


**ROUNDTABLE: TRANSNATIONAL PATRIOTISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN,
1800–1850**

Author's Response

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Transnational patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: stammering the nation. By Konstantina Zanou. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xviii + 248. ISBN 9780198788706.

I want to thank the reviewers for engaging so thoughtfully with my book and for raising such a variety of important points. I cannot hope to address more than a selection of them here.

Let me start with the Enlightenment, an issue raised by Joanna Innes. Although I mistrust taxonomies because they impose an ideological order on phenomena which are in reality messy and unclassified, I recognize that they can be useful in helping us make sense of the world. My claim that the intellectual activities of Kapodistrias and his friends belong to 'the Enlightenment' is based on the fact that these thinkers shared a set of values usually identified as the core values of the movement. I would single out in particular their emphasis on reason and, more specifically, on reasonable forms of religiosity ('il faut qu'elle [la nation] soit religieuse par sa raison, et conséquemment par un peu de lumières', to put it in Kapodistrias's words).¹ This was accompanied by their belief in progress and the amelioration of society, and their view that change would come, not through revolution, but through gradual reform;² their commitment to the idea of liberty as the ultimate goal of society and their view of republicanism as the ideal form of government (this belief was accompanied, of course, by the bitter proviso that societies are by and large unprepared for this condition—until then,

¹ E. A. Bétant, ed., *Correspondance du Comte Capodistrias, président de la Grèce* (4 vols., Geneva and Paris, 1839), I, pp. 297–8.

² Against the older notions of 'the modernization thesis', scholars now argue that the combination of enlightenment and anti-revolution was the rule, not the exception, an idea already put forward by Franco Venturi in his monumental *Settecento riformatore* (5 vols., Turin, 1969–90). See also John Robertson, 'Franco Venturi's enlightenment', *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 183–206.

enlightened or constitutional monarchies should take the lead);³ and, finally, their deep commitment to education as the means to achieve all of the above.

Of course, to echo John Robertson, the Enlightenment ‘was a retrospective construction on the part of scholars’ in the 1950s and 1960s. As such, it is a malleable concept, refined or expanded to fit the changing concerns of scholarship.⁴ My own interest in engaging with this concept in the book is twofold. First, I wish to challenge the dominant notion of the ‘Neohellenic enlightenment’ that has shaped Greek intellectual historiography since the 1960s, and that connects the birth of Greek nationalism with the ideas of Adamantios Koraes, and consequently with the radical and secular brands of the Enlightenment – a vision that is usually juxtaposed with an altogether reactionary ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople, thereby presenting a picture of the development of Greek national consciousness as a clash between religion and secularism and between East (Istanbul, Russia) and West (Paris, Vienna). Second, I want to question the propensity of Greek and, to a lesser degree, Italian historians to divide modern intellectual history into a ‘rational’ and ‘enlightened’ eighteenth century and an ‘irrational’ and ‘Romantic’ nineteenth century. Uniting my voice with those of historians who have highlighted the phenomena of religious enlightenment, monarchist enlightenment, and Ottoman enlightenment, and with those who have argued for a ‘long Enlightenment’ that does not necessarily end (or even clash) with Romanticism but continues throughout the nineteenth century, I argue for a plurality of Greek enlightenments within a Mediterranean, Ottoman, European, and Russian context.⁵

A brief comment now on the use of biography. I do not see the life of a person, today or in the past, as ‘embodying’ or ‘representing’ more abstract or impersonal processes and forces. I do not treat my characters as ‘samples’ in a social science text, but as protagonists whose lived experiences reveal the multiple and open possibilities of an age. Lives are important because they elude frontiers and mix multiple contexts, and because they break with taxonomies. In other words, I value biography not because of its representativity but because of the horizons it opens to historical imagination, enabling at the same time this imagination to become more concrete, palpable, and actually ‘embodied’. Therefore, I entirely share Joseph John Visconti’s view that the political visions of the historical actors described in the book were combined with pragmatic concerns (as always happens). In stating that in this book history is ‘personal’ and ‘embodied’, I do not mean that my characters embody wider phenomena. On the contrary, because these phenomena were so abstract, beyond ‘embodiment’ and comprehension, I endeavour to show how these people desperately sought to give shape to them by translating them into physical terms.

³ Annelien de Dijn, ‘The politics of enlightenment: from Peter Gay to Jonathan Israel’, *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), pp. 785–805.

⁴ John Robertson, *Enlightenment: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2015), p. 33.

⁵ Sebastian Conrad, ‘Enlightenment in global history: a historiographical critique’, *American Historical Review*, 117 (2012), pp. 999–1027.

Let me now say a word about exile, and about the motif of ‘success versus failure’ raised by Anastasia Stouraiti. Exile in the book is treated both as an experience and as a rhetorical motif. Thanks largely to Ugo Foscolo, exile and its predicaments (loss, homelessness, abandonment, and nostalgia) came to occupy a central place in the rhetorical toolkit of the Risorgimento. Exile was romantic, patriotic, and fashionable. The problem is that, in a world of itinerant intellectuals where everybody imagines themselves as exiles, it is hard to discern where reality ends and where fiction begins. In fact, in narrating themselves, these people often transformed their lived experience into a fiction of exilic patriotism. Mario Pieri, being the most melodramatic and eloquent of all the characters I examined in my book, was also the most successful in convincing me that his travails were real and that his feelings of exile and homelessness were acute. I admit that at times I fell into his own rhetoric, accepting perhaps a little too readily his tale of being a ‘failure’ in finding a national home. Beyond this admission, however, I believe there are two things that justify my calling him a ‘failed’ version of his peers: first, his lack of recognition in the world of letters; and second, his total disappearance from the historical record. In short, there are some imaginary and some real failures here, and it is still not clear to me how one can trace the boundary between the two.

Finally, Dominique Kirchner Reill’s invitation to turn our gaze towards the lower strata of Ionian society, and to their own relationship (if there was any) to the world of nations constructed around them, made me pause for a moment and reconsider the social affiliations of the people making their appearance in the pages of the book. I realized that these were people of two kinds: impoverished aristocrats and peasants. There are no wealthy (Ionian) aristocrats in my book. This fact raises questions about the meaning of ‘aristocracy’ in a (former) Venetian periphery, where one could enter the *Libro d’oro* and become a noble more easily than one could acquire property and make a decent living. These ‘nobles’ were all, of course, city dwellers. Peasant existence features in the book only in the guise of refugees or singers of folk poetry. Peasants, in other words, are seen only through the eyes of intellectuals, as romanticized bearers of the unspoiled soul of the nation. I therefore welcome the suggestion to reverse the perspective and imagine a book written from the point of view of those who appear now only as objects rather than subjects of historical action.⁶ Similarly, I am fascinated by Stouraiti’s suggestion that we read transnational patriotism through the eyes of women.⁷ Let’s hope that these proposals will sound equally alluring to the ears of our readers.

Acknowledgements. This roundtable brings together selected pieces from two events organized in 2019 to discuss the publication of the book: the first was hosted by Columbia University, New York, and was sponsored by its Society of Fellows and the Heyman Center for the

⁶ Reill herself offers a masterful perspective of this kind in her new book: *The Fiume crisis: life in the wake of the Habsburg empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2020).

⁷ Elisavet Papalexopoulou is completing her Ph.D. thesis on a subject along these lines: ‘Women of letters in the Greek cultural space, 1800–1832’ (European University Institute, Florence).

Humanities, the Department of Italian, and the Italian and Mediterranean Colloquium; the second was hosted by the Institute of Historical Research, London and was sponsored by its Modern Italian History and Rethinking Modern Europe seminars. The author is grateful to the organizers of these events, as well as to Mark Mazower, Elizabeth Leak, and Axel Körner for participating in them as chairs and discussants.

Cite this article: Zanou K (2022). Author's Response. *The Historical Journal* 65, 834–837. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X2100056X>