

ELIZABETH HARVEY

## NATIONAL ICONS AND VISIONS OF MODERNITY: ASSERTING AND DEBATING GENDER IDENTITIES IN NEW NATIONAL CONTEXTS

The population of Central and Eastern Europe emerged from the First World War and the upheavals following the Bolshevik revolution into transformed national polities. In newly-formed successor states from the Baltic to the Balkans, the national idea reached a new zenith, with consequences both for relations between states and ethnic/national groups, and for gender norms and relations. Most of the contributions in this section of the volume analyse cases in interwar Central and Eastern Europe where gender norms and identities were being debated and promoted in line with a seemingly self-evident ethnic or national imperative. Institutions, groups and individuals for whom the securing of ethnic or national identity was an overriding priority grappled with models of masculinity and femininity that would be compatible with and serve the national cause. This took place in the context of newly-formed independent nation states – notably Poland and Czechoslovakia – where patriotic Poles and Czechs sought to underpin and strengthen the dominant national culture by prescribing and celebrating national models of manliness and womanliness: this theme of nation-building within the successor states is central to the contributions by *Alicja Kusiak*, *Elżbieta Ostrowska* and *Joanna Szwajcowska*, and *Martin Schulze Wessel*. Gender constructs were also a key component of revanchist nationalism in post-Versailles Germany, as the contributions by *Marika Werner* and *Angela Koch* demonstrate. The ethnic/national imperative was similarly powerful for ethnic minority populations seeking to maintain their identity against the dominant culture of the newly-independent nation states in which they found themselves: examples of this can be seen in the Swedish-speaking communities in Finland analysed by *Ann-Catrin Östman* and in the case of the Jewish Bund in Poland discussed by *Gertrud Pickhan*.

By contrast, two of the contributions in this section deal with examples where ideas about gender were allied to political identities that were in opposition to ethnic/national thinking. For the early Bolsheviks, as *Tatiana Osipovich* reminds us, national identities were subordinate to identification

with the new regime and its ideology, and new gender norms were formulated and promoted in order to ensure conformity to the goal of revolution. And for the maverick female “outsiders” of interwar Europe discussed by *Margaret McFadden*, who distanced themselves from the dominant discourses of nationalism, the act of forming for themselves a modern identity as free and creative women was based on an internationalist ideal. Interestingly, however, both contributions also demonstrate the power of national traditions and national allegiances even where political movements and individuals set out to subvert them: the Bolsheviks, in order to promote their revolutionary notions of female peasant identity, drew on Russian folklore traditions in order to ensure that propaganda appealed to the rural masses, and the Estonian-Finnish playwright Hella Wuolijoki, determined as she was to transcend the limitations of nationality, put her creative and political energies at various stages of her life into the Finnish national cause.

The discourses and debates on gendered identities analysed in this section illuminate several characteristic features of the epoch “between wars” in this part of Europe. One feature highlighted by several contributors is the tenacity of national myths and icons from the past. The lasting influence of nineteenth-century narratives of national self-assertion on the cultural climate of the interwar period is demonstrated here particularly by the essays on Czechoslovakia and Poland. *Martin Schulze Wessel* traces the bourgeois nationalist morals and values of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic back into nineteenth-century debates. Attacking priestly celibacy as abnormal and incompatible with a nationalism built upon respectable family life was, he argues, nothing new, even if it was given much greater urgency and vehemence by the founding of the Czechoslovak national state in 1918. In the contributions by *Alicja Kusiak* and by *Elżbieta Ostrowska* and *Joanna Szwajcowska*, the staying power of the nineteenth-century cult of “Mother Poland” emerges vividly. Even in the new independent Poland, a sense of external and internal threats to Polish nationhood encouraged the continuing celebration of noble, self-sacrificing and tragic female patriots representing the violated but defiant nation. These female figures in their various guises of devoted wife and mother, heroic fighter and tragic martyr provided a familiar and richly dramatic resource for popular culture, as for instance in the Józef Lejtes film *Huragan* discussed by *Ostrowska* and *Szwajcowska*, as well as for the sphere of historical writing analysed by *Kusiak*. It seemed to be beyond most historians of the interwar period, according to *Kusiak*, to emancipate themselves from the heroic narratives about Poland that were laid down in the nineteenth century. To use Alina Madej’s phrase, cited by *Ostrowska* and *Szwajcowska*, the Polish “museum of the imagination” continued to supply ideas and motifs for important areas of interwar culture. One wonders whether contemporary readers and audiences recognised the

anachronistic nature of portrayals of “Mother Poland” and enjoyed them regardless in a spirit of patriotic nostalgia.

Notwithstanding the pervasive influence of long-standing myths and icons, ideas about gender in relation to nationhood during the period “between wars” were also inevitably marked by the First World War and its aftermath. The years of international conflict, revolutionary upheavals and civil war fuelled the re-imagining of gender roles in relation to the nation and its enemies. Warfare between nations in this part of Europe, as elsewhere, gave a new lease of life to polarized gender stereotypes based on the dichotomy of front line and home front, fighting men and supportive women.<sup>1</sup> Wartime stereotypes of soldierly heroes cast a long shadow into the interwar period: a record of martial prowess was claimed as an element in patriotic masculinity.<sup>2</sup> Several of the essays in this section touch on this theme of soldierly masculinity as a legacy for the post-war period. *Martin Schulze Wessel* shows how the memory of the Czech legionaries who fought on the side of the Entente inspired a militant image of “priest-legionaries” who, having broken their vows of celibacy and their ties to Rome, would join the ranks of manly nation-builders in the new Czechoslovak state. *Ann-Catrin Östman* demonstrates how the Swedish-speaking peasants of Ostrobothnia in the 1920s and 1930s fortified their self-esteem as pillars of the community and the nation by claiming a crucial role in fighting against the Bolshevik forces in the civil war in Finland. *Angela Koch* and *Marike Werner* both highlight in their respective contributions the cult of martial masculinity that characterized the extreme Right in Weimar Germany. *Koch* finds such imagery in nationalist periodicals such as *Alldeutsche Blätter*, which in the early 1920s openly advocated volunteering for anti-Republican paramilitary associations; *Werner* sees it pervading the novels of “soldierly nationalism” of the late 1920s. In these narratives, the war is never-ending and the cause of Germany lies in the hands of fighting men for whom women are an alien presence, at most a distraction or an obstacle to their violent mission.

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<sup>1</sup> BILLIE MELMAN, Introduction, in: *Borderlines. Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. by BILLIE MELMAN, New York, London 1998, pp. 1-25; ANNE SCHMIDT, “Kämpfende Männer – Liebende Frauen”. Geschlechterstereotypen auf deutschen Propagandaplakaten des Ersten Weltkrieges, in: *Geschlecht und Nationalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1848-1918*, ed. by SOPHIA KEMLEIN, Osnabrück 2000, pp. 217-253.

<sup>2</sup> GEORGE L. MOSSE, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, London 1990; SABINE KIENITZ, Körper – Beschädigungen. Kriegsinvalidität und Männlichkeitskonstruktionen in der Weimarer Republik, in *Heimat – Front. Militär und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, ed. by KAREN HAGEMANN/STEFANIE SCHÜLER-SPRINGORUM, Frankfurt a.M., New York 2002, pp. 188-207.

Warfare did not, however, serve only to reinforce and exaggerate conventional gender roles. Liberation struggles, partisan warfare and revolutionary conflicts could blur the gender boundaries characteristic of traditional warfare by opening up exceptional roles for women fighting alongside their male comrades.<sup>3</sup> The spectacle of women bearing arms could evoke terror and disgust among their opponents. But on their own side, women soldiers were celebrated. The memory of the revolutionary woman fighter featured in early Soviet culture as an emblem of women's equal status and equal duties under Bolshevik rule, but also as a reminder of extraordinary times when the revolution had to be defended by all means. As *Tatiana Osipovich* shows, Red women fighters appeared in early Soviet literature as strong and dramatic, though potentially tragic figures. Their depiction in the popular fiction of the 1920s provided a vehicle for exploring the conflict between passion and revolutionary duty, or between the conflict-hardened individual and the norms of civilian society.

War and violence in which vulnerable bodies were hurled into the line of fire also fed fears, hatreds and imaginings of the enemy in gendered and sexualized terms. Images of the enemy as predator, as perverted, sadistic or cowardly were translated into images of distorted masculinity or femininity. Sinister, sick, effeminate or sadistic men and freakish men-women – including women wielding guns, a spectacle of gender anarchy confirming the degeneracy of the enemy forces – loomed in the discourse of threatened nations as projections of the Other.<sup>4</sup> As Klaus Theweleit demonstrated on the basis of the writings of German Freikorps fighters, those who fought with the White forces against the Bolsheviks saw the pistol-toting Red woman fighter as the embodiment of Bolshevik perversion, a monstrosity to be annihilated.<sup>5</sup> Polish women who crossed conventional gender lines in their service to the national cause were similarly dramatized and caricatured by their enemies. *Marika Werner* cites from German borderlands fiction the example of Herybert Menzel's portrayal of a young Polish countess leading the Polish national movement in West Prussia: she appears as an Amazon on horseback, booted, spurred, and in her gender ambiguity doubly dangerous.

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred G. Meyer notes that a small number of women, perhaps a few dozen, managed to enlist in the Tsarist army during the First World War. ALFRED G. MEYER, *The Impact of World War I on Russian Women's Lives*, in: *Russia's Women. Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by BARBARA EVANS CLEMENTS/BARBARA ALPERN ENGEL/CHRISTINE D. WOROBEC, Los Angeles 1991, pp. 208-224, here p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> KAREN PETRONE, *Family, Masculinity and Heroism in Russian War Posters of the First World War*, in: *Borderlines* (see note 1), pp. 95-119, esp. pp. 104-110.

<sup>5</sup> KLAUS THEWELEIT, *Männerphantasien*. Bd. 1: *Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte*, Frankfurt a.M. 1977, pp. 97-103.

Just as visions of gender disorder were used to denigrate the enemy in nationalist rhetoric, so the speeches, brochures, articles, posters and novels that lamented losses or humiliations and threatened national retaliation were saturated with gendered imagery in which nationalists praised the homeland, the soil and their own nation at the expense of that of the enemy. Swedish farmers in interwar Finland, *Ann-Catrin Östman* argues, used the word *hembygd* when emphasising their bond with the land and the “soil of the fathers”: at the core of their understanding of “homeland” was an idea of agrarian masculinity. By contrast, the German concept of “homeland” (*Heimat*) tended to have more associations with femininity. In late-nineteenth-century Germany, home and family – spheres of life associated with women – had been key elements invoking the comfort and security of *Heimat*.<sup>6</sup> *Angela Koch*, reading German texts from the 1920s, analyses the discursive strategies in different periodicals in order to highlight the contrast between the imagery of a feminized “homeland-as-mother”, the idyll associated with childhood, that was characteristic of conservative bourgeois nationalism, and the more gruesome imagery of the nation-as-mutilated-body characteristic of the far right *völkisch* periodicals. For all their differences, both strategies sought to equate the nation with nature and the organic to drive home the message that the Versailles border changes were “unnatural”; and both drew heavily on the topos of rape to characterize Germany’s fate under the Treaty.

Debates on gender relations in the new national contexts in the interwar period reflected post-war anxieties about longer-term social change and modernization as well as the experiences and consequences of wartime upheaval. In their manifestos, fictions and historical writings, those concerned to secure national identity within their state or ethnic grouping were responding not only to external threats but also to forces within that were perceived as undermining the economic, demographic or social stability of the national group. Several contributions in this section discuss how attempts to uphold national identity in this period entailed efforts to resist, contain or manage the social consequences of modernity: industrialization, urbanization, increased geographical mobility, a loosening of family ties, a sense of dislocation between the generations and an increased questioning of rigid gender norms. *Ann-Catrin Östman* explores the ambivalent responses to modernization among the Swedish-speaking yeomanry of western Finland. On the one hand, a stereotype of the yeoman-farmer tilling the soil and planting rye was preserved even as patterns of agriculture shifted and production diversified, reducing the dependence on rye cultivation and increa-

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<sup>6</sup> ALON CONFINO, *The Nation as Local Metaphor*, Chapel Hill, London 1997, p. 170.

sing dairy production, a sector with which women were more strongly identified. However, upholding models of national manhood was in this case not a straightforwardly anti-modern enterprise. *Östman* notes that since the Swedish-speaking farmers also prided themselves on their efficiency compared to their Finnish fellow-citizens, they also sought to project a self-image as bearers of progress. Discussing mechanization as well as celebrating the old manual farming methods, they sought to present themselves as the most dedicated, most effective guardians of the homeland (*hembygd*) and its soil, conscious of the past but receptive to modern techniques. Reflections on the theme of economic modernity and national identity are also to be found in *Marike Werner's* analysis of the work of the German author August Scholtis: in his writing on Upper Silesia, the agricultural backwardness of the province is linked with the ambivalent, fluid national consciousness of its inhabitants. Although the fecund, archaic homeland exerts a fascinating allure, embodied in the mother figure Baba, the vision of the future is one which is dictated by the pace of progress elsewhere. In *Werner's* interpretation, the message of Scholtis' work is that urbanization and industrialization will dynamize the primitive pre-modern world in which ethnic boundaries were indistinct, finally making Upper Silesia no longer the domain of semi-Slavic earth mothers, but properly German.

If the war was thought to have accelerated social dislocation, contributing to a "crisis of the family" and threatening the biological substance of the population, nation-building projects sought to re-stabilize gender relations and to direct sexuality into the correct channels. *Schulze Wessel* demonstrates for the Czechoslovak case how sexual order and compulsory heterosexuality were part of the national project. The nation was represented by Czechoslovak nationalists as a collectivity of healthy males, counterposed to allegedly unhealthy priests who were either genuinely celibate and consequently repressed and unfit, or secretly sexually active and consequently dishonest and devious. Czechoslovak nationalism was constructed as progressive, anti-clerical and "masculine": priests, homosexuals and women did not fit neatly into this scheme. Astonishingly, for all their allegedly negative qualities, priests were at the same time seen as a promising source of high-grade eugenic material that would if they married and had children enrich the Czechoslovak population. In such arguments, an unequivocally modern drive to manipulate and control the "quality" of the population – a concern typical of interwar nation states – was making itself felt.<sup>7</sup>

The potential hazards of modernity for national identity and stability were frequently embodied in anxiety-laden portrayals of the "New Woman". The

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<sup>7</sup> MARIA SOPHIA QUINE, *Population Politics in Twentieth-Century Europe*, London 1996.



image of the liberated, economically independent “New Woman” was a powerful theme of urban culture in interwar Europe and – very importantly – it was an image that was seen as crossing national boundaries.<sup>8</sup> The notion of the “New Woman” was not just a phenomenon of the interwar period: the educated, employed woman with money to spend and leisure time to fill had been seen as an emblem of long-term modernizing trends since the late nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> However, the image of the “New Woman” was associated with wartime and post-war social changes as well as longer-term trends in education, marriage and employment patterns. It was also seen as a symptom of what was seen by conservative cultural critics as “decadent modernity”, of commodification and commercialism, of trends towards “cosmopolitanism”, “consumerism” and hedonism that were diagnosed both as a reaction to wartime deprivations and as a sign of American influence.<sup>10</sup>

The political implications of new freedoms and choices for women were fascinating but alarming for many contemporary commentators. Would the social changes that gave women more education and more alternatives to a life focused solely on domesticity make them more responsive to calls to serve the nation or a political cause, or just more able to indulge “selfish” tastes and aspirations? For the radically-minded playwright Hella Wuolijoki, the answer to this question was that modern women should be wary of all “calls” and should instead work out their own ways of working politically, following their own instincts and ideals. She illustrated this message in the 1933 play “Law and Order”: the central character Maria demonstrates the courage to set herself apart from the warring factions in the civil war in Finland and to stand her ground as a woman. But Wuolijoki was an isolated voice, as *McFadden* argues, just as Virginia Woolf’s uncompromising critique of patriarchy and fascism set her apart in the England in the 1930s. Even the Bolsheviks, with their commitment to the wholesale modernization of “backward” peasant society and their proclamation of the principle of

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<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the image of the “New Woman” and its significance in post-First World War debates on cultural crisis in France, see MARY LOUISE ROBERTS, *Civilization without Sexes. Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*, Chicago, London 1994.

<sup>9</sup> CARROLL SMITH-ROSENBERG, *Discourses of Sexuality and Subjectivity. The New Woman, 1870-1936*, in: *Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by MARTIN BAUML DUBERMAN/MARTHA VICINUS/GEORGE CHAUNCEY, JR., London 1989, pp. 264-280.

<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon of the “New Woman” in the culture of Weimar Germany has been explored in some depth: see for example *Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by KATHARINA VON ANKUM, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1997; *Visions of the Neue Frau. Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, ed. by MARSHA MESKIMMON/SHEARER WEST, Aldershot 1995.

women's equality, had some difficulty with the idea of the "New Woman", as *Tatiana Osipovich* argues in her contribution. The Bolsheviks promoted to supposedly "backward" rural women an image of the "New Soviet Woman", defined by her devotion to the cause of building socialism, by her ability to think "rationally" in terms of the community good and her willingness to liberate herself from "old-fashioned" and "selfish" ways of thinking. However, *Osipovich* shows how in their fictional plots Bolshevik agitators were worried not only about "backward" women: they were also alarmed at the idea of militant, sexually independent women, and dealt with them within the framework of fictional narratives by making them disappear or die. It seems that the idea of a truly free woman fitted only with difficulty into Bolshevik conceptions of the new society. These stories do indeed, as *Osipovich* suggests, express "the new society's ambiguous attitude towards non-conforming women".

Outside revolutionary Russia, fears and anxieties about the "New Woman" were expressed in many contexts in relation to the preservation of ethnic or national identity. Given that nationalism conventionally assigned to women the task of preserving the nation through her selfless devotion to family, children and guarding national customs, what would happen if a new generation of women were to reject the path taken by their mothers, treat domestic labour with less reverence and seek fulfilment in work and leisure instead of in family life? As *Marika Werner* shows, the response of German borderlands propagandists writing *Heimattromane* ("homeland novels") to this question was clear: there was only one possible model for proper German womanhood, and that was a life of quiet and selfless devotion to hearth and home. To drive this message home, the novels conjured up "New Women" characters – selfish, undomesticated, urban creatures, economically active and sexually predatory – and made them Polish. Within the mental world of the typical German borderlands novel, the "New Woman" could only be an alien.

In *Gertrud Pickhan's* contribution, the impact of social modernization on women is revealed as being at the heart of debates within the Bund over modernity and Jewish identity in the context of the new Polish nation-state. Class as well as gender identities among Polish Jews were at stake here. In 1939, a male Bund leader criticized women for not pulling their weight within the movement. To him, modernity appeared as a negative force, entailing secularization and the loss of national consciousness, and it was – he claimed – Jewish women who were most susceptible to its temptations. Allegedly striving for bourgeoisification and Polonization, women were becoming alienated from their Jewish working-class roots and consequently from the politics of the Bund. This suggestion that secular ways and modern tastes were leading Jewish women to desert their community ties was,



however, rejected by leading women of the Bund. Women Bund leaders took the view that if Jewish women were not playing their full part in the Bund, this was partly because men were not keeping up with women's particular needs and issues – for instance women's demand for birth control. It was also, they argued, because the transformed political situation in the new Poland operated to discourage women from participation in the politics of the Bund: the covert struggle against Tsarist autocracy before the First World War had been more conducive to women's involvement than the interwar world of formal party politics, public platforms and mass rallies. Reviewing the complex debates among the men and women of the Bund in interwar Poland, *Pickhan* sees the arguments as a sign of Polish Jews inhabiting increasingly diverse cultures, ranging from the highly traditional to the radically modern, and she suggests that Jewish women experienced the tensions between old and new even more acutely than Jewish men did.

Many of the essays in this section deal with images and visions that were transmitted through texts – broadly defined – and consumed by readers or spectators. They raise fundamental questions that concern all cultural historians exploring nationhood and gender: the question of how norms and identities are disseminated and reproduced in daily experience, and how the reception of texts and images relates to other practices, customs or aspects of everyday life. Some of the contributions explore debates that took place within a relatively limited circle, and are therefore concerned with texts that were not targeted at a mass readership: scholarly historical works, for instance, or the debates within the newsletters and periodicals of the break-away priests who rebelled against the Catholic Church in the new Czechoslovak Republic. Such cases shed important light on ideas circulating within a particular sector of the educated public, but also raise the wider question of the resonances such arguments and debates had among a wider audience.

Other contributions deal with mass cultural phenomena: bestselling novels, popular works of history, illustrated magazines, and films – all of which, as *Marika Werner* reminds us, were manufactured and consumed in bulk. They also raise more questions – notoriously difficult to answer – about the nature of the market in this era for texts exploring and asserting national identity. Circulation figures for the press, size of editions of novels, box office sales figures are all key indicators of the consumption on a wide scale of chauvinistic diatribes, didactic Bolshevik propaganda, or patriotic histories. Even so, data of this sort rarely tells us all one would like to know about who read what, who saw what at the cinema, and what they made of it. Who, typically, read German borderlands novels, saw Protazanov's film of *The Forty-First*, or went to the theatre to see Hella Wuolijoki's *Law and Order*? Were the smart young working women of Warsaw flocking in 1928 to see the film *Hurricane*, and if so did they lap up the images of patriotic

heroines of 1863? How did they relate the historical entertainment on the screen to their everyday lives and their relationship to the Polish state? *Ann-Catrin Östman's* approach to the question of how national identity is formed and internalized is noteworthy in this regard: she links a close analysis of texts (letters in a local newspaper) with a reconstruction of the likely readership, its social customs, and the construction of identity through a variety of channels and institutional frameworks. Her contribution traces the different components of Swedish-speaking peasant farmers' sense of "agrarian masculinity" by examining the different processes which helped to form them. As readers of the Swedish-language press, the Swedish-speaking yeomen absorbed the messages of land, soil and ancestry; through the face-to-face interactions within local community life, through farm clubs and cooperatives, they acquired their sense of identity as "local citizens" within a modern agrarian Finnish polity.

A final perspective from which to view the contributions to this section is to ask whose voices are to be heard in celebrations of nationhood or in debates about the place of men and women within the nation or the social order. How far did women echo, or defy, the national ideals laid down by patriarchal traditions and institutions? Were women's voices to be heard at all? In some of the contributions reviewed here, the texts, films and novels are the work of men, and it is masculine identity and men's constructs of gender, the homeland and the enemy that are in the foreground of analysis. In other contributions, however, we find women articulating their relationship to the nation. The case of Hella Wuolijoki illustrates the potential for women to adopt the position of the radical outsider; however, most examples show women joining debates on nationhood within the framework of nationalist certainties and ethnically-based identities. In the context of interwar Central and Eastern Europe, the cultivation of national identity could easily appear as marking freedom from foreign oppression or resistance against ethnic discrimination. These were struggles in which women could see themselves as empowered along with their nation or group, and where they could claim a space to voice opinions and present their own agenda alongside, or even against, their male compatriots. Thus *Martin Schulze Wessel* notes how the female partners of Czech priests publicly set out their reasons for opposing celibacy and reflecting on their future place in the project of a Czechoslovak national church with a married clergy; *Gertrud Pickhan* describes the women leaders of the Bund asserting women's interests within the movement and countering male leaders' allegations that women were letting down the cause of the Jewish labour movement.

In other contexts, we find examples of women submerging themselves in a nationalist mainstream, taking on the role of nationalist super-conformists and matching men in their chauvinistic rhetoric. Not only did such women

not question their own belonging to the nation: on the contrary, they adopted discriminatory and racist views towards “the enemy” or “the Jew”. In *Angela Koch’s* contribution, Käthe Schirmacher, the anti-Versailles polemicist, is cited; in *Marika Werner’s* essay we encounter Magda Trott, author of a German borderlands novel saturated with anti-Polish stereotypes; while *Alicja Kusiak* considers the case of Łucja Charewiczowa, who, notwithstanding her pathbreaking formulation of a feminist perspective on women’s history, identified herself in the late 1930s with the anti-semitic Polish Right and wrote anti-Ukrainian polemics. In such cases, women found an outlet for their nationalist engagement and produced texts that fitted within a particular genre, scholarly practice, or style of polemic. It appears that women could without difficulty adopt and reproduce nationalist discourses laid down by men. This was the case even if their position in relation to the gendered motifs of nationalist discourse – “homeland”, or “rape”, for instance – was different: presumably, although this is not elaborated in the contributions, it was a different matter for male and female writers to be addressing a “motherly” homeland, or denouncing rape. The cases of Charewiczowa and Schirmacher, like that of Isidora Sekulić discussed in *Andrea Feldman’s* contribution in the first section of this volume, provide unsettling evidence of how a position asserting women’s interests could coincide with a discriminatory stance towards foreigners, with anti-semitism and with fascism.

Women expressed their relationship to the idea of homeland and nationhood in a myriad of complex ways, as this volume has shown. But despite Virginia Woolf’s belief in women’s potentially greater immunity to the temptations of patriotism – expressed in her famous slogan “as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country”<sup>11</sup> – the contributions to this volume suggest that few of her female contemporaries in interwar Central and Eastern Europe would have agreed with her.

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<sup>11</sup> VIRGINIA WOOLF, *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*, Oxford 1992, p. 313.