TOWARDS AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF PATRIOTISM IN
EAST CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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The present volume seeks to reconsider the heritage of early modern discourses of patriotism and national allegiance in East Central Europe. In the last thirty years, the question of early modern collective identities has become a crucial topic of research in the history of political ideas, breaking through the conflict between “primordialists” and “social constructivists” and leading to more text- and context-sensitive approaches.1 While the classical interpretations of nationalism usually started from the presumption that it was only meaningful to talk about this phenomenon from the late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century,2 an increasing number of authors tried to adapt the basic categories of “Nationalism Studies” to the pre-modern context and interpreted patriotic discourses as in some sense national ideologies.3 With some remarkable exceptions,

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such as David A. Bell\textsuperscript{4} and Colin Kidd,\textsuperscript{5} however, they tended to draw a sharp line in a normative sense between the early modern and the modern phenomena, opposing “good” patriotism to “bad” nationalism.\textsuperscript{6} This counter-position organizes Maurizio Viroli’s argument about the shift from Renaissance patriotism to modern nationalism, triggered by the expansion of territorial (and usually monarchical) statehood at the expense of republican city-states.\textsuperscript{7} We also encounter this line of argument in the literature concerning the “British” framework of political and intellectual history that emerged simultaneously with the destabilization of the British institutional and symbolic-emotional framework.\textsuperscript{8} As the Scottish historian Arthur Williamson argued, patriotism in the early modern period was “reformist,” “dissentient,” and had “internationalist implications,” which made it “largely alien to nineteenth and twentieth century traditionalism and utterly alien to nineteenth and twentieth century nationalisms.”\textsuperscript{9}

In attempting to go beyond these normative counter-positions and to make sense of texts from the early modern period which appealed to a “national” focus of loyalty, one has to devise an interpretative framework that is sensitive not only to the structural and discursive continuities with the modern phenomena but also to the breaches of continuity.


\textsuperscript{6} See, for instance, Klaus Garber’s \textit{Imperiled heritage: Tradition, History, and Utopia in Early Modern German Literature} (Studies in European Cultural Transition 5) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

