

sources. There is clearly much more work that should, and can, be done to identify and give voice to the poor of the past.

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SMITH, Anthony D. — *The Nation Made Real: Art and National Identity in Western Europe 1600-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 232.

Anthony D. Smith is the author of several books dealing with the foundation of nations, national sentiment, and nationalism. In *The Nation Made Real*, he focuses on the contributions of visual artists to the perception of a shared national identity and to the rise of nationalism in Western Europe as of the seventeenth century. Smith contends that through a specific imagery of the homeland and its people, artists helped make the nation “real,” or tangible not only to educated elites, but to a wider audience as well. Their imagery involved the recourse to a variety of techniques and motifs, which he categorizes as didactic and even at times propagandist, poetic or evocative, and contemplative or commemorative.

The introduction theorizes the notions of nation and nationalism, commonly involving the salient traits of community, territory, history, and destiny through sacrifice and the first chapter shows the extent to which modes of representation of ethnic identities before 1600 foreshadowed, yet differed from later tropes of national art, especially because of their lack of emphasis on inclusive nationhood. While Smith addresses social and political factors leading to the advent of nationalism, the main strand of his analysis consists in delineating the cultivation of myths and symbols enabling a self-defined community to identify with a national territory or to celebrate its heroic figures. With its examination of Dutch art in the seventeenth century, the second chapter argues that the array of visual components and scenes devised by Dutch artists provided a prototype of national visual culture or a repository of images standing for attachment to the homeland discernible elsewhere in Europe in the following centuries. The Dutch example helps explain why the local may at times convincingly stand for the national among European artists, or why a national allegory may also have a universal relevance in their works. In his study, Smith clearly recalls continuities with previous stylistic or thematic approaches in the time frame under consideration; in that respect, *The Nation Made Real* offers on many occasions a glimpse into the fascinating revival or “recycling” (a term not used by Smith) of former images and the reenactment of concepts that are endowed with fresh meanings. But Smith’s purpose throughout is mostly to expose and reflect on the emergence of significant shifts in artistic paradigms, contributing to establishing new ways of representing the old value of patriotism, as well as promoting novel ideologies of the nation, such as the notion of national destiny inherent in nationalism, by capitalizing on symbolic subject matter, or rituals like oath-swearing ceremonies in Revolutionary France that illustrate the collective relationship to the concept of nation. In that respect, Smith analyzes the break with the idealization or “Italianization” of landscape among eighteenth-century British, German, or Scandinavian artists as one that ties landscape with nation, a process in which landscape is appraised as ethnoscape. By so doing, artists inscribe the authenticity and uniqueness of a group in a place evoking the traditions of a national territory, while being increasingly identified with a particular community. Likewise, the celebration of authenticity is shown to have entailed an attention to veracity in the representation of places or historical deeds,

which was not exempt of poetical effusion, all contributing to a reevaluation of the role of Nature in depicting metonymically the homeland and its inhabitants. The last two chapters of the study argue that while nationalism roots the community in a defined space, it equally anchors the nation in a distant past, the Middle Ages becoming for writers and artists a preferred reference in the late eighteenth century, an age in which developments in historical research emphasized the need for archival documents. In that view, nations are experienced as temporal communities with specific origins and trajectories, the destiny of which artists contributed to embodying through the depiction of foundational historical events, or with the commemoration of heroes and heroines whose virtuous selflessness and sacrifice for their country were supposed to inculcate a spirit of emulation among the viewers. In that respect, Smith points out that before 1850 artists relied at times on historical events or figures beyond their own national boundaries when they had the potential of conveying the “national ideal” or moral *exemplum* they were interpreting. Conversely, events such as the Seven Years War could entail stressing the national characteristics of the hero.

The issue of audience participation and the response of the viewer had been stressed by “art critics” or *Salons* commentators such as Diderot. Smith makes the point that if it is not always clear whether the public grasped all the political allusions of a work of art, its pedagogical import ensured that later generations would ultimately come to understand its relevance to national identity and adopt the image as an apt representation of that consciousness. Likewise, Smith shows that there are cases when the didactic, and especially nationalist, intention of an artist may be impossible to determine with any certainty, although the artist’s works may definitely be said to have successfully conveyed the notion of belonging to a national community. *The Nation Made Real* insists on the variety of artistic techniques and depictions in the time frame considered, differences that reflect for Smith what he calls the “ambiguities of nations and nationalisms” (p. 174), such as the reliance on nature or history, on authenticity or idealization, to signal national belonging. In the conclusion, Smith modestly proposes that “As far as the relationship between the novel kinds of visual art and the emergence of modern nations is concerned, the evidence presented here suggests some degree of correlation” (p. 173); indeed the study demonstrates the plasticity of the modes of articulation of art to politics over time. The book covers a wide temporal and geographical range (particularly the Netherlands, Britain and France, but also Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Norway), while providing close readings of some of the major works by artists such as Jacques Louis David, John Constable, Benjamin West, or Johan Christian Dahl, that testify to pioneering modes of addressing national identity. With its restrained apparatus of endnotes and judicious choice of plates, *The Nation Made Real* presents a clear, seemingly effortless thesis, which will be of interest to informed readers and non-specialists alike.

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STONE, Dan (ed.) — *The Holocaust & Historical Methodology*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012. Pp. 324

Jean-Martin Charcot once remarked that “Theory is good, but it doesn’t prevent things from existing” – a view that effectively describes most Holocaust historians’ dogged empiricism and methodological conservatism when faced with producing historical representations of