POST-FEMINISM IN POST-SOCIALIST LITHUANIA: *SOVIET WOMAN* BECOMES *WOMAN*

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Abstract

This study is an initial attempt to intervene into the existing scholarship of women's and gender history in the transitional period from Soviet Lithuania to Independent Lithuania and to suggest a different theoretical approach, informed by post-feminist theory and historical revisionism, as well as to illustrate the approach empirically through analyzing women's magazine throughout the transition. Theoretical arguments for more multiplex historiography ground the work, followed by an overview of women's situation during the transition paralleled to an analysis of changing discourse in magazine *Soviet Woman*, later – *Woman*. The final part presents the masterminds behind the analyzed discourse through interviews with editors-in-chief of the time. The study concludes that a magazine is an important actor in cushioning regime changes and helping women adjust, yet yielding to the new political order it acts as its ambassador as well. Finally, a recommendation is made for more complex and intersectional analysis, emphasizing women's agency in historical processes and the importance of women's magazines for social change.

Declaration of Original research and the Word Count

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where the appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

The body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 22,288 words

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Signed _____

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Introduction

Since I was a child, magazines have always been part of my life. Children's, teenage girl's, or science magazines, you name it. The way I think about it now, it might have been a habit of my parents to read magazines and use it as a source of information, knowledge, and leisure. We never had a big library at home and reading books was not engrained in me. But magazines were. One of my strongest memories from primary school is winning the subscription to a young girl's magazine that I received as a prize for achievements in school - not a very smart idea as I recall now. But I was waiting for the magazine each month with excitement and was reading each issue several times from the beginning to the end. It was something that I could own, it was dedicated to me and meant some status amongst my peers. My single mother at the time could not afford to spend money and time on reading books. It was the 90's. She was buying women's magazines instead and after reading them, she would put the old copies in her little hair salon for other women to read while they were waiting for their turn. So, it was my opportunity to engage in those beauty magazine's while watching the clients' makeovers, waiting for my mother to be ready to go home. Later, I was spending my lunch money to buy a magazine called *IQ*, which was a side project of *The Economist.* Banal and pretentious name, but for me as a girl it was a sign of something more than I had, some aspiration and goal to escape my working-class surrounding. I wanted to be better. I wanted more content because I knew, if I cannot be perfectly beautiful, I can be smart – just like the English working-class little girl in the 1950s of Lancashire watching musicals in Valerie Walkerdine's autobiographical recollection of the place of popular culture in the making of her academic subject.[1]

[1] Valerie Walkerdine, "Subject to Change without Notice: Psychology, Postmodernity and the Popularn," in *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, ed. Steve Pile and N. J. Thrift (London: Routledge, 1995), 302–23, https://www.dawsonera.com/guard/protected/dawson.jsp?name=https://idp.goldsmiths.ac.uk/idp/shibboleth&dest=http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9780203976012.

Our interests usually lead towards research and a deeper understanding of the complexity of our object of inquiry. If in my case, my initial research interest was rooted in pure feminist curiosity and the desire to deconstruct my locally grounded identity, now I am better equipped in positioning myself in a realm of my socioeconomic situation *vis a vis* culturally imposed normative femininity. Magazine or media studies can serve as a means of uncovering the expectations of desired subjectivities in the given structures. Moreover, it is very interesting to capture and unfold how the meaning-making process of 'womanhood' changes in the context of economic change. Therefore, I situate my thesis in the literature on post-socialist transition with a particular focus on popular culture**.** To achieve this, I draw on a magazine which during the socialist period was called *Soviet Woman* (*Tarybinė Moteris* in Lithuanian) and later, as a gesture of dislocation from socialism was renamed *Woman (Moteris).*

Soviet Woman was first published in 1952 and was running under this name until April of 1989. After that, the magazine was published by the name *Woman* and is running up until now. The contemporary magazine originates itself from Lithuanian Catholic women's magazine which was established in 1920 and was published until World War II and was also called *Woman.* Thus, this historical implication has its political meaning after the fall of the Soviet Union and I will touch upon this question in my thesis as well. It is important to mention that the socialist version of the magazine was also published in Polish (*Kobieta Radziecka)* for the Polish minority women in Lithuania. However, the Polish version did not renew and remain in circulation but was abolished after the collapse of the Soviet Union; a sad turn I will also address.

This magazine is a very interesting and very important case for several reasons. As an example of material culture, the magazine played an important role in relocation and stabilization of the shifting discursive construction of womanhood in the context of regime

change. To conceptualize this process, I use the term 'fixation' to capture historical processes and produce contextual knowledge while avoiding the implication that identities can be fixed. Fixation is needed as a tool for encoding the meanings produced in the magazine. As Homi Bhabha claims, the subject is informed by meaning and there is always an interplay in the production of meaning among the identities before they manifest themselves.[2] This being said, I stand with Bhabha to argue that fixation of different notions of identity can open up the possibility to show that identities are hybrid and articulated out of multiple dimensions of life that cannot be assumed to consist of innate traits that can be prioritized or put in a hierarchical order.[3]

This concept of hybridity is important in my work to bind together different theoretical frameworks such as historical revisionism, post-colonialism, post-feminism and its application on post-socialist transitions through a gender lens. Despite the fact that in this thesis I analyze a magazine and its production with the limitation that I am not addressing the positions and opinions of its actual readers, I still believe that a material object must be considered in a broader context and political climate of its production which informs the content of the magazine and its hybridity.

Moreover, I conducted two interviews with the editors-in-chief, Dalia Daugirdiene, and Arunas Marcinkevicius, who were running the magazine in the period of 1989 – 1994. Their subjectivities and gender are an important part of the creation of the magazine and add to the polyvocality of the discourses mediated in it. I decided to interview them as they were in office right before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, navigating the magazine's 'continuity' from the state-socialist period to a market-based economy. This continuation of the editors is an important factor that contributed to the lack of an abrupt shift

[2] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2012).
[3] Bhabha, 4.

in the two magazines. The renamed magazine *Moteris* had to negotiate with new topics and heritage of its forerunner *Soviet Woman*. The magazine, speaking to its 'same' readership also had to incorporate Western media's and femininity standards in the new context and maintain some continuity in order to keep at least the bulk of its massive readership, which was 500,000 copies in Lithuanian and another 50,000 copies in Polish during the state socialist period. Moreover, the change in the names, *Soviet Woman* and *Woman,* implicates a change in the image of a 'woman' that has got to do with the social and cultural changes in the country. So, the study of the discursive changes to this female figure in the popular cultural material object can be a telling source of knowledge about the shifting ideological work done in the changing social context that is both local and global.

Magazine studies are not new in cultural studies. One professor once told me about his participation in the Ph.D. defense committee. The thesis was about women's representation in *Cosmopolitan* and commented that he does not need to read a thesis to understand that contemporary images of women in mass media are degrading and objectify women. According to the feminist studies of women's magazines since the mid-1990s, they not only inculcate women in the ideal forms of femininity but inform, transform, give pleasure and create desires potentially against the grain. This shift in stance is an important point that was made most successfully by Joke Hermes who criticized the elitist position of those feminist scholars who would appropriate the enlightened position to themselves over the 'ordinary woman readers of the magazines'.[4] Although women's magazines aim to mediate a hegemonic discourse of gender, they are not necessarily exclusive to other aspects of life or other genders. As a result of this multiple positioning, on the one hand, magazines create and reproduce gendered and gendering differences but on the other hand, they can be a tool and a platform of critical self-reflection and emancipation. I think he was wrong in assuming that all perspectives

[4] Joke Hermes, *Reading Women's Magazines: An Analysis of Everyday Media Use* (Wiley, 1995).

lead to the same conclusions and that 'mundane' cultural objects such as women magazines have been exhausted and carry no political value. As Diane Negra observed about the post 9/11 chick flick romantic movies.[5] contested statements of apparent high political relevance are made possible precisely through the effectivity of the 'banal' that does the indispensable work of reproducing the norm as if harmless and inevitable. The analysis of representation in women's magazines is not merely to expose the nature of subjugation or to uncover the distorted images and texts that come about in representation as such. I think that different methodologies can lead to different conclusions, especially when representation is analyzed contextually and self-reflexively. Even if we talk about *Cosmopolitan*, as Jacqui True has noticed, the *Cosmopolitan* in the forefront of global marketization has a distinctly indigenous face and employs wider feminist topics than *Cosmopolitan* in the US compared to Czech post-socialism.[6] This observation, in my reading, raises an interesting question about contextual knowledge and the reasons for differing content and direction. I will argue that the genre of women's magazines is not homogenous and shows historically contingent variation between dominant and counter-narratives in different social and cultural formations.

The study on the Czech *Cosmopolitan* exposes the false, binary understanding of East and West and the colonial(izing) understanding of post-socialist countries as being 'backward'. How come that more progressive contents may appear in the 'Eastern' versions localized in the post-Soviet part of the world if we are still 'lagging behind' and have to import feminist discourses to 'live up to' those created in the 'West'? I will address this broader political issue in my thesis, keeping in mind that *Woman* is not a franchised magazine 'applied' from the 'West' but locally produced and one that is informed by the socialist past and its gender politics. Furthermore, this complexity of the global division of the constructed

[5] Diane Negra, "Structural Integrity, Historical Reversion, And The Post-9/11 Chick Flick," *Feminist Media Studies* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 51–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770701824902.
[6] Jacqui True, *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic After Communism* (Columbia University Press, 2003), 123.

geopolitical hierarchy shows that during the Cold War the 'curtain' was not made of iron but rather permeable and the winds of ideas were and are blowing in both directions as Allaine Cerwonka has argued.[7] So, in that broader context, I want to go beyond the orientalization of post-socialist countries as those who need to be educated and freed.

Representation, even if it has the arguable ambition to represent women's lived life, will always be exclusionary or rather partial and positioned because there is no such thing as a singular reality, thus any version of reality that pretends to pass as truthful will merely do the ideological work of naturalizing hegemonic representation. One of the most prominent scholars in feminist and film studies, Laura Mulvey was a pioneer in intersecting psychoanalysis, film studies and feminism and came up with the concept of the male gaze that structured mainstream Hollywood cinema in the 1950s where the woman is positioned to be looked at and the man always employs the active position of the looking spectator who objectifies.[8] In early women's magazine studies, as an arguable result of the change in the media as a workplace, the male gaze *should* change to the female gaze since women's magazines are usually made by and to women. However, the gaze itself cannot simply be simply reversed. The male gaze as the one who establishes the representation of a woman who is looked at cannot be simply appropriated, argues Susan Thornham in *Women, Feminism, and Media*, as long as the meaning of ideal womanhood in its center is structured by 'appearance'.[9] As it is obviously seen in contemporary women's magazines, even without a close look or complex studies, basically all women's magazines still employ what Connell calls the figure of 'emphasized femininity', usually white, thin, heterosexual and perfect representations of 'young urban career woman' still willing to pursue Mr. Right in her late thirties. The negotiation between different notions of gaze then suggests that the male gaze, which

[7] Allaine Cerwonka, "Traveling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism," *Signs* 33, no. 4 (2008): 809–32, https://doi.org/10.1086/528852.
[8] Laura Mulvey, *Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 1975* (Afterall Books, 2016).
[9] Sue Thornham, *Women, Feminism and Media* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

constructed hegemonic female representation can be and is internalized and incorporated into the female gaze (if it is possible to call it that way in the given circumstances at all) and just reversed into emancipatory practices with basically the same content and representation. Such a reversal corresponds with the post-feminist paradigm that argues for the viability of the female as emancipated subjectivity that can freely choose how to be represented in terms of body, sexuality, etc – but tellingly, never contesting those dimensions as integral to 'her'. Mulvey has been criticized for considering only white women and privileging psychoanalytic theory rather than situating it in socioeconomic structures, in other words, dismissing intersectionality.[10] Thus, listening to those points of criticism, studying representations, I will definitely address the issue of a class, partly because the hegemonic or Western eye also projected the imaginary Soviet woman as lacking feminine features due to her working-class embodiment. I will use a post-feminist paradigm and show how the post-feminist theoretical framework can be applied to post-socialist geographies. The new type of neo-liberal economy requires different identity construction to reproduce itself and the structure. The post-feminist notion of feminism articulated from within the gesture of disidentification as being *passé* due to an allegedly free world where one can freely choose her fate became a dominant paradigm in the Western media during the '90s – observes Kristyn Gorton in "Single Women in Popular Culture: The Limits of Postfeminism".[11] My vantage point here is that post-feminism has traveled to the post-socialist countries even if they are argued to have had no 'feminism', though it had a distinct face of discreditation which accommodated more nationalist attributes, i.e. it emerged as more 'traditional' and 'Christian'. I will also show, that this tendency is not only a traveling concept and paradigm but also a state ideology that positions itself in opposition to socialism. Similarly, to the West where post-feminism presents itself as apolitical

[10] Bell Hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 1st edition (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992).
[11] Kristyn Gorton, "Single Women in Popular Culture: The Limits of Postfeminism," *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 885–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.952878.

and ahistorical and distances itself from feminism because women want to disassociate from 'angry, old-fashioned conflict-driven feminists', the post-socialist region distancing from feminism in embedded in neglection of socialism. Dissociation stands in opposition to socialist women; they are imagined to be 'dabbed', masculine and overworked. The main narrative is that socialist emancipation did not work and thus the 'free' world gave women the chance to choose their destiny. I will show how this choice is limited and even counterproductive.

My comparative analysis in the first chapter contributes to the existing historiography of women's and gender history in the post-socialist countries by employing different theoretical frameworks. More specifically, this thesis will start a debate in Lithuanian historiography about the need for a more nuanced approach to gender relations during and after state-socialism which is very scarce at the moment. I will discuss different approaches in Lithuanian scholarship to women and their understanding of women's agency under state-socialism and will argue that the dominant, totalitarian readings of the Soviet Union add to undermining women's agency in capitalist post-socialism.

My second chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the transitional period from socialism to a market-based economy. I will review the factual women's situation, including the issues raised by women's organizations of the time as well as the changes the magazine *Soviet Woman* and later *Woman* underwent. I will analyze the content of the magazine and the changing discourse during the transition years of 1989 – 1994, reflecting how the content corresponded with the factual situation of Lithuanian women and how it helped construct their new identity. My chronology is partly shaped by the period in which the editors in chief whom I interviewed worked for the magazine which helps me to go to the next chapter.

My third and last chapter will analyze the interviews with the two editors-in-chief. The analysis will explore what kind of projections the editors had in mind about the 'new' magazine, which had lost state financial support. I explore their imaginary 'independent'

woman and their view on the old magazine, *Soviet Woman*. The analysis will also pay attention to the gendered disposition of the editors since one of them is a woman and the other is a man. I will show how different (or similar) their positions are and how it informed the production of the magazine. To substantialize their positions, I will employ a post-feminist paradigm to show how feminine subject is constructed in neoliberal rationale and will show how new traditionalism is constructed as free to choose.

Chapter 1. History, Historiography, and Theory

Governments in Baltic states have turned Westwards, particularly to Scandinavia, immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Unlike the other newly established post-soviet independent states they did not sign the treaty of Commonwealth of the Independent States, which has its roots in the Soviet Union, in order to encourage cooperation to coordinate trade, finance, lawmaking and security between them. These three Baltic states did not sign the treaty on the grounds that their participation in the Soviet Union was the result of illegal occupation in the first place. Instead, the Baltic states sought and achieved membership in NATO and the European Union in 2004. Lithuania's position towards the West was also explained by its non-Slavic cultural origins and its Roman Catholic faith, which was one of the strongest sources of resistance against the Soviet Union. As a result, the legitimacy of the country's belonging to the Western world after 1991 was sought in the interwar period with the declaration of independence in 1918 when the democratic state of Lithuania was established.

The dominant national narrative after 1991 and the related historiographies largely neglect the Soviet past and equate the socialist period with total stagnation, Stalin's deportations, while disregarding any attempts to conceptualize or discuss the Soviet style of modernization and its history.[12] The dominant discourse in historiography equates the whole Soviet period with absolute totalitarianism and as such discards it to the dust bin of history, dismissing social and cultural history and prioritizing the political one. Moreover, researchers who employ different methodologies and perspectives on Soviet history are publicly demonized and ridiculed as defenders of the occupation and genocide. The word genocide is widely used when talking

[12] Violeta Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War* (Routledge, 2014).

about the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR), thus putting Lithuanian deportations next to the Holocaust which was backed by some Lithuanian leaders during the Nazi occupation in 1941-1944. Moreover, the Professionalism of the academics who offer a more complex understanding of Soviet history is questioned.[13]

This dismissive neglect of the Soviet past cannot be legitimized in terms of some Realpolitik. People's everyday lives do matter and can tell different stories than officials tell or want to hear. Several of these unofficial stories can be told by women, for women and they must be listened to and acknowledged. The rising number of feminist scholars are mediating these voices, as I will discuss, although some periods of history receive more attention or more nuanced positions than others.

Due to the political and historical circumstances in Lithuania, women's and gender history also mainly focuses on the interwar period. In these readings, women are imagined to be able to act more 'freely', though they are mainly politicians' wives from privileged backgrounds. Usually, they are the voices that count and are considered informed, legitimate and ones translating agency. These women did fight and won the right to vote, organized themselves and participated in public life as politicians and activists. They did enhance the possibility for women to be recognized as equal human beings. My critique here does not imply that these women and their activities should be considered of little importance because of their status in society. On the contrary, I want these women to be recognized and celebrated – they are still mostly forgotten in public discourse. My point is different.

The fact that these women were famous men's wives rather shows that in the given context, women from less privileged backgrounds were either refused the possibility to publicly voice their positions or those positions were not considered as valuable remain unresearched.

[13] Almantas Salamavicius, "Memory That Was Drowned in the Fog of Amnesia," *Cultural Bars*, no. 14 (2014): 56 While reviewing Davoliute's book, Salamavicius accused her of being not scientific enough and reffered to her writing as crocheting a cardigan and "putting a serious face" while accusing her of lack of knowledge. Moreover, her reseach is called as drowened in the fog of amnesia .

Therefore, my main idea here is that patriarchal settings do their work in dominating politics and discourses, scientific ones included. It is a matter of representation and tradition of epistemology who gains relative prominence in history. Postcolonial feminist authors provide an extensive critique of Western feminist tradition and thought which usually homogenizes the category of a woman and the possible and different modes of resistance and expression of agency.[14] If Lithuanian historians frame Lithuanian interwar feminists as being in the shadow of their husbands,[15] it undermines their agency, imagining women's action only through their relation to men. I would argue that these historians are perpetuating a patriarchal, Western and ahistorical understanding of women's agency.

I do not agree with Lithuanian feminist historians who are speaking about interwar feminists outside their marital status either. Agency can be cultivated in a historically contingent context and in ways that are available and understandable for agents in particular ways. It is important that interwar feminists were wives of men with status. This status provided those women with tools for action. As Saba Mahmood has argued, some settings can be strategically used for emancipation, even though they conceptually are not in agreement with a liberal understanding of freedom or that the position of subjugation cannot emanate subversive politics.[16] I am saying that tools for emancipation can be acquired employing different organization strategies and can be conceptualized outside of grassroots arrangements.

[14] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2004); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 333–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/302821; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

[15] In 2017, a conference, organized by Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian Diaspora Institute, was called "Life Next to a Great Men: Women in Emigration".

[16] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 207.

1.1 Post-Soviet Lithuanian Historiography of Women's and Gender History in the Soviet Period

Lithuanian post-Soviet historiography on Lithuanian Soviet women is entrenched in the view that regards them as victims. Such a view dismisses women's agency and closes the gates for rethinking premises of research. Therefore, I cannot ground my approach in existing Lithuanian scholarship but have to develop an extensive argument first in order to open the ground for another perspective and to contribute to further research.

Soviet Lithuanian women's activities are basically unstudied. Few authors, such as Dalia Leinarte, Rima Praspaliauskiene, and Virginija Jureniene are pioneers in opening up the topic of women's and gender history in the USSR. Rima Praspaliauskene's article "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985, is the first attempt to dig into the archives of Women's councils in the Soviet Lithuanian state.[17] Dalia Leinarte's, prominent feminist historian's book *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality* is the first attempt to collect interviews with women who lived under state socialism and to introduce women's voices to uncover the past.[18] Virginija Jurienene, in her article "Creation of Soviet Woman in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and in the Soviet Union"[19], provides an overview of the so-called "woman question" and its application in Soviet Lithuania. These are the main feminist scholars writing about women's and gender history in Soviet Lithuania. Only a few articles mention explicitly the magazine *Soviet Woman*: Dalia Leinarte and Rima Praspaliauskiene wrote 6-page article about "Transformation of Women's Image in Women's Magazines 1975 – 1997"[20] and Ausra

[17] Rima Praspaliauskienė, "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985," in *Women's Movements– Networks and Debates in Post-Communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Edith Saurer, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak Böhlau (Verlag Köln Weimar, 2006), 307–17.

[18] Dalia Leinartė, *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality: Life Stories of Lithuanian Women, 1945-1970*, On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics 24 (Amsterdam ; New York: Rodopi, 2010).

[19] Virginija Jurėnienė, "Creation of Soviet Woman in Soviet Lithuania and Soviet Union," Lyčių studijos ir tyrimai, 2009, 36–44.

[20] Dalia Marcinkeviciene and Rima Praspaliauskiene, "Moters Įvaizdžio Transformacija Moterų Spaudoje 1975-1997 M.," [Transformation of Women's Representation in Women's Magazines 1975 - 1997] *Feminizmas, Visuomenė, Kultūra*, 1999, 61–67.

Maslauskaite made qualitative research on the development of women's magazines in Lithuania from 1990 to 2000.[21]

Since the scholarship is scarce and the introduction of a different approach requires attentive and self-reflexive analysis of the sources and literature, I need to engage more closely with the argumentation and interpretation of sources in contemporary Lithuanian historiography on Lithuanian Soviet women. This review will also provide the thesis with historical facts that are necessary for situating the magazine in the Soviet Lithuanian gender politics. Since the interwar period is very important in Lithuanian historical memory and signifies the creation of a modern and democratic state based on ethnic dominance and does, therefore, provide a model for the contemporary Lithuanian feminist project, I will also mention some facts regarding the interwar women's movement. It is also necessary to focus on the history of Lithuanian interwar period of 1918-1939 for two reasons. Firstly, the interwar period is very important in Lithuanian historical memory. In relation to that, secondly, this period has a bearing on the main discursive practices that I am trying to uncover pertaining to both the transitional period and post-1990 Lithuania. The scope that I am trying to consider might seem too broad but discursive construction of womanhood cannot be analyzed without its historical implications that will function as the interpretative context for my analysis. Also, my endeavor to open up a new discussion in Lithuania about how to approach women's history, as I have mentioned, has to be grounded in it and I need to establish linkages between the influential ideas.

Lithuanian women had achieved political, social and economic rights during the interwar period. Gender equality was articulated in political programs before 1918. Women were active participants in the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence and after its

[21] Ausra Maslauskaite, "Moterims Skirtos Žiniasklaidos Raida Lietuvoje," [The Development of Women's Magazines in Lithuania] *Filosofija, Sociologija* 4 (2002): 31–39.

declaration, they fought for the right to vote, to participate in the parliament, for their right to education and private property. Equal rights were adopted by the Constitution of the Lithuanian state in 1922. These rights were maintained until the right-wing upheaval of 1926 when president Antanas Smetona became an authoritarian leader. During the democratic period 1918 - 1926, there were various women's organizations that aimed to enhance women's political and social life:

> These aims were to be achieved by elaborating theoretical questions concerning women's and men's rights, by developing – especially women's – political self-awareness, and by actively fighting for women's and men's equal rights in towns as well as in villages; by helping women to reach equal status both in general activities and professional education; by caring about improvement of working women's conditions; by writing and distributing books, brochures, articles and appeals, and by lecturing and using a variety of propaganda-related methods; by creating professional organisations, and by protecting new women's organisations and associations in the whole country. The main aim of these activities was to raise women's self-awareness.[22]

I find this quote very important, especially thinking about the historical development of Lithuania. The methods described in the quote about interwar women's activities, look very similar to the project that was introduced by the Bolshevik women and later on implemented by the USSR. Naming the methods as *propaganda-related* also resembles the main narrative of USSR type of emancipatory practices as indoctrination. The difference between consciousness-raising activities in the two different periods is the power dynamics of the way of implementation regarding women's rights and feminist practices: Grassroots vs State initiated within liberal democracy vs socialist authoritarianism. Propagandist measures are treated differently in different regimes. Understandably, the social actors in the post-1990 political landscape bridge themselves with the liberal democratic tradition of the interwar period; although, I find it problematic to equate the two liberal regimes as if each other's continuation just interrupted and then reunited, without acknowledging the development of

[22] Toma Birmontienė and Virginija Jurėnienė, "Development of Women's Rights in Lithuania: Recognition of Women Political Rights," *Jurisprudencija: Mokslo Darbu Žurnalas* 116, no. 2 (2009): 23–44.

capitalism during the Cold War and the resulting neoliberal agenda that was drastically implemented in Lithuania after the collapse of SU and which was prominent in the West since the 1980s. The difference between the two forms of liberal systems is not explicitly articulated in Lithuanian historians' writing.

After WWII, when Lithuania was annexed by the SU and became a socialist state, the interwar feminism along with feminisms in other capitalist countries was rejected as bourgeoise feminism. The movement was seen as a force undermining the needs of *all* women and the broader working-class struggle.[23] The interwar period was seen as an authoritarian regime and was highly criticized in the USSR, especially because of the alleged undermining of women's rights. In 1945-1946, the Soviet-Lithuanian version of *Zhenotdel* (the section of the Russian Communist party devoted to women's affairs) – the *Women's Department* (WD) was established. Later on, the branches of WD were implemented as Women's Councils (WC) in every factory, office, and institution. The official institutional structure was designed to enhance women's position in society. It also and changed the course of how emancipatory practices can be delivered to women compared to grassroots women's activism during the interwar.

The USSR implemented an infrastructure for women's emancipation from above through modernization and urbanization of the country and state welfare system. Institutions such as WD and WC had to address women's problems at work in combination with political activities, motherhood, and household chores to enforce compliance with the law. Praspaliauskiene's archival research shows that, indeed, the socialization of women's

[23] "The Social Basis of the Woman Question by Alexandra Kollontai 1909," accessed February 1, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1909/social-basis.htm.

emancipation took place and circumvents the popular opinion that gender equality was only an official slogan in the USSR.

Praspaliauskiene claims that from the very first days of communist governance, women became the very special target of Soviet propaganda. Reiterating the socialist understanding of the "woman question", the Soviet state condemned the inter-war Lithuanian women's activities as bourgeois and declared that from now on there will be no need for the "woman question" because women will be given equal rights to work alongside with men.[24] Or at least this is what the daily paper of the Lithuanian Communist Party *Pravda* (Truth) claimed, which is one of the main archival sources in Praspaliauskiene's article. Praspaliauskiene argues that since Lithuania's Sovietization began in 1940, the revolutionary slogans of combating domestic slavery articulated by Alexandra Kollontai did not reach Lithuanian women. Praspaliauskiene argues that *WD* served the purpose of indoctrinating women into building up their loyalty for the Soviet government and the promise of *Zhenotdel's* emancipatory agenda was sacrificed for purely bureaucratic measures of the state.[25] However, the author gives credit to the newly introduced regime; she mentions, for instance, that the Soviet government gave women social welfare, equal education and work opportunities, state-based child care, paid maternity leave. And yet, Praspaliauskiene links social welfare to the demands of the inter-war women's movement and states that Stalinism redefined these opportunities and the concept of equal rights was embedded in the patriarchal family structure and WD promoted traditional division of gender roles.[26] Jureniene echoes the same stance and states that the Soviet occupational government used women only to gain their loyalty for the state in exchange for social benefits

[24] Praspaliauskienė, "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985," 310.
[25] Praspaliauskienė, 311.
[26] Praspaliauskienė, 310–11.

and that WD was established in the first place to impose the propaganda instead of dismantling traditional, patriarchal gender roles.[27]

The statements about WD as a phantom institution are supplemented by the claims that the majority of non-party, peasant women for the first time in their lives entered the political arena and learned about women's politics. "Many of them just because of this event (First Women Workers' Congress of the Soviet Republic of Lithuania in 1946) traveled by train or visited a theater, so these women, currently women's organizers, got excited about women's rights and opportunities".[28] Jureniene looks at it differently from Praspaliauskiene though and suggests that women wanted to participate in the Congress just because of the opportunity to socialize and use the infrastructure. Both interpretations could be validated but I would like to argue that despite the answer whether the train and theater were the main or secondary reasons for women to participate in the Congress, women did both and the aftermath was, as Jureniene claims, "self-consciousness of women and the impact of WC grew".[29]

I would like to make one more argument that shows the exercise of agency among women. Women were prosecuted by (male) communist officials and encountered negative attitudes in local rural communities, especially when women were unmarried or single mothers. It shows a clear bias towards women's ability to act. Praspaliauskiene mentions that women from WC were threatened not only by the "communists" but were also attacked by local partisans[30] for affiliations with Soviet government since WD was accountable to Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP). Jureniene explains that resistance towards communism from

[27] Jurėnienė, "Creation of Soviet Woman in Soviet Lithuania and Soviet Union," 37.
[28] Praspaliauskiene 312.
[29] Jurėnienė 38.
[30] Partisans as independence fighters; who waged a guerrilla warfare in Lithuania against the Soviet Union in 1944–1953.

Lithuanian partisans might have been the reason why during 1948 – 1949 women were reluctant to join the WC.[31]

However, as Praspaliauskiene mentions, women still did tremendous work in post-war Lithuania despite the fact that they were threatened by both parties. By organizing into WC, women helped the war-devastated country by taking care of orphans and seniors, and by initiating literacy courses for women. According to the author, in many cases, the money for resolving social issues and covering expenses of care was available just because of the activity of WC, trough state support.[32] It is clear that if women had not been active in promoting ideas of gender equality, there would not have been such strong resistance from their male colleagues who saw that activity as a threat to their dominant position. Women's agency was clearly articulated. Nevertheless, Jureniene tends to deny it by stating, that activism was dictated by the inertia of the philanthropic activities that were done during the inter-war period. This can be true and 'inertia' of activism is not a contradictory statement in itself. However, given the situation, there was no continuity from the pre-war women's activities, because women, who did social work and were active either were deported or emigrated to West.[33]

As the archival documents in Praspaliauskiene's article reveal, women raised questions and voiced their opinions during the meetings with authorities. She even mentions that there were councils' meetings where men were not allowed to participate, and where women expressed their will to remain Catholic, despite the fact that atheism was imposed on them.[34] Hence, ordinary women appropriated the tools of the government to question their authority and negotiate their positions according to their own will. However, as Praspaliauskiene

[31] Jurėnienė, Virginija. „Creation of Soviet woman in Soviet Lithuania and Soviet Union." *Lyčių studijos ir tyrimai* (2009): 38.
[32] Praspaliauskiene, Rima "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985" *Women's Movements– Networks and Debates in Post-Communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries* ed. Saurer, Edith, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, (2006): 314.
[33] Praspaliauskienė, "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985," 313.
[34] Praspaliauskienė, 315.

stresses, WC had their ups and downs, depending on the changes of general secretaries. As she writes, "Women's Councils existed from 1946 until 1988. The most active years were the first post-war years and the years of Perestroika. At the end of the 1970s, WC limited their activities to such chores as watering flowers in factories or organizing mushroom hunting trips".[35] Despite mentioning women's participation in different activities, Praspaliauskiene still undermines women's agency using the same indoctrination argument. Although, one can take the archival material she published and reinterpret it in a different light. Furthermore, the fact that WC activities varied with the change of general secretaries shows that different agendas were implemented and the woman question was considered differently and was not monolithically implemented and solved by Stalin and all other subsequent political leaders.

Praspaliauskiene's and Jureniene's articles are very important accounts of women's activities in the Soviet Lithuanian state. The picture reveals an interesting story about organized women's activism especially during the Stalinist period which, in mainstream understanding, is perceived as the most strict and repressive and permeated by censorship. The new regime obviously shook up the assumptions about the gendered divisions of private and public spheres. A substantial number of women could participate in social and political activities, socialize outside the household and receive the opportunity for education and work. However, both authors do not cover the whole period about which they speak. They briefly mention what were the women's activities after the Stalinism. Authors mention that archival documents are very poor due to the destruction of documents, considering the low importance of women's activities and history. Therefore, the picture of women's councils and their activities is very fragmented. Predominantly the activities are analyzed by drawing on annual reports and official protocols. But the question remains the same, were the activities of women's' councils just means to a

[35] Praspaliauskiene, Rima "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985" *Women's Movements– Networks and Debates in Post-Communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries* ed. Saurer, Edith, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, (2006): 315.

bureaucratic end as Praspaliauskiene claims in the introduction of her article[36] or is the picture of women's' history in the LSSR more complex? Moreover, the ideological distinction of *propaganda-related* methods between interwar women's activities and official women's organizations in USSR prevents the consideration of women's ability to act under a variety of historical. At the same time, it privileges propagandist means according to a linear and mostly Western inspired understanding of feminist activism or works towards the enhancement of women's rights and their participation in public – that I will discuss in details in the next section. Also, the emphasis on interwar political regime regarding women further installs the imagination of liberal democracy as the only possible route for establishing equality.

Perception of Soviet women as conformist and *Soviet Woman*—including the women who worked for the magazine— as a party-tool of propaganda and are thus examples of the top-down approach. The totalitarian paradigm, especially on gender under socialist regimes, is a global phenomenon and continues to diminish women's agency, and in the so-called Western scholarship continues to Orientalize Soviet women. Nonetheless, these assumptions are being challenged. Francisca de Haan has pointed out that ignorance about socialist women's activities is embedded in what she calls a continuing Cold War paradigm, and together with her colleagues, she has provided a more nuanced approach towards socialist women and their activities.[37] The emerging scholarship that sheds a different light on socialist women raises discussions about the conceptualization of agency; it has become clear that "agency" cannot be assumed or dismissed a priori, before the actual research and a careful assessment of the situation; but this is still under debate.

[36] Praspaliauskienė, "Women's Activism in Lithuania: 1945 – 1985," 308.

[37] Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (September 2010): 547–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2010.502399; Kristen Ghodsee et al., "Ten Years After: Communism and Feminism Revisited," ed. Francisca de Haan, *Aspasia* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2016), https://doi.org/10.3167/asp.2016.100107.

1.2 Paradigmatic shifts in Western Soviet Historiography

In this section, I will talk about different approaches to researching Soviet history in Western academia. For this reason, I will look at two articles. The first article "From Sovietology to Soviet History: Three Trends in Western Historiography"[38] is written by Dalia Marcinkeviciene (Leinarte). My second article "Revisionism in Soviet History"[39] is written by Sheila Fitzpatrick, a prominent historian of the Soviet Union, known as one of the members of "revisionist school". In her article, she provides an overview of different approaches to Soviet history, by following shifts in the discipline. I will compare those articles to see the implications of three main approaches in Soviet historiography so later I could revise my sources in relation to suggested frameworks. I chose Marcinkeviciene's article so that I could see her own approach in her findings related to women's and gender history in the Lithuanian Soviet period. I have already shown how the dominant discourse and the top-down understanding of socialist societies are created in Lithuanian historiography. Hence, my proposed discussion between Fitzpatrick and Marcinkeviciene will show the reflexivity of Lithuanian scholar regarding paradigms of research in sovietology. This discussion will also benefit the thesis by engaging with different approaches to the historiography of women's and gender history under socialism and will support my argument in the attempt to start 'forbidden' discussion about USSR in Lithuanian historical narrative.

In her article, Marcinkeviciene, analyses three approaches in Western historiography, interpreting Soviet history. She discusses the so-called totalitarian, revisionist and post-revisionist approaches in relation to possible perspectives of adopting it to Lithuanian Soviet historiography. As a feminist scholar, Marcinkeviciene recognizes the revisionist and post-revisionist contribution of incorporating the issues of gender in the field. She does not indicate

[38]Dalia Marcinkeviciene, "From Sovietology to Soviet History: Three Trends in Western Historiography," *Lietuvos Istorijos Metraštis*, 2003, 91–106.
[39] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (2007): 77–91.

towards which school she leans, neither does she emphasize which approach is more prominent in Lithuanian scholarship. Rather, she demonstrates the implications of all three ways of inquiry, as open possibilities in researching different questions in Lithuanian Soviet history. Marcinkeviciene explains the totalitarian paradigm as a thought of the integral system of totalitarian ideology that holds a notion of natural fate in its' development.[40] Meaning, that Stalinism was a logical sequence of the October revolution and the whole communist system was about the concentration and maintenance of power. Moreover, she states that representatives of totalitarian paradigm hold an axiom of an omnipotent communist state which governed unarmed, powerless, victimized and atomized society.[41] Marcinkeviciene mentions the limitations of the totalitarian approach. Totalitarianism is not very useful for Lithuanian historiography, mainly because of the lack of a comparative perspective. She points out that "totalitarianists" tend to homogenize whole Soviet bloc and therefore dismiss national specificities. And it is important to mention that according to Marcinkeviciene, totalitarian methodology engages only with power structures and does not take into account the interplay between the state and society.[42]

Fitzpatrick compares the paradigm shifts more as challenges to established orthodoxies in the scholarship to the "changes in intellectual fashion".[43] She links the paradigmatic shifts with more broad changes in the historical profession, namely shifts from political history, to social and later, cultural, as a dominant way of doing history. Thus, Fitzpatrick's account of shifts is presented more as an antagonistic to each other (totalitarian vs revisionist, revisionist vs post-revisionist), rather than analysis of each one independent from the other. So, in relation to the totalitarian paradigm, similarly as Marcinkeviciene, Fitzpatrick states, that revisionist saw totalitarians as constructing the Soviet Union as a monolith, with a completely top-down

[40] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, "From Sovietology to Soviet History: Three Trends in Western Historiography," 92.
[41] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, 92.
[42] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, 94.
[43] Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," 78.

approach, where society was an object of control and manipulation. She is arguing that the totalitarian paradigm used the mirror image of Soviet self-representation. If Stalin's policies introduced a singular proper way of living, then totalitarianists represented these policies in the dark light, dismissing possible deviances from the official line.[44] This perspective can be applied to Marcinkeviciene's suggestion about the homogeneity of the totalitarian approach but not only in terms of spatial distribution of power within the bloc, but within particular, local contexts as well. Meaning that complexities should be analyzed in different axes of inquiry. Moreover, Fitzpatrick questions the legitimacy of the totalitarian paradigm from the perspective of the Cold war. She states that the scholarship was corrupted by the dependence of government support and embraced the anti-communist propaganda by the mission "knowing the enemy".[45]

According to Marcinkeviciene, revisionists started to question totalitarianists' statement about the integrity of the communist system and offered a different account of Stalinism. Revisionists emphasize the specificity of Stalinism and are more engaged with the genealogy of it, outside the whole picture of the development of the regime, providing a room for sociopolitical analysis. Marcinkeviciene uses Fitzpatrick's example[46] which unambiguously states that Stalin's politics were born out of society, therefore, condemning such view.[47] Where Fitzpatrick's later statement is not that strong, she rather claims that there must have been "some kind of social support for the regime", arguing that terror alone could not enforce conformity. Especially, with the revisionist account of opened possibility for upward mobility for urban workers and peasants recruited to the new elite.[48]

[44] Fitzpatrick, 78.
[45] Fitzpatrick, 81.
[46] Marcinkeviciene is referring to Fitzpatrick, Sheila "New perspectives on Stalinism", *The Russian Review,* vol. 45, no. 4, 1987.
[47] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, "From Sovietology to Soviet History: Three Trends in Western Historiography," 94.
[48] Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," 81–84.

An important feature, in this case, is that revisionists incorporated women and gender issues in their analysis. Marcinkeviciene stresses that revisionists did not deny that the Soviet state implied *absolutely* new roles for women but the aim of gender equality was sacrificed for reproduction and "naturalization of woman's nature", therefore she states, the old patriarchal gender regime was transferred into a new context.[49] Also, she refers to Fitzpatrick at this point, to say that there is a great need for comprehensive studies of women and family issues in order to provide generalized attitude towards Soviet women's position in private and public spheres.[50] One could argue that Marcinkeviciene's book *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality: life stories of Lithuanian women, 1945 – 1970*[51] is an attempt to fill the gap of the unstudied area in Lithuanian women's and gender history although this book is an example of a totalitarian approach which uses the revisionist methodology for proving the former. Marcinkeviciene also is claiming that in Lithuanian historiography the studies of resistance could be seen as a revisionist approach but at the same time acknowledges that resistance studies contribute to the dichotomy of victim-hero image and limits reconstruction of manifold view of Soviet society.[52] Moreover, as Fitzpatrick argues studies of resistance are a less politically contentious area of inquiry since it escapes the accusations of being "soft on communism" or even being pro-Soviet.[53] Which, I would say is the reason for the acceptance of a "bottom-up" approach in Lithuanian historiography of resistance studies where resistance is considered only as pro-active and straightforward.

Third, post-revisionist approach, in Marcinkeviciene's article is described as more anthropological. She states that post-revisionist scholars dropped the idea of the genesis of Stalinism and concentrated on everyday life with a recognition of the specificities of each

[49] Marcinkevičienė 96.
[50] Marcinkeviciene 97.
[51] Fitzpatrick 85.
[52] Marcinkeviciene 98.
[53] Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Revisionism in Soviet History." *History and Theory 46*, no. 4 (2007): 86.

country in the bloc. For post-revisionists, communist ideology is important not as an omnipotent, evil bringing system but as any other ideology which creates a specific form of governance.[54] Marcinkeviciene argues, that for post-revisionists, the interplay between ideology and society is inevitable. The system penetrated the subject of whether she resisted or consciously accepted it. Self-determination of the subject cannot be articulated in isolation from the environment. Thus, Marcinkeviciene argues, the official discourse played the main role in the formation of the subjective individual.[55] The author concentrates on the mentality studies in post-revisionist approach, arguing that it would be very productive to use this approach to unfold the "double thinking" as one of the main dimensions, which formed the Soviet subjectivity and could help to reveal the phenomenon of Lithuanian society. Though I would ask for a more nuanced definition of "double thinking", what dimensions of mind it implies. Whether the "double thinking" could be unfolded as such and which part of it could be privileged as prior or "authentic". Because the notion of "double thinking" implies that there is one level of what a person thinks and another level – what the state wants the person to think. I would question the possibility of separating and dividing the way of thinking, leaning to Fitzpatrick claims that post-revisionists understand ideology as "something collectively constructed rather than imposed".[56]And moreover, in the line with post-revisionism, as a theory-driven cultural history, as Fitzpatrick stresses, post-revisionists question both "from above" and "from below" approaches and argue for decentered and multiple power relations, referring to Foucauldian understanding of power.[57] Thus she reiterates her statement of challenging the established approaches.

[54] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, "From Sovietology to Soviet History: Three Trends in Western Historiography," 99.
[55] Dalia Marcinkeviciene, 101.
[56] Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," 87.
[57] Fitzpatrick, 88.

In terms of gender issues, Marcinkeviciene states, that official politics tried to erase the gender differences. To counter this argument she uses Alexander Etkind's findings[58], and emphasizes that erasure of gender differences still resulted in the gendered division of labor: women were prescribed with the roles that are closer to "nature" (taking care of domestic chores) and men were dominant in the cultural sphere and political influence. Hence, the division of public and private sphere was not abolished and remained gendered. Marcinkeviciene claims, that Western Soviet historiography does not answer the question of how Soviet ideology restructured gender roles and what was *truly* behind the label of "Soviet family" and "Soviet woman".

Both authors engage with the topic from different perspectives and it is very interesting to see how they intersect. It seems that Marcinkeviciene is analyzing the paradigmatic shifts in researching Soviet history as established methodological approaches, which could be applied in Lithuanian scholarship. Meanwhile, Fitzpatrick's intention is to look at the stakes of theoretical implications in terms of repositioning the dominant notion of inquiry. How discipline works itself and what are its structuring principles. One of the most important claims of Fitzpatrick is an emphasis on employing different perspectives and theoretical approaches that are embedded in re-thinking established narratives. She argues that the shifts in historiography are affected by events, such as the Cold War paradigm in case of the totalitarian approach, the death of Stalin in revisionist approach or cultural turn in case of post-revisionism. None of these paradigmatic changes were influenced by the new discoveries of data, even the opening of Soviet archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is rather about the way of how the material is being perceived as including historians' own positionality and understanding that it is also affected by constructs of her own environment. It seems that

[58] Marcinkeviciene refers to Etkind, Aleksandr. "Psychological culture." *Russian Culture at the Crossroads. Paradoxes of Post-Communist Consciousness* (1996): 99-126.

Marcinkeviciene's account might be a bit problematic in terms of approaching paradigmatic shifts only as methodological tools without taking into account how the Western context shaped the methodology. Lithuanian scholarship did not have such debates and have a different tradition so it would be good to regard own context and critically assess its implications. The notion of challenge, expressed by Fitzpatrick, is very important. Dominant paradigms are challenged at the roots of its' premises and reshape the way we are thinking by establishing new perspectives. Therefore, I do not think that it is a matter of methodological choice only. Feminist scholarship is inevitably politically charged, and it is important to see in what context and from which positions the researcher is speaking. That is if we agree with the notion that we are also coming from a particular background and there is no *authentic* or *true* presence.

Regarding the post-revisionist approach, I would like to add that decentralization of power does not necessarily mean that the structure does not exist, and the main discourse is produced from different intersections of power and resistance without the certain structure that dominates the discourse formation. As Stuart Hall argues in his critique of post-structuralism – Foucault understands the state as an abstract and empty entity and privileges dispersed practices of power, thus ignoring the practices that are emphasized and produced by the state or main structure. Hall claims, that the articulation produces meanings and thus, establishes practices and by these practices reproduces the structure. Following Hall, and situating my own perspective in historiographical debates I want to claim that the state socialist practices established of a structure that has the (not necessarily full or renegotiable) continuation of socialist *and* feminist thought and practice that was articulated in women's fight for a more just society. They did have influence and power within the structure to implement infrastructure of accessible education, social security, reproductive rights and economic independence for women that resulted in emancipatory practices and self-determination. The top-down approach does not mean that there is no space for down-top initiatives it can also create opportunities for

bottom-up organizing which can and does co-exist together. Therefore, returning to my own research I want to argue that massively distributed state media informs and has an influence of gender politics not only in terms of shaping subjectivities and their identities but also in terms of giving the tools to self-reflect and act in the *given* structure that actively reproduces itself by people who practiced its politics. Marcinkeviciene's concern about the"double thinking" and the strict division of knowledge to authentic and constructed knowledge suggests that people were reproducing the system automatically, does not leave the room for any kind of resistance and positions people in the schizophrenic state. Following that, one could argue that "double thinking" similarly as authors who claim this impotency of acting positions themselves in a state of being outside the structures and do not reproduce it. This inconsistency shows that paternalistic view on Soviet citizens is exercised in a similar way as their critique object – puppets of the state.

Soviet Women's magazines, at the beginning (1914) were established by Bolshevik women, the magazine *Rabotnisa*, as Lapidus[59] claims, had to serve a theoretical platform and organizational center for the socialist women's movement to mediate between party's female activists with female workers. The mainstream assumption that Marxist-Leninist ideology was forcefully implemented by the party's men, who were in total control of the press, undermines not only women activists who were struggling for more even, classless and gender neuter society but also suggests that the state apparatus and bureaucratic machinery was working properly without any discrepancies and contradictions. Scholars who analyze Soviet press also argue that total control and full penetration of censorship and control through media is impossible without negotiations between different actors who are involved in production and reproduction of the content that was provided in the magazines.[60] Magazines that aim to women

[59] Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Sexual Equality in Soviet Policy," in *Women in Russia* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1977, n.d.), 120.
[60] Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

audiences informs about the way femininity must be exercised and does it accordingly to the narratives that occupy the hegemonic discourses of identities. Nevertheless, the magazine has to be analyzed in the given historical and political context, acknowledge different actors and their role in these discourses in order to uncover the representation of constructed femininities.

As I have shown, Marcinkeviciene is aware of the debates in Western scholarship about the methodologies regarding Soviet history. Though it seems that her own analyzed paradigmatic shifts stand more as a choice of approach rather than possibilities to rethink and revisit her own perspective. Clearly, women's and gender history falls out of the category of political history and requires more attentive work, especially when archives on women's organizations are scarce. Though, Marcinkeviciene cannot escape the notion of a top-bottom approach and regards women as victims of the regime. The same applies to Praspaliauskiene and Jurienene yet, all of them acknowledges that women *did* participate in the public sphere and *did* receive benefits from the state. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, women had to negotiate with resistance towards them from men which already proves that they did something that was unacceptable for women. I would like to point out to Krassimira Daskalova's statement here"If we neglect those women's agency, we take on the role of the patriarchal male establishment and reproduce the view that women-friendly policies [..] only resulted from the decisions of male communist rulers".[61] Therefore, I would like to reiterate this point and suggest that maybe if official state lines overlapped with women's narratives it could be interpreted not only in terms of "internalized propaganda"? I can agree with the notion that Lithuanian context is different from other socialist states and that people lived with the feeling of occupation, but it does not mean that people lived as victims or that the only way of showing agency was to go to the forest and become partisans. Was it acceptable for women in the first place? If we accept that universalization of Soviet bloc dismisses the particularities of countries

[61] Daskalova, Krassimira. "Audiatur et altera pars" *Aspasia* 10, no. 1 (2016): 122.

within, maybe we can accept that universalization of agency and resistance is false as well, as Kristen Ghodsee and Magdalena Grabowska show in their articles, while trying to articulate a different understanding of agency than it is perceived in the Western societies.[62]

The neglection of Soviet women's ability to act also dismisses the scholarship that was produced during the Soviet period. Leinarte writes that "It is important to note that in the 1960s- and 1970s-women's history in Lithuania had been developing within state socialism".[63] The main topic during these years was women's situation during the Lithuanian Chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). Leinarte says that Soviet Lithuanian historiography entrenched an idealized image of women. Without going into detail, it is interesting to see that women's history in Lithuania started to develop at the same time as in the West. Leinarte is arguing that Soviet Lithuanian historiography was either influenced by the processes in the West (institutionalization of women's studies) or provoked by the regime's propaganda. Again, this binary understanding is problematic for me. First, it installs these female historians in the position of compliance or embeds them in a Western framework of development. Two female historians were writing about women and their historical position in a positive light (I will not argue about the critique of sources). For me, it shows that the woman question to some extent was important and the research on women's status in public life gained attention. Moreover, as de Haan claims, understanding that the woman question in the Soviet Union—after Joseph Stalin (in)famously declared it „solved" in 1930 — was neither solved nor permanently closed; in fact, it was tentatively reopened under Khrushchev (who revived the women's councils) and

[62] Grabowska, Magdalena. "From Revolutionary Agents to Reactive Actors" *Aspasia* 10, no. 1 (2016):133.
Ghodsee, Kristen. "State-Socialist Women's Organizations in Cold War Perspective" *Aspasia* 10, no. 1 (2016): 112.

[63] Dalia Leinarte, "Women's and Gender History in Lithuania An Overview from Time and Distance," ed. Krassimira Daskalova, *Aspasia The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* Forum, no. Clio on the Margins Women's and Gender History in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Part Two) (n.d.): 186.

officially reopened under his successor Brezhnev.[64] So, it could be even argued, that researches on women's history were promoted and welcomed. Thus, in my research I would like to build on the theoretical framework of the "Feminist Revisionist Scholars"—in the phrase of US philosopher Nanette Funk—and approach women as participants in shaping the gender politics in the Soviet Union and in Soviet Lithuania; I agree with the point that scholarship that erases or negates women's agency reproduces a form of patriarchal production of knowledge.

[64] Francisca de Haan, "The Global Left-Feminist 1960s: From Copenhagen to Moscow and New York," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties. Between Protest and Nation-Building*, ed. Jian Chen et al. (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 230–242.

Chapter 2. Lithuanian Women‘s Problems During the Transition and the Solutions Offered

Here I will discuss issues Lithuanian women faced during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regime change from state socialism to liberal democracy. I will review the actual political and socio-economical situation of Lithuanian women through the transitional period and analyze how *Soviet Woman* and later *Woman* represented the changing situation, moreover, what solutions the magazine offered for the new feminine subject *under construction* and how the magazine's construction of this new, independent woman differed from the Soviet one. The main question I will answer in this chapter is what kind of problems were articulated by Lithuanian women themselves, what kind of solutions were offered by the magazine and how these solutions conformed to the inevitable changes reinforcing them.

In order to answer these questions, I will use several main sources. One of my main sources will be Suzanne LaFont's book *Lithuanian Women in Transition*.[65] While the editor of this book is an American scholar, I purposely chose not to include her perspectives expressed in the introduction of this book, but rather concentrate on the articles that were written explicitly by Lithuanian scholars and representatives of several women's organizations. These works contain a lot of statistical data, which is useful in order to build my own image of the transitional period and women's position in it. The overview of women's situation during the transitional period in Lithuania will be deepened using the Lithuanian report for the UN 4th World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995.[66] However, I would like to stress that my approach towards the report is critical as well. I do reflect on the fact that it was being written in 1995 and its purpose is to represent Lithuanian women in the light of anti-communist spirit and oriented towards the West, due to freshly reestablished Lithuanian state

[65] Suzanne LaFont, *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania* (SUNY Press, 1998).
[66] *Lithuania : Women in a Changing Society* (Vilnius : Pradai, 1995, n.d.).

in its highly unclear and chaotic period. Finally, the magazine content will be the third main source for my analysis, next to above mentioned main issues experienced by Lithuanian women during the transition and the activists' approaches to solving these issues.

1.3 The shift in the magazine

Drastic regime changes strongly affect most aspects of society. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant rapid changes in the economic, political and social spheres. While celebrating freedom, Lithuanian society had to face negative aspects of it as well. Accelerated privatization, the closing of factories, resulted in big inflation, unemployment, and big criminality rates. Lithuania's transformation was among the most economically radical, especially in comparison with other countries that became members of the European Union in 2004.[67] Economic modernization came at a considerable social and economic cost in Lithuania. As Susan Gal and Gail Kligman have noticed, people tend to ask about which system is better for women, communism or capitalism, but the revered valances of the discussion should be: what have women lost in the transition?[68] The independence movement had a nationalist orientation and a lot of feminist critiques emphasizes the masculine face of the nation-state.[69] Many scholars have argued that the post-socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is marked by (re)establishment of patriarchal order and 'traditional' values. The claim works in twofold directions, which are mutually inclusive. First, (re)emergence of the nation-state that according to many feminist scholars has a patriarchal face[70] and second – the collapse of Soviet Union brought about changes in women's life that resulted in a refusal to work as an

[67] Reiter, Herwig. '"In My Opinion, Work Would Be in First Place and Family in Second": Young Women"s Imagined Gender-Work Relations in Post-Soviet Lithuania / Herwig Reiter.' *Journal of Baltic Studies*, (2010): 533.

[68] Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.

[69] Anthias, Floya, Nira Yuval-Davis."Introduction" *Woman-Nation-State,* (1989). 6-11.

[70] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation: SAGE Publications* (SAGE, 1997).

opposition to the 'double burden' they had to experience during the socialist period.[71] Although here, I will focus on Lithuania to include this country in the broader debate, since this topic is still not widely discussed locally, and inevitably, abroad.

The above-mentioned changes drastically affected the magazine as well. During the Soviet governance women's magazines positioned themselves as a political and literary magazine and used to be published by state publishing houses hence, essentially were the ideologically right mouthpiece of communism. The union's collapse provoked a crisis in journalism, changes in topics, genres and writing styles. It had to face free market rules and booming of advertising, which is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. While my present research does not focus on the socialist period and rather examines the shift, one cannot speak about the shift without conceptualizations of departure and arrival points. Despite this fact, the chronology here is not assumed to have a concrete rupture in meaning-making. Though the important date is 1989 May, then the magazine undressed from 'Sovietness 'and was issued by the name *Woma*n, the transitional process for the magazine, as well as the bigger political shift, took place throughout a broader time frame.

The political shift was visible in the magazine in several different ways. 1989 May issue reached its readers with a new name – *Woman* and a cover page marked with strong national symbolic - a branch of rue on a hand-woven towel. Rue is a plant, which signifies purity, virginity and traditional womanhood in Lithuanian mythology, one of most heavily charged traditional Lithuanian symbols. The image of a rue branch is traditionally used in crafts and home decoration, in songs and myths a girls flower garden, had to have rue and its death

[71] Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (Verso, 2002); Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1993); "How Women Survived Post-Communism (and Didn't Laugh)," *Eurozine* (blog), June 5, 2015, https://www.eurozine.com/how-women-survived-post-communism-and-didnt-laugh/; Kristen Ghodsee, *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism* (Duke University Press, 2011); Mary Buckley, *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

symbolized the girl's impurity. Hand-woven towel signifies private sphere and part of the dowry that a woman should weave by herself before she gets married. The towels would be decorated in ornaments and given as presents to the in-laws, demonstrating the girl's hard work and devotion to her new family. In the context of the magazine as well as the broader political context, these symbols mark the return to traditionalism and national revival. They also make an indirect statement about the independent Lithuanian woman – pure, traditional and devoted to her duties. The first issue of the magazine without the word *Soviet* makes a bold statement about national freedom and traditional authenticity.

The magazine's content experienced a change as well. Still, under the name of *Soviet Woman*, the magazine began to feature themes about *Sąjūdis* (movement for Lithuanian independence), Perestroika and congratulate the public on active participation in the changing public life. Furthermore, in 1988 November issue the editorial mentions in a celebratory tone that "no one is surprised anymore by the [Lithuanian national] heraldic symbols, which arose disputes not long ago – Vytis, Gediminaiciai towers, the combination of green, yellow and red [Lithuanian flag] and all gatherings being ended with V. Kudirka National song" (1988, #11: 1-2). The next, December issue is already full of the mentioned three color flags in the hands of excited crowds, photos of high ranking church officials, the before mentioned heraldic symbols and a two-page long article about V. Kudirka, a national hero and the author of the national anthem (1988, #12). The end of the year 1988 was the beginning of a political shift and this shift was reflected in the still *Soviet Woman*. While attempting to survive political and economic changes, the magazine rejoiced the idea of independence and the individual freedom it brought, changing the discourse of its content.

In an attempt to instill the national identity, the independence movement used a discourse of reconnecting to society's 'natural' development which was interrupted by the Soviet period, the early 1990s were characterized by an idealized perception of the pre-war

situation. The seed of this was already visible in the last issues of the 1988 *Soviet Woman* when the rest of the content was still following the usual path. Articles about 1918 Lithuanian independence, 1863 uprising, and other glorified historical points appeared. Soon after the "Soviet" was dropped from the name, the discourse began to change. Accusations that female employment was an imposition by the communist program of modernization arose from the Catholic Church, which influence is strongly felt in Lithuanian society.[72] According to Herwig, it was believed that it is possible, that Lithuanian society may overcome the features of the Soviet version of gender discrimination and replace it with a more egalitarian model. Though, he stresses that it might also fall back into a pattern of idealizing the more distant past, before Soviet occupation, while dismissing more recent history as well as the lifestyle demands associated with the current liberalized economy.[73] At the beginning of the transitional period, the latter path was obvious, as is also visible in the *Soviet Woman*.

Next, to a change in discourse, the turn into liberal democracy and capitalism brought tangible material changes. Public's interest in printed word grew in the time of political upheaval - in 1989 *Woman's* run was half a million. The print press was one of the first ambassadors of freedom, yet its victim as well. It had to yield to the new market laws and free market brought competition from new magazines, radio, and TV. Moreover, changes in the market, as well as economic blockade[74] Lithuania was experiencing caused an increase in price. This resulted in the magazine being print on poor quality paper and by 1992 the magazine was published every second month with editorial apologies for skipped months, poor quality and complaints about lack of funding and paper. In the mentioned conditions, *Woman* had to adapt to the changes. The readers differentiated according to age, class and political views. Readers'

[72] Herwig Reiter, "'In My Opinion, Work Would Be in First Place and Family in Second': Young Women's Imagined Gender–Work Relations in Post-Soviet Lithuania," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 2010): 533, https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2010.527139.
[73] Reiter, 533.
[74] Lithuania's economic blockade is a period since April 18, 1990, when the Soviet Union stopped supplying raw materials (primarily oil) to Lithuania until July 2 1990.

letters and new columns appearing and disappearing again mark attempts to find a niche for the magazine and secure a new loyal reader. In 1991 the editorial board announces new columns "Him and Her", "Two Pages for Men", "The World Belongs to a Mature Woman". However, the more original attempts faded and the magazine succumbed to overruling public discourse – that of newly found nationalism and individual freedom.

1.4 Returning women to the family

After the restoration of independence, the slogan "Return Women to the Family" became extremely popular in the whole society. For men, it meant the restoration of their patriarchal power.[75] Interestingly, by making this point sociologist Giedre Purvaneckiene implies, that before the restoration of independence the patriarchal power was limited or exercised to a certain extent, which became more prominent after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She admits that women's situation has declined in comparison to the Soviet Union, but her witty comment that unsurprisingly no one thought about returning men to the family shows that patriarchal rule marked state-socialist regime as well.[76] Because of the new and old forms of gender discrimination in the spheres of production and reproduction, women have been more vulnerable to economic and social changes. Obviously, such a general comment could be made about every post-socialist state, thus I shall put the review about the changing women's role in economic, educational, reproductive rights and domestic spheres in post-Soviet Lithuania in a more detailed manner.

Structural changes in the labor market, shutdowns in industry, a decrease of the public sector and the demand for workers in the private sector deepened the labor sex segregation, which has resulted in feminized labor. A market economy requires flexible, young people who can produce the most. Therefore, most of the jobs were suited to young men. This was explicitly

[75] Purvaneckiene, Giedre. "In the Domestic Domain". *Lithuanian Women in Transition,* (1998): 52.
[76] Kanopiene, Vida. "Women and the Economy". *Lithuanian Women in Transition, (*1998): 67.

stated in job advertisements since Lithuanian language is highly gendered, one cannot create gender-neutral advertisement while explaining the skills required for the job.[77] Consequently, women with children were not able to get a job and the growth of feminized labor, primarily in the growing service sector, fixed the inequality among sexes, concerning income. Those who were able to maintain public jobs, such as hospitals, schools or administrative work, which during the Soviet period were considered to be well-paid and professional but mainly associated with women, found themselves next to the poverty line. The difference between salaries in the private and public sector reached 30 percent.[78] The need to become flexible in the job market and the exclusion of elderly people and women with children resulted in a loss of qualification and forced women to enter low paid unskilled jobs. According to the economist Vida Kanopiene, in the 1992 percent of Lithuanian society, living below the poverty line reached 75 percent in comparison to 15 percent in 1989. During the same time, Lithuanian women comprised nearly half of the labor force and 81 percent of women were employed. [79] The numbers tell the inflation rate, fall of salaries since the poverty line was not connected to unemployment. In 1985, 62 percent of all preschool children attended state-run day-care centers and in 1993, due to the closing of state-run institutions and privatization, the numbers dropped to 21 percent and almost all rural kindergartens were closed. Moreover, the divorce rate skyrocketed to 37 percent in 1993. The striking numbers show that a lot of women were being put in a situation where they had to sustain their and their children's living out of one decreased salary in the face of mass privatization and cutting off social welfare. By the end of 1994 women constituted 60 percent of all unemployed people.[80]

Despite the fact, that some activists expressed issues related to women's personal attitude towards gender equality, the numbers of educated women in Lithuania were big at the

[77] Kanopiene, Vida. "Women and the Economy". *Lithuanian Women in Transition, (*1998): 75
[78] Kanopiene 75.
[79] Kanopiene 69-70.
[80] Kanopiene 75.

time, though women did not reach high positions in academia. The number of habilitated women doctors was low, regardless of the fact that women constituted a greater number of the student body in 1994.[81] Moreover, some universities expressed concerns about the shortage of men in the programs and even gave two-point advantages to them during the university entrance examinations "If we were to base ourselves only on diploma data, we would have to admit 90% women"[82], claimed director of the University's Institute of Journalism and adds that high number of women would not find employment. It basically shows a few things: certain programs in universities were gender specific and were highly dependent on the demand of the labor market. The other thing is that the report does not mention any program where women would receive any advantages in male-dominated professions, thus the whole process of acceptance was discriminatory based on gender. Also, it shows that the education women gained during the SU are no longer needed even though they were more educated than men. The discrimination based on gender in education, further marginalized women pulled them back from career possibilities thus locking them at home or in low paid sectors that later on became almost strictly feminized.

As Kanopiene emphasizes, the issue of women's unemployment was not recognized as requiring special attention at the time,[83] though, as I have shown, women were placed/found themselves in a specifically vulnerable situation. Author's approach towards that is connected to the distribution of power in the parliament, she claims that "Lithuanian legislative and executive power is actually a 'men's club' with no women representatives in the Cabinet of Ministers".[84] The question of the situation in the representation must be approached not only in terms of economic development - radical historical and socioeconomic changes requires

[81] Voveriene Ona, Ina Dagyte. "Women and Science in Lithuania",*Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 26.
[82] Steponenaite, Gabija. "University Entrance Examinations: Gender Discrimination", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 28.
[83] Steponenaite 79.
[84] Steponetaite 79.

discursive construction of a new identity. The newly re-established nation-state and the negation of everything that was connected to communism had to reshape the identities of social actors as well. The high influence of the Catholic Church and nationalism definitely played its role in the creation of Lithuanian women. The Church and nationalist ideology became very strong during the *Atgimimas* (National re-birth) movement in the '80s which was one of the strongest movements that fought for Lithuanian independence. The two strong powers that took place in shaping the subject of independent Lithuania are well known for exercising patriarchal power. While the capitalist state needs productive power in the market, the nationalist state must reassure the growth of the nation, which is dependent on women. Emancipation of women cannot be accomplished while their bodies are being controlled by the state. Moreover, the role of the church and its close relation to the state has the power not only in terms of lobbying for certain policies but setting the moral tone towards society. Along with the "men's club" in the parliament and no representatives who could defend women's integrity, hegemonic discourses such as nationalism tend to prescribe women with specific duties and essentialize their position according to sex.[85]

1.5 New ideology suggesting a solution

While the issue of women's unemployment and devaluation as professionals was not openly addressed on a political level, the changing discourse based on a new ideology suggested a solution. Aneta Pavlenko claims that "At all times notions of acceptable femininities are closely tied to conditions and the distribution of wealth"[86]. Her statement is well illustrated by the new formation of womanhood. Unemployment and devaluation of

[85] Yuval-Davis, Nira. 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of "the Nation"'. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Links across Differences: Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationalism, 19, no. 1 (1 January 1996): 17–24.

[86] Aneta Pavlenko, "Socioeconomic Conditions and Discursive Construction of Women's Identities in Post-Soviet Countries," in *Critical Management Research in Eastern Europe*, ed. Mihaela Kelemen and Monika Kostera, Studies in Economic Transition (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002), 83, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403914361_5.

professionals were 'eased' by the revival of traditionalism and rejoice of personal freedom by offering new femininity as an alternative to Soviet working woman. *Woman* joined this construction of a neoliberal feminine subject by offering women a new role. The first issue of 1989 (still *Soviet Woman*) greets its readers with a picture of a bride on the cover and an article "Alive Soal of a Woman":

> "Soviet Lithuania is starting a new life... Responsibility for the society firstly demands perhaps the most important thing – to return a mothers cult to our lives through doings and not words. [...] Understandably, through our history, we experienced essential and undeniable changes to woman's positions and role. However, an attitude that there is nothing more important than work increasingly consolidated next to that. Motherhood became almost a personal matter when evaluating a woman we looked not at her birth, brought up, raised children, but the nature of her work, her social standing. [...] We owe to the family. For long years a woman pioneer, innovator, a public figure was glorified. Nowadays we realized that strong harmonious family is the foundation of every conscious nation." (1989,#1:1)

A transitional negotiation is clear from the quotation above – a turn to traditional family based nation-state has already begun, yet mothers position is still seen as a public matter to be facilitated by society and the state. The same article continues by calling the state as well as the society to create better conditions for mothers (1989,#1:1). On the same year, the editorial congratulates women with the 8th of March by addressing them as "mothers of our children, grandmothers of our grandchildren, wives and lovers" (1989,#3:1) wishing them happiness, health and beauty, and encouraging women's bosses to be tolerant to mothers and young female professionals about to go on maternity leave. The magazine shifts from woman-worker first to woman-mother first, featuring encouragement for the workplaces to create better conditions for women, raising problems of good and bad motherhood, articles about exemplary and symbolic motherhood, such as one about Mother Teresa (1989,#3- #4).

By April 1989 a discourse, demonizing abortion appears with an article "Unborn Life", beginning with words of a priest "life is given by God and a man has no right to take it away" (1989,#4:2). The author claims that "birth rate has to be increased. It's an insistent necessity. What is the use of 53 percent of our women having high education, 76 percent being doctors, 75 percent – teachers? Is this the main task of a woman?" (1989,#4:2). I have to add,

as I mentioned above, that this period is marked by negotiation, thus the author continues by campaigning for better conditions and wages for mothers, however, she mentions "nowadays one can hear various suggestions how to strengthen the family. One of them – a demand to forbid married women to work [...], make religious marriage compulsory" (1989,#4:2). While the author rejects the radical suggestions as totalitarian, she concludes that the only woman's come back to the family can secure a bright future for the nation. Furthermore, that "women stop birthing kids for the wish to 'live for themselves', which becomes a threat as the author claims this to have been the reason for the fall of the Roman empire.

Not all articles, constructing the new woman were so direct. *Woman* published articles discussing women's situation, written by interwar period intellectuals. Sofijos Čiurlionienė's publication claims that a cozy home can be created even by a single woman, as long as she is intellectual and spiritual (1990,#8:3). On the other hand, the articles about influential professionals are presented through a feminine lens. For example, UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher is described through her relationship with her husband and her ability to find time for her family: "however busy Margareth would be, she would find time to take her children to and from school […] every free minute she tried to spend with the family" (1990,#9:23). An illustration for the article portrays the prime minister with her twins in her hands in a kitchen, surrounded by pots. As examples show, some variety remains and there are acceptable 'deviations' from the promoted womanhood, yet they feed into it by overemphasizing the aspects being promoted.

1.6 Individualism

Women's organizations were loudly voicing the problems reviewed above, they were described in the Lithuanian report for UN 4th World Conference on Women. However, Interestingly enough, while expressing the difficulties of women during the Soviet period, and the obstacles they had to face in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, women in

the report express the need for infrastructure and socialization of the household duties in the state in order to abolish the traditional division of gender roles within the family.[87] The idea of state intervention to accomplish gender equality seems very similar to the one that was established during the Soviet period. But on the contrary, the articles which address particular topics tend to dismiss structural approaches. The interview with Lithuanian politician Nijole Ozelyte, informs the reader about Ozelyte's notion towards her career: "90 percent of my success is due to my individual characteristics. If I were a commonplace man, I would hardly have such a good career, as the one I have now."[88] This statement perpetuates the idea of individualistic characteristics to succeed in the public sphere, rather than talks about the structural difficulties, which were expressed previously in the report. Yet, the other politician and the first Woman prime minister in Lithuania, Kazimiera Prunskiene states, she was regarded as an exception and expresses patriarchal attitudes in the government and discloses constant remindings that women are "out of place in such positions."[89] However, the general notion remains individualizing the issues "[...] those elected to the Supreme Council and the Seimas, were comprised of, teachers, physicians, economists, and women of other professions, not unlike thousands of other Lithuanian women, only braver, more decisive, more determined, and feeling a greater sense of responsibility for Lithuania's present and future."[90] Similarly, the president of Lithuanian businesswomen's association Dalia Jurgaityte looks at the marginalized women's position in the society through a lens of internalized misogyny. Her perspective is that a lot of women are waiting for a 'prince on the white horse' and thus, they

[87] Alisauskiene, Rasa. "Women in Politics", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 14.
[88] Ozelyte, Nijole. "Women have not yet discovered their strong qualities", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 15.
[89] Prunskiene, Kazimiera. "I was regarded as an exception", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 16.
[90] Voveriene, Ona. "Women parliamentarians", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 18.

are disinterested to do the work themselves. Yet, she acknowledged the need of education, encouragement to "involve women into action."[91]

The new sense of individualism is clear from the above. Responsibility for women's well-being is shifted from structural to individual. As Rosalind Gill insightfully notices: The notion that all our practices are freely chosen is central to postfeminist discourses which present women as autonomous agents no longer constrained by any inequalities or power imbalances whatsoever".[92] This new notion isn't only dominant in the general public discourse but penetrated the magazine's content as well. The new *Woman* shares success stories and advice on freely juggling the different elements of the new womanhood. While the *Soviet Woman*, among other things, took the role of a mediator, advocating for better women's conditions and calling the stakeholders to improve, *Woman* shifts advocacy inwards, celebrating the unlimited possibilities of each reader and on the other hand, reminding that there is no one to blame for the failures but themselves.

As I have already mentioned, the sweeping nationalist sentiment overlaps with westernization and soon after the transition, the discourse of mother of the nation is supplemented by new identity – those of emancipated consumer and a businesswoman. "Unmarried, but a Woman", I want to be a businesswoman", "Woman on a business trip", "Men's attention gets tiring" are the some of the titles. The articles advice and encourage, yet the obstacles that are covered do not overcome personal choices.

An article comparing women's situation in Norway and Lithuania highlights the problem of the low percentage of women in governing positions in Lithuania. The reasons for it is found, in women's personal attitudes rather than structural ones:

> "already carrying the heavy burden in the household, women do not want to add another burden on their shoulders, maybe even a heavier burden. Also, a lot of women raise very strict demands for their work

[91] Jurgaityte, Dalia."It is easier for men than for women to engage in business", *Lithuania: Women in a Changing Society.* Vilnius (1995): 23.
[92] Rosalind Gill and Rosalind M. Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Polity, 2007), 394.

> that they do not even think about promotions, although in reality they can be equally compared with the men who are making a career" (92,#7-8: 32).

While the author (male) seemingly acknowledges the obstacles women face in reach for professional success, he describes women who do not in a degrading manner: "I am horrified when a woman closes herself in the home. I understand husband, children, the household duties, but you need to try to manage everything and get out of the home" (92,#7-8: 33). A woman who is satisfied *only* with household duties and motherhood alone is seen as lacking in personality and, in his eyes, failing the new womanhood.

As Elena Leontjeva, the head of the Free Market Institute, a neoliberal stronghold in Lithuania, says in another article: "busying oneself only with household duties, cooking food, sitting inside the home makes hard for women to be an ideal mother too. Especially when there are a will and potentiality to be not only a mother" (93,#7:7) The issues of how to manage both private and public spheres, how to find time outside the home is a constant topic in the magazine. But again, there is not even one remark about possible solution outside one's personal choices – the offered solutions are better time management, better self-care, a change in one's attitude. Yet a different article clearly states the solution: Constantly, the same message is repeated: regardless of how bad the situation is, how tired you are, how poor you are, always start for yourself:

> "Is it possible to silence and manage the running of life? It is possible. In truth, not the life itself, but yourself: changing your attitude towards problems and issues that strangle you, changing your wishes, goals, and needs. Let's admit, we rarely think about what is most important for us, what is our "hierarchy" of values. We just do everything "randomly", whatever "comes first", and in the end, it comes out that we do not have energy left for the most important things… So let's try to slow down and silence the running of life, let's stop for a moment, stay alone in order to look deeper into ourselves"(93,#7:23).

Even harsh social and economical problems, such as those of single mothers and women, pushed into poverty by the new regime are seen through the prism of personal responsibility. An article about prostitution claims: "we have to admit without doubt that we have a very profitable 'love business' in Lithuania, which, one should think, is rather popular among many young ladies […] a solution, unfortunately not a dignified one, they found themselves […] We

have to accept, today a woman is responsible for her own destiny (1993,#6:12). It is worth mentioning that in the balancing between unlimited opportunities and self-blame, there are rare appearances of outside influences, however, most of these cases are limited to blaming unlucky stars, horoscopes and demonizing soviet mentality rather than the structural problems and rather radical economic situation, which I cover throughout this chapter.

While almost all scholarship about Soviet women agrees, that socialist state failed to accomplish gender equality, it is evident from my work, that the change and joy of freedom did not result in freedom for all. It seems that women were the most vulnerable in the chaotic environment of transition, especially if they were not 'fast' and 'successful' enough to adapt to changes. The lack of social security due to harsh policies of privatization deepened the void of gender inequality and resulted in the even stronger patriarchal structure of the society, with the 'help' of nationalist ideology and the Church. The nationalist sentiment increased the anti-communist stances which resulted in total neglect of everything that can be associated with it, especially practices that were more friendly towards marginalized groups in the society. The distribution of wealth did not favor women. They found themselves in a strong patriarchal family, without chances of self-determination, which perpetuated the division of (re)productive labor. While free market allowed positions other than that of a mother and a home/nation maker, responsibility to achieve these positions fell solely on individual women's capacities. Women's organizations that addressed all the structural problems, tended to individualize certain issues and ignore the negative factors that were brought by the liberal economy.

This discourse was mimicked as well as facilitated by the Independent *Woman.* While the beginning of the transitional period ecstatically congratulated a come back to traditional femininity, later issues suggested slightly broader, western ideals of femininity. Possibilities were seemingly broad for the new woman – to free her 'inner' gentle femininity, reconnect with both her idealized ancestors and the lucky stars as well as to reach the hights of

professional life. Yet in the harsh socio-economic conditions, it was up to her to not only choose, but to make the right choice fulfilling not one, but all of the roles. The magazine, previously fulfilling the role of a trusted friend and support in hard moments, gradually became a glossy inspiration. The transition, as I emphasize throughout my work up to this point, isn't straightforward and the negotiation from one format to the other takes different forms. The magazine with its content as well as its visuals and its material form attempts to aid women to adjust to the new reality, however, *Soviet Woman* and *Woman* itself struggles similarly to its readers.

Chapter 3. Locating Post-feminism in the Editorship of *Woman*

In this chapter, I will present the interviews with editors-in-chief of the magazine *Soviet (Woman)* who worked for the magazine during the transitional period in Lithuania. First, I will provide the vignettes of the interviews and introduce the positions of the editors about the magazine's change, their views about the content and management of magazine's privatization. Then, I will analyze the main points of the interviews in relation to post-feminist critique to uncover the main implications and will show what kind of ideological work is implied in the magazine's production during the regime's change.

Both interviews were gathered on the 3rd of May 2018 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The recording was made on my personal phone in Lithuanian. Transcripted and translated by myself. The interviews were semi-structured and approximately an hour long. I have informed my interviewees about the topic of my research, yet my position as a researcher remained undisclosed.

1.7 "One cannot write about Putin or the threat of war from Russia for women"

It was early morning when I met Dalia Daugirdiene in her favorite cafe. I came to the place a little early dressed up with a dress and put a nice perfume. This performance was meant to signify neutrality so I would not be caught as queer and thus resemble some familiarity and friendly look. We had to talk about women's magazine, a feminine topic; therefore *passing* was one of my strategies. And there she came, short-haired, very informal and acting confidently. I felt a bit intimidated but when she suggested sitting outside so she could smoke the atmosphere changed and I knew we will have a nice talk.

Before I started recording we had a little chit chat. She was interested in what I am doing in Hungary and whether I have a husband there because of my surname. I think it

was the first time I was asked this question, so it was unexpected and quite intrusive, although this familiar chat informed me that I can expect honest talk surpassing some structured politeness. I lid up a cigarette after her so we both would feel more comfortable with each other like equal human beings. Everything looked better than expected and after some background information about me, I started recording. I began with the question of how she appeared in *Soviet Woman.* She told me that after graduation from the Institute of journalism she was migrating from one magazine to other. Mostly there were cultural magazines such as *Cinema (Kinas), Literature and Art (Literatūra ir Menas)* and a magazine for youth *Youth Ranks (Jaunimo gretos).* Before starting to work for *Soviet Woman* she was an experienced journalist. As she said, the work in *Soviet Woman* was accidental and her interest was due to the retirement of *old guards* who had to quit the jobs at 54 even if they wanted to stay. I immediately felt the anti-Soviet sentiment and I was affirmingly nodding. Everyone has to be anti-Soviet anyways. She was 30 when she became an editor of the culture section in *Soviet Woman* in 1983. Immediately, she reminded me of high numbers, around half a million of magazine's run. Also, the *Soviet Woman* had polish version – *Kobieta Radziecka,* where her friend Barbara Kaleda worked. Half of the million runs! I saw that she feels proud of being part of the biggest magazine in Lithuania. Soon she became magazine's "responsible secretary" and in her words, it meant she was the most responsible person in the magazine's production. Up until now, I could see that she feels like owning the magazine and it was good news for me – she is a perfect informant to speak about the magazine's direction and aim.

Throughout the interview the pride of high position was transparent. Daugirdiene started her position of responsible secretary in 1989 and worked until 1994 - the most crucial years for the magazine, and as she says it was her favorite job. She could be the mastermind of the magazine. No self-representation just navigating with the content and combining the magazine; in her own words, "pushing the Lego blocks". As I understand, she prefers creative

work and the best time for that was the transition period. Therefore, I turned the conversation towards the transition.

She knew in advance that I will meet with another editor Arunas Marcinkevicius and she immediately asked if I have already spoken with him. When I said that I will meet him after our interview she started to about how and why she hired him. I immediately felt that their relationship was not the best. Her rationale behind hiring Marcinkevicius was the fact that the whole magazine's collective was female. Daugirdiene mentioned that there were few men, a photographer, and a painter, although she did not reflect on what does the male gaze implies and just mentioned them in the "men's list". According to her, the role of Marcinkevicius was to imply another perspective into the content of the magazine. Together with Regina Paulauskiene, editor-in-chief at the time, Daugirdiene wanted a male voice in the magazine who could run the limited liability company as a head manager after the privatization of the magazine. As she mentioned in the interview, there were attempts to hire other male colleague but the job for him (name unknown) was too difficult and in her words, "he was not able to work at the same pace with women". Describing the process of privatization and transition from state-run magazine into limited liability company as *peripeteia*, Daugirdiene told me, that Paulauskiene was afraid to take responsibility and thought of herself as if she did not understand anything. Daugirdiene accounts this decision as very honest and altruistic and recounts that she as well did not want to take responsibility for running the magazine in the new market. Therefore, the man came whose judgment on economics, politics, and law was more trusted despite the fact that, as Daugirdiene said, she *bloody refused* the position for the same reason as Paulauskiene. So, in 1989 Marcinkevicius became the manager and editor-in-chief of the magazine and remained one until 1992. Despite the fact that Daugirdiene did not want to have the main position in *Woman*, she claims that she remained the one who was

actually making the magazine and the position of Marcinkevicius (editor-in-chief) was only a title.

Our first part of the interview was more about the facts and a lot of her sentences was a reiteration of the already published interview in *Woman* done in 2005 when the magazine celebrated its' 90th birthday and published series of articles dedicated to the historical review of the magazine. Since I had done my homework and knew about the facts, I turned our talk to the content of the magazine and its' changes. The main change for Daugirdiene was the disappearance of, as she calls, *nomenclature* section "Communist and his work" (Komunistas ir jo darbai) where the journalists had to write about workplace success stories of honored women. She added that she never liked this section and was a *rebel* because these stories were about women who were members of the Communist Party. Instead, she preferred new content that was more *feminine* – psychology and fashion sections and the fact that the fashion could be presented on a better and colored paper. Also, she added, that more and more content appeared for housewives who had to make their homes cozier and to know how to prepare for the wedding. She said that after 1989 it was total a freedom to write and as Daugirdiene says, "we became ourselves", despite claiming in the interview later that there was no need to reinvent the wheel.

The magazine's collective organized photoshoots, they were bringing all their clothes for models that appeared on the cover, also, Daugirdiene's 10th-grade daughter was a model. The most exciting photo shoot for her was "Masculine clothing in women's garderobe" – it was such a fun, she said. After that, the magazine was able to hire professional models who replaced working women from the covers of *Soviet Woman*. The representation changed and in Daugirdiene's opinion, it is boring to read about the milkmaids. Daugirdiene thinks that no milkmaid wants to read about another milkmaid and in her view, a milkmaid wants to read

about something distant, about faces that she sees on television, about someone who has achieved her life something more than work. As she said, a woman has to seek some ideal.

Daugirdiene's image of *Woman's* readership was herself. She was reflecting on what kind of magazine she would like to read. She said that if she had not been an editor of the magazine she would not buy it. She wanted more intellectual content that would go together with glamour. Faces, faces, she said. And personalities. The aim was to create a desirable subject: "The subject that women could follow". The section about work was totally dismissed from the magazine because, as she said, everyone should do their work properly and there is no need to emphasize it. In her view, what is in public has to be interesting and not just reflect the everyday routine. Daugirdiene distinguished the main topics in the magazine for women: beauty, fashion, and psychology. Moreover, her thoughts about what a women's magazine should be were that the magazine has to be leisure to read. To read the *Women* could be enjoyed while lying in a bed, drinking coffee. It has to be a break and not a desk read – a *blabberish read.* "One cannot write about Putin or the threat of war from Russia for women".

When the approach towards the readers was clear enough for me and Daugirdiene herself mentioned readers' letters, I asked her to elaborate more on the topic. She said that it was due to a Soviet slogan – work with the people – that *Soviet Woman* received thousands of letters from readers and had a separate workplace for managing it. Daugirdiene was telling that people were writing and complaining, exposing their problems. The problems varied from infrastructural public problems to very private issues. Sometimes people were even coming to the editor's office to consult: "we had guests all the time". All the letters had to be answered: "I could see that a person is speaking with Gods but still I had to answer" and "I had a prepared phrase – thank you for writing but…maybe next time." When I asked why she thinks so many people were writing, she said that it was because people did not know anything and they were not educated. She added that the Soviet bureaucratic system was hard to go through so people

were turning to a magazine to grumble about e.g. the unfairness of the head of collective farm or domestic violence.

The fact that so many problems were articulated and published in the magazine led me to the question about censorship. This omnipotent imaginary of strict censorship of any official material in the Soviet Union became a bit contradictory while thinking about all the issues addressed in the magazine which were also reiterated by Daugirdiene. After I asked about censorship, she nodded confirmingly and said that everything was checked by Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press) referring to her previous experience when she worked for radio and had to show folders with news and received a stamp that the information was good to air. Although when we spoke about *Soviet Woman* and I asked about specific cases, she could not comment much and said that she does not remember that her culture section was ever checked. While answering the same question Daugirdiene started to tell how a journalist had to go to the villages and report from there as if an order of covering some topics would be an explicit censoring. Though admittingly she said that there was a position of the counter-propaganda that was mainly tackling the religious content and informing people about "the terrible West and terrible capitalists that we need to fight against".

One more topic that I wanted to address in the interview was the question of continuity. I have already expressed my skepticism towards the intention to originate *Woman* from the interwar Catholic magazine and questioned whether the note on the contemporary magazine "runs from 1920" is candid; I asked Daugirdiene what does she think about that. Her immediate reaction was that it is a bit of a stretch. She said that I should address this question to Gražina Michneviciute, the editor of *Woman* during 2008 – 2018, whose project was to merge the magazines. Daugirdiene said that for Michneviciute the idea of having centennial during her period of editorship was important. The narrative of the *grand* magazine, having a long history, was emphasized by the sound article titled "The magazine has not been crushed

neither by war nor crisis". This title implies two critical moments the magazine survived and thus my question came about the Polish version of *Soviet Woman* (Kobieta Radziecka) which did not outlive the transition (crisis) but is always a part of the magazine's narrative. In Daugirdiene's view, the distinction of the Polish version of the magazine after 1989 might have been a political question. She reluctantly said that the closure of *Kobieta Radziecka* was a mistake and unconfidently added that Polish people were against the political changes and their reactionism had an influence on the decision. After this uncomfortable statement, she said that the people who worked for *Kobieta Radziecka* were very nice and some of them were co-opted by Lithuanian *Woman*.

1.8 "All I cared about were numbers"

After meeting with Daugirdiene I was trying to find my way to Press House – 18 story building erected in 1985. I was waiting in the hall for Arunas Marcinkevicius who for 20 years now works in a magazine called "A week with TV". In 1989–1992 he worked as an editor in *Woman*, 1992–1994 he was editor-in-chief and during 1995 he was a manager of limited liability company *Woman.* He had previous experience as an editor and journalist during the Soviet period but the work in *Woman* took place after the privatization.

He nervously greeted me and suggested to go to the Soviet-style canteen in the same building. As we walked he informed me that he hopes our conversation will not last longer than 20 minutes. His unpleasant tone reminded me that in his view I am just a young student writing some meaningless paper and I cannot argue about the duration of the talk. And that's how I felt throughout the interview. We sat down, did not order anything and he promptly asked if I am writing a term paper or what. I tried to rebuild my confidence and explained my work. Being anxious about the situation, I tried to act as informed and mature as possible but

he was irritated, interrupting my questions and swearing. Although, I succeeded to record 40 minutes of our talk and analytically looking – an interesting one.

He said that he appeared in *Woman* as a result of a disagreement with colleagues in his previous job. He was looking for a job and, as he said, the Communist party had to let the *Woman* go and therefore he became one of the 32 or 33 shareholders. For him, it was a swamp that somehow had to be managed, unlike other publications that were *hijacked* by businessmen. According to him, it was his achievement that the magazine survived the transition because all other popular magazines perished and only *Woman* succeeded. One-man army argument did not convince me so I tried to provoke and asked if the great run of the magazine could have helped to survive and maybe the readers were also part of the driving force. He started to name all the magazines that also had big runs but experienced closure, so his answer was ambiguous „Chier znajet" (shit knows) he said in Russian. So, I hinted on the audience and asked if *Woman* was the only magazine dedicated to women, implying that his named magazines were of another genre. Absolutely, he said, there was absolutely nothing else. Though he addressed other issues - during the 1991 -1992 it was impossible to imagine where to get paper and if you get it, then you must put it somewhere so no one would steal, so the premises of stacking would be dry, and the paper could be useful for printing. Marcinkevicius addressed material and infrastructural needs and for him, it was the main reason for the survival of the magazine because for the first time these questions came into place. Before that, everything was centralized, and the party was providing the press with supplies.

When I started to ask more ideological questions, i.e. the change of the magazine's name and continuity from the interwar period, Marcinkevicius was very laconic but also pragmatic. For him, the change from *Soviet Woman* to *Woman* was "normal" and the attempt to connect interwar magazine with the contemporary one is a far stretch. Questions about the relationship with the state and politics also led to a discussion about practicality. "There were no political

articles, the magazine was of social nature, the problems were about paper, premises, being on time to publish, distribute and how to obtain money on time – purely economic affairs".

Marcinkevicius said he was pushing for three moments in the magazine regarding the content: historicity – woman's life since stone age until now; social issues – work, leisure; and provinciality –meaning that heroes must be not only from capital city Vilnius. In his view, the agenda was not achieved. The content was organized excluding the peripheries - no one wanted to travel; social issues, in his words, were not addressed - "it was better to write about the owner of a perfect body"; historicity was limited to descriptions of Interwar balls, - how ladies were dressing up and that's it, as he said. Marcinkevicius sounded agitated that the magazine turned to be about body and draperies. "Body care and draperies…everyone writes and writes about that but what is next to it? What is next to it?! The whole magazine only about that? And a bit about sex – how interesting! One cannot *drive* on that." When I asked, why in his opinion he was not able to push these moments, he said that women took easy topics and since his main task was taking care of production and supplies and there were no bosses only shareholders, so he was not able to dictate his preferences.

Generally, for Marcinkevicius women's magazines must contain some information about politics, but just a little and a lot about the social sphere and relationships. For men, he said, it is easy "I am drunk, I am calm, go away. But women would be 'why so?' Life is relationships. Beauty, health, domesticity, pets…and that's it. And it will not change for few hundred years."

"There is no difference what color is the cat. What matters is how it catches mice", he said when I asked about how he saw himself working in women's magazine. For him, it was a commercial job. Although, after saying this he added that magazine's painter was always a man, a photographer was always a man. The idea of universal subject and genius was in the air, so I could not understand a clear position, if a job is gender-blind, how come the content still has a particular formation. The reluctance to talk about the ideas and discourses with only

some insights about the content often shifted to numbers, paper and run. We ended up our conversation with a few more abrupt statements. The question about readers' letters was answered simply – Soviet heritage and the question about *Kobieta Radziecka* and its disappearance after 1989 – accordingly to market logic; Polish ethnic community had to take care of it themselves.

1.9 Not Soviet anymore. So then independent?

After providing vignettes of interviews I have conducted, now I will analyze its' main implications in accordance with a post-feminist notion. Since during the regime change Lithuania became a part of the global market economy, the popular culture took the task to explain, make intelligible and legitimize the capitalism in post-Soviet countries, argues Salmenniemi and Adamson.[93] The newly introduced neoliberal rationality corresponds with postfeminist sensibilities that became a global and transnational phenomenon, thus enables post-feminist analysis in non-Western geographies, especially when a lot of cultural products are consumed outside the West.[94] The post-feminist notion about feminism, as Angela McRobbie puts it, "positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, it is a spent force."[95] Similarly, post-Soviet imaginary distances itself from the past and this new beginning is imagined as containing equality between men and women, with new meanings that work in this context and, as I have shown before – with implications of new historical meaning-making. Therefore, I would like to go deeper into this imagination of 'depoliticization' and look at the tropes my

[93] Suvi Salmenniemi and Maria Adamson, "New Heroines of Labour: Domesticating Post-Feminism and Neoliberal Capitalism in Russia," *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (February 2015): 90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513516830.
[94] Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (May 1, 2007): 147–66, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898.
[95] Angela McRobbie, "Post-feminism and Popular Culture," *Feminist Media Studies* 4, no. 3 (November 2004): 255, https://doi.org/10.1080/1468077042000309937.

interviewees use to justify new content in the magazine which went through a transformation or makeover from *Soviet Woman* to *Woman.* To provide more grounded arguments I will refer to the arguments I made in this research so that the contextual knowledge would provide more substantial claims. Rosalind Gill's research on Anglo-American popular media has identified several characteristics of post-feminism: femininity as a bodily property; a shift from objectivation to subjectivation; an emphasis on self-surveillance and discipline; a focus on choice, individualism, and empowerment. The celebration of 'natural' sexual difference; a sexualization of culture; and an emphasis on consumerism and the commodification of difference.[96] I will draw on them in this analysis.

First of all, my interviews provide an interesting case since I am dealing with female and male informants. It is obvious that they position themselves differently. Daugirdiene is engaging more into the topics and content as she imagines herself as a reader of women's magazine. Marcinkevicius, in this case, provides a picture of a more disengaged person and treats the magazine solely as a workplace. Daugirdiene does not speak about money and numbers; for her, the magazine is she herself and it is not a surprise that for her, working for *Woman* was the most interesting period in her life. Both of them clearly identify *Woman* as an apolitical magazine and are proudly are doing so, because the break from the Soviet Union allows doing that. To add, their gender disposition, despite the occupation in the magazine, envelopes as gendered as well. One as a rational thinker and another as embodiment, emotions and out of this mathematical organization of the magazine. But in my opinion, the most important part, which encompasses all the topics is the imagination of autonomy and freedom. To put in Daugirdiene's words "we became ourselves". Self as a part of the West? Or something more intrinsic as freed Lithuanian? Maybe both?

[96] Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (May 2007): 147–66, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898.

If at the first glance the interviews might look like contradicting each other, in reality, they go hand in hand. They perfectly uncover what the main aims were - to secure the magazine's run and make a profit and to create the content that attaches value to the economy of personhood. Domestication of post-feminism crucially involves domestication of neoliberal capitalism, thus *Woman* becoming a part of the market economy had to play according to its rules.

Neoliberalism as a system which is based on individual responsibility, choice, and self-governance, creates the subject who must perform well in order to be valued. For women who after the transition found themselves in economically and socially underprivileged positions, the scope of available femininities was limited. Re-establishment of traditional values suggested them to be reproducers of the nation, also reemerged Catholic traditions put women in a secondary position and built their subjectivity as meek, disavowal from socialism pushed them to distrust state support and invest in self-care, as Soviet women were seen as masculine, lacking feminine traits. Next, to the mother and wife, new subjectivity of businesswoman appeared although it was very limited and belonged more to the privileged women since the disposition of inequality grew. According to Rosalind Gill, human value and dignity could be put onto the labor of self-making. To have at least some valuable status Women invested resources into building themselves as beautiful. In neoliberal setting, the body becomes a site of enormous importance as it is seen as the only source of power available for women.[97] Thus, it can also be argued, that this becoming of self is also 'going back' to naturalized femininity. Women becoming women again. Like in the history of the magazine, Interwar *Woman* was re-established.

Magazines serve this mission of providing women with idealized pictures of whom to be. Economically driven desire assures the impossibility to achieve a perfect subjectivity, thus

[97] Gill.

fixates the moment of constant work towards one. Moreover "it creates symbolic hierarchies by attaching value to some persons and dispositions while portraying others as valueless, and in so doing works as a key locus for the politics of gender and class."[98]

Daugirdiene's elitism towards women who are uneducated or occupy positions such as milkmaid i.e working class and portraits of women who are considered 'successful' creates the politics of lack. This 'ideological lack' adds to the general anxiety about the socioeconomic situation and transforms one's life into a self-blaming mantra. By privileging successful women, someone who has achieved something more than work in her life, Daugirdiene foregrounds how the subject of social change should look and act like. McRobbie calls it an ideal post-feminist subject – "subject par excellence and also subject of excellence".[99] This juxtaposition of Soviet woman as indoctrinated and robbed of self and independent woman who is able to choose and become anything she wants to creates an illusion of possibility to achieve desired subjectivity. Subjectivity that could be presented in the pages of the magazine and made into the ideal that women have to seek. If in *Soviet Woman* the ideal is mostly presented in relation to work that almost everyone had with similar living and working conditions, meaning more relatable representation to the reader, then *Woman* requires perfection despite the unequal material position and different cultural values attached. Moreover, this dichotomy of 'free to choose' and 'imposed from above' further perpetuates the myth of Soviet woman as not capable of making her own choices - the problem that I have discussed in the first chapter.

The depoliticization of life in post-Soviet context, first of all, means deregulation of the economy where its' growth is considered as a measure of progress. All spheres of life are renegotiated according to how profitable they can be. The alleged neutrality of 'numbers' in

[98] Salmenniemi and Adamson, "New Heroines of Labour," February 2015, 90.
[99] McRobbie, "Post-feminism and Popular Culture," 257.

Marcinkevicius interview serves the rationale of 'content disinterested' subject whose main goal is to make these numbers bigger. The content is what sells and thus it has to satisfy the readers together with the commodification of social sphere through advertising and creation of consumerist desires. The cloak of numbers that Marcinkevicius hides behind tells that he does not want to reveal his stances towards social issues. Few hints on the content or rather dissatisfaction of it and the blame on women for taking 'the easy way' shows that Marcinkevicius wanted to be the central figure in the magazine which in 'numbers' paradigm means taking the biggest piece of the pie of share. It is specifically seen in the part where he shows anxiety towards the big number of shareholders, that he calls *swamp*, which has to be managed. Although the 'numbers' can also imply that 'anything goes' until it brings profit, which is a strong political position. A position that states that even the content that damages women, that objectifies, undervalues them and has consequences in their everyday lives is acceptable in the name of the personal benefit. And in this setting where individual responsibility is pushed forward, no one can take responsibility for other's 'personal' life choices, therefore, women who fail can blame only themselves.

Daugirdiene's 'free-of-ideology' position is seen via the neglection of women's socioeconomic/material situation that for her is clearly an ideological (because of Soviet past) topic. If Marcinkevicius' 'neutrality' is seen through the use of apparently bald numbers, then Daugirdiene's term is *femininity* in its essentialized form. In her words, the magazine's turn from work-related material towards psychology, fashion, and beauty made the magazine more feminine. The rapid increase of psychology-related topics in post-feminist paradigm relates to the aforementioned neoliberal rationale of individualizing one's issues instead of accounting them on the production of structural inequalities and thus reinforcing them.

Positioning the psychological topics as female related issues projects the care of emotional well-being onto women and further perpetuates the stereotype of women as more

emotional subjects, thus putting all emotional labor on their shoulders as women's natural duty. Not surprisingly, in the interview Marcinkevicius was saying that relationships for women are the most important thing, it is almost all life for them. Gill explains the necessity of psychologization of woman's personal and intimate life as increasing importance and intensity of self-surveillance and self-monitoring – the need for transforming oneself from within.[100] Again, this serves the idea of the need for constant work and with a never-ending sense of imperfections so the circle could spin.

The fashion and beauty sections in this free-to-choose rationale, despite the fact of the turn to subjectification – being beautiful for oneself and not for the other – still works in the same way as an object-oriented gaze, especially keeping in mind the fact that magazine's painters and photographers were all males. The presentation of women as desiring and empowered subjects here becomes even more problematic since the representation and sexualization of their bodies implies as if women freely chose to present themselves *primarily* as sexually coded. Moreover, the representation of 'beautiful' is still embedded in the traditional understanding of it. Thin, white, heterosexual normative femininity with a full hand of advertisements to take care that it stays this way. As a result of the turn from professional topics towards more feminine one's works as a 'naturalization' of the sexual difference made to see, in Gill's terms, that women choose it themselves.

While reading this traditional femininity together with the re-traditionalism of other values, such as religion, nationalism, and family, locally produced post-feminist discourse becomes even more complicated but also shows how its application can work in post-socialist backgrounds where post-feminism cannot be considered as a reaction to the Western type of feminism. As Salmenniemi and Adamson argue in the context of Russia, "post-feminism in the West evolved as a response to second-wave feminism … in Russia it has a

[100] Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture," May 1, 2007.

contentious relationship both with the state-sanctioned equality politics and with feminism as an 'exogenous' ideology".[101] So what it means is that next to the traditional feminine topics such as body, emotions, and fashion with an emphasis on individual choice and responsibility, post-feminism can be mobilized for nationalist discourses as an answer to socialist sentiments and gender relations and *also* distinguished from the Western type of feminism. Thus, the look on the interwar period and the magazine's name shift with connotations to 1920 *Woman* can be embraced for national aspirations leaving the structural hardships that women had to face after the collapse of the Soviet Union omitted. The merge of two independent periods, one of interwar and one after 1990, makes the turning back to home as a patriotic mission. Here traditionalism is seen through massive exploitation of sexuality via commercialization and objectification of the female body and via intensified calls for women to return to their 'natural' womanly mission' and traditional gender roles that are presented as a choice.

[101] Suvi Salmenniemi and Maria Adamson, "New Heroines of Labour: Domesticating Post-Feminism and Neoliberal Capitalism in Russia," *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (February 2015): 92, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513516830.

Conclusion

This research suggests that the change in economic regimes is a very complex issue and cannot be taken at the face value without close engagement into local contexts and the interplay between historical and imaginary narratives that produce different material and ideological meanings in the present. Gender, as an analytical lens provides even more complicated histories that disturb grand and linear narratives and is also a tool of uncovering the work of different power structures and resulting inequalities. Lithuania, in this case, is an example of the intersection between history, politics, its memory, and ruptures that to this day blames the Soviet Union for social and political problems while women and people in general still experience rising inequality after the fall of Iron Curtain. The shift towards a free market economy and new social structure redefined meanings of equality and womanhood.

In the first part, I showed that Lithuanian historiography on Soviet gender history is entrenched in the so-called totalitarian paradigm and dismisses women's agency. I suggest that the totalitarian approach is dictated by complicated Lithuanian history and its position in the geopolitical landscape. I argued that agency can be cultivated in a historically contingent context and in ways that are available and understandable for agents in particular ways and cannot be assumed or dismissed without close historical engagement. As Marriane Kamp argues, "resistance is not only resistance to the state; women's resistance is most often recognized in a struggle against patriarchal social norms. Compliance too involves decision and strategizing."[102] My argument is that scholarship that erases or negates women's agency reproduces a form of patriarchal production of knowledge. The complexity of conceptualizing agency was shown through a discussion about different paradigmatic shifts in Western Soviet historiography. It allowed me to argue that totalitarian readings of one's one history about the

[102] Marianne Kamp, "New Woman," in *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 11.

Soviet Unions results in self-othering and attempts to dismiss the socialist period from history disarms a country from revisiting and rethinking emancipatory practices that women had. The self-othering is a part of the Cold War rationale where women were imagined to be state puppets without voice and understanding of own needs.

In the second chapter, I showed how the period of transition from socialism to market economy resulted in drastic changes in women's lives as well as changes for the *Soviet Woman* and later *Woman* magazine. The only women's magazine to have existed throughout the Soviet period and survived the transition was a perfect witness of the historical change. The intersection of the harsh situation in the labor market and state-supported traditional mother's role resulted in highly domesticized women's picture in society. The solution that was offered by the liberal democracy and reinforced by the magazine was individualized, multilayered femininity. As I showed throughout the second chapter, the transition was not straight forward and encompassed woman's role's negotiations as well as the struggle to keep the magazine itself alive. However, while I showed some variations, presented in the Independent *Woman*, the overall position is constructed for a Lithuanian woman, the citizen of a newly independent state, was molded in between (self)sacrificing mother of the nation and an empowered consumer.

In my third chapter, I analyzed interviews with previous editorial members of the magazine *Soviet Woman* and later *Woman.* There I showed how the process of installing a new understanding of subjectivity came about in the most popular magazine in Lithuanian history trough its editors. I employed a post-feminist critique to show how neoliberal rationale in post-Soviet space construct women 's practices as freely chosen and imagine them as autonomous agents no longer constrained with structural inequalities. I suggested, that post-feminist 'empowered' subjectivity in post-socialist Lithuania is presented in the neglection of the Soviet past and its practices and showed how new traditionalism, naturalized femininity became part

of the nationalist mobilization as freely chosen as well. Here, the Soviet woman becomes a thing of a past, marked by a working-class embodiment that has to be redone according to a perfectly shaped and modern woman who is required constant work on self in order to be valued.

The popular culture and women's magazines can be a vehicle for change. It can be a tool and a platform for emancipation. Magazines are a highly readable nonelitist platform for discussions, leisure, politics, and sharing. The problem is when they are used only for advertising, self-improvemen, and beauty. Women should know about threats of war, economic crisis, politics, and their voice must be acknowledged in all topics.

As my research is one of the starting points in Lithuanian historiography in terms of revisioning women's and gender history of the Soviet Union it has limitations. First of all, I aimed to discuss mainstream discourses in scholarship and public, to show, that a lot of gains for women are at stake. What has to be done further, is research which would analyze the relationship between the readers and the magazine. As I have strongly argued for better attention of women's agency and ways it can be shown, obviously the content of the magazine or main historical narratives are not considered in totality and they are questioned, resisted, renegotiated or dismissed. Also, research on socialist period magazine *Soviet Woman* is needed to be looked closer, how state-supported magazine was addressing women's issues and whether it had any impact of Soviet gender policy. The demonization of socialism often overshadows the issues that were caused by the new market which I have addressed in my research.

We should try to do justice for every period in our history and not only to those times that are constructed to be worth remembering. We can agree or disagree about the politics of different regimes but we must admit that there were women and women are always agents in society. There is no one definition of how the agency should be exercised or how women should resist or conform to the rules that are often harsher for them. Revisiting history with

more complex and self-questioning attitude can reveal different understandings of the past and question main assumptions and methodologies in the discipline which is also a construct of the present. I wish my research will spark at least some discussions for a new dialogue between researchers and activists so we could work further for more just and even society.

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