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*AHR Forum*  
An Archipelago of Stories:  
Gender History in Eastern Europe

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WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE YOUNG FIELD of gender history in Eastern Europe, the following metaphor comes to mind: gender historiography as an archipelago of individual efforts, often disconnected and emergent, erupting periodically like so many volcanic islands, connected with the institutional seats of power of academia by rafts rather than ocean liners or solid bridges. While in 1986 it was possible for Joan Scott to write about the need to reject the essentialization of women's experiences, to deconstruct representations of the past as mediated forms of articulating specific social and cultural realities, and to call for gender to become an all-prevailing vantage point from which to rearticulate historical analysis, there is still not much to essentialize, deconstruct, and reframe in the East European field. The focus on women and gender is still emerging. This picture should not be viewed as dismal, however, but rather as a modestly optimistic outlook with regard to a still-new field of historical inquiry.

Three connected issues have framed the development of gender history in Eastern Europe over the past two decades: (1) the place of feminism in Eastern Europe before, during, and after communism, which can be used to delineate the important contextual differences between the United States and this area in how Scott's article "Gender" was received; (2) how interest in gender analysis among East Europeanist historians has developed in the United States since the 1990s, which enables us to make comparisons with the Russian field; and finally, (3) what developments have taken place in gender and women's history in post-communist Eastern Europe, which can help us identify important trends that lead to a cautiously optimistic conclusion about the potential of gender analysis in the wider historical scholarship in the coming years.

"Eastern Europe" is still a loaded term, with contested connotations in the realm of gender studies.<sup>1</sup> Why continue to use terminology that was a product of the Cold

I am grateful to the members of the History of Gender and Sexuality reading group at Indiana University, Bloomington, who offered thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this article, especially Arlene Diaz, Amrita Myers, and Marissa Moorman, as well as my friends and collaborators in Eastern Europe, who have offered me reason for hopefulness in writing this essay. Finally, many thanks to Rob Schneider, Sarah Knott, Jane Lyle, and the peer reviewers, all of whom offered extremely helpful criticisms.

<sup>1</sup> I will limit my focus in this article to the engagement with gender history inside Eastern Europe itself and by people who work on Eastern Europe in the United States and Great Britain. There is a solid community of historians interested in this area in other places in Europe, from Sweden to Italy,

War binary way of representing and reifying “capitalist democracy” versus “communist dictatorship”? For me, the answer is quite simple: the current institutional and intellectual frameworks through which historians of Eastern Europe who are interested in gender history function are still very much products of that communist experience. The new terminology that attempts to complicate the Cold War binary (e.g., Southeast, Central, and East-Central Europe) does not effectively acknowledge the fact that there is still a highly significant East-West divide in terms of power relations, be it inside European Union institutions, between the states in the EU and the rest of Eastern Europe, or in the realm of historical scholarship itself (within Eastern Europe and the United States alike).<sup>2</sup> When my colleagues who focus on French or German history speak about their work, for the most part they tend not to reflect on the constructed nature of their self-assumed centrality in defining the core and margins of Europeanness.<sup>3</sup> Thus “Eastern” here is meant to remind the reader about this power relationship inside Europeanist historiographic discourses.

This West-East divide has continued relevance especially for scholars in the post-communist world who have found themselves marginalized vis-à-vis U.S. academia, which still regards Marxism as an important frame of theoretical reference, without acknowledging that components of those theoretical stances are problematic for people who lived under communism until 1989.<sup>4</sup> This tension becomes apparent in how gender historians from post-communist Eastern Europe often speak of third-wave feminism in American academia. In describing the first time she took part in an international conference on women’s and gender studies in the United States, which was held at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Romanian scholar Mihaela Mudure represents herself as emphatically feminist while completely at odds with the debates, assumptions, and overall scholarly directions of gender studies scholarship in what she calls the West:

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and all the way to Japan as well. But for the purposes of this brief article, the comparison between these two very different academic settings—the Anglo-Western one and the post-communist European one—will illustrate points that are relevant to these other places. For debates about the continued relevance of the East-West divide, see also Joan W. Scott, “Fictitious Unities: ‘Gender,’ ‘East,’ and ‘West’” (paper presented at the fourth European Feminist Research Conference, Bologna, Italy, September 29, 2000), <http://www.women.it/cyberarchive/files/scott.htm> (accessed November 5, 2008); and Andrea Pető, “Writing Women’s History in Eastern Europe: Towards a ‘Terra Cognita’?” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 173–181. See also Jirina Siklová, “Why We Resist Western-Style Feminism,” *Transitions* 5, no. 1 (1998): 30–35, <http://www.tol.cz/look/Transitions/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=7&NrIssue=8&NrSection=1&NrArticle=4975> (accessed November 5, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> On the meaning and usefulness of these different denominations, focusing in particular on the significance of both marked and unmarked regions in Europe, see Maria Todorova, “Spacing Europe: What Is a Historical Region?” *East Central Europe/L’Europe de centre-est: Eine wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 32, nos. 1–2 (2005): 59–80.

<sup>3</sup> A handful of historians are trying to get away from these implicit and explicit binaries, and from the marginalization or flat-out invisibility of the “Eastern” inflection in the larger European context. One important exception here is Karen Offen, *European Feminists, 1700–1950* (Stanford, Calif., 2000). See also Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2000). Though less all-encompassing of Europe East and West, Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga, *Gendering European History* (London, 2000), is also an important contribution to this scholarship.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (New York, 2002).

I went back to old Europe having been fully convinced (how many times is it now?) that frustrations, more than moments of communication, force us to acknowledge the need of a feminist discourse that is *culturally particular to our post-communist context* . . . Our ability to make ourselves heard depends fatally on others' ability to give us the material resources to make our voices heard at symposia or congresses. And if a dialogue of the deaf seems to dominate a world in which the more we communicate, the less we can hear each other, I can't wait to have the chance and distance back home so that I might think more closely about Romanian feminisms in the concert of international ones and in comparison with them.<sup>5</sup>

Although Mudure accepts Scott's notion that gender roles are constantly negotiated and reinscribed, her experience at this conference reveals a deep gap between the West and her native East European context, with American scholars of gender often cast as less willing than others to attempt to understand the constructed nature of gender roles in contexts that are different from their own.

This transitory link with both the communist past and a much desired, presumably more democratic and prosperous future is central for understanding the meaning and direction of debates that have taken place in the past two decades over the usefulness and centrality of gender for historical inquiry from Yugoslavia to Estonia.<sup>6</sup> Simply put, even for those who have finally "arrived" in the EU, there is still too much institutional baggage from before 1989 in academia and intellectual debates for us to be able to discard the communist past as a relevant referent.

"GENDER: A USEFUL CATEGORY OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS," published in the pages of this journal in 1986, was a bold, powerful theoretical proposition, but it was more of a crowning achievement than a pioneering work. Scott's essay stood on the tall shoulders of scholarship produced by generations of historians of women and sexuality, of feminist philosophers and activists, and of a welcoming (though by no means unchallenging) academic environment.<sup>7</sup> The strength and diversity of the feminist movement in American academia was crucial to the response that "Gender" received and to its subsequent impact on a new generation of scholars.<sup>8</sup> Bridges and

<sup>5</sup> Mihaela Mudure, "Printre Feminisme: Among Feminisms," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, no. 6 (Winter 2003): 165–178, [http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no\\_6/mihaelamudure%20-%20articol.htm](http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_6/mihaelamudure%20-%20articol.htm) (accessed November 5, 2008), quote from 170, italics in the original. Siklová makes similar claims vis-à-vis Western feminism in "Why We Resist Western-Style Feminism."

<sup>6</sup> One of the problems with employing the terminology of "post-communist" or "Eastern" Europe when referring to the group of countries that used to be under communist rule in Europe is that they are in fact not a bloc, nor were they truly a bloc during the period of communist rule. There was a great deal of variety in the paths these countries took with regard to political institutions and in many areas of policymaking that affected gender relations and roles. Yet it is not an exaggeration to consider the institutional framework of academia, and specifically the historical craft, as sharing essential characteristics within the communist world, from the structure of higher education institutions and curricular practices to patterns of employment for professional historians and accepted methodologies.

<sup>7</sup> I make this statement fully cognizant of the backlash against feminism that was taking place in the United States in the 1980s. But my perspective is one that looks more broadly at the world. From that point of view, I have no doubt that feminist scholarship was overall more welcomed in academia in the United States than virtually anywhere else, and in particular in Eastern Europe, my main point of comparison here. Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–1075.

<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990) was another remarkable work that contributed to the richness and continued engagement with the theoretical underpinnings of Scott's arguments for that generation of gender historians. I read both works

alliances were forged in this process, rendering gender history a strong mass rather than an archipelago, a field thereafter to be reckoned with by most historians.

These elements have to be kept in mind when the post-communist context is examined. In Eastern Europe, feminism was once held in great respect, commanding both political influence and intellectual authority in many places. In the interwar period, it was a respectable mainstream ideology—not necessarily embraced across all political parties, but certainly accepted as an important movement and perspective in the making of public policy.<sup>9</sup> Feminists of many shades, most importantly

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at the same time and took them in as part of a continuum. Other important works that became part of the debate on gender history around that time are Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), which resonated strongly with Butler's own analysis in *Gender Trouble*; Denise Riley, "Am I That Name?" *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (New York, 1988); Sandra Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory," in Sandra Harding and Jean F. O'Barr, eds., *Sex and Scientific Inquiry* (Chicago, 1987), 283–302; and Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Calif., 1988). For more recent reexaminations of these debates, see Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 368–404; and Mary Hawkesworth, "Confounding Gender," *Signs* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 649–685.

<sup>9</sup> A great deal of scholarship on the subject has been published, most of it, however, scattered or "below the radar" of most historians of Eastern Europe or feminism. I hope that this incomplete list can serve as a good starting point for gaining a fuller view of this rich movement, even though it has largely been ignored in the broader historiography. See Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh, 2006); Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2003); Mills T. Kelly, "Feminism, Pragmatism or Both? Czech Radical Nationalism and the Woman Question," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 4 (2002): 537–552; Susan Zimmermann, "Reich, Nation, und Internationalismus: Konflikte und Kooperationen der Frauenbewegungen der Habsburgermonarchie," in Waltraud Heindl, Edit Király, and Alexandra Millner, eds., *Frauenbilder, feministische Praxis und nationales Bewusstsein in Österreich-Ungarn 1867–1918* (Tübingen, 2006), 48–102; Jitka Malecková, "Nationalizing Women and Engendering the Nation: The Czech National Movement," in Blom, Hagemann, and Hall, *Gendered Nations*, 293–310; Susan Zimmermann, "The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 87–117; Katherine David, "Czech Feminists and Nationalism in the Late Hapsburg Monarchy," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 26–45; Maria Bucur, "Calypso Botez: Gender Difference and the Limits of Pluralism in Interwar Romania," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas* 3 (2001): 63–78; Bucur, "In Praise of Wellborn Mothers: On Eugenics and Gender Roles in Interwar Romania," *East European Politics and Societies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 123–142; Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Emanciparea femeii române: Studiu și antologie de texte, Vol. II (1919–1948)* (Bucharest, 2004); Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc: Antologie de texte (1838–1929)* (Iași, 2002); Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 2006); Paraschiva Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România* (Bucharest, 1977); Ghizela Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România: Evoluția dreptului de vot în perioada interbelică* (Cluj, 2002); David F. Good, Margaret Grandner, and Mary Jo Maynes, eds., *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Providence, R.I., 1996); Martha Bochačevsky-Chomiak, "Socialism, Feminism and Nationalism: The First Stages of Women's Organisations in the Eastern Part of the Austrian Empire," in Tova Yedlin, ed., *Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York, 1980); Claire Nolte, "'Every Czech a Sokol!' Feminism and Nationalism in the Czech Sokol Movement," *Austrian History Yearbook* 21 (1985): 79–100; Krassimira Daskalova, "Women, Nationalism and Nation-State in Bulgaria (1800–1940s)," in Miroslav Jovanović and Slobodan Naumović, eds., *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century* (Belgrade, 2002), 15–38; Thomas A. Emmert, "Ženski Pokret: The Feminist Movement in Serbia in the 1920s," in Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (University Park, Pa., 1999), 33–50; Roxana Cheșcebec, "The 'Unholy Marriage' of Feminism with Nationalism in Interwar Romania: The Discourse of Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino," <http://www.women.it/cyberarchive/files/chescebec.htm> (accessed November 5, 2008); Indrė Karčiauskaitė, "For Women's Rights, Church and Fatherland: The Lithuanian Catholic Women's Organisation, 1908–1940," *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 128–152.

liberal and nationalist, participated in public political debates, ran for office, lobbied for women's political and civil rights, and wrote a great deal of activist literature. By contrast, left-wing women activists were not prominent in the broad spectrum of East European feminists.<sup>10</sup> A handful of women committed to communist ideology moved up through the ranks of the (mostly) illegal communist parties in Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> Overall, however, communism and social democracy as political movements remained relatively weak in this area, especially after the failed communist regime of Béla Kun in Hungary in 1919. Czechoslovakia constitutes an exception, as three socialist parties continued to receive recognition and support at the ballot box there during the interwar period. Czechoslovak left-wing feminists were indeed well represented, but they were part of a broader plurality that included staunch Catholic groups from Slovakia as well as center-right nationalists.<sup>12</sup>

After 1945, however, the communist regimes succeeded in destroying the institutional bases of feminist organizations, and in co-opting women as participants in these new governments' own enterprises, to the detriment of any critical progress toward closing the gap between the communist parties' rhetoric of gender equality and the reality that women inside communist regimes bore a double burden: a full workday on the job followed by a full workload at home.<sup>13</sup> Feminist voices continued to be heard, but only in a muted fashion. Unlike most male intellectual dissidents, who could articulate their critical position vis-à-vis the communist regime by summoning broadly accepted concepts of personal freedom, liberal moral values, or nationalism, women could not invoke the same legacies to speak about their gender-specific double burden. Communism had in fact brought women the kinds of political, civil, and economic rights that feminists had demanded in the interwar period. In a sense, the communist regime represented the fulfillment of many feminist dreams.

What communism did not do was to fundamentally question the labor division in the private sphere. East European feminists had generally embraced a maternalist view of their social identity and had demanded empowerment on the basis of gender complementarity.<sup>14</sup> Thus, once communist regimes offered women additional responsibilities, there was no room to argue for reduced duties in the home within the context of the local feminist discourses. Even in the Soviet Union, where more radical gender-role thinkers such as Aleksandra Kollontai had questioned the very notion of the gender division of familial roles in the early years of Zhenotdel, by the

<sup>10</sup> De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*.

<sup>11</sup> Marci Shore, "'Czysto Babski': A Woman's Friendship in a Man's Revolution," *East European Politics and Societies* 16, no. 3 (Winter 2002): 810–863; Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley, Calif., 2001); Andrea Pető, "Women's Life Stories: Feminist Genealogies in Hungary," in Jovanović and Naumović, *Gender Relations*, 211–217.

<sup>12</sup> Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 52–54.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (New York, 2003); Georgeta Nazarska, "The Bulgarian Association of University Women (1924–1950)," *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 153–175; Tatyana Kotzeva, "Re-Imagining Bulgarian Women: The Marxist Legacy and Women's Self-Identity," in Chris Corrin, ed., *Gender and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe* (London, 1999), 83–98; Andrea Pető, *Women in Hungarian Politics, 1945–1951* (New York, 2001). For a critical view of the double burden as something new under communism in the Balkans, see Maria Todorova, "Historical Tradition and Transformation in Bulgaria: Women's Issues or Feminist Issues?" *Journal of Women's History* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1994): 129–143.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh, 2002); Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*; Passmore, *Gender and the Right*.

1930s the party had come around to embracing the more traditional masculinist view of Stalin and Lenin, which placed women squarely in the home, as central to the moral upbringing of the new generation, with men acting only as their secondary partners.<sup>15</sup>

Thus women were put in a position of fundamental dependency on the communist state, without any tools to question the apparent boon they had received: they gained the power to be fully active in the economy, the right to vote, and access to unprecedented public services, from generous paid pre- and post-natal leaves to full-day state-funded kindergarten and birth control.<sup>16</sup> If the communist regime in fact provided women with the very rights and services that the most ambitious radical feminists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had dreamed of, how could the legacies of the pre-communist feminists offer any intellectual foundation for articulating a feminist dissident position inside the communist regime? Furthermore, there was little outside the communist world in the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s that engaged with the problem of this double burden in any useful way for women who actually lived under communism.

So there is little reason to wonder why, in the post-communist disarray after 1989, feminism initially appeared as a foreign import rather than a homegrown product, a vibrant legacy that had been curtailed and ultimately suppressed after 1945. The language favored by second-wave feminists, of struggle against patriarchal oppression and toward equality, of the need to mobilize socially and politically, rang hollow for people who had been schooled for several generations in the wooden double-speak of communist propaganda. Inside the one-party state, mobilization meant a form of political coercion rather than something that might reflect the interests and will of the people. This framework of authoritarian compulsion could not be quickly and easily erased from the mental landscape of most individuals living in the post-communist world.

In the two decades that have passed since 1989, however, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and other post-communist peoples have moved away from this knee-jerk reaction to encompass a broader array of attitudes: many are still avowed non- or anti-feminists, but a growing number of individuals, even if they have not accepted the label “feminist,” have at least embraced some important components of feminism.<sup>17</sup> Politicians, journalists, and social activists of all varieties have

<sup>15</sup> The Zhenotdel was the Women’s Department of the Russian Communist Party, initiated by Aleksandra Kolontai and Inessa Armand in 1919 and dissolved by Josef Stalin in 1930. Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Here there are some important exceptions, in particular the aggressively pro-natalist policies of the Ceaușescu regime in Romania from 1967 to 1989. See Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998).

<sup>17</sup> On some of the feminist directions in Eastern Europe since 1989, see Tanya Renne, ed., *Ana’s Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe* (Boulder, Colo., 1997); Nanette Funk, “The Fate of Feminism in Eastern Europe,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 2, 1994, B 1–2; Jirina Siklová, “McDonalds, Terminators, Coca Cola Ads and Feminism?” in Susana Trnka and Laura Busheikin, eds., *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women’s Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic* (Prague, 1993), 7–11; Mihaela Miroiu, “State Men, Market Women: The Effects of Left Conservatism on Gender Politics in Romanian Transition,” *Feminismo/s*, no. 3 (June 2004): 207–234; Adina Brădeanu, Otilia Dragomir, Daniela Roventă-Frumușani, and Romina Surugiu, comps., *Femei, cuvinte, și imagini: Perspective feministe* (Iași, 2002). See also the papers presented at the “Gender and Feminism under Post-Communism” Roundtable at Indiana University, Bloomington, in April 2005, <http://www.iub.edu/~reeiweb/events/2005/roundtables05.shtml> (accessed November 5, 2008).

begun to question the unequal economic power of women, their uneven access to investment resources, the feminization of underpaid and undervalued jobs, and the misogynist practices that often underlie “family values,” such as domestic abuse.

Yet few scholars have actually accepted and begun to utilize the theoretical framework offered by Scott in her 1986 essay. The impact of “Gender” has to be understood in this specific environment: the vigorous debate that took place around this essay in American academia would have been unimaginable in Eastern Europe. Instead, one has to measure change and engagement with the scholarly challenges proposed by Scott within this very inauspicious context.

In Eastern Europe today, feminism is still a matter of political and intellectual courage, and the costs of asserting such a position are far greater than anything that those of us in American academia can imagine, ranging from continuous public humiliation and uncensored slander to crude censorship and the loss of academic status.<sup>18</sup> Thus the scattered attempts to embrace Scott’s theoretical and implicit political (feminist) position should be appreciated more for their emergence as visible points in the scholarly landscape than for their impact on much older, established fields of historical inquiry.

One aspect of Scott’s essay that connected in a more widely resonant fashion with the agenda of East European scholars was its poststructuralist stance toward categories of knowledge. In the 1970s and 1980s, poststructuralism had found an enthusiastic audience among the East European intelligentsia. Slavoj Žižek and Yuri Lotman are only the most famous figures of a cohort of philosophers, semioticians, and literary and art critics who embraced the postmodern turn behind the iron curtain.<sup>19</sup> Theirs, however, was not a reaction against the academic Marxism of the New Left. Instead, postmodernism, with its anti-political stance and ironic distance from the burdens of everyday reality, offered a perfect intellectual pill for scholars who questioned every premise of their political and academic setup. Simply put, a sense of self-irony and the ability to question everything about the surrounding norms and structures were the only weapons available to intellectuals in the velvet prison. They were fundamentally dependent on the corrupt state to be able to make a living, and in fact they were dependent discursively as well, as Miglena Nikolchina has persuasively argued.<sup>20</sup> Their only means of sustaining some sense of integrity was to create an interior anti-politics of duplicitous irony, to emphasize the emptiness of all claims to authenticity, and to underscore the ways in which all individuals were in fact both victims and perpetrators of the communist regime of lies. Yet, although the poststructuralist theoretical concepts articulated by Scott resonated with intellectuals in Eastern Europe, the notion that gender itself was a category that needed

<sup>18</sup> Some of these trials and tribulations are vibrantly recorded in *Neprețuitele femei*, a collection of essays by the best-known feminist theorist and activist in Romania, Mihaela Miroiu (Iași, 2006). Similar humiliations have been the bitter pill served to many other feminists active in Poland, including Agnieszka Graff. See her *Świat bez kobiet: Pleć w polskim życiu publicznym* (Warsaw, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> See Miglena Nikolchina, “The Seminar: *Mode d’emploi*—Impure Spaces in the Light of Late Totalitarianism,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2002): 96–127, with a special explanatory note at 122 n. 7. This intellectual trend is also described vividly in Mihaela Miroiu, *R’Estul și vestul* (Iași, 2005). For some of the products of these intellectual poststructuralist debates in Eastern Europe, see Alexander Kiossef, ed., *Post-Theory, Games, and Discursive Resistance: The Bulgarian Case* (New York, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Nikolchina, “The Seminar.”

to be deconstructed as an essential step toward understanding how societies work did not generate much of an echo.

THE INITIAL IMPACT OF “GENDER” on the historiography of Eastern Europe was felt in the United States. Most historians of Eastern Europe in American academia did not notice or engage with it right away. Historians of Russia, a field with an established tradition of treating women as important subjects of historical analysis, and with a solid scholarship in social history, were the first to engage with the insights opened up by Scott’s essay.<sup>21</sup> In particular, historians such as Laura Engelstein, who embraced the postmodernist turn while keeping her feet steadily planted in more traditional political and legal history, began to show with impressive skill the usefulness of employing gender analysis when examining questions such as the modernization of the Russian tsarist legal system.<sup>22</sup> Both gender historians and other historians of the late tsarist regime found Engelstein’s approach enlightening and worth pursuing further.

By contrast, established historians of Eastern Europe remained more inflexible toward Scott’s theoretical propositions. In fact, part of the problem was that most historiography of Eastern Europe continued to be heavily engaged with questions of political history, diplomatic history, and intellectual history. Social history was still a weak area of development.<sup>23</sup> But anthropologists and sociologists were reading her work, as well as scholarship by other gender scholars, and they began to outline some of the basic questions connected with the history of communism in relation to gender roles and nationalism, for instance. In a pioneering essay published in 1994, Katherine Verdery offered a framework for understanding the central role of gender in the construction of nationalist discourses that attempted to legitimate late communist rule. Placing gender front and center as an essential category for understanding political ideology, and communist rule in particular, her essay became a benchmark for historians and other scholars of gender under communism.<sup>24</sup> Alas, many historians of politics under communism were less forthcoming in incorporating her insights.<sup>25</sup>

In the early to mid-1990s, however, graduate students who studied the history of

<sup>21</sup> I was reminded of the importance of such vigorous social history scholarship as a precursor for the development of gender history in a conversation with Krassimira Daskalova, to whom I am grateful for her observations about this important point. For examples of the early scholarship on women’s history and the shift to a gender perspective of historical analysis, see Richard Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, N.J., 1978); Linda Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia, 1900–1917* (London, 1984); Barbara Engel, “Engendering Russia’s History: Women in Post-Emancipation Russia and the Soviet Union,” *Slavic Review* 51, no. 2 (1992): 309–321; Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989); Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992).

<sup>23</sup> In 1992, a dedicated issue of the *AHR* offered a good picture of the state of the scholarship in and on Eastern Europe around the time of the publication of Scott’s article. “Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe,” *American Historical Review* 97, no. 4 (October 1992): 1011–1117.

<sup>24</sup> Katherine Verdery, “From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe,” in Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, N.J., 1996).

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian*



Eastern Europe became more aware of Scott's impact on the historiography of modern Europe in general, as well as her impact on other scholars of Eastern Europe. Verdery's work gave my generation wings, and hope that we could somehow enact a major shift in the historiography of Eastern Europe, which at that time was still dominated by old-fashioned analyses of party politics and diplomatic relations. Our mentors in East European history were not familiar with Scott, or even with the discourses in women's history that she was critiquing. And those who worked on gender history in other fields, from medieval Europe to the United States, were no longer pursuing the research agenda of the 1970s and 1980s, which had sought to give women greater visibility in social history. Within this context, scholars of my generation decided that we would simply jump over the "making women visible" stage, and instead shake up the existing historiography at the core, using the theoretical bases provided by Scott and the important addenda offered by Verdery and a few other prominent scholars of Eastern Europe, such as Susan Gal and Gail Kligman.<sup>26</sup>

To our great fortune, this impetus for breaking with the past of traditional East European historiography in the United States coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall. A new generation now had the chance to enter the East European archives and libraries without the insurmountable obstacles that scholars had faced before 1989.<sup>27</sup> Yet greater access to such repositories remained a privilege, one that many of my colleagues from Eastern Europe did not enjoy. Thus, even as I was doing research in Romania, I saw myself becoming a symbol not of greater access to information and of freedom to communicate with colleagues there, but rather of the cocky Western imperial presence, now lording over precious resources. Research on gender was thus initially confined to non-East European historians because of the continuing disparity in access to archives.

Still, these newfound sources took historical research on Eastern Europe in an entirely new direction, with gender as a central component. From analyses of Muslim identity and social policies of the communist regimes to the relationship between gender identities and nationalist ideology in how Poles represented their story of exile in Russia during World War II, historians who wrote dissertations and soon thereafter published books on East European gender topics have opened up new areas for scholarship.<sup>28</sup> In the American context, these efforts have generated a community that helps to sustain those individual scholars and younger ones, even if most historians of Eastern Europe remain uninterested in such topics. The story, there-

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*Communism* (Berkeley, Calif., 2003); and Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Kligman, *Politics of Duplicity*; Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism* (Princeton, N.J., 2000).

<sup>27</sup> To be sure, the post-communist archives are still in a terrible mess, both in terms of resources for preservation and cataloguing, and often also in terms of the still-thriving political and personal clientelism. But at least the "secret" catalogues were made public, and most scholars who wish to do research on any topic are given the courtesy of being allowed inside these institutions.

<sup>28</sup> Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham, N.C., 2005); Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2004); Katherine Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Pittsburgh, 2002); Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*; Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington, Ind., 2006).

fore, is still one of islands in an archipelago; however, they are better linked now than they were a decade ago. And since the beginning of the twenty-first century, historians in Eastern Europe have started to participate in dialogue with this scholarship on gender in a voice of their own.

FOR THE FIRST POST-COMMUNIST DECADE, historians from Eastern Europe generally became interested in gender history after traveling abroad and getting acquainted with foreign scholarship. But Scott's essay was not at the forefront of their acquisitions and interests. In fact, the first translations of "Gender" came out in the 2000s, after many other recent works of historical scholarship had been translated into East European languages.<sup>29</sup> Gender studies itself was founded as an academic discipline in 1994, in a pioneering gesture by the unorthodox philanthropist George Soros at Central European University (CEU), the institution he had recently established in Budapest.<sup>30</sup> The creation of the gender studies program at CEU was contentious at the time, as few established academics in Hungary could fathom the notion of gender studies as an actual academic discipline.<sup>31</sup> In addition, there were only a handful of local scholars with the credentials to work in this area.<sup>32</sup> But Soros embraced the notion that gender studies was important for fostering a more democratic academia and civil society in post-communist Eastern Europe. It is important to underline, however, that this program was separate from the history department, and that historical scholarship was not a strength of the gender studies department in its first years, despite Scott's presence among a group of Western gender studies scholars who were working with the administration to make some important hires in this direction.<sup>33</sup>

From Minsk to Zagreb, a number of graduate programs in gender studies have sprung up since 1994, but the presence of historians and historical scholarship in their curriculum is often not central.<sup>34</sup> CEU itself, after several internal overhauls

<sup>29</sup> The Bulgarian and Hungarian translations came out in 2005 and 2001, respectively. Krassimira Daskalova, personal communication.

<sup>30</sup> Around the same time, efforts were under way in other post-communist countries, from Russia to Bulgaria, to create academic units focused on gender studies. Central European University was, however, the most generously funded one, and received greater institutional support back then. It continues to be a leader in the region in terms of its Ph.D. program (it was the first university in Eastern Europe to grant doctoral degrees in gender studies, rather than Ph.D. concentrations or M.A. degrees), its funding for graduate students in this area, and the interdisciplinary breadth of its permanent faculty.

<sup>31</sup> For a brief overview of the first four years of this program, which culminated in a crisis in 2000, see Laura Secor, "Gender Trouble: Who Is Afraid of Gender Studies in Eastern Europe?" *Lingua Franca* 11, no. 4 (July–August 2001): 44–53, as well as Scott, "Fictitious Unities."

<sup>32</sup> Credentials were important for this program, more so than for established disciplines such as history. In that area, people without doctoral degrees or relevant scholarly publications were able to rise in the hierarchy of Central European University for years to come. One such case has recently created a great scandal in Budapest. The "outing" of Sorin Antohi as a historian who had lied about his Ph.D. in history is a relevant case in point. See George Damian, "Falsul doctor Sorin Antohi," *Ziua*, October 21, 2006, <http://www.ziua.ro/display.php?data=2006-10-21&id=209561> (accessed November 5, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> The first head of the gender studies department was Miglena Nikolchina, an outstanding post-modernist literary critic. See her "The Seminar"; *Chovekît-Utopia* (Sofia, 1992); *Smisîl i maitsebiîstvo: Prochît na Virdjinia Ulf prez Iulia Krîsteva* (Sofia, 1997); and *Rodena ot glavata: Fabuli i siuzheti v zhenskata literaturna istoriia* (Sofia, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> "A Short Guide to Gender Studies and Women's Studies in South Eastern Europe," in Jovanović and Naumović, *Gender Relations*, 371–380.

in the gender studies department, is currently the only program to offer a Ph.D. in gender studies, as well as a variety of graduate courses in gender history. The number of senior scholars teaching history in that program has grown to three permanent professors. And as a result, a new generation of gender historians, trained in a multidisciplinary program but with a specific interest in historical research, is now emerging in Eastern Europe.<sup>35</sup> In addition, students in the history department who are interested in gender topics often work closely with mentors in gender studies.<sup>36</sup> These young scholars hail from Lithuania to Bulgaria, and use Scott's theoretical insights as an integral component of their conceptualization of gender history.

Although historians of gender are often insular in their institutional attempts to secure recognition for gender studies at home, they have begun to collaborate to some degree, in particular engaging in efforts that cut across the East-West divide.<sup>37</sup> In one early such undertaking, in 1998 the CEU gender studies program brought a large group of historians of women and gender from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe together with Western (especially American and British) scholars in Minsk. It was the first time such a gathering had been held, and the intense three-day conversation resulted in several volumes, research projects, and other collaborative publication endeavors. Among them is a volume based on the conference, published, very significantly, in Russian, which constitutes an important signpost for the local academic communities in assessing the seriousness with which historians in Eastern Europe and elsewhere take gender and women's history.<sup>38</sup>

Among the other pioneering collaborative efforts in this area have been the publication of *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, and the yearbook *Aspasia*, which in part aims to take advantage of the insights opened up by the *Biographical Dictionary* and provide an arena for pursuing more research on women's and gender history.<sup>39</sup> These two endeavors are also linked in their aim to connect scholars of Central, Eastern, and Southeast Europe (inclusive of Russia) who live in the area with those

<sup>35</sup> Among the projects being completed by Ph.D. students in gender studies with an interest in history are Salome Asatiani, "Impaired Autarkies, Cultural Imports, and Reconfigured Gender: Soviet Georgia and Francoist Spain, 1960s–1970s"; Iwona Fedrau, "Securing State Security: Gender Regimes and the Communist Security Apparatus in Poland (1944–1982)"; Dominika Gruzziel, "Women's Informal and Formal Organizations: A Gender Analysis of the Polish Partitions, 1863–1914"; Alexandre de Kappaun, "Gender in the Making of the Brazilian Social Contract: Freemasonry and Feminism in Brazil, 1880–1916"; Raluca Maria Popa, "Female Comrades, Male States? Women's Political Organizations and State-Driven Emancipation in State Socialist Hungary and Romania, 1960–1990"; Dusica Ristivojević, "Chinese and Western Women in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century China: Motives, Actions, Relations"; Eszter Varsa, "Gender, Ethnicity/'Race,' Class and the Institution of Residential Care in Hungary, 1945–1985"; and Tamar Sabedashvili, "Domestic Violence in Georgia (1991–2008)." Interestingly, and maybe not surprisingly, only some of these projects focus on Eastern Europe.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Roxana Cheșchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania (approx 1890–1940s): Nationalism and Internationalism in Romanian Projects for Women's Emancipation" (Ph.D. diss., Central European University, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Ramet, *Gender Politics*; Corrin, *Gender and Identity*; Jovanović and Naumović, *Gender Relations*.

<sup>38</sup> Elena Gapova, Al'mira Usmanova, and Andrea Petó, eds., *Gendernye istorii Vostochnoi Evropei* (Minsk, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> *Aspasia* 1 (2007) is entirely dedicated to analyses of East European feminisms, primarily from a historical perspective, but also looking toward feminism during the communist and post-communist periods. See especially the forum "Is 'Communist Feminism' a *Contradictio in Terminis*?" (197–246). The next two issues focused, respectively, on "women's writing" and "the gender of everyday life." The fourth issue will have a section dedicated to "gender, the body, and sexuality."

who work on this area elsewhere in the world. Contributions to the *Dictionary* and to the first issue of *Aspasia* include articles by scholars from Russia and Lithuania all the way south to Turkey, as well as historians from the United States.

These efforts are also connected through their broad definition of what constitutes good scholarship on women's and gender history. This is a point on which there may be some contention with scholars who have moved decidedly in the direction of gender history. My own work as an editor of *Aspasia* has been directly connected with understanding women's history through gender analysis, and in my own scholarship I have offered avenues for pursuing an interest in women's past within this theoretical context.<sup>40</sup> But the paucity of interest in gender history and of any scholarship that regards women as significant subjects of historical inquiry makes it imperative to provide space for many colors of scholarship that would address this gap. Gender historians in American academia might be quick to dismiss some of the current projects in Eastern Europe as lacking self-reflexivity and as overly focused on "making women visible." They might view this research as insufficiently theoretical in problematizing gender roles. While such criticisms are accurate in the context of Western academia, they are a luxury that East European historians cannot afford. It seems more advantageous to render publicly transparent divergent understandings of what it means to interrogate the constructedness of women's gender roles as a site for debate and learning.

In this transitional period of growth in the scholarship on gender history, there are some voices, especially those of younger historians, that offer hope for the future of this field. In a doctoral thesis defended at CEU on liberalism in Romania during the nineteenth century, Constantin Iordachi offered an excellent refutation of the continuing myths about the exclusively positive legacies of liberalism in Eastern Europe.<sup>41</sup> Iordachi's thesis is remarkable for his insistence on not confining his argument to the better-known and more easily accepted debate about Romanian antisemitism as a force that fundamentally altered the potentially progressive role of liberalism.<sup>42</sup> Instead, he broadened his analysis to examine how regionalist loyalties and gender differences were treated in liberal doctrine and practice. With this shift, he suggested both that Romanian liberalism was not as exceptional as others have hinted with their exclusive focus on the prevalence of antisemitism in Romania, and also that historical analysis of gender roles is essential if we are to properly understand the complexity of the political ideologies and practices of the nineteenth century. In fact, gender analysis is only one aspect of Iordachi's broad critique of political institutions and ideologies. His analysis has been accompanied by other efforts to

<sup>40</sup> See Wingfield and Bucur, *Gender and War*; Maria Bucur, "Between the Mother of the Wounded and the Virgin from Jiu: Romanian Women and the Gender of Heroism during the Great War," *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 30–56.

<sup>41</sup> See especially Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866–1918," *European Review of History* 8, no. 2 (2001): 157–186. His Ph.D. thesis, "From the 'Right of the Natives' to 'Constitutional Nationalism': The Making of Romanian Citizenship, 1817–1919," is coming out in book form as *The Making of Nation-State Citizenship in Southeastern Europe: The Case of Romania, 1817–1919* (forthcoming from Central European University Press).

<sup>42</sup> William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth-Century Romania* (New York, 1991); Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence* (Lafayette, Ind., 1995).

revisit the major ideological offerings of modern politics in Eastern Europe, as well as the very criteria by which such movements are evaluated by historians.<sup>43</sup>

GENDER HISTORY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PLAY a much greater role in East European historiography, as we can see by looking at an important theme in post-communist historiography that is illustrative both of current weaknesses and of the possibilities for rendering gender history more central to this scholarship. Dissent under communism is one of the themes of major interest in historical research where scholars have retained a significant blind spot toward gender. This budding historiography, focusing on well-known figures such as Václav Havel, Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik, and a few other prominent male intellectuals, has generally avoided any engagement with basic assumptions about the gendered aspects of what can be regarded as dissent under communism.<sup>44</sup> By ignoring gender as an important consideration in their analysis, scholars have missed significant elements of how the intelligentsia constituted itself as an arbiter of intellectual and moral integrity.<sup>45</sup> An article by Miglena Nikolchina offers some observations on this matter, suggesting that women were important, if forgotten, participants in the intellectual dissident groups of the 1980s, and critiquing the implicit disregard after 1989 for women's voices in intellectual salons.<sup>46</sup> Although Nikolchina's essay is rich in its thick description of intellectual life under "late totalitarianism," it merely opens up an analytical space in which we can begin asking why, with all this sophistication, gender has not been placed at the same level of scrutiny and interest as other subjects of literary analysis that have taken hold of the post-communist intelligentsia.

Most historians even continue to ignore the fundamental gendered aspects of the Polish mass movement Solidarity, which in fact could do much to enrich our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, the attraction and ultimate victory of this powerful dissident movement. Only two attempts, a rather unsuccessful one by Shana Penn and a much more effective, albeit brief, one by Padraic Kenney, have interrogated the gender-blindness of other scholars.<sup>47</sup> Penn simply wishes to make women visible and assign them a specific significance in the movement according to her own understanding of feminism. Only fragments of the broader religious, social, and political framework are rendered visible in her analysis, making it impossible to

<sup>43</sup> See also Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu, eds., *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești* (Iași, 2002); Passmore, *Women and the Radical Right*, especially the essays on Poland, Hungary, and Romania.

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York, 1992); John Keane, ed., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y., 1985); Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (New York, 2000); Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism* (New York, 1987); Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest, 2003); Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> See Maria Bucur, "Gendering Dissent: Of Bodies and Minds, Survival and Opposition under Communism," in Angela Brintlinger and Natasha Kolchevska, eds., *Beyond Little Vera: Women's Bodies, Women's Welfare in Russia and Central/Eastern Europe* (Bloomington, Ind., 2008), 9–28.

<sup>46</sup> Nikolchina, "The Seminar."

<sup>47</sup> Shana Penn, *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2005); Padraic Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 399–425.

truly understand gender roles in Poland in their proper context. She helps us see the misogynist discourse central to the Solidarity movement, but not to understand how this movement could be so popular and effective among hundreds of thousands of women and men. Kenney's article does just the opposite: it questions implicit assumptions about what political (and anti-political) activism meant in Poland in 1980 in terms of the broader intellectual and social environment, enabling readers to better understand the limited options that individual actors had in negotiating gender roles. His study gives us a better understanding of why men and women supported Solidarity, and fundamentally, how specific gender practices helped or hindered their cause. Alas, the contributions made by Penn and Kenney have generally not been fully incorporated into the historiography on Solidarity and dissent under communism as central aspects of these phenomena, but instead remain footnotes meant to acknowledge (yet effectively avoid engaging with) the fundamental genderedness of political and social life.

DESPITE SUCH SIGNS OF HOW LIMITED the impact of gender analysis has been on the historiography of Eastern Europe at large, Scott's essay may yet become a more important reference point in Eastern Europe because of the growth of cultural feminism in this area. Whereas feminism was deemed an exotic foreign import in the 1990s, the emergence of a definite feminist sensibility can be seen in the realm of popular culture in post-communist Eastern Europe. Public intellectuals (although seldom historians), artists, and popular talk-show personalities are becoming more interested in a women's liberation discourse, and with that, the crass misogyny of the popular entertainment discourse has been called into question. It is hard to figure out why, alongside the popularity of syrupy South American soap operas, there is also a growing feisty feminist presence among a broad spectrum of the female population. The reason may simply be that television is now the primary medium of public entertainment accessible to most people, regardless of their location, education, and income. Private television stations and cable companies have taken off and inundated every home, with options from home improvement shows to *Oprah*-like talk shows. Since the fall of communism, most East Europeans have become television junkies.

Given the popularity of cable stations and of live shows in general, producers have looked around for new models to attract and retain large audiences. Men tend to gravitate toward sports broadcasts, but in many households there are two television sets, and women will spend a few hours watching their own shows late at night. Given this ready market, a number of women talk-show hosts have created their own version of the genre branded by Oprah Winfrey. Many Romanians may have no idea who Oprah is, but more than a million viewers (out of a population of 20 million) tune in every night at ten to watch "Three Times a Woman," a talk show that focuses on women's issues and features not only famous actresses and entertainers, but also women politicians and feminist scholars.<sup>48</sup> Whether this is a profound change or

<sup>48</sup> I had the pleasure of participating in such a show, where the topic of debate was prostitution, and where virtually everyone on the panel, including a journalist, a law enforcer, a social democrat member of parliament, and the most important gender theorist in Romania, articulated sophisticated positions

merely a trend is less important here than the notion that a space for articulating feminist positions has emerged in the mainstream media and will likely continue to grow, given its large built-in audience.

Historians, unfortunately, have not been at the forefront of this shift. They maintain a more elitist and misogynist position (be they men or women) on gender-related questions. The predominant questions of historical scholarship are still those pertaining to nationalism, to the relations of small peoples and states with the Great European powers, and to the contributions of East Europeans to European civilization at large. Somehow, within these broad parameters, most historians have yet to question some important points: How is nationalism gendered in both ideological and practical ways, despite Verdery's excellent challenge more than a decade ago? What is the scholarly significance of the masculinist assumptions about what counts as relations across borders and ethnicities, with feminist international associations cast as narrowly "women's" issues? What are the blind spots with respect to how European civilization is defined, with attitudes toward gender roles cast as secondary to the "great men" masterpiece narrative?

Yet in this larger landscape of scholarship, the work of those interested in gender analysis is becoming more visible and gaining an audience. I do not envision any great breakthroughs over the next few years in how the majority of historians from Eastern Europe view gender as a category of historical analysis. But I am certain that gender historians from Eastern Europe will gain a greater appreciation for each other's work and will find wider audiences for their perspective on the past among the younger generation of feminist students and future scholars. That kind of intellectual community will hopefully sustain this budding scholarship and encourage the building of stronger bridges between these disparate islands.

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that criticized the role of big media in reproducing gender-passive roles for young women, and also drew attention to the fundamental underlying problem in our discussion—the disproportionate poverty of young women. While most of the other panelists shied away from the notion of decriminalizing prostitution, everyone agreed that responsibility for women's choice to pursue a livelihood this way is a complicated matter that needs to be connected not only to the victims themselves, but more importantly to the fundamental truth that women are generally mistreated.

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