

in which lesbianism is implicit at best, reduced to an allegorical expression of the nation's plight. The construction of such a national lesbian tradition, an apparent contradiction in terms, is bound to productively mobilize the paradoxical, self-deconstructive aspect of allegory.

The Hungarian *Another Way* (1982) is the only film made in the Soviet-controlled region during communism that openly depicts lesbianism. It is thus a crucial point of reference for post-Soviet lesbian self-representations. At the center of the film is young journalist Éva Szalánczky. Shortly after she begins her job on the staff of the Budapest daily newspaper, *Igazság* [Truth], in 1958, she falls in love with a married colleague, Lívia, a markedly feminine blonde (Polish actress Grazyna Szapolowska). Lívia seeks an outlet from her eventless and emotionally deprived life at the side of her military officer husband and finds it in the new erotic energy that Éva radiates. After several dates and much emotional agony, she yields to the sexual temptation. Following their single sexual encounter, however, everything comes crashing down on the lovers: Lívia's jealous husband shoots her so that she remains wheelchair-bound and bitter toward Éva, a living memorial of regret and punishment, whose greatest fear is that nobody will want to make her pregnant. Éva, whose reporting about communist atrocities has made her situation impossible at the newspaper, gives in to despair. The scene that opens and closes the film (whose plot is told in retrospective narration) finds her at the Austro-Hungarian border, hinting at the possibility that she may have intended to emigrate illegally. But she does not hide from the border guards when they try to stop her and is shot dead.

The camera refuses to eroticize contact between the women, including the sex scene, and medicalizes the crippled, naked, infertile body of Lívia in the narrative introduction, which warns us of the consequences of "perversion" before the story begins. The film starts out with Éva's removal from the plot and ends the same way, teaching a lesson to those who diverge from the correct path of livable choices. A sigh of relief accompanies her exit, as she is not a point of identification to begin with. She is useful only to the extent that her sacrifice can posthumously be converted into political capital.

The film's own discursive strategies, the creators themselves, and the critical community all converged in interpreting the lesbian protagonists as mere allegories of larger national and universal issues. Felice Newman, one of the English translators of the 1980 novel *Törvényen belül* (literally, within the law; distributed in English with the title *Another Love*), from which novelist Erzsébet Galgóczi and director Károly Makk developed the film, writes: "In how many novels written in the 'free' and 'liberated'

West does a lesbian character represent the soul of the nation? . . . In Galgóczi's view, Hungary is a nation caught in an Orwellian squeeze. And Éva is Hungary's national spirit. *Another Love* is Erzsébet Galgóczi's State of the Union address, and she has chosen a fiercely independent (albeit emotionally battered) lesbian to carry the message. . . . Such guts, Galgóczi!" (Newman 1991, 17).

The misunderstanding here is profound. No Eastern European writer can "choose" a lesbian character within cultures where there is no such thing as a lesbian. Galgóczi, who was a closeted lesbian until the untimely end of her troubled life, struck out in this one novel to bring her own unrepresentable subjectivity into representation. But the only way she could do so was by putting the smoke screen of national allegory in front of the highly autobiographical story of the tragic lesbian. This strategy worked for the film version, too. At the 1982 Cannes Festival, Polish actress Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieslak, who played the role of Éva—in the absence of Hungarian actresses, none of whom would have taken on such a role—won the award for best actress. The film received the International Federation of Film Critics Award "for its clarity," for the "originality of its libertarian message," and for its struggle for "individual freedom" (Zsugán 1982, 16). European reviews praised it for the "extraordinary richness with which Makk and Galgóczi linked two disparate themes: the human right to another kind of love . . . and the search for political freedom" (Zsugán 1982, 16). American film critics and academics have been just as uncritically thrilled, ignoring the contradiction that a lesbian should allegorically stand for the cause of the nation, in whose official discourses lesbianism is inconceivable.<sup>4</sup>

What makes this contradiction possible to miss is precisely that the film's aesthetic successfully sublimates the lesbian theme in the realm of political allegory and suppresses a potentially lesbian look. Éva, the Eastern European "lesbian," is still without a name, but with a certain harassed lesbian self-awareness. "She is that way," declares a male character in the

<sup>4</sup> David W. Paul writes, "At first glance the issues of lesbianism and censorship may strike one as unlikely twins, but a brilliant idea links them in this story. For Éva, sexual and political nonconformity are of one piece. Since she cannot accept the Party line on matters of sexual preference . . . she can equally well reject the Party line on journalistic scandals" (1989, 192). Kevin Moss similarly accepts the filmmaker's explicit allegorical intentions without examining the discursive violence committed against the lesbian character: "In *Another Way*, then, Makk takes advantage of the similarities between political and sexual dissidence and constructs his film around the intersections of the two. Éva is both politically and sexually dissident, and the film shows how similar the devices used to conceal and reveal such dissidence are" (1995, 246).

film, indicating that her sexuality does not fall within the normative categories of language. She “suffers from two perversions,” as the director puts it in an interview: she “loves her own sex” and is “unable to lie” (Szilágyi 1982, 12). Her sexual “perversion” is never directly identified in the film, yet the circumscriptions, empty pronouns, and pronominal adjectives that refer to lesbianism point to a collective understanding of the secret (Moss 1995, 245). This understanding crystallizes in the stereotype of the male-identified and mannish lesbian who cannot resist the seductions of traditional femininity and who competes with men for women. Tragic lesbian love is a feasible allegory for signifying the failure of heroism in the face of oppression and complicity because Éva, an Eastern European lesbian, is constructed as an anomaly, a contradiction in terms, as someone not viable other than as a trope from the start.

Despite Makk’s and Galgóczi’s efforts to allegorize lesbianism, the pressure put on national allegory’s apparently self-contained referential system by the representation of lesbian desire releases allegory’s ghostly, inherently self-reflective side. Éva’s refusal to choose between available feminine and masculine identities opens up the performative dimension of national allegory. The retroactive engagement with national allegory in the novel and the film has proven to be a crucial identificatory resource for Hungarian lesbians, who have gradually appeared from the closet since the official end of communism. Éva’s plight has become the most important historical and discursive record of lesbian visibility, on which lesbian activists have drawn to construct their own very different kind of emergence into postcommunist representation.<sup>5</sup>

The first postcommunist novel written about lesbianism, *Goat Lipstick* (1997), by a lesbian writer who uses the pseudonym Agáta Gordon, engages in conversation with its single predecessor to stake out a different kind of lesbian subjectivity within but also outside the law, one no longer constituted in isolation. There is a conscious effort in *Goat Lipstick* to create a literary tradition, a minor literature in the Deleuzian sense, that deterritorializes language and connects the individual to political immediacy. The novel produces a collective assemblage of enunciation, turning a most personal story political (Sándor 1999). But this kind of allegorization is deployed for the purposes of lesbian identification, resisting incorporation by the national body.

The continuities between the two novels, landmarks in the constitution

<sup>5</sup> For this information, I am grateful to Kremmler, Magdi Timár, and Eszter Muszter, members of the Budapest Lesbian Film Committee, whom I interviewed at the Lesbian Film Festival in Budapest on July 4, 2004.

of a lesbian community, are numerous and intentional, going far beyond the overt references in *Goat Lipstick* to passages in Galgóczi's novel. Both texts are caught in an ambivalence between capitulation to and a critique of nationalistic ideologies of gender and sexuality. But Galgóczi's tragic, isolated lesbian commits suicide—importantly, on the border of the nation, by border guards' guns. Gordon's protagonist, even though she sinks into paranoia and depression and ends up in the psychiatric institution where she writes her autobiographical text, nevertheless belongs to a secret collectivity and is able to inhabit a lesbian space built from a collection of found images and texts. Where Galgóczi's lesbians inevitably and tragically come up against borders and binaries determined by the allegorizing logic of nationalism, Gordon's heroines hide among texts, quotations, and images that represent these borders as malleable. Even more important, Gordon's lesbians take pleasure in this textual hiding: "Hiding, the incorporation of a role and the incorporation of a self is almost luxurious in this novel, an enjoyed and excessive game" (Sándor 1999, 9).

*Goat Lipstick* is a paradigmatic text of postcommunist Eastern European lesbian feminist emergence in that it both identifies with the earlier, allegorical text and transforms it in the course of a collective, critical process of reinterpretation. While *Another Love* was swallowed up almost completely by the heteronormative categories of the national and removed from literary circulation after the end of communism, Gordon and her interpretive community take a critical, poststructuralist stand toward the same categories. Éva identifies as her role model the rebellious spirit of Sándor Petöfi, a revered Romantic male poet and patriotic revolutionary. Her search for what she calls lesbian nature was bound to fail within the parameters imposed by the search itself. Gordon, by contrast, foregrounds the way her heroine constructs lesbian subjectivity as a patchwork of allegories of reading (Balogh 2003). While Éva's story is retrospectively constructed in a realistic manner by a fascinated male police officer, the embodiment of state power, in Gordon's text the hiding protagonist's self-fashioning is communicated in a fragmented way through found poetry and punctuation-free, floating sentences without clear boundaries, evoking a "playfully dislocated, placeless subject" (Sándor 1999, 11). In the closing passage of the book, Gordon writes:

now the hunt was only a flash the greyhounds were not even roused really so late it was when they noticed the squirrel which was planting nuts among the rustling leaves on the ground and it pricked up its ears only when it heard my steps and frightened me escaping toward the dogs in a confusion but only until the next tree it managed to