

FROM GENDER TO NATION

Edited by Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov



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Contents

- page 9 Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov
Introduction. From Gender to Nation
- PART ONE
- 27 Elisabeth List
Selfhood, Nation and Gender: The Psychic Roots Of Sexism, Racism and Nationalism
- 43 Ritu Menon
Do Women Have a Country?
- 63 Vesna Kesić
Gender and Ethnic Identities in Transition
- 81 Elena Gapova
Reinventing Men and Women Within the Belarusian Nationalist Project
- PART TWO
- 99 Urvashi Butalia
Gender and Nation: Some Reflections from India
- 113 Daša Duhaček
Gender Perspectives On Political Identities In Yugoslavia
- 131 Tatjana Pavlović
Remembering/Dismembering The Nation: The Archeology Of Lost Knowledge

PART THREE

- page 153 Kumkum Sangari
New Patriotisms: Beauty And The Bomb
- 171 Irina Novikova
Gender, Ethnicity And Identity Politics In Latvia
- 189 Biljana Kašić
The Dynamic Of Identification: From Archetypes To Promising Female Roles
- 201 Tea Škokić
Must We Know Who We Are?
- 213 Index
- 225 List of Contributors

Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov

INTRODUCTION

FROM GENDER TO NATION

The gender/sex difference, as the oldest known difference inscribed into language, is seen as basic, unquestionable and unproblematic – a condition of life. It symbolically permeates all other dichotomies of thinking, all differences within the sphere of the historically consensual and, thus, permeates the historic legitimacy of hierarchies that thrive on binary differences¹. The global patriarchal consensus about the submission of women to men, accordingly, justifies other subjugations using the mechanism of symbolic “analogy”. The depiction of this state of affairs² as natural, which naturalizes and essentializes patriarchy, is itself historic. This history of the social relations of genders is often obscured by replacement of social and historic relations with biological ones. Thus, when the “national difference” surfaces historically, it appears in terms of gender difference, “justifying” hierarchies that are set by an assumed natural gender hierarchy.

Given our increasing awareness of this mechanism, any serious study of the national “issue” must look at the gendering of political discourse and the sexualizing of concepts related to the complex of nation and nationalism, state- and nation-building, citizenship and membership, and community and society.

Gender and nation are social and historic constructions, which intimately par-

¹ Difference “in itself” is *historically* and concretely determined as the hierarchy/ domination/ injustice/ social inequality that is “theoretically” based on it. “Long live the difference”, “Vive la difference” is the slogan of both possible, but not necessary just social claims and possible, but not necessary racist claims. As shown by Balibar (in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, London, Verso, 1996), new racism is “differentialist”.

² That is, the domination of all women by all men Guillaumin, *Sexe, Race et Pratique du pouvoir. L’Idée de nature*, Paris, Côté-Femmes, 1992.

ticipate in the formation of one another: nations are gendered; and the topography of the nation is mapped in gendered terms (feminized soil, landscapes, and boundaries and masculine movement over these spaces). National mythologies draw on traditional gender roles and the nationalist narrative is filled with images of the nation as mother, wife, and maiden. Practices of nation-building employ social constructions of masculinity and femininity that support a division of labor in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically and men protect, defend, and avenge the nation.

1. *Borders*

Gender identities and women's bodies become symbolic and spatial boundaries of the nation. Women's bodies serve as symbols of the fecundity of the nation and vessels for its reproduction, as well as territorial markers. Mothers, wives, and daughters designate the space of the nation and are, at the same time, the property of the nation. As markers and as property, mothers, daughters, and wives require the defense and protection of patriotic sons.

Border fantasies develop with this gendering of boundaries and spaces (landscapes, farmlands, and battlefields) and with the collectivizing of "our women" and "their women" (Mostov, 1995). Masculine actors invade (or fill) feminine spaces. The nation is adored and adorned, made strong and bountiful or loathed, raped and defiled, its limbs torn apart, its womb invaded. The vulnerability and seduction of women/borders (space/nation) require the vigilance of border guards.

[T]he "essential women" [raced or not] becomes the national iconic signifier for the material, the passive, and the corporeal, to be worshipped, protected, and controlled by those with the power to remember, and to forget, to guard, to define, and redefine (Alcaron, Kaplan and Moallem, 1999, p. 10)³.

Variations of struggles for power by new or would-be guardians of the nation are played out over the feminine body: over the feminine space of the nation – battlefields, farmlands, and homes – and actual female bodies; in claims to terri-

³ This theme has been explored eloquently by a number of feminist theorists, including: Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India*, New Delhi, Viking, 1998; Das, *Critical Events. An Anthropological Perspective in Contemporary India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995; Hasan (ed.), *Invented Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000; Kumar, *Divide and Fall? Bosnia in the Annals of Partition*, London, Verso, 1998; Menon, *Interventions. International Journal of Post-Colonial Studies, Special Topic: The Partition of the Indian Sub-Continent*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1999; R. Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries. Women in India's Partition*, New Brunswick, (N.J.), Rutgers University Press, 1998; and Sangari and Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, New Brunswick (N.J.), Rutgers University Press, 1990.

tory and sovereignty based on demographic and reproductive policies; and over the nation as an idea – mother, lover, home, and collective (receptive) body. These variations parallel gender roles that reinforce sexual imagery and stereotypes. The feminine is passive, and the masculine is active. The Motherland provides a passive, receptive, and vulnerable image in contrast to the active image of the Fatherland, which is the force behind government and military action – invasion, conquest, and defense.

This imagery recognizes women as a symbolic collective. The nation as mother produces an image of the allegorical mother whose offspring are the country's guardians, heroes and martyrs. Individual mothers are celebrated as instances of this image: their pain and suffering, their sacrifices are recognized as part of the nation's sacrifice; their individual plights are relevant only to this extent. Women as reproducers are recognized as belonging to the majority or minority nations, though, as we shall see, not as members of the collective in the same way as men. The rape and violation of individual women becomes symbolically significant in nationalist discourse and the politics of national identity as a violation of the nation and an act against the collective men of the enemy nation. It is the plight of "our" women that threatens or offends the nation. In the acts of war/nationalist/communist rape, women are the instruments of communication between two groups of men. And the subsequent discourse on these rapes follows, to a large extent, the same logic serving as a vehicle for hate speech and a weapon of war⁴. Women as mothers are reproducers of the nation; but they are also thought of as potential enemies of the nation, traitors to it, and collaborators in its death. The "other's" women are enemies as reproducers, multiplying the number of outsiders, conspiring to dilute and destroy the nation with their numerous offspring. Thus, while "our" women are to be revered as mothers, all women's bodies must be controlled. This is articulated in terms of "state fatherhood": the nation is defined as a family, motherhood and reproduction are supervised by the "father", or in terms of political jurisdiction: reproduction and sexual relations are political acts and must be put firmly under the control of the state and its moral and cultural institutions (church and family). This is the naturalized hierarchy of patriarchy. The instrumentalization of national body politics facilitates consolidation of the nation-state through regulatory practices rooted in the sexualization of women and their vulnerability to sexual assault.

The sexuality of individual women presents a potential threat to the nation, as an "entry" point for invasion. Individual women are potential suspects in border transgressions. Elias Canetti writes, in a slightly different context, that men who

⁴ This sometimes includes some well-intended scholarly work. The ethnicization of research, whether by local or by foreign scholars, often follows after great political conflict, see Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers. Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton (N.J.), Princeton University Press, 2001.

disdain a warning about danger are threatened only in their personal capacity. But, women who pay no heed to a warning or an interdiction about such danger put the whole community in peril (Canetti, 1966, p. 138). Sexual fantasies follow this threat to the community and, at the same time, collectivize the identity of women: the enemy male wants to invade the national space and abduct "our" women, to steal our identity, to dilute our culture. Each side fantasizes about invading the space of the other, robbing the alien society and installing its own culture. The "Others's" men are collectively seen as sexual aggressors, "our" women are objects of their temptation. "Their" women are forbidden prizes, and as such, a potential site for warfare, both symbolically and literally. It is the collective "our" women that represents the potential national tragedy; it is as a collective victim that "our" women gain the sympathy of the people and suffer.

Women's bodies mark the vulnerability of borders and, in another sense, women *embody* the borders: they are "signifiers of ethnic or national difference" (Menon and Bhasin, 1998, p. 252; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989) and the boundaries of the State. Mass rapes in civil wars point to the same fact: according to the patriarchal consensus, the community's women should be defended as borders, or the other's women should be violated as the other's borders/territories. In a way, communal violence against women, seen as violence against the male other is part of the group-identity building. The production of nations/states produces borders and, then, naturally, their violation... For borders separate as much as they invite transgression and produce no (wo)man's land. Violence against women is a constitutive part of these processes. Its softest aspect is the subjugation of women to a men's (state, communal, social) hierarchy. Its extreme case is rape. "In many villages – writes Urvashi Butalia – where negotiations had taken place, often women were traded for freedom" (Butalia, 1998, p. 159). Her research clearly shows that women were considered *belonging* to the community as property, but not really constituting the community as autonomous subjects or as any essential part of it. For women cannot claim identity with(in) the nation, or when they do so, they risk disloyalty to the higher gender/national principle which proscribes roles and hierarchies. Identity is claimed, group solidarity played-out and the identity principle maintained where power is at stake and in the function of power. The woman/feminine signifier serves as such as an alibi in fraternal struggles for control of the nation-state and national projects (Alarcon et al., 1999, p. 6). However, as we shall see in a number of texts in this volume, the feminine signifier also serves as a figure of resistance in these struggles.

2. *Community vs. Society*

In the study of gender/sex and nation, it is essential to keep in mind the distinction between community and society. A community is a vertical patriarchal construction claiming a self-referential genealogy in identity and re-configuring

one whenever needed. It is hierarchical and non-democratic, and does not recognize time. It is a transmission of commands in the immediate mode. In a community (and thus, within the nation), the communication between individuals is always indirect and goes through a higher office or principle (hegemonic idea, or colonizing universal) with which some (the hegemonic group) can identify directly, but to which the others can only be subjected. Those who are not identical with/similar to the ruling subject have only dispersion, diversity and discontinuity at their disposal (threatening to transform the community into a society). They bring discontinuity into the picture by interrupting the established community self-identity, both of the individual genealogical line (father's name) and of the Nation/State. This discontinuity is itself forced to affirm, through a symbolic twist, a symbolic continuity within and for the natural discontinuity of the masculine genealogy. The patriarchal system wants the masculine genealogy to be self-sufficient in reproducing the same, which of course it is not (because no exclusive genealogy is), but which it can pretend to be thanks to its dominant position. Society, on the other hand, is made up of individuals, (who can also, but need not, be members of various communities) who are in direct contact with each other and who recognize and accept each other's differences. It is society, not community that can open a public and political space.

Identity and "ethnic" or "national" identity, in particular, produce difference as inequality and are a result of inequality. States reproduce citizens and outsiders (Mostov, 1996a; Bose and Manchanda, 1997). Borders, meant to seal territories and identities, produce refugees and trans-border migrations. The Nation produces the borders (and vice versa), the non-nation and the marginal nation. Gender hierarchies among other things, as Ranabir Samaddar illustrates (1999), have an important role in the reconfiguration of the marginal nation in these processes of change. In the case of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, gender hierarchies and deeply anchored patriarchies at different levels sustained all of the post-socialist nationalisms. Gender and patriarchal hierarchies facilitated the reshuffling of the social structure, communal order and the state. These hierarchies were particularly welcome, as the previously existing social and political institutions collapsed along with the Yugoslav state. The patriarchal order represented the only continuity between the old regime and the new one and the main framework for transition, facilitating a basic and unproblematic consensus between the old and the new elites (often the same groups under new names, and even less democratically inclined). This consensus and *passation de pouvoirs* seemed necessary since there was no state, no civil society, no framework, nothing to hold things together, and a state of war. The patriarchal social order (which is far from concerning only women: it is the general social order) was readily available as a mechanism for social/political "reconstruction" (Iveković, 1999).

A common fate of women as members of the community, but not equal political subjects in (ethno) national contexts is that while being held responsible for

the continuance of the nation, they are in some way, always suspect; they are a symbol of the purity of the nation, but always vulnerable to contamination; they embody the homeland, but are always a potential stranger, "both of and not of the nation" (Alcaron, et. al, p. 13). The precariousness of a woman's place in the home/nation, which at the same time is her designated space underlines the danger of exclusion and the pressures to conform. Her marginality is always with her – national culture and values give her a place in society, but always remind her of the potential risk of her situation, and the precariousness of playing improper roles. Women who reject the identities cast for them by the "natural" hierarchy and historical consensus are faced with the prospect of dangling unprotected between the borders of national communities (Mostov, 2000). Theirs is a situation of the double-bind.

3. The Men and Community

At the same time, the nation – a community and not a society – provides a framework for a male-male world, for eroticism without women, sanctioned by heterosexuality. Off the battlefields, males can develop this sense of belonging as "fans" in sports clubs, military reserves (weekend warriors), and public institutions. According to Mosse, "nationalism redirects men's passions to a higher purpose" and projects a stereotype of human beauty which transcends sensuousness (Mosse, 1985, p. 11).

Manliness comes to mean freedom from sexual passion the sublimation of sensuality into leadership of society as the nation (Mosse, 1985, p. 13).

Nationalism devalues both women and the body as a source of desire. Klaus Theweleit (1989) develops this idea in his study of men from the proto fascist Freikorps in Germany after World War I. Theweleit argues that the ideals of warfare and masculinity that these men pursued – a kind of cult of virility follows from their unsuccessful differentiation as selves in their development as men. Repressing their emotions and desires for belonging, they developed a rigid, military armor of virility or an "armored self". This "virile" or "strong self" has become a cultural norm in patriarchal society, and is particularly present in moments of ethnic or national conflict, as is its "counter-image", the submissive woman. Unsuccessful differentiation (from one's mother) results in the assertion of agency through a hostile rejection of the feminine – the Other. Becoming a man, a boy must separate himself from his primary relationship to his mother and repress his "feminine" side. Separating from the first symbiotic, naturally organic union with the feminine leads the future man to create a secondary organic and natural replacement claim to belonging – the community. The difference is that whereas the first union is rooted in the other and would thus require

the recognition of the origin in alterity, this is not the case with the secondary organic community. The national community is, thus, constructed with its origin in sameness (sex and gender). This community becomes a “maternal” instance or refuge.

Aggressive nationalists (or racists) can be seen as these selves “not yet fully born” (undeveloped as separate selves) who cling to groups such as communities, teams, tribes, congregations. They are motivated by the fear of fragmentation or separation that would leave them as unprotected individuals. The fascist who, in Theweleit’s analysis, is near to what is usually described as psychosis, tries to establish himself as apart from the crowd, as the crowd is a non-subject (a mass of unprotected individuals). In this, he resorts to violence against others, which is to a great extent a “normal” male process of self-constitution. Theweleit develops this from child psychology and studies of ego-constitution in violent adult subjects. His “fascist” (the concept is indeed wider than the 20-th century historic figure) is in need of fusion within a sharply determined matrix, a common body shared with others identical to him, as quite distinct from the masses. The crowd is “soft”, “irrational”, “female”, “other”. The soldierly or “virile self” tries to establish his subject status, but he feels that his armor is constantly threatened. Rather than build his identity through a process of differentiation and individuation that relies on exchange and interaction, the aggressive type (the aggressive nationalist, or the fascist) seeks immediate exclusion – violence and war. Since life is possible only in time, he knows only of death (the other’s death, but by that implicitly his own death too). He can, paradoxically, try to compensate for his sense of insufficiency only by increasing death and violence.

We make choices in time; by confiscating time, the time of life itself (by killing, waging war etc), the violent avoid making choices and create a fabricated “continuity” of events, which portrays violence as seemingly unavoidable. This gives them a mastery over time, over the lives of others, and power to control occurrences and history⁵. Paradoxically, under such conditions, life is death. Violence may itself be the sheer attempt to overcome the paradoxical situation and fact by which we are born of the other and not of ourselves. It may be the mere quest for the identity principle, un-interrupted⁶.

Theweleit’s “unborn” has not yet come out of his symbiosis with his mother, which means that he is not born socially. What remains is his craving for an all-encompassing maternal body as shelter (symbolically the Fatherland, the Nation, the Army, the Church, etc), which is supposed to protect him from the loss of totality (wholeness). Within the community, the paternal pattern gathers the indi-

⁵ As the philosopher Radomir Konstantinović says, “the lesser the sentiment of reality, the greater the necessity for violence”, in *Filozofija palanke*, Belgrade, Nolit, 1981, p. 67.

⁶ Iveković, «Geschlechterdifferenz und nationale Differenz», in Chantal Mouffe and Jürgen Trinks (eds.), *Feministische Perspektiven*, Wien, Turia-Kant, 2001.

viduals into a maternal community (which can be a fraternity, group, secret society, party, sect etc). The virile soldier desires revenge for injuries to the maternal body (Nation, territory, borders, etc.), but also for vengeance against the “mother” vulnerable to violation. This maternal metaphor discloses the “unquestioned hierarchy”, expressed as the hierarchy of the fraternity or of the community. The maternal body to which the fascist or simply the member of some intolerant group surrenders (paramilitary unit, army, organization, even in some instances a sports club) is a body/entity within which he is just a part as any other. Each of the members identifies with and interiorizes the vertical principle in order to be able to communicate with the others through that higher office (the leader; the idea; god etc.). He takes refuge in community (belonging) with others.

According to Theweleit, the nation brings these units together, that is, the members find themselves yearning for union through the nation, as soldiers in the trenches found each other in “the unique – the nation” (Theweleit, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 79). In this context,

the nation has in the first instance nothing to do with questions of national borders, forms of government, or so-called nationality. The concept refers to a quite specific form of male community, one that is “yearned for” for many a long year, that rises from the “call of the blood” like sexual characteristics, its essential features are incapable of being “learned” or “forgotten”. The nation is a community of soldiers. (Theweleit, 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 79-81).

This pattern of community is different for women, because they have a different genealogy. Women are born from the same sex and are oriented towards the other for their socialization (given the hierarchy of social values which is male – in patriarchy), while men are born of the other sex and are directed toward their own. What counts here is the *identity principle*, i.e. the principle of maintenance and reproduction of the same by the same within a controlled configuration of power. The ideal would be to *not* have to pass through the other in order to reproduce oneself. This is not yet feasible (short of cloning). Thus, as noted above “our” women are not excluded, but seen as internal others. As reproducers they cannot be excluded from the nation, but their birth-giving faculty must be controlled.

4. *The Identity Principle*

Following this identity principle, men who choose to be nationalists (of course, not all men are nationalists) and who thereby choose to separate their own from other nations, claiming for it a special status, *subordinate* the other within. This involves the idea of rejecting one’s own origin in difference (from the mother) and yearning, retrospectively, for self-made descent – *the impossible self-birth*, from the same sex/gender. Women, on the other hand, who choose the national-

ist camp and reject other nations must, at the same time, be oriented towards the other socially (that is, the other sex/gender). The natural difference between the sexes is not seen as symmetrical or one of equivalence and potential equality-in-difference, because this difference is informed by the historic dimension of gendering. Social hierarchies are projected onto a biological difference, which is essentialized. This naturalization allows gender hierarchies to operate very efficiently on the imaginary, symbolic and social levels in the way of globalized "universal" values, whereby the masculine is seen to be both neutral and universal. This gender asymmetry marks patriarchal culture very strongly, and because of its cross-cultural dimension and its antiquity, its *historicity* has been lost sight of. Like any human institution, it is also constructed, historic, social, imagined – but real.

In the nation as a community, women, subjugated within a hierarchy insuring power to some (to those who manage to impose their interest as universal), are paradoxically invited like anyone else to adhere to the pattern. For those men who accept the hierarchy (the brothers), it is easy to adhere to it because they can identify, they find themselves naturally resembling their ideal. For women (those who choose to adhere, of course), this identification is both necessary and impossible. Women do not resemble the ideal. However hard they identify, they will never satisfy it. So they have to choose between being true to the nation (which amounts to being true to the father-figure) and being true to their own sex/gender. The nation itself involves contradiction as its constitutive condition, in that it assigns it (the contradiction) to its subalterns in general ("minorities", "ethnicities", etc.) and to women in particular – through the imposition of a double bind obligation. The double-bind situation makes one necessarily a traitor to one half of her double identity, and thus untrue to the common and "universal" ideal within the established hegemony. Men can never find themselves in this double-bind situation (in their capacity as men; though they can, as members of a minority group); for men the national and the sexual/gender identities coincide, and never appear as split. It is the masculine (patriarchal) "same" which is being reproduced. In this sense, man is "complete" and identical to himself only in his unity with the maternal body of the nation. Women cannot take part in the reproduction of this (patriarchal) sameness, unless they erase their own presence and role as individual, sex and gender: they will therefore be treated as matter, sheer body, or instrument, and will have to be silent in the way "Mother Nation" or "the Virgin" are: giving birth to nation-and-narration (i.e. to identity through language), or to logos – the word of God.

Women's attachment to this national mythology is therefore a denial of their sexuality, alienation of pleasure (imagining herself as male or imagining the pleasure of male guardians/warriors), or sublimation of pleasure in the acts of reproducing and nurturing the nation's sons, tending to its wounded, remaining faithful to its protectors. While the "nation" or the "race" is the woman, its fantasized

“cleanliness” (lineage) is guaranteed only by masculine control of women⁷. Women do not belong to the nation in the same way men do, because they are not its active bearers or representatives. Moreover, as noted above, the nation doesn’t trust its women (and resents their vulnerability to seduction/invasion). The regulatory policies of the national-state define the terms of belonging – acceptance of proper roles in the national hierarchy and the dynamic of patriarchy – as well as the conditions of exclusion. Trapped within the boundaries of the state as an insider, the “disloyal” or questionable Other (woman/ethnic minority) is an outsider, and risks the normative and legal consequences of this status. Thus, women’s attachment to the nation is based as much on penalties of exclusion, as well as national myths of inclusion.

Gender analysis of the politics of national identity that accompanied the break up of the communist federations in post 1989 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the state and nation-building policies and practices of the new “ethnocrats” (Mostov, 1996b, 2000) exposes the “naturalizing” processes through which people are bound to (or separated from) one another and constructed as differently situated gendered/sexualized members. These ethnocracies emerged as relationships of power in which the rulers were those leaders successful in promoting themselves as uniquely qualified to define and defend the (ethno)national interests and the ruled, a collective body defined by common culture, history, religion, myth and presumed descent... The strategies of ethnocrats were supported in much of Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia by a patriarchal consensus, a willing transformation of social and political landscapes, and a reduction of political subjects and political space⁸. The collective entity of class was replaced by (ethno)nation and an old/new hierarchy of national guardians emerged together with sexually repressive gender roles, return to “traditional” values, misogynistic rhetoric, and a hyper-virile militarism.

“The nation”, in the language of ethnocracy is portrayed as a natural community; identification with and loyalty to the nation does not involve choice but, instead, acceptance of the obligations of belonging and the mission of the nation, as articulated by its guardians. Accordingly, ethnocratic state-building strategies

• ⁷ The concepts of pure and impure are twin markers. “We” are necessarily and always “pure” (the condition being the control of *our* women), they are “impure”. These concepts have the same mental and imaginary configurations in our head as borders have on the imaginary maps delimiting “good” territories (ours) from “bad” (the enemy’s). The other’s territories can be improved through conquest. Bad blood in the other’s women can be “filtered” and “improved” by our boys. In this way, a dream of hyper virility is linked to that of the nation. The Other might be tempted by this dream as well, thus, we must police our women.

⁸ In the process of securing power (in the transitions preceding the dismantlement of the system, or in tearing the old system down), they also managed more or less successfully to privatize state or public property, often retaining control of it or distributing it to their kin or clients. This corrupt economic activity increased their dictatorial power.

seek to empty the public space of political subjects, to reduce the categories of political subjectivity, and to limit access to institutions of social power. The ethno-national model of belonging (and exclusion) is based on acceptance of "natural" bonds and roles (as in "natural" gender roles in sexual reproduction) defined by tradition and interpreted by national elites. This model cannot countenance ties based on mutual recognition among participants as competent choosers or political subjects, i.e. democratic citizens.

On the other hand, the historically concurrent process of building "fortress Europe" on a "securitarian consensus"⁹ presents another iteration of this model: inclusion and democratic citizenship for members of the European community; exclusion and forced belonging (to ethnic/refugee/racial communities of otherness) for "extra-communitarians". Any border defining activity sets up a process of inclusion and exclusion. The very logic of the modern construction of political agents in the liberal state offers the opportunity for exclusion and distortion in the hands of those who reject its democratic potential as too uncertain/uncontrolled, egalitarian, and open. The desire to exclude and to reconfigure power as communal threatens to replace existing relationships of reciprocity and equality with ethnicized, hierarchical, sexualized relationships of belonging, in which patriarchs/elites define the right to citizenship in ethnic/gendered terms. Thus, the nationalisms in the former Yugoslavia and other post communist countries parallel right wing movements in Europe and the U.S. and communalisms in South Asia.

5. Narration

The ethno-national story is a closed narrative. It is a story in which the contents of the identity in question are given through the official version of a unique and absolute truth/event. All of the multiple possibilities of the event (which could have happened) are discarded and reduced to one sole interpretation, which fixes the official interpretation of the event into a "unique truth".

The hope for a democratic alternative to this story remains in recognizing our histories, that is, our origins in alterity. Opening the past to multiplicity offers a chance for women to break the old patterns and create emancipatory practices and institutions for both women and men. The papers in this volume are a move in this direction, away from history as fatality to history as possibility; from hierarchical (gender/sexed/ethnicized) community to complex, diverse society. The essays in this volume consider the significance of nation and gender in the context of post 1989 transitions in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and in

⁹ Balibar, *Nous, citoyens d'Europe? Les frontières, l'Etat, le peuple*, Paris, la Découverte, 2001; Brossat, *L'Animal démocratique. Notes sur la post-politique*, Paris, Farrago, 2000.

the context of post partition India. The texts engage in various critiques of the naturalization and essentialization of nation and woman and explore the uses of sexualized/gendered imagery in defining the space of the nation (e.g. feminized landscapes and battlefields) and sexualized/gendered metaphors of state fatherhood and motherhood in defining the distribution of power within that space. The particular histories of nationalism and partition are each different (Kumar, 2000-2001), but commonalities in narrative structures, state and nation-building strategies, patriarchal patterns of control, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are striking, particularly, with respect to the ways in which exclusive national identities are constituted through gendered representations, hierarchies, and narratives. Indeed, all of the authors in this anthology investigate the political instrumentalization of this gendering in the service of a particular appropriation of national identity.

The essay by Biljana Kašić explores the divergence between women's given and inherited roles in the context of the predominant nationalistic discourse in Croatia, after the breakdown of Yugoslavia. She, as others in the volume, links representations of womanhood to the identification of nationhood with manhood. Kašić, Vesna Kesić, and Tea Škokić all detail ways in which idealized motherhood is involved in the promotion of national heroes: mothers are first celebrated for protecting their sons from the Yugoslav Army, then, for sending them off to defend the Croatian homeland, and finally, for sacrificing them to the national interest. Urvashi Butalia, follows on this theme focusing on the Indian nationalist context, but tells us of a Kashmiri woman, Rajai Zameen, who unlike many others never accepted violence in the name of the Fatherland or of the Nation, to the point of not mourning the memory of her son killed as an extremist and terrorist. This woman resists both violence and a history given as destiny.

Elena Gapova's essay on gender identities reinvented within the Belarusian national project highlights the complexity of gender construction as it intersects and serves in ethno(national) identity formation. In Belarus during the Soviet era, Russians represented the highest authority and, accordingly, the standard of "manhood". In comparison to this "true" manhood, Belarus manhood (the "weaker" manhood of a subaltern nation) was feminized. The new Belarus nationalist project sought to (re)construct its own manhood against this old notion and through new/old gender stereotypes for the Belarus women. The national project, however, in defining itself in opposition to Russian domination has had to reconcile its recovery of traditional values with Western/European culture. Gender stereotypes have proved critical in these negotiations. Kumkum Sangari clearly outlines the contractions in affirming national identity through a mix of association and distancing from the Western ("modernizing projects") in her lucid study of reformulations of patriarchy in nationalist transactions around beauty contests and nuclear weapons.

Vesna Kesić, recognizes identities as processes and tries to locate them within post-communist transition, itself an ongoing process. She clearly distinguishes

between the disintegration of the (Yugoslav) identity and the construction of new ones (Croatian, in her example). She situates these processes in a comparison of gender-constructions in Yugoslavia – considering the “flattening” of gender differences in the ideology of “brotherhood and unity” and self-management and the sharpening of gender differences in the Croatian transition to ethnocracy. In the latter, we see again how nationalists rely on reconstructed national myths, determinist cultural projects, and demographic threats in the processes of identity formation. Tatjana Pavlović examines the cultural stereotypes in the creation of new state/national literature and explores acts of resistance to constricted cultural spaces and dominant ethnicized/gendered constructions of the national story.

In her essay on Latvia, Irina Novikova writes about the clash between a once dominant nationality (Russian) and the newly emerging dominant nationality (Latvian) in the process of “post-Soviet nationalization”. Like Gapova, she examines how the forces of exclusion and marginalization have shaped national identities and how the historical context (Soviet and post-Soviet) has affected the modalities of women’s subordination and identification as members of the new majority or minority nationalities. In the process of identifying with “their” collectivity, women are identified as “other” by the dominant male discourse and practice. Tea Škokić looks at a similar scheme in her essay, through interviews with women displaced by the “homeland” war in Croatia. In state and nation-building projects, women may be “liberated” from the Other, to be dominated from within. Or, in displacement women may find some autonomy and then risk new exclusions in a newly configured community, at the hands of new national guardians.

Ritu Menon’s paper goes to the heart of the question: do women have a country? Women are included in the nation as subaltern. The Indian examples are telling: after partition which included a wide range of atrocities, “ethnic” and religious cleansing, large scale deportations, mass rapes, and abductions of women, India and Pakistan divided or shared their goods, and women were among those goods, as property of the nation. After the violence, the two countries agreed that no one would be taken away against her/his will. Yet, at the same time the two countries came to another agreement that violated this fundamental rule: women (and minors under 16) were to be forcefully returned to their families (even when they didn’t want to be or when their relatives rejected them), that is, returned to their “proper” religious community. Thus, the category of “abducted” women was created, to include women who had ended up in the “wrong” community even as a result of their own will. According to Menon,

“Belonging” for women is also – and uniquely – linked to sexuality, honor, chastity; family, community and country must agree on both their acceptability and legitimacy, and their membership within the fold.

The Nation – the community – decides whether one of its parts belongs. It is the masculine nation, thought as nation tout court.

Elisabeth List approaches these complex issues of subordinated inclusion from an analysis of the dominant theoretical paradigm of the modern nation-state. She derives the inferior condition of women from the same conditions, which govern (modern) rationality and links the individual self to the collective identities (ethnicities/nationalities) within a historic framework. It is this situation in which a dominant identity is built on the exclusion of the other (as in the subordination of women to men) that produces cultures of violence. The way out of this dilemma is acceptance of heterogeneity, that is, acceptance of a civilizational choice distinctly different than the one, which has so far prevailed in the world.

Daša Duhaček takes a similar approach, applying it to the Serbian/Yugoslav case. Duhaček recognizes that “the very discourse of political subjectivity which women and feminists have adopted is unavoidably and necessarily a part of the installation of the model they oppose – the model of the nation-state”. While national/political citizenship is a site of patriarchal regulatory policies, she notes that it can also be a site of subversion. Recounting the activities of feminist groups and anti-war activities, she alerts us to ways in which “nation” and “state” can be contested through women’s local networks and feminist interventions in the dominant male discourse. Women can and do create social spaces for contestations and resistance. In theorizing the interdependence of nation/gender/sexuality, each of the essays in this volume suggests – implicitly or explicitly – alternative emancipatory paths for women in the context of nation and state building, or the very transformation of these activities.

6. *Perspectives*

We have tried in this book to analyze the relationship between two important identity constructions, which are obviously interlinked. The construction of gender has a much longer history, indeed, and is generally used as a pattern for all social hierarchies. It has a very special relationship with nation building because this is the identity, among others, to which gender has lent most explicitly and directly its terminology and its conceptual framework. Since the common terminology is so widely shared and highly sexuated and gendered (consider, for example, birth, origin, sex, woman, father, mother, brothers, sons, family, community, body, sacrifice, virtue, honour, and love) it is difficult to separate the two orders (nation and gender). Thus, they appear as naturally related. This volume offers specific cases of this historic relationship and, at the same time, suggests a resolution of patriarchy in favor of full equality, liberation and emancipation for women. That would have, of course, an immediate bearing on the construction of the nation and of the state, intolerable for patriarchy. If the nation and gender are historically interrelated, and if patriarchy is maintained through nation build-

ing, the problem of patriarchy cannot be solved without undermining the constitution of the nation. It is, after all, both its principal instrument and its building material, and so its *function* and condition.

That is, maintaining patriarchy is not only the willful activity of (some) men, but also, and more fundamentally, the fruit of a larger system of hierarchies and dominance, which uses the subordination of women to men as its cornerstone. Sexual analogies and gendered language serve to transform the consensually accepted global subordination of women to men into other hierarchies (based on age, class, race, international relations, etc.). A gender sensitive analysis of the mechanism of nation and state building is, thus, also an analysis of the mechanism of patriarchy. Feminist critiques of the nation offer a particularly critical and far-reaching analysis of the relationships of power involved in the state and nation-building projects. The critique is, at the same time, a dismantling of these power relations. When the nation can no longer rely upon the hierarchy of gender, its identity principle and claim for continuity will be shattered, and with it, a powerful form of domination. The two processes, however, are not identical and move at different rates of speed. The transformation of gender relations is much slower (or more slowly perceived because of patriarchal resistance and obfuscation of symbolic values) than the transformation of nation, which is, after all, a modern formation. This is one reason why the two processes are not transparent to each other and why they may clash with one another. The recent events of 1989 and also those of the end of the colonial era exemplify these conflicts. The authors of this volume confront these clashes and see the entanglement of these processes not as a deadlock, but rather as a challenge for theory and practice.

A general abdication of the dominant schools of psychoanalysis and philosophy has accompanied attempts to come to terms with capitalist globalization after 1989 (starting an era of post-socialism and a new phase of revised post-colonialism) and renouncements of the dominant schools of political thought have followed the supposed triumph of the neo-liberal option and the obvious failure of the Welfare State, the Socialist State, and of the first (secular) Post-Colonial State (these three being parallel and linked). But such abdication or renouncement is not the affair of our authors.

State-building theories, nationalist ideas, and hierarchical ideologies preoccupied with maintaining power have been proposed as replacements for these "failures" of the 20th Century, offering up various "new traditional" proposals and temporary *ad hoc* solutions which lead to ethnocracies, populist governments, and discard for any social concerns, regardless of the human price (just a war here and there, at the peripheries).

The authors in this book; however, are not to be duped. It is clear to them that they can neither adhere to the abdication of one philosophy or another taking up no project at all, nor accept the seemingly single (re)emergent "project" – the nationalist project. Instead, they take an active attitude of resistance rejecting

the idea that we are condemned to the basically unjust situation imposed on us. They transcend the ethnic and nationalist view. Together with other authors working on these topics (many of whom for good reasons are women), they contribute elements to a new conceptual framework for rethinking gender relations *within* the process of reconfiguring and redefining the gender relationship underlying other hierarchies. It is extremely difficult to think from within an ongoing process, this is why the authors deserve credit for their daring, which is heavily based in the field of women's and gender studies, as well as on the study of transitions (post-colonial and post-socialist). Being able to think about these processes will soon be one of the crucial instruments not merely of understanding our times, but also of actively projecting a just and democratic future for everyone.

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EUROPE
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INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

COSTITUITO ALLA FINE DEL 1993 CON IL SOSTEGNO FINANZIARIO DELL'UNIONE EUROPEA (PROGRAMMA HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY), IL NETWORK INTERNAZIONALE "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" SI AVVALE DELLA COOPERAZIONE DI ALCUNI FRA I PIÙ NOTI STUDIOSI DELL'EUROPA E DEGLI STATI UNITI. IL NETWORK NASCE COME INIZIATIVA UNIVERSITARIA E CON L'AMBIZIONE DI SVILUPPARE CONVERGENZA STRETTA FRA RICERCA SCIENTIFICA ED ESIGENZE DI INFORMAZIONE QUOTIDIANA NELLA NOSTRA SOCIETÀ.

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE END OF 1993 WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME) AND RELIES ON THE COLLABORATION OF SOME OF THE BEST-KNOWN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN SCHOLARS. THE INITIATIVE WAS CONCEIVED AS A UNIVERSITY PROJECT, AIMING TO MAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH MORE RELEVANT TO THE WIDESPREAD NEED FOR INFORMATION.



Università di Bologna

The essays in this volume consider the significance of nation and gender in the context of post 1989 transitions in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and in the context of post partition India. The texts critique the ways in which narratives of nationhood and womanhood naturalize and essentialize difference and hierarchy. The authors explore uses of sexualized/gendered imagery in defining the space of the nation (e.g. feminized landscapes and battlefields) and sexualized/gendered metaphors of state fatherhood and motherhood in defining the distribution of power within that space. The particular histories of nationalism and partition are different in the countries involved, but commonalities in the narrative structures, state and nation-building strategies, patriarchal patterns of control, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are striking. This is particularly so with respect to the ways in which exclusive national identities are constituted through gendered representations of the nation and its members.

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