

Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History.  
Edited by Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Xosé M.  
Núñez Seixas. London–New York: Routledge, 2020. 214 pp.

The burgeoning scholarship on the history of emotions and experiences has only recently begun to address nationalism and nationalism studies. Surprising as it may sound, nationalism being a patently “emotional” experience, the underlying reason may have been linked to the difficulty of addressing individual agency in nationalism. The field of the history of emotions has developed collective concepts such as “emotional regimes” and “emotional communities.” However, the main goal has been to understand the agency, “emotional liberty,” within these regimes and the myriad ways in which people have managed their emotional repertoire in various communities, whereas nationalism has presented (or been presented as) a collective set of emotions or a broader framework of emotions. Many scholars of emotions have perhaps found it difficult to see the position of individual, ordinary citizens in the “making of the nation.” Moreover, nationalism studies have mainly concentrated on structures, ideologies, and constructed myths beneath the nationalistic discourse, thus offering little help to the historian of emotions. Feeling the nation has been the product of instrumental nationalism or a subjective experience à la Benedict Anderson resembling a form of false consciousness, not a lived experience.

The edited volume *Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History* is one of the first scholarly publications to tackle the connections between everyday feelings and nationalism with a clear focus on the agency of the nationals. In the introduction, Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas acknowledge the contributions of well-known nationalism scholars such as Anthony D. Smith and Michael Billig to our understandings of the roles of emotions and the everyday in nationalism. However, they criticize these scholars for having failed to see how everyday emotions and experiences have historically shaped nationalism and nationalistic sentiment. Billig’s concept of banal nationalism comes close to everyday nationalism in seeing the reproduction of the nation in the media, sports, and paraphernalia. Yet this approach does not see how individuals construct their relationships to these symbols and narratives, which are arguably constituent parts of the so-called nation. This is what the volume sets out to scrutinize: the relationship between ordinary people and the nation.

Chronologically and thematically, the topics of the nine chapters range from the ego-documents of the Age of Revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars to the collected reminiscences of Polish settlers in the newly acquired western provinces of Poland after World War II. As usual in the case of an edited volume, the chapters vary in incisiveness, but the editors have managed to form a coherent body of historical scholarship. The various sources on which the chapters draw reflect the aim of the book, which is to address agency in everyday nationalism.

Many of the chapters concern borders, both geographical, political, and emotional. The nation becomes visible and finds embodiment in times of crises. Ville Kivimäki writes about the poetry written by the rank-and-file and NCOs in Finland in World War II. He calls these servicemen the “artisans” of the nation. These artisans attached personal meaning to the nationalistic phraseology in their verses before the disillusionment which came at the end of the war. To become disillusioned, one needs first to have clung to an illusion or trusted a narrative that has since been shown to be false. Thomas Franck considers how Italian legionaries in occupied Fiume experienced their visceral emotions themselves testifying to the glory of Greater Italy.

Josephine Hoegaerts analyses the emotional socialization of children with the intention of transforming them into Belgians in the late nineteenth century by reading the reports the school children wrote after their educational trips around the country. School years are part of the transitional phases on the frontier between childhood on the one hand and adulthood and adult emotional communities on the other. Nationalism is taught to children, and these children are perhaps eager (if also pressured) to adopt national values, participate in the glorification of their so-called fatherland (or so-called motherland), and sing patriotic songs. Yet one may well ask whether there is such a thing as active children’s nationalism.

The chapters in the book show that emotions make the nation. They are not mere reactions but often cognitive responses and important components of the process of experiencing or “living” the nation. Another edited volume published by the Academy of Finland Centre for Excellence in the History of Experiences at Tampere University titled *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) continues the analysis of emotions in connection with nationalism.

All in all, the volume on the emotions and everyday nationalism demonstrates that the history of emotions approach to nationalism does not see nationalism as an elite enterprise or a grassroots phenomenon, but rather as an active

relationship between the elites and ordinary citizens and between various strata of society and the experiential concept of the nation. These relationships are fractured, sometimes elated, suspicious, and full of love, hate, and indifference, but the emotions to which they give rise form the historical setting for becoming and being “national.”

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