



Alexander Maxwell. *Everyday Nationalism in Hungary: 1789-1867.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019. iv + 258 pp. \$103.99, cloth, ISBN 978-3-11-063411-2.

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Even though nationalism scholars have filled libraries in the past decades searching for the various manifestations of nationalism, there are still several lacunae in the field. Scholars have routinely examined the intellectual foundations of particular national movements in their earlier phases and then turned their attention to their mass proliferation in later stages. Since sources often encourage this dynamic, it is easy to understand and accept this practice. Understandable, however, does not equate with desirable; one indeed would be interested in how nationalist ideologies crafted by intellectuals and several other elite groups manifested themselves when these ideas were themselves brand-new, contested, and their success anything but self-evident.

Alexander Maxwell's *Everyday Nationalism in Hungary 1789-1867* aims exactly at explaining the nationalist imagination as everyday social practice *before* the nationalist agenda became the cornerstone of any governmental policy, as it was cemented by the 1867 Compromise. As Maxwell explains, he “examines the beginnings of nationalism as lived experience in the Kingdom of Hungary.... Back when patriots had less guidance from precedent, they associated the ‘nation’ with a wide variety of objects and practices, attempting to nationalize spheres of life that subsequent generations usually treat as nationally neutral.... This

book, therefore, explores these less-studied aspects of early nationalism, focusing particularly on the nationalization of objects and practices that affected ordinary people in their daily routines. Parliamentary debates have been studied elsewhere: this book instead examines the spread of national thinking in everyday life ... its ultimate objects of study are patriotic fantasies and patriotic imaginations” (pp. 6, 9).

The book is divided into seven chapters. All of them start with a case study centered on Magyar national imaginations and practices, with some (though not all) accompanied by their Slavic, Romanian, and occasionally German counterparts. All of them are from Hungary in the greatest sense, including sources covering Transylvania and Croatia. The book is based on genuine political texts, belles-lettres, travel descriptions, folksongs, proverbs, and visual material in all the major languages of Hungary. Each chapter concludes with a dense theoretical interpretation.

A book about Hungarian nationalism, its first two chapters consider the terms Hungary and nation, respectively. Chapter 1 surveys the words Magyar and Hungarian (i.e., the exonym and the ethnonym) and documents the divergence in their usage in German and Slavic texts, a practice that Maxwell explains by the increasing ethnic tensions among intellectuals and politicians of the

Vormärz. The second chapter examines the associations with the word nation and some related concepts (race, people). Here Maxwell shows how high the stakes were when spokesmen of particular (imagined) communities claimed to be a nation. The first two chapters thus provide a necessary introduction by means of context, even though both the evolution of the Magyar-Hungarian dichotomy and the various meanings of nation and related terms are relatively well known.

The core of the book, chapters 3-7, examines more tangible manifestations of the national, and these chapters are far more genuine and innovative. Chapter 3 analyzes how a tariff dispute pertaining to the production and trade of tobacco became nationalized and how one could manifest a Hungarian patriotism and also anti-Habsburg feelings by consuming particular types of tobacco. The subsequent chapter centers on alcohol: it starts with the Hungarian self-image as home to the best wines in the world but notes also the actual, more inhibitive problems of the Hungarian wine industry, such as poor quality and high transport costs. Here Maxwell recapitulates the argument of the influential Hungarian historian Gyula Szekfű, who called the attention to the century-old controversy between self-image and actual quality in his 1922 study, *A magyar bortermelő lelki alkata* (The psyche of the Hungarian wine-maker) (though a reference is unfortunately missing). The chapter also demonstrates how wine consumption was attached to the imagined Hungarian national character and contrasts that with other ethno-alcoholic associations, such as Germans with beer and Slavs and Romanians with brandy. Maxwell concludes both chapters 3 and 4 with a Marxist theoretical interpretation but concludes that Marxism itself is not sufficient to explain these phenomena.

Chapters 5 and 6 bring the theme of gender to the fore. Chapter 5 analyzes the nationalized practice of facial hair. Throughout the nineteenth century and all over Europe, shaved faces were associated with conservatism and the clergy (and, in a

Habsburg context, with the dynasty), whereas full beards were worn by liberals throughout in Europe (such as Garibaldi). Mustaches, however, were fancied en masse only in Hungary, where they became a quintessential part of national masculinity, as Maxwell aptly demonstrates. Chapter 6 centers on a related topic and investigates the nationalization of sexual fantasies—that is, the call of nationalists for ethnic endogamy. These chapters conclude with a call to pay more attention to the nation as an imagined male community that claimed collective ownership over women. The last case study, chapter 7 shows how the national gala dress was invented and how it permeated society, in particular in the mid-nineteenth century.

Throughout the book, Maxwell heavily relies on Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism, and, in turn, it refines it by linking it to grass-roots phenomena and a gendered perspective. In the conclusion, Maxwell heavily criticizes Anthony D. Smith and claims that *Everyday Nationalism in Hungary* delivers a host of arguments against Smith's ethno-symbolic explanations of the emergence of nationalism. In turn, he argues that the sources cited in this book can be best interpreted by Rogers Brubaker's concept of ethnicity without groups.

Everyday Nationalism in Hungary aptly documents the experiments of Magyar and other national advocates to turn sublime ideas into tangible and visible social praxes. It shows well the temporal dynamic of these experiments: tobacco culture was a phenomenon with a nationalist connotation from the late eighteenth century to the 1860s but then its political load waned; the national costume flourished en masse during the mid-nineteenth century, lost its prevalence but survived until WWII, to be reintroduced after 1989; associating a particular facial hair with national identity was also the product of the long nineteenth century but faded away from ca. 1900; the cult of Tokaj wine still permeates Hungarian society. Maxwell also does a good job when examining

the limits of nationalizing said practices: the national gala dress, for instance, was rather reserved for the gentry but the peasantry was not encouraged to wear it; at the same time, a well-educated Hungarian patriot found nothing controversial in wearing a standard European black dress (presumably after Parisian fashion) when attending a Viennese salon. Another example of the limits of nationalization of everyday life pertains to marriage practices: as Maxwell is right to note, several national agitators married exogamously. Some spouses became patriots, such as the wives of István Széchenyi and Ferenc Pulszky, who both made efforts to learn Magyar and promoted national rebirth, but for Jan Kollár it had to suffice to imagine a Slavic ancestry for his wife, Mina, who refused to learn Slovak and shocked the small circle of Slovak patriots by raising their children in German.

Finally, a few critical remarks. While Maxwell does his best to orientate his audience, readers are still sometimes left to find out on their own who particular people were and why their voice is worth recalling. For instance, although chapter 1 does survey the most relevant actors, it also cites marginal figures who had no impact, among them a sheer lunatic. In chapter 4, the reader, unless being very well versed in the geography of Hungary, heavily needs to consult atlases to locate particular wine regions on the map (such as Ménes, that can be found today rather as Miniş in Romania) and even that will not help to understand that Hegyalja, mentioned in a single case without further explanation on p.105, is identical with Tokaj, a region central for the argument of the chapter. The protagonist of János Arany's poem *The Moustache* is not an aristocrat but a well-off peasant, perhaps a sandaled member of the gentry living a boorish lifestyle. Indeed, the poem describes his material conditions in detail, refers to his blue trousers (a typical peasant costume), and claims his highest wish is to be elected *bíró*, the village mayor (p. 139).

Notwithstanding, the contribution of *Everyday Nationalism in Hungary* to nationalism studies is unquestionable. It appeals to a far wider audience than scholars in Habsburg or East European studies and shall be consulted by anyone interested in the early phase of nationalism. Readers will appreciate the robust and hitherto largely unstudied source material, the depth of theoretical consideration, and Maxwell's entertaining prose. In particular, graduate students are encouraged to study this book because it provides a first-class template on how to select and apply relevant theoretical approaches in practice.

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