



Lotte Jensen (ed.) *The Roots of Nationalism. National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016, 342 pp., ISBN 978 946 298 107 2, Open Access: <http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=606242>).

In the 1980s sociologists and anthropologists such as Eric Hobsbawm, John Breuilly, Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner worked on the idea that nationalism did not exist prior to the Age of Revolutions. Their research and publications should be seen in the light of (renewed) interest in modernism, which could be defined as modernity, industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation and democratisation – features that were absent prior to the 1780s. In 2012 Caspar Hirschi published a book on *The Origins of Nationalism*, which shows an alternative history with a focus on linguistic framing of a belongingness due to history. Azar Gat's *Nations* (2013) suggests that (politicised) ethnicity and nationalism have become largely intertwined.

Where these previously mentioned studies form a macro-narrative on nationalism, Lotte Jensen's volume *The Roots of Nationalism* consists of mainly micro-studies: embedded in findings from literary sources of a particular country with a bottom-up approach. It focusses upon the period 1600-1815, taking up the challenge of showing elements associated with nationalism in the pre-Revolutions period. The book has been split in five different themes: a theoretical framing of nationalism; nationalism rooted in history; othering; cultural output; and lastly, nationalism during the revolutionary period. The first theme is theoretical, the second through fourth are thematic, and the fifth is based upon a period in time. The central theme of all articles is nationalistic sentiments in early modern discourses.

Jensen has succeeded in bringing literary historians together with a great variety of cultural backgrounds. This resulted in contributions focusing on countries often left out of the scope of Western-European researchers due to less accessible languages in Iceland, Wales, Hungary and Russia. The – mainly – thematic approach has not resulted in one single definition of nationalism, however, in its absence the contributors have found room to shape their contributions source-based. The lack of a single definition could have turned out to be disastrous, however, the three thematic sections turn out to have a clear focus. Unfortunately, the fifth section, 'Nation in the Age of Revolution' seems to be the odd one out: here a choice for a chronological section was made. Considering the build-up of this volume, Verheijen's protest songs would have fit well in the fourth section on 'Maps, Language and Canonisation' which focusses on the cultural output.

The red thread through all contributions is – obviously – literary examples in the early nationalism, or belongingness to a group with (ascribed) shared characteristics. Jensen starts off with an example by David Hume reflecting upon ‘nation’ and ‘national character’ (9) which became integrated in the daily use of language and literature. Understanding the differences between groups and their ‘identity’ was a matter of looking at – mainly – cultural expressions. Gat, Hadfield and Bell confront the reader with various arguments why ‘nationalism’ needs to be studied from a wider perspective. Gat shows that the focus should be on (political) ethnicity since it preceded nationalism and strongly influenced human interaction. Hadfield points out that a closer look at the shape of countries already invites us to look further back in time to find explanations of the shape and form of the borders well before the Revolutions. Bell shows that there is not necessarily an interconnectedness between ‘nationalism’ and ‘modernity’ as when, for example, eastern European countries became more self-aware due to the USSR’s suppression. He stresses that national sentiment and pride are not the same as national-*ism* – the latter being defined as a strict political program to consciously rally support – but that nationalism only started to appear step-by-step around the Revolutions and did *not* appear any earlier.

A limited number of case-study contributions from the rest of the volume will now be discussed. Five articles in this volume deal with the Republic directly, one contribution focusses on the Spanish view on the Dutch Revolt.

Jan Waszink talks about Grotius’ *De Antiquitate* in which the legitimisation of the Dutch commonwealth and its mixed constitution is framed in ancient history. It explains that the form of government had been in place since Roman times, with the exception of the Habsburg rule. The Dutch Revolt is approached from a Spanish perspective by Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez. She focusses on the Spanish discourse on fragmented national identity. It is striking that during the Dutch Revolt the Spanish seemed to have a strong enemy-image (‘othering’) and with that they developed a clear self-image that also needed to be defended. As such, a nation’s historian should be born within the nation to properly identify with the topic.

Gijs Rommelse discusses how the *free Hollanders* reacted to the Commonwealth’s argumentation to wage no less than three wars in the period 1650-1674. They did so by using negative mirror-images to illustrate what was wrong with the English society. The initially heterogeneous view underwent serious changes, due to e.g. the English Revolution and the Restoration. The influence of recent events on the perception of people, is discussed by Alan Moss. His well-chosen title ‘*Comparing ruins*’ says it all: Dutch travellers going on their Grand Tour visited many cities and then compared them to home. Coenraad Ruysch – travelling in 1674 – compared the German city of Magdeburg to what happened to the towns of Zwammerdam and Bodegraven. The German term *magdeburgisieren* could be

copied to the Dutch situation: French Troops ravaged these two unprotected cities after the necessary manoeuvre of General Von Köningsmarck to protect Leyden (and thus, Holland) from the French advance.

With her case of the *Panpoëticon Batavûm*, Van Deinsen shows 300 little framed portraits stored in a cabinet immortalising the Dutch poetical history. Unfortunately, the Leyden gunpowder disaster (1807) seriously wrecked the cabinet consequently dispersing its contents all over Europe due to lucrative selling. Bart Verheijen advocates the protest songs of the period 1810-1813. These protest songs were loathed by the French police, as they potentially undermined the Napoleonic regime. These songs of discontent were inspired by the loss of sovereignty during the occupancy. As most broadsheets were destroyed upon discovery, the researcher has – often – been left to study police records to learn about protest songs. Strikingly, Verheijen uncovered that though the texts did deal with the occupation, they did not project an idea of what should be happening alternatively.

Like any good study based on various cases, Jensen's volume raises many questions. While it settles some – whether national identity can be traced to earlier times (yes!) – the question remains whether these cases are just an exception to the rule and how we should now define 'nationalism'. This book is a great contribution to incorporate the micro-level to nationalism studies and its broad scope offers the possibility to compare research among various literary historians.

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