Conclusion

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Conclusion

The novels addressed in this study were written during what Benedict Anderson has so cleverly called the “heyday” of “the hyphen that for two hundred years yoked state and nation.”¹ Their political milieu is part of the reason why the constellations of their love triangles lend themselves to national readings, more obviously in the novels of subjugated nations, whose primary purpose was to raise national consciousness, but also fairly easily in the mainstream novels of adultery, which reveal that managing an empire can be analogous to keeping a wife in order. The first chapter discussed the grandson of a Polish refugee who is himself initially an aimless wanderer through Europe and is compared (favorably) to a Gypsy by his good friend and the narrator herself while being conflated (unfavorably) with a Jew by his small-minded neighbors. What all three ethnic groups had in common at the time, as the chapter points out, was the lack of a homeland, but why one comparison is favorable and the other is not is instructive of national prejudices. As Deborah Nord has shown in her work, Gypsies were perceived as romantic in the British imagination, and if we can describe such a perception as benevolent racism, then what the English Jews experienced was hostile racism, exhibited in the novel through the manner in which Ladislaw gets slapped with the “label” once the town discovers that his stepgrandfather is an old thief. In her own “insistance on the idea of Nationalities” Eliot promoted the idea of a separate Jewish state, while for her Gypsy-like quarter Pole who had no reason to hope for one at the time she found not only a home, but a meaningful existence in England.

In utter contradiction to Eliot’s idea that belonging to a nationality engenders human virtue, Tolstoy argued that patriotism was the opposite of peace.² Although he articulated that position almost twenty years after completing his novel of adultery, the seeds of it, as shown in chapter 3, are evident in the epilogue, where Levin feels no love for his Serbian “brothers of the same blood and faith” (PSS 19:387) but simply wishes to live in his “own tiny circle, if not well, then at least not badly” (PSS 20:571). In other words, the statelessness of the South Slavs and statelessness in general were of no concern to the great Russian moralist; it was, in fact, as he wrote to Sienkiewicz, the preferred mode of existence. Concomitantly, Tolstoy’s heroine comes to a completely different end than Dorothea Brooke, whose author kills off the stifling husband instead. And, while it is commonplace to argue that the female author will inevitably feel compelled to grant an unhappily
married woman a more generous ending—Eliot, after all, does the same for Gwendolen Harleth, whose sadistic husband drowns in *Daniel Deronda*—it is valuable to consider, within the framework of the present study, how these differing endings affect the nation. Ladislaw, though initially only inspired by the prospect of proximity to Dorothea, works with her uncle on behalf of reform, which Eliot supported. Vronsky, on the other hand, joins a war that Tolstoy condemned.

If Eliot welcomed the dispossessed in *Middlemarch*, while Tolstoy exhibited an active disregard for statelessness in *Anna Karenina*, then Theodor Fontane entirely ignored the problem in *Effi Briest*, the novel whose analysis in this book is conveniently couched between the masterworks of two large empires that were the source of German envy. Yes, he puts high Prussian society to shame in his portrayal of Roswitha, since the character whose name bears the colors of the Polish flag proves to be the most faithful person in the novel focused on unfaithfulness, but he also depicts Effi’s marital aspirations as colonial fantasy, which is not critiqued as such but is meant to elicit the reader’s pity for the naive child-bride. Kristin Kopp’s distinction between “inner” and “outer” German colonialism proved helpful in discussing the novel whose half-Polish seducer takes over the role of a Chinese ghost. Unlike Catherine the Great, who subjugated Poland, though, the mini-Catherine who demanded a fur coat and expected to see a polar bear on the Baltic Sea coast becomes the victim of an unscrupulous seducer whom she did not even love.

Statelessness was the issue of the last two novels covered in this book and possibly their raison d’être, all the more interesting for how the two authors approached it differently. Unlike Sienkiewicz, Šenoa did not have a glorious Croatian past to look back on and revive in the minds of his readers, but he nevertheless used significant historical events from the sixteenth century to discuss nineteenth-century oppression by foreign rule. He saw the solution, as did many of his predecessors and contemporaries, in multiple layers of unity: linguistic—not just within Croatia, but Croatia’s with the other speakers of South Slavic languages (save the Bulgarians, whose large number, he argued, would assure them their own state)—literary, since the anthologies he edited included Croatian and Serbian works, and political, in the form of what would become Yugoslavia after World War I brought the age of empires to an end.

Sienkiewicz, in recalling Poland’s past glory as well as in allegorizing its current suffering, wrote the empire-size novels, comparable in length to the English and Russian masterpieces of the nineteenth century, as opposed to the German and Croatian ones. True to the theme of Polish messianism that characterized the preceding period of romanticism, he fashioned a heroine who was not so much in need of rescue by a good-hearted nobleman, as the fragile Dora of Šenoa’s novel, but one who is capable of redeeming the enemy. Ligia’s redemption of a Roman warrior highlights the difference
between the messianism of the oppressed and that of the oppressor or, to recall Nikolai Berdiaev’s words quoted in chapter 5, the difference between sacrifice and dominance. As Eliot demonstrates in Middlemarch, however, the lines do not have to be tightly drawn, since her English heroine has much more in common with the Polish one than with either from the other two empires covered in this book.

While this study has focused on Europe and nations within it that are geographically close to each other if not contiguous, the investigation could be extended into other parts of the world, such as the United States, for example, a fascinating case of a colony turned (a twentieth-century version of) empire. The two best-known American novels of adultery flank the second half of the nineteenth century, with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter in 1850 and Kate Chopin’s The Awakening in 1899. They each come with their own national anxieties related to parts of the Old World, against which they must define themselves, and it would be interesting to explore how these anxieties play out in their love triangles. It is the crossing from England to Massachusetts that occasions the adultery of The Scarlet Letter, as it first separates the heroine from her husband and then leaves her thinking, alone in the New World, that he had been killed by Native Americans at the end of his voyage over. In The Awakening two different sets of transplants from the Old World clash as the Anglo-American Edna Pontellier, “though she had married a Creole, was not thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles.” Unlike The Scarlet Letter, The Awakening includes the additional difference in religion, since the young Edna had to contend with “the violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic.” Much like the first marriage of Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch, Edna’s is an act of defiance against her concerned family, yet in the end it proves untenable.

Crossing into the twentieth century and the burst of literary activity that characterized the 1920s, in the United States Edith Wharton selects a Europeanized divorcée of a brutish Polish count to threaten scandal in New York society of the 1870s, while in England D. H. Lawrence pens Lady Chatterley’s Lover, a novel whose heroine turns to a wealthy Irishman and ultimately to an impoverished Englishman for what her paralyzed aristocratic husband cannot give her. It is of note that after ending an affair with an Irishman who “had already made a large fortune by his plays in America” but “obviously wasn’t an Englishman, in spite of all the tailors, hatters, barbers, booters of the very best quarters of London,” Connie Chatterley decides that her next lover will be “a real foreigner: not an Englishman, still less an Irishman.” However, the lover to whom the single noun in the novel’s title refers, turns out to be a gamekeeper from Derby who can code-switch between his vernacular and the “ordinary,” “natural,” or “normal English,” which Connie prefers over “getting his meaning through the fog of the dialect.” In Germany, whose literature reenters
the world scene through Thomas Mann, the Russian, “leicht asiatischer” (slightly Asiatic), Clawdia Chauchat mesmerizes the visitor into staying on the Magic Mountain and a charming Polish boy captivates a middle-aged author until he meets his death in Venice. It is interesting, in relation to the nations covered in this book, that Aschenbach’s first destination is Slavic—a northern Croatian island “mit farbig zerlumptem, in wilde-fremden Lauten redendem Landvolk” (with a colorfully ragged local population that talked in wild-foreign sounds)—but he quickly discovers that he cannot bear “eine kleinweltliche, geschlossen österreichische Hotelgesellschaft” (a provincial and self-contained Austrian society in the hotel) and moves on to Venice.

Writing in 1996 for an edited collection of over a century’s worth of essays theorizing the nation, Anderson briefly pondered “two new guises” of nationalism emerging at the end of the twentieth century: “the creation of a congeries of weak, economically fragile nation-states out of the debris of the Soviet system” and “the impending crisis of the hyphen.” During my writing of this book, the debris of former Soviet states could be acutely felt in the crisis between Ukraine and Russia, to which I return at the very end. The crisis happening during Anderson’s writing in the mid-1990s, though he curiously omitted mentioning it, was the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, illustrated also through a sexual metaphor by Ferida Duraković in the poem that comprises the epigraph of this study. The grammatical gender in the Bosnian (as well as in the Croatian and Serbian) language allows for an easy equation of the Homeland with the deceiving beauty, since the word homeland is feminine: domovina. Grammatical gender is yet another category that contributes to the anthropomorphizing of nations as female, because in most languages that have it “homeland” is feminine, as are, for the most part, names of countries and continents. To review the word for “homeland” in the other three languages from the novels covered in this book—English being exempt for its lack of grammatical gender—the German Heimat, the Russian rodina, and the Polish ojczyzna are also all feminine, despite the fact that the last one doubles as “fatherland,” as the Polish word for “father” is ojciec.

The deceiving attribute of the beauty in Duraković’s poem is self-evident, since Yugoslavia, in the end, proved to be a deceptive concept. If it is the deceptive and disappearing Homeland that galvanizes “boys” to die for her, then we might assume that this Bosnian poet writing about the war in Croatia—the fall of the town of Vukovar, to be precise—has Serbian boys in mind, since they were the ones engaged to fight the states that had declared independence from the Homeland. I find this aspect of the poem particularly touching, since the typical objects of pity tend to be the innocent civilian casualties of war, whereas here—one of the only such instances in writing about the Yugoslav wars of succession—sympathy is expressed for the “boys” who have been seduced by the impassioned rhetoric of patriotism, which is exposed beautifully for its sexual connotations. The “beast”
from the poem’s title, unlike the “beauty,” receives no further mention in the poem itself and, hence, acquires no analogous political entity within it. We can only surmise, based on the context, that the beast might refer to the war machine or, based on the marriage metaphor, to the latter half of the nation-state combination, with the concept of the homeland being more akin to nation. If the fairy tale to which the poem’s title refers depicts an innocent beauty whose love tames the beast and turns him into a prince, then Duraković’s deceptive beauty does the opposite, feeding the state/beast’s aggression by supplying it with willing soldiers.\textsuperscript{13}

The rhetoric surrounding Yugoslavia’s breakup, both from within the country and from the outside powers, bore an eerie resemblance to the Eastern Crisis of the 1870s, all the more for the fact that Ottoman memory was invoked in the ethnic cleansing that took place in Bosnia and Kosovo. Russia, once again, felt compelled to protect its Serbian Orthodox brothers, whether it be from the secessionism that seemed to have infected the other Yugoslav republics or from Western involvement, including NATO’s bombing of Serbia in 1999. Russian support did not result in the mobilization of thousands of military volunteers and an eventual war declaration as it did in Tolstoy’s time, but there were Russian veterans, estimated possibly in the hundreds by the BBC, who did go over to join the fight.\textsuperscript{14} The most celebrated among them was the recently deceased Lieutenant Colonel Anatoly Lebed’, a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya whose heroic feats earned him the nickname “Russkii Rembo” (Russian Rambo). After NATO forces attacked Serbia, Lebed’ came out of retirement and traveled to Belgrade on a tourist visa. To the news crew cameras asking him for his reasons, he gave a succinct answer that echoes those of the Slavophiles discussed in chapter 3: “соседей, товарищей наших православных давят” (our Orthodox neighbors and comrades are being crushed).\textsuperscript{15} We can easily imagine what the sage from Iasnaia Poliana would have had to say on this occasion, not only to the Russians or the Serbs, but equally to the seceding republics demanding their own independent states. It is safe to assume that no side would have been satisfied with his answer. Nevertheless, his assessment of the “суеверие патриотизма” (superstition of patriotism) (PSS 37:241, 90:44) and, in its harsher incarnations, the “гипноз” (hypnosis) (PSS 90:443), “вред” (harm) (PSS 90:425), and especially “обман” (deception) (PSS 90:441, 443) of patriotism, “в котором так усердно стараются удержать их все правительства” (in which so diligently all governments strive to hold [their people]) (PSS 90:441), is compatible with the sentiment of Duraković’s poem.\textsuperscript{16} My book about the novel of adultery as an expression of national anxieties also turns out to be largely about the superstition of patriotism, which causes everything from malicious gossip in Middlemarch to duels in several of Fontane’s novels to war in Anna Karenina.

If Russian involvement was welcomed by Serbia at the very end of the twentieth century, it certainly was not by Ukraine in the second decade of
the twenty-first. In March 2014, as Russia annexed Crimea in reaction to Ukraine’s Euromaidan Revolution, *The Atlantic* (along with many other news venues) reported in a headline, “Ukrainian Women Have Launched a Sex Strike Against Russian Men.” Two Ukrainian women, Irina Rubis and Katerina Venzhik, launched the campaign on Facebook and had T-shirts made with the image that quickly circulated the globe: a pair of hands folded as if in prayer, except that the widening gap between the palms creates an image of a vagina. The slogan underneath the pair of hands reads, *Ne dai Russkomu* (Don’t give it to a Russian), with an asterisk at the end, which is explained by a line of poetry along the right edge of the image: *Kokhaitesia, chornobryvi, ta ne z Moskaliamy* (Fall in love, o dark-browed ones, only not with Muscovites). It points out that the phrase “Don’t give it to a Russian” was inspired by Ukraine’s national poet, the anti-imperial Taras Shevchenko, who penned the verse as part of his long 1838 poem, “Kateryna.”

*The Atlantic* article described the campaign as “a strategy as old the time” and invoked the eponymous ancient Greek heroine from Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, who brought the Peloponnesian War to an end by leading her fellow women in a sex strike against their husbands. The important point that this comparison misses, however, lies in the very aspect of sex that this book has sought to explore—the national allegories it can represent, as in the case of Ukrainian women refusing Russian men, which is a gesture symbolic of Ukraine’s refusal of Putin. Clarence A. Manning got it right in the introduction to his English translation of the poem when, in addition to remarking that “the theme of the country girl seduced by a nobleman and deserted by him was very popular in all European literature,” he takes care to point out that “Shevchenko followed the tradition in this poem but he added the other idea of making the lover a foreigner.” That “other idea of making the lover a foreigner” has been at the center of my study, though Shevchenko’s poem demonstrates that it predates the second half of the nineteenth century, in which the novel of adultery and its “fear of the foreigner”—to use Julian Preece’s assessment of *Effi Briest* from chapter 2—proliferated.

When the two founders of the Ukrainian campaign were asked in an interview by the American *Elle* magazine, “Why did you decide to choose sex as the center of the campaign?,” they answered in a way that caused me to further ponder the implications of my book project:

> First of all, the slogan on the T-shirts is not about sex. This is a claim to protect our country from aggressor.

> But sex is known for being one of the most effective elements of [gaining] substantial attention to promo campaigns. To use a provocative message to claim the world’s attention and interest to the Russians’ aggression was one of [the most] effective ways to be heard.

*Adulterous Nations* is not about sex, the surface-present topic of the classic nineteenth-century novel of adultery that explored adulterous
sex as a means of dealing with the broader anxiety surrounding women’s emancipation. Rather, the focus of my study has been the “aggressor” against the heroine and, more broadly, the nation that she embodies.

Sex is, indeed, “one of the most effective elements of [gaining] substantial attention to promo campaigns,” and I have sought to elucidate how it dovetailed in the novel of adultery with the age of imperialism and national revivals. There is no doubt that in writing Middlemarch, as Gillian Beer argues, George Eliot “brooded on the curtailment of women’s lives,” but

“Ne dai Russkomu” (“Don’t give it to a Russian”), Facebook campaign, March 2014
in fashioning a character of “dangerously mixed blood” for the heroine’s fulfillment, she captured the nation’s sympathy with the suffering Poles while at the same time critiquing its insularity. Tolstoy’s “provocative message” included the portrayal of adulterous sex as murder but placing Anna’s lover-cum-murderer at the train station in the epilogue, where he remembers Anna’s mangled body on the way to war, was “one of [the most] effective ways” that the author’s opposition to the war could “be heard” (once it finally made it into print). The ambivalent Theodor Fontane, on the other hand, stoked Prussian prejudices in his utterly unromantic portrayal of Effi’s half-Polish lover while inspiring magnanimity and sympathy through her kindly servant, Roswitha. August Šenoa, as Julijana Matanović shows, sought a balance between Croatian historical events and the invented love story “by which he made the novels more interesting and acceptable to the wider populace.” Henryk Sienkiewicz, finally, uplifted the quashed Polish national spirit and brought the Polish sufferings to “the world’s attention” through a heroine who manages to tame a megalomaniacal “aggressor.”