

A similar critique applies to Pierre Nora's seminal multi-volume work *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1992). Nora stressed the imagining of the *Realms of Memory* (as the English translation goes; Nora, 1984, p. xxxiv), but neither he nor any of the other contributing authors answered the question: who does the imagining, who invests the realms with symbolic meaning and how does it work in practice? With the exception of the article on the Vendée peasant rising of 1793–1796 – which referred to popular vehicles of memory such as folkore, street names, oral traditions and commercialized souvenirs (Martin, 1984) – the contributors offered a political and symbolic history of shifting *lieu-de-mémoire* interpretations rather than a social history of their appropriation. For instance, the section on *pédagogie*, which studied the popularization of history and patriotism through school manuals and vulgarized histories, did not examine the reception of these books by the public at large, nor their effects on the reader or their practical use in schools.[6]

The logical corollary of the top-down paradigm was the implicit assumption of a high degree of congruence between state and nation. During the 1980s, nation-state history was again on the rise in France and Germany. French scholars tended towards 'the personification, and

reification, of the concept of "the nation" as a sort of eternal representational given', which resulted in 'the "indissociability" of state and nation in French history' (Englund, 1992, p. 311). Fernand Braudel's *L'Identité de la France* (1986), for instance, 'naturalized the external borders of France erected in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' (Berger, 2005, p. 655). In Germany, too, historians were deeply influenced by the view that 'the historical evolution necessarily has to culminate in the foundation of the nation-state' (Berger, 2005, p. 650) – especially so during the 1980s, when the centre-right government of Helmut Kohl stimulated the 'renationalization' of history to bolster national identity (Haupt, 1995, p. 47).

In the British case, the 'Whig interpretation of history' with its unproblematic acceptance of Englishness/Britishness was seriously questioned in the 1970s as a result of Celtic, European and postcolonial challenges (Kearney, 2003, pp. 251–252). Yet this did not immediately lead to a more prominent place of ordinary people in the scholarly narrative of nation-building. Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter, for instance, linked resistance against the thrust of Britishness in the Celtic fringe to uneven capitalist development, but both were only concerned with analysing the behaviour of nationalist intelligentsia and peripheral elites (Hechter, 1999 [1975]; Nairn, 1977). Even studies with telling titles such as *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986) did not fully address ordinary appropriations, as they mainly examined external phenomena like public school propaganda and the strategies of the Empire Marketing Board (Mackenzie, 1986, p. 2).

The resurrection of patriotic historiography during the Thatcher years prompted a reaction from within the (Marxist–feminist) History Workshop Movement that anticipated trends of the 1990s. In 1989, Raphael Samuel published his three-volume *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, which was the result of a series of workshops held in response to the Falklands War. Samuel broke with the left-wing tradition of studying national identity as a bourgeois contrivance used for social control, criticizing the overbearing influence of 'Gramscian notions of hegemony [...]; Weberian notions of "social domination" (rule by bureaucracies of élites); and sociological theories of "social control" '. He was also weary of the historian's reliance 'on the self-conscious purveyors of patriotic sentiment at the expense of those more molecular processes in which national identity, like other personal attachments, are formed' (Samuel, 1989, pp. xvii and xi). Samuel's volumes introduced previously disregarded subjects, such as the role of women and minorities. Several contributions inferred popular attitudes from papers,

plays, prints, paintings, pamphlets, printed political literature, sermons, caricatures, novels and suchlike. Some also relied on interviews, readers' letters and memoirs.

2. The fragmentation of nationhood: the 1990s

After the theoretical field had been largely mapped by the broad explanatory surveys of the 1980s, the next decade witnessed a steep increase of case studies in the culturalist vein. Scholars scrutinized the discourses, myths, symbols and rituals of the most diverse nations and nationalist movements. Attention increasingly turned towards monuments, paintings, ceremonies, stamps, statues and so on. The top-down paradigm often remained the subtext of these studies. Yet several scholars began to question the narrative of top-down nationalization and the idea of a monolithic national identity, ousting all other allegiances – regional, religious, of class, of gender. Underlying these developments was the end of the Cold War, which led to a requestioning of the national past. At the same time it became clear that the Soviet Union's attempts at russification had not annihilated ethnic peculiarities. There was also the EU's post-Maastricht promotion of a common European heritage transcending national differences, which prompted research of transnational regions and identities (Berger, 2005, pp. 660–661; Langewiesche, 1995, pp. 190–191). Meanwhile, the growing impact of subaltern studies – which in itself was a reaction to the crisis of the nation-state in India – made itself felt. Its critique of received Eurocentric notions of nationhood and its insistence on the hybridity of identities was particularly salient (Prakash, 1994).

As a result, it was increasingly acknowledged that, while national identity is undoubtedly a construct, it is not an arbitrary invention independent of society. Some refer to this insight through the concept of 'relative construction': there are structural historical, political and social limits to a construction *ex nihilo* by conniving elites and manipulative rulers (Breuilly, 2002, p. 248). No matter how much energy is invested, not all constructions are successful. Some fail or remain second-rate because they connect insufficiently to popular notions, values and needs, because they fit uneasily with the dominant trends in a given society or because they ignore the presence of older, pre-modern ethnic elements (see A. D. Smith's ethno-symbolism). Scholars increasingly recognized that conflicting loyalties, regional variations and diverse contexts do indeed fragment nationhood, or support it in more complex ways than previously envisaged. These developments led various

scholars to emphasize bottom-up processes, to read well-known or well-used records against the grain and to study nationalization processes at a local or regional level.

In Great Britain the 1990s saw the rise – in Berger's words – of a new British history, 'that is, a history that would give due attention to the different parts of the British Isles and end the long domination of English over Celtic narratives'. Postcolonial challenges further undermined monolithic notions of Britishness (Berger, 2005, pp. 670–671). The increased interest in regional differentiation and the co-existence of multiple identities was lucidly expressed in Linda Colley's often quoted dictum: 'Identities are not like hats.' People can and do wear more than one at a time.[7] Colley's influential monograph *Britons. Forging the Nation* (1992) rejected the notion that Great Britain had forced cultural uniformity and Englishness onto its Celtic peripheries. There had never been 'an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead, Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences' (Colley, 1992, p. 6). Colley reached this conclusion by assessing a wide array of print matter – almanacs, sermons, religious literature, songsheets, war-volunteer lists – that shaped popular attitudes.

In French historiography the monolithic nation view became fragmented as well, a phenomenon witnessed most visibly in the growing disagreement on Vichy, the Algerian war and immigration (Berger, 2005, pp. 668–669). Concomitantly, scholars nuanced the linear politicization of the French countryside and Weber's thesis of peasants into Frenchmen (Barral, 1998). Centralization, they increasingly argued, did not simply erase regional identities and local languages. Jean-François Chanet, for instance, showed that primary school teachers, who were for a long time regarded as supreme instruments of homogenization in the name of the Republic, were *not* intent on erasing their pupils' mother tongue and love of their *petite patrie*. The celebration of local identities was quite compatible with the creation of French patriotism (Chanet, 1996; compare Baycroft, 1995; Ford, 1993; Thiesse, 1997; Gerson, 2003). Under the influence of Michel de Certeau and Roger Chartier, and in answer to the critique that scholars insufficiently addressed the popular appropriation of political innovations, the classic political and socio-economic view on nation-building was supplemented by a more cultural, historical–anthropological approach. Experience, self-perception and appropriation became key concepts. Gérard Noiriel, the foremost historian of France's immigrant past who harshly criticized nationalist

tendencies within French historiography, stressed the importance of mediation and agency when accounting for mechanisms of national integration (Noiriel, 1988). Similarly, peasants were no longer exclusively regarded as objects or victims of modernization, but also as actors with a voice of their own (Corbin, 1993; Hüser, 2001). Or in Christophe Charle's words: 'No more schools or barracks as tools of formation and taming [...], or as channels of a "civilizing process" [...] but as bargaining places, as translation processes [...] as places of transfers and contacts, positive or negative' (Charle, 2003, p. 63). Other studies taking a cultural and/or ethnographic view focused on monuments, museums, stamps, tourism and national festivities (Corbin et al., 1994; Ihl, 1996; Truesdell, 1997; Ben-Amos, 2000).

In German nationalism research, the 1990s saw a growing concern for regional differentiation and for the question of which social groups shaped national identity (the *soziale Trägerschichten*; Applegate, 1990; Confino, 1997; Green, 2001; Weichlein, 2004). Also in this period one of the last vestiges of the *Sonderweg* theory (the presumed continuity of German exceptionalism between 1871 and 1945) came under critical scrutiny, namely as *Sozialmilitarismus*: the pervasive reverence for army and authority in German society. Scholars took into account top-down manipulation, but also the susceptibility of the lower classes as a possible explanation of militarization. This shift was particularly evident in Ute Frevert's work. In 1997 she still emphasized Jacobin socialization 'from above', *von oben*, through the army, yet four years later she highlighted the emancipatory possibilities of the nation-in-arms concept (Frevert, 1997, 2001). Nonetheless, she stated that 'it is impossible to say what impressions army service left on men from the lower classes', given the lack of surviving testimonies (Frevert, 2004, p. 87).

More generally, several scholars of nationalism began to doubt the efficacy of nationalizing institutions. Haupt and Tacke, for instance, emphasized how little influence official measures, political propaganda and printed material exerted on the masses during the nineteenth century (1996, p. 262). Heuristically, most attempts from the 1990s to study nationhood from below relied on figures of draft evasion, membership of veteran leagues and attendance to national festivals, the dissemination of patriotic print ephemera, the wearing of cockades in the national colours, patriotic paintings, national tourism and, finally, the German sports and body culture, including military exercises in schools (Confino, 1997, p. 4; Vogel, 1997). Increasingly, though, private writings would be used.

3. 'Ordinary records': the early twenty-first century

In recent years ever more scholars have critically reflected on the need to engage in a social history of national identity construction. In 2002, for instance, the German historian Benjamin Ziemann called for a systematic and broadly based qualitative source investigation of how individuals construct national identity (Ziemann, 2002). Walker Connor too criticized the overdependence, in nationalism research, on 'the opinions and assertions of the literate elite, whose generalizations concerning the existence of national consciousness are often highly suspect'. Taking the perspective from below, Connor argued, 'will require a reordering of primary interest in ascertaining the view of group–self held by elites to that held by the people writ large. [...] If the nation is a mass phenomenon, then our priority should be to render the mass intelligible' (Connor, 2004, pp. 44–45).

An increasing number of nationalism scholars express an interest in the everyday aspects of national identity (Thiesse, 1999, pp. 227–279; Yoshino, 1999; Colls, 2002, p. 6; Echternkamp and Müller, 2002, pp. 17–18). Ever more studies tap with undeniable ingenuity into popular mentalities (Heathorn, 2000; Colls, 2002; Roynette, 2004; Hall and Rose, 2006; Melman, 2006; Brophy, 2007). Concurrently, a heuristic shift has occurred as more scholars are using qualitative sources *from* ordinary people. This is particularly evident in the areas of labour, empire, gender and plebeian lives.

Historians of labour have increasingly turned towards published and unpublished working-class autobiographies. Berger, for instance, has used these texts to study personal narratives of class and nation. He showed how 'experiences of internationalism are often intertwined with a reconfirmation of national belonging'. International labour meetings did not necessarily reinforce the internationalist belief that workers are the same all over the world. Those contacts could, for instance, foster a clearer sense of national character because they cast light on striking (subjective) differences (Berger, 2000, p. 283; see also Lyons, 2001; Rose, 2002 [2001]; Silbey, 2005). Yet published memoirs do have a downside. Ziemann has warned against the uncritical use of (a limited sample of) published autobiographies that are questionable in their post-factum reconstruction of working-class attitudes, especially if they were written by later party bureaucrats (Ziemann, 2002).

The common view has also been adopted in studies of empire, for instance by Linda Colley. She used autobiographical narratives of ordinary Britons who were taken captive overseas. Her intention was one

of 'individual recovery and of imperial revision', with the explicit aim to counterbalance the historiographic practice that 'reconstructed – and over-homogenized' British attitudes towards empire 'on the slender basis of testimonies by a few conspicuous actors in positions of power or notoriety' (Colley, 2002, pp. 3, 15).[8] Research on gender, masculinities and nationhood has also looked into average materials such as Mass Observation interviews, readers' letters to the press, statements of conscientious objectors, front letters and diaries (Funck, 2002; Roper, 2004; Rose, 2004).

In the past decade the study of plebeian lives has opened up a number of promising paths. Social historians who have tried to reintroduce individual experience in poverty research have used sources such as almshouse admission interviews, petitions, pension applications, court records of interrogations and the like. Laura Tabili, for instance, has examined applications for naturalization to gain access to lower-class immigrants' sense of Britishness. She showed 'that British nationality was not simply a hegemonic imposition obliterating local identities, but instead formed in asymmetrical dialogue between local and national, migrants and natives, state and society' (Tabili, 2005, p. 379). Requests or pauper letters, in which the poor (whether through mediation of public scribes or not) turn to an official institution to receive help (poor-relief officers, local dignitaries, provincial governors, the royal family and so on), have also attracted increasing attention over the last few years.[9]

In conclusion, we can safely posit that in recent years scholars have been tapping into previously underused or unknown sources to study nationhood from below. However, the use of 'fresh' sources in itself does not constitute innovative research into the complexities of national identification. One of the central messages of this volume bears reminding: it is absolutely crucial that 'ordinary records' are clearly framed within their historic context, that they are supplemented with a wide range of additional source materials and that their analysis is linked to broader macro-historical developments. Only then ~~will~~ the study of nationhood from below prove fruitful.

Notes

1. Thanks are due to John Breuilly, David Blackbourn and James Brophy for their comments on earlier versions of this article. All views expressed in this ~~essay~~ are of course the author's sole responsibility.
2. 'on ne manque sur les piece de dix centimes que lunion fait la force par ce que le gouvernemant belge a vu que le peuple voulai le conprendre est sent servir

[= et s'en servir] il on dit pour prouver au peuple belge qu il etait alleman qu il a loi marque en alleman sur toute nos piece de monai et dargen mai nous avont trop de sans [= sang] rouge dans les vains pour être alleman non jamais les prusiens ne viendrons nous gouverner'. Thomas Dumonceau to Georges Defuisseaux, 12 February 1888 [original spelling mistakes] (Archives of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Fonds Defuisseaux. 312C). All translations are the author's.

3. See the introduction on the development of the field of history from below.
4. The same can be said of other classic works on nationhood such as Mosse (1991 [1975]).
5. For examples in German historiography, see Langewiesche (1995, pp. 210–214).
6. The same can be said of the German equivalent of the *Lieux de mémoire*: François and Schulze (2002, 3rd ed.).
7. The sartorial metaphor is a popular one: 'Men and women did not choose collective identification as they chose shoes, knowing that one could only put on one pair at a time' (Hobsbawm, 1995 [1990], p. 123).
8. James Epstein and Bernard Porter too have used autobiographical sources to gauge the popular resonance of British imperialism (Porter, 2004; Epstein, 2006, p. 268).
9. See the special issue on petitions of the *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 46 (2001, December); the special issue on 'Pratiques d'écriture' of the *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 56, 4–5 (2001, July–October); Fabre (1997); Lyons (2007); Sokoll (2001); Van Ginderachter (2006).

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