



GENDER IRONIES OF NATIONALISM

SEXING THE NATION

EDITED BY
TAMAR MAYER



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Gender Ironies of Nationalism

The interplay between nation, gender and sexuality pressures people to negotiate their identities in complex ways. The empowerment of one nation, one gender or one sexuality invariably occurs at the expense of another.

In *Gender Ironies of Nationalism*, international case studies offer new insights into the compound intimacies and multiple identities that result from these negotiations—calling into profound question assumptions about nationalism as monolithic, much less gender neutral. The contributors conclude that control over access to benefits of belonging to the nation is invariably gendered. Nationalism frequently becomes the language through which sexual control and repression are justified and through which masculine prowess is expressed and strategically exercised.

By exploring the ways in which nations are comprised of sexed bodies, and the central role of sexuality in nation-building and in the construction of national identity, the contributors expose a fundamental set of “gender ironies.” Despite its rhetoric of equality for all who partake in the “national project,” globally *nation* remains the property of men. Yet, while it is men who claim the prerogatives of nation and of national authority it is, for the most part, women who actually accept the obligations of nation-building and of sustaining national identity.

Finally, if both “nation” and “gender” help to construct a fiction of “innateness,” the fierceness with which sexuality is wielded in defense of national bonds reveals the fragile, fragmented—and strained—status of nationalism itself.

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Gender Ironies of Nationalism

Sexing the nation

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In memory of my father, Artur Mayer,
For my mother, Shoshana Mayer,
And in honor of their great hopes

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1 Gender ironies of nationalism

Setting the stage

Tamar Mayer

The nation is a process of becoming
(Bauer 1996 [1924])

In his famous 1924 essay “The nation,” Otto Bauer asserted that “national character is changeable” (1996 [1924]: 40), and that the idea of *nation* is bound up with ego (1996 [1924]: 63). He suggested that “if someone slights the nation they slight me too...[F]or the nation is nowhere but in me and *my kind*” (ibid., emphasis added). The ideology which members of the community, those who are of the *same kind*, share—through which they identify with the nation and express their national loyalty—is what we call nationalism. Hence nationalism is the exercise of internal hegemony, the exclusive empowerment of those who share a sense of belonging to the same “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). This empowerment is clearly intertwined with what Bauer called “ego.” But what kind of ego is at stake in the case of the “nation”? The chapters in this volume argue that the national ego is intertwined with male and female ego, that it is inseparable from gender and sexuality. They further argue that nationalism becomes the language through which sexual control and repression (specifically, but not exclusively, of women and homosexuals) is justified, and masculine prowess is expressed and exercised.

Because nationalism, gender and sexuality are all socially and culturally constructed, they frequently play an important role in constructing one another—by invoking and helping to construct the “us” versus “them” distinction and the exclusion of the Other. The empowerment of one gender, one nation or one sexuality virtually always occurs at the expense and disempowerment of another. But because people have multiple identities, the interplay among nation, gender and sexuality often pressures people to negotiate their identities in complex ways.

The title of this book, *Gender Ironies of Nationalism*, is meant to convey the idea that the links between “gender” and “nation” tell us about some of the more profound ironies of modern social life. Despite its rhetoric of equality for all who partake in the “national project,” *nation* remains, like other feminized entities—emphatically, historically and globally—the property of men. At the same time, if it

is gendered, *nation* remains—quite like gender and sexuality—a construction that speaks to the conflicted urges of human community. For both “nation” and “gender” help construct a fiction of “innateness” in the name of bonds whose fragile, endangered status is evidenced in the fierceness with which they are defended—and in the fierceness with which the role of the imagination in the construction of transcendent categories and the urge to reify those categories are both, at once, revealed and denied. The subtitle *Sexing the Nation* emphasizes, further, that when sexed bodies comprise the nation we can no longer think of the nation as sexless. Rather, by exploring the gender ironies of nationalism we expose the fact that sexuality plays a key role in nation-building and in sustaining national identity.

The chapters in this volume demonstrate the many complex intimacies between gender and nation and sexuality. They show, in particular, that control over access to the benefits of belonging to the nation is virtually always gendered; that through control over reproduction, sexuality and the means of representation the authority to define the nation lies mainly with men. Finally, these chapters emphatically establish the relationship between gender boundaries and the nation: for they demonstrate that while it is men who claim the prerogatives of nation and nation-building it is for the most part women who actually tend to accept the obligation of nation and nation-building.

Definitions

Two sets of categories—nation and state, and gender and sexuality—are the bare bones of each of the chapters in this volume. Although nation is not to state what gender is to sexuality—because nation could be conceived without state but gender and sexuality remain inevitably connected—there are parallels across these sets of categories: all of these categories are socially or culturally constructed in opposition (or sometimes in relationship which is not binary) to the Other, and all of them involve power relationships. But before we turn to discussion of how nation, state, gender and sexuality intersect globally, it is important to define and explore each of these categories separately. Although *nation* and *state* are often used interchangeably, they are emphatically not synonymous. A state is a sovereign political unit which has tangible boundaries, abides by international law and is recognized by the international community. But while it may have tangible characteristics (Connor 1972) and is always self-defined, a nation is not tangible.

A nation “is a soul, a spiritual principle” (Renan 1990:19), a “moral consciousness” (Renan 1990:20) which its members believe must be maintained at all times and at all costs. The nation is a glorified ethnic group whose members are often attached to a specific territory (Smith 1981, Connor 1978) over which they strive for sovereignty or at least the ability to manage their own affairs. Members of the nation believe in their common origins and in the uniqueness of their common history, and they hope for a shared destiny (Smith 1986). They amplify the past and keep memories of communal sufferings alive. They share national symbols like customs,

language and religion, and are often blind to the fact that their national narrative is based on myths and on what Etienne Balibar (1991) calls “fictive ethnicity.”¹ Myth remains in fact essential to the life of the nation, for it is by embracing myths about the nation’s creation that members perpetuate not only national myths but also the nation itself.

The nation is sustained as well through both reactive and proactive measures. Nationalistic ideology can serve as “emotional glue” —by *othering* the nation when it occupies minority status (Calhoun 1997, Hechter 1975, Deutsch 1953) —and when there is no threat from outside or when threat does not appear imminent, through regular, even repetitive, exercises of solidarity which become accepted by members of the nation as “natural.” As many of the chapters here demonstrate, cultural, religious and political ceremonies—along with education (Chatterjee 1993, Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1990, Gellner 1983), exploitation of national media and museums and control of the national “moral code” —keep national consciousness alive and the nation “real.”

For the sake of maintaining parallels with the other set of categories discussed in this volume—gender and sexuality—and of better understanding the distinction between nation and state grounding the volume, it is important to develop here more fully some aspects of this complex relationship.² While a nation can live without a state, a state usually does not exist without a nation: we know of many stateless nations (some of whose national consciousness has been raised because of the state system).³ While there are many multinational states, there are no nation-less states.⁴ Furthermore, even though state is often perceived as the political extension of nation (Connor 1978), it must be viewed as a separate entity, because rarely do we find a pure nation-state that constructs a 100 percent fit between a nation and the state territory that it occupies. More often than not, instead, we find states which house many nations, leading to a hierarchy among these nations and creating a competition among them over control of resources and the exercise of power as a means to achieve national hegemony within the state.

As important as these discussions about the nation and the state are, they omit an essential discussion about gender and sexuality. Since the mid-1980s scholars have begun to demonstrate that we cannot understand nation and nationalism without understanding that gender and sexuality are integral to both.⁵ These scholars have shown that power, control and hegemony exist not only in the relationships between nation and state but also in the relationships between gender and sexuality, and between nation and state and gender and sexuality.

The distinction between gender and sexuality remains considerably less sharp and more complicated than the distinction between nation and state, because our understanding of these categories varies historically and geographically and because our definitions of them are still being debated. But for the sake of setting the stage for discussion and providing common language with which to read this volume I shall, nevertheless, offer some working definitions of these categories. First, what it means to be “male” or “female,” “masculine” or “feminine,” “man” or “woman” is inevitably, socially constructed—for culture gives gender and sexuality meanings

that are particular to time and space, and provides the arena within which a given subject is positioned. Within this arena, gender serves as the cultural marker of biological sex (Vance 1984:9) and sexuality serves as the cultural marking of desire (Foucault 1978).

More specifically, gender is the “dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors” (Sedgwick 1990:27). Social re-production (re)produces gender through daily repetition of acts/performances—or what Judith Butler (1990) calls “performativity.” In other words, what we perform repeatedly—based on norms that predate us—is what we become, regardless of biological chromosomes. In this sense, gender is divorced from sex (biology) and, therefore, “masculinity” does not necessarily have to be the domain of a biological “male” or “femininity” the domain of the biological “female.” As the chapters by Derné, Mayer, Martin, Allen and Lewis in this volume illustrate, at this time in the life of the nation “masculine” and “feminine” identities do seem to be fixed, with “masculinity” the domain of (biological) men and “femininity” the domain of the (biological) females. But because nation, gender and sexuality are always in the process of becoming, because they evolve continuously, associating “masculinity” with men and “femininity” with women in a national context could eventually change if either the discourse of the nation or that of gender and sexuality changes. Dwyer (Chapter 2), Moran (Chapter 5), Povinelli (Chapter 7) and Ahmetbeyzade (Chapter 8) show that in Indonesia, Liberia, Australia and Turkey these identities have already begun to change.

Sexuality, too, is not fixed in time and space. It too is a cultural construction, which refers both to an individual’s sexed desire and to an individual’s sexed being, embracing ideas about “pleasure *and* physiology, fantasy *and* anatomy” (Bristow 1997:1, original emphasis). But without understanding that sexuality is also “a domain of restriction, repression,...danger...and agency” (Vance 1984:1) and is an “actively contested political and symbolic terrain in which groups struggle to implement sexual programs and alter sexual arrangements and ideologies” (Vance 1995:41), we cannot fully understand the importance of sexuality to gender and to nation. Like gender, sexuality (and, as the chapters in the volume show, also nation) is organized into systems of power “which reward and encourage some individuals and activities while punishing and suppressing others” (Rubin 1984:309). As the chapters in this volume amply demonstrate, throughout the contemporary world these power systems generally reward heterosexual males and often punish women and gays.

To complicate these definitions even more, we need to recognize that neither gender nor sexuality ought to be discussed in the singular. Rather, because both gender and sexuality vary geographically, across lines of age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion, and because both are articulated through a variety of positions, languages and institutions, we

witness a multiplicity of gender identities and sexualities (see Lancaster and Leonardo 1997, McClintock *et al.* 1997, Duncan 1996, Berger *et al.* 1995, Brittan 1989, Vance 1984). Therefore neither gender nor sexuality is a “fixed” category: each is always implicated in the other; each is always ambivalent, always complicated, always a product of individual and institutional power.

Nation, gender, sexuality: liaison of/over bodies

The nation is comprised of sexed subjects whose “performativity” constructs not only their own gender identity but the identity of the entire nation as well. Through repetition of accepted norms and behaviors—control over reproduction, militarism and heroism, and heterosexuality—members help to construct the privileged nation; equally, the repetitive performance of these acts in the name of the nation helps to construct gender and sexuality. Moreover, because nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed in opposition, or at least in relation to, an(O)ther, they are all part of culturally constructed hierarchies, and all of them involve power. One nation, one gender and one particular sexuality is always favored by the social, political and cultural institutions which it helps to construct and which it benefits from—and thus each seeks to occupy the most favored position in the hierarchy (of nation, gender and sexuality); each tries to achieve hegemony; and each in the process becomes a contested territory, even the arena of battle among nations, genders and sexualities.

Until recently the literature on nationalism has been gender blind. But feminist scholarship’s identification of gender as a category of analysis has led to the exploration of the relationship among nation and gender/ sexuality. Feminist research has steadily revealed that men and women participate differently in the national project (Yuval-Davis 1997, McClintock 1995, Kondo 1990, Enloe 1989, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, Jayawardena 1986).⁶ Much of this scholarship has focused on women’s marginality *vis-à-vis* the construction of nation, and as a result these discussions have, for the most part, neglected to analyze *men* as an equally constructed category.⁷ This imbalance has arisen, I believe, from Women’s Studies’ tendency until recently to concentrate on recovering women’s experience, without necessarily positioning it in the larger context of gender construction, and from the unmarked status of masculinity within the nation and in nationalist discourse. However, as gender and its connection to sexuality continue to be explored, scholarship about nationalism has come to involve, more explicitly, analysis of both men’s and women’s relationship to the construction of the nation and of the ways in which national discourse constructs man and woman.⁸ It is this discussion to which this volume contributes.

When we examine the intersections among nation, gender and sexuality, we become aware that Otto Bauer (1996 [1924]) might have been ahead of his time when he observed that “the idea of the nation is bound up with ‘ego’.” Although Bauer’s reference to the nation’s “ego” does not even mention gender (which is

understandable, given the time he wrote), our understanding of this intersection is improved if we understand that who *I* am is connected to who the nation is; that my “ego” is often inseparable from the “ego” of the nation to which *I* belong and which helps to define *my* identity. Because the nation was produced as a heterosexual male construct its “ego” is intimately connected to patriarchal hierarchies and norms. These enable men and nation to achieve superiority over women and a different Other by controlling them. As a result, the intersection of nation, gender and sexuality is a discourse about a moral code, which mobilizes men (and sometimes women) to become its sole protectors and women its biological and symbolic reproducers.⁹

But I do not want to imply that the relationships which either the nation’s ego or male’s ego reproduce are monolithic, where men are active and women are passive; rather that it is important to recognize that women, too, participate culturally in reproducing the nation, defending the “moral code” and partaking in controlling the Other (e.g. De Grazia 1992, Koonz 1987). Therefore, they too sometimes contribute to the nation’s ego. For it is usually women, Yuval-Davis (1997:37) argues, “especially older women who are given the roles of the cultural reproduction of ‘the nation’ and who are empowered to rule what is ‘appropriate’ behavior and appearance and what is not and to exert control over other women who might be constructed as ‘deviant’.”

Gender control over nation and sexuality

The nation has largely been constructed as a hetero-male project, and imagined as a brotherhood (Anderson 1991:16) which has typically sprung, as Enloe (1989:44) suggests, “from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope.” Nation, therefore, regardless of location, largely remains the domain of men. But because not all men, and certainly not all people, are created equal, this “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991) remains gender, sexuality, race and class specific.¹⁰ Furthermore, because nationalism is about difference—and imagined community can therefore not be inclusive (Chatterjee 1996) —internal hierarchies often occur along lines of gender, race, class and sexuality, despite the national discourse of internal unity. It is men who are generally expected to defend the “moral consciousness” and the “ego” of the nation. Men tend to assume this role because their identity is so often intertwined with that of the nation that it translates into a “personalized image of the nation” (Hroch 1996: 90–91). Because men “regard the nation—that is themselves—as a single body” (ibid.), their own “ego” becomes at stake in national conflicts, and they frequently seek to sustain control over reproduction and representation of both sexuality and nation and over the

boundaries of the nation, through defining who is included in, or excluded from it.

Reproduction

Much of the literature on gender and nation has focused on the centrality of women to the national project. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) have suggested that women's national importance is based on their reproductive roles, which include biological and ideological reproduction, reproduction of ethnic or national boundaries, transmission of culture and participation in national struggles. Their centrality is also based on women's symbolic status, connected to their reproductive roles, as representatives of purity. Only pure and modest women can re-produce the pure nation; without purity in biological reproduction the nation clearly cannot survive. The chapters in this volume by Dwyer, Martin, Mostov and Marecek (Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6) use examples from Indonesia, the Republic of Ireland, the former Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka to illustrate the fact that reproduction is culturally constructed, and that fertility is frequently hailed by the nation's subjects and their leaders as a sign of both national prosperity and virility. It follows in all these cases that men control fertility and reproduction. Furthermore, these chapters show that when the nation is faced with internal and external pressures it polices and employs coercive means to control sexuality. These means can often be seen, as well, as racist.

Examining the politics of family planning in Indonesia, Dwyer (Chapter 2) shows that women there have little choice about their reproductive behavior; that they are not at liberty to define the size of their family; and that the reproductive choices which they do have remain cultural constructs. For the nation's sake, in the years before Western development, women were encouraged to have more children; but since the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.) have begun their activities in Indonesia and development has become the cornerstone of Indonesian nationalism women have been encouraged, by all means, to limit their fertility. Ultimately, through family planning the state has orchestrated control over both women's sexuality and the public articulation of nationalism. And the Indonesian situation is far from unique. In Ireland, for example, as Martin argues in Chapter 3, the state also controls women's sexuality and reproduction through its judicial system; and there, too, the state maps out the contours of national identity. By using the twinned logic of religion and nation to prohibit abortions (including travel to neighboring states for abortions, even for adolescent girls), the state interferes with women's reproductive choices and in effect sets the discursive relationship among state, nation, and reproduction.

Abortion is also constructed as the enemy of the nation in the former Yugoslavia, according to Mostov (Chapter 4), who shows that Bosnian, Croat and Serbian women are encouraged by religious and national leaders to have more children in the name of nationalism. Women who have abortions are figured as "moral enemies of the state" —but reproduction is celebrated only if it is consummated with men of that

nation. The case of the former Yugoslavia demonstrates how in a multinational state, especially one that has experienced major international wars, the “us”/“them” construction remains especially strong.

In both Liberia and Sri Lanka, as Moran and Marecek (Chapters 5 and 6) show, the reproduction of the traditional nation is carried out by women who are extolled as custodians of the national cultural heritage—if they conform to the ideals of traditional womanhood, and if they do not they come under attack by men of these nations. In both these countries, as in Indonesia, Western ideals about womanhood have been adopted, and thus reproduction of the nation in the late twentieth century means something quite different than a few decades ago. Furthermore, by legalizing a “moral code” concerning marriage and family, the state in both Liberia and Sri Lanka actively controls both sexuality and the nation.

Western ideals and technologies also participate in reproduction of the nation, especially in the non-Western world. While nationalism has become equated in Indonesia and Liberia and for the Sinhala in Sri Lanka with “modernity” and modeled on Western ideals about family and progress, in Sri Lanka the nation is at the same time reproduced in resistance against Western dress and lifestyle. As Western ideas such as family planning, the nuclear family, monogamous relationships and “civilized” behavior replace traditional practices, the nation is thus forced to negotiate its identity in complex ways: for while it may aspire the approval and resources of the West, the only way the nation can be fully reproduced is if it remains “traditional” and its women remain modest and pure. One way to ensure this type of reproduction, as Marecek, Martin, Mostov and Moran all suggest, is by mandating women’s confinement to the home, to the private sphere, where they remain under the watchful eye of their husbands.

These national battles over reproduction, representation and control over sexuality are inevitably complicated by social and political hierarchies: not only are there gender, class and sexual hierarchies within every nation, but hierarchies separate different nations as well. Therefore in Asia, Africa and Latin America biological reproduction is negotiated not only by husband and wife but also by the nation’s elites, whose interests frequently coincide with the interests of Western developers and politicians. Reproducing the nation has become in non-Western nations, then, paradoxically, in significant part the domain of the West and its white populations.

In addition to biological reproduction, the nation is reproduced culturally, socially and symbolically through the performativity of its members. This is also the way that norms of gender and sexuality are reproduced when they intersect with nation. Narratives about the creation of the nation, which posit the proper behavior of women as mothers and defenders of culture and national values, are discussed by Mostov for the case of Yugoslavia, by Martin for the case of Ireland, by Marecek for the case of Sinhala in Sri Lanka, by Moran for the case of Liberia, by Ahmetbeyzade for the case of

the Kurds in Turkey (Chapter 8) and by Derné for the case of Hindus in India (Chapter 10). Narratives which construct the role of men as defenders of the nation and its traditions are discussed by Mostov for Yugoslavia, Derné for India, Lewis for the Caribbean (Chapter 11), Mayer for Jewish Israel (Chapter 12) and Allen for the U.S. (Chapter 13). Their gender roles are reproduced in the name of the nation and in the process they reproduce the nation itself. Furthermore, as Povinelli suggests in Chapter 7, the nation may also be reproduced through sexual “performativity,” as in Australia, through the violent ritual sex of Aborigines. Although until the early part of the twentieth century these acts and their significance to Australian identity were misunderstood and challenged hegemonic understandings of Australian nationalism, ritual sex has more recently prompted the Australian public to consider a new, more heterogeneous and tolerant, foundation for its national narrative.

Cultural ritual is also central to the reproduction of both nationhood and gender roles, as Hamlish argues in Chapter 9, about China. The traditional practice of calligraphy is an important medium through which the nation is reproduced and gender is sexualized. Because the practice of calligraphy has not changed much over many years and remains almost exclusively the domain of men, women in China—unlike in other parts of the world—remain marginal to the cultural reproduction of the nation. Because calligraphy embodies traditional—gendered—values and beliefs, Hamlish argues, it remains an obstacle in the way of progress, actively helping to sustain “traditional” reproduction of both nation and gender roles.

In each of these cases, culture and ritual are central strategies through which the nation projects itself inwardly, as well as to the outside world, and through which it mobilizes its members. The nation’s self-representation always involves myths about the nation’s creation and about its members. As established by Connor (1990, 1978), Hobsbawm (1990), Smith (1986), Gellner (1983) and others, myth is such a crucial element in the life of the nation that without it the nation cannot survive. But because myth, by definition, does not necessarily represent with historical accuracy the nation’s past, the “reality” that is constructed intends to represent both the nation and its members in a way that will continue both to benefit the unity of the nation and to sustain the myth.

Representation

National narratives construct the ideal image of the nation. This discourse is a way for the nation to present itself to multiple audiences: to the national community (regardless of gender, sexuality, race and class) and to the international community. In order to survive and to justify its existence, the nation must preserve its uniqueness; it does so by constructing myths about national

creation and by defining “proper behaviors” for members of the nation and for the nation itself. Because elites play a major role in constructing the nation and its narratives, the nation is generally represented so that it serves the aspirations of the elite (Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1990, Connor 1987, Mosse 1985, Brass 1979). In these narratives the nation is virtually always feminized and characterized as in need of protection; women are figured as the biological and cultural reproducers of the nation and as “pure” and “modest,” and men defend the national image and protect the nation’s territory, women’s “purity” and “modesty,” and the “moral code.” Thus women are represented as the nation’s social and biological womb and the men as its protectors: “women [are] sedate rather than dynamic...[t]hey [stand] for immutability rather than progress, providing the backdrop against which men determine[d] the fate of the nation” (Mosse 1985:23). Although in reality these prescribed identities are often challenged, rarely do we find in the national rhetoric ambivalence over any of these identities.

“Purity,” “modesty” and “chastity” are common themes in national narratives of gender, nation and sexuality (e.g. Chatterjee 1993, Katrak 1992, Kandiyoti 1991) and they are discussed extensively in this volume. Dwyer, Martin, Mostov, Moran, Marecek and Derné all show that when a nation is constructed in opposition to the Other there emerges a profound distinction not only between us and them but also more pointedly, between our women and theirs. Our women are always “pure” and “moral” while their women are “deviant” and “immoral.” As these contributors illustrate, representing women in this way guarantees women’s inferiority, for the favored members of the nation—the loyal sons—must defend *our* women’s “purity,” as well as the “moral code” of the nation. These men praise traditional roles for women but embrace for themselves practices which are based on modernity.

In the case of Indonesia, for example, as Dwyer shows (Chapter 2), even as the ideal of nationhood is becoming intimately connected with the path of modern progress, representation of the “ideal” woman—who restricts her fertility for the sake of the nation, who is “modest” and who is committed to her nuclear family—is becoming more important in public life. Religious sermons, family planning propaganda in schools and youth movements, and commercials on television and billboards all hail the benefits of contraception to small and “happy” families in their representations of women and the nation.

The “ideal” nation and its “model” members are represented in arts, literature and the media, in public speeches and in the writings of the nation’s leaders—in every medium through which the nation is mobilized. Other media through which the relationships among gender, sexuality and nation are represented and which are discussed in the volume include newspaper cartoons in Liberia, calligraphy in China, the rhetoric of remembrance in Israel and the political debates surrounding the participation of women and gays in the U.S. military. Moran argues in Chapter 5 that because newspapers are one important medium through which African social life is constructed, given meaning and revised, and

where the nation constitutes itself as “civilized,” women’s representation in Liberian newspaper cartoons exemplifies national tensions between becoming modern, “civilized” and remaining “native.” Although these cartoons offer different visions of “civilized” womanhood and female citizenship, their frequent portrayal of modern women as “predators” and “aggressors” —as enemies of national development—has, according to Moran, contributed to the negative representation of women in contemporary Liberian nationalism. Hamlish argues in Chapter 9 that because in China the images of calligraphy embody a timelessness that transcends the particularities of any given historical moment, appropriating calligraphy as an instance of national heritage contributes to representations of the nation as a singular, unified community. And because it is largely men who have participated in the calligraphic tradition, it is men’s vision through which the nation has been reproduced and represented.

A common theme in the literature concerning gender and nation is the feminization of the motherland and the call of the nation’s sons to defend her. Mostov and Mayer argue, in Chapters 4 and 12, that in the cases of both the former Yugoslavia and Jewish Israel it is the nation’s men who are made into heroes, and it is through imagery of men that the nation represents itself. Such representation is sustained, Mayer argues, through the rhetoric of remembrance and through public embrace of a “cult of toughness” that represents both the Jewish nation and its Israeli men. Representation of the nation through its military is a pattern which is also explored by Allen (Chapter 13), who asserts that the U.S. military performs the most important representative function in American life. After examining the rhetoric of threat to the national fabric in U.S. Congressional debates about inclusion of women and gays in the military, Allen argues that the military has become a leading defender of heterosexual national (and “family”) values.

But representation of the American nation is not only the domain of mainstream groups. Light and Chaloupka argue in Chapter 14 that for that part of the American public which they call “angry white men” the formulation of an American sense of nationhood depends greatly on creating myths about white male supremacy. It is through the white supremacy discourse of the right, through major anti-government challenges mounted in places like Waco, Texas, in Ruby Ridge, Idaho and Oklahoma City, that the extreme right’s vision of an American nation is constructed and played out. Light and Chaloupka also suggest that it is because mainstream representations of the nation are limited and exclusive that fringe groups like white supremacists construct their own vision of the nation and fight for it.

Inclusion/exclusion—whose nation is it, anyway?

The nation, as Benedict Anderson (1991) has framed it, is an “imagined community” whose members conceive it to be united, exclusive and worthy of sacrifice (Breuilly 1996). While it may feel central when the nation is constructed *vis-à-vis* the Other,

this discourse of “unity” is often challenged when the nation’s inner workings are examined, especially in relation to gender and to sexuality.

Because the nation is often constructed by elites who have the power to define the nation in ways that further their own interests, the same elites are also able to define who is central and who is marginal to the national project. In the intersection of nation, gender and sexuality the nation is constructed to respect a “moral code” which is often based on masculinity and heterosexuality. This is the reason why the leaders of the nation may try to represent their nation as “modest”—and in turn speak in terms of the ideals of the nation in imposing on women a traditional moral code (see Mostov, Martin, Moran, Ahmetbeyzade and Derné).

Allen’s analysis of Congressional debates over the inclusion of gays in the U.S. military and of women in combat units (Chapter 13) suggests that the military has been an important vehicle for American national imagining. Opponents in Congress have, in effect, tried to exclude women and gays from fully participating in the nation; for it is precisely because of the military’s significance to the nation and the importance of military service to membership in U.S. national community, Allen argues, that female combatants and gay soldiers seek access to a military role. The military has also been central, Mayer argues (Chapter 12), in defining who is part of the Jewish nation and who is not. Jewish national imagining was possible only through creating the *New Jew*, the *Muscle Jew*, an exclusively male figure who became a fighter; the pioneer redeemer of the biblical homeland, the crown jewel of Zionism. Although women were clearly important to the Jewish national project (at the very least, as biological reproducers), because so much about Jewish nationalism has since the beginning of the twentieth century revolved around militarism and defense, men have been elevated to much more central roles—while women have in many ways remained marginal to the Jewish national discourse. Furthermore, as the national memory remains so closely linked to acts of heroism and to what Mayer calls the “pantheon of male heroes,” women continue for the most part to remain excluded from the Jewish national project and its imagining.

Chinese women experience a different sort of exclusion. Hamlish (Chapter 9) argues that because the nation’s symbolic reproduction is closely linked to calligraphy and because only a small cohort of ruling elite—mostly men—actually practiced this art during the nationally formative imperial period, women in China have for centuries been excluded from the national discourse and from participation in its symbolic reproduction. Furthermore, even though more Chinese women have recently become calligraphers they have continued to remain marginalized—and their art invisible, distant from the sphere of national symbol-making, as they are restricted to a space defined by gender.

Exclusion from the national discourse, Ahmetbeyzade argues (Chapter 8), has also been the experience of Kurdish peasant women in Turkey. Although within their own communities Kurdish peasant women have access to power (they are often heads of households, they organize peasant networks and they often

represent peasant communities to the Turkish state), they remain marginalized in the larger context of the Turkish nation. Through social policies, on the one hand, and military repression, on the other, the Turkish state excludes Kurds in general and Kurdish women in particular.

The discourse of national inclusion and exclusion is in fact central throughout the world, as three more chapters in the volume evidence. Light and Chaloupka argue in Chapter 14 that it is directly in response to the discourse of nationalism articulated by the left that the far right's formulation of itself around themes of national self-identity has emerged in the U.S. White male identity politics have focused on the formation of a new, exclusionary American national identity—one which is based on white racial pride and on a desire to return to the ideal of white supremacy associated with earlier American culture. Moran and Povinelli (Chapters 5 and 7) suggest that in nations which include both modern and native populations, access to membership in the nation involves complex cultural negotiation. In the case of Australia, Povinelli argues, sexual behavior has been an important marker of who is included in or excluded from the "imagined nation." Aborigines' ritual sex practices—some of which were violent and all of which were public—revealed to white Australians the fact the national "imagined community" that they had conceived as unified was in actuality fragmented, prompting an effort to forge a more tolerant and inclusive notion of national identity. As Moran shows in the case of Liberia, when the population is comprised of both "civilized" and "native," modern and rural, it is the "civilized" who are elevated to the highest positions within the national hierarchy while "natives," especially if they are women, and even if they have achieved some measure of "civilized" status, remain excluded from the imagined community. In other words, social transformation does not necessarily enable the members of the indigenous population to overcome their position in society and to become part of the nation as defined by the elite.

As these examples show, in determining who belongs to the nation and who does not, elites construct a code of "proper behavior" for members of the nation which becomes a sort of national boundary. In each case, the code which the elite promotes as essential to the continuation of the nation also furthers the elite's own interests; thus in the life of the nation one gender, one sexuality and one national narrative tends to rule. Even as groups of women and men, straight and gay, have begun to challenge these models and gender identities have become more fluid, the hegemony of one gender and one sexuality within the nation remains relatively unchanged all over the world.

Gender/sexual boundaries and nation

The nation has been constructed as the hegemonic domain of both masculinity and heterosexuality, and thus has been a major site for the institutionalization of gender differences (McClintock 1995). Because the nation has been

symbolically figured as a family (McClintock *et al.* 1997) —and as such has acquired a patriarchal hierarchy within which members are assigned distinct roles in accordance with their gender—as in the patriarchal family, for the nation to sustain itself it needs both masculinity and femininity. For without masculinity, femininity cannot exist; and without these twin constructions the nation as we know it would not exist either.

Mosse argues in *Nationalism and Sexuality* (1985) that manliness has been the idea on which the nation is built and the arena where a passive femininity is constructed. Even when the binarism of hetero-patriarchal norms is challenged, it virtually always remains the case that it is men who claim the authority to define the nation and its boundaries; to define the process of nation-building; and to articulate what masculinities and femininities are appropriate to the nation. The chapters in this volume discuss the relationship between nation-building and both masculinity and femininity, and assert that these categories were constructed at the same time as the nation, and that very often they play an active part in defining the boundaries of the nation through a relationship to the body.

Masculinity and the nation

In her essay “How to build a man,” Ann Fausto-Sterling (1995:127) tells us that “men are made not born” and that we “construct masculinity through social discourse.” Male behavior depends on existing social relations and on the social code that predetermines these relations. Therefore the expression of masculinity will depend on the image that men have of themselves (Brittan 1989) relative to women, community, society and the nation.

The five chapters in this volume which explicitly discuss the dynamics of interaction between masculinity and the nation suggest that the construction of the nation was simultaneous to the construction of masculinity in India, the Caribbean and Israel, and that male bonding or *Männerbund*, in Mosse’s words, is central to the perpetuation of the nation in the cases of Israel and the United States.

Both Indian and Caribbean nationalism developed in reaction to British imperialism and to imperialism’s feminization and infantilization both of the colonies themselves and of indigenous men.¹¹ In reaction to the powerlessness which they experienced during colonialism, Darné argues in Chapter 10, Indian men developed sharper consciousness of their nation and their bodies. And as the British challenged their masculinity, Indian men emphasized both control over their own bodies and control over Indian women’s bodies—through body-building and celibacy, and through controlling Indian women’s sexuality. Many Indian men’s sense of masculinity has, increasingly, come to depend on preserving women’s femininity, modesty and religiosity; because the nationalist discourse, built around the intersection between nation and masculinity, has

focused on “protecting” women and, especially, their sexuality from assaults by foreigners.

British imperialism has also sought to feminize the Anglophone Caribbean, but the intersection between nationalism and masculinity took a different route there. In the Caribbean, Lewis argues in Chapter 11, nationalism’s connection to masculinity developed simultaneously in two different arenas: in trade unions, where men who held central positions articulated ideas about a Caribbean-based self-determination; and in the Black communities, where a Black consciousness was growing and a Black national pride was evolving. Because much of the Anglophone Caribbean nationalist project was formulated by men as part of projects of colonial resistance, the nationalism that developed there was masculinist in nature—and therefore reproduced many of the male-dominated political and social institutions of the colonial era. Men’s goals, which were embraced both by women and men as if they were to benefit the entire nation, defined the nationalist project in the colonial era and continue to do so in the post-colonial era as well.

Reaction to being feminized has also led to the intersection of masculinity and nationalism among Jews. Mayer shows in Chapter 12 that we cannot conceive of Jewish nationalism without understanding how masculine a project it has been. From its inception, the idea which stood behind Zionism (Jewish nationalism) was the transformation of the social, political, economic and psychological profile of the Jews of Europe, the creation of a *New Jew*, a *Muscle Jew*, who would be the antithesis of the pejoratively “feminized” Diaspora Jew. And, in turn, the political and economic transformation which led to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine required the construction of a physically fit *New Jew*, who upon arrival in Palestine would take up arms to protect himself, his communities and what he believed was his land. Because Jewish history in Palestine has been burdened by a continuous struggle for survival, a militarized notion of Jewish nationhood developed which further shaped Jewish nationalism in Palestine (and later in Israel) as masculine. Mayer argues that because national myths of creation and survival —of wars and heroic, even miraculous, saving episodes—have been integral to the daily Jewish experience in Palestine and central to formal and informal Hebrew education there, a militarized nationalism and an almost exclusively male cult of heroism has developed there. The homosocial experiences that the militarized setting has offered and the male bonding experiences that have occurred in military units have also helped to build the intimate connection between masculinity and Jewish nationalism.

Attempts to protect homosociality in the military have been important as well in the U.S., where they have been at the center of Congressional debates. Allen argues in Chapter 13 that efforts to prevent women from becoming combatants and gays from participating in the military are a way to preserve the U.S. military as a perpetual military fraternity, an heterosexual masculine zone. Because the military in the U.S. serves to defend political ideals as well as gender and sexual ideals (such as heterosexual masculinity and the model of male-headed

households) which are at the heart of the mainstream American notion of nation, an inclusive military force could, according to opponents, threaten the national (heterosexual male) fabric. At the heart of the debates in Congress about inclusion or exclusion of women and gays is the dilemma of how to protect, uninterrupted, the existing connection between nationalism and masculinity.

Light and Chaloupka take up in Chapter 14 yet another aspect of the relationship between masculinity and nationalism, as they demonstrate the connection between leftist versions of identity politics and right-wing nationalism. They argue that right-wing nationalism is a reactive nationalism, formulated by white men whose idea of the nation is intertwined with their race and gender supremacy, in reaction to liberal formulations of the American nation. Because they are committed to the idea that their formulation of nationalism is the only correct one, right-wing nationalists see themselves as “saving” the American nation from its current government, and present such activities as the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the siege in Ruby Ridge as justifiable acts of defense of the American people. These acts of saving the nation from its own government is the ultimate masculine task.

In all these cases, the connection between masculinity and nationalism remains strong: men take the liberty to define the nation and the nation-building process, while women for the most part accept their obligation to reproduce the nation biologically and symbolically. Although some of these roles have begun to be challenged, we can still generalize that masculinity and femininity remain fixed categories when they interact with the nation.

Femininity

Because the national project was initially defined by men and almost immediately became a masculinist project, femininity has in the national context been constructed in relation to men, to nation and, later, to state policies. As many of the chapters in this volume illustrate, femininity is generally produced as a means of supporting the nation’s construction, through symbolic, moral and biological reproduction; in turn, it is precisely because it is a masculine project that nation becomes feminized and figured in service to male needs.

In Indonesia, for example, as Dwyer shows in Chapter 2, women are encouraged to control their fertility so that they can participate in the process of nation-building by becoming guardians of family morality and national development. Because women are the primary users of contraception, femininity has become associated in Indonesia not only with reproduction but also with the control of reproduction. Membership in contraception “acceptor clubs” offers Indonesian women a privileged and approved means to participate in national identity and nation-building.

Martin argues in Chapter 3 that in Ireland, where women have historically been charged with the labor of representing or embodying the nation, femininity is ascribed through a religious discourse. Not only are Irish women constructed as equivalents to home and motherhood, but also their femininity and their relation to the nation are structured around the Virgin Mary so that, according to Martin, femininity is inscribed and embodied as a product of the everyday discursive practices that comprise the devotion to Mary. Women are encouraged to represent and manifest the ideal of Mary in their own “essence” —in their behavior, their motherhood and their relationships with others. In other words, it is through their mimetic performance of Mary’s model that individual Irish women come to embody femininity and, by extension, the Irish nation.

And in Liberia, where the nation is divided along a civilized/native binarism, femininity is defined by “civilized” men. “Civilized” women are defined by the fact that they do not participate in the physical difficulties of farm labor; ideally they are to be dependent housewives who are fully occupied with the care of the home and the children. Through these domestic practices, women produce and reproduce the honored status of the entire household as well as the next generation of “civilized” people. Yet if, therefore, “civilized” women more than “native” women participate in the nation-building process, both their “feminine” and their “civilized” status can be maintained only as long as these women do not challenge the “proper codes of behavior” or engage in activities that may threaten their respectability. If they do so, their civilized status will be stripped and their femininity questioned.

Femininity as constructed through patriarchal relations and women’s obligation to the nation has in fact begun to be challenged—by women themselves. Ahmetbeyzade argues in Chapter 8 that because so many Kurdish peasant mothers and wives are heads of households and have access to power and resources within their own communities they are able to negotiate their own positions by resisting familial, tribal and even state patriarchies. No longer are these women just biological and symbolic reproducers of the nation. Rather, they have accepted a new obligation to nation-building, one which is based on their own ability to control communication among Kurdish peasant villages and on their own growing political consciousness.

The body as boundary

As several of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, when nation, gender and sexuality intersect, the body becomes an important marker—even a boundary—for the nation. In the hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity, when men (and sometimes older women) control the “proper behavior” of women, in effect they control women’s bodies and

sexuality. And because women's bodies represent the "purity" of the nation and thus are guarded heavily by men, an attack on these bodies becomes an attack on the nation's men.

Dwyer, Martin and Mostov (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) show different ways in which women's bodies have become the nation's boundary. In Indonesia, Dwyer argues, sexuality has become a primary idiom through which national identity is articulated: encouragement (and coercion) of women into participation in family planning programs and use of contraceptive technology becomes a means of controlling their fertility and, as a result, altering their bodies. Because family planning is such an important part of Indonesian nationalism, women and their bodies thus become the nation's marker.

In Ireland the body plays a different role in marking the boundaries of the nation. Martin analyzes the case of Miss X, a 14 year old who became pregnant as a result of a rape, and who subsequently made plans to go to England for an abortion because abortions are illegal in Ireland. The debates surrounding Miss X's possible travel to England for abortion, Martin argues, show how Miss X's pregnant body became synonymous with the ideal image of the Irish nation; how for many in Ireland the death of Miss X's baby came to correspond mimetically to the death of the Irish nation. Even though her rape was a personal act of violence, through restricting Miss X's travel to obtain an abortion in England and, in effect, prohibiting her from leaving Ireland altogether, the boundaries of her female body and the boundaries of the Irish nation became conflated.

A third case of how the body serves as a boundary for the nation is discussed by Mostov in Chapter 4. In the former Yugoslavia, where women's bodies have been important to the collective national body in their reproductive capacity, violent personal acts like rape have acquired national significance. Mass rapes such as in Bosnia, Mostov asserts, are about the invasion of the Other's boundaries, the occupation of the Other's symbolic space, property and territory: rape of women becomes an attack on the nation, figuring as a violation of national boundaries, a violation of national autonomy and national sovereignty.

Ultimately in the interplay of nation, gender and sexuality and in the mutual roles that they play in constructing each other, power becomes the most important narrative—because power, more than any other discourse, determines the hierarchical relations within each of these discourses and among them. And because the national project has been imagined by men and has been designed as a masculine construct, patriarchal hierarchies have become the foundation of the nation as much as the foundation of both gender and sexuality. As nation, gender and sexuality interact with one another, one nation, one gender and one sexuality come to dominate; and therefore what the nation is, its "ego," becomes imbedded in what men are and what women are assigned to be. The nation and men so often seem to mirror one another and be each other's extension, therefore, as Bauer put it, in his 1924 essay: "if someone slights the nation they slight me too." However, as social, political and economic conditions in each nation are never static the hegemony of the-male-nation has begun to be challenged. And

as the nation is always in the process of “becoming” so are gender and sexuality. Challenges to heteronormativity are likely, therefore, to yield changes to the nation which will no doubt become the grounds of discussion of—and tension over—power conflicts in the years to come.

Notes

- 1 For general discussion of the role of myth in nationalism see Gellner (1996), Connor (1990) and Hutchinson (1987).
- 2 For an important contribution to this discussion see Herb and Kaplan (1998) and see, in particular, G. Herb's essay “National identity and territory” (1998) where he provides a lucid framework for the discussion of nation, state and territory. Also central to the discussion are Calhoun (1997), Breuilly (1993), Hobsbawm (1990) and Connor (1978).
- 3 A few examples of stateless nations are the Palestinians, the Kurds and the Druze, the Basques, Quebecois, Sami people, Zapotecs, the Berbers, the Moros, the Sikhs, Flemings, Bretons and Catalans.
- 4 The list of multinational states is very long but some examples which we may want to think about are Belgium, Canada, China, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Soviet Union, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- 5 See in particular the works of Yuval-Davis (1997), Radcliffe and Westwood (1996), McClintock (1995), Mayer (1994), De Grazia (1992), Parker *et al.* (1992), Enloe (1989), Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), Koonz (1987) and Mosse (1985), who all discuss explicitly the importance of gender or sexuality to our understanding of the nation and of nationalism.
- 6 Because many of these books do not distinguish between nation and state they discuss women's “citizenship” rather than women and nationalism, even though, as discussed in the early part of this introduction, the two are not the same and should not be conflated.
- 7 Notable exceptions are Herzfeld (1997), Pickering-Lazzi (1995), Parker *et al.* (1992), the two volumes by Theweleit (1987, 1989) and Mosse (1985).
- 8 Two important examples are Radcliffe and Westwood (1996), specifically Chapter 6, and Sharp's (1996) analysis.
- 9 In particular see Anthias' (1989) work on Greek-Cypriot nationalism and Kandiyoti's (1991) analysis of Turkish nationalism.
- 10 For an important discussion about who can do the “imagining” of the *nation* during colonial times and who can and should do it in a post-colonial era, see Chatterjee (1996).
- 11 For an excellent discussion of the impact of British imperialism on the feminization of the colonies see McClintock (1995).

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