EDITORIAL

It is a sombrely appropriate time to be considering the issue of nationalism, with the bloody disintegration of a once-stable, multi-national Yugoslavia. As we go to press, we hear terrible stories of the systematic rape of Muslim women in Bosnia, involving not only physical violation, but forcible impregnation. This is the most grotesque reminder of how, fundamentally, nationalism is gendered – women's bodies are the boundary of the nation, and the bearers of its future.

This issue of *Feminist Review* is not so much about the history of nationalist movements (nor their political outcomes) as about national ideologies, i.e. the cultural resources that nationalisms bring to the creation of a common identity. All national ideologies are gendered: most commonly, women are the *symbol* of the nation, men its *agents*, regardless of the role women actually play in the movement. Variants of the theme run through almost all the articles here, although they describe very different nationalist movements – in Iran, India, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and imperial Britain.

Suruchi Thapar describes how this process worked in India: Hindu female icons were used to represent the nation as passively feminine (toning down the warlike aspects of some, like Kali, a symbol for the more oppositional women's groups). She gives an account of the construction of ideas about femininity and womanhood in pre-independence India, the crucial ways in which they structured liberation ideologies, and also how they circumscribed the role of women in the nationalist movement.

Catherine Nash illustrates how – in representations of the landscape of the West of Ireland in the early twentieth century – the nation's space (the land) is feminized, against the 'masculine' colonial power. In opposition, she places the work of Kathy Prendergast, contemporary Irish artist, who – reworking the trope 'landscape/woman' – uses the metaphor of 'mapping' to expose both the colonial appropriation of land and male control of the female body. Máighrhead Medbh, in 'Easter 1991', subverts the traditional image of 'Eire' as long-suffering mother, awaiting rescue through the action of her loving sons. Medbh's 'Ireland'

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is sick – yes, sickened as much by her own men as by the colonial invader – but she is active, and impatient.

Anne McClintock examines the gender-blindness of some of the standard academic writings on nationalism. She explores several potent metaphors of woman/family/nation, with (she demonstrates) long historical roots. The nation as family, she argues, is a figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a (presumed) unity of interests. In this light, she compares Afrikaaner and ANC nationalisms.

Ann Curthoys describes recent attempts to forge a more inclusive, multicultural Australian identity, in reaction to the strong critical voice of Aboriginal men and women, and the challenge that they present to republican as well as to more traditional ideals of nationhood. Changing the focus from 'nation' to 'state', she then argues that the relationship between contemporary feminists and Australian state institutions has been a productive one; she defends the notion of 'citizenship' against its feminist critics.

Nahid Yeganeh traces the different implications for women of the secular, 'modernizing' nationalist movement, and the more recent Islamicization of the state, in Iran. She explores the inconsistencies of the latter project, in a modern state which requires the presence of women in the public sphere, particularly in education.

Finally, we carry reports of two successful conferences on the subject – one organized by *Gender and History* and held in Bellagio, Italy; the other by the Women's Studies Centre and English Department of University College, Galway, Ireland. The Galway conference, in particular, provided the inspiration, and some of the material, for this issue: many thanks to the organizers. We will publish further articles on nationalism in the near future. Some related themes will be discussed in our forthcoming issue, on ethnicities in Britain and Europe.

Annie Whitehead

Clara Connolly

Erica Carter

Helen Crowley