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Dean Kostantaras, *Nationalism and Revolution in Europe, 1763-1848*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 272 pp. €99.00 (hb). ISBN 9789462985186; €98.99. (eb). ISBN 9789048536214.

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Dean Kostantaras is an intellectual historian with a particular expertise on nationalism and on Greece in particular, his previous publications including *Infamy and Revolt: The Rise of the National Problem in Early Modern Greek Thought*.^[1] In his new book, *Nationalism and Revolution in Europe, 1763-1848*, he enlarges the geographical scope of his investigation to the whole of Europe in the years ranging from the end of the Seven Years' War and the revolutions of 1848. The volume's scope is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to "account for the prominence of the nation in French-Revolutionary-era discourse" (p. 203). On the other hand, it explores the questions surrounding nationalism during the first half of the nineteenth century in general and their impact on revolutions in particular.

Nationalism and Revolution is divided into six chronologically organized chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by a short epilogue. The first introductory chapter challenges the still existing ideas of a dichotomy between Western and Eastern European understandings of the nation, according to which an enlightened and civic idea would be at odds with ethno-linguistic conceptions of Romanticism. In the second chapter, "Enlightenment Era Representations of the Nation," Kostantaras argues that the nation, far from being a sudden invention of the late eighteenth century, was in fact "entangled within an older, cross-cultural discourse on matters ranging from the operation of natural laws and the origins of language to the fashioning of viable political units" (p. 25). The historicist perspective of "improvement" was paramount to these discursive strategies. The third chapter, "The Enlightenment Nation as a Site of Practice," tells the story of eighteenth-century national discourse as a strategy employed by intellectuals in order to "appeal to collective action" towards the "depressed and even degenerate condition" of peasant populations (p. 54).

The fourth chapter, "The French Revolution and Napoleonic Inheritance," questions the civic republican character of especially French nationalism, arguing with David Bell and others that "ethnolinguistic elements also rose occasionally to the fore" (p. 85).^[2] The fifth chapter, "The Greek Revolution of 1821," moves to the author's area of predilection, and brings forward the argument that Greek, as well as most Balkan nationalisms, "embraced territorial objectives that if achieved would have resulted in the creation of ethnically heterogenous states" (p. 134). The sixth chapter is devoted to the "Revolutions of 1839," focusing most particularly on the cases of

the independence of Belgium and, after a short interlude on Germany and Italy, on Poland. It argues that by the 1830s and increasingly so during the 1840s, nationalism had become closely linked to liberalism and that a variety of political claims, ranging from the “social question” to constitutional problems and economic concerns could be voiced in the language of nationalism (p. 163). The last chapter, “Revolutions of 1848,” focuses on the Frankfurt National Assembly, on national movements within the Habsburg Empire, and on the Italian Risorgimento, arguing that nationalism in general and liberal nationalism in particular rose to prominence in these years. The epilogue sums up the argument and briefly points out that nationalism was increasingly separated from its organic links to liberalism and was hence incorporated into conservative political agendas.

The overall impression of this book is that it presents itself primarily as an historiographical essay. The author is mainly concerned with situating himself within different interpretations brought forward by historians since the seminal works in historical nationalism studies of the 1990s. As a consequence, original research on primary sources is somewhat relegated to a second rank. This tendency is particularly apparent in the chapter on the revolutions of 1848. The abstract preceding the chapter presents its objective as an exploration of “the historiographical problems surrounding the role and relative strength of national sentiment in the revolutions of 1848” (p. 173). A look at the source material confirms this impression of the book being primarily an historiographical essay. Though dealing with Germany, the Habsburg Empire, and Italy, the references to the chapter are overwhelmingly to anglophone and to a lesser degree francophone literature. Literature in Italian, German, or in any of the languages of the Habsburg Empire is not mentioned. With the noticeable exception of the chapter on Greece, which relies to a considerable extent on publications in Greek, the same finding holds true in the other chapters of the book. Correlatively, the vast bibliography given at the end of the volume is overwhelmingly anglophone. French historiography is also quite prominently represented along with a handful of publications in Spanish.

If the overall impression of the book is that it is a historiographical essay, it has to be added that it almost exclusively engages with and indeed relies on anglophone historiography. To be sure, no single author is capable of reading and managing all the different national historiographic traditions within Europe. Conversely, this practical impossibility is not necessarily an argument against attempts to engage with geographical and cultural areas outside of one’s particular field of linguistic competence. The vibrant field of global history has by and large encountered the same problem. The point is the author does not engage with nor reflect upon the resulting biases, whereas global historians and scholars in the fields of postcolonial and world literature have produced an ample reflection on the “geopolitics of knowledge” with its unequal distribution of academic resources and, even more fundamentally, the unequal recognition of intellectual production.^[3] The problem is the same within Europe: nobody would dare to engage in a discussion of British or French history, relying solely on, say, Hungarian references. The absence of a discussion of these methodological issues is all the more surprising in the case of an historian of (early) modern Greece.

In the conclusion of the chapter on the revolutions of 1830, Kostantaras highlights the “hybridity” and “composite nature” of these uprisings (p. 170), both in the sense a multiplicity of actors involved in the upheavals, and in the sense of the diversity of their claims. He concludes that “by all accounts, Europe had a social problem, a national problem, and a constitutional problem” (p. 170). One could add linguistic problems, problems of economic integration, religious

problems, etc. Kostantaras's point is that the language of the nation bracketed together these different problems and the different and sometimes antagonistic claims. While this is not altogether a very surprising finding, it seems that the overall approach might have benefitted from methodological devices drawn from conceptual history. According to conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, historical concepts are crucially defined by the fact that they are able to concentrate the polysemy of its different political and social usages in the lexical unity of a single word.[4] In this sense, the question arises of the real issue at stake in this book would not have been the history of the concept of the nation.

However, two objections immediately arise. On the one hand, it may be asked which concept(s) Kostantaras is actually be dealing with. Is it nationalism, as the title of the book seems to imply? But nationalism is not a concept used during the period and contemporary sources talk about "the nation" or about "nationalities." The different concepts of nation, nationalism, nationality, patriotism, etc. are subsumed under the umbrella term "nationalism," and the operation of conceptual subsummation is never made explicit. What makes it worse is the fact that even concepts like race are assimilated to the conceptual amalgam of nationalism. For instance, when Kostantaras talks about French historian Augustin Thierry, he argues that the latter "believed that a racial or national element lay behind every social conflict...The primary force in French history, including the great cataclysm of 1789, was thus an 'enduring racial antagonism' between Franks and Gauls" (p. 135). Can Thierry's "racial antagonism" really be equated to a "national element"? It is in these issues that Kostantaras's reliance on secondary sources is particularly questionable. On the other hand, the comparative approach of the book would have been benefitted from a reflection on the concrete wordings of these concepts in different languages under consideration. To be sure, the book contains some interesting reflections on these issues, but only with regard to the Greek case and the elusive nature of the term *ethnos* and its links to language, religion, descent, and identity.

In summary, the book offers a very useful overview of the historiography on nationalism in Europe during the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, although with a heavy bias on the anglophone secondary literature, as well as on translated collections of source material. As a result of this, the findings are often unsurprising for students of nationalism. In addition, little attention is paid to the concrete languages in which the various political, social, and cultural claims associated with the historiographical umbrella term of nationalism are expressed.

NOTES

[1] Dean Kostantaras, *Infamy and Revolt: The Rise of the National Problem in Early Modern Greek Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[2] David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); , David A. Bell, "Revolutionary France and the Origins of Nationalism: An Old Problem Revisited," in *Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 67-86; Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Stuart Woolf, ed., *Nationalism in Europe: 1815 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1996); Timothy Baycroft, "France," in *What is a Nation? Europe, 1789-1914*, ed. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28-41.

[3] See most prominently Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. Michael DeBoviose (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). See also Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1, (2000): 54-68; Jérôme David, *Spectres de Goethe. Les métamorphoses de la « littérature mondiale »* (Paris : Les prairies ordinaires, 2012)

[4] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). See in particular, the chapter "*Begriffsgeschichte* and Social History," pp. 75-92: "In use a word can become unambiguous. By contrast, a concept must remain ambiguous in order to be a concept. The concept is connected to a word, but is at the same time more than a word: a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word" (p. 85).

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