

The Patriotic Fashion and Performance in the Post-Communist Eurasia

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Abstract:

In the last decade, due to the development of media and socio-political changes, a transnational revival of patriotic attire linked to patriotic performance, which becomes fashionable and gathers momentum in Eurasia can be observed. My paper examines visual and ideological links between media, dress and performance and the current development of this new nationalist/regionalist patriotic fashion and performance in these areas. It focuses comparatively on the cultural, visual, performative and political dynamics of this phenomenon and on its historical roots. I analyze the reasons for its appearance, its perception within the context of post colonialism, gender, region and globalization/European Union as well as its current development and progress. I also trace the visual reconstruction of past, which is inherent in the visual and performative self-representation of contemporary new nationalism.

This patriotic attire, which includes elements of neo-folk, embroidery, historical scenes, religious symbols and photographs of politicians, is the of creation of new nationalist biased ideological utopian and dystopian narratives within Eurasian states. This attire and performance is inherent within these narratives as their visual ideological statements. The current development of the Eurasian postcolonial new nationalist patriotic fashion and performance is rooted on the 19th century patriotic national self-visualization.

Introduction:

In the last decade, combat trousers and T-shirts printed with famous historical battles as well as folk motives on dresses and skirts are popular in Poland; during their annual assemblies, Hungarian right-wing activists wear Nomadic-Mongolian style attire; Ukrainian patriots wear special embroidered blouses and Russian girls wear blouses with portraits of Vladimir Putin and “old Russian” dresses. This phenomenon of ideologically oriented dressing up and performance in is noticeable in the whole Post-Communist area of Eurasia as well as in other postcolonial countries. Therefore, I analyze this current

trend of patriotic dress and performance as a postcolonial heritage practice. The question is how this so called by me *new-nationalist* or *patriotic* attire comes to demonstrate and to visualize the wearer's support of certain political ideology, party or movement within the former Eastern Bloc Eurasian countries and what are the reasons for their increasing popularity in the last decade.

Since visualization of its messages to audience of supporters is an essential part of each political ideology and the connection between dress and politics is far from being new, broad research has been done on the topic of ideological and political usage of attire by various countries and governments in different historical periods. (for instance, Guenther 2004; Maxwell 2014; Bartlett 2010; Breward 2004, Miller 2005; Helman 2011). However, I argue that the way in which dress and performance started to be used by politicians and supporters of the governmental politics in the postcolonial Eurasian countries in the last decade is a part of a new nationalist populised visual narratology. Despite the usage of some visual and performative practices in a way it was used during the Communist regime, it has a different content being linked rather to the 19th century nationalist ideological sartorial and performative practices in these countries.

My article is a part of a larger research project which I currently conduct in order to find out the way in which the historical and political 19th century nationalist ideology of visualization of a nation which has been done through various media in various areas of Eurasia, globally influences the 21st century new nationalist political, artistic and design actors to create and to promote different types of patriotic attire using transmedial sartorial and performative practices in the same regions. In what way they use the global 21st century fashion of self-visualization (such as digital social media, selfie culture, youtube and podcasts), trends in dress and performance in channelizing visual messages of their ideology? I will answer these questions within the post imperial and postcolonial context which has served as a

Methodologically, I use various visual and digital sources such as depictions, real and online stores apparel, video games, festivals and performances, video clips and photographs in order to trace the specifics of various types of patriotic attire. I analyze the ways in which its ideological message is transferred, its links to the 19th century ideology, its impact on the local societies and finally I trace the way in which the global visual elements and influences are merged with the local ideologies in and the ways in which the elite actors transform this apparel as a patriotic one to the patriotic consumers.

In this article, I plan to demonstrate several test cases in order to prove that these phenomena are expression of a transnational revival of the new nationalist patriotic attire in the post-colonial Eurasia

(and the post-colonial world regions generally). I will focus on Poland, Ukraine and Russia and trace the similarities and the differences in which the patriotic fashion phenomenon is expressed there by the local new nationalist activists.

New Nationalism

New nationalism is a phenomenon, which started to appear under this term in research and press in the recent two decades. This phenomenon is still under development and undergoes constant changes. Therefore, although some research has been done on it, it is still uneasy to provide it an unambiguous scholarly definition and it is still an umbrella term unifying global new social developments. Thus, scholars dealing with various expressions of new nationalism, emphasize some common feature that it shares: its bounds to the right wing and populist ideals and rhetoric, Euroscepticism and anti-globalization, its anti-migration and anti-Islam biases, sometimes anti-liberalism and last but not least, its interrelation to the earlier 19th and 20th century nationalism and at the same time, its otherness. (Camus 2017: 122-209; Finchelstein 2017; Toubeau 2016; Eger, Valdez 2015; Rushkoff 2016; Gingrich, Banks 2006; Sabanadze 2010; Bremmer 2018; Trautsch 2019; Erwin 2017). In his monograph *Liquid Nationalism*, published in 2017, Bianchini defines new nationalism as a highly differentiated phenomenon. (Bianchini 2017). Already in 2006, focusing on the Western European new nationalism, Gingrich and Banks defined it (as a working definition) as ‘... the re-emergence of nationalism under different global and transnational conditions... Thus the most visible ‘new’ aspects in current European nationalisms are due to such interactions with, and reactions towards, several of these fairly recent, transnational and global developments in Western Europe’. (Gingrich 2006: 2-3). Although, this was written about the Western European new nationalism, it is still not too much written about the Eurasian one. My assumption is that in the decade following the innovative research of Gingrich and Banks, the rising new nationalism in the Post-Communist countries, similarly to the Western European ones shapes its unique forms through interactions with the local and global politics. Thus, it combines the existing Western European/global populist strategies based on media and visual messages with the self-reinvention resulting from their recent past under the Iron Curtain and with the 19th-beginning of the 20th century nationalist ideological sources, which differed from the Western European ones. (Camus, Lebourg 2017; Fielitz, Lotte, Laloire 2016, Sugar 1995, Hroch 2004). This article aims to demonstrate the distinctive way in which Post-Communist new nationalist actors demonstrate their ideology both at the local and in the global level, enthusiastically visualizing it through new types of dress and performance.

This new type of new nationalist attire in the last decade becomes fashionable, i.e. on the one hand it is promoted and popularized by each state's political (parties' leaders or activists), artistic (such as clips producers, musicians, dancers, festivals organizers and exhibitions curators), trade and scholarly (for instance ideologically biased historians and anthropologists) elites. Thus, this fashion promoted from above, meets enormous amount of consumers from below and becomes viral. As the result, more and more people wear and share it online and in a daily life on the other hand. Although this revival started to appear in the early 2000's, due to the development of virtual networks and media it has certain global features. Since new nationalism is linked to populism, the new populist right, which nowadays rises in the whole world from India to Russia, uses attire as a toll of its self-visualization. However, the usage of dress is especially politicized in the Post-Communist space. The former Communist bloc countries still undergo the constant process of post-Soviet/post-imperial group, national, ethnic and religious self-reinvention, which started after 1989. I assume, that this process of reinvention meeting the simultaneously occurring process of globalization on the one hand became very visualized using all the recent media and on the other hand due to this process of globalization and to the constant socio-political changes in this huge region brought to the recent rise of new right and populism which still puts an emphasis on the sartorial political self-visualization.

I argue that the post-Communist/post-Imperialist self-reinvention in the case of the Eastern-Central Europe created a strong drive as well as an opportunity for the local social and political elite actors to visualize this new self-reinvention, to emphasize its patriotic component through attire and to transfer through various channels this ideological attire. Thus, the elite offers it to the ample amount of consumers (the elite-mainstream-identity processes of consumption and shopping are perfectly described by Bauman). (Bauman 2000). Following philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, this process of inculcation of certain power ideology from the elite is nowadays very emotional, being based on "offering" and "seducing" the consumer: 'This society of ours is a society of consumers, and just as the rest of the world as-seen-and-lived by consumers, culture turns into a warehouse of meant-for-consumption products – each vying for the shifting/drifted attention of prospective consumers in the hope of attracting them and holding their attention for a bit longer than a fleeting moment'. (Bauman, Haugaard, Mark 2008: 115).

Therefore, my research comes to trace the way in which this global new nationalist attire comes to express not only certain esthetic, religion or ideology, but also turns by the new nationalist/populist leaders into a patriotic one, coming to support the local government and to visualize the state's political

line. Thus, the global dress fashion influences upon their arrival in the Post-Communist space are often filtered through ideological channels of local media. During this filtering process, they are transformed into tools of visualization of ideology of new nationalist actors: patriotic artists, musicians, fashion designers who often work hand by hand with local political and religious activists.

Both in a daily life and during festivals, performances and concerts as well as for the reenactment of historical events, there is a growing usage of neo-folk elements on clothes which are supposed to be recognized by the viewer and thus to demonstrate their wearer's group, regional, religious and political ideology. These are, for instance, Pagan or neo-Pagan symbols on clothes (for instance, depending on the region, either ancient Mongolian shamanic or God Tengri symbols depictions and engravings, or these which are regarded by wearers as Pagan Baltic or Slavic ones), special jewelry, in the case of Hungary or Kazakhstan nomadic accessories such as pointed boots or fur hats together with swords, bows, arrows and traditional musical instruments as well leather and metal ornaments which remind traditional ones. (For instance, see pictures from the annual *Kurultaj* assembly, recent Hungarian shamanic rituals, or the performance of the Hungarian Tilla Torok Band)ⁱ. I suggest, that for instance in the case of Hungary wearing these pseudo-nomadic clothes is a statement which symbolizes belonging to a populist group of neo-Turanists, sharing their neo-pagan world view and belonging to the anti-European right-wring political milieu.

I argue that the link between attire and the nationalist/new nationalist ideology is not entirely new. What is observable in today's patriotic self-visualization is a revival of social, visual and performative patterns which had already been inherent in 19th century nationalism. (Bianchini 2016). In the last two decades the new nationalist ideologies are based on fighting the globalization which according to them causes loneliness and sadness and to create a sense of unification and of an imagined tribe or community under a certain ideology. Its sources are in the emotional and imaginative side of 19th century nationalist ideology, which stressed experiences of atomization of people. People who moved to work in the large cities from the rural areas, were regarded by nationalist activists as lonely and detached from rural life. Nationalism emphasized the importance of their unification into groups, in reaction to massive transformation of the social structure.

My statement is, that progress of the nowadays media played here the same role the development of periodicals, photographs and cinema played in the visualization of nationalistic ideology in the second half of the nineteenth century . In the second half of the 19th century, images of people dressed up in various "national" or "folklore" costumes, uniforms, etc. started to be spread through periodicals,

postcards, ateliers or wedding pictures. During the twentieth century, the idea of 19th century nationalism diminished after the decline of empires, successor states and first and foremost the Communist bloc which suppressed the nationalistic ideology supporting the internationalist-all Soviet instead, a-la *Etat Nation* (Baycroft, Hopkin 2012; Melegh 2006; Bollerup, Christensen 1997; Sugar 1995; Verdery 1996). The current Eastern-Central new nationalism started to develop after the collapse of the communist regime combined with the collapse of the nation state idea and processes globalization on the one hand and modeled itself after the recent global populist trends on the other hand. My assumption is, that these unique combination of social and political changes of the recent two decades, together with the development of media, created within many individuals an emotional desire of belonging to certain tribes or ethnic groups. Quoting renowned scholar of digital age Douglas Rushkoff: ‘John Barlow dismissed them in his Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace 20 years ago: “I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us.” But the Internet age has actually heralded the opposite result. We are not advancing toward some new global society, but instead retreating back to nationalism. Instead of moving toward a colors of Benetton racial intermingling, we find many yearning for a fictional past when people like to think our races were distinct, and all was well’. (Rushkoff 2016).

This article focuses comparatively on the case studies of Poland, Ukraine and Russia, on which my research project currently focuses. In these countries the phenomenon of patriotic fashion and its performance became very prominent for understanding of the Post-Communist new nationalist populism. My statement is, that in Russia, patriotic fashion is developed by fashion designers working together with the political and religious leaders in three directions. The first one is the neo-folk one, which is often used by various Eastern-Central European Neo-Pagan Native Faith Rodnoveriy (Slavic Native Faith followers, who are modern Slavic Pagans) groups during various performances and in social media and which focused on Russian and Slavic folklore attire elements, embroidery and patterns imaginably linked patriotic Russian attire with the rest of Slavic ethnic groups. The second direction is a Russian Orthodox fashion which is still undergoing developments and which aims to supply proper modest but modern clothes to the Russian Orthodox people, especially women. The third one is a Putin-oriented direction which focuses on various depictions of the president’s portrait on the different types of clothes.

The patriots of the neighboring country, Ukraine, use fashion based on the traditional embroidery shirt called *Vyshivanka* as a unification tool for all the Ukrainians which emphasized their uniqueness and

symbolizes their fight against Russia. Finally, in Poland, which is the most Western country among the three, patriotic fashion is linked both to the support and the protest directions and often tries to visualize various historical events from the recent and the remote past.

Ukraine:

In my research, Ukraine is an example of a revival of a neo-folk attire. In recent years, due to the political developments in the Eastern-Central European region and especially the Russian-Ukrainian war which started after the Russian annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014, the embroidered blouse *Vyshyvanka* became a powerful symbol of Ukrainian ethnic identity, regardless of religion or language, demonstrating unique patterns from various regions within Ukraine and generally unifying Western and Eastern, Russian and Ukrainian speaking Ukrainians. It is worn by the Ukrainians in Ukraine and abroad during the state and religious holidays, family or school events and group pictures. *Vyshyvanka's* appear on the catwalks, fashion shows, advertisements, they are sold on the streets, during festivals and performances and via online patriotic stores.

The roots for the today's ideological use of *Vyshyvanka*, too, are in nineteenth-century Ukrainian intellectual nationalism, which had been inspired by idealization of peasant way of life and by the peasant traditional costumes and sometimes was ironically called by the Polish and Ukrainian artists themselves as *Chlopomania* or "peasant nationalism". Thus, the famous Ukrainian writer and nationalist activist Ivan Franko wore *Vyshyvanka* under his modern European suit (Wandycz 1996; Eile, Phillips 1992; Miller 2003; Himka 1999, Hrycak 2006-2007).



Ivan Franko

During the Soviet time, the government and state authorities' relationship to *Vyshyvanka* was ambivalent and depended on the political climate and on the ruler. For instance, at the beginning of the

Soviet Union, fashion for embroidered shirts, both male and female, went far beyond the Ukraine. This could be regarded as a part of a general trend of the 1920s, which emphasized various ethnic motives on the Soviet shirts and dresses (Bartlett 2010: 13-18). With the beginning of Stalinism in the second half of the 20's (which strengthened the urbanization, industrialization, collectivization, totalitarian ideology and fight with demonstration of nationalist ideology and with the anti-Soviet activity) and after the Second World War with the glorification of the Soviet Nation, wearing embroidered shirts started to be regarded by the Soviet authorities as demonstration of Ukrainian nationalism and regionalism against the Soviet Union and moreover, as a political Anti-Soviet action. The next change by the Soviet authorities towards *Vyshivanka* came during the *Thaw* ear of Nikita Khrushchev between 1953-1964. Then, together with the beginning of general increasing representation of Western fashion in the Soviet Union it started to be popular among Ukrainians for decade, after the Soviet leader himself used to wear embroidered shirt both in private and in public, therefore giving it a certain legitimacy. However, during and after Brezhnev time in the 1970s-1980s, the politics of the Communist party was directed towards all-Soviet unification of all the republics with no national or regional differences in their look or attire and to the fight with the dissidents. Wearing this type of shirt in public returned to be regarded as a symbol of anti-Soviet nationalism, worn by “nationalists” and “dissidents” who wanted to oppose themselves to the ideal non-national *Homo Sovieticus*, a Soviet citizen who did not give any preference to any region, therefore the embroidered shirts were tolerated only within strict folkloric frames (Schmidt 2016: 55; Yeminova 2016; Semenchenko, Kapsamun 2012; Bogomolov 2011, Szporluk 2000; Eliseev 2006). So, for instance in the 1970s-1980, Ukrainian traditional attire was sometimes shown in a semi-comic way, as for instance in the humoristic cartoons “Once Upon a Dog” and “The Cossacks” representing there Ukrainians so to say as “the hobbits” of the regionⁱⁱ.

After 2015, an international “*Vyshyvanka* Day” on every third Thursday of May was arranged by the people from various areas of Ukraine and gradually became viral. The supporters of this holiday, being organized to a larger group in 2015 received an official support from the government, seeking to unify Ukrainian patriots around the globe. (Satenstein 2017; Policka 2018).



By Vladimir Yaitskiy - Flickr: Solomiya, CC BY-SA

2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31323504>

In recent years, especially during and after the Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014, annexation of the Crimea peninsula and the following constant war between Ukraine and Russia, *Vyshyvanka* became a political symbol of Ukrainian independence and gained popularity far beyond Ukraine (Satenstein 2017; Anon 2018). During this day, millions of Ukrainians as well as people supporting Ukraine wear these shirts, embroidered dresses and other accessories, which are regarded by the Ukrainians as proper Ukrainian ones. Especially after 2015, this action is public and performative, taking place on the streets and other public places and being distributed through various media channels, such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In addition, after 2014 *Vyshyvanka* appeared in forms of shirts and dresses on models in various catwalks in Ukraine. Moreover, Ukrainian embroidery appeared also on the catwalks of the High Fashion week in Paris in 2015. (Policka 2018; Satenstein 2017). Since this was the midst of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict after Russian military intervention to Crimea in 2014, thus this action could be regarded as a European political statement towards Russia and as an indirect form of political support of Ukraine. So, I argue that in the 21st century, Ukraine became the symbol of the Eastern European patriotic fashion in the West. Thus, after 2014, Ukrainian *Vyshyvanka*, as it has been already mentioned, started to appear on the dresses of famous Western designers as a solidarity with the Ukrainian people fighting with Russia.

Russia:

In the case of nowadays Russia, there are several directions in which the patriotic attire has been developed by the government supporting designers. Here I will focus on the two most significant ones: the revival of “traditional” folk dress and portraits of the president on clothes (T-shirts and dresses). Clothes started to have a political meaning in Russia from the early modern age onwards. During the

reign of Tsar Peter the Great (1682-1725) the traditional Russian dress was abandoned by the elite; even the appearance of lower social groups was (sometimes by force) changed by the laws issued by Tsar Peter to resemble European dress codes (for instance beards shaving, short cloaks or wigs). (Zabozlaeva 2013: 8-15). During the 19th century, dress regulations introduced by the authorities prescribed each social, professional and ethnic group to dress in accordance with its status, “unifying” its members visually, preventing diversity and creating “uniforms”. (Kirsanova 2012; Zabozlaeva 2013: 8-51). During the last two decades, many Russian activists: businessmen, designers, apparel stores owners, politicians, artists (a large part of whom are religious Orthodox) started to promote in the advertisements and through various social media the so called “traditional”, “Old-Russian” costumes, which real Russian patriots would love to wear.

The House of Russian Apparel established in 2011 by one of these activists promoting Russian nationalist ideology and Russian Orthodox values, Valentina Averianova, offers their customers “Russian” clothes, shoes and accessories, which combine folk motives with the latest Western fashion trends. This house ‘promotes Russian traditions in the history of fashion’ⁱⁱⁱ.

The mission of the head designer is the ‘Revival of the Motherland’s greatness through the ideals of Holy Russia. Russian style in the modern world - that’s the national identity of the people’^{iv}. One of the latest collections named “Revival” was dedicated to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in February-March 2014. The House of Russian Attire demonstrates close links with the Orthodox Church, which is one of the sources of its inspirations and which supports the whole House’s project, therefore its clothes are connected to the Russian Orthodox religious and political ideology. Many discussions within the Russian Church are dedicated to the re-invention of proper attire of its female members: from shape and color to head coverings. According to the archpriest, national clothes are the garment on the icon of the Russian soul and the revival of the Russian State will start when people attend church in their national clothes^v. Besides the *House of Russian Apparel*, the internet store *Miryanka* offers various every day and festive clothes for Russian Orthodox women, who would like to be modest but still fashionable and attractive.

Also Chechen Muslim designers, first of all, the spouse of the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov herself and later their daughter re-design their own attire, which is fashionable and at the same time follows the prescriptions of Quran. Moreover, Kadyrov, called “The Putin of Chechnya”, became a role

model for many Chechen men who started to copy his way of semi-military dressing. Shirts a-la Kadyrov became popular among his male supporters^{vi}.

Portraits of Putin appear very often on T-shirts and are so popular that the personality of the Russian president was compared to a “Fashion brand” by one of the designers Gleb Krainik who developed the brand *Putinversteh*, calling to defend Russian values against Western influences^{vii}. Some of the designers of clothes with these portraits emphasize their love and loyalty to Putin, while certain female patriotic activists stress their sexual appreciation of the president by locating his portrait on the breasts area and appearing with these pictures in public. Moreover, the 2018 elections and the erotic admiration of the Russian president brought about an additional idea from the youth patriotic movement *Set’*. They decided to support the president by launching a collection of T-shirts for women which expose cleavage through a heart cut-out that Putin holds in his hands. Although this collection was published mostly through social media channels, it made the headlines and gained popularity because of its unusual design.

One example of ideological support of Russian politics expressed by famous people through attire, was the so called “Putin dress”, which caused lively discussions both in Russia and abroad in October 2016. During that time, at the Forum of Arab Culture a dress created by a famous designer from the United Arab Emirates Mona al Mansouri, was demonstrated. She presented this dress to Russia in general and to Putin in particular as a symbol of a union between the Arab and Russian people. The front part of the dress depicted a portrait of the Russian president in a judo costume and with wings, surrounded by cherubs and holding an Earth globe in his hands. On the back side of the dress, Kremlin was depicted^{viii}. Thus, Russia and its politics were depicted as symbols of an active fight for peace and as a hint on the leading role on the globe.

Thus, Russian women have many opportunities to display their patriotism nowadays: either by wearing T-shirts with the portrait of the president for festivals and performances or by emphasizing their Russian Orthodox religious identity by wearing traditional *Sarafan* dresses on their workplaces, special scarves attending the Church and festive *Kokoshnik* headgears for weddings, that are seen as typical elements of Russian national attire.

Poland:

In the case of Poland the tradition of visual group self-representation had already been strong during the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the so-called *Sarmatian* costume (a Baroque orientalized and Turkish influenced Polish nobility costume) became the symbol of “Polishness”. (Wasko 1995; Grzybowski 1996).



Poles dance the Polonaise (by Kornelli Szlegel)^{ix}

In the time of the partitioned Poland (from 1772-1918) members of cultural, social and political movements inspired by Romanticism and nationalism tried to find the roots and to depict the soul of the nation and they attempted to visualize themselves according to their beliefs, too. They turned to their surroundings focusing on peasants, who became one of the symbols of the Polish nation. Often their way of dressing was regarded as the proper Polish one. During this time the peasant folk costume was reinvented, elaborated and represented as a true Polish attire. (Wandycz 1996; Eile, Phillips 1992; Miller 2003).

The main visual emphasis was put on clothes, for instance on “peasant” and, again, the *Sarmatian* costumes that had been “re-invented” by artists and scholars, as well as on special military clothes that highlighted the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a huge multi-ethnic confederation between Poland and Lithuania, which was ruled by one king and which was established in 1569 and existed until 1772. The second half of the 19th century was a period of creation and transformation of nationalistic ideals and ideas of uprising through the visual prism of Romanticism and through attempts of unification of various groups of population within the partitioned Poland under the ideals of freedom.

In February 1861, this led to the Polish patriotic political anti-Russian manifestations in Warsaw. After five participants in a manifestation against the Russian rule were killed by the Russian soldiers, a few days later their burial turned into an additional demonstration where thousands of participants of

different religious confessions and political belief demonstrated together against Russia, as for instance it was depicted in the famous painting of Polish painter Aleksander Lesser^x.

After these manifestations and during the January Uprising of 1863-1864 a phenomenon called "People's Morning" appeared and it was expressed in a special "Black Fashion" and "Black Jewelry" items, which appeared and became common, especially among the ladies and girls of Warsaw and was transformed into an instrument of a protest against the authorities.

Thus, in March 1861, the archbishop of Warsaw Antoni Fijałkowski officially declared during his sermon in the church the beginning of the "People's Morning": 'All the parts of Poland should wear black to the unlimited time. Ladies should wear white dress only on the day of their wedding'. (Bauer 2014: 53-72). Since then, both male and especially female inhabitants of Warsaw started to wear modest long sleeved and high collared black clothes. However, men had to stop wearing black and patriotic clothes, because of danger of punishment from the authorities. So, the symbolic opposition reflected in mourning dresses and jewelry became females' prerogative, therefore, becoming gendered.

According to "Black Fashion" restrictions of the mourning clothes of this time, ladies had to wear mourning dresses, which had to be simple and black or white on the wedding day and their hairstyles were very basic: either modest knots or spits which again had to remind the old Polish style, or eventually half-mourning ones as black and white among the little girl. No jewelry was used, except the so-called "Black Jewelry", often made from simple materials, wood, hair or stone, and which had to symbolize suffer of people. Usually there were either crosses, or national symbols or sometimes chains which had to remind "kajdanki", the handcuffs of the Polish prisoners. (Krypczyk 2012: 117-136; Bauer 2014: 53-72; Brzeszcz 2014: 119-124).



Artur Grottger, “In the Saxon Garden”, 1863 (photo: [wikimedia commons](#))

In the last two decades, Polish patriots decided to use in their clothing the same visual messages of folk dresses elements, which had been in use among 19th century Polish nationalists. For instance, patterns, which are generally regarded as the folk ones on dresses and skirts are popular and even fashionable. In addition, today’s new nationalist activists depict motives on their clothes taken from Polish history: famous battles or faces of political and religious leaders. These motives appear both on the male and female clothes^{xi}.

Starting from the 2010s the visual aesthetical forms of the performative aspect of new nationalist Polish ideologies often feed on globally popular pseudo-medieval fantasy movies, such as “The Hobbit”, “Warcraft”, “Thor: Ragnarok” and “The Witcher”, comics, video-games, together with pop culture, and they create a visual fusion with the regional revival of pseudo-medieval and folk traditions. Thus, my assumption is that the visual reconstruction of ancient and medieval mythology mixes with postmodern performative ways of neo-patriotic ideological self-representation through attire. For instance, in Poland, in the last two years, the online series “Polish Legends” broadcasted in 2016-2017 by the Polish online e-commerce platform *Allegro*, transfers medieval fairy tales into current Polish reality, mixing folk, pseudo-medieval and postmodern design in attire and performance in general, was enormously successful, garnering an audience of millions^{xii}. There, again a significant role was given not only to heroic men but also to fighting strong women.

In the recent decade in Poland the increasing usage of folk dress in order to emphasize own identity and political and social views often receives also a clear gendered character, obtaining many female features. This phenomenon is very similar to its 19th century sources as well as the nowadays performative sexualizing of the folk attire, as for instance represented by the famous clip of Cleo&Donatan, which appeared on the 2014 Eurovision, where girls appeared in provocative dresses with folklore motives^{xiii}. Dress also continues to be a symbol of female protest among the 21st century Polish women and here, too, takes up imagery that makes reference to past practices – as happened during the recent “Black Protests” in Poland in October 2016. Then, hundreds of thousands of women went to the streets wearing black clothes and protesting the governmental ban on abortions. The black dress reappeared as a symbol of political protest in the female Polish society (Novikov 2016)^{xiv}.

Conclusion:

Thus, in my project in general and in this article in particular, I analyzed on the one hand the similar visual rhetoric of usage of dress in political aims between the nationalist activists in the second half on 19th-beginning of the 20th century and between the new nationalist activists of the 2010s, focusing therefore on time dimension. On the other hand, I also focused on the space dimension in order to analyze the uniqueness of the postcolonial Eurasian region, where in the recent decade attire became an important political tool in order to promote the governmental ideology. I trace the process of transformation of the global fashion, media and performative trends into ideological sartorial tools which are supposed to visualize and support the local new nationalist ideology in this region. My article focused on indicating and proving the ways in which patriotic dress in the 2000s and especially in the last decade is used for the promotion and visualization of various political ideologies in order to demonstrate the support to the governments’ policy.

My argument is, that the dress practices are gathering momentum again because the rhetoric of new nationalism strives to classify people into unique groups according to their imagined ethnic origins, which are believed to cut across nowadays’ linguistic, religious, political or geographic borders. The transnational process of a current development of new nationalist/regionalist patriotic fashion in the postcolonial countries follows the transnational expansion of the populist right wing new nationalist practices. (Fielitz, Lotte, 2016: 17). This process can be examined within the historical context of the second half of the 19th century when nationalist patriotic attire started to appear and to be visually promoted through various media.

Due to the current global development of visual culture, reflected in social media, selfies, festivals and video clips, current new nationalist fashion has very performative character. It has been massively publicized and promoted in huge populist shows, reenactments, exhibitions and festivals. Being virtual and mediatized as well as transmitted in many forms of communication, this new nationalist fashion, therefore easily crosses frontiers of countries becoming viral and transnational.

The holistic interdisciplinary analysis of new nationalist/patriotic attire which includes subjects of political and social history, dress history, visual studies and cultural anthropology within a transnational and a global context can contribute both to the historical and fashion studies fields. On the one hand such an interdisciplinary research through the dress and visual studies methods can contribute to the deeper understanding and analysis of the multicultural and diverse phenomenon of new nationalism in the Eurasian postcolonial sphere: from the Baltic Sea to Central Asia, from Estonia to Tajikistan. The narratology of new nationalism being in a large measure transmedial is based on visual storytelling and therefore I am able to analyze this political and social phenomenon by the visual, cultural, social, media and sartorial studies methods. On the other hand, the field of fashion studies will benefit from the analysis of the new forms of attire, both transnational and regionalist which appear in the postcolonial countries.

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