

**FROM “HYGIENIC SADDLES”
TO THE “VEHICLE OF BEAUTY”:
DISCOURSES ON THE CYCLING WOMAN FROM
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY
TO THE 1930s**

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ABSTRACT

This study is centred on women and bicycles. The historical-archival analysis of primary and secondary sources reveals the patterns of discrimination of women, their disqualification from participation in public sphere as well as professional sport. This paper displays how the newly invented bicycle was perceived as a threat to traditional gender roles and obtained a name of “social revolutionizer.”

The thesis consists of three main parts: historical background of the bicycle in relation to women in the U.S.; analytical review of the recontextualization of the bicycle in Lithuania; and the analysis of textual and visual publications in the popular press in Lithuania with regard to female bicyclists.

Through the analysis of textual and visual publications I examine how the bicycle was “gendered” within the popular discourse of mass media from the time of its emergence until its appropriation for women. The results of my research prove the assumption that the shift in discourses actually means only the alteration of form. The institutionalized mechanisms of discipline became institutionally unbound, dispersed power embodied in self-surveillance and beauty practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel... the picture of free, untrammelled womanhood.

- Susan B. Anthony, 1896¹

With this inspiring quote I would like to invite you to an intellectual journey through the history of the cycling woman. As many authors (Furness 2005; Marks 1990; Zheutlin 2006) assert, the strongest political effects of bicycle appropriation became evident when women started to use it for the purposes of mobility, pleasure, and empowerment. In the 1880s and 1890s American women had to fight prevailing attitudes in order to move away from stereotypes that bound them to domestic concerns.

According to feminist scholars, *Western* culture is “founded on the notion of sexual difference: the idea that there is an essential difference between men and women, expressed in the behaviors of masculinity and femininity and their attendant practices” (Jeffreys 2005:20). Believing in “natural”, inborn differences between sexes supports creations of two distinct, unequivocally defined categories of male and female, whereas differentiation of *feminine* and *masculine* psychological and behavioral propensities are generally explained by biology (hormones, brains, genetic structure), body features, and other “convenient” (in regard to patriarchy) characteristics (Lorber and Farrell 1991).

In the 19th century, a woman, who *naturally* could not be equal to a man, was seen as maternal, delicate, modest, sentimental, and meek. As Marks (1990:1) points out, “the “womanly woman”, was one of the nineteenth century’s most memorable myths.” The presumed women’s difference from men disqualified them from participation in public

¹ American suffragist Susan B. Anthony said this in *New York World* interview in 1896. It was published in “Champion of Her Sex,” *New York Sunday World*, 2 February 1896 (Zheutlin 2006).

sphere. Because of the desire to keep women in their “proper place” – the domestic realm, fears surfaced in the late 19th century in the U.S., when the newly invented bicycle became a threat to the existing social order.

As Marks suggests (1990), the “New Woman”, who rode the bicycle and wore the *bloomers*, stood up courageously before the eyes of society with the decision to gain equality with men and escape from the common beliefs about inborn femininity, weakness, submissiveness, and passiveness. However, “the implicit threat to the male monopoly on achievement was answered with opposition” (Barthel 1988:123). As Garvey (1995:96) specifies, the emergence of the bicycle was accompanied by advertising, stories, and articles which portrayed the cycling woman as a “threat to traditional roles.” Because she refused to accept the fixed divide between male and female, the *New Woman* was criticized as “unnatural”, “unfeminine”, “unladylike”, “shameless”, and even “promiscuous”. However, the bicycle became a social “revolutionizer” which brought about emancipation for American women.

The case of American female cyclists in the late 19th century is the starting-point of my story. It serves as a theoretical and historical background for my further analysis of the appropriation of the bicycle in Lithuania. Building my theoretical discussions on the works of American suffragettes Willard (1895) and Ward (1896); historians Smith (1972) and Bijker (1995); feminist scholars Marks (1990), Balsamo, and Ehrenpreis (1999), I expose in chapter 2 the construction of gender distinction through “professional knowledge” of the female body and introduce the concept of *disciplinary power* (Foucault 1991). I also discuss how the body – one of the signifiers of social status – serves as a battle site (Baudrillard 1998) and what women have gained in this battle through the appropriation of the bicycle.

Beginning my analysis from the social/cultural context of the invention of the bicycle and its early life in America, I move to the emergence of the vehicle in Lithuania, where the

history of cycling woman is not written yet. Is it because the bicycle had no revolutionary power among Lithuanian women? Did the emergence of the bicycle raise any significant conflicts and reconsiderations in terms of gender? Was cycling a gendered activity at the time of its advent? And if it was, what kind of puzzles, discussions, alterations or reforms did it bring along? Moreover, were there any links to the experiences of American women?

In order to answer these questions, I analyse how the new vehicle was recontextualized in Lithuania through various accounts in the popular press – the major space for popularizing the invention. Through the analysis of textual and visual materials I explore how the bicycle was “gendered” within the popular discourse of mass media from the time of its emergence in the country until the appropriation of the bicycle for women. I look at those texts and images through the prism of power relations between the sexes with an emphasis on sport and beauty practices as forms of gender discrimination. A more detailed account of my methodology is presented in chapter 3.

Chapter 4.1 is dedicated to analysis of printed texts that speak about the history of cycling in Lithuania as well as about struggles of women to escape prevailing stereotypes and the label of “weaker sex”. In Chapter 4.2 I move on to the visual representations of women on bicycles in the popular media. According to many scholars (Bartky 1990; MacDonald 1995; Gallagher 2001; Dyer 1992; Berger 1972; Goffman 1972; Baudrillard 1998), advertisements fulfill the function of reinforcing an existing order of domination of men and subordination of women. I extend the scope of my analysis beyond advertisement and look at all kinds of images portraying the cycling woman, for there were not many ads of bicycles in given period. In order to understand how public discourse was adjusted in regard to cycling, I build my analysis on feminist criticism of beauty practices (Talbot and Andrews 2000; Jeffreys 2005) as well as Goffman’s (1979) insights on gender display in media images. In result, I

argue that the bicycle – a new tool for liberation – was appropriated in the media as a new tool of patriarchal control.

The focal point of my thesis can be framed by following questions: through what social practices is the female body gendered, framed as “different”, objectified, oppressed, culturally dominated, and marked as inferior in regard to bicycling in both American and Lithuanian contexts. Incorporating the theoretical-critical insights of other scholars into my own analysis, I present shifts of discourses on the female body, by focusing on the body as a bearer of signs and cultural meaning. After identifying the imposition of discipline upon the female bodies by institutional power in Foucauldian terms (e.g. medicalization), I disclose the new ways of discipline through, what Bartky (1990) calls, *institutionally unbound power*, embodied in self-surveillance and beauty practices.

2. THE REVOLUTIONARY BICYCLE IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY IN THE U.S.

2.1. The bicycle

The history of the bicycle is long and complex. As many other inventions, the bicycle had a lot of less successful precursors, such as *célerifère* (a “wooden horse with two wheels”, made in France in 1791), *draisine* or *hobbyhorse* (the “running machine” constructed in 1817 in Germany), the *velocipede* or *boneshaker* (built in France in 1865), the high-wheeled *ordinary bicycle* (patented in 1870 in England). Neither of them became as popular as the new advancement in 1884 called *safety bicycle* (Smith 1972). This “low-wheeled vehicle with diamond frame and a chain drive on the rear wheel” was the bicycle as we know it now (Bijker 1995:19).

According to Bijker (1995:37), “[w]hereas skiing began as a way of getting about and evolved into a sport, bicycling began as a sport activity and evolved into a means of transport”. In the 1880s, the first bicycles were developed as „macho machines with an emphasis on speed, danger, and adventure” (Creager, Lunbeck, Schiebinger 2001:136). Consequently, throughout much of the early 1880’s, cycling was only affordable to *men* from the upper classes. Back in 1884, the price of bicycles ranged between \$100 and \$150, what made about half a year’s wages for most Americans (Smith 1972). For those who could afford the vehicle, cycling embodied physical activity and the pleasure of personal display (Bijker 1995). Showing off for the ladies in the parks became a quite popular activity among well-off gentlemen.

The demand for bicycles grew constantly during the 1880s. Public pressure increased the scale of manufacturing. With the start of mass production the cost of the bicycle markedly decreased, thus providing members of the working class access to the new technology (Smith

1972). The year 1895 marked the peak of the American bicycle craze. As Peter Zheutlin (2006) suggests, in 1897 alone, more than 2 million bicycles were sold in the United States, about one for every 30 inhabitants.

It is important to emphasize that bicycling was not only a sport and/or a mode of transportation. The 19th century gives an excellent example of cyclists who appropriated the bicycle as a tool for political critique and mobilization. According to Furness (2005:56), “a simple form of technology, the bicycle, has been historically politicized as an instrument of critique in regards to class, patriarchy, and car culture; utilized as a vehicle for direct action protest.” In the late nineteenth century, cycling became a technological narrative of progress and mobility.

2.2. Object to women bicyclists ²

To the biggest surprise of the inventor-entrepreneurs, women started to be the main target group of the new mass market, in particular with the introduction of a new bicycle design based on safety (“safety bicycle”) (Creager et al. 2001). A particular historical setting of technological advance and social processes enabled women to make use of a new tool of „biopower” (Foucault).

Although the bicycle was not explicitly forbidden to women, social conventions regarding women’s manners, desires, clothing, and especially – health, were very strong and did not encourage “the weaker sex” to cycle (Furness 2005). Medical “experts”, theologians, journalists, and anti-suffragists condemned cycling as a hazardous fad, an outrageous offence, or impertinence. Criticism was usually based on women’s mobility, physical capacity, clothing restrictions, propriety, femininity, and religion. Ironically, female cycling was met with resistance not only from men, the medical community, the church, but also from other

² The title of the article in *The New York Times*, June 15, 1895.

women such as the *Women's Rescue League*³. Along with the fears of the priests that people would not attend church any more (Neesen 1899), this “militant feminist organization that demanded that all bachelors be forced to marry, concluded that “bicycling by young women has helped more than any other media to swell the ranks of reckless girls, who finally drift into the standing army of outcast women of the United States” (Smith 1972:75).

2.2.1. Physical capabilities, health issues, and sexuality

Talking about the emergence of the bicycle we inevitably encounter two main fields – sport and science. “Lynda Birke and Gail Vines, two feminist sport sociologists, identify both science and sport as cults of masculinity marked by a belief in the superiority of the male body” (Balsamo 1997:42). For long years, men dominated sport arena as a field of competitiveness, power, and strength, which was closed for women because of their ‘womanly’ qualities.

According to Balsamo (1997:26), there was a time (18th-19th centuries) when science was perceived as providing fundamental truths about the body – the “reality of bones and organs was taken to be the only foundation of the moral order, a biology of incommensurability became the means by which such differences could be authoritatively represented”. It is amazing how in the medical textbooks of the nineteenth century the female body was constructed as an object of medical attention and control. Medicalization of the female body was a counter reaction to the threatening instability of gender boundaries.

The claims about different physical capabilities of women and men had to be constantly verified. As “Lenskyj’s and Vertinsky’s analysis suggests, historically the properly feminine body was considered to be constitutionally weak and pathological. To be both female and strong implicitly violates traditional codes of feminine identity.” (Balsamo

³ In 1896-1896, the president of the *Women's Rescue League* Charlotte Smith did everything to save morality and outlaw cycling by women (Smith 1972).

1997:43). The fragility and sensitivity of the female organism was perceived as undeniable truth, therefore many critics warned that the bicycle was harmful to woman's health because of different kinds of possible injuries (Zheutlin 2006). According to some medical "experts", women should not take to the wheel because cycling was "physically dangerous and unwise for women: it would result in enlarged lower leg muscles, bow-legs, spinal curvatures, deformed hands and feet and so on (Curry; Bingham 1992). Moreover, the riding may cause bad future health with illness of kidneys, liver and urinary tract. The widespread fear was that cycling, due to the minor side-effect from the vibrations of the wheel, could eventually lead to insanity or even death (Smith 1972; Zheutlin 2006).

Thus, popular fears centered around long term bicycle-caused afflictions that acquired special names. The cyclist had to beware of the "bicycle walk"⁴, "bicycler's heart", "bicycle hump", "bicycle hands", "bicycle wrists", "bicycle eye", "bicycle twitch", "bicycle jerks" and many other harmful effects. The "bicycle face" was one of the most unwanted for women cyclists, since it meant ugly deformations of the face: wide and widely expectant expression of the eyes, strain lines around the mouth, and "general focusing of all the features toward the center, a sort of physiognomic implosion" (Smith 1972:70).

It was also widely believed that for women, cycling was "but a step from extreme nervous susceptibility to downright hysteria, and from that to overt insanity... Seen in this way, hysteria is simultaneously the norm of the female body taken to its logical extreme and a medical category that effectively defines this norm as inherently abnormal." (Balsamo 1997:27). The *hysterization* of the female body, to borrow a Foucauldian term, was one way in which scientific *biopower* was organized and reified.

⁴ The scale of harming effects is presented in details in Robert A. Smith's book *A social history of the bicycle*. For instance, the "bicycle walk" was described by doctors as the walk of the cyclemaniac who "did not swing his foot forward, but lifted it off the ground in a rising, circular motion, as if he were riding the pedal" (Smith 1972:67). The effect of "bicycle hands" starts with the slight numbness of the thumb and fingers and slowly makes the patient into "permanently useless" (Smith 1972:69).

“[T]he meaning of the female body as a “hysterical entity” – a corporeal being susceptible to hysteria – was a meaning constructed through discursive practices, i.e., not only in the discourses of science and medicine, but also through the establishment of social institutions” (Balsamo 1997:20). Seeing that the female body was presented as fragile, sick, always inducing illness, and always needing control (Foucault 1988), it was notably emphasized that the “bicycle gives to women more freedom than they have heretofore enjoyed, and it is not surprising that... silly, weak-minded women lose control of themselves when they have liberty thus thrust upon them“ (Neesen 1899:88). Here the patriarchal discourse is extremely striking: men have appropriated their status as if they were the ones who have a right to decide and command, allowing something, giving permission or more liberty to women.

The medical authority created a “scientifically rational” order and defined the female body by its reproductive capacity (Balsamo 1997). Building their objections on science and medical knowledge, the “community of men” created plenty of warnings regarding women’s unique anatomy and physiology, and their special moral obligations that disqualified them from vigorous physical activity. According to Balsamo (1997:42), “women have a moral duty to preserve their vital energy for childbearing and to cultivate personality traits suited to the wife-and-mother role”. Therefore, riding the bicycle not only strained female bodies and fostered traits unbecoming to “true womanhood”, but also wasted vital forces (needed for reproduction), and harmed the whole reproductive apparatus. During the “bicycle craze” of the 1880s and later, it was commonly believed that riding the bicycle might ruin the organs of “matrimonial necessity” and lead to irregular and fearfully painful menses, more painful and dangerous child-bearing, and even infertility (Neesen 1899).

Such warnings based on physiological “facts” of the female reproductive system objectify the body and “establish the biologically sexed female body as the “natural” emblem

or guarantor of female identity (Balsamo 1997:42). As Bartky (1990) defines it, the practice of (sexual) objectification takes place when the sexual parts or sexual functions of a person are “separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (p.26). Implicitly prohibiting inappropriate physical activities for women, medical “experts” code the female body as the cultural sign of the “reproductive”, so that “the womb signifies female gender in a way that reinforces an essentialist identity fro the female body as the maternal body” (Balsamo 1997:9). Patriarchal power thus is organized and manifested through the medical engagements and constraints based on female reproductive health.

Another crucially important issue was morality which, as doctor Neesen (1899) suggests, was closely related to health. According to Dr. Neesen, critics, dissenters and moralists have tabooed the bicycle for women for various reasons, chief among which is its moral influence. By tradition and custom, he states, a woman has to consider the morality of everything she does.

It was widely believed that the “unfettered liberty” of bicycling would “intoxicate” women to commit immoral acts. One of the most disturbing things about cycling was the image of a woman straddling the saddle of the vehicle⁵. That bike riding might be sexually stimulating for women became a real concern in the 1890s. As Zheutlin (2006) points out, it was thought that straddling a saddle combined with the motion required to propel a bicycle would lead to sexual arousal.

So-called “hygienic” saddles began to appear, saddles with little or no padding where a woman’s genitalia would ordinarily make contact with the seat. High stems and upright handlebars, as opposed to the more aggressively positioned “drop” handlebars, also were thought to reduce the risk of female sexual stimulation by reducing the angle at which a

⁵ Before, the saddle was not an issue, since the “ladies” rode horses side-saddle. Moreover, the ladies’ model of high-wheeler, designed in 1874, had both pedals on the left side of the bicycle, thus enabling woman to sit sideways (Bijker 1995).

woman would be forced to ride (Zheutlin 2006). These kinds of adjustments obviously served as methods of social control and, in terms of Foucault (1991), political technology of the body. Sexuality has become one of the main instruments of control in power relations. And, as various examples from over the world demonstrate, such explicit mechanisms of control over women are still applicable in contemporary societies⁶.

2.2.2. “Protection, Pudeur, Parure”⁷

According to Sahlins (1976), our clothing is in fact a symbolic system through which specific social messages are being sent, e.g., the distinct clothing modes of men and women illustrate something of the nature of the difference that is supposed to exist between the sexes. “It communicates the supposed ‘delicacy’ of women and the supposed ‘strength’ of men (Lury 1996:16), thus serving as the basis for gender division and sexual discrimination.

As Sheila Jeffreys (2005) points out in her book *Beauty and Misogyny*, the clothing is an important constituent of beauty practices that are often perceived as a tool of women oppression. Moreover, clothing conventions are inextricably connected to class: in certain historical contexts being properly dressed is a requirement and part of the civility of manners, mode of sexuality and sociability (Green 1997:17). Indeed, after the rise of the middle class in the nineteenth century, clothing played an extremely important role in making class distinctions. In other words, the body, as well as clothes covering that body, became important signifiers of middle class superiority. Modesty and propriety was only important for a middle (upper) class woman, while working women were perceived as “immodest”, “loose”, vulnerable to “falling” into vice and prohibition. Personal dignity, propriety and

⁶ The Islamic Republic of Iran has devised an “Islamic bicycle” which is fully equipped with a cabin to conceal parts of a female cyclist’s body. The new technology is less about the bike and more about suppressing women. Iran forbids women from riding bicycles because of the belief that sexuality is easily stimulated in both sexes (Milani 2007).

⁷ As Roland Barthes has summarized, the three main functions of clothing are “*protection, pudeur, parure*” – protection, modesty, and adornment (Green 1997:16).

decency became the key elements for various restrictions and warnings, whereas “the boundary between proper womanhood and “vulgar” women of other classes” need protection from violation (Cahn 1994:15).

In the newspapers there were plenty of articles that presented bicycling as a sensation (Neesen 1899). One of such articles (from the year 1895) in *The New York Times* announced: “The Board of School Trustees of the village of College Point to-night passed upon the question “Is the riding of a bicycle by a young lady an improper practice?” (*Object to women bicyclists* 1895). The decision was unambiguous: female teachers were prohibited to ride their bicycles to and from school. The action of riding a bike was proclaimed by the Trustees as immoral. Thereafter, the verdict of the male Trustees, considering themselves as “guardians of the morals,” sounded like this:

It is not proper thing for the ladies to ride the bicycle. They wear skirts, of course, but if we do not stop them now they will want to be in style with the New York women and wear bloomers. [...] They might just as well wear men’s trousers. I suppose it will come to that, but we are determined to stop our teachers in time, before they go that far.” (*Object to women bicyclists* 1895)

It is not difficult to understand that this kind of objection was not only a question of proper clothing. Affronts to “feminine” behavior and disobedience to existing patriarchal requirements inspired a real battle between women cyclists and patriarchal authority. A woman was expected not to lose her femininity, preserve her attractiveness, and stay away from “a fine line between traditional femininity and traditional masculinity” (Barthel 1988:122). Consequently, those who disobeyed these rules were being punished, first and foremost through the mass media.

It was often highlighted in the popular press that *propriety* and *femininity* were threatened by the unfettered liberty of riding, for riding without a chaperone would increase the ranks of masculine, indecent, home-wrecking women” (Curry, Bingham 1992). The restrictive clothing of the Victorian era – corsets, long, heavy, multi-layered skirts worn over

petticoats or hoop, long sleeved shirts with high collars, gloves and a hat – inhibited freedom of movement and seemed to symbolize the constricted lives women of the 1890s were expected to lead (Zheutlin 2006).

As doctor Neesen (1899:54) suggests, “[f]rom the time immemorial, woman has been clothed in the very graceful and modest but very unhygienic and inconvenient trailing skirt”. When bicycle riding was attempted for long skirts that dragged the ground, it became really dangerous. According to doctor Neesen (1899:55), “all manner of devices was invented to prevent the skirt from catching in the wheel and pedals, but without success... the alternative immediately arose either to eschew the bicycle or discard the skirts”⁸.

American feminists “rallied around both female cycling, and the clothing issues, raised by female cyclists through the creation of such organizations as the Rational Dress Society.”⁹ (Furness 2005:66) Amelia Bloomer – the prominent advocate of the Rational Dress – was ahead of her time in pushing pants in the aim of dress reform in mid-nineteenth century America (Green 1997). Also, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a frontline soldier in the battle of equality between the sexes, rushed into print with a spirited defence of the bloomer costume.” (Smith 1972:106) However, outside of America, the trousers, as well as rational dress reform, were not accepted (e.g., Britain) or became acceptable only under certain circumstances.¹⁰

The main achievement of the struggling women was that the bicycle was retained and the skirts cut down, despite the fact that those who courageously abandoned their long skirts were ridiculed by the public and cursed by philosophers and demagogues (Neesen 1899). The change of the woman’s outfit was the first visible thing. However, the dress reform was not just a matter of practical adaptation; it invoked and challenged popular perceptions of

⁸ It was literally impossible for “a woman with bands hanging on her hips, and dress snug about the waist and chokingly tight at the throat, with heavy trimmed skirts dragging down the back and numerous folds heating the lower part of the spine, and with tight shoes” to ride a bicycle (Willard 1895: 93).

⁹ The Rational Dress Reform was 19th century’s movement, internationally promoted by American activist Amelia Bloomer (1818-1894), in order to change cumbersome Victorian dress and corsets, which damaged women’s internal organs, into more comfortable and practical “Turkish pants” – bi-furcated garment later known as the “bloomers” (Neuburger 2004).

¹⁰ “A French police prefect forbid women from wearing pants *unless* cycling” (Green 1997:27).

femininity and became a hotly contested moral issue. Eventually, the battle over dress reform, largely fought on the battlefield of cycling attire, and the popularity of cycling among women, forever altered public perceptions of female athleticism and *proper* female behavior, challenged traditional gender norms by increasing physical movement, a feeling of mobility, freedom and self reliance. According to Zheutlin (2006), it was a real catalyst for changes.

Thanks to Bloomer and Stanton, the *daring* women in the U.S. were no more constrained in their ability to move freely. The large billowing skirts and corsets started to give way to *bloomers* – baggy trousers, sometimes called a divided skirt, cinched at the knee (Zheutlin 2006). It is important to emphasize that in the context of an international reform movement (partly initiated by feminists) to make clothing more comfortable and less constraining for women, raised plenty of new concerns from the society. Shorter dresses or trousers (“rational dress”) enabled women not only to cycle, but also to take up other sport activities. The society of the 1890s was “shocked” to see women in “men’s pants” and horrified by the new forms of anaesthetics. According to Green (1997:27), “the peddling female” was condemned for debasing good taste and femininity, while more generally the “invasion” of sport clothes (=men’s clothes), “practical but ugly”, was denounced.

For a long time, the women, who were not dressed properly in public and wore *bloomers*, were seen as “outrageous” and “immoral”. There were such cases as in New York in 1895, when a group of men were signing written pledges promising not to associate with any woman who wore bloomers and to use “all honorable means to render such costumes unpopular in the community where I reside” (Zheutlin 2006). The marital prospect of such women was endangered¹¹, when the saying “I see women on bicycles, but never a lady” (Bellofatto 2002) became quite common. The distinction between “female” and “lady” was very important: it dictated the norms and standards in regard to men’s convenience and

¹¹ Here I see the connection with genital surgeries, lip plates, and many other customary practices, where women give their consent mainly concerning the better prospects of marriage.

delight. Consequently, “[t]hose who sought to change the parameters of their domestic sphere were no longer thought of as “ladies”; indeed, they acquired a variety of epithets. “Varmity woman”, “wild woman”, “social insurgents”, “manly woman” and so on (Marks 1990:2). Moreover, a negative connotation was applied to those women who were striving for emancipation. The ‘cyclewoman’ who, to ride her bicycle, dared to adopt a costume whose principal, and scandalous, component was knee-breeches (Albert 2005), was ridiculed and stigmatized. In an 1898 interview, a “decent” married woman asked to describe the emergent feminine social type – “The New Woman” – promptly answered, “A creature who smokes and wears bloomers and rides a bicycle and hates men and votes.” (Giorcelli 1997:87) Actually, by the early 20th century, there were already a number of “advanced” women who not only rode their bicycles, denounced marriage (often identified as a primary instrument of women’s oppression), but also openly advocated sexual freedom (Schneir 1972).

Since experts and journalists prophesied dire results from cycling, there was no surprise that caring parents began refusing to allow their daughters to ride the bike (Willard 1895). “The charge has been that the bicycle engenders a freedom of manners in women, quite in contrast to all accepted ideas of retiring modesty” (Neesen 1899:89). The “decent” members of society were afraid that the “new women” – who are, in fact, their wealthy wives, and therefore, the “decent ladies” – will forget elegance and good manners, instead, they will walk around in their bicycle costume and chew gum¹² and talk slang. The female cyclists were constantly satirized, mocked, and called immoral.

Despite the huge anti-bicycle crusades, there were more and more women who appropriated the bicycle as a means of exercise and transport. The “new women”, who were not afraid to dress as they pleased and strive for equality with men, waved goodbye to Victorian prudery and rode forward.

¹² “In Omaha a doctor advised cyclers to chew gum when they went on spins through the countryside; this would help them satisfy their thirst and prevent them from drinking from rural wells, which might be tainted with typhoid” (Smith 1972:67). Thus the image of the cyclist was often associated with the chewing gum.

2.3. Changing discourses: cycling turns out to be good for woman's health

Such daring actions of women cyclists' brought about the change in public opinion. The media played a central role in softening the effects of what became inevitable. As Patricia Marks suggests in her book *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, the "New Woman" was often depicted in the comic press in Britain and America. According to the author, the analysis reveals that the woman wearing bloomers and riding the bicycle was welcomed more sympathetically in American press, than in British where caricaturists marked such behaviour as more *outré*. The American press seemed more "to be laughing *with* the New Woman than *at* her, an attitude that demonstrates a degree of acceptance, at least of the [new] myth, if not of the New Woman's substance." (Marks 1990:22) This case is the perfect example of changing the media discourse into more up-to-date regime. Since in the late 1890s it became obvious that women were not going to retreat, a new strategy was needed. According to Furness (2005:70), "there was a gradual shift in the popular media that acknowledged, and thereby accepted, the idea of female cycling". In parallel with the negative discourses, there were always some attempts to claim the opposite.

Feminists and suffragists were the first to recognize the wonders of the bicycle and its transformative power¹³. In 1895, Frances E. Willard published a book, called *The Wheel within Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, in which she praises the bicycle she learned to ride at age of 53. The author named her bicycle "Gladys" for its "gladdening effect" on her health and political optimism (Willard 1895). In her book, Willard calls the bicycle a tool of

¹³ In fact, one of the very first conscious attempts to change public opinion about cycling was made in the early 1980s by Albert A. Pope – the owner an import house for bicycles and riding school. He spread the message that bicycling brings health and happiness, whereas the bicycle is a machine for the improvement of humanity. In order to popularize cycling, Pope "offered prizes to doctors who published best articles defending bicycle riding as a positive aid to good health" (Smith 1972:9).

“harmless pleasure” and forcibly describes that there is not a single reason in the world why a woman should not ride just like a man does.

Few years later, in 1899, in his *Book on Wheeling*, Dr. Neesen provides a broad overview of health effects of cycling. The chapter, called “Bicycle for women”, surprisingly begins with praising the invention of two wheels: “So strong had the love of the wheel grown in the female breast that all the precedent of ages was thrown to the winds... Thus did the bicycle accomplish what reformers and philosophers and demagogues had striven in vain to do” (Neesen 1899:55).

One of the important arguments in favor of the bicycle was that women needed to quit staying indoors and had to go into the open air. Women, who finally were recognized by medical ‘experts’ as physically capable of easy exercise (Curry, Bingham 1992), were now encouraged to take longer walks and to do some athletics. Learning to ride a bike slowly became known as very useful for health, even recommended for women, for they were just passively sitting around in-doors, reading or sewing or gossiping, and “building up towers of headaches and mountains of backaches” (Neesen 1899:57). As Dr. Neesen (1899:90) goes on, riding tends to bring all the muscles, tissues, and organs up nearer to the perfect health limit. Moreover, “[b]icycle women have ceased to be the pale, frail, painted butterflies they used to be, avoiding the sunshine as a pestilence, on account of the damage it would cause their complexions.” A modern, up-to-date “bicycle girl” had the “springy step, the erect carriage, the clear eye, the fresh complexion, the well balanced poise of the head and body, all proclaim the new order of things – the triumph of bicycle” (Neesen 1899:58). Moreover, compared to horseback riding, wheeling was believed to have everything in its favor because of the better sitting position.

Funnily, some arguments praising the bicycle were in total opposition of the earlier prohibitions, for example, the issue of woman’s reproductive health. In 1899, some medical

experts already assured that “[b]icycle riding tends to make childbirth easier and safer in the following way. A muscle will perform its function more naturally when it is healthy and sound. Bicycle riding tends to bring all the muscles, tissues and organs up nearer to the perfect health limit” (Neesen 1899:62). Moreover, it was convincingly explained that “[t]e thin woman is benefited by bicycling; the liver works better, the food digests better. The stout woman is benefited, for the exercise hardens and condenses the flesh. The average healthy woman is kept in the best of health by the exercise and plenty of pure, fresh air. For the sedentary, the undeveloped, and the insufficiency nourished, the bicycle seems to work wonders” (Ward 1896:172).

According to Willard, by learning to ride this fascinating and illimitably capable machine, women dissolved many prejudices. As the author recites in her poetic manner, the “old fables, myths, and follies associated with the idea of woman’s incompetence to handle bat and oar, bridle and rein, and at last the cross-bar of the bicycle, [were] passing into contempt in presence of the nimbleness, agility, and skill” (Willard 1895:41). The physical achievements of women revealed their ability to be equal – physically, mentally and morally.

Indeed, many physicians started to regard the ‘wheel’ as healthy exercise, beneficial to the health of women as well as of men (Willard 1895). In his book on wheeling, Dr. Neesen (1899) reiterates that certainly, what is good for a man’s muscles is also good for a woman’s and the same rules should be applied for both genders. Nevertheless, as Neesen further warns, “it should be understood that a woman, being more finely organized than man, cannot endure as much hard work, nor for so long a time. Therefore her rides should be shorter. She also suffers more nerve strain than man; therefore her riding should be slower” (Neesen 1899:68).

It is obvious from the last example that when sport turned out to mean “an avenue toward female self-reliance and independence” (Cahn 1994:19), the clash was inevitable. The growing independence of women was threatening patriarchal prejudices and that there were

contesting discourses around the bicycle and the woman. Consequently, the female body continued to function as the sign of a gendered body opposed to a non-marked (human=male) body. As Cahn (1994:19) points out in her book on gender and sexuality in twentieth-century women's sport in America, finally, woman were allowed to take up sports, however, the emphasis was put on benefits for health and beauty. According to the author, "[e]xercise columns in popular magazines instructed women on the need to exercise, claiming that both beauty and improved health would follow." (Cahn 1994:19)

In fact, such a new attitude toward women cyclists became to mean a shift in discourses. As Ehrenpreis (1999:29) argues in her article, "[t]he figure of an attractive female cyclist in fashionable biking attire symbolized the modern woman [...], culmination of an ideal type embodying youth, beauty, and hope for the future." It means that the female body, that was "subjugated to discursive systems of power and knowledge" (Balsamo 1997:30) in the 19th century, remained in the same position, although the methods of control have changed. The acknowledgement of cycling as a health and beauty remedy for women signalled the emergence of new latent control mechanisms. And this is what I discuss in two next chapters on the basis of my research on popular media in Lithuania.

3. METHODOLOGY

For my thesis I am using two kinds of sources: *primary* and *secondary*. Since the first part of my work is built on a presentation of the U.S. bicycle scene in the late 19th century, I researched already existing publications concerning women and bicycling at that period. The material mainly consists of books and articles in scholarly magazines.

By primary sources I mean all materials, mainly from the printed media which I collected in the archives of the *Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania*¹⁴ during my research break. In order to trace back the history of the cycling women in Lithuania, as well as to reveal the mechanisms of gendered positioning of the vehicle, I decided to look at the printed media from the period of the emergence and adaptation of the bicycle in the country around 1920s.

During the two weeks period spent in the archives I did research on bicycles in the popular press in Lithuania in the early 20th century. My initial intention was to analyse the periodical press in a bit shorter period – 10-20 years after the advent of the bicycle. However, as the first steps of my research revealed, the actual arrival of the vehicle to the country and the media accounts on that were not quite adequate. By saying this I actually mean two things. First, since in the early 20th century Lithuania was continually struggling for independence, there were not so many periodicals dedicated to the topics of sport or women's issues at the time. The media were totally preoccupied with liberty issues which had nothing to do with bicycles. Only after 1918, when Lithuanian became an independent country, dozens of new periodicals have sprung up¹⁵. Second, the representation of women in regard to bicycling, as

¹⁴ The National Library collection is being accumulated since the library's foundation in 1919. Over 7 million publications are stored in it. The library has a huge collection of books, periodicals, serials, reference publications as well as manuscripts (<http://www.lnb.lt>).

¹⁵ As bibliographers suggest, there were more than 200 periodicals in 1905-1917 in Lithuania. With the beginning of the First World War, most of them stopped or were banned by Russian censorship (Bulota 1992). In the second half of 1917, as Bulota goes on, the liberation movement restored old or inspired new newspapers and magazines. However, persecuted by Polish censorship, most of them would survive very shortly or change their

well as any other kind of sport, was pushed aside for about ten more years. Even if women already exercised and rode the bicycles at that time, the media reports were unambiguously silent about such occurrences. The visual representation of women and bicycles came into the press even later (in the second half of the 1930s). Mainly because of these two reasons I had to expand the intended research period from the turn of the century to the late 1930s. Consequently, I was looking at the Lithuanian popular press during the period from 1900 to 1940.

Since the library has no subject index of articles in old newspapers, I had to skim through most of the newspapers that might have said something about cycling. I selected and scanned more than 60 different periodicals (at least few issues of each) to get an idea in which ones I am most likely to find useful data. In order to know more about the general history of the bicycle in Lithuania (the year of emergence, a scope of import, prices, availability, popularity and so on), I scanned through economical journals, collections of statistical data and trade news. However, the main body of information I gathered from the women's and youth magazines, newspapers for farmers, and – most importantly – sport periodicals published after 1918. I skimmed through all available newspapers concerning sport and exercise, as well as periodicals on women's issues from 1918 to 1940.

On the basis of my primary analysis of the Lithuanian media, I have focused on ten main newspapers and magazines that made the biggest contribution to my field of interest. The most valuable sources for my research were four Lithuanian sports-oriented newspapers: 1) *Sportas*: Sporto bei fizinio auklėjimo iliustruotas žurnalas [*Sport*: an illustrated magazine about sport and physical education], the organ of *Lithuanian Football League*, *The Circle of Women the Sport Lovers*, and *Lithuanian Cycling Association*, published in 1923-1928; 2)

names and go on. As bibliographers suggest, in 1926, there were 110, in 1930 – 172 different periodicals in Lithuania. According to the inexact data, around 2000 periodicals were published in Lithuania during the period of independency from 1918 to 1940 (Bulota 1992).

Kūno kultūra ir sveikata: fizinio auklėjimo ir sporto savaitraštis visiems [*Physical culture and health*: the weekly newspaper on physical education and sport for everybody], published in 1933-1934; 3) *Lietuvos sportas*: Lietuvos fizinio lavinimosi sąjungos organas [*Lithuanian Sport*: the organ of *Lithuanian Association of Physical Culture*], illustrated fortnightly magazine about sport and physical education, published in 1922 and 1937-1938; 4) *Mūsų sportas*: sporto ir fizinio auklėjimo laikraštis [*Our Sport*: the newspaper on sport and physical education], published in 1931-1932.

Various women magazines and newspapers also provided me with a fair amount of articles and advertisements. The most important for my research were: 1) *Moteris*: mėnesinis, visuomenės kultūros, moterims skirtas laikraštis [*A Woman*: monthly newspaper on public culture for women], published by *Lithuanian Catholic Women Association* in 1920-1940; 2) *Moteris ir pasaulis*: Lietuvos moterų tarybos mėnesinis žurnalas [*A Woman and the World*: the monthly magazine of the *Lithuanian Women's Board*], published in 1937-1940; 3) *Lietuvaite* [*Lithuanian Girl*], a women's newspaper, concerned with social work and public activities, published by *Lithuanian Catholic Women Association* in 1910-1914.

As Bulota (1992) points out, at the end of the third decade, commercial, sensational, pulp periodicals, targeted to the high-toned bourgeois, started to spread in the country. Two more periodicals that I used in my research he entitled as "pulp magazine": *Iliustruotas pasaulis*: įdomus miestui ir kaimui savaitraštis [*The illustrated World*: a weekly newspaper interesting both for city and countryside], 1936-1938; and *Sekmadienis* [*Sunday*], 1928-1940.

The last rather useful newspaper was *Ūkininkas* [*The Farmer*], a monthly newspaper for farmers and country workers (1918-1928) with three main supplements: *Jaunimas* [*Youth*], *Žibutė* [*Violet*], the supplement for the women's issues, and *Sveikata* [*Health*].

Collecting the data I scanned all issues of the periodicals presented above. Also, along with archival work with newspapers, I analyzed few books from the first half of the 20th

century concerned with the history of the bicycle in Lithuania, as well as woman's beauty and health issues. Lastly, my visit to the *Šiauliai Bicycle Museum*¹⁶. enlarged my knowledge in terms of the history of the bicycle in Lithuania around 1900s – 1930s that I could not trace in the popular media.

For my actual analysis I use two types of data:

- *textual materials*: texts from the booklets, articles, reports, news;
- *visual materials*: advertisements, illustrations, and other pictures in the press.

In the next chapter (chapter 4.1) I explore the textual materials concerning cycling women (and cycling in general) from 1900s to 1930s in Lithuania. According to Fran Tonkiss (1998:246), language is domain in which our knowledge of the social world is actively shaped, whereas “[d]iscourse analysis involves a perspective on language which sees this as not as reflecting reality [...], but as constructing and organizing that social reality for us.” In other words, the study of texts through discourse analysis helps me to interpret a particular, intentionally used language and to trace down the changes in the ideological instruments of the female cyclist across the different periods.

In chapter 4.2 I focus on the visual materials. On the basis of feminist critique on women representation in the media, I will analyse, what Goffman (1979:10) calls, public pictures, i.e., commercial pictures, news photos, and other anonymous pictures from Lithuanian printed media in the early 20th century. As Goffman (1979:26) and Barthes (1998:70) agree, the picture is designed to tell the story, thus it has intentional meaning. Relying on the methodological insights of Lacey (1998:11) and other feminists, I base my analysis of the images on examination of facial expression, gaze, gestures, bodily posture, bodily contacts, clothes and appearance. I will try to decode those images disclosing the hidden meanings of stereotypical reproduction of gender roles and gender relevant behaviour.

¹⁶ The museum was established in 1980 at Šiauliai bicycle and motor factory *Vairas*. There are 348 exhibits in the museum's exposition, 79 of these are bicycles (http://www.muziejai.lt/Siauliai/dviratis_ir_lietuva.htm).

4. THE CYCLING WOMAN IN LITHUANIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

4.1. Looking through the gender prism: the appearance of a new vehicle

4.1.1. The advent of the bicycle in Lithuania

The first bicycles in Lithuania appeared at the end of the 19th century. First, they were imported from Great Britain and Germany (*The Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia*, 2004). It became popular and widely used only some years after the First World War, when the bicycle sport started to be cultivated in 1922. First, cycling was directly connected to class. Not everyone had the huge amount of money to buy a bicycle. In 1924, the bicycle price was around 480 Lt¹⁷. The table of the bicycle prices in *Sport* newspaper (1924, No.12-13:103) reveals an interesting difference in the prices of male/female bicycles. The English “Humber” for men costs 450 Lt, while the same model for women is 500 Lt. Hence, riding a bicycle firstly was gendered through the price tag attached to it as an expensive commodity. Even middle-class women, who at the time were rarely independent and self-supporting, could not afford a bicycle.

As most of the early printed sources suggest, the bicycle was mainly popularized by the bicycle sport. The first bicycle championship in Lithuania took place in 1922 in Kaunas¹⁸. At the time, only men could take part in the event. In 1923, The *Lithuanian Cycling Association* (*Lietuvos dviračių sporto sąjunga*) was founded in order “to develop bicycle sport in Lithuania and thus improve physical culture in the country” (*Lietuvos Dviratininkų*

¹⁷ For instance, the wage of policeman, which is quite privileged position, in 1923-1924 was around 170 Lt per month (http://www.seniejitrakai.lt/siaudine_siena.html).

¹⁸ After the First World War and the capitulation of Germany, Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, was the most important point of conflict between Poland and Lithuania. Kaunas became then the temporal capital. The majority of governmental and public organizations (including the headquarters of the publishing organizations) were situated in Kaunas until the liberation of Vilnius in 1944.

Sajungos statutes [The Statute of Lithuanian Cycling Association], 1923:1)¹⁹. The association played an extremely important role in the popularization of the vehicle. First, the organization possessed few bicycles which could be used by its members. Later on, the *Lithuanian Cycling Association* supported its members and provided discounts and other privileges to obtain a bicycle. For instance, only members of the association were eligible to receive special vouchers that enabled them to join the queue for buying a vehicle.

This kind of order was established because the bicycles were imported to the country in limited numbers. In other words, at the beginning it was not only a question of price but also a matter of accessibility to afford a bike (*Sportas* 1923, No.1). Therefore, in the early years, it was a big advantage to belong to this bicycle association since once in a while the association was organizing a lottery for winning the main prize – a brand new bicycle (*Sportas* 1924, No.6-7)²⁰.

According to the *Sportas* (1925, No.30-32:297) reports, in 1925 there were around 3000 bicycles in Kaunas, while in 1939 the number of imported bicycles reached 35 000. At the period of 1928-40 the bicycles in Lithuania were also made by the companies of American Lithuanians (~2000 bicycles per year) (*The Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia*, 2004). However, in the early 20th century the bicycle was not very common among individual people. It was rather a tool for the sport possessed mainly by various sport associations and circles.

¹⁹ Similar association in the U.S. at the time of advent of the bicycle was the *League of American Wheelmen*, organized to “promote the general interest of bicycling, to ascertain, defend and protect the rights of wheelmen, and to encourage and facilitate touring” (Smith 1972:12).

²⁰ These kinds of lotteries were quite popular in Lithuania in the 1920s. For example, the newspaper *Rytas [Morning]* announced a lottery for poor schoolchildren in which there was a bicycle as the main prize among such other winnings as “cupboard, kettle, drapery, books, cakes, turkey, ham and so on” (*Morning*, 1928, No.74:3).

4.1.2. The border of difference

When the bicycle first became accessible for the members of sport organizations, women were not able to reach it. This is because the importance of physical culture was first acknowledged only to men. As several messages in the newspapers suggest, women did not show any interest in physical exercise (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.2:13), therefore they could “logically” argue once women were left behind. However, I have indicated that the newspapers’ position is ideological (i.e., rejection of women as if they simply “respect women’s wish”). And what I am arguing in this chapter is that in the early 20th century women were explicitly excluded from the bicycling as well as from sport in general. And this, in large part, was achieved through the discursive construction of the relationship between women and sport in the media.

Here I must make a remark on class and space, for there was a big difference in the perception of the bicycle between urban and rural areas. First, the hard-working country women (as well as some of the working-class town women) were not concerned about *sport* as such. Second, *propriety* and *decency* was not that much of a significant issue in the countryside as it was for the middle class *ladies* in the urban areas. Consequently, if country-women were lucky enough to possess a bicycle, they were using it successfully as a means of transportation on a daily basis. As several exhibits in the *Lithuanian Bicycle Museum* expose, the first homemade bicycles, made from wood and iron by the gifted craftsmen, appeared in Lithuanian villages at the end of the 19th century and were successfully used by villagers. Unfortunately, there is no account in the early newspapers of such occurrences, for the sport news in the popular media was directed to the potential bicycle users and purchasers from the elite and middle class. In consequence, I will develop my further analysis on the basis of the

printed media, keeping in mind that it represents only a particular segment of contemporary society.

On the basis of a critical analysis of the early 20th century's Lithuanian press, some patterns concerning women and sport can be identified. As the news in the periodicals reveal, at the time of the emergence of the bicycle at the turn of the century, women were excluded from the bicycle market not only because of their financial dependency on men, but also because of their imagined *incapability* to ride a vehicle. The discourses of the main Lithuanian newspapers concerning sport and physical activity (*Sportas*; *Mūsų sportas*; *Kūno kultūra ir sveikata*) as well as 'women's periodicals' (*Moteris*; *Moteris ir pasaulis*; *Lietuvaite*) were based on the assumption that the nature of man and woman is vastly distinct (in the sense of physical and psychical capabilities as well as on the level of interests). The "separate sphere" based on two distinct sets of gender roles for women and men meant that woman was expected to be limited to domestic concerns and the beauty market. In Lithuanian newspapers and magazines of 1910s-1920s, the "women's column" was filled up with the ads of soap, pantyhose, sewing-machines, textiles and similar items supposedly belonging to domestic realm or beauty practice (see Fig.1,2). Moreover, "homemaking was simultaneously constructed as a duty – an expression of love and respect – and a demonstration of professional skill, as well as a source of pleasure and fun" (Ryan 2000:17) (see Figure 2). However, the role of binding women to the household was crucial in maintaining their oppression.

With regard to sport, women were forced to comply with the "expert" knowledge of the medical authority through which patriarchal power was exercised. The pattern of the medicalization of the female body that I have presented in the first part of my thesis is fully applicable for the Lithuanian context. At the beginning of the 20th century, women were disqualified from bodily exercise. According to Grauziniene, "housework is a kind of

athletics, similar to the ‘real’ sports and physical exercises that are popular among men” (*Moteris is pasaulis*, 1938, No.11:18). Since the household activities were often considered as a sufficient exercise, women were not supposed to bother about sport.

Numerous claims about woman’s inconsistency with sport because of her specific bodily structure, kept women “safely” away from exercising. According to another female author, “the very structure of woman’s body clearly reveals her purpose in life, which is surely not the struggle for existence, thus different from that of a man.” (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.2:13) And arguably, a woman was not in need of either strength or well developed muscles; consequently this logic pushed her to be reasonable enough to see that; concealing the patriarchal interest in confining her to the home, thus not allowing her to take up sports that would have meant activities in the public realm.

However, in the early 1920s, when Lithuanian women started the struggle for their rights²¹, the practice of total prevention from sport was switched to the mode of partial limitation. Different methods of exercise were applied for the two sexes (Grabauskaitė, *Physical Culture and Health*, 1933:13). Building their objections and prescriptions on medical knowledge, male-incarnate-medicine spoke to the woman audiences through books, booklets, and periodical press.

In his small booklet published in 1924 in Lithuania, dr. Dineika establishes with authority which of the sports are good for women’s health. According to him,

women are welcome to engage in athletics, walking, running, jumping, discus throwing, swimming skating, skiing, boating and some team games such as tennis. All other sports are **inappropriate** for women, whereas the bicycle sport is especially **harmful**” (Dineika, 1924:64). First of all, the bicycle does not **prettify** woman’s body. An obvious outcome from the cycling is a hump. Furthermore, the constant pedaling makes one’s legs stout and **muscular**, and this is not **beautiful** at all. Also,

²¹ The question of woman’s rights was first raised in the very first issue of women’s periodical called *Lietuvaite* [*Lithuanian girl*]. The unknown author proclaimed: “Women have neither voice in the family, nor personal freedom, nor their own choice. They are terribly constrained and exhausted. Therefore Lithuanian women must undertake an action – a task of liberation. They must demand equal rights for women in the household as well as in public space. To be equal means to have equal rights with men to education, property, market, and other institutions” (*Lietuvaite*, 1910, No.1:4-56).

the blood-vessels expand and become visible through the skin. In addition to unaesthetic effect, this also causes a **pain**. **Pregnant** women should be especially concerned, for the enlargement of the blood-vessels is very harmful to them. In actual fact, the bicycling and riding a horse are not recommended for anyone, but especially it should be strictly avoided by the pregnant women (Dineika, 1924:65)²².

In this short paragraph dr. Dineika touches the main issues that contemporary Lithuanian society was concerned about in regard to woman's cycling²³. The author seems to focus on three main problems: propriety, beauty, and health. I will start with the latter one – the perceived *difference* between the two sexes and medicalization of the female body.

An attempt to control a woman through the medical regulations was obviously specific to Lithuanian society. First, the restrictions were based on woman's reproductive capacity. Since "woman's mission is to bear and nurture children, the primary duty of every woman is to take care of her and her children's wellbeing" (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.1). Therefore, the article claims, woman should not involve in anything what might be dangerous for her and her children's health.

The concerns about woman's health (in particular, woman's reproductive health) in 20th century's Lithuania were embodied in plenty of similar myths about woman's body. For instance, Dineika (1924) claims that "pregnant women should be especially concerned, for the enlargement of the blood-vessels is very harmful to them." Here we have a nice example of an ultimate statement that is not supported by any further explanations or actual cases. Later, in the conclusion part the doctor assures that "riding a bicycle is altogether a harmful thing similar to collar-work with the sewing machine, thus it is dangerous for woman's genitalia"²⁴, (Dineika, 1924:66). According to him, many sad examples can be found in our daily life; however again, no clarifications or examples are given.

²² Here and further in the quoted texts all emphases are mine.

²³ The same issues were disputed in the U.S. in the late 19th century (see chapter 2.2).

²⁴ The question of sewing-machine was strongly connected to woman's sexuality in the end of 19th century. It was thought "that the double-treadle machine could lead to involuntary masturbation, menstrual difficulties, and possible sterility", thus it is very dangerous for women (Green, 1997:164).

The dominant discourse in the booklet reveals the power of the “medical authority”, its legitimate right to decide and declare those decisions publicly. More importantly, at the beginning of the 20th century, the obedience to medical professionals was not a matter of ‘choice’, but a matter of control and disciplinary power (Foucault 1977). As Šulginienė argues:

In the 1920s, before starting any kind of exercise every woman was obliged to see a doctor. And only if **he** allowed her to take up sport activities that are **right for her**, she was able to start exercising. Furthermore, even after getting permission, a woman had to consult with the doctor at least once a year (*Moteris* 1923, No.5:75).

This quote perfectly demonstrates how female bodies were disciplined through institutional control. However, here class and status must also be taken into account. The concerns about exercise which is “right for her” as well as the issues of propriety and beauty (from the previous excerpt) obviously demonstrate the presumed audience of these texts. Most likely, the readers were middle class literate men and women, interested in leisure time activities and physical exercise. What is more important, they were interested in preserving sense of decency. The article of Žilevičaitė published in the same year (1924) contains the advices presumably for the women of the same status. “The toilet of a young woman, i.e., clothing, hair dress, a hat and so on, must fit to her level of education, her position in the society, her wealth, her age and the whole environment,” she states (*Moteris* 1924, No.4:52).

As I briefly mentioned in the first part, that kind of elegance was not available to everyone. Such concerns were linked to the upper classes which just “heighten the emphasis on class separation”. (Barthel 1988:92) As Barthel goes on, the privileged way of life carries with it social duties, such as to maintain status and standing. Consequently, propriety had its requirements according to the class position and thus just reaffirmed stereotypes on “masculine and feminine distinctions, i.e., women are the weaker sex; therefore they should be guided by informed men. It’s also relevant for the analysis of the gendering practice

around the bicycle to consider, in addition to health and propriety, the issue of beauty, which was continually emphasized throughout the booklet by Dineika (1924), is of primary importance to my thesis. I will come to that later in the separate chapter on beauty practices.

4.1.3. From “tenuous creatures” to sportswomen

As I mentioned earlier, the concerns about women’s incapability to take up sports was mostly connected to the middle class city woman, who could afford to take care of her body and propriety. An important point here was the concept of *sport* itself. The institution of sport was delineated as an exclusive space of men. Accordingly, women were explicitly discouraged from any kinds of competitions and sports contests. It was believed that “sport competitions are unsuitable, inappropriate, and thus undesirable for women” (Dineika 1924:65).

As Steponaitytė – the chairwoman of *Women’s Section of Lithuanian Exercise Federation*²⁵ – observes in 1933, the beginning of women’s sport activities was not easy (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.15-16:247). According to her, in 1921 it was less difficult to find funds than to fight the prevailing negative attitudes towards sportswomen. However, sport became popular among women around 1919 in Kaunas. In 1920 few women started to exercise officially, and after one year the first women’s athletics match was organized. In 1922, as an article in the public press suggests, Lithuanian women showed their interest in football and bicycle sport (*Moteris* 1923, No.5:75). However, in the early 1920s, as the article suggests, the number of sportswomen was really tiny in comparison with men (~5%)²⁶. And seemingly, the lack of the sport organizations (for women only) was an important obstacle (*Moteris* 1923, No.5:77).

²⁵ *Lietuvos fizinio lavinimo federacija*

²⁶ The author of the article does not specify how many women and men were there in actual numbers. And I could not find these data in figures.

According to Šulginienė (1923), in 1923 Lithuanian women were still very weak in the physical sense of the word. In her article published in the biggest women's magazine *Moteris*, Šulginienė argues that "women are finally taking positions in various institutions of culture and education; unfortunately, their bodies are still torpid and not trained". This, she says, supports the image of woman as of a "tenuous creature"; and this must be stopped immediately. It is time for "women to take into consideration the condition of their bodies" (*Moteris* 1923, No.5:76). According to her, American women were the first to understand that physical culture is a key not only to woman's wellbeing but also to their liberation. Sport activities, as the author argues, have a huge impact not only on woman's body (strength, agility, vitality, endurance, and beauty), but also on her mind. After doing sports, woman will find herself strong, brave, and independent. Therefore, women must keep up with men in physical exercise: physically strong and able to defend themselves, women will gain liberating power and thus independency.

The messages about American women as an example for Lithuania appeared once in a while in the newspapers. The connection between two spaces was created through the immigrants and their publications. Throughout the interwar period between 1920s and late 1930s, it was being argued that although American girls have *too much* masculine manners, they are practical, solid and going in for sports not less than men (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1934, No.46). These brave and optimistic girls and their emancipations movements should be taken as an example for Lithuanian women.

The other article about women's sport history (*Sportas* 1924, Nr.18-20:139) explains that from the time immemorial woman's body was numb, stiff, bound down by the awkward clothes. Woman was drowning in her innumerable skirts, folds and laces. Only if woman unloads her countless dresses and starts to wear light shoes and garment, if she starts to train her body and mind, only then she can become free and equal to a man.

This kind of claims in the newspapers show the conscious effort of Lithuanian women to overcome the oppression asserted by the restrictions in clothing, moving, and *acting*. The media played an important role again, by attracting women's attention to the sport and wear issues as well as to the questions of possible liberation. In *Moteris* (1923, No.10-11:145-150) Ruškytė talks about the unfortunate position of Lithuanian women who are merely servants, slaves, and possessions of men. Consequently, women are being encouraged to fight against it with prudence and self-confidence. Women must educate each other and enter the public sphere as well as the sport arena.

Such appeals to Lithuanian women supposedly made a big impact. In 1923, the first organization of sportswomen was established in Kaunas. It was called *The Circle of Women the Sport Lovers* (*Moterų sporto mėgėjų būrelis*) (*Sportas* 1923, No.1). The goal of this organization was to popularize physical culture among Lithuanian women. In approximately half a year, this circle attracted 40 members. The common summer sports were the various branches of athletics, i.e., jogging, jumping, and throwing, as well as the team games such as basketball, football, handball, and tennis. Cycling was not mentioned among them yet (*Sportas* 1923, No.8).

During the first working year the female members of this organization have proved of being able to work and flourish independently from men (*Sportas* 1924, No.4-5). As the same article reveals, the first festival of sportswomen in May of 1923 earned a fair amount of money that allowed *The Circle of Women the Sport Lovers* to purchase a bicycle. Thus every member of the circle would be enabled to learn to ride a bike (*Sportas* 1923, No.8). This occurrence nicely demonstrates the uprise of liberating power and the next daring steps toward equality and independency.

However, this growing autonomy increased the need for control, which was asserted in the media during the next ten-fifteen years. Various printed sources from the 1920s-1930s

help to trace down a battle going on at that time. An attempt to wear more comfortable clothes in sport as well as in the street triggered the resistance that manifested even in the women's magazines. In 1927, the message called *The Sick Fashion* announced: "We got a report from New York informing that, since the female clothes became as straight and tight as the male clothes, the number of female tuberculosis severely increased" (*Moteris* 1927, No.5). An attempt to frighten women however did not achieve hoped-for results. On the contrary, the struggle against patriarchal authority in sport extended to the fight for women's rights in general, what naturally caused resistance from men. For instance, in one of the sport newspapers a letter of the female reader was published. According to the author,

there are plenty of women interested in sport activities; however, everything is under control of men, who rule the whole "sport world". In other words, women get chance to participate only in those sport activities and contests which are allowed them by men. Since women are under total leadership and control of men, they have no voice in decision-making. Moreover, there is no woman responsible for the women's sport program. Since men are interested only in their own business, women are pushed aside and oppressed in multiple ways (*Lietuvos sportas* 1938, No.4).

Thereafter, the author claims, women must have a female representative in the governing level. They must wake up, unite, and strive for the real victory in every sense of the word (*Lietuvos sportas* 1938, No.4). Of course, it is not surprising that similar appeals were usually published with explanatory remarks of the editor. The footnote of previous letter was warning:

Be aware that the ideas expressed in this letter convey personal opinion of the author which is rather radical. In actual fact, women are the only ones who can be blamed for the paltry results in sport. Their passiveness, torpidity and reliance on men's help are the main reasons of their failure (*Lietuvos sportas* 1938, No.4).

Actually, there were plenty of such messages in the newspapers of 1920s and 1930s. Women were either accused for being passive or for being incapable of doing sport and poking their noses into men's business. One of such reports warned that "certainly not every

woman may ride the bicycle. Some women are simply not allowed to cycle because of their “health conditions”, the point which was neither specified nor discussed (*Sportas* 1923, No.8:124). Thus the controlling power was exercised through the ‘knowledge’ of female anatomy.

The Circle of Women the Sport Lovers had to set the instructions for ‘proper’ sport activities, based on the medical information. As an article in the magazine *Moteris* explains this regulation, not all of the sports are suitable for woman’s body. “To make a physical exercise useful, women must follow these instructions: 11-14 years old girls may take up gymnastics, swimming, and easy games; 14-16 years old girls may add winter sport; 20-25 years old young women can also start shooting; 25-30 years old women can do athletics, winter sports, water sports, and everything mentioned above. Starting from the age of 30-35, women may begin to ride a horse and a bicycle.” (*Moteris* 1923, No.5:77) Interestingly, there are no explanations or specifications given where such regulations came from and why riding the bicycle is forbidden for younger than 30 years old women.

One of the possible explanations can be found in the example of the U.S. that I presented in the first part of my thesis. The prohibition to ride the bicycle in the late 19th century was linked to the concerns about woman’s sexuality. The idea that the saddle can be sexually stimulating, or even harmful for reproductive health, might have been the reason determining the age limit of 30-35 for the Lithuanian female cyclists. In early 20th century’s Lithuania, by this age women were expected to be married and have children. Thus the organization might have tried to “protect” the young girls from harming their genitalia or masturbation.

However, despite all the negative attitudes and objections, in 1924 the first race of women bicyclists took place in Kaunas (*The Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia* 2004). The newspaper *Sportas* (1924, No.8-9:67) announced that the race was a part of the first match of

Lithuanian female athletes, organized in 1924, May 18th -19th. According to the organizers²⁷, this match was aimed at attracting more women to sports; hence, it mainly served the purpose of promoting cycling amongst women (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.15-16:247).

The popularity of the bicycle among women was growing, though very slowly. The analysis of newspapers from the 1920s exposed a huge gender gap in cycling during the whole period. In 1926 there were as many as fifteen different cycling competitions for men (from 100 meters to 110 kilometers); and only four different competitions for women (100 meters, 500 meters, 1 kilometer, and 1.5 kilometer) (*Sportas* 1926, No.38:455). These data suggest that at that time, women finally entered the bicycle sport and were noticed by the media. However, the attention of the media usually was limited to mentioning the names of the female winners. In fact, throughout the whole period from 1900 till 1940 I did not find any pictures of women cyclists in terms of doing sports (I will return to this later, in the chapter 4.2). In the media, the women cyclists were treated as “weak” and incapable of riding long distances, consequently, it was widely believed that a sport competition is not the right place for woman to be, just it was in the states in the late 19th century.

In 1929, 1930, 1931 the bicycle sport was torpid (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.37:593). I found almost nothing about the bicycling in Lithuania during this stagnation period. Finally, the article from the 1933 informs about “a huge interest in the bicycle sport. According to this announcement, the public opinion toward the bicycle is getting better (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.37:593). And what about cycling woman?

Most of the printed sources from the 1930s confirm that public opinion toward woman doing sport was hostile or pitiful. One of the evidences of such views can be a set of the rules for a decent sportsman presented in the sport newspaper. The very last instruction in the list is formulated as follows: “Do not imitate sporting girls! To make a mock of exercising girls or

²⁷ To more precise, the *Representative of Women’s Sport Committee*.

women is inappropriate and rough stuff. A real sportsman would never do that.” (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.48:746)

The rules of politeness for decent sportsmen implied the logic of degrading women into the “weaker sex”, yet again in spite of their capacity to cycle and exercise. Women were believed to be awkward when riding the bicycle or doing other sports, but a “real gentleman” was supposed to abstain from making fun of that. This point is an extremely important connection of two main discourses associated with “natural” female characteristics. The implied logic here is that woman—who is “weak” and incapable in physical sense—by taking up sport also loses her best attributes, i.e., beauty and attractiveness. Therefore, instead of making mockery of her, men should rather show compassion or not respond at all.

One more example taken from the *Physical Culture and Health* newspaper in 1933 also draws our attention to threatened “femininity”. The female author is strongly criticizing the new clothing regulations for women. According to her, “it was completely unreasonable to prohibit short pants and singlet for women as a sporting costume. It is much worse to struggle with the fluttering skirt in the middle of exercise. And it is pity, she concludes, there are people who treat woman not as a human being but merely as an immoral source of seduction (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.48:745).

Both cases presented above are based on the same logic. The key concept here is beauty and disciplinary practices “that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine” (Bartky, 1990:65). The construction of aesthetic femininity, supported by presumed fragility and lack of muscular strength, becomes one of the main concerns in Lithuanian society in the early 20th century.

4.1.4. A disciplined beauty

Starting from the beginning of the 20th century, the messages in the newspapers expressed concern about the instability of the female image. In his book Laukis (1908:19) laughs at those women who “10 years ago wanted to wear trousers and cut their hair short, just like men do.” Now, he continues, “women do not have to follow that *silly* fashion any more. Now they are eager to get equal rights with the men, but not *turn* into them”.

Many years later, similar messages continued to appear in the press. As the author of the article *Moteriai apie moterį* [*For woman about woman*] argues, a false understanding of the equality of men and women is still dominating. According to *him*, “many mistakenly think that in order to be equal to the man, the woman must dress and behave just like *he* does (e.g. wears trousers, smokes and drinks).” (*Moteris* 1931, No.5)

Obviously, both of the authors do not see women’s liberation in the change of the female clothing and behavior conventions. The concept of “equal rights” in these terms rather means *equal* opportunities for men and women to be who they are, to use their “natural”, “inborn” powers, which in the case of woman is believed to be an ability to enchant and seduce. Naturally, acting “just like a man” woman will not be able to please his eye and to “reach his heart.” (*Moteris* 1931, No.5)

As the previous examples demonstrate, the perception of beauty as the most precious possession women can ever have, was being strongly supported by the mass media throughout the years. In 1910, the female author in the newspaper *Lietuvaite* [*Lithuanian Girl*] claims: “our sex is the beautiful one; therefore we have to look beautiful” (*Lietuvaite* 1910, No.1:3).

Emerging concerns about beauty were not surprising to me. According to Barthel (1988:87), no other qualities were asked from women more often than their beauty and propriety. “For women, beauty has traditionally been one route to achieving social status. By

“marrying up,” the beauty can wave good-bye to her humble origins and gain recognition, and security, among her “betters.” However, it depends less on personal will than one might think. As Bartky (1990:76) suggests, refusing to submit oneself to the appropriate body discipline causes real sanctions. According to her, the woman “faces very severe sanctions indeed in a world dominated by men: the refusal of male patronage” Moreover, she argues, it may result in deprivation of a decent livelihood.

Taking into consideration the link between beauty and social status, there is no surprise that in the prevailing discourse of Lithuanian press in the 1900s-1930s, the concerns about woman’s appearance were extremely highlighted. There were entire columns dedicated to ways women should look and appear to men, for this is what determines the way in which women will be treated. Therefore, according to Dineika (1924:22), the beauty of woman’s face and body is not only the biggest gift and treasure, but also an ultimate goal. However, he adds anxiously, the beauty cult in Lithuania is not yet entrenched.

Many articles concerning beauty practices and attractive appearance emerged in the printed press. In 1936, the first equivalent of today’s self-help books was published by Adolfina Velingsonaitė. In her book called *Moteris grožio paslaptys* [*The secrets of woman’s beauty*], the author reassures that “wealth is nothing in comparison to woman’s beauty. If the woman does not take care of her appearance, there are no prospects for a good, wealthy, prosperous, and therefore, happy life” (Velingsonaite 1936:6). Women should never forget what is expected from them and act accordingly, she concludes.

However, the understanding of beauty was not always narrowed down to the prospects of marriage. Few articles in the Lithuanian press expand such notion of beauty by suggesting that an attempt to look beautiful is not just a vain caprice or compliance to male power. As an article from 1914 suggests, “woman’s beauty rules politics, economics, and arts.” (*Lithuanian girl* 1914, No.3) In the context of the rising Lithuanian women’s movement, this kind of

message was obviously promising: it did not only resonate with the expected reward of male attention, admiration, and/or marriage, but also implied a potential emancipation in a broader sense. Women were encouraged to look beautiful and consider it as an advantage in their struggles for emancipation. Here the concept of beauty is redefined, becoming a powerful asset.

Such an exposure of prevailing discourses on beauty in Lithuanian media in the early 20th century, in fact, plays a central role in understanding new power mechanisms. Resting on Foucault's disciplinary theory, Bartky suggests that the institutional discipline, imposed on individuals with the help of violent actions or public sanctions, has nothing to do with it. In my case, "the disciplinary practices of femininity [that] produce a "subjected and practiced", an inferiorized, body, [...] must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers" (Bartky 1990:75). In other words, the beauty is imposed on women not through the explicit, established punishments, but through hegemonic power of persuasion that Baudrillard (1998) calls "latent terrorism". By winning women's consent to play the beauty game and transforming their minds. There is no space left for conscious decision not to participate in the beauty contest, since the media is ready to prove and persuade that beauty rules everything.

The biggest problem here is that "disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere; the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular" (Bartky 1990:74). The core of hegemonic power that reaches subjected bodies is intangible and dispersed. The image of "perfect femininity" is being inscribed to people's minds through the complex mechanisms of socialization, education, and most importantly – with their own consent.

4.1.5. Changing discourses: sport as a beauty practice

The change in the prevailing media discourses was quite consistent and deliberate. As I mentioned before, some articles published in 1933 revealed an attempt to soften existing antagonistic attitudes toward women doing sports (*see* chapter 4.1.3). The first steps were still grounded on the “old-fashioned” medical knowledge and threat of malady. Two excerpts from different sources in the same period show an appeal to women’s health:

Today’s women are obsessed with the wish to be beautiful according to contemporary fashion. They are trying to restrict their bodies in various ways in order to adjust the lines of their bodies to such a temporary *beau idéal*. And this is a huge mistake, precisely because an attempt to change the body by artificial means does not bring any long term results. Trying to look beautiful at the expense of health will just cause more harm. (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.1)

The life of Lithuanian woman differs so much from the life of Americans who are genteel, but numb and spoilt. They are concerned too much about their beauty and caparison. [...]. The corset – that unfortunately reached Lithuania and becomes more and more popular among our “ladies” – will cause you nothing but troubles. (*Moteris* 1933, No.2).

Paraphrasing what Winship (2000:33) has argued in her essay on women’s discipline, for women the shift from the fashionable “taut, stiff, tight” body to the “healthy, intelligible, and progressive” body in the early 1920s involved practising new internal disciplines: exercise, sports and diet rather than corset and stays. The media messages presented above demonstrate the first criticisms of that “unnatural” beauty. Calling the corset an “artificial means” implies the existence of “non-artificial” one. However, the positive influence of sport was not spelled out yet.

The first messages praising women’s sport activities, as well as cycling, appeared in the newspapers shortly after that. In the next issue of *Physical Culture and Health* the author was lamely reciting that “many journalists and women’s rights’ activists started talking about physical culture as of necessity for the beauty and health of the body” (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.2).

Distancing oneself from the content of the report implies the author's reluctance to readily accept the idea presented in the column. This position, however, is fully understandable bearing in mind that few years ago the same newspaper was denouncing sportswomen and their actions as outrageous and inappropriate. With no surprise, the main pressure in the previous message was put on *health* and general physical strength (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.2).

Switching off the discourse of prohibition and mockery and starting to focus on the condition of women's bodies in the early 1930s signified a supposedly big step forward, argues Barthel (1988). However, the hegemonic reformation of the social space – from prohibition of cycling to exercise as a health remedy – was subjecting women to the new disciplinary practices in a very handy way. For an ordinary woman the legitimate access to the exercise meant a “new from of freedom”. As a number of reports in the newspapers suggest, more and more women were attracted to sport. The changing discourse in the media softened public attitude toward women's fitness and enabled them to develop “more muscular strength and endurance than was heretofore allowed” (Bartky 1990:73). However, the gender border was firmly guarded with a renewed vigilance.

Sport for women **shall not imply the competition** for the first prize, but rather it shall mean the source of soundness and an art of **wellbeing**. Seeing that woman is **different** than man (i.e., has different anatomical and psychical features), she cannot and must not endeavor at what a man is striving for. As an **aesthetic human being**, she should not try to match a man; foremost because such a **masculine woman** throws away her good qualities. Her objective is to strengthen her body without losing her **femininity**. Therefore, the body building shall stay in the realm of men's sport, while the best thing for women is to pursue an individual gymnastics and various games in a fresh air and water. These kinds of sports will fulfill the need of exercise without causing any damage to **feminine sensibility**. (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.3)

This single message contains most of the elements of women's oppression. The suggested avoidance of competition, essential deference, beauty and aesthetics, stereotypization, requirement of conventional femininity, and presupposed sensibility...

Accepting these points reinforced the patriarchal order and ignored women as equal human beings. Although the *new woman* was neither passive, nor so fragile any more – indeed sport helped her become more energetic, physically stronger, and more independent – in the sport world she was not treated seriously. Instead, the sporting women were offered a new – special – niche.

At the end of the message about advantages of sport, the remark gladdened the reader: “if you are involved in physical exercise, beauty will naturally follow” (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.2). Such seemingly trivial note opened the door for the avalanche of new media messages which started to escalate the necessity of exercise for women because of its prettifying effect. It was often said that sport will keep women’s bodies not only healthy but also young and beautiful. Consequently, a healthy and thus beautiful body suddenly became a key concept for every self-respecting woman.

The only way to combine health with beauty is through exercise. Those women, who employ more physical work and love to exercise, are usually more beautiful and jolly. Their bodies look prettier, more slender and elegant. In other words, every woman who wants to be healthy and beautiful should start to do sports. (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.3)

All over the world, the physical exercise is acknowledged as a single means for making our bodies plastic, pretty and well balanced. Sport brings beauty and youth to women. (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1934, No.4)

After some more years, the importance of beauty itself surfaced in the media. Being – or becoming – beautiful was not just gratifying outcome from exercising anymore; the beauty itself was explicitly disclosed as a primary objective which could be achieved with the help of sport.

Sport is a highroad to beauty. The movements of women who exercise are exact, harmonious, rhythmical, pretty, elegant, and charming. Sporting women *are able* to learn walking *correctly*, smoothly, lightly, and nicely. The lines of the body of a sportswoman are more pretty and *balanced*. (Velingsonaitė 1936:14)

As we see from this excerpt from the book on beauty by Velingsonaitė (1936), in few years the attitude toward sportswomen has enormously changed. Now, *only* those who *do* sport *are able* to learn something and to become *charming*. Also, only these women can be able to develop the skills of *correct walking* and master the *balanced* body *lines*, that are already decided.

The previous excerpt actually demonstrates how the notions of beauty and perfect body took a particular shape. The newspapers increasingly discussed and described how the perfect body actually should look like. According to one of the articles, “to be perfectly beautiful means to have a slender, but strong and powerful body.” (*Lietuvos sportas* 1937, No.18) Another author in a women’s magazine presents very similar formula: “Perfect women look slender, graceful, strong, lively, and full of energy” (*Moteris ir pasaulis* 1938, No.11:18). By presenting a new vision of femininity women were encouraged to strive for perfection of their bodies to reach those forms publicly established for woman’s body.

The circumstances to keep an existing patriarchal order were really convenient. Bartky (1990:66) identifies three reasons for this situation. Following her ideas, the first is that in the case of sporting women, it was not easy “to distinguish what is done for the sake of physical fitness from what is done in obedience to the requirements of femininity.” Second, exercise still did not mean competitive, professional sports or racing, thus it did not mean the equality or emancipation either. Third, mastering the rules of “the perfect body” – the body of the right size and shape – imposed a burden of never-ending self-improvements.

According to Oddy (1996:67), no longer was “the female bicycle treated as a compromised male machine, rather it has become an exercise in “femininity.” Cycling, walking, and riding were now presented as great exercises to “regularize the work of a gut, clean the skin and strengthen the body” (*Moteris ir pasaulis* 1940, No.5). Until 1940, the entrenched belief in supposedly weak woman’s health and her preoccupation with beauty did not

experience any major changes. Thus, the slight modification in perception of cycling woman did not alter existing power relations. The new image of woman's body and activity was connected to health and self-esteem, but, as a matter of fact, it became merely another tool of oppression. As as Ehrenpreis (1999:30) has pointed out, "the image of the alluring cyclist, however, had the aggregate effect of converting the New Woman from a political figure into a commodity espousing the virtues of fashion, leisure-and consumption." Moreover, the image of the cycling woman shrank into the exposure of the conformity to the beauty requirements.

4.2. Gendering through the visual: representations of the cyclists in the ads and other pictures in the popular press

4.2.1. The first ads of the bicycle in Lithuanian press

As Barthel suggests (1988:6), advertising is so much about gender: “[g]ender is part of its social structure and its psychology.” According to her, advertising addresses the sense of ourselves and “our knowledge of the world gained through our bodies. It addresses our need to articulate our social identities through our physical appearance.” (Barthel, 1988:8)

However, as Gornick (1979:vi) observes, drawing on Goffman’s *Gender Advertisement* “[a]dvertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we *think* men and women behave. This depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women *are*, or want to be, or should be, not only in relation to themselves but in relation to each other.”

In its early stage in Lithuania, the bicycle was popularized exclusively through the sport organizations and the ads in the popular press. As I presented in the earlier chapters, the women were long time excluded from the sport arena, whereas sport was guarded as a legitimately closed area of male imagery. The sport newspapers were filled up with the articles and pictures of sporting *men*. Almost every single issue of a newspaper *Sport* exposed the pictures of cycling men; usually – the winners of some race (*see* Fig. 3, 4).

The sport news on bicycling in the newspapers were followed by the first ads which put an emphasis on the prices that apparently went down increasing the sales and popularity of the vehicle²⁸ (*see* Fig. 5, 11, 12, 13). When it actually came to advertisement, the bicycle again secured the role of a powerful tool for making gender distinction. First, at the beginning of mass import of the bicycles to Lithuania, the ads consisted of the enumeration of what

²⁸ *Lithuanian Cycling Association* recommends the bicycles which are assembled in Lithuanian from the imported parts (*see* Fig.9). The company of American Lithuanians called “Amlit” (*Sportas*, 1928, No.61, p.730) offered the bicycles for around 300 Lt. In comparison with the prices few years ago (450-500Lt), bicycle became considerably cheaper.

equipment was available in the particular shop²⁹, brief information about the selling company, and a schematic drawing of a *male* bicycle (*see* Fig. 1, 2, 3). Specifically speaking, “the type-forms which we recognize today as male and female bicycles date from the ‘gentlemen’s’ and ‘ladies’ bicycles of the period 1885-95” (Oddy 1996:60), which indicates that in the first few years of the bicycle import from Germany and England to Lithuania, the bicycle was already “gendered”. At the time, when women were still expected to wear long skirts, the bicycle that did not have ‘dropped’ or ‘open’ frame was commonly recognized as a male bicycle. According to Nicholas Oddy (1996:58), it was precisely because “[m]ounting the machine by swinging a leg over the connecting beam was considered unseemly for a lady.” To make a vehicle accessible for a respectably dressed woman “who did not wish to flaunt social convention, it would have had to be designed so that one could easily step over its frame and with sufficient ‘drop’ for a skirt to hang uninterrupted.” Consequently, the ads of just one type of bicycle likely not proper for any ‘decent’ woman (*see* Fig.5-10), implied the suitability of the vehicle only for men.

Second, the newspaper itself, in which the bicycle was advertised, was an important indicator of presumed audience. At the early 1920s, women were still excluded from doing any kind of sport, thus the ads in the *Sport* newspaper were not speaking to women in any way. At that time women already had “their own” newspapers (e.g. *Lietuvaite*) concerned about “women’s question” and emancipation, which did not touch too much the issues of cycling or sport in general until 1930s.

Third, the image conjured up by the linguistic articulation was reinforcing an existing disproportion. The language used in these ads was peculiar, with the detailed instructions, and emphasized mechanical specifications, such as “spring-loaded front forks” or “long frame” (*see* Fig. 10, 12, 13). The growing popularity of the bicycle opened up the opportunity to

²⁹ Usually, the ads also advertised typing-machines, gramophones, sewing-machines, what demonstrates the status and habitus of the projected audience.

conduct the business by importing and selling them in Lithuania. Consequently, bikes were advertised as the vehicle for “business, work, sport or relaxation” (see Fig. 7) and supported by corresponding images (see Fig. 10, 12). Neither of these activities (except maybe relaxation) was meant for women; thus the bicycle was not meant for them either.

According to the linguistic specificities of the various newspaper figures, the female body is a real battlefield where the significant gender differences are inscribed in gestures, body postures, movements, facial expressions, and general bodily comportment. Thus the body becomes an important signifier that articulates and maintains hierarchical power relations between the sexes.

4.2.2. An overwhelming power of masculinity

Finally, in 1927, the first images of people appeared in the bicycle ads. The very first ad with an actual figure of person was published in the *Sport* newspaper in 1927. It was a figure of man whose gender identity was underscored through an emphasized muscularity (see Fig. 10). The simplified insight of John Berger (1972:47) about gender in the media suggests that “men act and women appear.” Moreover, men tend to create a sense of identity by extending out from their bodies, demonstrating an ability to stay under control. The bodily expression of man’s *powerfulness* here conveys his superiority and security.

In agreement with Berger, Dyer (1992:270) also notes that “images of men are often images of men doing something.” What matters here above all is that in the Figure 10 we see a man in the course of riding the bicycle. The man is totally implicated in and concentrated on the act of cycling. Moreover, he is obviously doing sports, i.e., it is not just an idle cycling but cycling as a form of sports race. He is in the middle of some race (or at least in some training for the race), wherefore he is straining and striving; and it looks like he is ready to ride away with a full force. His muscles are symbolizing his effort and abilities. According to Dyer

(1997:169-170), “muscularity is the sign of power – natural, achieved, phallic”, whereas “the ‘naturalness’ of muscles legitimizes male power and domination.”

As Berger (1972) suggests, the very presence of man is dependent upon the promise of the power which he embodies, whether it is moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social or sexual. In Figure 10, the image of a man is offered mostly as a spectacle of physical power. The point is to reveal this power without demonstrating any interest in showing off. The gaze of the cyclist – he looks off – emphasizes concentration on his activity and suggests that he has no interest in the viewer.

Regarding the position of being either in control or under control it is very important for man to make sure that he is associated with ‘in control’: “to project an appearance of power and authority.” (Barthel 1988:10) The case with the bicycle advertisements at the beginning of the 20th century clearly confirms the assumption that this power is communicated through the muscles, body strength, and physical fitness and through all what they come to mean. As Barthel goes on (1988:10), men are judged “by whether they project an appearance of power and authority.” Therefore it is extremely important to depict men in the role of “being in charge”; especially, when both a man and a woman are taking part in the act.

To illustrate in what sense the bicycle was a gendered object, depiction of *femininity* and *masculinity* in the media images is one of the most telling instruments. According to Goffman (1979:32), “[i]n our society when a man and woman collaborate face-to-face in an undertaking, the man-it would seem-is likely to perform the executive role.” Moreover, he claims that any instruction involves some sort of subordination of the instructed, therefore men are more likely to be pictured instructing women. This is exactly what happens in the ad of the cycling wear (*see* Fig.18). Man is displayed in such manner that he seems to be involved in what he is doing and extremely self-confident and content. A man is depicted as if

he was in his “natural”, “ready for action” position. Moreover, he seems to be kind, patient and attentive for taking his time, explaining or discussing something. In agreement to Goffman (1979), the man in the ad seems to be involved and deeply identified with his appearance and act, whereas a woman seems to be more identified with him. A woman holds her hand on the man’s shoulder as if she needs support and prop to lean upon. Her posture may imply an uncertainty and lack of self-confidence, while her facial expression demonstrates an interest in what he is showing and explaining.

As Dyer (1997:147) suggest, the gaze is very important. According to him, women tend more to look at men than men at women. In face-to-face interactions, he claims, “women listen more to men, pay more attention to them.” Women watch men, and this constitutes superior position of a man³⁰. In the bicycle wear ad (*see* Fig.18) he is an authority, the hero. And she is just a model for cycling clothes, standing next to the man and demonstrating her outfit in a full-length.

4.2.3. Advertising the female bicycle: a comparative analysis

The first advertisement of the female bicycle appeared in the media in 1927 in the *Sport* newspaper (*see* Fig. 11). What is more, it was the only one ad of the female bicycle I found in the periodical press during the whole period of the 1920s-1930s; therefore it is all the more important to compare it with its counterpart that advertises bikes for men (*see* Fig. 10).

According to Barthel (1988:77), there is a tendency for “[a]dvertisements [to] play with the edges and boundaries of society, of right and proper female behavior. Increasingly, they must pretend that the norm still exists, in order to give women the pleasure of breaking it.” Although the boundary might have not just pretended to exist, a display of the female cyclist can be perceived as this edge in the *Triumph* ad (*see* Fig. 11). First, the appearance of

³⁰ Moreover, the superior positioning of a man is expressed by technological configuration of the bicycle: a woman’s seat is behind a man’s seat because, as Smith (1972:79) suggests, women were not given credit for being able to navigate and sit in the front.

such ad at the time when cycling was still regarded as *masculine* activity was rather surprising. The prevailing discourse on female cyclists at that time was quite hostile, especially – on women doing sport. Second, the presentation of the female bicycle in the *Sport* newspaper might be also suspicious. However, the first impression of liberation (e.g., from stereotypes about female body) turns out to be false, precisely because the women are *allowed* to go further, but not too far – just until certain limit.

In Figure 11 we can see the figure of a woman *standing* next to the ‘female’ bicycle - not *riding* the bicycle. She is, holding it from the left side, which posture is rather unusual and awkward for the task of gripping the handle since most people are believed to be right-handed. She is wearing a dress, which demonstrates an emphasized dissociation from the world of sport. Instead of being accepted as a person who is equally capable of cycling for exercise, let alone sport, she is rather warned not to cross the border of social conventions. The setting of surroundings in the background of the picture (the meadows and mountains) reinforces the impression that a female cyclist is allowed to *try* to ride the vehicle during her leisure time, but is not welcome to the bicycle race.

The next very important point concerning the same image (*see* Fig. 11) is the body techniques. The body of a woman which, according to Sadra Lee Bartky (1990:72) mandates fragility and lack of muscular strength, communicates not her power over others, but her *presence*. Her awareness of being watched and observed is manifested through her attention to the anonymous spectator which most likely is “an anonymous patriarchal Other”. Furthermore, a woman must continually watch and survey herself precisely because of the new kind of disciplinary power and “internalized patriarchal standards of bodily acceptability” (Bartky 1990:77), since in the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality, the woman must make herself into an object for the man. Depending on how she appears to men, she is rewarded or punished by what is normally thought of as the success of life. This

formula of success, when the woman was constantly urged to take care of her outlooks in order to have better marriage prospect, I already described in the previous chapters.

In fact, a woman in Figure 11 is pictured in a pose which implies a little connection with the bicycle, but has a lot to do with the expression of conventional *femininity*. According to Bartky (1990:68), “[f]eminine faces, as well as bodies, are trained to the expression of deference.” They are trained to smile and they do smile notably more than men³¹. In the Figure 11, a woman is smiling, gazing somewhat inviting, wearing a dress (the selection of clothes is very important), elegantly posing by stretching curve and waving her hand. All these constituents set the female cyclist into an attractive posture which is significant for winning male attention. She is ready to serve and please. Moreover, for her, it is more important to greet the viewer and make an impression, than to be on the bicycle. The symbolic name of the bicycle brand – *Triumph* – becomes a significant affirmation of triumph over other women in the competition for men attention (Bartky 1990); while in the ad of the male bicycle (*see* Fig.6) it indicates a victory in race.

It is also important to mention how the list of qualities differs in the ads of male and female bicycles. In addition to desirable mechanical specifications, the ads of male bicycles emphasized speed, performance and a competitive disposition, oriented toward ‘victory’. The amount of text in the ad of the *Triumph* female bicycle was much smaller. The information consisted of a brief reference to the good payment conditions, suitability for bad country roads, lightness in weight, and strength. Calling the female bicycle “strongest in the world” (*see* Fig. 11) certainly implies the masculine nature of the vehicle, and thus supports the assumption that every woman (even the cycling one) is in the urgent need of a strong and supportive male character. In result, woman is inextricably bound to heteronormative discourse, sustained by the beauty and attractiveness embodied in her presence.

³¹ As one study of a smile elicitation has shown, “the rate of smile return by women was 93 percent, by men only 67 percent” (*quoted in* Bartky 1990:68).

4.2.4. The visual representations of the cycling woman in Lithuanian media in the 1900s – 1930s period

Barthel (1988:6) makes an important observation about the division of labor in the advertising industry that left its impression on the gendered nature of the ads themselves. Until the year 1940 in the U.S., the advertiser was the *adman*. Therefore, the relationship between the creator of ads – usually man – and the consumer – usually woman – “was depicted as one of power.”

I have no reliable data about the world of advertisement in Lithuania at the period which I am looking at (1900s – 1930s). Most of the texts concerning cycling woman were written by female authors, while the authorship of ads is unknown. However, indeed, the analysis of Lithuanian press from the 1900s-1930s has demonstrated what Oddy (1996) calls a lack of effort to respond to female stereotyping. Within mass media discourse, the binary opposition of gender was repeatedly reinforced by representation of specific body techniques (gestures, postures, special expressions) and gender specific practices.

According to Talbot (2000:178) advertisements have always perpetuated sexist stereotypes, constructing a particular perception of the female body. For a long time the advertisers “kept” women in the domestic sphere, as I have demonstrated this previously (*see* Chapter 4.1.2.). However, the requirement of being advanced, up-to-date, and in step with contemporary issues, as Talbot suggests, was crucially important for the media to maintain its *reliable* positions. Since the world of advertisement could not afford to be seen as in any way oppressive, the ads in the daily media quickly adjusted to the demands of the public. Instead of continuing the dead silence, through the textual and visual visions the sporting and cycling women were promised progress and emancipation. The new discourse presented happy, self-confident, and supposedly beautiful ladies riding their bikes during the sunny holiday.

As Barthel (1988:124) points out, “[t]he New Woman of the 1920s may have been shocking in her day, but she was in fact a welcome creature to advertisers, who quickly recognized and encouraged her taste of the glamorous, the innovative, the modern.” Of course, as I mentioned earlier, it was not exactly *she* who all of a sudden chose to show interest in glamorous and beautiful. Switching the discourses and letting such a supposedly emotional unstable creature as woman into challenges of sport, created a conditional security for patriarchal setting. In other words, permission to engage in sport—where woman could be busy enough taking care of her own well-being and perfection of her body—reduced the “danger” for the social and political space occupied by men.

Six pictures from Lithuanian newspapers in the late 1930s can perfectly serve as an evidence for the previous claim. All six pictures with the cycling women depict them engaged in the leisure activities (*see* Fig. 14, 15, 16, 19, 20). Although all the images were published between 1937 and 1939, when women presumably were free to take part in the physical exercise, there was not a single photograph picturing woman engaged in the bicycle sport. Meanwhile, only the proud figures of victorious men continued to “embellish” the pages of the sport newspapers.

The perfect consonance of the textual and visual materials ultimately proves that sport – as the spaces of “real” men – preserved its demarcation and dissociation from women in the first half of the 20th century. Moreover, in spite of quite numerous media reports on cycling, the commentary under one of the pictures proclaims: “in England, the bicycle is popular also among women” (*see* Figure 14). It can not suggest anything else but the implication that in Lithuania the bicycle was still not popular among women at that time.

However, as long as the bicycle grew in popularity and became more and more visible on the streets in the second half of the 1930s³², the publishers had to make it visible in the media, at the same time keeping it within certain bound. One of the best ways to do that was to link the cycling with supposed female *narcissism* and *pleasure*.

Although most³³ of the pictures of the female cyclists were taken outside Lithuania (see Fig. 14, 17, 20), they were speaking to Lithuanian reader in the universal language of visual representation. The photograph that in my opinion is the most expressive and eloquent one, depicts a woman standing astride the bicycle and looking at herself in the mirror (see Fig. 19). Naturally, it is an elegant ‘*female*’ bicycle suitable for the cyclists wearing a skirt. The picture, which is in fact presenting a dress for the cycling, portrays the woman’s body as decorated and ornamented entity that needs constant examination and reiterative attendance. All the more, because now her body is perfectly visible for the whole community, while she is riding in the near surroundings.

It is important to mention, that the woman is depicted as if she stopped somewhere in the meadow, far away from the gazes of the spectators, as if she was in the backstage (retracing Goffman’s dramaturgical theory of everyday performance). Here she has to repeatedly inspect her body in order to be prepared for the *real*, outstanding performance. Thus, according to Macdonalds (1990), this investment in appearance becomes a key identity marker of conventional femininity.

The real function of the mirror, according to Berger (1972:51), is “to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight.” Being a sight, woman has to better the spectacle improving herself in the various ways. The more so because her own sense of being herself is always accompanied by obligation of self surveillance. It means that in

³² I have no data in actual numbers about cycling in Lithuania at that time. However, as some newspapers from 1933-1935 suggest, the interest in the cycling as leisure activity, as well as in bicycle sport, continually grew (*Kūno kultūra ir sveikata* 1933, No.37; 1934, No.49).

³³ In my opinion, none of those pictures were from Lithuania. However, the notes under these pictures did not specify the source.

addition to cycling and keeping her body fit, she has also to make sure her face and hair look good too. And this, returning to Berger again, from the viewpoint of the audience, is often perceived as vanity,³⁴ although the moralizing is mostly hypocritical.

As Macdonalds (1995:192) explains it, perfection and adornment of the body means not just a pleasure of narcissistic satisfaction. Rather, these practices are strongly associated with sexual feelings, whereas prevailing norm of sexuality remains heterosexuality and dominating point of view – firmly masculine gaze. Thus, the great emphasis on decoration of the female body can be understood as disciplinary techniques through which women are constructed into “docile bodies”, implicitly forced to obey to patriarchy. And this is exactly what we see in the ad of the female dress, where the focal point is intentionally set up to be woman’s self admiration and anticipated gratification.

The posture, gestures, and facial expression of a woman also reveal self-confidence and satisfaction in watching herself. The joy and playfulness constituted in woman’s appearance speak about the pleasure of being *beautiful* and *feminine*. According to Macdonalds, playfulness has “become a recurrent mode in addressing women about their femininity.” (MacDonald 1995:220) This we can also see in the Figure 20, where four cheeky “ladies” attract everyone’s attention to their extravagance and challenging appearance. The numbers attached to their bicycles denote that it must be some kind of competition. The playfulness manifested through the exceptional fashion and exaggerated bodily adornment in Figure 19 “offer scope for play and experimentation with identity that is liberating.” (MacDonald 1995:219) But is it *real* liberation or just another attempt to attract male attention by showing off?

As the next picture from France reveals (*see* Fig. 17), women were encouraged “to view their bodies as intrinsically related to their sexual desirability” (Macdonalds 1995:194),

³⁴ On the basis of his analysis of paintings and other images, Berger (1972:51) argues that “the mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman.”

no matter in what context. The flirt scene depicted in Figure 17 implies woman's frivolity, jocosity and delight in getting male attention. Moreover, racing men are portrayed as pushing a woman forward, what implies that besides all that she is also physically weak and slow. It is no wonder, that Lithuanian publishers found this image funny and suitable for their *macho* newspaper, i.e. *Lietuvos sportas* [*Lithuanian Sport*].

These images of jolly, fashionably dressed and continually smiling women support the assumption that it is very difficult "to separate the exercise routines from the rituals of dress and self-presentation associated with them" (Macdonald 1995:203). By this I mean not only the shape of the body which becomes more fit, slender and athletic after exercising, but also the very process of doing sports, which in the case of the cycling became very rewarding. Paradoxically, the conditions that some ten-twenty years ago turned cycling women into object of mockery, now promised attention and presumed pleasure of being stared at. Since riding the bike does not enclose individual indoors, the cyclist is being watched, measured, and judged by the society. Especially, when cycling is exercised as a leisure activity, the space and riding trajectories expand even more. Thus again, the female cyclist must not forget about those whom she will meet on her way. Because of being constantly observed and evaluated, she has to be always *prêt*.

However, I have to make a further qualification. Such transformation of oneself into the properly feminine body of her time, as for instance, wearing a special dress for cycling would have it, at the same time implicated and announced woman's economic and social status. An interest in clothes and fashion demonstrates a "greater participation in social and leisure activities" (MacDonald 1995:205), thus conveying the privileged position of these cycling women. Their polished, well matched, and aesthetically pleasing outfit allows us to place them within the contemporary class system as rich middle class and daring ladies (*see* Figures 14, 19, 20).

On the basis of analysis I have developed in the previous chapters, I would claim that these pictures were meant for visual enjoyment and stimulation of imagination of men rather than for the encouragement of Lithuanian women to cycle. Especially, because most of those images were published not even in women's magazines, but in the sport newspapers targeted mainly at male audience. And if some messages or photographs were meant for women, they were restricted to "contemporary", "up-to-date" issues of beauty and fashion. For instance, the same picture of two female cyclists, published in the two different newspapers (i.e., *Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1938 and *Lietuvos sportas [Lietuvos sportas]*, 1938), was commented differently (see Fig. 15, 16), presumably, accordingly to the public demand. Instead of expressing gladness about the cycling women, the sport newspaper made a remark about fashionable headscarf. And this is a perfect evidence of the new well hidden mechanism of disciplinary power.

Consequently, I must agree with Talbot (2000) who has argued that the impression of 'freedom' presented through the texts and pictures of cycling women, in fact is just part of this power game. Offered as a 'revolutionary' product, the bicycle was instantly linked to empowerment just as much as it maintained the beauty practices and self-surveillance that was convenient for the existing patriarchal order.

However, I would like to believe that all those pictures, no matter how stereotypic and sexist they are, convey at least a tiny grain of *really* liberating power. Although this liberation was scarcely accessible to Lithuanian women in the period of the 1900s and 1930s, the depiction of a "new women" must have played the role not only in stronger oppression through the standardization of the "beautiful body", but also in obtaining self-confidence and mobility.

5. CONCLUSION

In male dominant cultures founded on sexual difference/deference, “the gendered boundary between male and female is one border that remains heavily guarded” (Balsamo 1997:9) and publicly demonstrated in order to maintain and manifest male supremacy. Consequently, at all times, woman’s body was subject to man’s assumed superiority and his knowledge. Women were constructed through the “facts” about their different capacities and specific anatomical structure, e.g. the *hysterization* of woman involved the medicalization of her body. My thesis demonstrates how the female body was a legitimate focus of attention of medical professionals in regard to cycling. Pointing explicitly at sporting women, i.e., women who walk on the edge of conventional *femininity*, reflects the patriarchal anxiety and subjection of women to the disciplinary practices.

Starting to ride bicycles, ‘new women’ came to represent activity, choice, mobility, pleasure, and empowerment. In the late 19th century having proved they are as capable as men not only of physical activities, but also of independence and responsibility, American women built the base for an important debate between women and men about equality. Consequently, they experienced a change in the media discourses that suddenly moved from scourging cycling women to praising bicycling as healthy exercise to correct the flaws of the female body. Thus, the American case gave an excellent example not only of the female cyclists who appropriated the bicycle as an instrument of critique in regard to patriarchy, but also a deliberate feedback from the center of power.

Moving on to the popular media in Lithuania, I uncovered the patterned ways of how the bicycle in the early 20th century served as a marker of gender border. Objecting against the cycling women or silencing such occurrences in the media was the first strategy of maintaining the clear-cut gender difference. As I argue in this paper, first, these practices were

institutionally bound (Foucault) and embodied through the explicit prohibitions and mockeries from the side of “experts” in both American and Lithuanian contexts. Later, an *institutionally unbound power* (Bartky) created an impression that the production of femininity is entirely natural and voluntary process in which women involve by their own will. In my thesis I trace down these “finer channels” through which the disciplinary imposition of power on female identity and subjectivity gains access “to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions.” (Bartky 1990:79)

The representation of cycling woman in popular Lithuanian press revealed asymmetries in gender display (Goffman) as well as gendered positioning of the vehicle. Although the “masculine” area of competitive sport remained closed for women, the bicycling was allowed for them as a tool for staying healthy and beautiful. The analysis of mass media displayed the construction of female into a sight, whereas the imagery of bicycling women reinforced heteronormativity and gender inequality.

The case of the cycling woman is just one example illustrating how the ‘gender border’ is being guarded. The concerns about femininity, gallantry, and propriety are still relevant in contemporary societies, while the female body remains the site of patriarchal anxiety, control, and power.

APPENDIX

*Jos dažnas sapnas —
Lietūkio siuvamoji mašina*



Nes ji žino, kad **LIETŪKIS**
duoda už mašinos aukštą kokybę,
garantiją 15 metų.

Prieinamos kainos. Geros pirkimo
sąlygos.

Gaunama Lietūkyje ir Kooperatyvuose.

She often dreams about Lietūkio sewing-machine
Because she knows that LIETUKIS gives a 15
years warranty for this high quality machine.
Reasonable prices. Good conditions. Available in
Lietukis and cooperatives.

Figure 1. The ad of the sewing-machine (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1928, No.2)

**KIEKVIENOS MOTERS
SVAJONĖ**



MUILAS

173 „*My dream*“
Kaunas, Berar & Co.

**Štai? kur
šmagumas!**



Skalbiamųjų
muilu
„**MALŪNAS**“
skalbinius
skalbiant.

Pirkdami kreipkit ypatingą dėmesį į ženklą

„MALŪNAS“

visiems žinomos firmos
„FLORANCE“

The real fun is to wash your clothes with a laundry
soap „MALUNAS“! Before buying - look carefully
at the brand. Everyone knows „MALUNAS“ from
the famous „FLORANCE“

Figure 2. The ads of soap in the sport newspaper (*Sportas, [Sport]*, 1923, No.2-3)

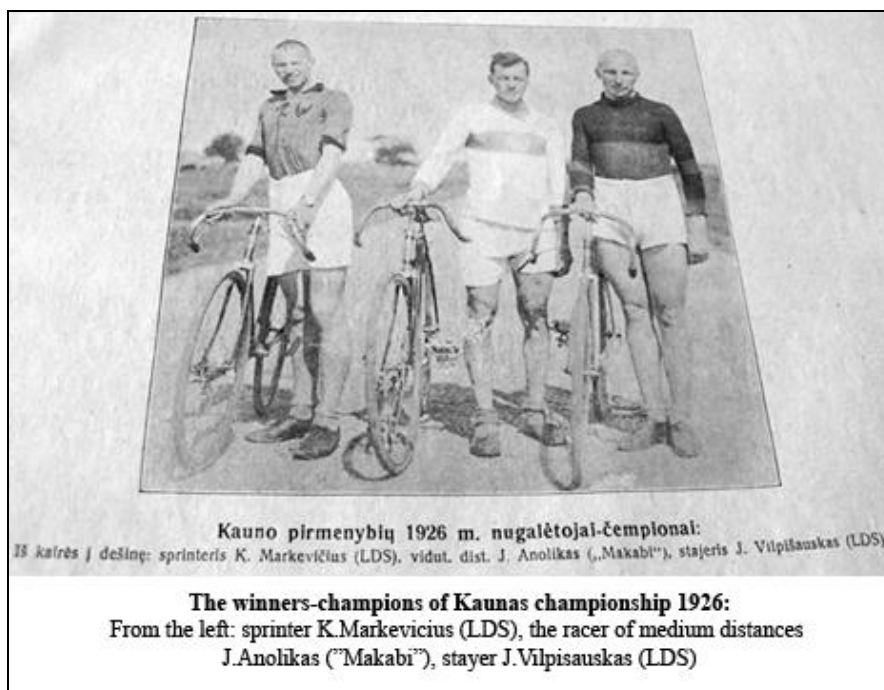


Figure 3. The winners (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1926, No.38)



Figure 4. The winners (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1928, No.63)



A. KACAS
LAISVĖS ALĖJA 57.

Dviračiai
rašomos ir siuvamos mašinos,
gramofonai ir visos dalys.
PIGIAUSIOS KAINOS

A.Kacas, Laisves avenue 57. Bicycles. Typewriters and sewing-machines, gramophones and all accessories; THE CHEAPEST PRICES

Figure 5. One of the first bicycle advertisements in Lithuanian press (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1923, No.2-3).



S. TRINKOVSKIS ir K. ARRIS
Kaunas, Laisvės Al. 21. Tel. 396.

SIŪLO SANDĖLYJE:
Anglų modelių specialaus užsakymo dviračius

VISKAS futbolo sportui—kamuolius, kostiumus ir kit. įrankius.
VISKAS lauteniso žaidimui — raketas, sveidinius, tinklus ir kit.
VISKAS lengvajai atletikai—diskus, ietis, batukus, „boomerangs“, kostiumai

Hockey ir visų sporto šakų įrankiai.
Moterų ir vyrų kostiumai maudymui.

S.Trinkovskis and K.Arris;
Kaunas, Laisves av. 21. Phone no. 396
OFFERS IN THE STORE:
Special English bicycles
Everything for football sport- balls, costumes, and other equipment.
Everything for tennis game- rackets, balls, nettings, and so on.
Everything for athletics- discs, spears, shoes, “boomerangs”, costumes.
Other equipment for hockey and all sports.
The swimming suits for women and men.

Figure 6. The ad of English bicycles and other sport equipment (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1924, No.10-11)

NAUJAI GAUTA
 lietuviško modelio (yra ir kitų mo-
 delių) pailgintais remais

Reikalaukit visur!



Geriausi dviračiai!

Brennabor

firmos dviračių verslui, tarnybai,
 sportui ir pramogai.

Geriausi dviračiai!

Gražūs, lengvi ir tvirti. Prieš perkdami
 —įsitikrinkite!

Atstovas Lietuvai

KACAS ir Sūnus.

KAUNAS, Prezidento gatvė 4 Nr.

Newly received Lithuanian bicycle (with an extended frame)
 Request everywhere! The best bicycles!
 Brennabor for the bicycle business, work, sport or relaxation.
 The best bicycles! Pretty, lightweight, and durable.
 Make sure before buying it!
 Lithuanian representative Kacas & sons. Kaunas, Prezidento str. no.4

Figure 7. The ad of Lithuanian bicycle (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1925, No. 22-24)



Generalis Lietuvos Dviratininkų Sąjungos tiekėjas.

Akc. B-vė „DUBYSĄ“

SIŪLO: geriausius francūzų, anglų ir vokiečių fabri-
 kų dviračius ir motociklus;

Rašomas mašinas: Underwug, Remington, Royal ir A.E.G.
 Siuvamas mašinas — Original — Viktorija fabr. Mundlos;
 Skaitliavimo mašinėlės (arifmometrai) Bransviga.

Prie krautuvės yra įrengtos didelės dirbtuvės taisymui
 dviračių, siuvamų ir rašomų mašinų.

— VISOS DALYS DEL DVIRAČIŲ. —

Kaunas, Laisvės Alėja 61. Akc. B-vė „DUBYSĄ“.

General supplier of Lithuanian Cycling Association. Corporation “Dubysa”
 Presents: the best bicycles and motorcycles made in French, English, German factories;
 Typewriters: Underwug, Remington, Royal and A.E.G. Sewing machines - Original -
 Viktorija factory Mundlos; Calculating machines (arifrometres) Bransviga. Next to
 the shop there is a big repair shop for bicycles, sewing machines and typewriters.
 All bicycle accessories. Kaunas, Laisves avenue 61. Corporation “Dubysa”.

Figure 8. One of the first bicycle advertisements in Lithuanian press
 (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1925, No.25).

Žinomos keleivių ir lenktynių „KORONA“ markės dviračių tikrai garantuoti, sulig naujausiais modeliais lengva važioti siūlo
S. VOŠČINAS, Kaunas,
 Laisvės Alėja Nr. 45

The famous company of travel and race bicycles “KORONA” guarantees that our new models are designed for an easy ride
 S.VOSCINAS, Kaunas, Laisves avenue no. 45

Figure 9. The bicycle ad (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1925, No.25)

Ar jau nupirkote dviratį
TRIUMPH?

Nepamirškite, kad Triumph yra daugiausiai pritaikintas mūsų keliams jo priešakinėmis spyruokliančiomis šakutėmis, ilgu rėmu, lengvu ėjimu ir gražiu išdirbimu. Reikalaukit visur tik dviratį „TRIUMPH“

Atstovas Lietuvai
Juozas Margolis
 Kaunas, Laisvės, Al. 53. Tel. 155 ir 2352.

Fahrräder
TRIUMPH WERKE NÜRNBERG A.G.

Have you already bought the TRIUMPH bicycle? Do not forget that Triumph bicycle is best adjusted to our roads, for it has springing front forks, long frame, beautiful finish, and it gives an easy riding. Demand everywhere only the “TRIUMPH” bicycle! The contact person in Lithuania is Juozas Margolis, Kaunas, Laisves av. 53, phone no. 155 and 2352.

Figure 10. The ad of a male bicycle “Triumph” (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1927 No.48-49 and *Ūkininkas [The Farmer]*, 1928, No.20)

„Triumph“
stipriausias ir lengviausias pasaulyje dviratis.

TRIUMPH

Specialiai pritaikytas mūsų keliams. Lengvos mokėjimo sąlygos



Juozas Margolis
Telefono Nr. Nr. 155 ir 23-52.
Kaunas, Laisvės al. Nr. 53.

TRIUMPH WERKE NÜRNBERG A-G

“Triumph” – the strongest and lightest bicycle in the world. It is specially adjusted to our roads. Good payment conditions
Juozas Margolis, Kaunas, Laisves av. 53. Phone no. 155, 23-52.

Figure 11. The ad of the female bicycle “Triumph” (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1927 No.53)

Ar jau nupirkote dviratį

Triumph?

Nepamirškite, kad **TRIUMPH** yra daugiausiai pritaikintas mūsų keliams, savo priešakinėmis spiruoklinėmis šakutėmis, ilgais rėmais, lengvu ėjimu ir gražiu išdirbimu

Reikalaukite visur tik dviratį **TRIUMPH!**

Atstovas Lietuvai
Juozas Margolis
Kaunas, Laisvės al. 53.
Telef. 155 ir 2352.



Have you already bought the TRIUMPH bicycle? Do not forget that the TRIUMPH bicycle is best adjusted to our roads with its spring-loaded front forks, long frame, easy riding and beautiful finish. Demand everywhere only the “TRIUMPH” bicycle
The contact person in Lithuania is Juozas Margolis, Kaunas, Laisves av. 53, phone no. 155 and 2352


Figure 12. The ad of a male bicycle “Triumph” (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1928, No.4)

Tautiečiai! palaikykite savąją pramonę — pirkite tik

„AMLIT“ markės **DVIRAČIUS**

kurių kainos yra nedidelės (nuo 282–315 lt.)

Dviračiai „Amlit“ yra specialiai pritaikinti Lietuvos keliams. Jų priekinė šakutė yra spiruoklinė ir balnelis su dvigubomis spiruoklėmis. Visa tai daro važinėjimą labai lengvą ir malonų, nes, važiuojant net ir blogiausiais keliais, nejaučiama kratymo.



Dviračiai „Amlit“ gaminami Lietuvoje **Amerikos Lietuvių Akcinė Bendrovė:**

<p>Šiauliai, Bažnyčios Aikš. Nr. 2 telefonas 157</p>	<p>Kaunas, Kęstučio g-vė Nr. 44a telefonas 221 ir 188</p>	<p>Klaipėda, Liepojos g. Nr. 5 telefonas 17</p>
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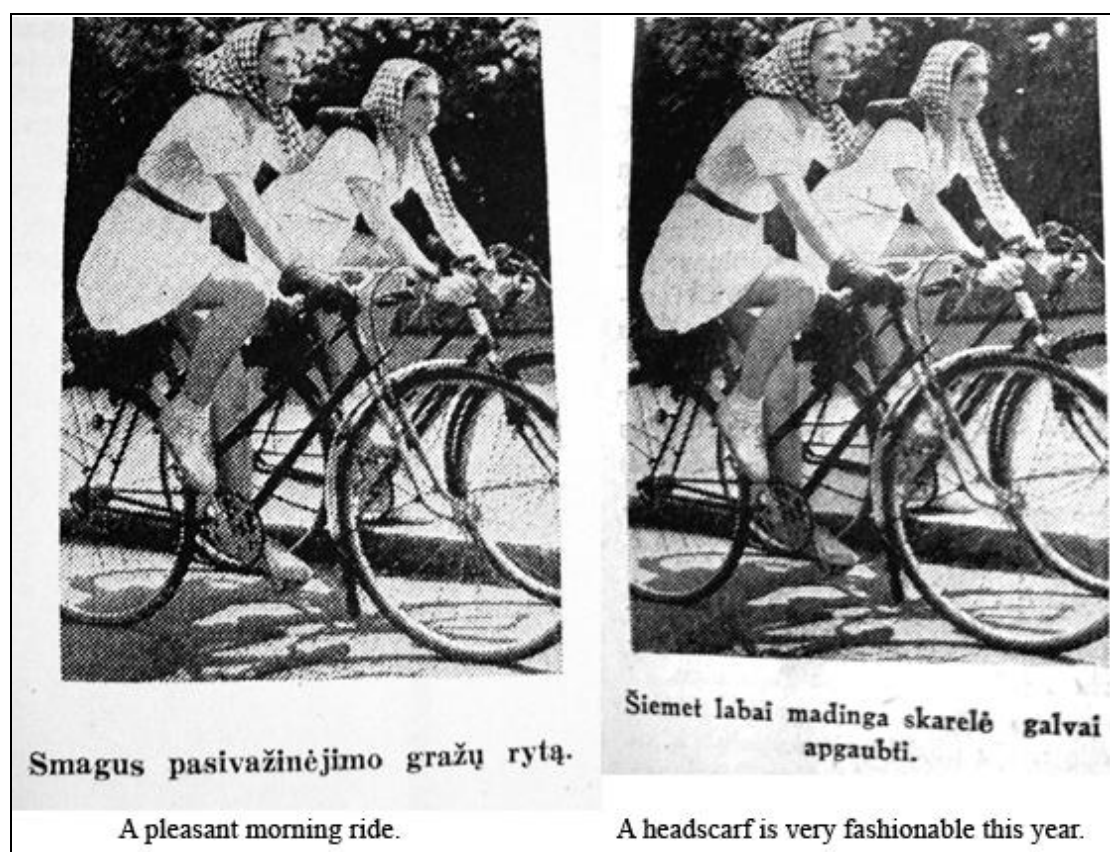
Urnu parduoda generalinis atstovas G. MACYS, Kaunas, Laisvės Al. 61 Nr. Tel. 20-90

Fellow-countrymen! Support your industry – buy only “AMLIT” bicycles that are not expensive (from 282-315 Lt) “Amlit” bikes are adjusted to Lithuanian roads. The front fork is spring-loaded, and the saddle has a double springs too. This makes your cycling easier and more pleasant, for you feel no rumble-tumble even on the worst track. “Amlit” bicycles are made in Lithuania in Corporation of American Lithuanians: Siauliai, Baznycios sq. no.2, phone no.157 Kaunas, Kestucio str. No.44, phone no. 221 and 188; Klaipeda, Liepojos str. No.5, phone no.17; The contact person for the wholesale – G.Macys, Kaunas, Laisves av. 61, phone no.20-90

Figure 13. The ad of Lithuanian bicycle brand “Amlit” (*Sportas [Sport]*, 1928, No.61)



Figure 14. An illustration of the sport news from England (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1937, No.30)



Figures 15, 16. Two interpretations of the same photo in two different newspapers (*Sekmadienis* [Sunday], 1938, No.23 and *Lietuvos sportas* [Lithuanian Sport], 1938, No.23)



During the bicycle race in France, the racers came across a female cyclist and started to flirt with her.

Figure 17. A French cyclist (*Lietuvos sportas* [Lithuanian Sport], 1938, No.50)



Figure 18. The ad of the cycling wear (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1938, No.50)



Figure 19. The ad of the cycling wear for women (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1939, No.18)

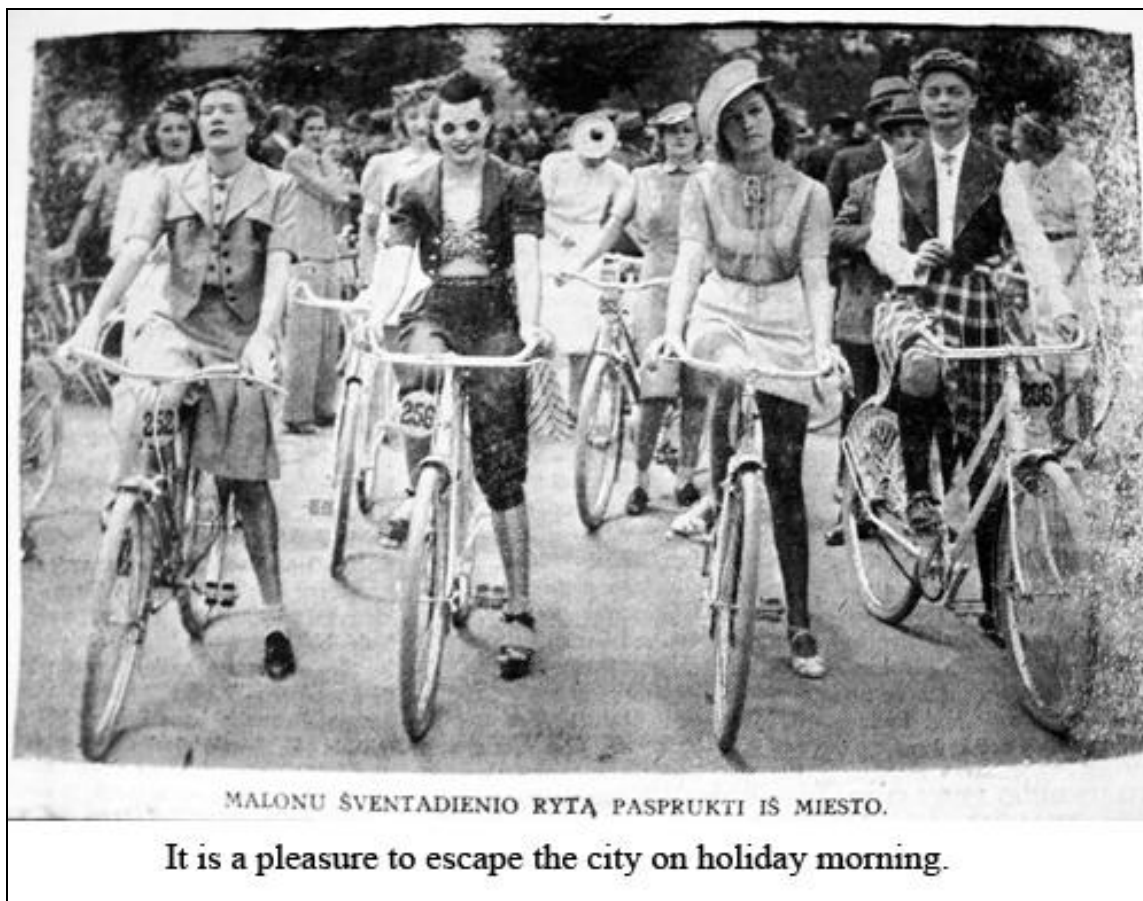


Figure 20. Cycling women (*Sekmadienis [Sunday]*, 1939, No.27)

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