

The Women's Review of Books

Vol. XXI, No. 12

September 2004

74035 \$4.00

In This Issue

We continue our exploration of **Women, War, and Peace** with articles on women as policy-makers, peace activists, defense industry workers, soldiers.

☞ **Carol Burke** explains how military marching chants are used to transform recruits into fighters. p. 6

☞ Is **Bob Woodward** a sister? **Cynthia Enloe** reveals how feminists can learn from *Plan of Attack*. p. 10

☞ **Liza Featherstone** looks at traditional gender roles and witty direct-action groups like Code Pink. p. 11

☞ In both rebel and government armies, African girl-soldiers are spies, porters, cooks, fighters, and sex slaves. Some join, while others are pressed into service, says researcher **Dyan Mazurana**, and all face special problems reintegrating into their communities when war is over. p. 21

☞ Plus a special poetry section with new work by **Eloise Klein Healy, Julia Kasdorf, Maxine Kumin, Elizabeth Macklin, and Gail Mazur**. p. 14

☞ and more...



A panel from Jennifer Camper's comic-review of *Persepolis 2*, Marjane Satrapi's memoir of adolescence in Iran and in exile. p. 8

Erasing the lines

by Ayse Gul Altinay

The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus by Cynthia Cockburn.

New York: Zed Books, 2004, 244 pp., \$25.00 paper.

April 24, 2004, was a historic day in the troubled history of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. More than half a million Cypriots voted on the future of their island and their lives. The voting came 30 years after the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, which had followed years of communal strife between the Greek majority and the Turkish minority in the 1960s and a coup d'état by Greek Cypriot extremists associated with the Greek military junta in 1974. Ironically called "the Peace Operation" by the Turkish social-democratic government of the time, this military intervention, like all others, resulted in many deaths and disappearances on both sides, forced relocations, and the partition of the island into two: the

Turkish North and the Greek South. In April, Greek and Turkish Cypriots were asked to express their opinions about a UN-driven negotiation document for a reunited Cyprus, the Annan Plan. Unfortunately, the results were less than satisfactory for those longing for a solution: a 65 percent "yes" to the Annan Plan in the Turkish North and a 75 percent "no" in the Greek South. The 30-year-long struggle to demilitarize the island and normalize relations between Turkish and Greek Cypriots went into a new phase, its success to be determined by the extent to which women become a part of it. Because so far, women's position has been one of total invisibility.

continued on page 3



PRINTED IN THE USA

Erasing the lines

continued from p.1

Cynthia Cockburn's remarkably timely book, *The Line*, introduces a woman's group, Hands Across the Divide (HAD), which was set up in 2001 as the first Cypriot political organization that, by the device of constituting itself with a London postal address, legally has both southern and northern members. The book also includes interviews with women in both parts of the island who don't necessarily see themselves as political activists. Through their life stories and daily struggles, a very different picture of "the Cyprus problem" emerges. "*The Line* is a book about Cyprus as seen through women's eyes," says Cockburn.

But that is not the whole story.

At another level, equally inspiring, *The Line* is a book about new ways of imagining the connectedness of ethnic and gender conflicts, anti-militarism, and feminism. Cockburn continues the conversation she began in her earlier work *The Space Between Us* (1998), which examined women's across-the-line activism in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and Israel/Palestine. In *The Line*, she presents her analysis of the "inner processes of line making, line negotiation and line melting." Do not be misled by the singular use of "the line" in the title; the book is about the many lines that structure our thinking, our politics, and our every day lives.

How can we understand as well as challenge these lines which delimit our militarized, ethnicized, gendered lives? Cockburn says we must start with a simple realization.

A geo-political partition is not just armoured fencing, it is also a line inside our heads, and in our hearts, too. In fact, the physical fence is a manifestation of these more cognitive and emotional lines that shape our thoughts and feelings. (p. 1)

In the case of Cyprus, the lines demarcating ethnic difference were a result of colonial, international, and national projects that included Britain, Turkey, Greece, and the United States as the most decisive actors. *The Line* presents a nuanced history of these political projects—as interpreted by women. Not surprisingly, the women's interpretations belie the over-used Turkish vs. Greek analysis we often confront in both the media and academic works.

While some Greek Cypriot women come from nationalist families that supported the ghettoization and marginalization of the Turkish minority in the 1960s and applauded the coup in 1974, others were its victims. Arianna Enonomou, the dancer whose performance inspired the book's title, had experienced British raids into her home as well as threats from both Greek and Turkish nationalist extremists. For her leftist parents, the Turks were hardly the enemy. They identified "the Greek fascists and their local supporters as enemies more immediately menacing than either Turkish Cypriots or Turks." Sevgül Uludag, today a prominent Turkish Cypriot journalist, also remembers Turkish extremists being more of a danger to her leftist parents than anybody else. After the 1974 coup, some of the Greek women who now belong to HAD, or their parents, were blacklisted. While some women, like Ayse Hasan, saw the Turkish intervention as a lifesaver, for others, who lost their villages, houses, and loved ones in the ten years of ethnic strife, Turkish military intervention was not the solution.

The summer of 1974, when the Turkish military fought with Greek Cypriot forces and ultimately drew the partition line, was a turning point in the history of Cyprus.

From then on there would always be "before" and "after". The thing that made the difference was your ethnicity in relation to where on the geo-ethnic

map of the island you had been living. If you were a Turkish Cypriot living north of the Partition Line or a Greek Cypriot living south of it, you were relatively lucky. (p. 73)

Those who did not fit in the new geo-ethnic divisions would experience violence of all kinds, and, ultimately, displacement. Many were killed or went missing, and everybody else had to relocate: about 180,000 Greek Cypriots became refugees in the South and 45,000 to 60,000 Turkish Cypriots in the North.

The result is one of the most heavily militarized pieces of land on the planet, where lives are separated by barbed wire and mines. Militarization in Cyprus, as elsewhere, is deeply gendered.

In one sense, all politicians in both north and south Cyprus are "military men" because the entire male population, bar a few ethnic and religious categories deemed unreliable (such as Catholics and Turkish Cypriots in the south), are conscripted into military service. (p. 113)

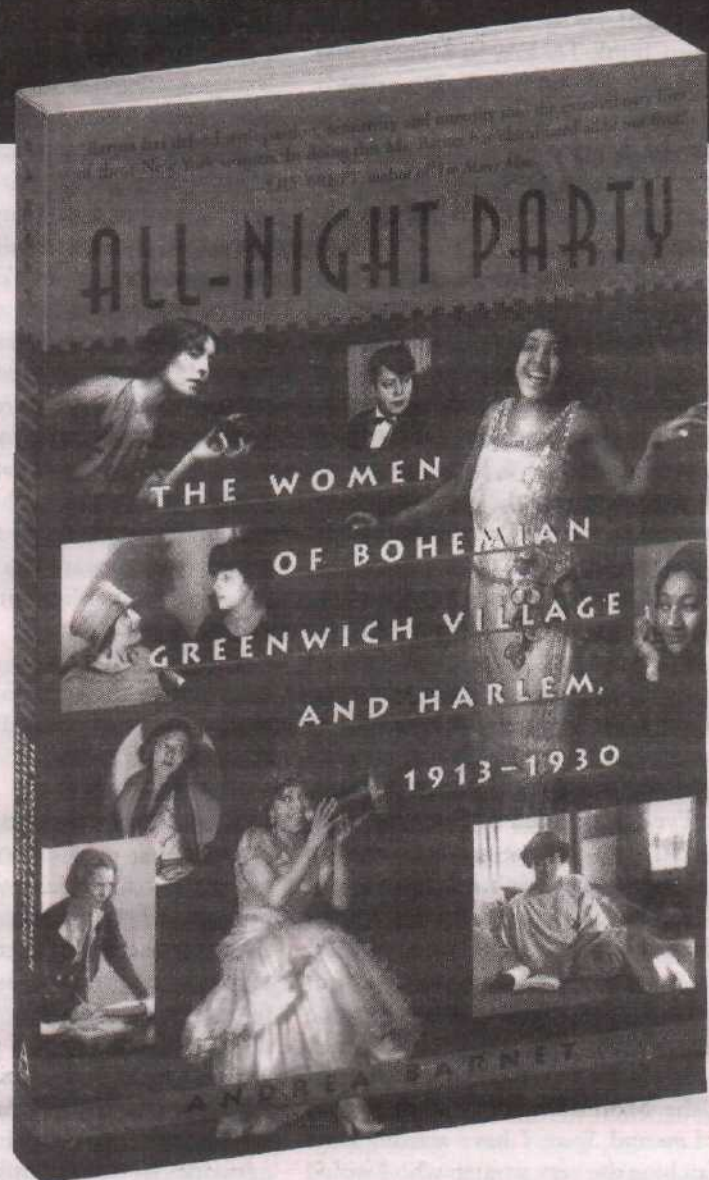
Cockburn explains the processes through which Turkish and Greek nationalisms, each supported by militarized notions of heroic, soldierly masculinity, have created deeply patriarchal gender orders on either side of the Partition Line. "Neither militarism nor nationalism is conducive to women's equality and autonomy. In Cyprus these twin mind-sets are still firmly in place, everlastingly legitimated by the unresolved war, the unsigned peace."

How can this picture change? Cockburn, based on her interviews with HAD members and other women in Cyprus, proposes two important types of action. The first is to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for including women at all levels of negotiation, as well as in post-agreement processes of peace-building. As the UN has recognized: "War is a women's issue. Gender is a peace issue." Second, Cockburn argues, we should understand, reveal, and change the mutual workings of ethnic lines and gender lines through what she calls transversal politics, "a very difficult art." Such politics entail taking a position of "neither/nor" to the limiting models of nationalism and patriarchal gender orders, a position that the women of HAD struggle to implement across their own divisions. Different strategies are needed to tackle gender and ethnic lines, says Cockburn: "While an ethnic line, such as the line that encircles a ghetto or the partition line that splits a country, may almost totally separate two cultural groups, the gender line that differentiates men from women operates in another way. The gender line runs through every institution, every street, every building, every bedroom—even the bed itself." An ethnic line is reason for outcry and international negotiations; gender lines are less visible because they have been normalized through patriarchal discourses and practices.

One recent strategy to decenter the ethnic line and to emphasize the Cypriot identity on the Turkish side has been the use of the terms new *Kıbrıslı Türk* (Cypriot Turk) and *Kıbrıslı Rum* (Cypriot Greek) in everyday language. As for other creative strategies for revealing and changing the gender and ethnic lines of differentiation on the island, we will need to keep our eyes and ears open for the actions of Hands Across the Divide and other women's groups from Cyprus. I share Cynthia Cockburn's hope that her book "might encourage the growth of an inclusive and outward-reaching woman's movement in Cyprus, help make feminism a more say-able word, and feminist change a more thinkable thought." What an inspiration a demilitarized, gender-equal, multiethnic, multi-religious Cyprus would be for our conflict-ridden region! What a gift this book is for making such an idea a "thinkable thought!"

"[An] eclectic assortment of the daring, the devastating, and the derelict."

—*The New Yorker*



"Barnet persuasively and delightfully presents these women as the first generation of feminists, the women who 'blasted the door open to the rest of the country, leaving it to us to imagine future lives as **stunningly original** as theirs.'" —*The Boston Globe*

"Her flair for storytelling and enthusiasm for this endlessly fascinating subject makes each juicy chapter go down as **deliciously as an E! True Hollywood Story**." —*Bust magazine*

"Barnet's treatment of this scintillating era is as **lively and appealing** as the women she's writing about." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Regardless of your degree of knowledge about this remarkable era, you'll find something—and someone—to celebrate in this **comprehensive, consistently entertaining volume**." —*Elle*

"Barnet's beautifully detailed portraits of these pioneering women are delicately shaded, filled with resonating emotional nuance, and surrounded by such stellar supporting characters.... **All-Night Party** is sure to arouse great interest." —*Booklist*

ALL-NIGHT PARTY: The Women of Bohemian Greenwich Village and Harlem, 1913-1930
by Andrea Barnett

Wherever Books Are Sold

ALGONQUIN BOOKS OF CHAPEL HILL • www.algonquin.com

Copyright of *Women's Review of Books* is the property of Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.