Best Article in Slavic/Eastern European/Eurasian Women’s Studies

Yana Hashamova, “War Rape: (Re)defining Motherhood, Fatherhood, and Nationhood” in Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova edited, Embracing Arms. Cultural Representation of Slavic and Balkan Women in War (Central European University Press, 2012)

Yana Hashamova’s essay is an important intervention in the debate over the fate of women raped in wartime. Her discussion complicates the usual depiction of survivors as hapless victims by focusing on the dilemmas women faced when they bore a child against their will. Two fictional works addressing this predicament—one a novel by Slavenka Drakulić, the other a film by Jasmila Žbanić—weave painful stories of “impossible motherhood.” Building on Kristeva’s argument about the power of maternity, Hashamova insists that we recognize the active subjectivity women demonstrate: first in choosing motherhood despite their reservations, and then living with the consequences in a society still aching with hatred and suspicion. The essay is a powerful indictment of the violence of war and the traumas that linger in peace: whether they be homegrown, or committed abroad when images of victimhood dominate the narrative. Hashamova calls on us to be witnesses to suffering, and to the redemption found in a child’s loving face. The Committee awards Yana Hashamova the prize for Best Article in Slavic/Eastern European/Eurasian Women’s Studies.