

**Javier Gimeno-Martínez.** *Design and National Identity*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. 240 pp. \$114.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4725-9104-3.

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**Published on** H-Nationalism (March, 2019)

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In his book *Design and National Identity*, Javier Gimeno-Martínez provides an extensive literature review on nationalism and design. The book's focus—a link between nationalism literature and the design field—is original. The author examines three main approaches found in nationalism literature: primordialism, modernism, and ethno-nationalism, respectively in the three parts of the book. However, for a reader who is familiar with nationalism literature, the tendency toward ethno-nationalism is evident, particularly in parts 2 and 3.

Gimeno-Martínez begins by basing his argument on the claim that nationalism did not cease to exist or weaken with globalization, rather globalization created new national identities. He then tracks these new national identities through design: for example, through emblems or logos of municipalities, fashion design, furniture, and ceramics. In the introduction, Gimeno-Martínez provides a brief but effective summary of nationalism literature. He is influenced by Michael Billig (*Banal Nationalism* [1995]) and Anthony D. Smith (*Ethnic Origins of Nations* [1991]), well-known scholars in the nationalism field, which is totally understandable as their work is related to the subject of this book.

In the first chapter, Gimeno-Martínez begins his analysis of primordialism with discussions on

national character with references to costume history. Although he clearly asserts that nationalism emerged after the French Revolution, he also claims that starting in the fifteenth century, some nations already had recognizable fashions. With interesting examples from European history, such as an engraving from the seventeenth century, he illustrates the significance of costumes as national symbols. The author mainly rests on the ideas of Johann Friedrich Herder in explaining primordialism. He then focuses on the relationship between primitivism and the nation and romanticism and nationalism, with detailed examples from paintings, folk art, and museum exhibitions in Russia, Central Europe, Scandinavia, and Japan. Through his examples, he shows that artists and their work are influenced by nationalism; while art is a reflection of the personal, nationalism expects the reproduction of the nation. Therefore, to get their work into a museum, artists need to produce or select among their work the artworks that are compatible with national identity and national design understanding.

While discussing primordialism in the first section, particularly in the third chapter, Gimeno-Martínez mainly rests on a literature review rather than his own analysis or interpretations. This is sometimes problematic in cases when the cited ideas lose their meaning when they are ex-

tracted from the whole text or when the author cannot clarify what the cited part means. For instance, citing Umut Özkirimli, the author states that Özkirimli recognizes the relevance of primordialism today. However, without explaining Özkirimli's statement thoroughly, this quotation can be understood as Özkirimli believing in the relevance of primordialism, but that is not the case. What Özkirimli says in his well-known book *Theories of Nationalism* (2000) is that primordialism still has relevance since it is widely used as a discourse in nationalist political movements and generally in political life.

Throughout chapter 3, Gimeno-Martínez defends the relevance of primordialism by reminding readers about Herder's ideas again and providing examples from design history. He states that primordialism is not methodologically relevant but keeps on emphasizing its importance. It is not difficult for the reader to understand that primordialism is evident in national design since it is used in political discourse of nationalist politicians in domestic politics. That does not prove the theoretical or methodological relevance of primordialism; rather, it points to its effectiveness as a tool to construct national identity. However, we cannot reach this conclusion from this part of the book due to a lack of analysis. We are left confused after a good and detailed literature review and solid examples of design history.

In the second part of the book, Gimeno-Martínez presents his research on modernism, the state-centric approach to nationalism, and the ways in which the state influences design. He points out in detail the most important arguments of modernist literature. The main problem here is that he builds on the arguments of Smith, though Smith is considered not a modernist but an ethno-nationalist, which is the subject of the third section of the book. One wonders why not focus more on Benedict Anderson, Ernst Gellner, or Eric Hobsbawm. Rather than constructing the chapter

on modernist approaches, the emphasis is on the ethno-symbolist critics of modernism.

In the following chapters on modernism, Gimeno-Martínez discusses interesting examples related to design, such as the construction of the general Dutch design attitude, which is examined through emblems or banknotes. Within this spectrum, Catalan and Flemish histories and federal structures are examined and a brief analysis related to their national design is offered. Brussels and Madrid are the examples for national emblem design discussed in this part. In the last chapter of the section, the author provides a good overview of the relationship between the state, design, and nationalism. He makes solid connections among these concepts and shows how the state disseminates its understanding of nationalism through symbols or representations that are visualized in design. I would have liked to find more of these analyses throughout the book.

The last section approaches the subject from the bottom-up, influenced by Billig's *Banal Nationalism*. The section begins with a comprehensive review of literature on nationalism from below, providing examples of some significant studies in the field. Gimeno-Martínez presents an interesting collection of symbols and their relation to civil society and notes how the symbols are created or interpreted when first perceived by the viewer. Then, in the following chapter, he discusses the production of national symbols used by companies, like IKEA, providing a new link of national identity construction, which is created by companies rather than states. The author refers to a collection of studies in the field related to these concepts and provides a good review for those who are interested in deepening their knowledge in this area.

In the last chapter of the third section, Gimeno-Martínez discusses literature on multiculturalism. He connects it with design by analyzing pictograms and "chorks," an intercultural new design to globalize certain specific products like

chopsticks and forks. The chapter tries to invoke ideas on nationalism and multiculturalism in a globalized world, where most countries host migrants and diasporas.

In the conclusion, Gimeno-Martínez redefines his main point. He argues that the national framework needs revision but it is still a relevant analytical unit. In studying nationalism and design, the book offers a focus on objects rather than designers.

As an overall assessment, the book is a comprehensive collection of literature on nationalism. Although the author extensively researched nationalism literature, his analysis could have been stronger; the reader expects to see the author's analysis rather than just quotations or references. The book would have been more beneficial if Gimeno-Martínez offered his own assessment and conclusions of this material. The originality of the book and its contribution to the literature stems from the material it provides from the design field, which scholars of the nationalism field can use to develop their own analyses.

A last criticism is related to the referencing of quotations: in some quotations, the reference is not to the original resource, which can be found in libraries or bookstores, but to a secondary source. Throughout the book, we only see quotations of what the main writers of the field wrote on the subject, which leaves me wondering why we are reading this book rather than theirs. The book seems to be authored as lecture material rather than as a new contribution to nationalism literature.

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**Citation:** Pinar Erkem. Review of Gimeno-Martínez, Javier. *Design and National Identity*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. March, 2019.

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