

sensorium of America is exchanged for a Warhol blowup, a Kruger installation, or Mapplethorpe's naked bodies. 'Magical realism' after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world. Amidst these exorbitant images of the nation-space in its transnational dimension there are those who have not yet found their nation: amongst them the Palestinians and the Black South Africans. It is our loss that in making this book we were unable to add their voices to ours. Their persistent questions remain to remind us, in some form or measure, of what must be true for the rest of us too: 'When did we become "a people"? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? What do these big questions have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others?'

[Introduction' to Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *The Nation and Narration* (Routledge: London, 1990), 1-7.]

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48 Women and the Nation-State

Women's link to the state is complex. On the one hand, they are acted upon as members of collectivities, institutions or groupings, and as participants in the social forces that give the state its given political projects in any particular social and historical context. On the other hand, they are a special focus of state concerns as a social category with a specific role (particularly human reproduction). It is important to note, however, that these roles cannot be understood in relation to the state reproducing itself, or that any absolute control by the state would be achievable, given women's incorporation at a number of other social levels within civil society and in the economy.

A number of attempts¹ to conceptualise the link between women and the state have focused on the central dimension of citizenship and how, far from being gender-neutral, it constructs men and women differently. Thus the feminist and socialist feminist critique of the state and state theorisation has advanced from one which points to the way the state *treats* women unequally in relation to men. There now exists a theoretical critique of the way the very project of the welfare state itself has constituted the 'state subject' in a gendered way, that is as essentially male in its capacities and needs. However, different forms of the state and different states even within the same form, involve the positing of a different constituency for 'citizenship'. The notion of citizenship focuses on the way the *state* acts upon the *individual* and does not address the problem of the way in which the state itself forms its political project. Therefore it cannot on its own attend to the social forces and movements that are hegemonic within the state. This applies also to the state's relationship to women. 'Citizenship', on its own, does not encapsulate adequ-

ately the relations of control and negotiation that take place in a number of different arenas of social life.

When we come to discuss the ways women affect and are affected by national and ethnic processes within civil society, and the ways these relate to the state, it is important to remember that there is no unitary category of women which can be unproblematically conceived as the focus of ethnic, national or state policies and discourses. Women are divided along class, ethnic and life-cycle lines and in most societies different strategies are directed at different groups of women. This is the case both from within the ethnic collectivity and from the state, whose boundaries virtually always contain a number of ethnicities.

While we have argued against the links between women, the state and ethnic/national processes taking any necessary form we can nevertheless locate five major (although not exclusive) ways in which women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes and in relation to state practices. These are:

- (a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
- (b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
- (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;
- (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;
- (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.

Different historical contexts will construct these roles not only in different ways but also the centrality of these roles will differ.

Before giving a further explication of the above categories, a word of caution is necessary in relation to the use of the term 'reproduction'. We consider this concept as problematic on more than one ground. First of all, its use in the literature includes many and indeed inconsistent meanings, from a definition of women's biological role to explanations of the existence of social systems over time.²

Even more importantly, the term 'reproduction' has been criticised as being tautological on the one hand, often implicitly assuming that 'reproduction' takes place, and static on the other hand, therefore unable to explain growth, decline and transformation processes (women act as both maintainers and modifiers of social processes). By retaining the term 'reproduction', however, in the depiction of some of the then central roles women play we wished to locate our work in relation to the literature which deals with human and social reproduction. Feminist literature on 'reproduction' has dealt with biological reproduction, the reproduction of labour power or state citizenship, but has generally failed to consider the reproduction of national, ethnical and racial categories.³

We shall now describe in more detail the range of policies and discourses which can be included in each of the five categories noted earlier.

(a) Various forms of population control are the most obvious policies which relate to women as biological reproducers of members of collectivities. The fear of being 'swamped' by different racial or ethnic groups has given rise to both individual state and interstate policies which are aimed at limiting the physical numbers of members of groups that are defined as 'undesirable'. One form these take is represented most clearly in immigration controls. More extreme measures are the physical expulsion of particular groups and even actual extermination of them (e.g. Jews and gypsies in Nazi Germany). A further strategy is to limit the number of people born within specific ethnic groups by controlling the reproductive capacity and activity of women. These range from forced sterilisation to the massive mobilisation of birth control campaigns. The other facet of such a concern is the active encouragement of population growth of the 'right kind', i.e. of the ethnic group dominant in the state apparatus. Calls for a 'White Australia' immigration policy or Jewish 'return' to Israel are supplemented at times of slack immigration or national crisis with active calls for women to bear more children so that no 'demographic holocaust' will take place. This encouragement is very often a question of using national and religious discourses about the duty of women to produce more children. (A popular Palestinian saying in Israel for example boasts that 'The Israelis beat us at the borders but we beat them in the bedrooms'.) However, in many cases, rather than relying on ideological mobilisation, the state establishes child benefit systems and other maternal benefits such as loans to this purpose. (The Beveridge Report for example cited fear for the fate of the 'British race' as the major reason for establishing child benefits in Britain.)

(b) Women are controlled not only by being encouraged or discouraged from having children who will become members of the various ethnic groups within the state. They are also controlled in terms of the 'proper' way in which they should have them—i.e. in ways which will reproduce the boundaries of the symbolic identity of their group or that of their husbands. In some cases (as until recently in South Africa) women are not allowed to have sexual relations with men of other groups. This particularly is the case for dominant-group women. Legal marriage is generally a condition if the child is to be recognised as a member of the group and very often religious and social traditions dictate who can marry whom so that the character as well as the boundaries of the group can be maintained from one generation to the other. In Israel, for example, it is the mother who determines whether or not the child will be considered Jewish. But if the mother is already married (or even divorced, but only by civil rather than by religious law) to another man, that child will be an outcast and not allowed to marry another Jew. In Egypt, on the other hand, a child born to a Muslim woman and a Copt Christian man will have no legal status.

(c) The role of women as ideological reproducers is very often related to women being seen as the 'cultural carriers' of the ethnic group. Women are the main socialisers of small children but in the case of ethnic minorities they are often less assimilated socially and linguistically within the wider society. They may be required to transmit the rich heritage of ethnic symbols and ways of life to the other members of the ethnic group, especially the young.

(d) Women do not only teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups. Very often they constitute their actual symbolic figuration. The nation as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who lost her sons in battle is a frequent part of the particular nationalist discourse in national liberation struggles or other forms of national conflicts when men are called to fight 'for the sake of our women and children' or to 'defend their honour'. Often the distinction between one ethnic group and another is constituted centrally by the sexual behaviour of women. For example a 'true' Sikh or Cypriot girl should behave in sexually appropriate ways. If she does not then neither her children nor herself may be considered part of the community.⁴

(e) Finally, and probably the category that requires least explication is the role that women have come to play in national and ethnic struggles. Women's role in national liberation struggles, in guerilla warfare or in the military has varied, but generally they are seen to be in a supportive and nurturing relation to men even where they have taken most risks.⁵ In addition, the way in which national liberation struggles have articulated issues concerning gender divisions and women's liberation is a consideration here.

The explication of some of the central roles that women play in relation to national and ethnic processes must bear in mind three important elements. The first relates to the link between national ethnic processes and the state. We have noted already that the relationship between collectivities and the state is complex and will vary in different historical and social contexts. Whilst only rarely exclusively so, customary and religious norms and legislation, which usually construct women as primarily biological reproducers, will often be incorporated and reinforced by state legislation, although contradictions can exist also between state and religious legislation. Thus the sphere of 'civil society' and the sphere of the 'state' can link hands in the construction of women in some ways although in others they might be in conflict. In addition, the political projects of the state are often the outcome of tensions and conflicts within civil society and are carried by social classes or other social forces.⁶ In addition, the state will often identify and specify those groupings or social relations that it can legislate on but which it delineates as private and therefore essentially as an individual matter of choice or liberty in its specifics. Such is the case in relation to the family, for example. When we look at the role of women as markers of collective boundaries and differences and also as participants in

national, political and economic struggles we often find a contradiction—women are constituted through the state but are also often actively engaged in countering state processes.

Secondly, the central role that women play should not lead us to the fallacy that women are attended to either only as women (i.e. in their 'difference' from men) or that all women, irrespective of class, age or family situation are attended to in the same way. Often there may indeed be tension between, on the one hand, treating women as 'different', say in certain of their capacities or potentialities, and treating them 'equally' in others (e.g. as workers). Also an 'equal' treatment by the state in any number of capacities will not necessarily lead to the destruction of a sexual division of labour in society more generally. Notions of what are specifically women's needs or duties often reassert themselves in very traditional ways even in revolutionary societies. This clearly requires the much wider discussion of gender relations. There is no space here to review some of the central positions taken in this regard but we argue elsewhere (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1983) that gender divisions are irreducible to class or other divisions. Clearly, for the purpose of our argument here it is important to note that the state does not exclusively construct gender divisions nor can they be seen only in the context of any specific state mechanisms at any historical moment as they relate to the whole area of gender 'differentiation'.

In addition, we find it vitally important to emphasise that the roles that women play are not merely imposed upon them. Women actively participate in the process of reproducing and modifying their roles as well as being actively involved in controlling other women.

['Introduction' to F. Anthias and N. Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Woman—Nation—State* (Macmillan: London, 1989), 6–11.]

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49 Europeanness: A New Cultural Battlefield?

The nation-state is a political configuration of modernity. But modernity is a curious condition, for in some respects it is characterised by flux and impermanence, what Baudelaire in his classic formulation identified as 'the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent'.¹ It is this aspect of modernity that has been emphasised in the recent vogue for 'postmodernity', whose proponents have been apt to think that the old collectivities may no longer confer identities that command special attention.

So, for instance, David Harvey² has argued that the present phase of capital accumulation results in a 'reterritorialisation' of social power which is part of the spatio-temporal disruption of an earlier social order. These globalising or universalising tendencies in contemporary capitalism, and the growth of post-

Fordist 'flexible accumulation' have placed 'a strong emphasis upon the potential connection between place and social identity'. Socialist, working class, racial and other groups opposing the reshaping of the world by capitalism find it easier to organise in given places but not where it counts—over space (i.e. globally). Such 'regional resistances' are inadequate to the task of creating alternative structures, although by way of interpreting 'a partially illusory past it becomes possible to signify something of a local identity and perhaps to do it profitably' (through, for instance, the heritage business). This offers a very slender basis for the construction of collective identities and, on this analysis, the nation-state does not even figure as a relevant framework.

Other theories of postmodernity have quite explicitly argued for the obsolescence of the nation-state and heralded this as opening up potential new spaces of tolerance for the 'stranger'.³ Even on this analysis, however, the search for community goes on. The contemporary quest for shelter from the chill winds of ontological insecurity, of contingency, it has been argued, results in what Michel Maffesoli⁴ has called 'neo-tribalism'. Such tribes, we are told, are formed 'as concepts rather than integrated social bodies—by the multitude of individual acts of self-identification. Such agencies as might from time to time emerge to hold the faithful together have limited executive power and little control over cooptation and banishment'.⁵

Such a view leads to the temptation to see national identity as on all fours with other forms of group identity. It is precisely this that has lately been encapsulated in the slogan of 'neo-tribalism'. In its most popular variants this, in some respects, acute perception of new forms of affiliation has degenerated into seeing all collectivities as choosable life-styles or sub-cultures.

In a neo-tribal world, on this account, if we don't like the company, we can opt out. Nothing like the cohesive tribes of old. While this might well account for many of the vagaries of everyday life in the advanced capitalist world, it does not give us much purchase upon what we are presently witnessing; namely 'the rebirth of history' in the former Soviet bloc and also in parts of the west (or perhaps, now, the centre)—the reunification of Germany being the most dramatic case in point.

In fact, some forms of collective identity are much more potent (and potentially stable) than others as Alberto Melucci⁶ has argued. He observes that 'ethno-national mobilisation' understood as 'the formation, maintenance and alteration through time of a self-reflexive identity' arises from the contradictory realities of 'post-industrial democracies' in which there are both pressures to integrate and a need for identity-building. Like Bauman, Melucci argues that the nation-state system is exhausted, with decision-making moving to the global and local levels. However, Melucci sees ethnic identities as particularly powerful expressions of symbolic self-assertion, although as by no means reducible to a single form: for instance, they may express the desire within a given community to be recognised as legitimately different; alternatively they