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Anthropology, Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Nationalism History / Studies, Russian or Soviet History / Studies, Women's & Gender History / Studies

Another Soldier is Born, the (Body of the) Nation is Safe: #TheBestHeroistheDeadHero

Panel Organizer: Nelli Sargsyan (Marlboro College)

Discussant: Jennifer Burrell (State University of New York at Albany)

Chaterjee (1993) and many other scholars have long theorized about the gendered nature of modern nationalisms as hegemonic masculinist, idealizing women as mothers (of sons). These sons are soldiers who are thought of as potential heroes in protecting the borders of their nation's body. Rene Girard suggests that "sacrificial scapegoating is the fundamental mechanism" that sustains different human communities and in order to curtail any discord among the members of a community violence needs to be directed outward (Koenigsberg 2005, para 1). Building on Gerard's idea, Koenigsberg (2005) suggests that war is a collective fantasy, a kind of bad dream, operating on yet another fantasy that nations are real entities and will maintain their existence as long as there are victims sacrificed for the body politic of nations. Hence in this context "the soldier functions as a sacrificial victim" (Koenigsberg 2005). Is this why we see the smiling faces of (mostly male identified) volunteer fighters going to the frontlines? What else do we see besides war becoming a way to suspend another failed promise of heteropatriarchy by allowing disillusioned masculinities to gain agency beyond the impotence caused by the corruption of "mafia states" (Magyar 2016), poverty, joblessness, and migration? Does this fantasy feed on more sacrificial victims, by energizing the militarization of women through the emergence of women's squads (and celebration of it)? At this particular drone-powered historical moment the sacrificial victim's life and death are a trending hashtag away should they die for the body politic that comfortably sends the consequences of neoliberal policies and climate change offshore. It is at this moment of the leak of the Panama Papers that you are invited to pull this collective fantasy apart in an effort to examine the potentialities for, using Koenigsberg's terms, "awakening from the nightmare of history." In other words, what can be potentially revealed when we understand how the fantasy operates? Are there ways, spaces, and potentialities for a collective knowing and abandoning of this collective bad dream? What is the body politic of the nation onto which we are mapping our individual human bodies, sacrificing those of soldiers? What do porous boundaries of this nation body politic render vulnerable? How do variously gendered, sexed, and raced experiences map this fantasy? When we awake, how can we rethink and decouple mafia states from their seemingly unlikely allies who tout human rights with one hand and sell high

tech arms for eliminating others' right to life with the other? When we awake, what alternatives can we create to the now dead neocolonial and neoimperial diplomacy? What kind of evidence would we need to consider for this? And who is the "we" working with evidence? This panel invites participants to engage with any of these questions by disrupting and queering the collective fantasy of war, its metastases, and consequences, reimagining, recreating other fantasies through feminist and queer anthropological lenses, to radically dismantle it through theoretical as well as ethnographic engagement.

Please submit your abstract of no more than 250 words (along with the title of the paper) by Thursday April 14th to Nelli Sargsyan at nsargsyan@marlboro.edu. Please note that if your paper is chosen for the panel, you will need to register for the AAA annual meeting and submit your abstract online by April 15th, 2016.

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