

The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion

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Input

**Workshop 8
Managing Gender and Diversity – Key Competencies in Cultural and
Citizenship Education?**

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Images and representations of women and of gender relations in contemporary history textbooks from (Central, Eastern and South Eastern) Europe

1. Introduction

The aim of this presentation is first to point out one particular feature of the contemporary history education, namely the lack of gender sensitive knowledge in the history textbooks for schools (but also for some University courses) in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe; second to argue that the lack of such a knowledge jeopardises the civic education and the formation of the future generation of European citizens.

The conclusions that follow are based on my research (still in progress) dedicated to representations of women and gender in the history textbooks in Europe. It is based on various types of sources. To begin with:

- 1) the textbooks for high schools and middle schools in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe (CESEE) which I studied not only for both textual and visual representation of women and gender, but also for use of gender sensitive language;
- 2) research articles, dealing with the topic of gender representations in the history textbooks from various countries around the world: from the CESEE (Romania, Russia, Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria) but also – for comparative purposes – from countries such as the UK, Austria, the USA, Japan, Syria, etc.;
- 3) interviews and informal conversations with researchers working on textbooks who belong to different national traditions and who between April and August 2009 were fellows at the Institute for International Textbooks Research in Braunschweig, Germany;
- 4) being the current President of the International Federation for Research in Women's and Gender History, I have also used various international sources dealing with the state of the art of women's and gender history worldwide which give some – though not always explicit – idea about the topic into consideration. I also followed some of the historiographical debates regarding the development of the historical field;
- 5) my participation in the editorial boards of several international journals and research projects also gives me additional information about the developments of the research in the field.

However, the work done so far – and the conclusions based on it – has several limitations:

- 1) I was able to consult history textbooks only in the languages I use: Russian, Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian, Slovenian, German, English/American, French, and, of course, my native Bulgarian, i.e. about 30 textbooks for both middle and high schools, which constitute only a very small part of all the textbooks published; (I managed to have a look at a couple of Polish, Czech and Slovak textbooks, too);
- 2) The textbooks I studied so far were published within the last 15 years of the transitional period (which started after 1989), i.e. 1994-2009. Part 2 of the paper gives a brief overview of the general situation of the field of Women's/Gender History today as this is an important precondition for the possibility to include the knowledge about women's past and history of gender relations not only into the present mainstream narrative but in the history textbooks as well. In Part 3, I argue why textbooks have a crucial role in civic education. In Part 4, I look at the attempts of reforming textbooks in the CESEE since the fall of communism. In Part 5, I present the major results from my research on the representations of women and gender in the history textbooks. Part 6 concludes.

2. State of the art in the field of women's/gender history

In 1975 the American historian Carl Degler answered in positive the question “Is there a history of women?” The French scholar Michelle Perrot replicated him (1984) with the edited volume, entitled “Une histoire des femmes est-elle possible?¹ (Is a history of women possible?) followed in 1998 by the collection “Une histoire sans femmes est-elle possible” (Is history possible without women?), edited by Anne-Marie Sohn and Françoise Thelamon.² As Gisela Bock rightly mentioned: “The inversion of the original question is far from being merely ironic: it suggests that, just as women’s history must be viewed and practiced as an integral part of history at large, history at large cannot be written and understood without integrating the history of women and gender relations.”³ The research and the publications on women’s and gender history showed that when women ask questions, when gender relations are put at the core of historical analysis, history changes a lot. The growing recognition that old truths and long-accepted interpretations might be different or even false when women’s experiences and perceptions were considered led feminist scholars across disciplines to challenge the conventions of language, categories of analysis, and methods of research that had led to such omission and error.⁴

It is already well-known that women’s/gender history is a field that (re)emerged with the feminist actions of the late 1960s and early 1970s and developed at an accelerating pace thereafter.⁵ Since then, a lot of publications dealing with the “state of the art” have appeared, presenting achievements made in this field. Among them: *Writing Women’s History. International Perspectives*, edited by Karen M. Offen, Ruth R. Pierson, and Jane Rendal; the five-volume *History of Women in the West*, published under the general editorship of Michelle Perrot and Georges Duby; *Écrire l’histoire des femmes*, by the well-known French historian Françoise Thébaud; and Bonnie Smith’s ironic (towards the idealized ‘invisibility’ of the omniscient narrator), provocative, and pathbreaking *Gender of History*. Another good overview of the developments of women’s and gender history in various Southern European countries is presented in the bilingual volume, edited by Gisela Bock and Anne Cova *Écrire l’histoire des femmes en Europe du sud, XIXe–XXe siècles/Writing Women’s History in Southern Europe, 19th–20th Centuries*. To these titles one may add the recent collection *History Women*, edited by Ilaria Porciani and Mary O’Dowd, published as a special issue of *Storia della Storiografia*⁶; Katheleen Canning’s rich and theoretically informed collection of essays entitled *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship*,⁷ that discusses a range of controversial issues in the field of European gender history and insists on the necessity of deconstructing and redefining of some concepts such as body, citizenship, class and experience through historical case studies. She shows how European gender history has revised the master narratives in some areas of the modern European history (such as French Revolution, nationalism and citizenship⁸) but left almost untouched some other issues (such as Weimar Germany and Nazi regime, for example). Last but not least, I would like to mention here the *Biographical Dictionary of Feminisms* and

¹ Michelle Perrot *Une histoire des femmes est-elle possible?* Marseille: Rivages, 1984.

² Anne-Marie Sohn and Françoise Thelamon (eds.) *Une histoire sans femmes est-elle possible?* Paris: Perrin, 1998.

³ Gisela Bock and Anne Cova (eds.) *Écrire l’histoire des femmes en Europe du sud, XIXe–XXe siècles/Writing Women’s History in Southern Europe, 19th–20th Centuries*, p.

⁴ Marilyn Jacoby Boxer. *When Women Ask the Questions. Creating Women’s Studies in America*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

⁵ As has been shown by many women’s historians (Kathryn Kish Sklar, Natalie Z. Davis, Bonnie Smith, Karen Offen, to name but a few) who presented the expanding new field during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶ *Storia della Storiografia*, 46, 2004.

⁷ Katheleen Canning. *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2006.

⁸ See for example Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall (eds.) *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Berg, 2000; Geoff Eley. *Culture, Nation and Gender* (about the importance of cultural studies for the study of gendered nations), and Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall (eds.) *Defining Victorian Nation: Class, Race, and Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867*. Cambridge, 2000.

Women's Movements in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries, edited by Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, which mirrors the state of women's and gender history research in these regions of Europe.

The various contributions to these volumes share concerns about the marginalization of women's and gender history in the countries studied (the extent of which, of course, differs from country to country) and the role of the regional and international social, political, economic, and cultural context for establishing and shaping this field of research. A further common feature (related to the first one) is found in the scholarly struggles against the suspicion that women's and gender history is an ideology, and that it does not meet the academic standards of scholarliness and value-free scholarship: that is, the issue of, as Keith Jenkins in another context points out, 'whether the historian's knowledge can be gained objectively and through the "proper practices", or whether it is intersubjective and interpretative.'⁹ It is, of course, an ancient tactic by those resisting change to accuse those advocating change of lowering standards.¹⁰ Keeping in mind that for some national traditions in Europe, political and institutional history is still the measure of significance and social history there has only recently been elevated to legitimacy, the subject "women" is defined as doubly marginal. Women's/Gender History there (and not only in Europe, I would dare to claim) is not recognized as a legitimate field and to admit that one worked in it is considered the kiss of death professionally. A further common concern is the inapplicability of the traditional periodization for the study of the history of women and gender, something that many years ago was discussed by Joan Kelly in her pioneering provocative essay, entitled "Did women have a Renaissance?"¹¹ Scholars who followed the path laid down by Joan Kelly-Godal continue to challenge and deconstruct accepted historical truths. They uncover the fact that many historical generalizations of the past are male-centred whilst claiming to be universally valid and do not encompass the experience of women. This brings us to the important suggestion made by Joan W. Scott, namely that "gender", rather than women, is a more useful concept for the study of history as it can be applied to all human relationships and social structures and not just the study of women's lives. Gender – conceptualized as historically specific knowledge about sexual differences – is understood to be socially constructed. But as the gender historian Marilyn Boxer has argued: '...the increasing preference for the term gender reflects more than the desire to accommodate a pluralistic understanding of "woman". Self-reflexivity and the quest for new "paradigms" in women's studies emerged concurrently with the "linguistic turn" in history, the rise of the "new historicism" in literary criticism, the burgeoning of cultural studies, and the "interpretive turn" in many liberal arts fields'¹².

⁹ Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 67.

¹⁰ "The same response greeted educational reformers in the 1840s and again at the turn of the century who wished to include the study of American history and literature in college curricula. They, too, were accused of wanting to lower standards and dilute the value of higher education..." See about this Gerda Lerner. Women among the Professors of History; the Story of a Process of Transformation. – In: Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds.) *Voices of Women Historians. The Personal, the Political, the Professional*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999, 1-10, esp. p. 5.

¹¹ For centuries the Burkhartian definitions of the Renaissance have gone unchallenged, but recent feminist history criticism has questioned its very existence (especially for women during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). In her essay, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" for example, Joan Kelly questions traditional assumptions about the experience of women. She emphasizes, as other scholars have also done, that women's historical experiences often differs from men's in regard to property rights, institutional control, religion and ideologies, and that, therefore, traditional period labels, are often meaningless for women's history. Her conclusions based on analyses of medieval and Renaissance (men's) literature, reflect on and formulate the Renaissance evolution of class, sexual and family relations, institutional policies, and political ideologies, which –according to her - show deterioration in the status and freedom of women in the Renaissance. For more recent debates on similar topics see Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (eds), *A Companion to Gender History* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

¹² Marilyn Jacoby Boxer. *When Women Ask the Questions. Creating Women's Studies in America*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

I would argue (along the lines of the feminist historical scholarship) that if we include the experience of all parts and regions of Europe into the picture of the past we will see – especially in respect to women and gender – that there are (the differences of social, political and cultural background notwithstanding) many similarities between the histories of modern (West and East) European nation states. This could be illustrated with

examples of the relationship between the nation state and citizenship in the CESEE.¹³ It shows that some categories of historical analysis promoted as universal by the establishment of the historical profession are actually partial and do not say the whole story about the past. Women's and Gender History today is a huge and valuable resource about the past of our civilization and it should be known and used properly by all professional historians. Repeting the old approach of dealing with mostly (if not always only with) diplomatic and political history does not make justice to the half of human population and does not suggest a deeper understanding of human cultural development. But if we do not respect our past, we lose our future and if we neglect our roots – we cannot grow.

3. The role of textbooks for civic education

In what follows, I would like to present the interim results testifying the connections between social changes after 1989, the character of school education and especially of textbooks in some East European states, and civic education and the formation of citizenship of the future generations from a gender sensitive perspective. As the well-known French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues, the school institution is among the major institutions – together with the Church and the State – responsible for the preservation of old stereotypes and male domination.¹⁴ Though it is clear that textbooks are not the only channels responsible for education and socialization of young generations, it would be impossible to deny their important role in the cultivation and support of the prevailing gender order, attitudes and values. With their implicit conformity textbooks (and school education in general) perpetuate the existing social rules, roles, relations, actions and positions. Textbooks and especially history ones have always served the ideological propaganda of the politically powerful.

¹³ Avdela, Efi. "Between duties and rights: gender and citizenship in Greece, 1864-1952". - In: Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (eds.) *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*. London and New York, 2005; Avdela, Efi and Angelika Psarra. "Engendering 'Greekness': Women's Emancipation and Irredentist Politics in Nineteenth-Century Greece". - In: *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, June 2005, 67-79; Bozinovic, Neda. *Zensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* (The woman question in Serbia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Beograd, 1996; Bucur, Maria *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh, 2001; Daskalova, Krassimira. "A Life in History (Fani Popova-Mutafova)". - In: *Gender and History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2002), 321-339; Daskalova, Krassimira. "The Women's Movement in Bulgaria in a Life Story". - In: *Women's History Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2004), 91-103; De Haan, Francisca, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Lutfi (eds.) *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms. Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th – 20th Centuries*. Budapest and New York, 2006; Fournaraki, Eleni. *„Institutrice, femme et mere’: ideas sur l’education des femmes Grecques au XIXeme siecle (1830-1880)*. Vol. 1-2. These de doctorat en histoire et civilisations. Universite de Paris VII. Paris, Mai 1992; Jovanovic, Miroslav and Slobodan Naumovic (eds.) *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*. Belgrade- Graz, 2002 (papers by Krassimira Daskalova. "Women, Nationalism and Nation State in Bulgaria (1840s-1940s)", 15-38; Ana Stolic. "Vocation or Hobby: The Social Identity of Female Teachers in the Nineteenth Century Serbia", 55-90; Radina Vucetic. "The Emancipation of Women in Interwar Belgrade and the 'Cvijeta Zuzuric' Society", 143-166); Kandiyoti, Deniz "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation", in: *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1991, pp. 429-443; Passmore, Kevin (ed.) *Women. Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*. Manchester, 2003 (Maria Bucur. "Romania", 57-78; Carol Lilly and Melissa Bokovoy. "Serbia", "Croatia" and "Yugoslavia", 91-123); Paletschek, Sylvia and Bianka Pietrow-Ennk (eds.) *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: a European Perspective*. Stanford CA, 2004 (Eleni Varikas..., p.); Ramet, Sabrina (ed.) *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*. University Park, 1999. (Thomas A. Emmert, "Zenski pokret: the feminist movement in Serbia in the 1920s", 33-49); Schilde, Kurt and Dagmar Schulte (eds.) *Need and Care – Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*. Opladen & Bloomfield Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005, etc.

¹⁴ Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bourdieu, P. (1978) *La Distinction: Critique social du jugement*, Paris: Minuit; Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language & Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.; Bourdieu, P. (1998) *La domination masculine*, Paris: Seuil.

Keeping in mind that they are products of the rather conservative state system, it is hard to believe that innovation would be encouraged.

Textbooks transfer, together with knowledge, the political, social, and cultural norms of the society. Present day history textbooks in particular provide a new conceptualization of the past. But even in these new versions of History women are still “those who have no right to history”, to borrow an expression from the well-known French historian Lucien Febvre. The experience and representations of women are still largely absent from the new national history canon, demonstrating the sexist biases of the new educational “politics” parading as civic and liberal. Speaking about the situation in CESEE, this is just another example that the so-called “turning points” of history do not turn around the lives of women and men in the same way. Whatever we teach must be honest, in the sense that it must be true to the surviving record of the past, i.e. our historical sources. But teachers (as representatives of the centralized state educational system) still act as “patriots on duty”. Sometimes it is easier to change curricula and textbooks than the way teachers teach.

To re-write the EE history textbooks means to start a symbolic “civil war” about the interpretations of the past that will affect school curricula. If until now women’s history researchers could accept to play the role of history’s objective analysts, this is not possible any longer because what is at stake is the formation of the civic identity of future generations. This also means that the official discourse developed in the history textbooks can be seen as a hidden program for civic education. It is important to problematize the functions and selections of the historical matter presented in history textbooks, to articulate the discriminatory silence that casts a shade on women’s historical existence, and to overcome the silence about the past of half of the population as this past is our “future’s past”.

Some of the well-known 20th century’s scholars (starting Benedetto Croce¹⁵) questioned the claim of objectivity in social science and even Max Weber¹⁶ in his presumably value-neutral concept of social science recognized the role of values. Others showed the manipulative and ideological character of historical writing. History writing, according to them, has a dual “nature” – as a scholarship and as a resource that legitimizes the political power. As Marc Ferro put it, historical writing – in spite of its declarations of “scientifism” – has two main functions: “divination” and “fight”. These “missions”, according to him, have been realized to a different extent throughout history writing but their meaning remains unchangeable. He points out that the “scholarly quality” and the methodology of history serve as no more than “a fig leaf” of ideology.¹⁷ Dominick Lacapra also insists that “we could no longer rely on the idea that objectivity is a normal given of historiography that is assured by established procedures or that bias is a deviation from normality for which we can simply ‘correct’”. More than that: “the constructive place of the historian” in the “process of elaborating a range of subject-positions (those of researcher, reader, and theorist or intellectual)” should be recognized and taken into consideration.¹⁸ Using similar sobering critical language Pierre Bourdieu showed that the canonical scholarly writing not only transmits but redistributes the „cultural capital“ and power in a society, as well.¹⁹ Feminist historians on the other hand showed that women as a subject were “hidden from history” and from other humanities and social sciences, and that scholarship is far from being “objective” or “universal”.²⁰

¹⁵ At the beginning of the 20th C Croce wrote that most historical writings pose the problems of their own time rather than of the epoch they are supposed to be studying.

¹⁶ Weber, M. (1959) *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, Berlin: Duncker and Humboldt.

¹⁷ Ferro, M. (1992) *Kak razkaivayut istoriyu detiam v raznih stranah mira*. Moskva: Visshaia shkola.

¹⁸ Lacapra, D. (2000) *History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

¹⁹ See about this term Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

²⁰ Fetterleey, J. (1978) *Resisting Reader: Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Joan W. Scott, “History Writing as Critique” and “The Question of Invisibility”...

Taking this into consideration, it is curious to follow how and why the historical narrative is putting into relief or “silencing” certain periods or aspects of the historical past. The fact that all history textbooks are ethnocentric is well documented in the international historical scholarship and the EE case is not a unique phenomenon. Here, however, I am not interested in this ideological manipulation of historiography, which is nationalistic and centered on the dominant ethnos, without concern for the historical past of the minority groups and about the multi-ethnic character of the territories considered as irredenta. I will pay attention only to the discriminatory vision of women, implicit or explicit in the history textbooks’ narrative. Needless to say, in doing so, I am not claiming to be systematic in any way. Rather, my opinion is based on a (directed, purposeful and “resisting”²¹) feminist reading and interpretation of the contents of some of the new history textbooks published after 1989.²² That is to say I do share the opinion that the scholarship in general, and history writing in particular, is not “value free” (i.e. scholarly writing is to a larger extent “colored” by the theoretical, educational, political and personal preferences of the author).

According to Pierre Nora, school textbooks – along with autobiographies – are among the “functional sites”²³ of memory where every society stores its memory for preservation or where it discovers it as a necessary part of its identity. The discourse of the history textbooks represents the official historical memory, which to a great extent is the outcome of an inter-subjective agreement of a small group of people belonging to the establishment. But whose memory does the traditional EE historical narrative articulate and what kind of historical knowledge does it offer?

Virginia Woolf wrote in 1929 that English history is “the history of the male line, not of the female. Of our fathers we know always some fact, some distinction... But of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great-grandmothers, what remains? ...”.²⁴ The history, which is taught in most EE countries at the beginning of the present century is not much different from the above-cited state of affairs.

4. Attempts at reforming school textbooks after 1989

Before 1989 there were ideological and structural differences within the education of the countries in the region (CEE). Since the fall of communism, school textbooks have been re-written in many of the former socialist countries to free them of the ideological distortions of the “old regime” and to adjust history to current political events (some suggestive cases are given with contemporary textbooks of former Yugoslav states²⁵). This process of re-writing went along with discussions and re-evaluation of the educational systems, school curricula and the contents of the textbooks.²⁶ Several collective undertakings of specialists from various European countries should be mentioned in this respect, most of them dealing with

²¹ The term “resisting reading” and “resisting reader” are due to Fetterleey (1978).

²² For examples, see my analysis on the case of the Bulgarian history textbooks see: Daskalova, Krassimira “Education and European Women’s Citizenship: Images of Women in Bulgarian History Textbooks, in: Sirkku K. Hellsten, Anne Maria Holli and Krassimira Daskalova (eds.) *Women’s Citizenship and Political Rights* (published in Women’s Rights in Europe Series), Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006, pp. 107-126 (shorter and earlier version available also in German, in: *L’Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift fuer Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*. 15. Jg. Heft 2, 2004).

²³ Sites of memory (“lieux de memoire”), according to Nora, are artificial, and deliberately fabricated. They exist to help us reveal the past and “to block the work of forgetting”. He speaks about “the topographic” (archives, libraries, museums), “memorial places” (architectural memorials and cemeteries) and “symbolic” sites of memory (as commemorations, pilgrimages, anniversaries, emblems) – all of them pretentiously universalistic, i.e. men-centred. See Nora, P. (1989) ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire [1984]’, *Representations*, 26: 7-25; Nora, Pierre *Les Lieux de memoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992 (translated into English as *Realms of Memory*, Columbia University Press, 1996–1998).

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²⁵ Stojanovic, D. (2003) ‘Construction of Historical Consciousness. The Case of Serbian History Textbooks’, in M. Todorova (ed), *National Identities and National Memories in the Balkans*, London: Hurst & Company, pp. 327-338;

²⁶ Deyanov, D. (ed) (1995) *Prenapisvaniata na novata bulgarska istoria v uchebnitsite za gimnaziite* (Re-writing the new Bulgarian history in the high school textbooks), Sofia: MNP.

the history textbooks. Already in the early 1990-s the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and the Foundation "Intercultural Center for Minority Studies and Cultural Interactions" commissioned a research entitled "Re-Writing the New Bulgarian History in the High School Textbooks". In the second half of the 1990s one big undertaking in this direction was the "Southeast European Joint History Project" (hereafter JHP), an initiative of the Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe based in Thessaloniki, Greece. Several conferences were held and their results were published.²⁷ What appears to be the main outcome of the research and workshops organized by the JHP is that without exception all educational systems in the Balkans (SEE) are ethnocentric, i.e. they favor the dominant national group. The participants in the project point out striking similarities in their national textbooks, especially in the way the neighbour "Other" is presented. They all agreed that this project and the six workshops held should fight stereotypes, prejudices and old clichés in history textbooks from the region. Some of them spoke in terms of democracy and human rights. To my knowledge, there are several other research projects dealing with the textbooks. One – sponsored by Koerber Stiftung – was dedicated to re-writing East European history by developing new historical fields and topics. Still another – sponsored by the British Council – resulted in the establishment of national helpdesks for intercultural learning materials in several European countries.²⁸

But most of these projects pay no attention to gender dimensions of national education. Good exceptions in this respect are the two projects: the one on primary school textbooks in Croatia and another – of Romanian colleagues entitled "Gendering Education in Romania".²⁹ The findings in all cases show that awareness of gender issues in school activities is small and there is no specific concern for them. In the context of the ongoing reform of Romanian primary and secondary education, most of the answers of interviewed teachers show that they are not prepared for a gender sensitive education. They are more predisposed to maintain the cultural norms (including those based on gender) and act in a conservative way than to be "(gender) norm breaker".³⁰ As far as Romanian textbooks are concerned, as this research demonstrates, they are gender insensitive and full of implicit and explicit sexist qualifications (e.g. the maintenance of old-fashioned myths of masculinity and femininity in the texts and illustrations, etc.). Similar are the results of the project sponsored by John and Katherine Mac Arthur Fund and dedicated to gender expertise of the Russian state's educational standards, and textbooks and other teaching materials for the University education in Russia (in 2001-2003).³¹ The aim of the project was to study how gender theory and topics are presented in textbooks of history, psychology, cultural studies, political sciences, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, law, etc. The outcome shows once again how the society and its institutions (family, state, economy, culture, educational system, etc.) build different social models for women and men, i.e. they construct gender differences and gender order. The latter is continuously perpetuated in the social institutions, in the structure of consciousness and the system of communication. The results of the project underline urgent necessity to include the gender component in the various spheres of Russian educational system. As Olga Voronina put it, this is necessary as gender studies are dealing with the individual and her relationships with the world around (with various humanitarian topics interesting for every human being), i.e. with the civic education.³²

²⁷ Koulouri, C. (ed) (2001) *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*, Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe; Koulouri, C. (ed) (2002) *Clio in the Balkans. The Politics of History Education*, Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe;

²⁸ On the idea for helpdesks, see Sercu, L. (1999) *National Helpdesks for Intercultural Learning Materials. A Guideline*, Utrecht: Parel.

²⁹ Stefanescu, D.-O. and Miroiu, M. (ed) (2001) *Gen si politici educatiunonale* (Gendering Education in Romania) Bucuresti.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

³¹ O. A. Voronina (ed.) (2005) *Gendernaia expertise uchebnykh dlia visshoi shkolii* (Gender expertise of textbooks for University education), Moscow.

³² Ibid., p. 6.

While it is clear that history textbooks in Eastern Europe are no longer exclusively devoted to the narration of wars, diplomatic treaties and deeds of monarchs and state officials, their contents and the knowledge they offer about the economy, social life, social groups, and culture are far from satisfactory. History textbooks are far from being means of critical assessment of historical discourse; they still do not give conceptual tools for better understanding of the conflicting interests of various social actors in history, knowledge that should help young people to understand current social and political realities.³³

I will skip here – because of the lack of time and space – the examples given by researchers who during the last 20 years have done gender sensitive analysis of the various national traditions of textbooks. They deal with history textbooks in countries as different as UK³⁴, Bulgaria,³⁵ Greece,³⁶ Romania,³⁷ former Yugoslavia,³⁸ Russia,³⁹ Germany,⁴⁰ France,⁴¹ Austria,⁴² with the USA, Japan⁴³ and Syria,⁴⁴ etc.

5. Results of my research on women and gender in the history textbooks

I will try to summarize the main concerns of these researchers:

1. The images of women that appear on the pages of the history textbooks represent “the woman” as an immutable natural being. “She” gives birth and raises children, lives her whole life at home or in the fields, takes care of the small things in everyday life, and is “protected” from being active in the public sphere, where power is exercised. The reproductive (“natural”) “function” appears to be the main, if not the only, role for women in the past – their “destiny”. What transpires through the pages of the school textbooks is the sexist vision of the “woman” as a natural, passive, and motherly concerned creature, totally immersed in “her femininity” while the “man” is gendered only in his relations to the “woman” and his attributes are considered to be universal. Activities of men are considered not biological but political – something that secures their place in History. The main point here is that many contemporary

³³ Dragonas, T. and Frangoudaki, A. ‘The Persistence of Ethnocentric School History’ in C. Koulouri (ed.) *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*. Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 37-47.

³⁴ Osler, Audrey “Still Hidden from History? The representation of women in recently published history textbooks”, in: *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1994.

³⁵ Daskalova, Krassimira (2006) “Education and European Women’s Citizenship: Images of Women in Bulgarian History Textbooks”, in: Sirkku K. Hellsten, Anne Maria Holli and Krassimira Daskalova (eds.) *Women’s Citizenship and Political Rights*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006, pp.107-126 (shorter and earlier version available also in German: - In: *L’Homme. Europaäische Zeitschrift fuer Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*. 15. Jg. Heft 2, 2004).

³⁶ Katz, V. (2001) ‘Workshops for the Future’, in: C. Koulouri (ed.) *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*. Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, pp 61-67.

³⁷ Miroiu, M. (2003) *Guidelines for Promoting Gender Equality in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe*, Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES.

³⁸ Sklevicky, Lydia “More Horses Than Women: On the Difficulties of Founding Women’s History in Yugoslavia”, in: *Gender and History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1989, pp. 68-75. This situation was also reported by the Croatian participants at the Helsinki workshop on European women’s political participation in September 2003.

³⁹ O. A. Voronina (ed.) (2005) *Gendernaia expertise uchebnikov dlia visshoi shkolii* (Gender expertise of textbooks for University education), Moscow. See especially T. B. Riabova, *Gendernaia expertise uchebnikov I uchebniih possobii po istoriui* (Gender Expertise of History Textbooks and Textbook Materials), in: O. A. Voronina (ed.), *Gendernaia expertise uchebnikov dlia visshoi shkolii* (Gender expertise of textbooks for University education), Moscow: 2005, p. 123-140

⁴⁰ Schissler, H. (2001) ‘Beyond National Narratives. The Role of History Textbooks’, in C. Koulouri (ed.) *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*, Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy & Reconciliation in Southeast Europe.

⁴¹ See also “Image de la femme dans les manuel scolaires”, and “Frauenbuild in Schulbuechern” from the collections of the *Historical Archive of the European University Institute* - Florence, Italy.

⁴² Elfriede Windischbauer, “Gender as a Historical category in Austrian History School Books from the 1960s until Today”. *Paper, presented at the September 2009 conference on textbooks in Braunschweig*

⁴³ Yoshifumi TAWARA, Secretary General, The National Network of Concerned Citizens on Textbooks and Children, ‘Junior High School History Textbooks: Whither “Comfort Women” and the “Nanking Massacre”?’ in: *SEKAI*, vol. 681 (November 2000).

⁴⁴ Sami Alrabaa, Sex Division of Labour in Syrian School Textbooks, in: *International Review of Education*, 31 (1985), 335-348.

textbooks perpetuate gender stereotypes and value-laden opinions about ‘the woman’ and ‘the man’, about ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’.⁴⁵

2. The fact that some of the authors of the history textbooks are women has in no way changed the “conservative” and nation-centered spirit prevalent among the members of the profession. Aware only of their own successful professional career, women-historians are not sensitive toward their own “femaleness” and the limits of the existing power frames. The thematic professional choices of those women-historians are conditioned by the educational and scholarly institutions in which they work. The topics and issues of their interests demonstrate that they unconsciously internalize the objective social structures and norms, including scholarly ones, which become what Pierre Bourdieu would call their habitus.

3. The very limited representations of women in history textbooks can be explained also with the fact that social and cultural history (especially in Eastern Europe) is underdeveloped or not taken into consideration in the school textbooks which follow mainly the political history. (If we exclude, of course, the ideologically distorted history of the working class that was researched a lot during the state socialism.) But even the political actions of women are not visible in the textbooks. The history of women’s suffrage, for example, is almost nowhere mentioned in the textbooks and only in a few cases the achievements of women’s and gender history are taken into consideration.

4. Instead of “Silences of the Middle Ages” one should properly speak about “the Silence of the Modern Ages” regarding European women’s history.⁴⁶ Due to lack of good will and scholarly (and political) interest, women are almost absent from textbooks in spite of the existence of many documents and archival materials (and research and publications) on women’s historical actions since the 18th C onwards (i.e. in 18th, 19th and 20th C).

5. Another problem is that the results of the work and publications of hundreds of women’s/gender historians (and social and cultural historians more general, as for example the achievements of the histories of private and everyday life) are not taken into consideration at all. The textbooks studied in the publications I mentioned do not represent the ‘state of the art’ in the field of history (or ‘contemporary knowledge’ as I. N. Tartakovskaia had it) but the personal opinions/judgements and preferences of their authors.⁴⁷ These authors of textbooks should present the “state of the art” in the field of history and pay attention to all new developments and not only enumerating the same political developments which were at the core of the historians’ interest since the 19th C...

“History” remains mute when historians do not make it speak.

6. The presumably “universal” and “value free” language of the textbooks is not innocent but ideologically manipulative (and in many cases explicitly sexist). It does not help overcoming the traditions of the patriarchal culture but supports their perpetuation. It possesses huge symbolic power that builds images, forms attitudes, values, and modes of behavior, and reproduces patriarchal hierarchical relations in various social domains.⁴⁸ This is the power

⁴⁵ About cultural studies of masculinities see, for example, Beynon, John *Masculinities and Culture*. Buckingham: Open Univ. Press, 2002; Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996.

⁴⁶ Here I refer to the title of the volume II of the well-known multi-volume edition dealing with women’s history in the Western societies. See C. Klapisch-Zuber (ed) *A History of Women in the West. Vol. II: Silences of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

⁴⁷ In O. Voronina’s volume.

⁴⁸ On the symbolic power of language, see Bourdieu (1991). As Elfriede Windischbauer showed in her presentation re Austrian history textbooks, the German Language is a very male-dominated one. Many of the so-called “neutral” nouns are in the masculine form, but are aimed at including women, as well. She mentions lots of efforts to make women more visible linguistically.

that chooses some voices to be heard, and causes others to be ignored, disciplined, rejected, ironized, ostracized...

Language is sexist when women and their achievements are ignored, when women are dependent on and subordinated to men, when women are only portrayed in stereotypical roles and are shown to have only stereotypical interests and abilities, when they are humiliated and ridiculed by derogatory language.⁴⁹

7. The incorporation of women's history in "the functional places of memory" (Pierre Nora) is an important part of the identity politics of every society. For part of the Western societies this was an issue of scholarly debates and concerns some 30-35 years ago, when the new wave of feminism reached its highest point and helped for the establishment of women's/gender studies and women's/gender history, as a scholarly disciplines. During the 1980s some West European feminists denounced the sexism hidden in their national history textbooks as seen from projects as "Image de la femme dans les manuels scolaires", and "Frauenbild in Schulbuechern".⁵⁰ But as my interviews with some French textbook researchers in 2009 reveal, for example, in the contemporary French textbooks women and gender relations are less visible then they were in the 1980s.

8. In the present day post-communist EE feminism is almost not existent as social practice and unknown or misrepresented as an ideology and historical phenomenon. Here there are "deep seated notions of gender difference" combined with the idea of "a lack of any real sense of gender inequality"⁵¹. That is why a myth of "gender harmony" is being elaborated by some East European scholars and women's activists in contrast to the Western feminist idea of universality of gender power relations. From here, it is not difficult to reach the concept of "gender parallels". It seems that the communist propaganda succeeded in silencing the "eruptions" and "flows"⁵² of Western feminisms in the Eastern part of Europe. The communist notion of emancipation and equality (equated primarily with "the right" to work), inculcated by the "old regime", still prevails. In order to have women adequately represented in history textbooks, it is necessary to take into consideration the development of other scholarly fields, such as historical anthropology (with its emphasis on family and sexuality), oral history, history of everyday life, of the mentality, in addition to the rehabilitation of feminism. To that purpose, the interests, energy and work in the same direction of many people and institutions are needed. But first of all, one has to make it clear for a wider audience that relations between women and men are social relations and that sex-based distinctions have a fundamentally social character. And that political, social and economic life is shaped by cultural concepts.

9. Although most of the European states adopted the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and introduced guidelines for free of stereotypes representations of women and men in school textbooks and other teaching materials, and for promoting women's and gender history, as some statistical data show (based on content analysis of texts and images), gender equality (and equity) has still a long way to go.⁵³ To represent women as active social actors in the past means to shatter the stability of the traditional history narrative. Re-considered from the perspective of women, history requires other signposts. To re-write the history of Europe means to start a "civil war" with existing

⁴⁹ Troemel-Ploetz, *Frauen und Macht in der Sprache*, p. 199.

⁵⁰ See footnote 39 above.

⁵¹ Watson, P. (1993) 'The Rise of Masculinism in Eastern Europe', *New Left Review*, 198: 71-82.

⁵² These metaphores were coined by Offen, K. (2000). *European Feminisms, 1750-1950. A Political History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁵³ See for example the text by Elfriede Windischbauer, "Gender as a Historical category in Austrian History School Books from the 1960s until Today". *Paper, presented at the September 2009 conference on textbooks in Braunschweig*. She calculated that in four generations of Austrian textbooks (first after 1963 and fourth - after 2000) the number of entries referring to women are many times less then the number of entries that concern men.

“universalistic” interpretations. But if we want to build a more tolerant, multicultural, and pluralistic civil society in the future, women should enter The History.

6. Conclusion

The notion of citizenship – based on the liberal ideas of individualism and equality and developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth century – marked a radical departure from traditional ideas of society as made up of natural hierarchies and inequalities. Its main idea is that all individuals are born free and equal. Liberal ideology presents the modern abstract (“universal”) individual as social actor without gender, but, in fact, this individual appears with all the qualities that women are assumed not to have.⁵⁴ Feminist scholars criticized liberal (male) understanding of citizenship which applies only to the rights, entitlement, and patterns of participation in public institutions.⁵⁵ Feminists argue that alongside the history of citizenship, it is important to explore the history of the public-private divide as public and private are valued differently, ruled by a different logic of action, and gendered. Men’s citizenship – according to feminist scholars – was constructed on the “fraternal social contract” that excludes women and on the domestic patriarchal power men were given. As the case of (East) European history textbooks shows, a cultural change should be made from social models where women are defined as “minors”, or mainly in relation to their reproductive capacities, toward models in which they are defined as persons and individuals, entitled to take equal part in the public institutions of modern society. Only then one can expect that representations and images of women in the contemporary East European (but not only) textbooks – and education in general – would not essentialize and dehistoricize women but help overcoming the implicit misogynistic denial of women’s humanity still present in our culture. Then and only then, it won’t be necessary any longer to struggle to define women’s rights as human rights and the old question “Are women human?” would be answered in the positive. Then and only then women’s presense in the (local and central) seats of political power – in municipal and Parliamentary structures – would make a difference and the goals of civic education will be fulfilled...

⁵⁴ Okin, S. (1979) *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁵⁵ One may mention here the case of the recently published textbook for the 12 grade of the Bulgarian secondary schools, entitled "World and Individual", which is supposed to give basic knowledge about society and its citizens, that does not differentiate between women and men citizens but speaks in pretentiously non-gendered "universal" terms while it actually obeys the old cliches that to be a "woman" or a "man" is biologically predestined. See Grekova, M., Deyanova, L., Dichev, L., Kabakchieva, P., Kolev, K. and Shikova, I. (2002), *Sviat I lichnost. Uchebnik za 12 class (World and Individual for 12 Grade)*, Sofia: Prosveta, esp. pp. 112, 113 and 130. Speaking about the hierarchy of identities, its companion book [Deyanova, L., Dichev, I., Kabakchieva, P., Kolev, K., Mineva, M. and Shikova, I. (2002) *Sviat I lichnost. Uchebno pomagalo za 12 class (World and Individual in the United Europe for 12 grade)*, Sofia: Prosveta] does not even mention that there are gender hierarchies in the contemporary societies (see esp. pp. 21-23).