

***JOURNAL OF
CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGY***

RESEARCH ARTICLE

VOLUME I

2010

ISSUE 1

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Construction of Gendered Space in Socialist and
Post-Socialist Ukraine**

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses how new gendered spaces are being constructed through the means of state-sponsored political propaganda visualized in political art, public images, and some iconic figures in socialist and post-socialist Ukraine. It investigates state-sponsored political art in various guises and gender discourses to argue that both regimes have produced gendered spaces of their own, within which women have constructed and negotiated their identities. Gendered space is the culturally and materially embedded repertoire of the appropriate gender roles that create frames (porous, not rigid) within which women construct and negotiate their identities. The article demonstrates how images and discourses repeatedly cast via state-sponsored political art are engaged in spatialization of the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Political art is engaged in creating a certain image of the state that supports its legitimacy. Thus, Soviet political posters have created a powerful “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) or a “mental universe” (Bonnell 1997) that presents socialist women as first and foremost loyal to the state, emancipated by the state, and identifying as new socialist beings. Repeated broadcasting of such metaphors makes them routine and easily recognizable, it hypernormalizes them. In post-socialist Ukraine, many ideologies have developed in opposition to the Soviet “colonial” scripts. We witness the intersections of three popular gender discourses: anti-emancipatory, nationalist paternalistic, and “traditionally rooted” cosmopolitan. Although the ideological and political messages proposed by such art and images face contestation and renegotiation on the ground, and other culturally relevant meanings are superimposed on the monologue sent by the state, these personal and localized meanings operate within the existing spaces and their frames.

* This article was first developed during a 2006 seminar in urban anthropology taught by Dr. Walter Little at the State University of New York at Albany. I would like to thank the seminar participants for their comments and criticisms. Parts of this article were presented at 2006 Northeastern Anthropological Association meeting in May 2006.

INTRODUCTION

This work discusses how new gendered spaces are being constructed through the means of state-sponsored political propaganda visualized in political art, public images, and some iconic figures. It investigates socialist and post-socialist state-sponsored political art in various guises and gender discourses to argue that both regimes have produced gendered spaces of their own, within which women have constructed and negotiated their identities.

Gendered space is the intersection of knowledge and action in the gender realm that is political, ideological, and embedded in the existing mode of production (Lefebvre 1991; Gal and Kligman 2000). In other words, I am interested in divulging what spaces the state envisions for women and why. I trace the ways in which states have engaged in constructing the domains deemed appropriate for women. Although similar projects of masculinized spaces are in place for assigning men to particular social niches, it is beyond the scope of this paper to divulge the details of this process. I focus on feminized spaces, as a part of gendered spaces.

This paper demonstrates how images and discourses repeatedly cast via state-sponsored political art are engaged in spatialization of the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). States are not merely bureaucratic entities, but they also function to produce symbolic and culturally determined images in order to be represented in a particular and desired way. A series of “metaphors” is offered to the population as a toolkit with which the state can be conceptualized. That is to say that “Through specific sets of metaphors and practices, states represent themselves as reified entities with particular spatial properties . . . By doing so, they help to secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority, and to represent themselves as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982).

The analytical value of such “discursive hypernormalization” has recently been noted by Yurchak (2008:9-10). He defines it as a “performative shift” from direct meaning to the repetition of public discourse. Using political art that surrounds people in their daily lives at work, on the street, and in public places, this article investigates how everyday practices make such metaphors routine and easily recognizable, in other words, how they hypernormalize them. Thus, states are constructed and use sets of images and practices to confirm their authority and legitimacy. I focus on the meta-language of political art. Using Fairclough’s conceptualization, I understand discourse as a communicative code (or language in the broadest sense) that reflects and at the same time shapes the social order: “Discourse constitutes the social. Three dimensions of the social are distinguished—knowledge, social relations, and social identity—and these correspond respectively to three major functions of language . . . Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies” (Fairclough 1992).

Lefebvre argued (1991:54) that socialism has not produced a space of its own, that what initially started as creation of space in 1917 during the Bolshevik Revolution in the Russian Empire died in the early 1930s with Stalin’s regime. In contrast, I demonstrate that gendered (or feminized) spaces in Soviet Ukraine, embodied by the political art, fully encompassed Lefebvre’s essential characteristics of space: they are political, ideological, and embedded in the existing mode of production. Not only did socialism create gendered spaces, but these spaces also serve today as scripts that the state and individuals use in rewriting their public roles. This paper investigates how these socialism-produced gendered spaces contribute to the construction of public space in contemporary Ukraine. I introduce competing gender discourses circulating in post-socialist Ukraine, which often seek to locate women’s domains in opposition to the old socialist spaces. This paper discusses how new gendered spaces are being constructed through

the means of state-sponsored political propaganda visualized in political art, public images, and some iconic figures.

THEORETICAL DEPARTURES

What do I mean by gender space and why is it a relevant concept? I borrow Lefebvre's concept of space (1991) and Gal and Kligman's gender paradigm (2000) to conceptualize the notion of gendered space. Lefebvre understands space as an inherently political entity that is tightly linked to hegemony and power (1991:11). For him, space is both a physical and a mental category; however, it is deeply rooted in the existing mode of production. Although Lefebvre draws on Marxism in this operationalization of space, he also adds to it Foucault's idea of space as a tool for "thought and action." Space becomes not only a "means of production," but also "a means of control" (1991:10, 26). Lefebvre argues that although space is a locus of hegemony that is "exercised over society as a whole, culture and knowledge included, and generally via human mediation: policies and political leaders, parties, as also a good many intellectuals and experts" (1991:10), it does not indicate lack of subversive knowledge. Space is rather an intersection of different agencies; "it points up the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power" (1991:10). Significantly, Lefebvre disagrees with Foucault on the definition of power. While Foucault conceives of power as embedded in force (bio-power), Lefebvre views it as more political; "it is sovereign and conceived from above" (Shields 1999:156). Specifically, the essential characteristics of space, according to Lefebvre, include its representation of the political, its implication of an ideology designed to conceal the conflicts that may arise from its supposedly disinterested knowledge, and the embodiment of the existing mode of production (1991:8-9).

Lefebvre's ideas are instrumental for this article, as they complicate the notion of space enough to be inclusive of multiple voices. Indeed, state is a complex concept composed of different groups and people who might not act with a single point of view and single motivation (Kertzer and Arel 2002). This article does not argue that all state actors and institutions uphold the hegemonic views promulgated by political art, or that all women uniformly accept or refute them. However, these personal and localized meanings are influenced by the existing spaces, so to say—by the ideology and the corresponding infrastructure of its expression. Aware of differences within the broad categories, I strive to discern main discourses within which people operate. This is especially relevant for Soviet society with state dictatorship, where straying away from the expected line of action had very real repercussions. State-sponsored political art is the condensed locus of expressing the desired image of the state, which makes it an important space for exploration.

Taking this definition of space, we now need to articulate the meaning of gendered space. Gal and Kligman (2000:4) see gender as an ideology of what it means to be a man or a woman in a given society, institutionalized by the state; "gender is socially and culturally produced ideas about male-female difference, power, and inequality that structure the reproduction of these differences in the institutionalized practices of society." I understand *gendered space* to be broader than simply the geographical placement of men and women into public and private spheres (Rasmussen 2002). Private is often nested in public, and multiple linkages connect the two domains. Instead, I see it as an intersection of knowledge and action in the gender realm that is political, ideological, and embedded in the existing mode of production. In other words, it is the culturally and materially embedded repertoire of the appropriate gender roles that create a space within which women construct and negotiate their identity.

This article employs Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) concept of spatialization of state to analyze the gender aspects of political art. Ferguson and Gupta (2002:983-184) argue that the "metaphors through which states are imagined" and the "social practices through which these images are made effective" are extremely important for understanding how states are spatialized, that is, "why they are imagined in some ways rather than the others." In other words, the ways in which states are imagined are carefully orchestrated. I argue that political art displayed in public places and embedded in everyday practices, together with iconic images and public discourses, contribute to legitimization of the existing gendered spaces. They reinforce and reproduce the brackets within which women and men construct and contest their identities.

Beyond Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) focus on the state as the projector of powerful metaphors of its spatialization, Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) argues that political posters serve as the "invented tradition," the unwritten beliefs and values repeatedly displayed in public with the goal to inculcate the desired behavior. Here, the focus is more on the process rather than the message or the result. Bonnell (1997) utilizes Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition" to argue that political posters help legitimize institutions, status, or relations of authority, as well as "promote socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, values and conventions of behavior" (Bonnell 1997:2).

Thinking of the creation of gendered spaces with help of these conceptualizations, this article explores the "mental universe" that was created by the public display of political art and that provided a "visual script" for thinking "that the present and the future were indistinguishable" (Bonnell 1997:14).

The following section discusses gendered (feminized) spaces produced by the socialist Ukraine in the broader context of the Soviet Union. Since the early 1930s, production of political posters and monumental architecture was highly centralized (Bonnell 1997:5), and the same images circulated all over the vast territories of the Soviet Union, including Eastern and Central parts of Ukraine that were a part of the Soviet Union at the time. The western parts of Ukraine (Zakarpattia, Prykarpatia, Halychyna, Volyn, Bukovyna) were annexed by the Soviet Union only after World War II, and will not be discussed in the following section on socialist poster art.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: EMERGENCE OF THE POLITICAL POSTER AND BOLSHEVIKS' VISION OF GENDERED SPACE

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought an abrupt end to the Tsarist regime in the Russian Empire; however, the country was far from unified. World War I and years of civil unrest had introduced multiple political discourses that threatened the legitimacy of the Bolshevik state. The main task of the new government was to gain control over the discourse and introduce a unifying narrative with transformed imagery. As in Yurchak's concept of "discursive hypernormalization," Bonnell (1997:1) argues that the main task of Bolshevism was not simply a "seizure of power," but a "seizure of meaning." An efficient way to pursue this goal in a largely illiterate rural country was through introduction of the political poster. Reminiscent of the traditions of Russian Orthodox icons, bright posters carried larger than life messages and used similar visual grammar to reach a post-revolutionary audience. From 1918 to 1921, more than 3,000 political posters were produced by the Bolshevik state, and by the end of the 1930s, the centralized government department was publishing more than 250,000 propaganda posters annually (Bonnell 1997:5). Spatialization of the state via these expressive means can be especially well traced, since political art was either ordered or produced directly by the centralized Soviet government.

Marxist ideology guided all aspects of the Bolshevik regime. This included gender relations. The revolutionary state believed that by changing the mode of production and bringing all members of socialist society into the labor force, it would be possible to create a single Soviet culture. Through participation in productive labor, the population had an opportunity to turn from a feudal order to modern socialism along the lines of unilineal social evolution (Hirsch 2005:8). In regards to gender, Marxist ideology was based on the premise that women had to be involved in the revolution and should be emancipated through their participation in wage labor in order to become true citizens of the socialist state (Kollontai 1923). In addition, peasant and illiterate women constituted the majority of the country's female population, and *baba* was an unlikely builder of modernity—of socialism. *Baba* is a term signifying an illiterate, superstitious, small-minded, irrational, and overly emotional female figure, usually a peasant (Wood 1997). Women were the target of new policies even more so than men, since men, having served in the army and traditionally involved in public life, were usually more exposed to the outside world. In contrast, *baba* was perceived to be a survival of the old world order; “a *baba* thus could not remain a *baba* and still be a comrade” (Attwood 1997:17). She marked “behaviors and attitudes which were not considered sufficiently revolutionary and dedicated to the cause of building a new order” (Attwood 1997:17).

Why did political art target women in particular? Wood (1997:15) argues that this was important because on the one hand women were misogynistically viewed as a “raw material” from which the revolutionaries could mold the desired “civilized” citizens. On the other hand, women were mothers responsible for future generations of Soviet citizens. Bolsheviks thought to redirect the loyalties of women away from their families, kin, and church and into the state and social production. They drew from August Bebel's *Women under Socialism*, Friedrich Engels's *Origins of the Family*, and GSDs (German Social Democrats) Clara Zetkin and Lily Braun's writings to set a goal of “liberating women from domestic slavery” (Attwood 1997: 27). Lenin and his wife Nadezhda Krupskaja spoke of housework as “degrading” and “stultifying,” and denounced “patriarchal immobility” and “personal dependence” (Attwood 1997:29). We have since learned that most of the gender policies had a rather declarative character and were instrumental to the regime because they expressed idealism (Wood 1997:13). This mythological quality of socialist gender “dreaming” makes this investigative approach to the issue of spatialization of state via new imagery especially suitable. The focus here is on the frames that were envisioned to circumscribe women's new space in socialist society.

The Bolshevik vision of women's “liberation” is not to be confused with “feminism” as it is used in the Western world. In a Soviet context, organizations had to walk the tightrope of uniting women for furthering various public issues, while at the same time not turning them into their own “class,” thus channeling their enthusiasm away from proletariat interests (Attwood 1997:30). Feminism was labeled a bourgeois movement, and antipathy to this term can be noted in Ukrainian society even today (Pavlychko 1996).

We can observe how the Bolsheviks' socialist government initiated the creation of a new gendered space, intended in opposition to the pre-revolutionary conceptions of gender roles. The old mentality was not acceptable in the radically new state-building. It is not surprising that even today the word “pre-revolutionary” in Russian and Ukrainian is used widely to signify backwardness. We now turn to the analysis of women's images in the socialist political art.

SOVIET POLITICAL POSTERS

Early Bolshevik Posters

Early Bolshevik posters created a “visual script” (Bonnell 1997:14) or a gendered space for a new emancipated woman who was supposed to appear an opposite to her pre-revolutionary counterpart. Prior to 1917, we see an abundance of women’s images in the Orthodox icons and in commercial prints, where women are portrayed as either motherly or domestic (Baburina and



Figure 1: Away with Domestic Slavery! Demand New Living! 1931. Shegal, Grigoriy Mykhailovich. Moscow. Khromolit (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).



Figure 2: Woman! Literacy is the Key to Your Freedom! 1920. Iznar, Natalia Sergeevna. Kostroma. Khromolit (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).



Figure 3: Woman-Proletarian, Learn Aviation Technology! 1931. Bri-Bein, Maria Feliksovna. Moscow, Leningrad. Khromolit (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).

Artamonova 2001). In contrast, the political poster of the 1920s depicted an emancipated socialist woman, determined and enthusiastic, liberated from degrading “domestic slavery” (Figure 1). The Soviet poster advertised new possibilities open to women by socialism: literacy programs, public child care, laundry and dining facilities, maternity leaves, and the like (Wood 1997). Women were depicted surrounded by books rather than by family or children; in the background were the socialist institutions that allowed for their emancipation, such as kindergartens, vocational schools, and factories (Figure 2). In the language of the political poster, women were invited to join the industry as engineers; they could even fly as civil aviation forces (Figure 3). We begin to witness a powerful message of state priorities and the initial weaving of a new gendered space, in which women are urged to get involved in social production, albeit on state terms.

While the early Bolshevik “dreaming” was translated into posters by avant-garde and Futurist artists, a resolution of the Moscow Soviet (Council) in 1919 declared that the aesthetic needs of the workers should take precedence over particular trends of artistic groups (Bonnell 1997:73). Futurist and avant-garde art was saturated with allegorical representations and symbolism. This was interpreted as the bourgeois consciousness of artists who came from a bourgeois class, and not from blue-collar families. Instead, the Moscow Soviet Council decreed

to depict simple and comprehensible themes that could be directly understood by the public. It is this official prohibition of the freedom of expression that led Lefebvre to mark the socialist order as the end of space. Yet, political and ideological spaces embedded in the existing mode of production were still being created, even though this process was no longer on democratic terms. Creation of space does not equate to the freedom of expression. While the state controlled the ways in which spaces were created, it does not indicate that spaces came to an end. A creative, though controlled, project continued: a project of creating a new socialist man and woman. Susan Brownell's (1995) concept of "body culture" is relevant here to emphasize the nation-building project that, among other things, centers on training a civilized, orderly, and disciplined body of new citizens. While Brownell's work focuses on sports in China, the project that both Soviet and Chinese socialist states are involved in bears many parallels with crafting and steeling a new citizen at the core. Body culture emerges as a display of national strength and power, sending a unifying message to the country and beyond. Similarly, the political posters of the early socialist years display such prowess underlining the envisioned might of the Soviet Union. The body of the state and citizens' bodies intersect to create socialist moral order.

The following section tracks how this process continued to unfold during the collectivization and industrialization era, as well as during the World War II and postwar periods.

Kolkhoznitsa and Collectivization Project

As the first decade of the socialist project came to an end, Stalin's regime changed many aspects of the early Bolsheviks' ideas. The New Economic Policy that gave a relative degree of freedom to private businesses and farms was replaced by crash collectivization and industrialization (Fitzpatrick 1999). This new political course found a clear voice in the political art of the 1930s. A new image of the Soviet woman is presented—the collective farm worker, or *kolkhoznitsa* (Russian). This image of the *kolkhoznitsa* quickly became a dominant theme of the poster (Bonnell 1997:101), as the need to actively recruit peasants into collective farms became more pressing. Collectivization was a highly unpopular policy, accompanied by forcible extraction of land, equipment, and houses. In Ukraine in particular, collectivization met intense resistance, and arguably led to 1932-1933 *Holodomor* (Ukrainian for famine) (Bilinsky 1999; Mace and Heretz 1990; Wheatcroft 2004). Political propaganda was a very important means of conjuring new and more attractive meanings of being a farmer in the socialist state.



Figure 4: Bread to the Homeland! 1931. Babin, Nikolay Semenovich. Moscow (1978 reprint) (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).

Despite the novelty of the image of the *kolkhoznitsa*, we can also observe continuities with the early Bolshevik posters in their positioning of the new socialist woman (*kolkhoznitsa*) in opposition to the pre-revolutionary *baba*. The *kolkhoznitsa* boasts a strong and youthful body (Figure 4) in contrast to the heavy-set, middle-aged-looking peasant woman. Her dress and hair style are also reminiscent of the working-class urban woman—red kerchief, short haircut, and a modern wardrobe. The distance between urban and rural is symbolically shrinking in Soviet political art. This reflects a broader trend of socialist emphasis on technological advancement and modern lifestyle associated with urbanism.

Modernizing the underdeveloped peasant countryside through



Figure 5: Work like Daria Garmash! (a worker-hero). 1946. Nesterova-Berzina, Maria Aleksandrovna. Moscow, Leningrad. Khromolit (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).

collectivization was a Soviet state priority. One of Lenin’s most famous slogans was “electrification of the entire country”—by which he meant that even the smallest house in the remotest village had to have an electric light-bulb (Bekman 2007; Chadaga 2007). The light-bulb became a symbol of progress. In a direct and figurative sense, it brought enlightenment to the masses. In the same vein, the tractor became another symbol of modernization of the Soviet countryside. It symbolized progress brought about by socialist collectivization of the farmers. The image of the *kolkhoznitsa* successfully operating the tractor is abundant in the political art of the time (Figure 5).

In this way, women are shown to symbolically have departed from their peasant roots and arrived at a new state of being—in a collectivized modern countryside indistinct from urban space. Given the stereotyped perception of peasant women as especially backwards, female “domestication” of the tractor was a bold message pointing to progress and imagined advantages of socialism.

Political posters of 1930s rarely depict women with children. Instead, the emphasis is on participation in the labor force (Bonnell 1997:105). Like the early Bolshevik posters, children are either absent or appear in the background, happily playing with their peers in state childcare institutions. The images demonstrate how the Soviet government takes the burden of childrearing away from a woman’s shoulders, and offers public collective care in kindergartens and schools. In this way, women are envisioned to be liberated from “domestic slavery,” while children are given a better chance of becoming progressive members of the new socialist society.

Another distinctive feature of the *kolkhoznitsa* is her monumentalism. Women are portrayed as gigantic, larger-than-life figures towering over the fields and the landscape (Bonnell 1997:103), sending a message that nothing can stop progress. This monumental depiction of women was a part of the general self-glorification of the socialist state, where the emphasis was placed on longevity and forever-ness of communism as the only social organization that truly existed for the people rather than for a particular social class. This emphasis on eternity is aptly captured in Yurchak’s (2008) “Everything was forever until there was no more. The last Soviet generation.” Similarly, Bonnell (1997:103, 123) argues that socialist political art masked the desired future as the present, thus creating an idealized utopian vision of the present. He notes: “like the concept of socialist realism . . . this prescription for artists involved a fundamental shift to a new mode of visual representation which presented only future—future in the guise of present . . . The image became a vehicle for anticipating and achieving future. Stalinist propaganda created, in sum, a new political mythology. The picture . . . acquired an unprecedented verisimilitude, not with the existing society but with the rural social world of the imagined future.”

This visual shrinking of time in political art creates space of particular order—it is “political mythology,” but at the same time it is also real, for it creates the frames in which gender roles are being constructed and presented for public consumption.

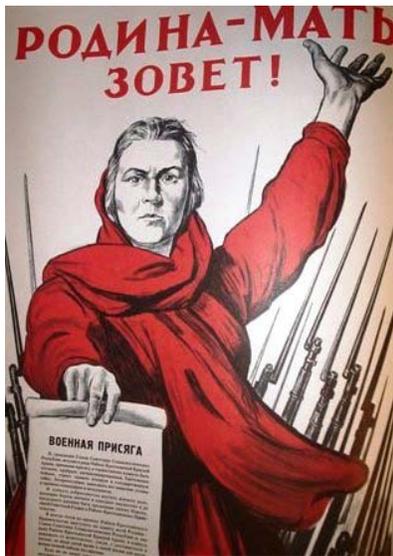


Figure 6: Motherland Calls!
1941. Toidze, Iraklii Moiseievych.
Moscow. Khromolit (Baburina and
Artamonova 2001).



Figure 7: Do not Speak Out!
1915. Vatolina, Inna Nikolaevna and
Nikolay Viktorovich Denisov.
Moscow, Leningrad. Khromolit
(Baburina and Artamonova 2001).

Women's Depictions During World War II

During World War II (1940-1945¹), the Soviet Union saw a brief reemergence of the maternal theme in political posters. Instead of avoiding this topic, political art capitalized on a mother and child as a tool for mobilizing soldiers (Bonnell 1997:256). This invocation of a pre-revolutionary theme, motherhood, corresponded with reopening of the Orthodox churches to draw on spirituality during wartime. This brief episode of spiritual freedom during Stalin's regime was an unusual and radical departure from the intense condemnation of religion, understood as a blinding "opiate for the masses," after Lenin, prior to World War II. With the end of the war, the former intolerance of religion returned.

One of the most celebrated posters of this period is *Motherland Calls!* (Figure 6). It is one of the first portrayals of a socialist woman as a symbolic representation of the country. In the multiethnic Soviet Union, this image, a unified motherland that people of all ethnic groups living on the vast Soviet territory could identify with and fight for had never been used before the war. Yet, the gendered space during World War II did not radically depart from enthusiastic prewar images. Although the maternal role is acknowledged, women are still expected to be, first and foremost, loyal to the state rather than their family. The wartime political propaganda against cosmopolitanism is an excellent example. In a Soviet context, cosmopolitanism was understood negatively as being "a citizen of the world," that is, being oriented toward world affairs rather than toward the inside of the socialist state, or even the home (Bonnell 1997:263). Because of this attitude and definition of cosmopolitanism, Jewish people residing in the Soviet Union were often labeled "cosmopolitan" for their perceived loyalty to themselves or to international issues rather than to the state; "cosmopolitanism . . . is a code word for official anti-Semitism and strident Russian chauvinism" (Bonnell 1997:263). Expressing this idea of loyalty to the state in the times of war, political posters depicted women with essential socialist markers: a determined gaze, the red kerchief, as, for example, in Figure 7—warning against the idle chitchatting that may cause one to unknowingly disclose important information to the internal enemies—Nazi collaborationists. The common thread running through socialist gendered space in the time of peace and the time of war is construction of women as builders of socialism, whose loyalties always remain with the state.

¹ Soviet Union fought in the World War II from 1940 to 1945.

“*Homo Sovieticus*”

The general theme of socialist postwar art is a celebration of the Soviet way of life that brought victory over fascism to the world. There are little to no differences in the portrayals of urban and rural women; instead, the images of the *kolkhoznitsa* and the urban factory worker are interchangeable and belong to the same “species of handsome new *Homo Sovieticus* . . . Beautiful people live in beautiful places in the Soviet paradise” (Bonnell 1997:246, 251). Political posters send a message that after working hard on industrialization, collectivization, and the World War II battles, people deserve to reap the fruits of their labor and enjoy relaxation provided by the state-sponsored new living quarters and vacation packages (Figure 8). Soviet people are awaiting the forthcoming communist paradise. They “have entered a new state of being” (Bonnell 1997:251).

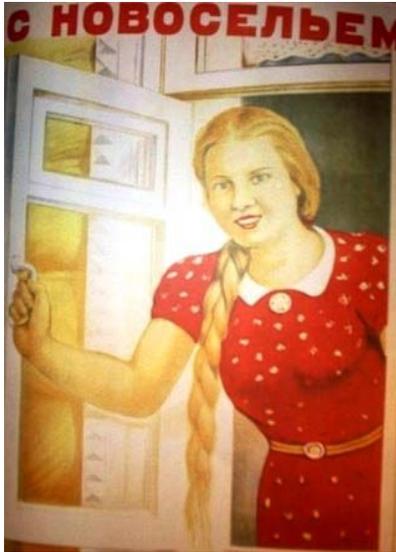


Figure 8: Welcome to the New House! 1946. Govorkov, Viktor Ivanovych. Moscow, Leningrad. Khromolit (Baburina and Artamonova 2001).

Thus far we have demonstrated the political posters’ picturing of women as determined, at times ferocious, stripped of femininity, strong, monumental, energetic, and enthusiastic about building a new socialist world order. The common theme of the Soviet political art in all periods of the socialist era is a masculinized woman whose main purpose is work and loyalty to the state. Soviet political posters created a powerful gendered space, for they attempted to redefine gender and gender roles within which women and men negotiate their roles and identities.

While Soviet citizens did not always accept and follow all of the imagery projected by political art, it nevertheless created a “political mythology” or a “mental universe” within which women and men understood and acted upon their ideas of what it meant to be a woman or a man in the socialist state. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss people’s response to such political propaganda on the ground. Whether rejecting or promoting the state-sponsored images, people were bound to operate within the state frames by virtue of

living in a totalitarian society. The following section describes how the gendered space created by socialism is currently transforming in independent Ukraine.

GENDERED SPACE IN POST-SOCIALIST UKRAINE

Since Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, women have been introduced to new and often competing gender discourses. New gendered spaces are being constructed and negotiated in the state that is currently petitioning for the European Union membership. New ways of spatialization of state are being introduced. This section addresses gender discourses in Ukraine that reflect the opposition to the old socialist ideals, as well as continuities. Because centralized production of the political poster is no longer a factor, the same data are not available for Ukraine. For this reason, I focus on state-sponsored depictions of women in public spaces, such as monuments, some of the currently influential iconic images (popular politicians), as well as gender discourses more broadly.

For the purposes of this paper, I discuss three leading gender discourses circulating in Ukraine today: anti-emancipatory, nationalist paternalistic, and “traditionally rooted” cosmopolitan (author’s term). Together, I argue, they create new gendered space for the post-

socialist Ukrainian women. This distinction of current gender discourses draws on Phillips's (2008) discussion of feminist, motherist, and nationalist/paternalist discourses, where she argues that negotiation of these discourses has led to the production of complex and contradictory subjectivities among women in post-socialist Ukraine.

Anti-Emancipation or Anti-“State Feminism”

Rejection of socialist ideology is a current trend in many post-socialist societies. Many of the post-Soviet ideologies, including the rhetoric of a return to Ukrainian cultural and historical roots, are intended to challenge Soviet policies. The Ukrainian nation-building project emphasizes the historical events that are assumed to demonstrate the monstrosity of the Soviet state,² and the crucial role of independence and cultural authenticity. Thus, Rubchak (1996:315) views Ukraine as a post-colonial society that “strips away layer upon layer of accumulated colonial baggage . . . striving to reclaim its lost heritage—its cultural, linguistic and spiritual traditions.” Early Soviet projects failed in many respects; people felt that socialist emancipation had not delivered all that was promised. Women who were supposed to be liberated from “domestic slavery” instead had to deal with a “double burden” of full-time work and the responsibility for childcare and domestic work (Corrin 1992; Posadskaya 1993; Wolchik 1993). The masculinized socialist woman of the past is exactly how many contemporary Ukrainians do not want to be seen. While not engaging in productive labor was criminalized in the socialist context, emancipation in the post-socialist context sometimes comes to signify the right not to work rather than the right for equality at work. Phillips (2008) argues that emancipation imposed on women under the Soviet regime, sometimes called “state feminism” (Watson 2000:106), had a corrupting effect on the notion of equality. Feminism is often viewed negatively because it is associated with a further loss of femininity, hatred toward men, lesbianism, and the rejection of family (Funk and Mueller 1993; Occhipinti 1995). Solomea Pavlychko (1996:306) explains the current anti-feminist mood in Ukraine in terms of two utopias—local and imported. The local utopia signifies a “national revival” of Ukrainian traditions in contrast to Soviet or Russian values, while the imported utopia stands for the foreign invasion of cheap mass culture from the West: “Barbie dolls, mediocre films and beauty contests with their well-known gender stereotypes.” Pavlychko argues that the idea of women’s emancipation is a part of unpopular communist totalitarian ideology, which is also of foreign Russian origin. She explains the “conscious anti-feminism and unconscious sexism” in terms of “the lack of democratic traditions, the underdevelopment of civil society and low political culture of contemporary Ukrainian society that is post-colonial, post-communist, and post-totalitarian” (1996:306).

The public imagery of women fully encompasses these challenges to the socialist gendered space. Commercials, mass media, and popular discourses project a female image of femininity, beauty, and attractive weakness: in a word, being a “real woman” (author’s term) signifies soft and caring qualities.

Nationalist Pronatalism

As a newly independent nation, Ukraine is now engaged in active nation-building (Wanner 1998; Popson 2001), and is rediscovering its “historical memory and identity” (Rubchak 1996:315). Rubchak argues that the Ukrainian state has made this “restoration and revitalization of historical traditions a conscious program as a way of authenticating its

² Such as the man-made famine of 1932-1933 and the Chernobyl nuclear power station accident.

collective being” (1996:315). Citing Gupta (1992:74), she also claims that in a nationalization project, “women are generally recognized only in their role as producer of citizens and (they) are thus precariously positioned as subjects of the nation.” As a part of nation-building project (Phillips 2008; Pavlychko 1996; Rubchak 1996; Zhurzhenko 2001), the Ukrainian state is actively promoting an ancient Ukrainian myth of Berehynia. Berehynia is an ancient pagan goddess of the domestic hearth who symbolizes the mother-protector of her children, home, and nation. According to this myth, Ukrainian women have always enjoyed equality in difference. They have never competed with men for their public roles, but have been nevertheless greatly respected and as influential as the opposite gender. The post-socialist Ukrainian state actively uses this myth as a tool for designing a new gendered space within the larger Ukrainian nation-building project. Rubchak colorfully recounts an example of Berehynia’s representation in popular press: “The Ukrainian woman has a responsible mission (she is perhaps the only woman in the world, emancipated from her very inception, who never waged a battle for equal rights with her husband, but always fought instead for the equal rights and liberty of Ukraine). Like the Blessed Virgin, the Ukrainian woman must give birth to the Ukrainian Savior” (1996:319).

The image of Berehynia is also infused with Christian motifs, as Ukraine experiences a large-scale revitalization of Christianity (Wanner 2007). A religious revival and rewriting of the Ukrainian history are a part of the search for Ukrainian “roots” that would help the newly territorialized state to create a shared sense of identity. In the Ukrainian context, this is deemed especially important due to considerable loss of the Ukrainian language and cultural practices



Figure 9: Kyiv. Independence Square. Maidan Nezalezhnosti. Personal photo taken by the author.

over the centuries of Russian domination (Bilaniuk 2005). The revival of Orthodox Christianity imparts significant changes to gendered spaces. Known for its patriarchal ideology, Orthodox Christianity, coupled with the state-sponsored revitalization of “patriarchal mythology” (Pavlychko 1996:306), further locates women within the domestic realm as mothers and caretakers. The grandiose statue of Berehynia towering over the main square of Kyiv (Figure 9) is a clear statement about the envisioned women’s role in the new Ukrainian society. Clad in traditional Ukrainian dress, the female figure bears resemblance to the Virgin Mary and a peasant

woman at the same time, emphasizing the connection to the land and spirituality.

Unlike Rubchak (1996), I avoid viewing Ukrainian women as a monolithic group. Not all women are eager to retreat into the domestic sphere. There are competing gender discourses in contemporary Ukraine, and not all women are consciously devoting themselves to “rebuilding the nation.” It is rather an ideology that has not become an everyday practice. The paternalist discourses do not indicate a simple return to the “traditions,” but represent active negotiation of

meaningful politics in which the issues of reproduction are the key to nation-building (Gal and Kligman 2000:21-22).

Traditional Cosmopolitan

To further develop my argument of multivocality within the gendered spaces, this section discusses another popular discourse circulating in Ukraine today—the Western conception of empowerment and individualism. While savoring their femininity and ability to practice what was not allowed in the socialist Ukraine, women today are renegotiating their public roles.

The open market ideology draws a vision of a successful woman entrepreneur. The image of a successful business lady is quite popular. Feminist scholars suggest that mass media lulls women into the belief that they are as active in the business environment as men, creating a businesswoman identity as a form of legitimizing identity that justifies the existing order without challenging it (Zhurzhenko 2001). While women find niches of empowerment (Ghodsee 2005; Phillips 2008), when it comes to large business enterprises women manage three times fewer companies than men (UN report 2003). Zhurzhenko's main argument is that women's choice of identity is essentially limited to the two mutually exclusive categories of housewife-Berehynia or businesswoman. The current gender situation in Ukraine is not a new creation of post-socialist order that in some intrinsic way disadvantages women. It is not a change per se, but rather the epitomizing of the already existing socialist categories, taking them to the extreme (Bazylevych 2005). Indeed, motherhood has always been articulated by the socialist state as an inherently female responsibility (Posadskaya 1993). The image of a working mother was promulgated as a social norm to ensure the ample labor force that the industrializing country desperately needed. According to Zhurzhenko, post-socialist reality brought these two images to their extreme forms, creating the dichotomous options of housewife versus businesswoman without an apparent option of combining family and work.

In contrast to this critical feminist view, Phillips (2005; 2008) suggests that women's involvement in new domains of public life created by the open market does not necessarily indicate exclusive categorization. In her research on women civic activists in Ukraine, she found that Western ideas of civil society and women's roles are being rewritten by the local actors. Many women who are leaders of the nongovernmental organizations have become fluent in the international "NGO terminology" (Phillips 2008) and successfully obtain funding from the international donors. However, when they are communicating with the local women during workshops and meetings, the international gender rhetoric is being muted or even disappears to render these new ideas in a more culturally acceptable manner.



Figure 10: Yulia Tymoshenko (Zuschyk 2008).

In this regard, a popular Ukrainian political leader emerges as a particularly colorful example of how Western cosmopolitan ideas of gender roles intersect with locally relevant post-socialist gender discourses. Yulia Tymoshenko is a current prime minister of Ukraine and a popular politician who became especially prominent during the 2005 Orange Revolution. In the beginning of her political career, Tymoshenko was a noticeable figure, though not the top-ranking politician. Caught in the conflict with the president at the time, Leonid Kuchma, she made a dramatic move that changed her career and immensely increased her popularity. Tymoshenko

changed her hairstyle and wardrobe to infuse her image, the internationally oriented democratic politician, with a traditional hairstyle—a braid that bears clear association with pre-revolutionary peasant Slavic women, stereotyped as mothers and caretakers (Figure 10). She also modified her designer wardrobe to incorporate more feminine elements: lace, stiletto heels, feminine skirts, puffy sleeves, floral fabrics, and the coral beads. The transformation of Tymoshenko's public image signals that she understands her position as a new Ukrainian cosmopolitan, European-oriented politician, whose priorities are, however, rooted in Ukrainian traditions. Her image is the amalgamation of what is now viewed as progressive and Western rather than colonial Soviet, and at the same time feminine and traditional. Tymoshenko's image serves as an example of how women can construct and contest their identities, using the tools provided by the gender spaces that are configured by the state, international influences, and local cultural conceptions. Women need not be buying any of the promoted discourses wholesale; they also need not be operating in vacuum. Instead, gendered space emerges as a historically contextualizing hub of competing discourses that to some degree circumscribe gender roles in the society. Depending on the flexibility of the ruling regime, women and men may or may not be able to pick and choose various threads of gender identity.

CONCLUSION

As a means of understanding the process of construction of the gendered space, this article has discussed political art in socialist Ukraine and public discourses and images in post-socialist Ukraine. I have focused on the representation of women's images and the circumstances in which corresponding gender discourses are built. The article has argued that political art can be understood as a means of the spatialization of the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002), that is, creating a certain image of the state that supports its legitimacy. Thus, Soviet political posters created a powerful "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) or a "mental universe" (Bonnell 1997) that presented socialist women as first and foremost loyal to the state, emancipated by the state, and given the gift of identity as a new socialist being. Although the ideological and political messages proposed by such political art most likely faced contestation and renegotiation on the ground, and other culturally relevant meanings were superimposed on the monologue sent by the state, these personal and localized meanings operated within the existing spaces and its frames. This article tracked how repeated broadcasting of the metaphors makes them routine and easily recognizable, in other words, how it hypernormalizes them.

In post-socialist Ukraine, we witness the construction and renegotiation of new gendered spaces circumscribed by social, political, and economic changes in the country. As Ukraine has acquired its independent status, many ideologies have developed in opposition to the Soviet "colonial" scripts. We witness the intersections of three popular gender discourses—anti-emancipatory, nationalist paternalistic, and what we termed "traditionally rooted" cosmopolitan ones. This paper addresses how women in contemporary Ukraine operate within these newly negotiated gendered spaces.

One of the goals of this article was to track how state is spatialized via projection of certain metaphors, and how gender spaces are created in the process. Another goal was to explore whether socialism had produced a space of its own, as understood in Lefebvre's terms. One element of the socialist space, I argued, is a gendered space within which women and men construct and contest their identities. We investigated socialist political art and post-socialist gender constructions, and found that they demonstrated the essential elements of the concept of space as outlined by Lefebvre. The gendered spaces are political, they are ideological, and they

are rooted in the corresponding modes of production. The change in mode of production from socialist to market economy and the corresponding transformations of political and ideological arenas trigger the creation of new post-socialist spaces, as exemplified by the gendered spaces discussed in this article. These overlap and intersect with other historically relevant gender spaces and new international influences.

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