
ПЕРЕХОДНЫЕ ЭПОХИ

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TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS: GENDER AND HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA (Part I)

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In this essay, Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone examine how feminist and gender theories traveled between Russia and the West after the fall of the Soviet Union by featuring the careers of two eminent scholars: Natalia Pushkareva and Tatiana Barchunova. They chronicle the parallel development of feminism in the Soviet Union and in the English-speaking world, and then discuss the development of gender studies programs and women's activism in Russia after 1991. Using the intellectual biographies of Barchunova and Pushkareva, the authors show how Western ideas about feminism meshed with Russian ones in post-Soviet gender and women's studies. While post-Soviet pressures push toward the de-politicization of the field, both Barchunova and Pushkareva maintain a critical edge in their scholarship, supporting and promoting women's activism, raising awareness of Russian women's issues past and present, and advancing feminist theory.

Keywords: feminist and gender theories, Russia, transnational feminism, women's activism.

ТРАНСНАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ФЕМИНИЗМ: ГЕНДЕР И ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ ЗНАНИЕ В ПОСТСОВЕТСКОЙ РОССИИ (Часть I)

В данном эссе Чой Чаттерджи и Карен Петрон рассматривают то, как феминистские и гендерные теории «путешествуют» между Россией и Западом после распада Советского Союза на примере карьер двух из-

вестных ученых: Натальи Пушкаревой и Татьяны Барчуновой. Авторы характеризуют параллельное развитие феминизма в Советском Союзе и англо-говорящем мире, и затем анализируют развитие программ гендерных исследований и женский активизм в России после 1991 г. С помощью интеллектуальных биографий Барчуновой и Пушкаревой Чаттерджи и Петрон показывают то, как западные идеи о феминизме сплетались с российскими в постсоветских гендерных и женских исследованиях. Хотя постсоветские обстоятельства побуждают к деполитизации этих направлений, и Барчунова, и Пушкарева сохраняют критицизм в исследованиях, поддерживая и продвигая женский активизм, повышая осведомленность о женских проблемах в прошлом и настоящем и развивая феминистскую теорию.

Ключевые слова: феминистские и гендерные теории, Россия, транснациональный феминизм, женский активизм.

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“Transnational Feminism is neither revolutionary tourism, nor mere celebration of testimony.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. 1993.

How do academic ideas travel across the globe in the era of late capitalism? How are theories and prescriptions that develop within transnational frameworks received and reworked in specific locales? How do these ideas change in transmission, especially when they come in contact with established intellectual traditions and scholarly practices, and how do they influence the development of new bodies of literature and the creation of programs and institutions? In this essay we enter the emerging field of scholarship pertaining to knowledge production with a focused case study of how ideas, specifically feminist and gender theories that were primarily developed in the crucial admixture of liberal, Marxist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial scholarship, traveled between Russia and the West in the aftermath of 1991¹. We have selected illustrative examples within the humanities disciplines of history and philosophy, but similar developments have occurred in a variety of other fields. These examples are only first steps in our larger project of mapping the circulation of knowledge across

¹ Solomon, Susan Gross. Circulation of Knowledge and the Russian Locale // *Kritika*. Vol. 9. No. 1 (Winter, 2008). P. 9-26; Freidman, Susan Stanford. Locational Feminism: Gender, Cultural Geographies, and Geopolitical Literacy // *Feminist Locations: Local and Global, Theory and Practice* / Ed. by Mariane DeKoven. New Brunswick, 2001. P. 13-36; Raj, Kapil. *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Scientific Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900*. London, 2007.

both national and disciplinary boundaries.

We center our essay on the stories of two eminent scholars, Natalia Pushkareva, senior researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, and Tatiana Barchunova, lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Novosibirsk State University, colleagues that have lent their unstinting support to this project and have given us permission to share their experiences with our readers. Pushkareva's and Barchunova's careers exemplify the many ways that their state-funded educational training in the Soviet era helped them negotiate and in effect master the transnational circulation of feminist knowledge in a post-Soviet world, especially as the academic women's movement in Russia was galvanized by the lifting of state censorship, the growing networks of local and national feminist alliances, and the infusion of foreign ideas and funding into post-Soviet Russia².

Compared to the development of women's studies and gender studies programs in the US, which were often the result of protracted negotiations and battles with resisting and suspicious university bureaucracies, centers sprang up in various academic locales in Russia, such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tver, Novosibirsk, Ivanovo, and Saratov, with what seemed to us an enviable rapidity. Within a decade of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia had a cadre of accomplished scholars well versed in theories of gender and feminism and engaged in serious revision of national historical narratives, political mores, and academic practices. As Russian scholars came into increasing contact with their Western counterparts through academic exchanges or through the activities of aid organizations and NGOs, they replicated some of the strategies of Western feminism. They created departments of women's studies, offered courses on gender and women's issues within traditional disciplines and departments, convened conferences dedicated to women's concerns, set up think tanks devoted to advocating women-friendly state policies, and used existing academic resources both on the ground and in cyberspace to sponsor research into women's issues and raise awareness about women's movements in the media and political circles³. But as feminist scholar Elena Gapova has noted, recipients of Western funding had to negotiate many forms of institutional pressures from international donors, bureaucrats, and politicians in their host

² Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, Anastasia. On the Threshold of the Classroom. Dilemmas for Post-Soviet Russian Feminism // *Transitions, Environments, Translations. Feminisms in International Politics* / Ed. by Joan W. Scott and Cora Kaplan. New York, 1997. P. 373-381.

³ Lipovskaya, Olga. Women's Groups in Russia // *Perestroika and Post-Soviet Women: From Baltic to Central Asia* / Ed. by Mary Buckley. New York, 1997; Sperling, Valerie; Ferree, Myra Marx; Risman, Barbara. Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism // *Signs*. Vol. 26. No. 4 (Summer, 2001). P. 1155-1186; Racioppi, Linda and O'Sullivan See, Katherine. *Women's Activism in Contemporary Russia*. Philadelphia, 1997; Sperling, Valerie. *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition*. New York, 1999.

countries. According to Gapova, while international funding facilitated access to critical theories and intellectual circuits for certain privileged scholars at elite institutions, this in turn created asymmetrical relationships within post-Soviet academia⁴.

American and Russian feminists differed greatly in their attitudes toward the state and family. While in the US few women benefitted from subsidized childcare or flexible leave policies, affirmative action policies that were instituted during the Soviet era influenced Russian feminist understanding of transnational feminist politics. Given the long existence of a paternalistic welfare state during the Soviet era, many feminists saw the state as the natural guarantor of women's rights. Moreover, in the interest of nationalist considerations that became especially acute in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, and due to the continuing existence of academic censorship, many were reluctant to engage in Western-style radical critiques of the family, patriarchy, and state. The concepts of radical individualism that undergird much of Western feminist philosophy proved less than attractive to an academic population that had historically venerated the needs of the community above those of the self. Russian feminists operated in profoundly challenging political and economic circumstances in the post-1991 era, during which both men and women suffered as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The family in Russia, as many scholars have pointed out, was not perceived by women as the primary site of gender oppression as represented by liberal feminism. Instead, many considered that the family was an important foundation of a civil society, and a refuge from the cruel vicissitudes both of Soviet rule and the forced transition to a market economy⁵.

Within the field of women's studies in Russia, there were profound intellectual differences and disagreements as to the applicability of feminist and gender theories. Russian scholars were the first to interrogate and radically critique their own use and appropriation of Western theories and to articulate the ways such theories could be adapted to illuminate specifically post-Soviet gender relations⁶. While many scholars were receptive to the liberal, radical, and postmodernist approaches within feminist theo-

⁴ Gapova, Elena. Post-Soviet Academia and Class Power: Belarusian Controversy over Symbolic Markets // *Studies in East European Thought*. Vol. 61. No. 4 (Nov., 2009). P. 271-290; Idem. Anxious Intellectuals. Framing the Nation as a Class in Belarus // *In Marx's Shadow. Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia* / Ed. by Costica Bradatan and Serguei Oushakine. Lanham, 2010; *Politicheskoe voobrazhaemoe gendernykh issledovaniy v byvshem SSSR // Gendernye issledovaniia*. 2007. No. 15. P. 14. URL: www.kcgs.org.ua/gurnal/15

⁵ Gal, Susan and Kligman, Gail. *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*. Princeton, 2000.

⁶ Temkina, Anna and Zdravomyslova, Elena. Gender Studies in Post-Soviet Society: Western Frames and Cultural Differences // *Studies in East European Thought*. Vol. 55. No. 1 (March 2003). P. 51-61; Zhrebkina, Irina. On the Performativity of Gender: Gender Studies in Post-Soviet Higher Education // *Studies in East European Thought*. Vol. 55. No. 1 (March 2003). P. 63-79.

ries, some still adhered to the Soviet-style “woman question” that allowed for research into traditional roles of women pertaining to production and reproduction, without coming to radical conclusions about the workings of gendered subjectivity, gender inequality, and patriarchal domination. In recent years women’s studies scholars and “feminologists,” who tend to accept the notion of essential gender roles, and more explicitly feminist gender scholars, who emphasize the social construction of gender roles and the power relations inherent in such constructions, have begun to converge in their use of the term “gender.” This has enabled “gender” to become more universal in its semantic application, but it has also dulled its critical and revolutionary edge⁷.

While gender studies scholars in Russia seek to broaden their reach, they disagree about the best ways to overcome their perceived “ghettoization.” Prominent gender scholars such as Olga Voronina, director of the Moscow Center of Gender Studies, and Anna Temkina and Elena Zdravomyslova, co-directors of the graduate program at European University in St. Petersburg, debate whether the best strategy for promoting gender studies is to continue to build independent gender programs (supported by Western funding) or to attempt to integrate gender studies into the mainstream of the Russian academy. Scholars agree that despite their success in creating and sustaining a new discipline over the past fifteen years, they face persistent challenges in their attempts to mainstream and institutionalize this discipline in an environment that is resistant to feminist demands for gender equality⁸. Any analysis that ignores the long history of Russian feminism or the specific political context within which Russian feminists operate today is doomed to repeat charges of theoretical underdevelopment in the Russian academy and of scholars’ inadequate understanding of Western critical theory⁹.

Feminisms in Russia and the West: Historical Background

Feminist movements erupted onto the global stage as a mass phenomenon as recently as the 1960s, but they had a long maturation period dating back to the birth of both liberalism and, later, Marxism in eight-

⁷ Temkina, Anna and Zdravomyslova, Elena. Gender and Women’s Studies in Contemporary Russia // *A Canon of Our Own? Kanonkritik und Kanonbildung in den Gender Studies* / Marlen Bidwell-Steiner, Karin S. Wozonig (Hg.). Wien; Innsbruck, 2006. P. 241-242; 250.

⁸ Ibid. P. 250; *Politicheskoe vobrazhaemoe gendernykh issledovaniy v byvshem SSSR // Gendernye issledovaniia*. 2007. No. 15. P. 14. URL: www.kcgs.org.ua/gurnal/15 (11.11.2010)

⁹ See Nanette Funk’s exemplary essay: *Feminist Critiques of Liberalism: Can they Travel East? Their Relevance in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union* // *Signs*. Vol. 29. No. 3 (April 2004). P. 695-726; Cerwonka, Allaine. *Traveling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism* // *Signs*. Vol. 33. No. 4 (2008). P. 809-832.

eenth- and nineteenth-century Europe¹⁰. The autonomous self of liberal discourse, protected by a web of inalienable rights and privileges, was initially thought to be the exclusive preserve of the white bourgeois male. However, with the passage of time, liberalism, narrowly conceived as an upper-class and masculinist enterprise, was challenged by the rise of working class, feminist, and anti-colonial movements¹¹. Some left-wing theorists believed that the subject needed no protection from the communist state and that the transcendent self could be fused to a virtuous community of the proletarian elect. For the most part, however, feminists and anticolonial thinkers were rightly suspicious of universal categories of selfhood that were represented as either the liberal male or the proletarian male subject. These reservations notwithstanding, the marriage of Marxism and feminism was enormously productive in the nineteenth century. It led to the rise of international labor movements and laid the basis for solid intellectual scholarship that problematized the relationship of sexes within the capitalist economy and society¹². Nineteenth-century Russian feminists had strong links with feminist movements in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the US, cultivated on the basis of personal relationships, as well as the circulation of shared intellectual texts and newsletters pertaining to activism¹³.

With the Bolshevik victory in 1917, Marxist feminism, a fundamentally oppositional discourse, was reconfigured as state dogma, one that put the “liberation of women” at the front and center of state policies¹⁴. The

¹⁰ Offen, Karen. *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*. Stanford, 2000; *Becoming Visible. Women in European History* / Ed. by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz. 3rd ed. Boston, 1998.

¹¹ Evans, Richard J. *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism, and Pacifism in Europe, 1870-1945*. Sussex, 1987; *Socialist Women: European Socialist Feminism in the Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries* / Ed. by Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean Quataert. New York, 1978; Burton, Antoinette. *Dwelling in the Archive. Women, Writing, House, Home and History in Late Colonial India*. New York, 2003; Offen, Karen. *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789-1945*. London and New York, 2010.

¹² Boxer, Marilyn J. *Rethinking the Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept ‘Bourgeois Feminism’*. *American Historical Review*. Vol. 112. No. 1 (2007). P. 1-28. We thank Christine Worobec for this citation.

¹³ Goldberg Ruthchild, Rochelle. *Equality and Revolution: Women’s Rights in the Russian Empire, 1905-1917*. Pittsburgh, 2010.

¹⁴ Clements, Barbara; Engel, Barbara and Worobec, Christine. *Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*. Berkeley, 1991; Stites, Richard. *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton, 1988; Goldman, Wendy Z. *Women, the State, and Revolution*. New York, 1993; Wood, Elizabeth A. *The Baba and the Comrade. Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington, 1997; Northrop, Douglas. *Veiled Empire. Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Ithaca, 2004; Attwood, Lynne. *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women’s Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-1953*. London, 1999; Shulman, Elena. *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire. Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East*. New York, 2008; Petrone, Karen. *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebrations in the Time of Stalin*. Bloomington, 2000; Krylova, Anna. *Soviet Women in Combat. History of Violence on the Eastern Front*. New York,

Soviet Union represented itself as the champion of women across the world and marketed its program for the modernization of women as one of its premier ideological exports. While Soviet feminism strongly censored discussions about notions of the gendered self, sexuality, patriarchy, gender violence, and reproductive rights, it did celebrate women's right to employment and state-subsidized education, healthcare, and childcare. Women were constantly exhorted to participate in production, politics, and social institutions. Soviet discourse was always ambivalent about how to modernize motherhood as generations of patriarchal Soviet leaders rather cynically advocated that women combine exemplary motherhood with exemplary social activism and career success¹⁵.

In turn, generations of Soviet women successfully fulfilled the demanding state dicta, but beginning in the 1960s a homegrown feminist movement and feminist consciousness took nebulous shape outside the state-approved women's movement¹⁶. Affirmative action policies that widely promoted women's access to higher education were primarily responsible for this phenomenon. Within the modern world order, the Soviet Union laid claim to having the largest number of women receive a post-secondary education. While some women played prominent roles in the dissident movement, others wrote about the hidden specter of gender violence and persistent patterns of gender discrimination in *samizdat* publications such as *Woman in Russia* and *Maria*, published in the 1970s and 1980s¹⁷. Still others pointed to the ubiquity of abortions as a method of birth control forced upon women by the lack of modern contraception. Women writers in their prose about daily life pointed to the lack of consumer goods and services that disproportionately affected Soviet women's ability to function in the public sphere¹⁸. Finally, scholars such as Natalia Pushkareva, who produced pioneering work on women's history in Russia, found that the academy was not always receptive to their innovative scholarship about women in the pre-Soviet past¹⁹.

Scholars undertook research on the social roles of women in produc-

2010; Chatterjee, Choi. *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology*. Pittsburgh, 2002.

¹⁵ Balmas Neary, Rebecca. *Mothering Socialist Society: The Wife-Activists' Movement and the Soviet Culture of Daily Life, 1934-41* // *Russian Review*. Vol. 58. No. 3 (July, 1999). P. 396-416.

¹⁶ Buckley, Mary. *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*. Ann Arbor, 1989; *Women in Russia. Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union* / Ed. by Tatyana Mamonova. Boston, 1984.

¹⁷ Alexeyeva, Liudmila. *The Thaw Generation. Coming of Age in Post-Stalin Russia*. Pittsburgh, 1993.

¹⁸ Gosילו, Helena. *Paradigm Lost? Contemporary Women's Fiction* // *Women Writers in Russian Literature* / Ed. by Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene. Westport, CT., 1994. P. 205-228; Sutcliffe, Benjamin. *The Prose of Life. Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin*. Madison, Wisconsin, 2009.

¹⁹ Pushkareva, Natalia. "Ia sama sebe podam pal'to!" // *Vechernaia Moskva*. 6 March 2002. URL: <http://pushkareva.narod.ru/interview/vm06032002.htm> (05.07.2009).

tion and the domestic sphere, studied patterns of marriage and child rearing, and created ethnographies of daily life, but women's history as a means of social and political critique was rarely practiced. Instead, Soviet histories, while sharply criticizing the exploited position of women in capitalist societies, trumpeted the privileges of women in the socialist bloc²⁰. Despite the vast numbers of female scholars in numerous institutions of higher education throughout the Soviet Union, these women had few political opportunities to organize themselves either as local collectives, or as a pan-Soviet special interest group within the academy. Feminist scholarship that critiqued the constitution of the state, or the lineages of the patriarchal social order, could rarely be produced within the single party system. As in the West, however, the ubiquitous glass ceiling and the very inattention to women's history played important roles in aiding the development of a feminist consciousness within academic circles in the Soviet Union.

The Bolshevik revolution had significant impact on the women's movements in the US. Through the dissemination of Comintern propaganda and the writings of fellow travelers and left-wing academics who visited the Soviet Union, cosmopolitan audiences in the US became aware of the Soviet welfare state that supported women's right to work and education, and provided generous maternity leave, socialized medicine, and subsidized childcare services²¹. In the 1960s feminist movements reemerged in force from the successful conclusion of the suffrage movement in 1920, and they were helped by a generation of left-wing activists, including Betty Freidan, who began their careers in the interwar period. They flourished in concert with movements for civil rights for ethnic minorities, growing ecological activism, and antiwar and antinuclear protests. Political feminist groups that focused on abortion rights, equal pay for equal work, increased access to employment and educational opportunities for women, and criminalization of rape and gender-based violence and sexual harassment at home and in the workplace achieved a certain measure of success within a few decades. While powerful women's organizations were formed at the local, state, and national level, the government refused to implement equal pay for equal work, subsidize childcare, or institute Soviet-style affirmative action policies to increase women's representation in education, politics, and the workplace.

Feminism found an increasingly congenial home in American academia. By the late 1990s there were more than 800 women's studies departments in colleges and universities across the US²². Traditional disci-

²⁰ See for example: Yemelianova, Yelena. *Revoliutsiia, partii, zhenshchina*. Smolensk, 1971; Stishova L. *Zhenshchiny v budniakh velikikh stroke*. Moscow, 1986.

²¹ Weigand, Kate. *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*. Baltimore, MD, 2001.

²² See Boxer, Marilyn Jacoby. *When Women Asked the Questions. Creating Women's Studies in America*. Baltimore, 1998; *The Politics of Women's Studies. Testimony from Thirty Founding Mothers* / Ed. by Florence Howe. New York, 2000.

plines such as history, history of science, literature, philosophy, sociology, psychology, linguistics, education, and medicine opened their door to female academics. Path-breaking feminist scholarship enshrined women and women's activities as legitimate subjects of enquiry in all of these disciplines.

From its very inception, feminist scholarship in the US was a multi-cultural and transnational endeavor, and the strength of the academic feminist movement lay in its receptivity to both internal and external criticisms, and its enormous capacity to confront diverse and dissonant voices²³. In the 1970s and 1980s during the height of the Cold War, when fear of the Soviet Union was omnipresent in the US, readings on Marxist feminism by Marx, Engels, and Bebel were routinely included in women's studies syllabi that incorporated theories of both liberal and radical feminism. The writings of Bolshevik feminist Aleksandra Kollontai were translated and incorporated into many academic courses²⁴. Emma Goldman, a Russian-Jewish émigré who popularized anarchism in the US, achieved similar cult status on campuses²⁵. While liberal feminists and Marxist feminists disagreed violently about their politics, both groups agreed that the state should play a role in advancing women's equality in society and providing support for motherhood and child welfare²⁶.

African American, Chicana, and other feminists of color accused academic feminism of being dominated by the concerns of white middle-class and elite women exclusively²⁷. Charges of racism and ethnocentrism were leveled routinely at conferences and congresses, and writers such as Audre Lorde questioned the very applicability of mainstream feminist prescriptions to the problems faced by African Americans²⁸. At the same time, generations of international students, including one of the authors of this essay, who were funded by and trained in American universities, brought radical postcolonial critiques to their host country. They questioned the viability of Western representations of women populating the non-Western world, and interrogated the Western right to speak on their behalf. As a result, American universities became the centers of a transnational femi-

²³ *The Feminist Reader* / Ed. by Sue Morgan. New York, 2006.

²⁴ *The Selected Writings of Aleksandra Kollontai* / Ed. and trans. by Alix Holt. Westport, 1977; Evans Clements, Barbara. *Bolshevik Feminist: The Life of Aleksandra Kollontai*. Bloomington, 1977; Farnsworth, Beatrice. *Aleksandra Kollontai: Socialism, Feminism and Bolshevik Revolution*. Stanford, 1980.

²⁵ Goldman, Emma. *Living My Life*. New York, 1971; Idem. *Red Emma Speaks. Selected Writings and Speeches*. New York, 1972.

²⁶ Rowbotham, Sheila. *Hidden From History*. London, 1973; *Women, Resistance and Revolution*. New York, 1972.

²⁷ *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* / Ed. by Cherie L. Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Berkeley, 2002; Hooks, Bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston, 1983.

²⁸ *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House // This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* / Ed. by Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa.

nist traffic with global links, especially as international students returned home with feminist scholarship and practices learned in the US²⁹. Criticisms by women of color and postcolonial critics led to dramatic revisions in women's studies syllabi in the 1980s and 1990s. The experiences of women from various ethnicities, classes, sexualities, and geographical locations were soon incorporated into the syllabi, although not always in an equitable manner. Some critics have charged that liberal feminism has "managed" the issue of difference by adding plurality to a founding narrative that continues to feature the experiences of white Western women at its epistemological center³⁰. Gender, a profoundly oppositional discourse, soon became one of the axes of an emerging body of critical scholarship along with theories of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and transnationalism.

The success of women's studies was based on the foundation of woman as a category of inquiry. However, with the advent of poststructuralist, deconstructionist, and postcolonial scholarship, the very certainty of the female subject, female experience, female writing, female sociability, female networks, female culture, and female voice was questioned³¹. As scholarly theories ebbed and flowed, women went from being oppressed victims of history to virtuous agents and makers of their own destinies, to being oppressors, victimizers, and finally, complex subjects in their own right. Generations of women scholars who had labored in archives to unearth the rich diversity of women's voices and experiences witnessed the rise of gender, the strange and unintentional fruit of their struggles³². The essentialist notion of woman was increasingly replaced by the category of gender, and a new theoretical scholarship declared that gender was essentially performative, locational, and relational. Gender was a "category of analysis" and could be used to scrutinize the formation of notions of masculinity and femininity, socio-cultural norms that served to perpetuate patterns of natural domination and subordination in different societies at various times. Gender served as a hidden language of power, coding and naturalizing differences and hierarchies implicit in political, social, and cultural formations. Gender was embedded in our very thought processes, in the ways we understood the world, in the way we interacted with others, in the way we fantasized about the future, and in the way that we ascribed

²⁹ It should be noted that many women from Asia, Africa and Latin America who were trained in Soviet institutions also learnt about Marxist feminism and women's equality in these educational institutions.

³⁰ Ang, Ien. *I'm a Feminist but...* Other Women and Postnational Feminism // *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* / Ed. by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills. New York, 2003. P. 190-206.

³¹ Scott, Joan. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York, 1988; *Feminists Theorize the Political* / Ed. by Judith Butler and Joan Scott. New York, 1992; Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, 1990; Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* // *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* / Ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. London, 1988. P. 271-313.

³² Hoff, Joan. *Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis* // *Women's History Review*. Vol. 3. No. 2 (1994). P. 149-68.

value to different social and cultural symbols. Gender was imbricated in the language of politics, race, identity, sexuality, subjectivity, nationalism, empire, globalization, and transnationalism³³.

Gender liberated feminist scholarship from the study of women in both the public and private sphere, and critiqued the impermeable and ahistorical constructions of these spheres. One could suddenly “do” gender without studying women at all, without even having a feminist agenda or subscribing to feminist politics. Departments of gender studies researched masculinity, queer studies, and transgendered subjectivity³⁴. Suddenly gender was chic and it was everywhere. However, as gender honed its critical and theoretical edge and conquered new intellectual territories, women’s studies as an intellectual enterprise was in danger of losing its home. Wendy Brown, in an influential article, took the bull by the horns and loudly proclaimed the “impossibility of women’s studies.” She argued that rather than locate feminist scholarship in departments of women’s studies, gender scholarship should become an intellectual part of all curricula and disciplines in academia³⁵. While many have responded thoughtfully to Brown’s critique, nonetheless it has struck a chord. As universities nationwide face increasingly attenuated budgets, women’s studies, along with ethnic and area studies, will be the most likely targets of administrative cutbacks³⁶.

Post-Soviet Feminism: Scholarship as Activism

In the 1990s the emergence of globalization and the neoliberal economic order led to the radical downsizing of welfare states across the world and the concomitant rise of economic theories that represented the welfare state as the primary obstacle to national economic growth and prosperity. Women suffered enormously as states retracted their spending on development, social services, education, pensions, and healthcare. Nevertheless, during the same decade when the feminization of poverty became an indisputable reality and an important topic for researchers worldwide, there were phenomenal gains in the institutionalization of women’s studies programs in universities in places as diverse as India, Mexico, and Russia. Many of these programs were initially funded by Western state agencies as

³³ McClintock, Anne and Mufti, Aamir. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Minneapolis, 1997; McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Contest*. New York, 1995; Stoler, Laura Ann. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, 2002; Levine, Philippa. *Gender and Empire*. New York, 2004; See also the excellent set of articles in the forum on gender in the *American Historical Review*. Vol. 113. No. 5 (December 2008).

³⁴ Auslander, Leora. *Do Women’s + Feminist + Men’s + Lesbian and Gay + Queer Studies = Gender Studies // Differences*. Vol. 9. No. 3 (1997). P. 1-30.

³⁵ Brown, Wendy. *The Impossibility of Women’s Studies // Differences*. Vol. 9. No. 3 (1997). P. 79-101.

³⁶ Weigman, Robyn. *The Possibility of Women’s Studies // Women’s Studies for the Future / Ed. by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins*. New Brunswick, 2005. P. 40-60; *Women’s Studies on the Edge / Ed. by Joan Scott*. Durham, 2008.

well as by private organizations and foundations in the West³⁷.

While some scholars have criticized the neoliberal motives that undergirded Western funding of women's movements in Russia and Eastern Europe, this funding galvanized the proliferation of gender studies on Russian campuses and facilitated the emergence of a cadre of gender experts³⁸. However, Western funding did not operate in an empty space. Without the existence of talented scholars and activists, a substantial body of feminist intellectual thought, and political traditions that had long valorized the role of women in the public sphere, the emergence of an academic women's movement in Russia would not have been possible. State-sponsored institutions such as USAID and IREX, and private donor organizations such as the MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Soros Foundation played a significant role in the establishment of summer courses, compilation of syllabi, publication of scholarship about and by women, websites, transnational feminist networks, travel grants for international conferences, and academic centers for women's studies. Western funding has also privileged the production of Russian scholarship that is geared toward solving contemporary social problems and highlighting inequality and gender discrimination.

As a result, research in women's history is seriously underfunded as compared to work in the fields of sociology, psychology, economics, demography, and even linguistics³⁹. The foundations promoting the visibility of women's studies felt that their support of the discipline had symbolic importance due to the previous absence of a "gender perspective" within traditional disciplines⁴⁰.

(to be continued in the second issue of the journal)

³⁷ Parada-Ampudia, Lorena. *The Institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies in Mexico // Women's Studies for the Future / Ed. by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins*. New Brunswick, 2005. P. 262-271.

³⁸ Zimmerman, Susan. *The Institutionalization of Women and Gender Studies in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union*. URL: <http://www.##ke.edu/womstud/TranslationGS.doc> (7 April 2008).

³⁹ Voronina, Olga. *Has Feminist Philosophy a Future in Russia? // Signs*. Vol. 34. No. 2 (2009). P. 252-257.

⁴⁰ Kotkin, Stephen. *An Evaluation of Academic Community Building in Russia*. Moscow, 2006. P. 32. The authors thank Dr. Kotkin for sharing this detailed and informative report with them.