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**Lady Rosa of Luxembourg, or,  
Is the Age of Female Allegory Really a Bygone Era?**

*The allegories are 'female' because only the images of women - who stay outside (economic and state) competition - were appropriate to embody the imagined community's interests.*

Silke Wenk, "Die steirneren Frauen," 1987.<sup>1</sup>

*What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central, and if we ignore or minimize inversion and other forms of cultural negation, we often fail to understand the dynamics of symbolic process generally.*

Barbara Babcock cited in Elisabeth Bronfen, "Weiblichkeit und Repräsentation" 1995<sup>2</sup>

The public project by Sanja Ivekovic, *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg*, was realized in Spring 2001 within the exhibition *Luxembourg et les Luxembourgeois: consensus et passions bridées*, organized by Musée d' Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg and Casino Luxembourg - Forum for Contemporary Art. Since this exhibition ultimately dealt with national identity and self-representation, Ivekovic was one of several foreign artists invited to proffer an 'outsider's' view on Luxembourg, its present and its past. She decided to 'rephrase' the local memorial, *Le monument de memoire*, 1923, which is topped with a gilded figure of Nike, female allegory of Victory. This female figure is known in Luxembourg as the *Gëlle Fra* (Golden Woman). Making a replica of the national icon of Luxembourg, Ivekovic's conceived of another version of the monument by introducing three crucial interventions: she dedicated her temporary monument to Rosa Luxembourg, turned the figure of *Gëlle Fra* into a pregnant woman, and presented a text composed of a number of seemingly unrelated words, running around the monument's plinth. All three of these feminist 'corrections,' especially the text, to which I will return, generated an enormous political scandal in the Luxembourg and caused violent, even hysterical, 'patriotic' reactions in the public sphere, where the 'inviolability' of collective memory and 'endangered' national identity have been discussed not only during the time of the exhibition (31 March till 3 June 2001), but also after. On one hand, with her *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg* created something which contemporary public art occasionally manages, the phenomenon that could be called 'public as sculpture', a cultural space in which all the 'users' of that space can raise their voice. On the other, with her *Lady Rosa*, Sanja Ivekovic, a foreigner, unveiled in Luxemburg an intense public, that is, democratic, discourse about nation as an 'imagined community'. However, her project revealed something else as well: frequently this discourse slipped into an expression of deep and fanatic nationalism which until then had lain earlier dormant.

### **The Political, the Feminine**

Sanja Ivekovic (born in Zagreb 1949) is an artist who emerged after 1968 and belonged to the generation of artists raised in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia whose 'post-object' art was usually covered by an umbrella term 'New Art Practice'. Her fellow artists questioned not only traditional artistic media, figurative art in particular, but also critically referred to modernist practice, which was the official ideology of art in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1991). In contrast to her female colleagues who at the time begun to make conceptual art and performances, in the early 1970s Ivekovic's work took a feminist stance, even though nobody in her native Croatia discussed it as feminist critique. Throughout her entire career, she has persistently interrogated the 'politics of femininity' as it is staged in the media, be it 'high', or popular such as television or print media. In her live performances, photographic works and videos produced in the 1970s and 1980s, the critical attitude was directed towards the Socialist (Yugoslav) setting in which long-established patriarchal culture was overlaid with gender egalitarianism resulting in a stable Socialist, or *Sots patriarchy*.

When Titoist Yugoslavia started to disintegrate in 1991 through a series of nationalist wars, Sanja Ivekovic continued to observe 'new' patriarchal models, which conquered the public sphere in Croatia, dominated (no less than other post-Yugoslav milieus) by an aggressive nationalist ideology that solidified during the war years. In short, she was primarily dealing with the institutions of

<sup>1</sup> Silke Wenk, "Die steinernen Frauen" (Petrified Women), in Sigrun Anselm and Barbara Beck (Eds.), *Triumph und Scheitern in der Metropole*, Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1987, 101. (Translation B.P.)

<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, "Weiblichkeit und Repräsentation," (Femininity and Representation) in Hadumod Bussman and Renate Hof (Eds.) *Genus - Zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1995, 417.

power, be they Communist or nationalist, and their representation of 'femininity'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ivekovic was the only woman artist in Croatia of the 1990s to deconstruct nationalism in a critical and 'un-patriotic' manner, unmasking the maleness of (Croatian) nationalist project, focusing on media manipulation of women during the war and later in peacetime, when the image of the Mother replaced that of the Soldier.

In 1998, Ivekovic was selected to take part in the international itinerant biennial exhibition, *Manifesta 2*, held that year in Luxembourg, and she proposed two projects. For the first one, entitled *Fraenhaus*, she chose to expose a social matter, usually publicly suppressed, neglected and invisible: the domestic violence against women. At that time she was preoccupied with this issue within a Yugoslavian context, as a kind of violence associated with war: A violence implying ethnic cleansing by the rape of the enemy's women. Without wanting to view it as a problem affecting only post-Communist and post-war societies, she mirrored it in Luxembourg, a country of 'high capitalism'. This East-West exchange project first presented at *Manifesta 2*, was also performed in Zagreb, Croatia, where Ivekovic made a workshop in a women's shelter, making individual cast masks of gauze and white plaster of seven women. Similar proceedings happened in the city of Luxembourg, where the house for victims of domestic violence is called *Fraenhaus* (women's house).<sup>4</sup> In the exhibition space, each of these 'aided' self-portraits of Croatian and Luxembourgian battered woman were placed on an individual plinth with a label of the woman's first name and her 'story' of what brought her to the shelter. In addition, on the museum's façade, Ivekovic also displayed the names of all the women and printed as a postcard sold in museum shop as a 'souvenir'. The other project Sanja Ivekovic planned for *Manifesta 2*, then called *Pregnant Memory* (1998), was an intervention upon the original *Gëlle Fra* monument to present her as pregnant. In doing so, she apparently referred to a long tradition of nationalisms, which have, as Cynthia Enloe argues, "typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope."<sup>5</sup> Since this project could not be realized in 1998, Enrico Longhi, director of the Casino Luxembourg, invited her to materialize it in 2001 within the exhibition *Luxembourg et les Luxembourgeois*. Ivekovic now made her *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg* statue, which was produced in Zagreb by a male sculptor and then 'imported' to Luxembourg to be installed in front of the Casino, situated not so far away from the original *Gëlle Fra*.

As apposed to Ivekovic's *Fraenhaus* of 1998, an artwork that dealt with domestic violence against *real* Luxembourgian female citizens, which to my knowledge did not spur much of a public and political reaction in the local community, her *Lady Rosa* referring to the nationally praised *idealized* 'femininity' did create debate.. In other words, *Fraenhaus* a work that points to the issue of violence and violation of human and women's rights, burning social problems, appear to be less troubling for the given social order than *Lady Rosa*, an artwork that reshaped the female figure originating in a time gone by.

Ivekovic's *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg*, soon to be nicknamed the "Gëlle Fra 2", destabilizes widely accepted art historical presumption regarding the centrality of female allegorical figures in public sphere as something that belongs mainly to the nineteenth century, when "petrified femininity" saw its first – though not last - glory days.<sup>6</sup> If the time of female allegory is *really* outdated, how we are to justify the many literary and artistic works (public ones included) produced over the last decade in which female figures such as the 'Mother India'<sup>7</sup> or 'Mother Poland' and 'Mother Croatia', resurface in the post-colonial world and post-Communist Europe, respectively? Moreover, why these allegories became so central in 'post-nationalist' Western democracies?

To everyone living in liberal democracies, the reason why 'new' female allegories appear in totalitarian context is clear. During the student uprising in Beijing of June 1989, young art students made a gigantic female statue of styrofoam and plaster, named *The Goddess of Democracy*, which they placed opposite to the portrait of Mao in Tiananmen Square, despite the authorities' warning announced over the loudspeakers: "This statue is illegal. It is not approved by the government. Even in the United States statues need permission before they can be put up."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See the catalogue to the Ivekovic's retrospective exhibition edited by Silvia Eiblmayr, *Personal Cuts*, Innsbruck: Galerie im Taxispalais, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The third *Women's House* workshop took place in Bangkok (2000) in a shelter that along with victims of home violence hosts also the AIDS patient and drug addicts.

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases – Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 44.

<sup>6</sup> See Silke Wenk, *Versteinerte Weiblichkeit – Allegorien in der Skulptur der Moderne* (Petrified Femininity – Allegories in Modern Sculpture) Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> See Nalini Natarajan, "Woman, Nation, and Narration in *Midnight's Children*," in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Eds.) *Scattered Hegemonies*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994,

<sup>8</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Violence in Public Art," in Mitchell (Ed.) *Art and the Public Sphere*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 29.

What appear to be less clear to those who (try to) practice democracy, is *why* after the re-unification of Germany, was *Die Neue Wache* in Berlin, the national Memorial to the Unknown Soldier, which previously belonged to East Berlin, redesigned? During the existence of the GDR, this building (built in 1816-1818) was emptied out of any figuration, and memorial, watched by solemn guards, was dedicated to the 'victims of fascism and militarism'. In 1993, however, due to the interference of the then German Chancellor, Dr Helmut Kohl, the *Pieta* by Käthe Kollwitz was installed in its interiors. Given that Kollwitz, whose son fell in World War I and the grandson in World War II, conceived her mother-in-mourning in 1937 as a sculpture of 'intimate' scale (circa 60 cm in height), it was necessary to enlarge it to the 'monumental size' appropriate for a state memorial, with a copy being made by Harald Haacke. The memorial was rededicated to 'all victims of war and dictatorships', and the guards, who were too reminiscent of GDR militarism, disappeared. Despite furious protests in the public sphere in a democratic country against such 'state's art' (reminiscent also of the GDR), by the thousands of German intellectuals, feminists included, the Chancellor's decision was not revised.<sup>9</sup>

And, *why* during the memorial service, 'The Prayer for America', held at Yankee Stadium on 23 September 2001, did Reverend Calvin Butts, President of NYC Council of Churches, referred to a female allegory? He opened his four-minute long speech with these words: "In the harbor of New York there stands a lady. She is the Statue of Liberty. And I thank God today that, while I regret and mourn the loss of lives and the destruction of World Trade Towers, that those cowards did not come near Lady Liberty. "<sup>10</sup> Having in mind that several thousands victims lost their lives in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September 11th, one should ask *why* the statue of Miss Liberty was mentioned, and not, for example, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington? Why not a concrete man considered the Founder of the Nation, but an allegorical female figure, embodying abstract ideals? burqa

*Why* the reshaped Statue of Liberty by the Moscow art group AES, internationally known for some four years, got so much more popular after September 11<sup>th</sup>, when it started to appear on the covers of art journals and was included in numerous exhibitions dedicated to "Ground Zero" held all over the place? After all, AES started to develop their *Islamic project - Witness of the Future*, back in 1997 during the Chechnya war. The project includes both performances and computer-manipulated photographs in which they redesigned major capital cities of the Christian world (Moscow, Rome, Berlin, Stockholm, and even Belgrade), adding elements of Islamic architecture to the skylines of the cities. One image from this series features New York with the *Statue of Liberty* wearing a burqa and holding the Koran.

*Why* do people or rather those who speak in the 'name of the people', need to refer to female allegories whenever the real or imagined enemy is near? Why do female allegorical images continue to appear today, are talked about, or related to, *always* when a particular nation or country experiences great crises? Or, phrased differently, *why* did Ivekovic's "Gëlle Fra 2", induce such a crisis in the national public sphere of Luxembourg, to the extent that the Minister of Culture, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, was even asked to resign, since she was not ready to prevent Ivekovic's project. Yes, many patriots in Luxembourg also argued that Americans would never allow their *Liberty* to be 'blasphemously violated' in this way.

### The Politics in/of Female Allegory

The French Revolution brought about a substantial turn in the concept political/public space and enabled an until then unknown visualization of power: "The popular forces acted on the rhetoric of the Revolution, which declared power no longer to resided in the king's body but in the nation."<sup>11</sup> This was a turning moment in history, where the figure that used to enable spatialization of the royal and absolutist 'body politic' now shifted from the male to female figure.

Political portraits of rulers standing for a respective territory or empire have a rather long history, but only in the medieval period did political theology clearly formulate the concept of the 'king's two bodies', whose contours could be traced already in Roman times.<sup>12</sup> In his thorough 1953 analysis of the concept, Ernest Kantorowicz examined Western medieval practices continuing up to 1816, when he discovered in Plowden's commentaries, the following definition of kingship: "[T]he King has in him two bodies, viz., a Body Natural, and a Body Politic. His Body natural ... is a Body mortal, subject to Infirmities that come by Nature and Accident, to Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that

<sup>9</sup> See *Nationaler Totenkult – Die Neue Wache*, Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1995; Stefanie Endlich, "Die Neue Wache 1818-1993, in *Deutsche Nationaldenkmale 1790-1990*, Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1993; also Silke Wenk, "Die 'Mutter mit toten Sohn' in der Mitte Berlins," in *Käthe Kollwitz*, ex.cat., Berlin: Kollwitz Museum, 1995, 84-93

<sup>10</sup> Aired on CNN, September 23, 2001.

Also on [www.cnn.com/2001/us/09/23/vic.yankee.prayer.service](http://www.cnn.com/2001/us/09/23/vic.yankee.prayer.service).

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Florence Dupont, "The Emperor-God's Other Body," in Michel Feher et al., (Eds.) *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Three*, New York: Zone, 1989, 397-419.

cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which Body Natural is subject to...<sup>13</sup> According to such a formula, the undying 'body politic' or king's 'other body' is conceived as invisible. Starting from this premise, French art historian, Louis Marin (1925 – 1992) developed his own semiological theory, in which he focused on the 'figurability' of 'body power'. He turned to the thinkers around Port Royal, Blaise Pascal in particular, who claimed, "the portrait of Caesar is Caesar." Marin discusses on several occasions the portrait of Louis XIV, maintaining that a king's power lies not in his presence but in his representation, a concept he comes to name 'the body-of-power'. This body delivered as a portrait of the king, which is displayed in every corner of his empire, is the king's *real* power. In other words, the king does not exist except *in* and *through* his pictures.<sup>14</sup> American visual theorist, David Summers, without reference to Marin, also holds that spatialization of power enacted through ubiquitous imperial portraits is not simply 'illustration' of power, but rather a visual means through which the given power becomes constituted.<sup>15</sup>

The birth of 'emancipating' nationalism, which appeared first as a cultural concept in Romantic literature and painting, and then became political practice in the mid-1800s, engendered a radically new approach towards public space. Given that nation, in Anderson's understanding, is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship,"<sup>16</sup> it is interesting to see how the nation or rather a nation-state, which relies on 'horizontal fraternity,' becomes visualized. It became imagined and imaged via a female body, via an allegorical figure. As soon as the portrait of the male omnipotent ruler, a real, historical person was dismantled and removed from the political/public space, the image of female body begun to stand for power. Moreover, as Marina Warner in her volume *Monuments and Maidens ~ the Allegory of the Female Form* (1985) remarks, the 'feminization' of the public field implied also a shift from personal to universal: "The female form tends to be perceived as generic and universal, with symbolic overtones; the male as individual, even when it is being used to express a generalized idea."<sup>17</sup>

Allegory, meaning "other speech" (Latin, *alia oratio*; Greek, *allos*, other, and *agoreuein*, to speak openly in the agora) is undoubtedly a literary and visual device well known in Western history. The female statue standing for natural site, rivers, in particular or geographical locations, like cities, or regions has been known since the Greek and Roman age, and further flourished in the Renaissance. But with the female allegories that conquered the public monuments over the period of "democratic statue mania" following the French Revolution, and appeared in historical paintings, and popular print media, like posters, daily press, postcards and comics, particularly after the revolutions of 1848, the female body meant to picture 'something else' was staged in the political space and for the sake of that space: this female body now embodied the 'interests of the people.' Thus, these female allegories must be differentiated from the mythological ones, because, as Silke Wenk has argued, such allegorical figures are not accompanied by narratives inherited from antiquity, but appear together with the birth of the modern state. The female body became a special *vehicle* for transporting ideals, not those shared by a nation as an 'imaginary community', but much more a way to convey the desire for establishing a common territory, namely, the nation-state. In this regard, Silke Wenk, German art historian who as early as the 1980s started to inquire into the female allegory in public setting and who produced precious studies on 'allegorical femininity' (of which, regrettably, only a few have been translated into English) contends: "The figure of allegory appears together with the constitution of the (nation) states. It works on the basis of 'moral' and has a state-building function. The allegory is oriented against the inherited myths and it is also directed against the heritage of folk culture. Allegorical representations are, therefore, to be differentiated from the mythological ones as in the allegorical representations we do not deal with inherited narratives but with the collectively accepted values and required principles according which the world should be arranged and the models with which it should be handled."<sup>18</sup>

Hence, the female allegorical figures such as *La Republique* or *Marianne* and *La France* have been substituted for the representation of the monarch, which used to embody the absolutist rule. And although Delacroix painted his *La Liberté guidant le peuple* in 1830, and Rude sculpted his *Marseilles* on the Arc de Triomphe in 1833,<sup>19</sup> the female allegorical figures, will populate

<sup>13</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, 7.

<sup>14</sup> See Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi*, Paris: Minuit, 1981 (English translation of 1988); also, Marin, "The Body-of-Power and Incarnation at Port Royal and in Pascal, or Of the Figurability of the Political Absolute," in Feher et al., op cit, 412-447.

<sup>15</sup> See David Summers, "Real Metaphor: Towards a Redefinition of the 'Conceptual' Image," in Norman Bryson et al., (Eds.) *Visual Theory*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991, 231-259. Both Marin and Summers's views, may be useful for discussing the omnipresence of the figure/portrait of Stalin during his life, and photographic portrait of Tito in the SFR Yugoslavia till and after his death in 1980.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, New York: Verso, 1983. Quoted after Revised edition of 1991, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens - the Allegory of the Female Form*, London: Vintage, 1996, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Silke Wenk, "Die steinernen Frauen", op. cit., 95. (Translation B.P.)

<sup>19</sup> It is perhaps interesting to remind that L'Arc de Triomphe in Paris, built in 1795, was not originally planned as a military monument, but was to be in memory of the "Heroine of the 6 October 1789", ~ for those women who, by marching to

memorial landscapes all around Europe by the end of the nineteenth century and will be also 'exported', like the *Lady Liberty*, either to the USA or European colonies. These statues came to personify, on the one hand, the universal principles such as freedom, equality, but above all victory in war, and on the other, 'site-specific' ideals shared either by a nation living in a sovereign nation-state (typically born of wars with neighboring nation/states) or by a nation, which dreamed of becoming (yet again via combat) an independent nation-state.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, every nation in the world has invented such an allegory. All national fraternities were quick to commission from their (male) painters and sculptors a representation of the Mother of the Nation, with several versions being produced at different times. The statue of *La Republique* (Paris, 1883 and 1899) is just one example of female allegories scattered around European monuments and historical paintings, although under different names: *Bavaria*, *Germania* (1883), *Greece* (1858), *Hungaria* (1861), *Italy*, *Finland* (1881), *Denmark* (1897) *Serbia* (1889 and 1901) or *Croatia* (1905). Such 'universal' female statues individually recognized as national, were usually staged on the plinth of the monuments honoring real, historical grandees, generals and rulers shown in bellicose posture.

Marina Warner pointed to a radical 'symbolical inversion' – which it is worth mentioning in passing, now bothers only feminist art historians – implemented in the discrepancy between 'real life' and the 'ideal' female body shown in national memorials: "Liberty is not represented as a woman, from the colossus in New York to the ubiquitous Marianne, figure of the French Republic, because women were or are free. In the nineteenth century, when so many of these images were made and widely disseminated, the opposite was conspicuously the case; indeed the French Republic was one of the last European countries to give its female citizens the vote. Often the recognition of a difference between the symbolic order, of judges, statesman, soldiers, philosophers, inventors, depends on the unlikelihood of women practicing the concepts they represent."<sup>21</sup> One should also add here, that artists, like the French Bartholdi, who designed the *Statue of Liberty*, sometimes associate eternal ideals with concrete (flesh and blood) mortals, Bartholdi modeled Liberty's face using the features of Mme Bartholdi, *maman*.<sup>22</sup> Artists of the period, through using their own mothers as models for national allegories, stress even more strongly the mixture of blood and family affiliation, with the soil and geographic territory inhabited by a nation to which artist sons belong.

In the nineteenth century, the statues of 'universal femininity,' which conquered the squares and façades and popular imagery of the newly born European nations, was shaped according to an equally 'universal' academic art that spread all over Europe and despite of the newly erected borders between the nation-states. On the eve of the twentieth century, academicism started to be challenged by other sculptural approaches, which were, in truth, much more influenced by Maillol's stylizations than by Rodin's radicalism.

Far from outdated and exhausted, similar envisioning of nation recur in present-day cinematography and have been researched by Susan Hayward: "[The] nation comes to stand for/in for lost issues/concepts/realities of kinship and family obligations ... The nation becomes a collective individual that one dies for (the father- or more particularly and pertinently, the motherland). Or again, the nation is a collective (female) individual that suffers rape at the hands of enemy. Thus a closed, self-referential, even vicious circle gets established whereby one concept feeds the other: threat to nation leads to (manifestations of) kinship, and kinship leads to nationalist discourses (in the name of the mother nation etc.) ~i.e., a nationalism which in turn engenders the notion of nation. Each concept *masquerades* as a grounded reality, disguising the fact that, as such, these are imagined abstractions."<sup>23</sup>

### Victory of Modernism and Allegory of Victory

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Versailles in 1789, had forced the King to move into the Tuilleries Palace in Paris. Hans-Christian Harten, "The Monuments of the French Revolution," in *Daidalos*, No. 49, September 1993, 53.

<sup>20</sup> One recent example confirms this assert since during the war in Bosnia, a female allegory of *Republika Srpska*, self-proclaimed state by Bosnian Serbs in 1992, was also invented in 1995 and appeared in a painting, which general Ratko Mladic gave as present to Sir Michel Rose, who served as Commander of UN peace-keeping troops, now departing from the 'Balkan quagmire'. See *Der Spiegel*, No. 9, 27 February 1995. I am very grateful to Silke Wenk who made this information available to me.

<sup>21</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*, op. cit., XIX.

<sup>22</sup> *The Statue of Liberty*, unveiled in 1886, was the present offered by France to the USA for the centenary of the American Revolution. It took Americans many years to raise considerable funds needed for the building of the plinth. In contrast to the face, the rest of the statue was not done after Mme Bartholdi, mère: In her book, a fine piece of an inspired nationalism, Lillie Patterson, writes: "For the body of the statue, Bartholdi needed a younger and stronger model, one whose body held an implicit vitality and one who could stand day after day with her arm upraised." Lillie Patterson, *Meet Miss Liberty*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962, p 47. The artist, of course, married the model ten years later.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Hayward, "Framing National Cinema," in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (Eds.) *Cinema & Nation*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, 89.

Le *monument du souvenir* with the *Gëlle Fra* in the city of Luxembourg, unveiled in 1923, commemorated the Luxembourg male citizens, who, although their country was neutral, volunteered as soldiers in the Allied armies and fell in World War I. This memorial, designed by a local sculptor educated in Germany, Claus Cito (1882-1965), joined thousands of monuments erected all around Europe, experiencing a new 'statue mania' after the Great War. Regardless of whether the countries left that war as winners or losers, they evenly experienced a rise in nationalism that increased in the early inter-war years, when most of the European countries needed to commemorate the fallen heroes of the "end of humanity" (Karl Kraus) and started to built their national memorials to the Unknown Soldier, a convention established in 1918.<sup>24</sup> Along with countless smaller monuments presenting male allegories of soldiers, like the French *poilu*, erected in every corner of the countries associated with the Allies, the female allegories of the nations, often shown as mothers-in-mourning, gained a new vitality in public space. For example, the *Memorial to the Unknown Soldier* in Belgrade (1934-1938) presents 8 female allegories standing for the regions that made part of the multi-national Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The female allegory of victory, Nike, once again proved to be the most suitable figure for memorials of the 1920s, irrespective of their location, that is, 'she' was sculpted equally in those countries that won and in those that lost the war. By the 1920s, modernist artistic procedures were applied to public statuary, which eventually became deprived of story-telling details typical of academic realism dominant the previous century, which had, alas, survived in conventional public sculpture until the present. This is also evident in *Gëlle Fra*, an elegant figure presented with the laurel wreath in a gesture of crowning soldiers fallen in the war (grouped in front of the obelisk), connoting undying spirit of victory. Very similar female statue turned up in post-First World War monuments that blossomed from Germany to Egypt, from France to Serbia. In memorials commemorating the Great War, a winged Nike, like the one in Copenhagen (1923-1928), became rather seldom as by that time, Nike has long lost her wings, an attribute with which she first entered the public sphere back in the late 1800s.

The archeological discovery of a winged female statue in 1863 fuelled artists' imagination and established an 'invented tradition' soon to be set up in public statuary. The Nike of Samothrace (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) was first exhibited in Louvre, Paris in 1867, and was then moved to the central stairway in 1884, where it remains today. This figure had an "immeasurable effect on the public iconography of glory,"<sup>25</sup> partly due to the fact that in ancient Greek mythology Nike (known in the Roman world as Victoria) is a "goddess without the story." In approaching the image of Nike, Warner explains the way pagan mythology and the Christian heritage are conflated in this statue, the male angel in Christianity borrows Nike's features, above all its wings denoting speed, flight and heavenly immortality. The angel, especially in the Annunciation scenes, also retained Nike's classical function as the bearer of good tidings. From Paris, where so many foreign artists gained their academic art education, the winged Nike moved further afield and was installed on the top of national monuments built in Berlin (*Siegeseule*, 1873), New York (*Monument to General Sherman*, 1900) or Krusevac, the earlier medieval capital of Serbia (*Memorial to the Kosovo Battle*, 1889-1904). With modern art and secularization almost completed, Nike begins to appear without wings, but in the memorials erected after the Great War, the figure is as a rule shown with the laurel wreath (a Greek symbol of victory, a Roman symbol for triumph, and in Christian art a sign of Christ's victory over death) and occasionally with a palm (offered to the winner).

Any discourse on (female) allegory involves yet a further aspect implicated in war memorials: this is the relationship of the body to the state, which is not only a highly gendered relation, but also a relation invested with violence: "Sacralizing military violence and containing questions of material body by effacing or mystifying it, they produce the national, sovereign subject."<sup>26</sup> As opposed to men, who, in nationalist/patriotic optics are expected to offer (most of the time willingly) their bodies to the 'altar of Motherland/Fatherland', and to whom the 'grateful' *patria* will erect memorials (featuring more often than not a Nike), the relation of the woman's body to the state, at least till the Second World War, was construed quite differently. Thus, Moira Gatens argues: "Constructing women as incapable of performing military service and so incapable of defending the political body from attack could serve as an example here. This incapacity, constructed or not, is sufficient to exclude her from active citizenship. At this level the metonymical aspects of the metaphor of the body function to exclude. Those who are capable of the appropriate political forfeit are excluded from

<sup>24</sup> Here, Benedict Anderson provides a useful insight: "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers [...] Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings. (This is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else they could be but Germans, Americans, Argentineans...?) [...] The cultural significance of such monuments becomes even clearer if one tries to imagine, say, a Tomb of the Unknown Marxist or a cenotaph for fallen Liberals." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, op. cit., 10)

<sup>25</sup> Marina Werner, op. cit., 140.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Correll, "Rem(a)inders of G(l)ory: Monuments and Bodies in *Glory* and *In the Year of the Pig*," *Cultural Critique*, No.19, Fall 1991, 142.

political and ethical relations. They are defined by mere nature, mere corporeality and they have no place in the semi-divine political body except to serve it at its most basic and material level.<sup>27</sup>

Before the Second World War, female allegorical statues were so crucial for public statuary produced not only in those Western countries molded by totalitarian patterns, such as Germany or Italy, but also in other European states that did not show such inclinations. The 1930s brought about a true revival of the 'allegorical speech' accepted the world over. While European nation-states, in which the 'horizontal fraternities' did not allow women's suffrage but notwithstanding praised women as Mothers of their Nations, in the Soviet Union, the image of the Soviet couple (immortalized by Vera Mukhina in her sculpture *Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*, 1937) had to point to the equality of genders established by the October Revolution. This image that became the icon of Socialist Realism, presents though, a conventional division of gender roles, since it features the male worker, standing for industry, linked to an urban setting and 'culture') and the female peasant, associated with agriculture, earth and 'nature'.

Predictably, the end of the Second World War induced a new monument 'boom', experienced again by both the winners and the losers. Quickly after 1945, however, Europe faced the Cold War during which the 'peoples' democracies' turned to (an imposed) 'Great Realism', and the Western liberal democracies, or the countries that were 'in-between' (like Titoist Yugoslavia, for example, which left 'Stalin's line' in the summer of 1948), will (re)introduce the 'Great Abstraction.' Behind the Berlin Wall, the statue of the Red Army soldier became installed in every single capital city of the liberated 'East' (Berlin and Vienna included) meant to produce the spatialization of new '-red'- power. Along with this male allegory sculpted by Soviet artists and erected everywhere as early as in 1945, the artists in the 'East' massively turned inventing another tradition: they found in Delacroix's *Liberty* of 1830, 'the working class goddess,' a source of inexhaustible inspiration. Many of her 'sisters' re-emerged as the allegory of (Soviet) *Victory* and in Titoist Yugoslavia, where socialist revolution was carried out parallel to the liberation of the country (1941-1945), as *Revolution*. The figures of *Victory* topping the memorials in the 'East' of course lost their wings as they referred too much to the Christian angels belonging to the 'spiritual' and 'backward' society, left behind by the Leninist world. Thus, an 'atheist' Nike which did not lose its belligerent posture, and the figure of *Liberty* with her dress slipped and one breast bared, landed in war memorials installed from Warsaw (*The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial*, 1948) to Zagreb (*Monument to the Slain*, 1951), from Macedonia to Bratislava to Tbilisi (*Victory Monument*, 1980-85). They were to be seen in Baghdad (*Monument to Peace*, late 1950s), or in Volgograd where a gigantic statue of *Motherland* (1965) borrowed the posture of "femme de peuple" immortalized by Delacroix, who in turn may have been inspired by the antique figure of *Nike apteros* (a wingless *Victory*).

Given that abstract art had conquered public places all around the Western world (and Socialist Yugoslavia) from the late 1950s on, one could easily presume that with this 'universal language' (*Weltsprache*) the glorious days of female allegory were - finally over. But did female allegories really depart from a public space now informed by High Modernism?

Art historical writings inquiring into the female allegory in public space are not numerous, and except for Marina Werner, gendered studies of this field in Anglo-American literature are rare. German feminist art historians, on the other hand, have produced valuable contributions to this subject, but nobody dealing it as persistently as Silke Wenk. After having examined 'allegorical femininity' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, she turned to post-1945 public sculpture, and discussed modernist practices, where it had long been thought that allegorical meaning had been bypassed. Treating this presumption as another 'modernist myth' Wenk was able to formulate fully original and unknown reading of non-representational public sculpture. In several 'abstract' and 'content-less' monuments built in West and East Germany after the Second World War, she traced the unassuming vitality and presence of the female allegory of *Victory*, *Nike*, although in these high modernist and non-figurative sculptures the 'body' of the goddess had disappeared. Namely, she focused on public sculptures with schematized depictions of fire, like Bernd Heiliger's, *The Flame* (Berlin, 1961) or in East Germany, Theo Balden's monument, *Karl Leibknecht – Heart and Flame of the Revolution* (Potsdam, 1983). In her well-grounded argumentation, Wenk detected here the form of *Nike's* wings. Furthermore, this shape may be read in twisted, organic shapes, for example Henry Moor's public productions commissioned by the FRG in the 1960s, and it was certainly evident in the abstract public work of Bernd Heiliger entitled *Nike* (Duisburg, 1956).<sup>28</sup> It may be interesting to remember here that these public commissions took place in Germany just after the country came out of the de-Nazification era, when the ideal of victory sneaked into the public space. Following Silke Wenk's inquiries, I was able to find many similar examples of fire/wings in 'abstract' monuments erected in Socialist Yugoslavia (*Monument to Revolution*, Ljubljana, 1961) and much later in Armenia (design for the monument to Great Patriotic Revolution, Tbilisi, 1985). Parallel to these analyses of sculptures usually described as "organic abstraction," in 1990 Anna

<sup>27</sup> Moira Gatens, "Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic," in Katie Conboy et al., (Eds.) *Writing on the Body*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 83.

<sup>28</sup> See Silke Wenk, "Nike in Flammen," in Gudrun Kohn-Waechter (Ed.) *Schrift der Flammen*, Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1991, 193-218; also Wenk, *Henry Moore – Large Two Forms*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1997.

Chave inquired a rather similar “rhetoric of power” in American Minimalism and read these sculptures, earlier believed to be ‘self-referential’ and ‘un-iconic,’ as in fact “cryptically iconic.”<sup>29</sup>

### Lady Rosa of Luxembourg

In 1985, *Le monument de memoire* in Luxembourg was unveiled for the second time and finally fully restored. The *Gëlle Fra*, after having spent some forty-five years in storage, appeared in full glamour on the top of the memorial. Her first appearance in 1923, also caused a local scandal, so the polemic over Sanja Ivekovic’s project, was not the first violent dispute over the *Gëlle Fra*. Back in the early 1920s, this figure with her dress tightly pressed to her body, was also an object of disagreement. It was then considered “indecent” by the local press and the patriotic male audience who accused the sculptor of showing the figure “almost nude” in a memorial complex sometimes considered as the memorial to the Unknown Soldier. The later destiny of this figure is just as interesting. In 1940, during the German occupation, the monument had to be removed, and the *Gelle Fra* was hidden by workers, secretly kept in a storeroom over the war years. Given that the realization of Luxemburgian nation’s desire to reconstruct this central national monument took ‘a while’ (1945-1985), the names on the monument’s pedestal today include soldiers who fell in both World Wars.

In the 1980s, however, ‘new’ public art became not only ‘post-figurative’ but also ‘post-object’ and often immaterial, and this may mean that today we enjoy ‘post-allegorical’ public spheres. This presumption is well supported by some artists. Reflecting later on her public projects, including *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Washington D.C., 1980-82) she designed, Maya Lin mentions she found the issue of allegory exhausted: “For me, these projects require the kind of art that communicate with you almost immediately and not be referential. The second you start intellectualizing it, it’s lost. What I really question is allegory. This represents this because it says so in the guidebook. It’s difference between telling people what to think and enabling them - allowing them - to think.”<sup>30</sup> However, her highly discussed memorial in Washington was initially contested for not being ‘patriotic enough’, an opinion supported by James Watt, First Secretary of the Interior in the Reagan’s administration.<sup>31</sup> A new memorial was commissioned from Frederic Hart, this time including three male allegories believed to provide the necessary ‘bodily identification’ that every national memorial is expected to offer. Alas, this allegorical representation of the 1984 Vietnam Veterans Memorial was politically correct (one black, one Latino and one white soldier) only from the male point of view, as it made invisible the women’s endeavors in Vietnam. This misinterpretation occasioned the creation of the third monument, this time *Vietnam Women’s Memorial* (unveiled in 1993) with three nurses and one dying male soldier in which the artist, Glenna Goodacre, cited a ‘non-political’ scene of the Christian *Pieta*.<sup>32</sup>

With her title, *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg*, Sanja Ivekovic purposely refers to the same Christian tradition, in which the motherhood fuses with virginity (‘Notre Dame’, Our Lady, the Virgin Mary). In the wake of a secular public sphere during the French Revolution, the statue of the Virgin Mary became at times quickly ‘recycled’<sup>33</sup> and used yet in post-despotic and post-religious context. Overlaying this image of women as defined by Christianity with the leftist tradition (without disregarding that the *Gëlle Fra* was saved from the occupying forces by a group of Luxembourg’s workers), Ivekovic dedicated the memorial to Rosa Luxemburg. With this move, she deliberately points to the monumental statuary, from which real women, be they philosophers, writers, artists or revolutionaries have been historically excluded, except in the case of royalty.

A question that a feminist art historian may ask (as my German colleague, Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, in fact, did) is whether Ivekovic with her pregnant *Lady Rosa* actually continues the patriarchal and nationalist discourse from where the female allegories of nations and victories were born, instead of deconstructing it? It is a relevant question. Given that earlier statues of Mothers of Nations, Victorias, Liberties, Nikes and Revolutions were hardly ever shown pregnant, and while *Rosa* is, makes a poor argument that may appeal only to those still operating with the notion of ‘artistic originality.’ I think any reading of this statue has to take into account that Ivekovic worked here with a war memorial and that, as suggested in the initial concept entitled *Pregnant Memory* (1998), women

<sup>29</sup> Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” in Holliday T. Day (Ed.) *Power: Its Myths and Mores in American Art 1961-1991*, ex.cat., Indiana Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1992, 116-122. Originally in *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 64, No.5, January 1990)

<sup>30</sup> Maya Lin quoted in Daniel Abramson, “Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines, and Minimalism,” in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 22, Number 4, Summer 1996, 697.

<sup>31</sup> Erica Doos, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Originally, the artist conceived this monument with one of the nurses holding a Vietnamese baby, but this solution was vetoed by the board members. As one of their PR staff commented: “The baby represented an accurate portrait of the war: many of the women who served over there took care of orphans. But given the proposed location for the memorial, I think the board members had to be careful not to make any political statements”. In Erika Doss, op. cit., 31.

<sup>33</sup> A statue of the Virgin Mary may be “removed from a church, given a fresh coat of paint, and, equipped with a liberty cap, placed on a public square next to liberty tree.” Hans-Christian Harten, “The Monuments of the French Revolution,” op.cit., 53.



'remember' wars differently from men, an allusion to the condition faced by women in past and present wars. That women of the 'other' side were violated and raped in these wars, including the recent Yugoslav wars, should not be overlooked here. For, in contrast to fallen male heroes, raped women are scarcely honored as 'fallen heroines,' within their own communities, but regarded suspiciously as 'fallen women' bearing 'dirty seed'.

What can be viewed as a deconstructivist as well as feminist gesture is not the pregnant figure itself, but the intersection of the visual (the statue) and the textual (the inscriptions on the plinth), of which the latter perhaps more than the former agitated the Luxemburg public. Texts Ivekovic presented on her monument are printed as a poster in three languages. They read: in French: LA RÉSISTANCE, LA JUSTICE, LA LIBERTÉ, L'INDÉPENDENCE; in German: KULTUR, KAPITAL, KUNST, KITSCH; and finally in English: WHORE, BITCH, MADONNA, VIRGIN. The notions in French and partly German, refer to the ideals and concepts that were historically conceived and practiced as 'masculine' but which became personified by idealized female bodies. "What [female] allegory has to embody, are the principles and determinations that are proclaimed to be 'masculine.' The 'spiritual' was already long in opposition to the 'corporeal', 'culture' opposed to 'nature'. In philosophy, religion, literature, and in the entire Western gender ideology, however, the 'corporeal' and 'nature' are linked to the 'feminine'."<sup>34</sup> The words in English, on the other hand, are down-to-earth expressions or common epithets with which women were - or still are - imagined as and referred to in - real life, a life that happens both in private and in public.

As these unrelated words running around the monument's plinth produced unexpected and provocative junctions, like, "la resistance" - "whore," or "la liberté"- "bitch", for instance, they triggered unprecedented emotional and political reactions. The protest came from the war veterans who fought against fascism (and Enrico Lunghi had to point out that Sanja Ivekovic's mother herself was a Croatian anti-fascist who survived two years in Auschwitz); then the right wing nationalists protested because a foreigner touched upon their memory and claimed that *Lady Rosa* was a "Communist conspiracy" and the graffiti reading "Rosa Go Home" soon appeared; Luxemburg's feminist groups, on the other hand, made their demonstration in favor of "their Rosa." The website created for that occasion was visited by some 20.000 people. In the daily newspapers, citizens discussed whether the "Gëlle Fra 2" should be removed or not, eventually, some 70% voted to keep her during the time of exhibition; there was the idea that only the text should be removed and the sculpture kept but Lunghi refused such a compromise; the artist, now back in Zagreb, has given countless email interviews, etc. The press clipping documentation contains some 700 pages. Briefly put, the scandal aroused over a public artwork in Luxembourg, proved that the public sphere could be activated as a space pregnant with contradictions. This space is not meant for their suppression, but as Rosalyn Deutsche holds, for their exposition: "Conflict, far from the ruins of democratic public space, is the condition of its existence."<sup>35</sup>

Part of these contradictions occurring in a democratic public sphere was the decision of the parliament of Luxembourg to pass a new law that had never been needed. According to the new bill the *Gëlle Fra* is acknowledged as the national monument in 2001, and as the national emblem the figure is now protected from (visual, artistic and otherwise) abuse! The book with arguments against the *Lady Rosa*, issued either by politicians, war veterans or by the inimical press is already printed.

During the exhibition *Luxembourg et les Luxembourgeois*, several possibilities for the future of *Lady Rosa* were in play. Initially the Museum of History wanted to acquire the sculpture, but after the show was over, they retracted. They proposed to keep the figure in their storage, until the 'proper moment' for buying arrived. **Ut** Sanja Ivekovic did not want *Lady Rosa* hidden as the original *Gëlle Fra* was (between 1940 and 1985), decided to donate the statue to *Fraenhaus* in Luxemburg, the shelter for the abused women. It was not a gesture of desperation, but conviction. Indeed, Sanja Ivekovic's entire practice may be observed in an more 'global' manner, described at best by Anne McClintock, who once rightly asserted: "There is not only one feminism, nor is there only one patriarchy."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Silke Wenk, "Die steinernen Frauen," op. cit., 100. (Translation B.P.)

<sup>35</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions – Art and Spatial Politics* (1996), Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ann McClintock, " 'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Nationalism, Gender, and Race" (1991), in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Eds.) *Becoming National*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 160.

