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## From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe

Katherina Verdery

Eastern Europe has been for the past half-century a major proving ground for experiments in both the social organization of gender and the attempted redefinition of national identity. Early pronouncements by socialist regimes in favor of gender equality, together with policies to increase women's participation in the work force, led optimists to expect important gains for women; the internationalist bias of Soviet socialism promised to resolve the "national question," making national conflicts obsolete; and the Party's broadly homogenizing goals bade fair to erase difference of almost every kind from the social landscape. Had these promises borne fruit, socialism would have given "gender" and "nationalism" a wholly novel articulation.

Although socialism clearly did not liberate women or put an end to national sentiment, it did reshape them and (thus) their interconnections. My objective in this chapter is to offer some thoughts on how these two aspects of "difference" intersected under socialism and on what changes we might look for in the postsocialist period. I aim to raise issues for discussion rather than present a finished argument. I begin by defining what I mean by the terms "gender" and "nation," then sketch the gender regime of socialism, give some examples of gendered national discourse in socialist Romania, and look briefly at what has been happening with nationalism and gender since 1989 in certain Eastern European countries.

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### Concepts

I take "nation" and "gender" to be cultural constructs used both in academic writing and in everyday life (even, occasionally, with some overlap in those two registers). As constructs, they are made up – arbitrary – but through their utilization in social life they become socially real and seemingly natural. Both constructs are basic means of social classification. Each names a particular way of organizing social

difference, a dimension along which categories indicating difference (male, female; Catalan, French, Polish) are arrayed. Each also implies both homogeneity and difference simultaneously, creating putative internal homogeneities that can be contrasted with one another *as* differences. Thus a given "nation" has no meaning except in a world of other, different nations, but a great deal of social effort has historically been expended on defining any given nation as distinctive by virtue of qualities *all* its members are presumed to share. The same can be said of gender or gender roles. Gender and nation exist in part as an aspect of subjective experience (national or gender "identities," for instance) – as a subjectivity that orients persons in specific, distinctive ways according to the nationness and gender attributed to or adopted by them. This subjectivity is, in turn, the joint product of prevailing cultural understandings and people's social situations. To examine the intersection of nation and gender is to ask how either of them implicates the other, in the way they are socially elaborated or lived.

Gender, as a construct, mediates the relation between bodies, as anatomical or biological givens, and social meanings about them. It is a symbol system by which bodies enter into sociality. In this sense, gender can be seen as a fundamental organizer of the connection between nature and culture. Most gender systems construct a very small number of categories – usually two, "feminine" and "masculine" (with alternative forms generally seen as acceptable or deviant permutations of these). In making bodies social, gender enters into organizations of power and inequality to produce what R. W. Connell calls gender regimes, which consist of a gender division of labor, a gendered structure of power, and a structure of cathexis. The term "patriarchy" refers to gender regimes whose inbuilt inequalities favor the occupants of masculine gender roles.

Nation, as a construct, mediates the relation between subjects and states (which are themselves social constructs too). It is a cultural relation intended to link a state with its subjects and to distinguish them from the subjects of other states. I use the term "nationalism" to refer to activity (including discourse) or sentiment that posits such a relation as important, whether it be oriented toward an existing state and its regime or toward some other state/ regime, envisioned as more suited to the nations interests. The subjectivities integral to "nation" are fundamental elements of the basic political form of modern times, the nation-state. To the extent that the modern nation-state is defined in relation to a geographical territory, "nation" parallels "gender" in linking the physical "body" of the state to a set of meanings and affects, thus rendering physical space sociopolitical. And because such events as war and military service involve the state directly in the bodies of its (male) subjects, the standard rhetoric of nation-states effectively ties together control over subject bodies and that over territory.

Actual nations are potentially infinite in number; the grounds for defining them, however, are more limited. Eric Hobsbawm mentions several of the meanings nation has had since ancient times, but for the modern world he identifies two main senses

of it. These are 1) a relation known as citizenship, in which the nation comprises all those whose common political participation ostensibly undergirds collective sovereignty, and 2) a relation known as ethnicity, in which the nation comprises all those of supposedly common language, history, or broader “cultural” identity. The latter is the meaning most often invoked with the term “nationalism” (which I sometimes sharpen by calling it “ethnonationalism,” to signal the ethnic meaning). I would add to these a third form of cultural relation between state and subject, the form attempted under socialism – in Romania, frequently using the expression “socialist nation.” It emphasized a quasi-familial dependency I will call “socialist paternalism.” Instead of political rights or ethnocultural similarity, it posited a moral tie linking subjects with the state through their rights to a share in the redistributed social product. Subjects were presumed to be neither politically active, as with citizenship, nor ethnically similar to each other: they were presumed to be grateful recipients – like small children in a family – of benefits their rulers decided upon for them. The subject disposition this produced was dependency, rather than the agency cultivated by citizenship or the solidarity of ethnonationalism. Sharing a kinship-familial metaphor, socialist paternalism and ethnonationalism as state-subject relations have a certain affinity. Indeed, in official discourses of Ceaușescu’s Romania in the 1970s and 1980s, the two meanings are virtually impossible to disentangle.

Nation in these three (or other) senses can implicate gender in a variety of ways. Citizenship and political rights, for example, can be understood as applying differentially to women and men – or, to phrase it the other way around, notions of “male” and “female” can be elaborated in such a way that they intersect unequally with citizenship. In many societies, women are citizens only by virtue of their ties to husbands and fathers; a man marrying a foreign woman makes her his nation’s citizen, but a woman marrying a foreign man loses her rights; the offspring of men, but not of women, automatically become citizens; and so on. Similarly, ethnonational symbols may be thought of in gendered terms. Other (weaker) nations may be “feminized” (and raped), and a national identity may be defined and protected by sequestering or defending “our” women from the allegedly insatiable sexuality of other nations’ men. Finally, socialist paternalism implicated gender by seeking to eradicate male/female differences to an unprecedented degree, casting onto the state certain tasks associated with household gender roles. From these examples, it is clear that both gender and nation are essential to the hegemonic projects of modern state-building, and that a prime vehicle for symbolizing and organizing their interface is the family.

### **The Gender Regime of Socialism**

Although the socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union differed from one another in important ways, I treat them as forming a broad class of societies more similar to one another, in certain organizational respects, than to other societies. I have presented in chapter I my analysis of the “workings” of socialism as a

system – without, however, considering the place of gender in this.<sup>0</sup> In the following brief summary, I draw upon scholarship by Joanna Goven, Gail Kligman, Maxine Molyneux, and others, whose work helps to clarify the gender regime peculiar to socialism.

Socialist systems legitimated themselves with the claim that they redistributed the social product in the interests of the general welfare. Using this premise, socialist paternalism constructed its “nation” on an implicit view of society as a family, headed by a “wise” Party that, in a paternal guise, made all the family’s allocative decisions as to who should produce what and who should receive what reward – thus a “parent-state.” As Preobrazhensky put it, “The family must be replaced by the Communist Party.” While socialism resembled many other political systems in emphasizing the family as a basic element in the polity, I believe that it went further than most in seeing society not simply as like a family but as itself a family, with the Party as parent. Socialist society thus resembled the classic *zadruga*: as an extended family, it was composed of individual nuclear families, but these were bound into a larger familial organization of patriarchal authority with the “father” Party at its head. We might call the result a “zadruga-state.”

Peculiar to the *zadruga*-state, as Goven and Dolling show, was a substantial reorganization of gender roles within its nuclear families, increasing the degree of gender equality in them. The reason was that socialist regimes pushed an industrialization program that was (perforce) labor-intensive and capital-poor, necessarily requiring the labor power of everyone regardless of sex. More than any ideological commitment, this fact produced socialism’s emphasis on gender equality and the policies that facilitated it. These included generous maternal leaves, child-care, and (except in Romania after 1966) liberal access to abortion, which enabled women to exercise greater control than before over this aspect of their lives. Among the consequences of women’s participation in the labor force was increased relative authority within family units, even as various state policies and the state’s usurpation of allocative decisions undercut the familial authority of men.

While many commentators have remarked upon the ensuing “double” or even “triple burden” of housework, mothering, and wage work borne by women – that is, husbands assumed no more of the first two of these than before – it is nonetheless true that socialism also reorganized household tasks to some extent. First, relatively youthful retirement served to make unpaid household labor increasingly the responsibility of pensioners (as opposed to housewives), who stood in food lines, cared for grandchildren, cooked for their working offspring, and so on. That is, social reproduction was to a degree “geriatrized.” It nonetheless remained heavily feminized, partly because the tasks were considered women’s work but also because pensioners were disproportionately female, owing to the sex imbalance in the elder age groups. (Hence the feminization of food lines.) Second, the *zadruga*-state’s interest in their labor power led it to take upon itself some of women’s “traditional” nurturing and care-giving roles. Policy statements underscored this: for example, the

Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party would periodically emit decrees that ordered local Party organizations to help protect and consolidate the family by ensuring good working conditions for women, providing more public eating facilities, and increasing industrial production of semiprepared foods and labor-saving devices for housework. These policies plus the health system show how socialist regimes moved to assume aspects of the child care, housework, medical caregiving, and care of the elderly that in other societies were chiefly the job of women.

The *zadruga*-state could go further still, however: it might seek to “etatize” even the labor of birth itself. The most extreme forms of this appeared in pro-natalist Romanian policies of the 1970s and 1980s, discussed in detail by Kligman, which treated women’s bodies as no more than instruments of the state’s reproductive requirements. Obligatory gynecological exams were to ensure that pregnancies had not been terminated, and doctors were held responsible for natality rates in their districts, their salaries docked if birth rates were lower than expected. Thus not just women but also male doctors became agents of biological reproduction in socialist Romania. Childless persons, both women and men, paid a “celibacy tax” – further evidence that birth was not solely women’s affair. As Ceaușescu put it, “The fetus is the socialist property of the whole society.” In support of this premise, his and others’ speeches repeatedly pointed to increases in the numbers of kindergartens, day-care centers, and maternity facilities and in the size of family subsidies.

In sum, socialism visibly reconfigured male and female household roles. One might say that it broke open the nuclear family, socialized significant elements of reproduction even while leaving women responsible for the rest, and usurped certain patriarchal functions and responsibilities, thereby altering the relation between gendered “domestic” and “public” spheres familiar from nineteenth-century capitalism. Biological reproduction now permeated the public sphere rather than being confined to the domestic one. At the same time, the space in which both men and women realized pride and self-respect increasingly came to be the domestic rather than the public sphere, as they expressed their resistance to socialism through family-based income-generating activities (the so-called “second economy”). In a word, families within the *zadruga*-state differed in fundamental respects from the organization of domestic and family life common over the past century in Western countries.

Not only were gender roles reconfigured; in many socialist policies, one sees a long-term goal of gradually homogenizing the entire “*zadruga* family” under its Party’s wise patriarchal leadership. The members of society were to form a homogeneous fraternity, tied to the “father” Party above them; differences such as those between male and female were to be effaced within a new set of discriminations – between good and bad Party members, or Party members and others – while women were expected, like men, to “militate” for the building of a socialist society and to be “heroines” of socialist labor. Even when describing motherhood as women’s supreme mission, for example, speeches by Ceaușescu and others

simultaneously presented it as a “profession” (*meserie*) requiring a “qualification” (*calificare*); this use of terms drawn from industry helped to equalize “male” and “female” forms of work.

In addition, women, like everyone in the society, had become dependents, wards of a paternalist regime that made the most important decisions in “the whole family’s” interests. The dependent attitude the Party expected of this homogenized populace appears vividly in the Romanian media during the 1980s, which frequently invoked the “boundless gratitude” and “profound appreciation” of Romanians for the “parental care” and “exceptionally valuable guidance” of the Party and its leaders. Horváth and Szakolezai’s fascinating work on Hungarian Party activists gives further evidence of how cadres perceived the population they served as helpless, infantilized, and dependent – and worked to make it more so.

Despite reorganizations of family roles and these tendencies toward homogenization, the structure of power and the larger division of labor in the socialist family remained decidedly gendered. As we might guess from imagery of the socialist family’s wise Party “father,” the state apparatus was heavily masculine. The core sectors of socialism – the bureaucracy itself, heavy industry, the army, and the apparatus of repression – were almost wholly male, especially at the apex, and were represented as such. In the state bureaucracy, women overwhelmingly held clerical and secretarial functions (as is true virtually everywhere). Women were indeed brought into political office, but generally at lower levels and in areas deemed appropriately female: education, health care, and culture. Thus although these “female” roles had been to some degree taken out of the hands of mothers in nuclear families, they remained feminized in the broader division of labor of the *zadruga*-state.

Comparable gendering can be seen in the composition of the labor force. For example, in Romanian industry in 1985, 42 percent of the labor force was female, but women formed 80 percent of textile workers, 50 percent of those in electronics, and 30 percent of workers in machine construction; among white-collar occupations, women formed 43 percent of persons employed in science but 65 percent of employees in the more “feminine” jobs in culture, education, and the arts, and 75 percent of health care workers. Like all socialist regimes, the Romanian one fostered a cult of heavy industrial production whose hero-workers were overwhelmingly represented as male, while agricultural production and activities related to consumption, including employment in the service sector, tended to be carried out by women and to be symbolized as such (to the extent that these production-oriented regimes gave any space to representing those activities).

In addition to this persistent gendering of the power structure and the societal division of labor, a gradual refeminization of nurturance seems to have been underway during the 1980s (if not before). The reasons differed from one Eastern European country to another. In Hungary, for example, Gal reports that Party policy had begun pushing women out of the labor force and back into housework, so as to

reduce the enormous cost of child care and care of the elderly. Expansion of the “second economy” further reinforced “traditional” gender norms, associating men with the primary wage and women with supplementary work. In Romania the impetus came partly from these cost concerns but more directly from the state’s pro-natalist policy, which communicated a very mixed message concerning women’s roles. On the one hand, Party literature presented women as doing everything that men did: fulfilling the plan, solving problems, providing political leadership, and being a dynamic element of Romanian socialism. On the other, despite claims about the “fetus as social property,” the press emphasized that mothering was the special task and privilege of women. Countless articles extolled women’s noble mission as rearers of children and guardians of the nation’s future. Some derived the strength of the mother-child bond from the fact that mothers stay at home to take care of the house and raise children, while fathers leave for work and for military service (with women constituting about 40 percent of the labor force, this description applied to exceedingly few families).

Predictably, the implications of such emphases spilled over into the wider division of labor. For example, in 1973, the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party commanded enterprises to create good working conditions for women, so they could give more time to rearing children, and suggested the following provisions: extending work into the home, developing four-hour shifts and regular half-time positions for women employees, and providing early retirement for women with several children. The decree further observed that because women are best suited to certain kinds of work – those requiring low physical effort, such as electronics, optics, chemistry, food processing, commerce, and so on – the Party would establish a “nomenclatura” (special list) of jobs for which women would have first priority. Thus the feminization of certain kinds of work was further institutionalized, in the name of mothering.

The message about women and childbearing became ever more insistent in Romania throughout the 1980s, as the birth rate continued to stagnate despite the unavailability of contraception and stringent penalties for abortion. Party literature now spoke of the Party’s support of the “most beautiful traditions of the Romanian people: motherhood, and the bearing and raising of many children.” To document this new “Romanian tradition” of large families, there were articles such as the lengthy interview with two well-known historians, published in the Party daily under the headline “The Home with Many Children, Sign of a Good Citizen’s Sense of Responsibility for the Future of the Nation.” In it, the two scholars discussed historical research proving that since its very beginning millennia ago, Romanian society had the family unit as its basic cell, preserver of its traditions and element of its progress. One asserted, in a blatant justification of patriarchy, that “only with the founding of a family does a man acquire his true social identity.” As these historians saw it, what had enabled Romanians not to be obliterated through centuries of war and invasion was their large families, producing a dense population that supported

the rise of defensive medieval Romanian states. In a word, the family with many children was a fundamental aspect of Romanians’ historical continuity since the time of the Dacians, over two thousand years ago. We see here how Ceaușescu’s socialist nation intersected with the ethnonation precisely on the issue of women’s “nurturant nature.”

Although Romania’s pro-natalism was extreme, the tendencies it revealed were nonetheless evident elsewhere in Eastern Europe: a socialization of reproduction, in tension with various factors reinforcing patriarchal family norms, and a persistent gendering of power and of the work force. These features of socialism have several consequences for gender and nation in the postsocialist era. The most important of them is that the *zadruga*-state’s incursions into women’s nurturant roles opened both socialism and women to accusations of having jointly destroyed the ethnonation, the national character, and “traditional” national values. Nationalist politics in the post-socialist period thus focuses on driving women back into their “proper” nurturant roles, recaptured from the deficiently mothering state, so as to reverse the damage to the nation. Work on the abortion controversy in Poland, Hungary, and Croatia (to be discussed in the final section of this chapter) shows precisely this line of assault on the positions women acquired under socialism.

#### **The Gendering of Nationalism in Socialism: Examples from Romania**

Regime emphasis on building a “socialist nation” did not mean total erasure of nation in the ethnic sense. This was particularly true of Romania, where to a degree unparalleled elsewhere, Party leaders themselves embraced the (ethno) national idea. From the forms this embrace took, we see even more clearly how thoroughgoing was the patriarchy of the *zadruga*-state, even as it emasculated its nuclear-household heads and empowered women.

#### *Nation as Tradition*

The national idea has lain at the center of Romanian politics for two centuries or more. It shares with other ethnonationalisms in Eastern Europe (as well as elsewhere) an obsession with Romania’s territorial borders: with where “the nation” ends, territorially speaking. There has been trouble on nearly all borders but particularly on the western one with Hungary, for many Hungarians contest Romanian sovereignty over multiethnic Transylvania, to which each side has an arsenal of “proofs” of rightful ownership. For Romanians, these center on arguments from ethnography and folklore – showing an unbroken Romanian peasant tradition – and from history and archeology – showing unbroken Romanian continuity of settlement from time immemorial. Both arguments are served by the existence of regions where “tradition” still “lives” – where peasants still walk around in the same garb as can be seen on Trajan’s column, for example, or sing Christmas carols mentioning events registered in antiquity. The region par excellence of this “living tradition” is Maramureș, in

northern Transylvania. Its “tradition”, and national rhetoric more broadly, are interwoven with gender.

From the official point of view – in the Ceaușescu regime’s discourse about tradition and in how its invented traditions were organized – tradition was not gendered; it was equally male and female. But as Kligman’s research in Maramureș shows, tradition was effectively feminized. This is partly because regime investment policies drew Maramureș men out of the rural labor force into industry or into seasonal labor migration, thus leaving peasant agriculture overwhelmingly female. Therefore women were perforce the bearers of a “traditional” livelihood, since they were the ones who stayed at home in conditions from which state policies had excluded economic “modernity.” Moreover, the regime’s very marginalization of Maramureș made it a locus of resistance to the political center. The tenacity of local custom became a sign of its resistance and produced an identity distinct from the regime’s image of Romania as a “multilaterally developed” industrializing society. In women’s centrality to life-cycle rituals and in their consumption styles (“traditional” clothing, food preparation, house decor, etc.) women reproduced this resistant localism more than did men. As Kligman puts it, “Women are now the practical tenders of tradition – for their families, their villages, and the state.” Her data show that in Ceaușescu’s Romania, “modernity” in the form of industrial wage work was produced and figured by men, “tradition” by women. This feminized tradition is, of course, crucial to Romanian claims to that territory.

#### *Nation as Patrilineage*

Nationalist texts from the Ceaușescu years also show a gendering of the “nation” and of “tradition,” but in rather different ways from those just discussed. The Maramureș peasantry stabilized only a part of Romanian national identity (a very important part, of course, since it made Transylvania “Romanian” by the putative longevity of the regions folk customs); other parts of this identity rest on national history. Not only Ceaușescu’s speeches but all manner of newspaper articles, for example, included lengthy references to Romanian history. These nearly always presented that history as an endless sequence of male heroes, strung out one after another, almost like a series of “begats,” and producing the impression of the nation as a temporally deep patrilineage. Here are parts of such a text, published in English under the title “Great Figures in the History of Romanian Genius”:

A Romanian, and especially a foreigner who would make a study of the great figures in the history of the Romanian spirit, according to Carlyle’s vision of the “hero,” of “geniuses,” of the great “makers of history,” may not understand the precise way in which the history of the Romanian spirit took shape. . . . More than in the West, such figures acquire general collective features and, one after the other, enter “history,” “tradition” and “folklore.” Hence the response they arouse in the people, the assimilation of their message by ever broader sections of the Romanian people. The Romanians lack the egocentric

vision of the great personalities. The [se] become “great” first by redeemed, recuperated collectivity. . . .

One of the earliest figures of South-Eastern European dimensions, the Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab, represents a synthesis between the Byzantine and Romanian spirit, owing to the twofold cultural and architectural work he helped advance: *The Teachings of Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab to His Son Teodosie*, and the church built at Curtea de Arges, a superb 16th century architectural monument. The Teachings, more especially, those contemporary with the work of Machiavelli, are a handbook of political and practical wisdom, dealing with ethic thinking, military art and pedagogy. The Romanian political spirit had reached the stage of theoretical, crystallized and codified presentation. It was a decisive step forward in the art of *governing*, in the relationships between the ruling prince and his subjects, in moral principles, at the opposite pole of “Machiavellism.” Influenced by the Christian lore. . . the Romanian spirit constantly rejected cynicism and political amorality.

Two great, pre-eminently political figures, who lived in the 15th and 16th centuries respectively, embodied and gave memorable expression – traditional now – to the spirit of independence and resistance to foreign aggression, against invaders. One must never forget that this highly patriotic feature has left a deep imprint upon the entire history of the Romanian national spirit, where it can be traced as an uninterrupted presence.

Through the battles he won and the military defeats he suffered, through the foundation of citadels and churches, through his feudal yet uninterrupted cultural activity, Stephen the Great, the Ruling Prince of Moldavia, is the symbol of a great personality always present in legends, in folklore, in the great tradition of the Romanian people. The end of his rule marked the end of the independent political life of Moldavia. . . . His activity also belongs to the European resistance against the Turkish invasion. There is much truth in the thesis holding that the West was defended against the many waves of invasion by the fight waged by the peoples living in the East and South-East of Europe. The Romanian spirit, viewed in a historical light, possesses some of the legitimate pride stemming from a vocation and a feeling for the necessity of courage and sacrifice, in an area of expansion and passage to Central Europe or to Constantinople.

Michael the Brave is an epic figure. . . possessing a vision that exceeded by far the historical conditions of the epoch. His opposition to the Turks marked by a memorable date, the battle of Calugareni (1595), which he won under epic conditions, is a daring attempt at unifying the three Romanian lands (Walachia, Moldavia and Transylvania) under one single rule. The unification was achieved – though ephemerally – through a rapid campaign and his political acumen, and, though short-lived, it has lasted ever since in the national history of the Romanians. Thus, the awareness of the unity of the Romanian people, of its common origin and language . . . became a reality for the first time. A spiritual tradition became an historical fact. . . . Treacherously murdered by his chance allies, Michael the Brave illustrates and consolidates through his death one more historical constant of the Romanian spirit: the value and significance of sacrifice, of the supreme sacrifice for the triumph of a lofty or common cause. One should not overlook the fact that masterpieces of Romanian folk poetry . . . belong to the same *ethos* of accepted, creative death, through the natural agreement between individual destiny and hostile forces.

All through the history of the Romanian people, the social and national awareness has brought about actions of equal symbolic value. When conditions of social and national oppression in Transylvania, at the end of the eighteenth century, led in 1784 to the outbreak of the great peasant uprising headed by Horea, Closca and Crisan, the execution of the

three national heroes added one more foundation stone that helped build the edifice of the Romanian spirit. It was the contribution of spontaneous, “anonymous” heroes, genuine representatives of the oppressed masses of people. By means of such popular, anti-feudal explosions, the Romanian spirit, under highly unfavorable social conditions, asserted periodically its dignity, the dream of a juster and better life, of a more prosperous life. Due to its national and social fights against serfdom, the people acquired the awareness of its liberty, of its national and human rights, and demanded the abolishment of oppression and social discrimination. . . .

The 1821 revolt led by Tudor Vladimirescu, openly national [and] antifeudal . . . , gave a regenerating impulse to the social and national claims, an ethic consciousness once again marked by the supreme sacrifice of the leader of the revolt. Tudor Vladimirescu too was to die, murdered like his forerunners and fellow-sufferers in their collective sacrifice.

The 1848 Revolution in all the Romanian Principalities is the first expression of the bourgeois democratic spirit, accompanied by a great national and social clan. It was dominated by the pure image of Nicolae Bălcescu, who stands out most clearly as an ideologist, historian and politician possessing a vast European vision. . . . Nicolae Bălcescu contributed his fervour, an ardent revolutionary spirit, a radical democratic consciousness, complete devotion to the cause. The modern democratic Romanian political spirit won in him its first ideal exemplary figure. . . .

The figure of the national poet Mihai Eminescu possesses the same shaping quality and spiritual significance as any promoter, social or political, of the Romanian historical awareness. Eminescu gave powerful expression to the national consciousness of the Romanians, he also gave Romanian poetry its true dimensions, he transformed the Romanian language into an exceptional means of expression and fixed in the hearts and minds of millions of Romanian people the effigy of the “poet” and of the “genius,” thus the encounter with great Art, with Poetry. Through such a representative, the Romanian spirit was not only enriched, but it also became universal, more subtle and purified. . . .

The prominent representatives of the Romanian culture and spirit mentioned so far constitute a brief selection from a large number of personalities whose names echo solemnly in the remoter or more recent history of the Romanian people.

In line with the great humanistic traditions of the Romanian people, in the vast context of historical revolutionary transformations in Romania, the out-standing personality of Nicolae Ceaușescu expresses, in a striking militant hypostasis of a modern, independent, fully sovereign socialist country, the loftiest aspirations of the Romanian spirit.

This text, as suggested earlier, presents Romania as an extended patrilineage of “heroes” living “exemplary” biographies. Their biographies all emphasize heroism and triumph, along with victimization and sacrifice – things they share as individuals with the nation that unites them, “Romania.” The passage constructs a national self that is collective and has collective rather than individual interests – that is, it constructs the nation as a “collective individual.” This collective individual acts as an entity: it does things, fights for its freedom, asserts its dignity, participates in world culture, possesses legitimate pride, rejects cynicism, and so forth. Such a collective individual generally also *possesses*: it “has” a culture and a bounded territory and a character or spirit. The one presented here seems to consist largely of “sons” (sometimes with their fathers), culminating in Ceaușescu, who was usually referred to

as the “most beloved son of the nation.” The excerpt’s complete silence *on female* “geniuses” eloquently renders men the dynamic, active, heroic principle. (In school manuals during the socialist period, some effort went into finding the occasional exemplary female, but they rarely appear in Ceaușescu’s speeches or articles in the popular press, except in women’s publications.)

There is nothing especially unusual in this. As George Mosse has shown, much nationalism rests on homosocial masculine bonding. It suggests a peculiar kind of lineage, however, one that reproduces itself without re-course to females or even to sex. In this excerpt, emphasis falls primarily on the national spirit and its reproduction through culture (created by men) or through men’s creative death – that is, women may create life in this world, but more fundamental to the nation’s continuity is its life eternal, ensured through culture, heroic deeds, and qualities of the spirit: the realm of men. The theme of sacrifice and creative death in this excerpt permeates both Romanian historiography and important Romanian folk tales (not to mention other nationalisms).

There are interesting parallels between this image of a collective Romanian nation reproduced without women’s intervention and the biblical creation story Carole Pateman sees as the originary myth for models of patriarchal civil society (the myth that stands at the root of the citizenship meaning of “nation”). Adam – like the zadruga-state and like the eponymous ancestors of Romanians – is both mother and father, representing the pro-creative power of a male complete in himself; Eve springs from him, after all. Thus woman’s procreative capacity is “denied and appropriated by *men* as the ability to give *political birth*, to be the originators of a new form of political order.” These parallels show a patriarchal imagery underlying both ethnonational and citizen nation, collective entities nurtured and midwived by the heroic deeds and sacrifices of men.

#### *Nation as Lover/Beloved*

The patrilineages of this kind of history writing do more than simply pro-create the nation. They also provide the source of sentiments necessary to procreating it, and here they join with other elements of national culture such as poetry and art. In exploring this issue, I follow Connell’s suggestion that an essential component of any gender regime is its structure of cathexis, or gender patterning of emotional attachments. I see this as providing a clue to a problem I do not find persuasively treated in literature on nationalism: how national sentiment becomes cathected – how subjects come to feel themselves national.

Let me illustrate by means of a second excerpt (henceforth referred to as “excerpt 2,” the one above being “excerpt 1”). It comes from a long essay by Romanian poet and writer Ion Lăncrănjan, in his book *A Word about Transylvania*. Unlike the previous one, this text was produced not for an international audience but for a local one. It offers a self-definition of Romania and Romanians implicitly against Hungary and Hungarians. Its context was increasing friction between Romania and Hungary,

evident in writing by historians throughout the 1980s and probably related to the increasingly divergent strategies of the Ceaușescu and Kádár regimes – ever-greater coercion vs. ever-greater market forces. Accompanying this friction was evidence of heightened attachment (on the Romanian side) to the idea of “Romania” and to the contested soil of Transylvania. These two themes are apparent in excerpt 2:

*Patriotism – A Vital Necessity*

*Only One Love*

As a child, you think the world begins and ends with the threshold of the house where you were born, with the edge of the village or town in which you first saw the light of day, with the light that first set the boundaries of your sight. As an adolescent, you think that your first love is your only true and great love, in comparison with which the stars in the sky grow pale and the lilies fade, along with everything that is alive and mortal, for, or so you then think, only this love of yours, around which everything else turns, even the land and the waters, is undying. Things change after that, you realize the world is bigger and more comprehensive, and loves succeed one another endlessly, yet over them all there arises out of nothing, when you aren't even aware of it, a single and inextinguishable love – love of your country [*patria*], love of your native land and of the places of your birth and of the nation [*neam*] you come from, that unstinting love that overpowers, time and again, that grows and opens itself to the light as you yourself grow and are clarified in and toward the world, a love that intersects with and fraternizes with your first love and with all your other loves, for only those who are capable of love are able to love their country and their people, only those who are good and generous, only those who know the weightiness of speech and the earthquake of self-abandon can raise themselves up to the height of this profound and powerful sentiment.

We will see, if we look back, that the most notable sons of the Romanian people, the most enlightened and gifted, the best and most just, the most honest and sincere, the most daring, passed through the fire of this sentiment, gave themselves to it without restraint, gave themselves in fact to the country and the people they were descended from. The life and work of Eminescu, for instance, are inconceivable without this self-giving, without this sacred love, which his genius purified for all time, raising it up into the undying light of eternity, and in its light he himself was pulverized, without stopping to waver, without awaiting sustenance or payment from somewhere, carrying everything through as if preordained to happen thus so that our country, Romania, and our ancestral language, our culture, in its entirety, might acquire a new and deeper self-awareness. The pathos of the life of this great poet, whose feet trod all the regions inhabited by Romanians so as to hear their speech and know their aspirations and legends, his tremendous labor, of inestimable value, everything that this superb man wrote and did, stood under the sign of his great and earth-shaking love, for in his unique and exemplary case, things took a dramatic if not indeed tragic turn, so deep was his ardor, so pure, so unhesitating, so total, that it was transformed at last into an undying flame.

The same things can be said also about Bălcescu, about Iorga, and about Sadoveanu. Bălcescu, especially, can be compared only with Eminescu, for the same fire consumed him, too; he too put above everything, above satisfactions and glory, his love for his people and his country, where he would have wanted to die but where he did not manage to return, dying instead in the loneliness of strangers and entering thus into eternity. The other two

men, Iorga and Sadoveanu, seem less legendary, being closer to us in time. But the pathos of their lives also stood under the sign of love of their country and people, which both of them served in their own ways, with self-abnegation.

Nor should we forget, besides the example of these notable men and of so many others – the always-fresh and ever-unsullied example of the man of the people, the example of the people itself, for it was the parent and the teacher of all, it ascended the “Golgothas” of the centuries, bleeding and gnashing its teeth, believing so much in its own star, having such strength in its manner of being – its beauty, and sensibility, and intelligence, and vivacity, and love, and longing – that it overcame everything in the end: centuries of hostility, subjugation, and dependency, being itself that which its most important men were: the people of an earth-shaking, profound, and pure love. . . .

Love, any love, raises up and purifies, and love of country, love of your places of birth, of your people, gives another meaning to everything, raising everything up onto the high platform of all accomplishments, making of yesterday's child a daring and clear-headed man, transforming the adolescent into a hero, as has so often happened, as will happen again, and as ought to happen.

*Romania – Eye of the World*

Romania is my natal land, the land of my dreams, the land of my longing. . . . Romania is my land of origin, it is the old song of the flute and the quiet whisper of the plowed field that is almost ripe; . . . it is the far-away and almost forgotten tinkling of the shepherd's pipe that brightens the mountainsides of an evening – it is the land with the name of a girl and the fiery soul of a fiery man! . . . Romania is the land that paid with sweat and tears – and often, much too often, with blood – for whole days and years of its tumultuous history, it is the land across which came massive waves of fire and smoke, it is the land that always refound its being in its own soil, in its mountain springs, in the quiet of its glades, in the fascinating journey through its fascinating landscapes, in its just and honest judgment, owing to which no one can push you aside or destroy you if you rely on what is yours, if by your work and your struggle you have become one with the soil on which you tread! . . .

Romania is the land whose boundaries give it the shape of the sun, “plump,” as our unforgettable poet Blaga would have said; it is a land with so much beauty, so rich and so good, so generous and credulous and endowed so bountifully – that you can't capture it in words, you can't paint it on paper in all its true and radiant splendor, you keep missing something: a leaf that is dying, a flower opening its corolla toward the sky, the rumbling of a mountain storm or the endless calm of the sea, the deep breathing, barely perceptible and barely felt, of the plain at sunset, the peaceful song of the regions between the Carpathians and the East, the silver trill of the swallow!

Romania is the land of some unforgettable men, the land of Bălcescu, the land of Horea and Iancu, of Michael the Brave and Stephen the Great, the land of the Basarabs, of Gelu and the Mușatins, the land that never let itself be conquered, that met difficulty with quiet and patience – and how often that was! . . .

Romania is a hardworking and capable land, exceedingly capable, with the most diverse and unexpected inclinations, and even if it was also often sad, in a distant and not-so-distant past, the reason is that the fruits of this industriousness were often taken from it, outright or indirectly through the usual base perfidy, and it was left more often than not only with tears and weeping. . . .

Romania is the land of the truest independence, a land now geared into a profound process of renewal, it is a land penetrated from one end to the other by the manly, powerful, and rising hum of machines; it is a land that adds to its old jewels other, more valuable ones, a land that makes the strong waters into current and electric light, a land in which fires burn constantly – at the [steel mills in] Hunedoara, Galați, Reșița and other places! . . .

Romania is the land of friendship, a hospitable land full of understanding and of respect for everyone, eager to assimilate all that is good and beautiful, wanting only to be respected, understood, and appreciated justly for its hard work! . . .

Romania is the eye of the world, an eye that is clear and watchful, sensitive to the finest nuances of the light, deep and vibrant, with rustling eyelashes of rustling grain stalks, with melancholy eyelids and with rough hiding places of a rough audacity, with the clearness of great and calm waters, with undreamt-of openings toward the future! . . .

Romania is my natal land, the land of my origin, with which I am so much and so fervently in love that if I should happen to die who knows where, in a distant and foreign place, I would rise up again on my feet and I would walk back here, to my country, to these loved and known places! But let us not speak of death, now when it is more appropriate than ever to speak of life, of that which was and will remain imperishable in the soul of this land with the name of a girl and the rough steadfastness of a rough man!

These two essays, like the one preceding them, construct a collective individual made up of sons and unforgettable men, and they emphasize heroism and self-sacrifice, triumph and victimization. But they also do something more: they explicitly work on sentiment. The excerpts show clearly how central gender is to eroticizing the nation: male heroes burn with ardor for a feminized “Romania” who has eyelids and eyelashes, is “plump,” has the “name of a girl,” and is overtly linked with a man’s first adolescent *amour*. Whereas the unstated emotional underpinnings of national solidarity in excerpt 1 are a simple admiration of heroes or, at best, loyalty to a kinship line, the love appropriate between a son and his father, in excerpt 2 this becomes an (almost incestuous) erotic attachment between “Romania” and her “sons.”

To create the basis for this erotic attachment requires identifying two separate elements that can be joined. In this text, “Romania” becomes divided into two components: a container or receptacle (a kind of house) and the thing contained, the residents. Each has gender connotations and is linked with additional oppositions. The container is feminine and the residents masculine, the space of “Romania” is feminine and the temporally deep lineage of its inhabitants (those “unforgettable men”) masculine, the body is feminine and the soul masculine. That is, space is feminized and time masculinized, and “Romania” is given a female body and a male soul (the “fiery soul of a fiery man”). The homeland becomes the inactive female object of sentiment, while the male subject is a historically acting subject, themes very common in modern conceptions of identity. Thus we cannot say that this collective individual “the Romanian nation” is strictly masculine, as appeared to be so in

excerpt 1: here it is an active (masculine) principle intimately tied to a (passive) feminine space – territory – which the masculine principle will defend.

The feminization of space deserves further comment. In Romanian historiography, where national victimization is a central theme, this victimization often has a spatial dimension: the barbarian violates Romania’s borders, rapes her, mutilates her. The Soviet annexation of Bessarabia is widely referred to as the rape of Bessarabia, and the temporary annexation of Transylvania by Hungary in 1940 – 44 is seen as a bodily mutilation. (Similarly, when Hungary lost Transylvania after 1918, images of this showed the beloved motherland’s “white and virginal but mutilated and bleeding body,” and politicians spoke of a “revered body. . . torn asunder and ravaged by barbarians.”) The most obvious basis for seeing this violated space as feminine is the (Western) association of the female with body and nature, as in landscape. One thinks of all those metaphors of men plowing the fields, as well as the images – ubiquitous in so much celebrated art – of prostrate female nudes, like material nature the passive object of the active gaze and actions of men.

This association, one not confined to the case at hand, achieves two things. First, it naturalizes/genders the question of territorial boundaries, so vexed in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Eastern Europe. It makes these boundaries like the skin of the female body, fixed yet violable, in need of armed defense by inevitably masculine militaries (“sons” defending their “motherland,” their “mothers,” and their “beloveds” – conveniently conflated). Second, it establishes a gendered structure of cathexis, a set of sentiments, to support this armed defense.

We therefore see in excerpt 2 the outlines of a set of antinomies familiar in Western thought and especially in Romanticism:

woman	beloved	body	nature	land	space	birth
man	lover	soul	culture	people	time	(creative) death

That is, we see something paralleling the values of a “traditional bourgeois” gender regime, and this organization sustains a cathexis of the national sentiment as like, but better than, one’s first love. Does the excerpt reveal a form of resistance (perhaps unacknowledged) to socialism’s reconfiguration of household gender roles by usurping male authority and empowering women, in relative terms, as allies of the state? Or does it reveal, rather, the “deep structure” of a higher-order patriarchy, essential to the *zadruga*-state? That a text permeated with the preceding antinomies can exist at the heart of this *zadruga*-state, written by one of Ceaușescu’s favorite poets, indicates that however radical socialism may have been in reorganizing family structures and roles at one level, at another its paternalism dovetailed perfectly with patriarchal forms central to national ideas elsewhere in the West. What happens to these two levels of gender organization with the fall of socialism, and how does the national idea figure in the outcome?



### **Postsocialist Nationalism and Antifeminism: Examples from Hungary, Poland, and Croatia**

With the end of socialism, the prior differences among the countries of Eastern Europe have been accentuated, yet one unsettling commonality is evident in nearly all: increasingly visible ethnonationalism, coupled with anti-feminist and pro-natalist politicking. Much of it centers on the issue of abortion. Only in Romania is there (so far) no active antiabortion movement, because the earlier ban on abortion there has made people all too aware of the costs; but even in Romania, Kligman detects the same “retraditionalization” – a return to “traditional values,” family life, and religion, with women’s place once again to be in the home. Elsewhere, abortion was more or less readily available, and as is clear from recent work, nationalism and opposition to abortion are working hand in hand, together with assaults on the position of women in the labor force and in public life. As a male Hungarian worker told anthropologist Eva Huseby-Darvas, “The ideal situation would be if from now on all women could stay home as Hungarian mothers should, and if men could, once again, earn enough to support their family.”

The connection is strikingly visible in slogans such as “The Unborn Are Also Croats” and “Abortion Is Genocide.” It appears also in political arguments about the “seventeen million murdered fetal Polish citizens” or the “five million Hungarians” dead in “our Hungarian Holocaust,” killed by the thirty-five years of the Communists’ liberal abortion policies and the selfish women who took advantage of them – and still want to. In Croatia, conservative groups, funded by private sources, the Catholic Church, and international pro-life organizations, are taking the liberal abortion law to court with arguments about the family as the fundamental unit of a nation; their feminist opponents are treated as subversives. Nationalists in Hungary have gone so far as to compare the aborted Hungarians with the (many fewer) dead from Hungary’s worst historical military disasters (the Turkish defeat in 1526, the battle of Stalingrad in World War II) and to erect, in the town of Abasár, an “Embryo Memorial” to those sacrificed Hungarians. They refer to pro-abortion feminists as “murderers of mothers” and hold women responsible for the “death of the nation.”

The most extended analysis of these trends is Joanna Goven’s, based on data from Hungary. Her argument, more complex than I can summarize here, roots this reaction in the way the pre-1989 opposition to socialism reinforced “traditional” family roles, and this is now exaggerated as the opposition takes over the running of society. New political movements are reversing women’s gains under socialism and their increased control (except in Romania) over reproductive decisions. In other words, the *zadruga*-state’s usurpation of familial-patriarchal authority is now giving way to policies and attitudes aimed at recovering that lost authority for men in nuclear families. The politics of this involves “othering” women as allies of the Communists. Because Communism proved itself the enemy both of nature, by trying to make humans be what was “contrary” to their acquisitive and deeply gendered “nature,” and of the nation, which it almost killed off by permitting birth rates to fall,

the women who became its allies (or at least careerist, feminist women) must therefore be enemies of the nation, too. So a nationalist politics now proposes to reshape the nation against the debilitating “mothering” of socialism. This entails reconfiguring the family yet again, compelling women back into the nurturing and care-giving roles “natural” to their sex and restoring to men their “natural” family authority.

Goven offers some stunning material to illustrate this. She cites political texts that speak of the need for Hungarian men to become real men again instead of the wimps that socialism had made them; if they do, then women will automatically want to be their subordinates once more. Numerous writings express concern with or disapproval of the “matriarchy” that had become all too common in Hungary. They argue that “socialist mothering” made men weak and lacking in authority, and to alter this requires restoring autonomy to the family and authority to the father: mothers should be dependent not on society but on their husbands. Essentialism pervades these writings, with their emphasis on “natural differences” that suit women to homemaking functions. Even more important are texts decrying the aggressiveness (especially in sexual matters) that socialism encouraged in women, and above all their destructive aggressiveness within the family; women, such texts complain, have ceased to be affectionate and understanding. I see this as further confirmation that what is at issue is precisely women’s nurturing and emotional roles, weakened by socialism’s having assumed them so women could work.

Thus, Goven’s data suggest, political pluralism and the restoration of capitalism in Hungary are bound up with the reimposition of certain “bourgeois” family norms. This is the more necessary as the welfare state of socialism is forced to shuffle off many of its functions: there is no longer enough money for all those day-care centers and kindergartens, for lengthy maternity leaves and family allocations – in a word, for socialized reproduction. Nurturance must re-devolve onto women, then, and politics must assist this by reining in all those aggressive Hungarian wives and mothers so derelict in their duty to the nation. Here, for example, is Kata Beke, Hungary’s first secretary of education under the HDF government in 1990: “In the rich store of historical examples... the European model of marriage has proven to be the most successful and resilient. Because it corresponds to humanity’s two-sexed nature, to the set of complementary differences hidden in our genes. Because only here [in Europe] can a new generation grow up in a normal – that is, two-sexed – world.” Only if gender polarity is restored, argue political groups across the spectrum, will Hungary again become a healthy society.

There is some evidence that although many women wish to continue working, others are eager for this restoration and do not resent the loss of their place in the labor force and political life. For them, work was a necessity, not something they sought; Party activism was a torment that a certain number had to bear because the Party insisted on proving its egalitarianism with “quotas.” For many, the home was always a haven from an oppressive state; they are content to return there now, if only

their husbands can earn the proverbial family wage. Many women indeed saw socialism as contrary to nature, because it treated as equal two sexes that they believe are “by nature” wholly different. Many see the end of socialism as necessarily a restoration of the natural order of things, in which gender essentialism and the natural role of mothering have a crucial place. It is chiefly the abortion question that has mobilized a few of them to defend what they had come to see as a right.

If Hungary is any indication, postsocialist Eastern Europe reveals how tightly interwoven are “socialism” and “capitalism” with specific – and variant – organizations of gender; and these in turn are bound up with the national idea. The end of socialism means the end of a state that assumes significant costs of biological and social reproduction, instead of assigning most of these costs to individual households, as capitalist systems have done. If, as some scholars argue, the gender organization of the capitalist household cheapens the costs of labor for capital by defining certain necessary tasks – “housework” – as nonwork (and therefore not remunerating them), then the economies of postsocialist Eastern Europe will be viable only with a comparable cheapening. Thus the end of socialism necessarily means making once again invisible, by feminizing them and reinserting them into households, those tasks that became too costly when rendered visible and assumed by the state. The chief alternative Eastern Europe’s women might anticipate is what has happened in more advanced economies: the commodification of household tasks into services (day care, cleaning, meal provision, etc.) for which a working couple pays something closer to their real cost than is paid when these are “housework.” Until the commodity economy becomes as pervasive in Eastern Europe as it is now in the developed world, however, postsocialist Eastern Europe will be returning to the housewife-based domestic economy that was superseded at least in part by both socialism and advanced capitalism.

A crucial means for this return will be the new democratic politics, which is proving to be – for quite different reasons from one place to another – “misogynist.” And central to this, as Goven’s Hungarian data show, is ethnonationalism. It is not difficult to see why. Post-1989 political forms are still being legitimated through “anti-Communism”: through being the opposite of what the Communists did. Because Communist Parties all across Eastern Europe mostly toed the Soviet internationalist line in public, national sentiment became a form of anti-Communism. This resistant aura to nationalism makes it an obvious means of reversing the damage Communists did to the nation they suppressed. To the extent that women are seen as having benefited from socialism or as having had the socialist state as their ally, feminism becomes socialist and can be attacked as antinational. The separate threads come together, as has been shown, in the issue of abortion. It owes its force partly to a vital symbol of socialism’s demise: the idea of the nation’s rebirth. The nation cannot be reborn if fetuses – and the nation with them – are condemned to death. The nation cannot return to health if its women refuse to bear and nurture its “fetal

citizens.” The nation’s recovery from socialism requires, then, a new patriarchy, instituted through a new democratic politics that serves the national idea.

One of several ironies here is that Western policy-makers accustomed to thinking of nationalism, with its irrational “tribal” passions, as not in keeping with a modern Western political economy are suddenly finding that the best promoters of the Westernizing, anti-Communist values they hope to foster are local nationalists. Western liberalism has always found ethnonationalism suspect, for it restricts the “demos” of democratic participation to the members of a chosen people, excluding the ethnic “others” from full citizenship. This challenge to the notion of universal citizenship, which liberal political theory would place at the heart of democratic politics, is now lodging itself at the center of Eastern European “democracy.” As the transition from socialism proceeds, scholars should be especially attentive to how nationalist politics integrates gender, what alternative forms of national imagery will be offered and by whom, and how the politics around issues like abortion will produce distinctive forms of democracy and capitalism in which nation and gender are intertwined in novel ways.

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