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Never Mind Patriarchy, But Do Mention the War! Reflections on the Absence of Gender History from the *House of European History*

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This article explores the absence of a consistent longer historical narrative about gender relations in European history, as the latter is presented in the recently opened House of European History in Brussels and, to some extent, in the European Parliament's visitor centre, Parlamentarium. It is argued that gender equality is presented as part of a modern European identity, but that it is a phenomenon that isn't given such a problematic history as many other phenomena – gender inequality is not construed as a part of European history in the way that, for example, totalitarianism and colonialism are. Gender inequality isn't seen and constructed as a previous challenge to European unification and integration, and therefore gender equality can't be perceived as a solution to a relevant problem in the narratives at hand.

In this article I will reflect on museal representations of war and gender, and how these are constructed and displayed in the European Parliament's ambitious new history museum: the House of European History in Brussels. I will attempt to compare a well-established, often musealised historical narrative about Europe and European identity, which is undoubtedly part of the most commonly featured tales, with a less well defined – or even ill-defined —narrative. The narratives are both connected to central, alleged 'European values'. The first one tells us that the remembrance of war and totalitarianism is a central part of European identity, because modern EU integration has provided a way to overcome and prevent the repetition of historical evils. In this narrative, political and economic integration as well as liberal democracy are solutions to these problems. Europe is thus constructed as a peaceful continent with a troubled past, a story often told in museums.

Now among the 'values' and policy areas that are narrated as elements and products of this integration, and of liberal democracy, we find gender equality. But I will

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argue that this value is given weak ties to the European history that provides a backdrop to the other main values. Gender equality can be found among the solutions, but what was the problem? How can gender equality be such an important field of EU policy, while the old 'master narrative' is still so strong that gender issues remain marginal or almost invisible in the museal narrative?

A House of European History

In the European Parliament complex in Brussels we now find a new museum for European History: The House of European History (HEH), opened in spring 2017. It holds, first and foremost, a permanent exhibition, but also hosts temporary exhibitions. The permanent exhibition is indeed quite impressive. It would take anyone seriously interested in exploring and examining its objects and audio-visual illustrations much longer than the suggested 90 minutes. My following discussion of the HEH builds on my reading of the 'Concept for a House of European History' (2008), an interview (conducted before the actual opening) with the project leader of the HEH, and one visit (albeit over two days) to the HEH in December 2017.

The project as such was initiated by the European Parliament, the initiative being ascribed to the then President of the European Parliament, Prof. Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, MEP in 2007. The published 'Concept for a House of European History' gives a brief history and motivation for the project, as well as an outline for the exhibition, including a timeline of important events and processes. Point 23 in the Concept for HEH states: 'The permanent exhibition will not portray the individual histories of Europe's states and regions one after another, but will instead focus on European phenomena. In that connection, particular emphasis will be placed on the era of peace Europe has enjoyed since the end of the Second World War' (Concept: 8).

In my interview (carried out in 2016) with Taja Vovk van Gaal, who acted as the academic project leader during the building phase of HEH, it became apparent that the project was trying to avoid creating a European history of the kind that Gerard Delanty has called 'a group history of the nation state' (Delanty 1995, ix). Instead, the idea is to capture what is truly *European*. This includes the experience of a plurality of nationalisms. One key effort in the creation of the permanent exhibition was to present a multitude of objects from the many histories of individual national projects, and the nationalist ideologies that framed them, thus presenting them not as national histories, but as a common European experience (interview with Taja Vovk van Gaal). This paragraph also emphasises the special significance of and peacefulness of the period after the Second World War. Solely from the reading of the outline, I found it reasonable to pose a question about the conspicuous absence of women and gender relations. Van Gaal acknowledged the validity of these concerns, and suggested that the team had tried to amend this, not least by searching for objects that would represent and depict the life and activities of women, and stated that a temporary exhibition would probably treat this in greater detail.

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The Exhibition in Sections

The Eastman building, where the HEH is located, is an older but renovated structure. The permanent exhibition is located on floors 3 to 6. The first section, 'Shaping Europe', is a series of reflections on maps and vague and shifting geographical borders as well as references to antiquity, merged with references to very modern phenomena. Then comes 'Europe: A global power', where the industrial revolution and colonialism are on display. 'World War I' has a section of its own. 'Totalitarianism versus Democracy' is devoted to Stalinism and National Socialism. 'World War II' is another section, and then come 'Rebuilding a divided continent' and 'Creating Social Security'. 'Memory of the Shoah' is a specific section, where the act of remembering at a cultural and social level is very directly addressed. The 1970s and 1980s, and the end of the post-Second World War boom, are represented in a section called 'Shattering certainties', and the post-1989 period is treated under the headings 'Re-mapping Europe' and 'Milestones of European integration'. The section 'Shared and divided European Memory' again addresses the very activity of history and memory production. In a concluding section on floor 6, we find a gallery named 'Accolades and criticism', which encourages visitors to articulate and share their opinions. The questions directed at visitors include 'What is Europe?', 'What makes you feel "European"?' and 'What is our European heritage'?

There were certainly a number of debates preceding the founding of HEH (see for example Settele 2015) and it would be interesting to review its reception in the media as well as other forums, but that is outside the scope of this article. I will however mention two reactions to the permanent exhibition at HEH, one from Jakub Jareš (2017), of the Cultures of History Forum, and one from the Platform of European Memory and Conscience (2017). The Platform published a highly critical report, more or less dismissing most of the exhibition, stating: 'The main idea is missing, seems to be overshadowed by the narrow-minded Marxism-rooted concept' (Platform 2017, 14). It is obvious that the Platform has quite a different interpretation of 'the main idea' of the HEH than the museum's own professionals and the associated academics. One claim of the Platform is that the history and experiences of Eastern Europe are specifically misrepresented. Jareš on the other hand is generally less dismissive, but concludes that there seems to be a Central European bias, and wonders whether Portuguese, Irish and other nationals from southern and western Europe will accept the narrative readily. He also observes that women's rights do appear as a part of the Western post-war narrative. In his observation this serves to highlight the contrast the exhibition creates between East and West (Jareš 2017).

I will not carry out an in-depth analysis of the exhibition, but explore the well-known narratives of war and totalitarianism, and look for gender equality as a part of modern European identity as it is constructed through this exhibition, while also examining if and how gender relations are part of a problematic past.

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Memory, History and Identity

It is well noted that in recent decades there has been a shift towards memory studies in history (Pakier and Stråth 2010), as well as studies of heritage. This is reflected in academic research, but also in the way that society and organisations engage with the production and use of history. This can be understood in many ways and from several points of views. One is that both the use of 'memory' and 'heritage' as concepts involve and even demand something more from collectives of people than 'history' does. These collectives may be readers or students, but are more likely to be spectators, visitors, ethnic groups or even citizens of a specific political community. *If* a collective memory exists, and can be actively formed, it most certainly becomes a very important part of a collective identity. *If* there is a collective heritage, belonging to a group, then it creates a concrete bond between those who bequeathed that heritage and those who inherit it. And, as pointed out many times, it may serve to exclude others. Either way, the main ingredient in memory and in heritage is history and historical narratives.

In a parallel, but to some extent connected, recent process, European political integration has led us to a point where we now have a sort of a European citizenship. Stråth (Pakier and Stråth 2010) emphasises how the market integration agenda of the Maastricht treaty effectively crowded out visions for a more social agenda for the EU, and that this came to shape notions of the de facto European citizenship that was given to citizens in EU member states (Pakier and Stråth 2010, 380–381). Policy casts shadows into the regulations of belonging. This citizenship's legal and political implications are manifold, but it has also created a demand for a clearer and explicitly common European *identity*, substantiated through a historical narrative. The case I am examining here – constructing a memory for display at the House of European History – tells stories about European history, and also explicitly aims to underpin, maintain or even create a common European identity. Historical narratives in museums may also, as Lähdesmäki points out, be 'pending narratives', which place the continuation of the story in the hands of the audience (Lähdesmäki 2017). The story/history is not yet finished; it has not come to an end. I will use this concept of pending narratives in the following analysis, because it can help us to understand the communicative efforts and possibly effects of historical narratives of European history and integration (Lähdesmäki 2017). Furthermore, many museum projects, whether strictly historical or with slightly different agendas, as well as the existence of 'master narratives', give an important role to both historical awareness and the act of remembering in identity building, which I will also reflect on here. But, I argue, this also underlines the possibility that museal exhibitions may have a form of argumentative structure that presents us with historical problems, and their solutions.

The Master Narrative – Where Gender Relations are Excluded

A range of different museal representations of European integration can be found. Indeed, these can be seen as a part of the wider phenomenon of Europeanisation, which also has a strong expression in cultural policy, especially via several EU

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bodies, and in the declaration of a 'European Identity' by the European Commission. Taking a smaller case, I will follow the questions raised by Kaiser *et al*. (2014), who examine how processes of Europeanisation take shape in different spheres, for example in museums and their exhibitions and collections, and especially how these represent history and create master narratives that may sometimes compete with each other (Kaiser *et al*. 2014, 4–5).

Tuuli Lähdesmäki (2017), has conducted a narrative analysis of the Parlamentarium, which is the European Parliament's visitor centre (see also Pearson 2013). In her analysis, Lähdesmäki covers the Parlamentarium as a whole, but an important section concentrates on the historical 'Prologue', and the 'Visions' it projects. As an exhibition, it is much smaller/more limited than the HEH, but the similarities in their goals and the fact that they were both founded by the European Parliament makes it possible to compare them. Lähdesmäki concludes that the Parlamentarium presents us with a narrative in which the European Parliament is the protagonist, and the citizens and administrative bodies of the EU are the agents. European problems are solved only by the unification of Europe. She also interprets the choices of images as a method of creating an intertextuality, where familiar images are assumed to give the viewer a way to confirm the constructed *common* story, by acknowledging all of its parts as well known:

> When memory texts follow commonly repeated and broadly circulated narratives and imageries, such as in the case of the Parlamentarium bringing to the fore the tropes of war, emergency resulting from its destruction, and liberation from totalitarianism, and link these tropes to the story of European integration, the need for explaining and justifying them decreases: memory texts are perceived as bringing to the fore history 'as it happened'. (Lähdesmäki 2017, 66)

To summarise, the argument is that visitors recognise 'their' history in the exhibition and therefore more easily accept the whole of it as their identity. I will depart from this assumption from Lähdesmäki's observations concerning the historical part of the exhibition in the Parlamentarium when I turn to the exhibitions in the House of European History (referred to as HEH from here on).

Time as a Cultural Border

The first narrative, as mentioned above, relates how modern European integration is the result of dire circumstances. Integration was the way to overcome some of the most fearful wars the world has ever seen. This is a narrative so powerful that some suggest that Europe's own history is the greatest 'other' of the EU. *Peace* in Europe is seen as more or less equivalent to European integration (you can't have one without the other) and its manifestation is first and foremost the European Union and its institutions and structures (Lähdesmäki 2017; Kaiser *et al*. 2014). Needless to say, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU is a powerful confirmation of this narrative. Europe's *darker history* – exemplified as states governed by totalitarian ideologies and the two world wars in the twentieth century – have been used as *the* big trauma, and the big cultural border to overcome, in order to create a unified

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identity, as well as a unified political and economic sphere. In this narrative the EU, its predecessors and expansion provide a concrete way to leave the past behind. Europe after the wars becomes something completely different from what it was before.

Time and history are thus construed as a cultural border of great significance. It separates present-day Europe from the past, and at the same time unifies nations and peoples that were often in direct conflict with each other. This cultural border is not presented in a way that leaves the past behind in oblivion. To be *aware* of this war-torn and totalitarian past, to engage in *remembering* it, is a necessary part of European identity. This narrative is observable in several museal representations of European integration, such as the above-mentioned Parlamentarium. It was also an important element in a project called the Museum of Europe, not to be mixed up with HEH, which resulted in a few temporary exhibitions but did not make it to an established on-site museum. In the Museum of Europe exhibition entitled *It's our history!* it was claimed that 'For the first time in the history of Europe, the culture of war has given way to the culture of peace', a claim that brought this exhibition criticism for reproducing a teleological official EU rhetoric (cited from Kaiser *et al*. 2014, 25).

Challenging the Master Narrative by Giving Gender Relations a Past

In the following I will highlight a political and social process which I think we can consider as part of the 'solutions', in so far as it has grown important in representations of the European present; namely gender equality. This second, less well established, and, in a longer historical perspective, more truncated narrative that I will address, is one in which gender relations, and specifically the development towards a modern norm of gender equality, is part of the modern European integration project. I will assume that gender relations have a double connection to constructions of European identity. Inside the notion of a European identity, and inside the EU itself, gender relations is an area where variation not only in behaviour, but also in institutions and regulations is allowed, and even expected. In this sense it represents cultural diversity within Europe. However, on the outside of European identity, seen in relation not to Europe's components (i.e. the nation states), but to the rest of the world, gender relations become a more unifying element, and gender equality can be seen as one of the ingredients used in efforts to construct *a common* European identity.

Since 2006 the European Union has had a dedicated body, *The European Institute for Gender Equality* (EIGE), that was

> established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality.

Furthermore, EIGE underlines that equality between women and men is now a 'fundamental value' of the EU (http://eige.europa.eu/about-eige). Since 2013, EIGE has published a Gender Equality Index. On one hand, the index highlights and visualises

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the variation and differences in Europe in these matters. On the other hand, this is done with an explicit goal of integration and harmonising national societies towards a common norm of gender equality. Kimberly Earles (2014) argues that the EU is trying to construct itself as a leader in gender equality. Amy Elman (2007) takes quite a wide scope in her analysis of gender policies in European integration, and points to the development of greater EU interest in social inequalities – or, as she says, in equality policies – starting with the signing of the Amsterdam treaty in 1997. This is the point where gender equality is articulated as one of the union's fundamental values. Despite many efforts, an increasing number of directives, the establishing of specific agencies as well as gender mainstreaming policies, Elman holds the view that the EU has not been a particularly strong force for gender equality within the member states: the greatest beneficiary of EU equality policies may instead be the EU itself. In practice, the union is a laggard in relation to (many of) the member states, which means that, on the whole, equality is rhetorical and virtual rather than a core value in actual policies and regulations:

> A historical analysis of the EU and its response to sexual inequality have revealed that because its agenda is primarily economic and because it lacks any specific and detailed legislation concerning human rights, the EU can contend that such issues as violence against women and sexual self-determination are extraneous to its political mission, beyond its purview, or even substantively inconsequential. The EU's general reluctance to regard the sexual subordination of women as political in nature, economic in consequence, and worthy of EU action in general has meant that, relative to many of its numerous constituent states (though certainly not all), it is a laggard. (Elman 2007, 155–156)

Elman further points to the EU's 'reluctance to combat sex discrimination on principle rather than merely because it is economically and/or politically expedient' (Elman 2007, 153). I am using her observation of this reluctance – and specifically focusing on 'on principle' – as an argument that gender equality is indeed a very ambiguous part of European identity. It is welcomed – and fairly widely used – as a symbol of progress and as a field where the EU can be observed to be in the forefront. In the Global Gender Gap Index of 2017 (World Economic Forum 2017) we find only one EU country below the global average (Hungary) and a lot of them among the top scorers (Finland at number 4 is the top EU country). But when we look at the history of the EU, not only did gender equality issues come a long way down on the agenda, but women were, from the beginning, as Elman puts it: 'conspicuously absent from the initial deliberations that established the EC. In fact, its primary policy-making body, the European Commission, was composed entirely of men until 1989' (Elman 2007. 19).

Despite this, gender equality is nowadays an explicit core value of the EU. But, I will argue, in the publicly projected historical narratives of European history, gender *inequality* is not portrayed as a field that the EU or the Europeans have to engage with, remember and seek remedy for in the organised learning of our own history. It is not an important and integrated part of the European past. Gender equality appears as a part of modern Europe, and as such it is an import part of contemporary

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European identity and democracy. It is a part of the solution, so to speak, but a solution that does not seem to issue from a historical problem. Gender relations thus holds no prominent position in the master narrative.

The Twentieth Century – With or Without Prehistory

In the aforementioned Parlamentarium, at the other end of the European Parliament complex, history doesn't go further back than the twentieth century. However, this is not the case with the much more ambitious HEH. Still, it is safe to argue, both from the very concept of the HEH, and from observing its permanent exhibition, that the disasters of the twentieth century again form the prime explanation for modern European integration, which – however less apparent – remains the explanandum of the museum (which makes a point of calling itself a 'House', and not a 'museum'). The world wars are without doubt central to the whole project. It is noteworthy that the First World War holds a much more prominent position in the HEH than in the Parlamentarium. Both these projects have been seen as shifting the narrative from a longer one, such as that chosen for the previously mentioned *Museum of Europe*, which placed integration after 1945 in a long tradition dating back to the year 1000. (Kaiser *et al*. 2014, 121–122)

The concept is introduced with a quoted speech by Prof. Hans-Gert Pöttering, MEP, as the said initiator:

> I should like to create a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow. I would like to suggest the founding of a 'House of European History'. It should [be] a place where a memory of European history and the work of European unification is jointly cultivated, and which at the same time is available as a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union.

These words were part of the speech he gave on 13 February 2007 setting out the programme for his presidency. Pöttering uses several central concepts here: 'memory', 'history', 'European unification' and 'European identity'. Memory and history are, as discussed earlier, central and related concepts in historiography today, but maybe even more so in relation to museology. It should be noted that they aren't used as equivalents: history is what should be remembered, together with the efforts for unification, and that memory should in turn be cultivated. The HEH should also be a locus, an actual place for European identity, which is perpetually shaped by the citizens of Europe. Lastly, the concept of (modern) European integration that I have been using to denote the EU, as well as other previous and parallel developments, is not the word of choice here. Instead Pöttering is using European *unification*, which may be understood as a much stronger and more normative concept than integration. This brief quote on the other hand also signals a readiness to counteract the concern that has been put forward: 'The construction of collective memories has a dimension of political instrumentalization in which the memory boom might be exploited as a nostalgic trip to the past in order to avoid discussion about the future'

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(Pakier and Stråth 2010, 9). Pöttering opens up for an ongoing process of shaping European identity, which certainly aims for the future, and thus also qualifies the narrative as a pending one.[1]

A Long, Eventful Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century is, in the historiographic tradition that MacDonald and DeCoste (2014) puts in question, portrayed as a relatively peaceful period, but also as a time of morality, rationality and idealism. From this comes, claims MacDonald, an apologetic understanding of colonialism, rendering European colonial domination and explorations around the world as less dramatic than later genocides and massacres, as well as earlier disasters. When the twentieth century emerges out of this, its violence, wars and massacres seem all the more irrational (MacDonald and DeCoste 2014, 93).

My angle on this, however, is not to put a whole historiography into question: it is to explore what image of history and identity we meet when we enter and walk through the House of European History. If historical narratives are the main ingredients of memory and heritage, then museums and similar institutions are the main stage where they are put on display, and they are in turn of course also built on artefacts, images, sounds, visualisations and texts. It is surely possible to question whether the permanent exhibition in the HEH projects a narrative of the nineteenth century as relatively peaceful, etc., in the manner mentioned above. I would argue that it is instead represented as a time of upheavals and change. Without engaging in a critical discussion of these aspects in detail, I would say that colonialism and its Europeanness are definitely on display. Decolonisation appears as a part of

1. Indeed, the future is there in the Concept, as Questions for Europe's future:

113. The future of the European Union remains open. There is no clear objective in sight, nor is there any agreement on where the EU's borders should lie. The closing section of the exhibition is intended merely to throw up questions, so as to make clear to visitors how open the situation is. At the same time, this approach makes it possible to react in the short term to new developments.

114. Possible questions to visitors:

- Is a further 'deepening' of the EU possible? How should we react to the referendum defeats on the EU Constitution? Is the Lisbon Treaty a viable compromise?
- When will the enlargement of the EU be completed? Can Turkey become a full member of the EU?
- How can the EU's democratic deficit be overcome?
- Why is the EU incapable of arousing any real enthusiasm among the general public in the Member States?
- How can the EU overcome its structural weakness in military matters, and in foreign policy in general?
- How can the EU react to the demographic change affecting all its Member States? Is encouraging immigration an effective response?
- Can the differing traditions on the form taken by the European social model be reconciled?
- What will the EU of the future look like? Will it develop into a form of federation or an association of states?

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European history, of importance to political movements and identities of more contemporary times. The communist regimes of the twentieth century are connected with severe political oppression and conflicts, and a number of processes of resistance and liberation. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century is also portrayed as the century of the breakthrough of the industrial revolution, and as such also as a redefinition of the social structure, with proletarianisation and poverty following suit. Communism and other totalitarian responses to economic liberalism – notably fascism and Nazism – all address some kind of problem, even though they then become the main manifestations of breakdown and of separation, that is, the total antitheses of unification, and a clear challenge to integration. Thus, the main European values have a history and the gains of integration are presented as a result of overcoming historical problems. However, precisely because the accomplishments of political and economic integration, primarily via the EU and its institutions, have been remarkable, the success of this integration as such, together with the enlargement process from the 1990s onwards, also means that mounting crises and conflicts nowadays are 'internal'. From this result one can argue that European integration has created a cultural border against its own past. But one can also ask how sustainable is this process, and what are the future prospects? An infinite integration process? Unification as an endgame? A new European war might even be a true civil war, as Ulrike Guerot (2017) argues, for example. The open-ended exhibition, the 'pending narrative' of the HEH doesn't explicitly point us in this direction. But the exhibition leaves us without a framework to deal with such issues.

Women's Liberation – Again a Solution without a Problem

Let's turn back to the question of gender in the exhibitions and outline of HEH. If we start with the concept and outline as such, it is clear that gender history was not one of the main points of departure when the whole project was conceptualised. There is in fact only one explicitly 'gendered' paragraph in the concept for HEH. Paragraph 39 says:

> The division of men and women into the political and social estates of the clergy, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry and servant class was long regarded as an expression of the natural and divine order. Similar cultures formed throughout Europe based on the lifestyles or ways of thinking of the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and later of industrial workers, civil servants, etc. This was reflected in ways of dressing and eating and in an interest in and taste for music and other arts. (Concept: 12)

The purpose of mentioning men and women here seems to be not to exclude women, and to mark that we are now talking about the population as a whole. But even if this is a point where women are actually mentioned, any reference to a political or economic dimension of the gender order is totally absent. When paragraph 43 mentions the rise of the idea of human rights during the eighteenth century, and when it explores some of the important elements of what has been called the 'age of

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revolutions', again there is nothing about any gender dimension to this struggle to assert and reformulate rights and citizenship before the twentieth century. The only thing mentioned is the first European election with universal suffrage 'in which women also had the right to vote and stand', in Finland in 1907 (Concept: 13).

There are certainly images of women and representations of women's lives, as well as representations of social life as it was lived by men, women and children, in the permanent exhibition. In common with a few images in the Parlamentarium, there are also images and stories concerning the modern women's movement. A few appear in the very first section, and some in the section on 'Europe: A global power', such as women demanding the vote. The main problem I see with the historical narrative of the gender order we are presented with here is not the relative absence of women as such, even though this becomes pressingly obvious every time a more biographical, 'founding father' perspective is used as the pedagogical approach. I argue that it is the fact that the older gender order is not represented – or articulated – as an intrinsic part of these older societies, and of how political and economic power was construed. Patriarchy and the systematic subordination of women are not clearly stated to be a part of our heritage, and therefore are not visible as a problem to be solved. But women's liberation is still a part of European identity. History thus becomes less central as a remedy to present-day problems, even if gender equality today is supposed to be a core value of the EU.

Why is this so? Well, the fact that totalitarian regimes, wars and not least the Holocaust/Shoah are given a specific place and pedagogical position in the European narrative at hand here is by no means surprising. But to my understanding this doesn't have any direct bearing on the absence of a representation of the older patriarchal order as politically, socially and economically embedded in older European societies. So might it be the concept for the HEH that is the problem? Well, it could be, and to some extent it does seem to be the case. However much the narrative in the concept for a House of European History aims at *overcoming* nationalism, it clearly bears the mark of what has sometimes been called 'methodological nationalism'. Explaining changes in the political structures that define nation states and other similar political forms of organisation is a priority in a narrative that seldom addresses gender relations. But, on the other hand, mention is given to many other aspects of social history, political mobilisation, social relations and conflicts, ideologies such as racism, practices such as colonialism and the problematic situation of the working classes. Furthermore, their manifestations are clearly on display in the permanent exhibition, not least in the section presenting 'Europe: A global power', which focuses on the period from 1789 to 1914. The team has worked extensively to give life (or still life ...) to the brief points mentioned in the narrative of the concept through objects of many kinds. Maybe the crux here is that gender inequality isn't seen and constructed as a previous challenge to European unification and integration, and therefore gender equality can't be perceived as a solution to a relevant problem in the narratives at hand. This means that the rather

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extensive body of historical research on gender relations in Europe that is available has left few clear traces here.

Concluding Remarks

The dark history of wars and totalitarianism can be traced back in the historical narratives that are also found in the House of European History. Lähdesmäki concluded that the Parlamentarium has a ‘pending narrative’, and I would say that this is also found in HEH. But this time it is more clearly constructed to evolve around memory and heritage as active social processes. History doesn’t have an end, and the exhibition attempts to put the future in the hands of visitors. European integration serves as an important mechanism for the creation of peace and democracy, and thereby creates a cultural border against the European past.

Gender equality on the other hand, is clearly presented as a part of the modern European identity, but with weak links to the past. The cultural borders connected to the creation of gender equality are implicit, more connected to differences within Europe, or between Europe and other regions, but remain restricted to the modern world and do not become part of any master narrative. A last remark: both the Parlamentarium and the House of European History have now included images and texts about Brexit, pointing to an ambition to keep up to date. The question does arise over how casual this exit can be in relation to a common European identity constructed via memory. A shrinking of the Union was not among the questions about the future to visitors that were proposed in the outline for HEH. Neither was there a question about how an understanding of previous systematic gender inequalities could improve a European future.

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