

# A Conservative Turn in a Patriarchal Society? The Entangled Memory of Female Political Activism in Post-Soviet Russia<sup>1</sup>

Nadezda Petrusenko (Södertörn University, Sweden)

[nadezda.petrusenko@sh.se](mailto:nadezda.petrusenko@sh.se)

Paper Presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021

**Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Author.**

## Introduction

Recent research on the conservative turn of post-Soviet Russia has paid attention to the revival of the so-called ‘traditional values’ promoted through the government’s pro-natalist family policy.<sup>2</sup> After the fall of the Soviet Union, some politicians expected that these values would fill the vacuum left by Communism. In recent years, under President Vladimir Putin, ‘traditional values’ have moved to the centre of official Russian discourse as a means for solving the severe ‘demographic crisis’ and helping Russia regain its status as global power.<sup>3</sup> ‘Traditional values,’ within the conservative patriarchal paradigm, prescribe family and maternity as the main priority of women, establishing a norm of what constitutes femininity.

A patriarchal view of women, and their roles in society, is nothing new: pre-revolutionary Russia was a patriarchal society, where women were considered first of all as wives and mothers; even the Soviet society was patriarchal in its attitude towards women, who were considered worker-mothers, with the

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a part of the research project “Narratives of Revolutionary Struggle and Construction of Post-Soviet Identities in Russia (1991-2018)” funded by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Sweden).

<sup>2</sup> See Katharina Bluhm and Martin Brand, “‘Traditional Values’ Unleashed. The Ultraconservative Influence on Russian Family Policy,” in *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*, ed. Katharina Bluhm and Mihai Varga (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 223-44.

<sup>3</sup> Janet Elise Johnson, “Pussy Riot as a feminist project: Russia's gendered informal politics,” *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 584, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.916667>; Bluhm and Brand, “Traditional Values,” 223; Yulia Gradszkova, “Recovering traditions? Women, gender, and the authoritarianism of ‘traditional values’ in Russia,” *Baltic Worlds* 13, no. 1 (2020): 31-2, 35, [http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/BW\\_1\\_2020\\_pdf\\_FULL.pdf](http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/BW_1_2020_pdf_FULL.pdf).

burdens of both paid work, outside the home, and domestic responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> The question is, thus, whether a conservative turn really occurred during the presidency of Putin, or if the post-Soviet patriarchal paradigm is just a continuation of the tendencies that existed in the pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods. I intend to answer this question by focussing on post-Soviet representations of female political activism.

Political activism contradicts the patriarchal view on proper femininity. This must be why female political activism has attracted much media attention in Russia. The first examples of such activism were the women, who participated in terrorist attacks against civilians in the course of Chechen Wars (1994–96, 1999–2009), i.e., the conflict between the Russian government and Chechen separatists. The second case was Pussy Riot, a feminist punk group that became famous after it staged an illegal performance in Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on February 21, 2012, to protest the dominance of the conservative patriarchal culture.<sup>5</sup> Previous research on female Chechen suicide bombers and Pussy Riot has paid attention to a particular feature connected to the perception of these politically active women: their political agency was most often ignored by different audiences, including even feminists in the case of Pussy Riot.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See for example Rosalind Marsh, “Women in Contemporary Russia and the former Soviet Union”, in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism* ed. Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Yulia Gradszkova, Irina Sandomirskaja, and Nadezda Petrusenko, “Pussy Riot: Reflections on Receptions. Some Questions Concerning Public Reactions in Russia to the Pussy Riot’s Intervention and Trial,” *Baltic Worlds* Winter 2013, <http://balticworlds.com/reflections-on-receptions/?s=pussy%20riot>.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Veronika Shcheblanova, and Elena Yarskaya-Smirnova, “Explanations of female terrorism. Discourses about Chechen terrorists in the Russian mass media: ‘Easy girls’, ‘coarse women’ or ‘fighters’?” in *Gender Dynamics and Post-conflict Reconstruction*, ed. Christine Eifler and Ruth Seifert (Frankfurt am Maine: Peter Lang, 2009), 259-60; Alisa Stack, “Zombies versus black widows: Women as propaganda in the Chechen conflict,” in *Women, gender, and terrorism* ed. Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 83; Gradszkova, Sandomirskaja, and Petrusenko, “Pussy Riot”; Vikki Turbine, "What does the Pussy Riot case tell us about women's human rights in Russia?" *e-International Relations* 2013, <https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/80400/1/80400.pdf>; Johnson, “Pussy Riot,” 584, 588; Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "The Pussy Riot affair and Putin's démarche from sovereign democracy to sovereign morality," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 617, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.917075>; Valerie Sperling, “Russian feminist perspectives on Pussy Riot,” *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 592, 600, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.924490>;

In order to make sense of the political participation of these women, who clearly challenged the patriarchal gender norms, the history of female revolutionary radicalism was re-actualised by mnemonic actors with different political affiliations.<sup>7</sup> It has been observed by scholars that, despite their critical attitudes towards conservatism, even liberal and feminist groups in post-Soviet Russia sometimes make use of the patriarchal paradigm because it resonates with the population's cultural understanding.<sup>8</sup> That is why I focus on how female political agency was narrated by mnemonic actors with different political affiliations, and see whether this finding holds true even when it comes to portrayal of female revolutionary activism.

Political agency of revolutionary women was rationalized during the pre-revolutionary times by their supporters and conservatives as well as during the Soviet period by the ruling regime, which resulted in emergence of particular mnemonic patterns. In the chapter, I will see whether these mnemonic patterns were iterated or altered during the post-Soviet period. That will help me answer the central question about the nature of the post-Soviet conservative turn.

I analyse acts of remembering dealing with political agency of revolutionary women, created for mass consumption during a time when female political activism made headlines in post-Soviet Russia. The primary sources for my research are the following mnemonic signifiers: the liberal writer Boris Akunin's mystery novel *The State Councillor* (1999); the blockbuster films *A Rider Named Death* (2004) and *The State Councillor* (2005), directed respectively by Karen Shakhnazarov and Filipp Yankovsky to promote a pro-government agenda; and the *Narodovolki* graffiti series created by feminist artist Mikaela.

---

Valerie Sperling, *Sex, politics, and Putin: Political legitimacy in Russia* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 224; Jessica Mason, "Pussy Provocations: Feminist Protest and Anti-Feminist Resurgence in Russia," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 2, no.1 (2018): 8-10, <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc.201805>.

<sup>7</sup> Gradska, Sandomirskaja, and Petrusenko, "Pussy Riot".

<sup>8</sup> Sperling, *Sex, politics, and Putin*, 9, 27; Alek D. Epstein, "Confronting the socio-psychological environment: Feminist/political art protest in contemporary Russia from Pussy Riot to 'Spiritual Combat' exhibition," *Environment and Social Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2016), 14, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18063/ESP.2015.01.001>.

This research offers a new understanding of both the place occupied by Soviet mnemonic patterns in the post-Soviet context, and the cultural consequences of the conservative turn.

## Entangled Memory

In this chapter, I apply the ideas of German historian Gregor Feindt and his co-authors about the memory being *entangled*, in other words, plural and dynamic. According to this approach, memory is not a tangible phenomenon, and the starting point of analysis is interpretations by mnemonic actors, and not artefacts (*mnemonic signifiers*).<sup>9</sup> Because this approach gives an opportunity to take into account the different discourses and mnemonic patterns employed in each act of remembering, it deepens our understanding of the construction of memory in the public realm. According to Feindt et al., memory refers to acts of mental representation in which signs bring the past to the fore of consciousness. These acts of mental representation are phenomena of discourse that shape the objectifications of remembering, i.e., the cultural artefacts or *mnemonic signifiers*.<sup>10</sup>

The starting point of investigation of the acts of remembering is the *memory work* of the mnemonic actors connected to the *mnemonic signifiers*. The memory work will be reconstructed with the help of interviews given by these actors to different media, where they have explained intentions behind creation of the *mnemonic signifiers* as well as the meanings that they wanted to insert in their work. According to Feindt and his co-authors, every act of remembering has a synchronic and a diachronic dimension.<sup>11</sup> A *synchronic dimension*, on the one hand, refers to the subject position of a mnemonic actor. Acts of remembering insert a mnemonic actor into different social frames such as class, religion, family, or academia, which imply simultaneous existence of concurrent interpretations of the past.<sup>12</sup> This study is primarily interested in the mnemonic actors as representatives of different (liberal, pro-governmental conservative and feminist) ideologies that have had significance in post-

---

<sup>9</sup> Gregor Feindt et al., "Entangled memory: toward a third wave in memory studies," *History and Theory* 53, no.1 (2014): 26-7, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10693>

<sup>10</sup> Feindt et al., "Entangled memory," 28, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Feindt et al., "Entangled memory," 34-5.

<sup>12</sup> Feindt et al., "Entangled memory," 32.

Soviet Russia. The *synchronic dimension* of the act of remembering, on the other hand, refers to current specifically mnemonic and general patterns of interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

The *diachronic dimension*, in its turn, implies a dynamic relation between every act of remembering and changing mnemonic patterns. Every act of remembering stands simultaneously in a relation of either iteration or alteration to several of these mnemonic patterns.<sup>14</sup> In the remainder of this section, I will introduce the relevant patterns of interpretation in the case of female revolutionary activism.

The *synchronic dimension* of remembering consists of the following general patterns of interpretation: the contemporary patriarchal views of women and femininity introduced above, as well as perceptions of the political agency of female Chechen suicide bombers and Pussy Riot in Russia at the time when the mnemonic signifiers analysed in this chapter were created. As mentioned above, previous research pointed out that the general perception of political agency of Chechen female suicide bombers and Pussy Riot was characterized by silences and denial. Female Chechen suicide bombers were typically dubbed “Black Widows” in liberal Russian media, i.e., women who turned to terrorism to avenge husbands, fathers, or brothers killed in the conflict with the federal government. In mainstream pro-governmental media, they were typically characterised as victims of Chechen men who raped, drugged, and forced them to commit suicide attacks.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the Chechen women engaged in political terrorism were depicted as lacking any political agency of their own, but instead victimized by men from one or both sides of the conflict. Pussy Riot, in their turn, were seen as blasphemers by the conservatives and, after their arrest, as victims of the ruling regime by the opposition, including feminists.<sup>16</sup> In both cases, the feminist message of the women’s performance was neglected and their political agency was therefore denied.

The current mnemonic pattern of interpretation is the memory of the Russian Revolution in the Post-Soviet context. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was considered the foundation myth of the Soviet

---

<sup>13</sup> Feindt et al., “Entangled memory,” 35.

<sup>14</sup> Feindt et al., “Entangled memory,” 34-5.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Shcheblanova and Yarskaya-Smirnova, “Explanations of female terrorism,” 259-60; Stack, “Zombies versus black widows,” 83.

<sup>16</sup> Gradszkova, Sandomirskaja, and Petrusenko, “Pussy Riot”; Turbine, “The Pussy Riot case”; Sperling, “Russian feminist perspectives,” 600; Sharafutdinova, “The Pussy Riot affair,” 617; Mason, “Pussy Provocations.”

Union.<sup>17</sup> After disintegration of the USSR, during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, attitude towards the revolution changed drastically: the October Revolution was now considered a negative event that broke the historical development of Russia.<sup>18</sup> The October Revolution of 1917, however, has played an important role for the memory of the Russian left throughout the post-Soviet period due to its important role in the construction of their political identity.<sup>19</sup>

The changing memory of female revolutionary activism is the *diachronic dimension* of remembering. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the politicians with different political affiliations perceived revolutionary women patriarchally. Conservatives, who opposed the revolution, approached women as wives and mothers. As a result, participation in political activism was seen as anomalous, which was explained with the help of gendered narratives. One of the most typical of those narratives was the representation of revolutionary women as 'un-natural'.<sup>20</sup> Their political agency was in this way denied. Although liberals and revolutionaries highlighted the political agency of the revolutionary women, they created highly feminized portrayals of them in order to make it clear that despite their political activism female revolutionaries were 'natural' women.<sup>21</sup> Particular attention, in the narratives of sympathizers with revolutionary women, was devoted to their self-sacrifice for the cause, reminiscent of the patriarchal ideal regarding women's 'natural' obligation to sacrifice themselves for their families.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin lives! The Lenin cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Ma; London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 2-3; Thomas Sherlock, *Historical narratives in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia: destroying the settled past, creating an uncertain future* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8; Boris Kolonitskii, "Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution. New Challenges to Old Paradigms?" *History & Memory* 21, no. 2, (2009), 37-8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.2979/his.2009.21.2.34>; Torbakov, "Celebrating Red October," 7.

<sup>18</sup> Malinova, "The embarrassing centenary," 273, 276; Linchenko, and Anikin, "The political uses of the past," 4.

<sup>19</sup> See more about it in Linchenko and Anikin, "The political uses of the past," 5-8.

<sup>20</sup> Nadezda Petrusenko, "Female Terrorists: Political or Just Mad? Conservative Narratives in the historiography of early 20<sup>th</sup> century female terrorism in Russia," *Baltic Worlds X*, no. 4 (2017): 84-5, [http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Theme-Herstory-Revisionism-BW-4.2017-pp-39\\_98.pdf](http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Theme-Herstory-Revisionism-BW-4.2017-pp-39_98.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Nadezda Petrusenko, *Creating the revolutionary heroines: the case of female terrorists of the PSR (Russia, beginning of the 20th century)* (Stockholm: Stockholm university, 2017), 119-25, <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1159550/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Petrusenko, *Creating the revolutionary heroines*, 124, 226-45.

After the Revolution of 1917, images of revolutionary heroes and heroines were used as models of emulation for regular Soviet citizens and were popularized in historical books, movies, etc.<sup>23</sup> As well as before 1917, revolutionary women were introduced as individuals with agency, driven by revolutionary faith and, at the same time, as ‘natural’ women. Non-Bolshevik female revolutionaries were not praised so much as Bolsheviks due to their parties’ and organizations’ opposition to the ruling party. Only members of the People’s Will, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century revolutionary organization famous for terrorist attacks against government officials and the successful assassination of emperor Alexander II, were praised as heroes during the Soviet era. Although Bolsheviks traditionally opposed methods of revolutionary terrorism as inefficient, they portrayed members of the People’s Will as unwaveringly devoted to the cause of revolution.<sup>24</sup> The organization was perceived differently because of their position as the revolutionary predecessors of the Bolsheviks.<sup>25</sup> Among the revolutionary heroes of the People’s Will, particular attention was devoted to Sofia Lvovna Perovskaya (1853–1881), daughter of a governor-general of St. Petersburg, and a member of the People’s Will’s Executive Committee, who conducted preparations for assassination of Alexander II.<sup>26</sup> Although portrayals of the women of the People’s Will in popular culture were agentic, they were at the same time feminized, as well as portrayals of female revolutionaries created by their sympathizers before 1917.<sup>27</sup>

In the following sections, I will introduce the mnemonic actors, the mnemonic signifiers, and their connections to the history of female participation in revolutionary struggle and to the post-Soviet

---

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Jones Hemenway, “Mothers of Communists. Women Revolutionaries and the Construction of a Soviet Identity,” in *Gender and National Identity in twentieth-century Russian Culture*, ed. Helena Goscillo, and Andrea Lanoux (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 75-92; James Frank Goodwin, “The Afterlife of Terrorists: Commemorating the People’s Will in Early Soviet Russia,” in *Just Assassins: The Culture of Terrorism in Russia*, ed. Anthony Anemone (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 2010), 229-46.

<sup>24</sup> Goodwin, “The Afterlife of Terrorists,” 229-30.

<sup>25</sup> See more about it in Goodwin, “The Afterlife of Terrorists.”

<sup>26</sup> See more about Perovskaya’s life in Richard Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 148; Oleg Budnitsky, “Zhenshiny-Terroristki: Politika, Psikhologiya, Patologiya,” in *Zhenshiny-Terroristki v Rossii: Beskorystnye Ubiitsy*, ed. Oleg Budnitsky (Rostov-na-Donu: Fenix, 1996), 4.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Shcheblanova and Yarskaya-Smirnova, “Explanations of female terrorism,” 247-48.

female political activism. After that the representations of female political agency will be discussed in connection to the mnemonic actors' intentions regarding that issue.

### **Revolutionaries for the Sake of Love: A Liberal Perspective**

In 1999, a popular post-Soviet mystery writer, Boris Akunin (pseudonym of Grigory Chkhartishvili, 1956– ), published the detective novel, *The State Councillor*, his sixth book about the adventures of sleuth Erast Fandorin in pre-revolutionary Russia. Akunin is famous for his liberal political views and, as previous research has shown, these views have even influenced representations of Russian history and revolution in his novels about Fandorin.<sup>28</sup>

The main topic of *The State Councillor* is the struggle between the Russian imperial government and the revolutionary underground at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Akunin depicts a fictional revolutionary terrorist unit that attempts to kill key figures in the Russian government and the police force in order to incite a revolution. Fandorin investigates an assassination committed by the unit, and in the course of the investigation gets romantically involved with Esfir Litvinova, a young woman close to the revolutionary circles. Despite the fictional nature of the events and people that appear in the novel, it is easy to see that the plot was inspired by the history of the People's Will. The methods and culture of the terrorist unit resemble the essential features of that organization.<sup>29</sup> The life story and character of Iгла ('The Needle' in Russian), a female revolutionary that appears in *The State Councillor*, resemble those of Perovskaya, with whom Iгла is explicitly compared in the novel.<sup>30</sup> It is, therefore, possible to conclude that the story told in the book can be seen as an act of remembering the Russian revolutionary history.

In an interview given in connection with the release of a film based on *The State Councillor*, in 2005, Akunin defined political terrorism as the main topic of the novel, and explicitly connected his interest

---

<sup>28</sup> A.M. Lobin, "Istoriya i revolyutsiya v tvorchestve B. Akunina (na material tsikla romanov "Priklucheniya Erasta Fandorina")", *Vestnik Vyatskogo gosudarstvennogo gumanitarnogo universiteta* 10 (2014): 148-154.

<sup>29</sup> See more about the People's Will in Oleg Budnitsky, *Terrorism v rossijskom osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii: ideologiya, etika, psikhologiya (vtoraya polovina XIX – nachalo XX v.)* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Boris Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik* (Moscow: Zakharov, 1999), 209.



in the issue to the acts of terrorism that occurred during the Chechen Wars.<sup>31</sup> This is how Akunin approaches revolutionary terrorism and terrorists:

Unfortunately, this evil, this disease (political terrorism. – N.P.) is appealing. And it is appealing to many people of, so to say, very altruistic and good inner nature. These people are ready to sacrifice themselves, they commit terrible atrocities, and they think that they do it for the common good, and that is the tragedy! The book is about how there is no idea in the world that would be worth killing people and committing crimes for.<sup>32</sup>

Akunin's words show that, on one hand, his interpretation of revolutionary terrorism is an iteration of the post-Soviet mnemonic pattern, according to which revolution is seen as a negative event. On the other hand, Akunin's attitude towards revolutionaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as altruistic individuals ready to sacrifice themselves for the cause, is an iteration of the mnemonic pattern used in the Soviet Union to portray revolutionaries of the People's Will.

According to the Soviet mnemonic pattern, the revolutionaries, regardless of sex, were driven by the political beliefs that they cherished. Political beliefs initially seem to be the driving force behind the political activism of Igla, an ascetic revolutionary woman who participates in the terrorist unit and is sincerely devoted to the cause of revolution, and Esfir, a young woman close to the revolutionary circles. Even the political participation of Julie, a sex worker, who actively helps the terrorist unit in its enterprises, is rationalized by Grin, the leader of the unit, in a Marxist way: he considers Julie to be a victim of the vile social system, like any other working woman.<sup>33</sup>

However, later in the novel it becomes clear that revolutionary convictions were not the main driving force behind political activism of any of these women. Similar to Perovskaya, Igla fell in love with a fellow revolutionary who was then executed by the state. However, unlike Perovskaya, who left her privileged class due to her political convictions and met her love in the revolutionary ranks, Igla became involved in the revolutionary underground only after her fiancé had been executed.<sup>34</sup> In this way, Akunin alters the Soviet narrative of the model revolutionary life: Igla is portrayed as initially

---

<sup>31</sup> "Intervju Borisa Akunina, avtora romana "Statsky sovetnik," *Statsky sovetnik* website, accessed May 8, 2020, <http://statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=727>.

<sup>32</sup> "Intervju Borisa Akunina."

<sup>33</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 100.

<sup>34</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 209.

driven in her political activism by a personal reason, the loss of love. Esfir's political beliefs are depicted in *The State Councillor* as superficial: she speaks with phrases borrowed from revolutionary pamphlets and cites other people's opinions without making any judgements of her own.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Esfir becomes romantically involved with Fandorin, a person from the opposite political camp, which shows clearly that her private life is more important for her than the cause of revolution. Esfir's political beliefs are introduced as superficial because Akunin portrays her as a person who was manipulated into the revolutionary underground by a police informer specializing in radicalization of youths in order to later betray them to the police. Esfir is, thus, depicted in the novel as a potential victim of the fake revolutionary without political agency of her own. Julie, in her turn, at the end of the novel is revealed as a police agent who merely follows instructions of her secret lover, prince Pozharsky, who works for the Police Department. Julie explicitly states that she had no political interest in betraying the revolutionaries,<sup>36</sup> which implies that from the very beginning she didn't have any political agency of her own. Thus, in all the above-mentioned cases, Akunin alters the Soviet mnemonic pattern, because none of the women are politically motivated, as revolutionary heroines were represented during the Soviet times. The reason for this must be Akunin's generally negative attitude towards the revolution and revolutionary struggle, typical for the post-Soviet period.

The alterations to the Soviet narrative in Akunin's novel have much in common with the patterns used to explain the participation of Chechen women in suicide attacks during the conflict between insurgents and the federal government. The narrative of personal loss as the driving force behind political activism, employed in the case of Igla, is reminiscent of one of the most popular explanations of these women's political participation, offered by liberal media at the time *The State Councillor* was written. Esfir and Julie are introduced as being manipulated into the revolutionary underground by men, who possess real political agency, which is reminiscent of a more pro-governmental explanation for the political participation of Chechen women.

In addition, the alterations to the Soviet narrative in *The State Councillor* appear to be informed by ideas about proper femininity, typical for the post-Soviet times, according to which all women should be oriented towards family life and motherhood. Igla's motivation for political participation stems from her inability to be with the man she loved. Julie's activity as a revolutionary and *agent provocateur* is informed by her wish to be together with Pozharsky. In other words, the main driving

---

<sup>35</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 111, 152.

<sup>36</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 293-4.

force of both women is their frustrated wish to fulfil their ‘natural’ female duty. Even in the case of Esfir, who was not motivated by search for love in her political activism, love seems to be the main driving force, since her relationship with Fandorin is more important than her political convictions. This corresponds to findings of gender researcher Irina Savkina who, having analysed other books by Akunin, comes to the conclusion that he normally introduces women as driven in their actions exclusively by love, and, thus, reproduces patriarchal ideas about proper femininity.<sup>37</sup> This implies that although Akunin didn’t have any intention of making statements about ‘traditional values’ in *The State Councillor*, the novel, however, promotes a patriarchal view on proper femininity. The fact that a liberal writer explains the agency of revolutionary women with the help of patriarchal narratives confirms the findings of recent studies that patriarchal frames can be employed in post-Soviet Russia even by people with liberal political convictions.

### **‘Natural’ Women in the Wrong Place: A Pro-governmental View**

In 2004 and 2005, two different blockbuster historical films, dedicated to revolutionary terrorism in Late Imperial Russia, were produced at Mosfilm, the main Russian film studio. These films were *A Rider Named Death*, directed by Karen Shakhnazarov (1952– ), and *The State Councillor* directed by Filipp Yankovsky (1968– ). Both films have already been discussed by researchers as works promoting the ideology of Putin’s state.<sup>38</sup> Promotion of pro-government ideas and patriotism became an important task of the Russian film industry, revived in the late 1990s and early 2000s after years of stagnation. Historical blockbuster films like those analysed here, which are similar in form to Hollywood films, were an especially successful part of that campaign.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Irina Savkina, “‘Taste the Difference’: The Children’s Book for Boys and The Children’s Book for Girls in Boris Akunin’s ‘Genres’ Project,” *Russian Studies in Literature* 52, no. 2 (2016): 190-204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611975.2016.1243383>.

<sup>38</sup> For the opinion of a film critic see, for example, Elena Monastireva-Ansdell, quoted in Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia. Movies, Memory, and Patriotism* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 65. For scholarly opinion, see Robert Mulcahy, “A not-so-thrilling thriller: Adapting Boris Akunin’s *The State Counsellor*,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 7, no. 3 (2013): 332, [https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.7.3.311\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.7.3.311_1).

<sup>39</sup> See more about it in Norris, *Blockbuster History*, 12, 50.

The mnemonic actors have close connections to the ruling regime: Shakhnazarov was elected head of Mosfilm and thus became the most influential agent of the above-mentioned revival of the Russian film industry; Nikita Mikhalkov (1945– ), famous as an outspoken supporter of President Putin and his political ideology,<sup>40</sup> produced *The State Councillor* together with state-run Channel One.<sup>41</sup>

Both films were characterized by their creators as attempts to make a statement about Russian history and, at the same time, to shed light on contemporary issues (particularly, on the Chechen Wars).<sup>42</sup> It has been observed, by Stephen M. Norris, that *A Rider Named Death* appeared on screen 18 months after the attack at Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow, in October 2002, and, according to Shakhnazarov, offered a comment on the meaning of violence in the contemporary world.<sup>43</sup> Both films are based on literary works. *The State Councillor* is an adaptation of Akunin's mystery novel discussed above. Although Akunin is famous for his liberal political views, his novel was adapted to promote state patriotism because of the idealization of the Late Imperial Period, which corresponds to attempts by the Putin regime to place its roots in that period of Russian history.<sup>44</sup> The plot of the film is not very different from the plot of the book. *A Rider Named Death* is based on a novel, *The Pale Horse*, written in 1909 by Boris Savinkov (1879–1925), leader of the most famous revolutionary terrorist unit in Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Combat Organization of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (the PSR). The novel is based on real events connected to preparations of a political assassination by that unit, and the main characters resemble the real members of the Combat Organization. Particularly interesting is the only female member of the terrorist unit, Erna, whose portrayal as well as revolutionary work are reminiscent of Dora Vulfovna Brilliant (1880–1906)<sup>45</sup> of the Combat Organization.

---

<sup>40</sup> Norris, *Blockbuster History*, 88; Mulcahy, “A not-so-thrilling thriller”, 312. See more on Nikita Mikhalkov and his ideology in Mariëlle Wijermars, *Memory Politics in Contemporary Russia. Television, Cinema and the State* (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Mulcahy, “A not-so-thrilling thriller,” 318.

<sup>42</sup> Norris, *Blockbuster History*, 53; “Interviyu s Nikitoy Mikhalkovym, produserom kartiny “Statsky sovetnik,” *Statsky sovetnik* website, accessed May 8, 2020, <http://www.statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=682>; “Interviyu Borisa Akunina”; “Interviyu s Leonidom Vereschaginym, produserom filma “Statsky sovetnik,” *Statsky sovetnik* website, accessed May 8, 2020, <http://www.statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=753>.

<sup>43</sup> Norris, *Blockbuster History*, 50.

<sup>44</sup> Norris, *Blockbuster History*, 75.

<sup>45</sup> See more about Brilliant in Petrusenko, *Creating the revolutionary heroines*, 77-8.

The mnemonic actors made an effort to give historical credibility to their work not only by recreating the old Moscow, but also by making actresses look like their historical prototypes: Ksenia Rappoport, who plays Erna in *A Rider Named Death*, looks very much like Brilliant; Oksana Fandera, who plays Igla in *The State Councillor*, looks like the most famous portrait of Perovskaya (see Pictures 1, 2, 3, 4). Both films can be, thus, approached as acts of remembering of revolutionary history.



**Picture 1.** Ksenia Rappoport as Erna (<https://www.ul.kp.ru/photo/54977/986839/>)



**Picture 2.** Dora Brilliant ()



**Picture 3.** Oksana Fandera as Igla ([http://www.for-love.ru/f/fandera/oksana\\_fandera-08.jpg](http://www.for-love.ru/f/fandera/oksana_fandera-08.jpg))



**Picture 4.** Sofia Perovskaya (<https://homsk.com/upload/media/entries/2019-07/09/14260-11-b1caa1d66a930fa12fb1bed2a2c8331e.jpg>)

None of the mnemonic actors has spoken in interviews about any intended statements about ‘traditional values’. However, in an interview on the occasion of the release of *The State Councillor*, Mikhalkov expressed his understanding of Igla’s character in the following way: “There is unhappy love and some kind of loneliness there...”.<sup>46</sup> He sees Igla, first of all, as a woman unhappy in her personal life, an attitude that is clearly informed by patriarchal ideas of proper femininity. The Soviet mnemonic pattern of female revolutionary activism is not employed by Mikhalkov and it is hardly present in either films.

In general, women’s political agency is downplayed in the film *The State Councillor* in comparison with Akunin’s book. Igla and Julie are introduced in the novel as participating on equal terms with men in planning and executing different enterprises of the terrorist unit (both women come up with plans to smuggle money acquired during the expropriation, both actively participate in the smuggling).<sup>47</sup> In the film, however, these parts of the story are omitted, and in the scene when the male terrorists are planning the expropriation, Julie is shown as utterly bored, while Igla appears only in the background, clearly not participating in the planning. Given clear parallels between Igla and Perovskaya, such portrayal is very unlike the real-life leader of the People’s Will, who masterminded the assassination of emperor Alexander II.

Political beliefs of the revolutionary women are mentioned in neither of the films. Erna, in *A Rider Named Death*, never speaks about the cause she is serving or about her political beliefs. The only subject of Erna’s conversations is her love for George, the leader of the terrorist unit. Erna is represented as an agentic person only when she insists that she must throw a bomb and sacrifice herself for the cause. However, this agency has nothing to do with Erna’s political beliefs: she wants to sacrifice her life after she has been rejected by George and forgets about her request as soon as George shows her affection. This portrayal corresponds quite well to the portrayal of Erna in the novel, with one exception: Savinkov doesn’t characterise Erna’s participation in political terrorism as in any way connected to her personal life. According to *The Pale Horse*, Erna became a terrorist because she was ashamed to live.<sup>48</sup> In the revolutionary underground, where the novel was written, this was a very common explanation for participation in political terrorism for upper- and middle-

---

<sup>46</sup> ”Interviyu s Nikitoi Mikhalkovym.”

<sup>47</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 181-2.

<sup>48</sup> Boris Savinkov, “Kon bledny,” in *Zapiski terrorista. Avtobiograficheskaya proza* by Boris Savinkov (Moscow: Zakharov, 2002), 404.

class people who wanted to sacrifice their lives for the cause of revolution.<sup>49</sup> However, these explanations are not included in the film and, as a result, Erna is deprived of her political motivations and represented as a revolutionary for the sake of love.

When it comes to Igla, in *The State Councillor*, the only reminders in the film of her revolutionary heroic status are her modest behaviour and simple clothes. As mentioned earlier, Grin found reasonable explanations, in the novel, for Julie's participation in the revolutionary struggle by approaching her as any regular working woman. In the film, however, he asks Julie about the issue and openly says that he doesn't understand her revolutionary motives. The Marxist rationalization of Julie's political activism is, thus, absent from the film. Esfir is represented in the film as even less politically motivated in comparison to the novel. For example, the movie includes a scene, not part of the book, where Fandorin openly mocks Esfir's political convictions. She responds by leaving Fandorin and being enraged, but in the next scene Esfir comes back and behaves as if nothing has happened.

None of the female revolutionaries depicted in *A Rider Named Death* or *The State Councillor* are represented as politically motivated and agentic, in accordance with the Soviet mnemonic pattern. The explanations given for their political participation in the films, as well as in Akunin's book, stem from general patterns also used for explanations of the political participation of Chechen women. The theme of revenge as the main driving force is further highlighted in the case of Igla not only by the story of her tragic love, but even by her looks in the film. Akunin doesn't describe in detail in his novel the clothes that Igla wears. However, the mnemonic actors, who made the film, clearly put focus on her clothing by showing Igla exclusively in black dresses. In this way, she doesn't only behave like a typical 'Black Widow,' but even looks like one. Esfir, introduced throughout the book as cocky and characterized by Akunin as a "decisive young lady",<sup>50</sup> appears scared in the scene where she is about to be arrested, at the informer's apartment. In this way, the filmmakers highlight her status as a victim of manipulation, rescued by Fandorin.

---

<sup>49</sup> See James H. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men. Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1980), 408; Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 7, 175.

<sup>50</sup> Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik*, 73-7.



Alterations of the Soviet mnemonic pattern in both films were also connected to the conservative understanding of proper femininity. As in Akunin's book, all the women are represented as driven in their political activism by love. This narrative is further highlighted in *The State Councillor* in comparison to the book. According to Robert Mulcahy, the romance between Igla and Grin is focused in the film, while in the novel that relationship is downplayed.<sup>51</sup> This corresponds to Mikhalkov's vision, mentioned above, of Igla as, in the first place, a woman unhappy in her love life. Furthermore, in the scene of Igla's final confrontation with Pozharsky (played in the film by Mikhalkov himself), significantly changed from the book, Pozharsky asks Igla whether she did not want to have another kind of life. "I wanted. I wanted to get married," is Igla's answer, making her political activism seem a mere substitute for family life.

Both films, *A Rider Named Death* and *The State Councillor*, thus almost totally neglect the political agency of their female characters and focus on the more 'feminine' side of their lives, connected to their search for love. In other words, 'traditional values,' as concern women's roles in society, are reinforced in these films. Interestingly enough, unlike the pre-revolutionary conservatives, who most often approached politically active women as 'un-natural,' neither film perpetuates such representations. On the contrary, all female revolutionaries are represented as women with 'natural' female desires, who ended up in the wrong place because of personal circumstances.

### **Political Agents without Agency: A Feminist Perspective**

In September 2012, a graffiti series *Narodovolki* (the Women of the People's Will) was for the first time spray-painted on the streets of Moscow by feminist artist Mikaela (1983– ). Political graffiti developed in Russia as an art form in the second half of the 2000s. Graffiti comment on reality and are normally seen as a form of protest, since painting walls is considered to be an illegal act of vandalism if it is done in places that are not specifically permitted for such activities.<sup>52</sup> This art form has been actively used by contemporary Russian grassroots feminists, the young generation of women that started organizing themselves in a reaction to the state repression of feminist NGOs.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Mulcahy, "A not-so-thrilling thriller," 324.

<sup>52</sup> Lena Jonson, *Art and protest in Putin's Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 177-9.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, "Pussy Riot," 586-7; Sperling, *Sex, politics, and Putin*, 245-6, 252.

Mikaela is a representative of this new informal feminism. She has been a member of the Moscow Feminist Group (MFG), which in February 2012 formed a coalition with other grassroots feminist groups under the name Forum of Feminist Initiative (Forum Feministskaya Initsiativa).<sup>54</sup> In her interviews, Mikaela speaks critically about the patriarchal order in contemporary Russia,<sup>55</sup> and her art works often criticize patriarchal values and highlight issues of gender equality.

*Narodovolki* were painted for the first time approximately one month after the members of Pussy Riot received their harsh sentences for hooliganism. In an interview with *Ravnopravka*, Mikaela connected her work to the contemporary political protests, and spoke particularly about Ekaterina Samutsevich of Pussy Riot as a political activist, who was ready to sacrifice herself for her political beliefs the way the revolutionary activists depicted in *Narodovolki* did.<sup>56</sup> The graffiti series *Narodovolki* became famous soon after it was painted for the first time. The graffiti depicts six revolutionary women who were active in Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It can thus be approached as an act of remembering. The fame of *Narodovolki* resulted in a number of interviews, in which Mikaela explained, at length, the meaning of her work.

The Soviet mnemonic pattern is definitely a starting point in Mikaela's interpretation of her art work, since she sees the women depicted in *Narodovolki* as political activists.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Mikaela alters the mnemonic pattern since her work was not inspired by pre-revolutionary discourses or Soviet mnemonic patterns, but by Margaret Maxwell's historical book *Narodniki Women*.<sup>58</sup> Maxwell's

---

<sup>54</sup> "Mikaela: Interviyu o strit-art proekte "Narodovolki," *Ravnopravka*, accessed March 23, 2020, <http://ravnopravka.ru/2012/09/mikaela/>; Tanya Setsko, "Mikaela: Ya ochen dolgo shla k tomu, chtoby zanimatsya iskusstvom," *MAKEOUT*, accessed June 6, 2018, <https://makeout.by/2014/11/09/govorit-chestno-intervyu-s-mikaeloy.html>. See more about these grassroots organizations in Sperling, *Sex, politics, and Putin*, 245-51.

<sup>55</sup> See for example Setsko, "Mikaela"; Ekaterina Frolova, "Mikaela: 'V Rossii, govorya o sovremenno iskusstve, - pochti vsehkh mozhno upreknut v neprofessionalizme'," 365, accessed June 6, 2018, <http://365mag.ru/culture/mikae-la-nuzhno-sozdavat-gde-tol-ko-vozmozhno-feministskij-kontekst>. Peter Weibel interprets Mikaela's art as an attempt to encourage women to step out of the traditional female roles promoted in contemporary Russia, see Peter Weibel, *Global Activism. Art and Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 287.

<sup>56</sup> *Ravnopravka*, "Mikaela."

<sup>57</sup> *Ravnopravka*, "Mikaela."

<sup>58</sup> *Ravnopravka*, "Mikaela."

historical research on female revolutionaries in the Late Imperial Russia is written in the tradition of glorifying revolutionary terrorists as fighters against the autocratic regime, for freedom, and hence resembles the discourse of the revolutionary underground in its portrayal of revolutionary women. In a foreword to *Narodniki Women*, Tatyana Mamonova introduces the female revolutionaries depicted by Maxwell as forgotten heroines, who “stoutly maintained they were not feminists”, but, however, “their frustration at the humble roles assigned to them in the patriarchal society of tsarist times has feminist undertones”.<sup>59</sup> This attitude seems to have influenced Mikaela, since she spoke about the women’s political agency in the following way: the female revolutionaries managed to become successful politicians and showed “that women can write political articles, live in the underground for years and print illegal leaflets, recruit people, prepare bombs, shoot – and often do it more efficiently than men”.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, Mikaela’s approach to the political activism of the women depicted in *Narodovolki* is limited. She states that the women’s participation in revolutionary terrorism was not supposed to be a part of the project. The mnemonic actor highlights her negative attitude towards political violence but shows understanding of the women’s engagement in terrorism: “Narodovolki chose terrorism after they were subjected to repression for participating in legal political struggle”.<sup>61</sup> Their sufferings in the hands of the authorities, however, seem to have been important for the project. Mikaela defines the revolutionary women as political activists who made huge contributions to the revolutionary movement and were severely repressed by the state because of it.<sup>62</sup> Mikaela also states that by portraying the female revolutionaries, she wanted to show that women in politics have always been dangerous for the power of men.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Tatyana Mamonova, “Foreword,” in *Narodniki Women: Russian Women who sacrificed themselves for the Dream of Freedom* by Margaret Maxwell (Pergamon Press, 1990), vii.

<sup>60</sup> Ravnopravka, “Mikaela.”

<sup>61</sup> Ravnopravka, “Mikaela.”

<sup>62</sup> Ravnopravka, “Mikaela.”

<sup>63</sup> Ravnopravka, “Mikaela.”



Picture 5. Mikaela *Narodovolki* (<https://www.2do2go.ru/events/10509/sreda-rr-sovremennoe-lico-feminizma>)

The feminist interpretation and political agency that Mikaela attributes to the revolutionary women in her interviews, however, are absent from the mnemonic signifier. *Narodovolki* depicts six female Russian revolutionaries: Vera Zasulich (1849–1919), Perovskaya, Vera Figner (1852–1942), Ekaterina Breshkovskaya (1844–1934), all associated with the People’s Will, as well as Maria Spiridonova (1884–1941) and Irina Kakhovskaya (1887–1960) of the PSR and the Left SR, respectively. The graffiti series consist of stencil portraits of these women based on the most famous images of them. The portraits are accompanied by short texts that state the women’s names as well as their sentences (see Picture 5). Stress on the female self-sacrifice in connection to the revolutionary struggle, as shown above, was typical for the Soviet mnemonic pattern. However, the reasons for

these women's punishment by the state are absent from the graffiti: there is no information about the political activism that these revolutionaries engaged in. In this way Mikaela avoids mentioning their participation in political terrorism, which would make the graffiti series quite controversial and could hardly gain sympathy for her work. Even by mentioning the non-violent activities of the revolutionary women, Mikaela would risk losing the main part of her potential audience since, as mentioned above, the revolutionary past is a part of the problematic history of Russia, in the post-Soviet context. At the same time, by omitting this information, Mikaela presents revolutionary women as deprived of the political agency that she attributes to them in her interviews.

Absence of political activism, and focus on victimization, in Mikaela's work, are reminiscent of reactions to the Pussy Riot case by liberal and feminist activists in Russia, who chose to ignore Pussy Riot's feminist message and focus on their unjust treatment by the Russian state.<sup>64</sup> Jessica Mason observed that such reactions reinforce patriarchal views that women are more sympathetic as victims of unfair treatment than as political agents.<sup>65</sup> The same can be said about the depiction of revolutionary women created by Mikaela. In her work, the artist clearly uses the narrative of revolutionary heroism created in the revolutionary underground and later employed in the Soviet Union. However, she avoids mentioning female political agency and focuses on female self-sacrifice. In this way, the artist unwillingly contributed to the promotion of patriarchal 'traditional values' despite her feminist agenda. This further confirms the findings of the researchers who claim that patriarchal frames can be used even by feminists in post-Soviet Russia.

## Conclusions

At the centre of this chapter has been the question whether the revival of 'traditional values' in post-Soviet Russia and, particularly, patriarchal attitude towards women, can be seen as a conservative turn or as a continuation of the tendencies that have been present in Russia since pre-revolutionary times. Particularly, I focused on the re-actualization of history connected to female revolutionary activism by mnemonic actors with different political views in order to see a) whether they made use of the patriarchal paradigm and, b) whether they iterated or altered pre-revolutionary and Soviet mnemonic patterns. In the chapter, four acts of remembering by mnemonic actors with liberal, pro-

---

<sup>64</sup> Gradskova, Sandomirskaja, and Petrusenko, "Pussy Riot"; Sperling, "Russian feminist perspectives," 592, 600; Sperling, *Sex, politics, and Putin*, 224; Mason, "Pussy Provocations," 8-10.

<sup>65</sup> Mason, "Pussy Provocations," 9.

governmental conservative and feminist views, were analysed. These acts of remembering emerged in situations where patriarchal ideas of proper femininity were challenged by female political activism. In the course of analysis, the following results were acquired.

Being associated with the revolutionary history of Russia that the Russian population longs to forget, the Soviet mnemonic pattern has been altered by the post-Soviet mnemonic actors: none of them represents the revolutionary women as they were depicted during the Soviet times, as selfless fighters for freedom. The alterations made by both the liberal novelist and the conservative creators of blockbuster films correlate with the contemporary patriarchal view on women and political activism: they introduce the revolutionary women either as potential wives and mothers, who are politically active out of a desire, or frustrated desire, to fulfil their 'natural' duties; otherwise, they are represented as the manipulated victims of the real political agents, i.e., men. The only difference between the representations created by the conservative and liberal mnemonic actors is that the latter seem more eager to accept women as agentic. Thus, in both cases, the political agency of female revolutionaries was rationalized in accordance with the explanations given in contemporary instances of politically active women, such as the female Chechen insurgents.

The alterations to the Soviet mnemonic pattern made by the feminist mnemonic actor were linked to the feminist vision of the revolutionary women's political agency, which focusses on their activities and downplays the role of ideology. At the same time, the mnemonic signifier created by feminist artist Mikaela omitted totally the revolutionary women's political agency and concentrated on the female political activists as above all victims of the authoritarian state. This corresponds with feminist perceptions of contemporary female political activists Pussy Riot. However, like the conservative and liberal representations of female political agency, Mikaela's representation reinforces the pro-governmental, conservative vision of women as unfit for political agency and more sympathetic in the role of a victim.

Based on the analysis undertaken in this chapter, it becomes clear that the patriarchal views of women and their political agency are reinforced in post-Soviet Russia even by the mnemonic actors who do not support these views, which shows that conservatism plays an important role in the cultural life of the country. Although the patriarchal paradigm was used by liberals and socialists before the Revolution, as well as by Soviet ideologists in their portrayals of revolutionary women, none doubted the political agency of revolutionary women. The difference in the contemporary situation is that female political agency is denied and silenced even by liberal and feminist mnemonic actors.

In addition, the post-Soviet conservative views of female political agency are quite different from pre-revolutionary views. Post-Soviet conservatives, unlike their pre-revolutionary counterparts, do not see politically active women as ‘un-natural.’ On the contrary, they portray female revolutionaries as essentially ‘natural,’ from the patriarchal perspective, i.e., oriented towards family and motherhood. Such representations must have their origin in the post-Soviet pro-natalist family policy, according to which every woman is seen as a potential mother, able to fulfil her ‘natural’ female duties and thus help the state solve the ‘demographic crisis’.

The differences between contemporary discourses on female political activism, and the pre-revolutionary and Soviet discourses, discussed above, show clearly that the attitudes towards women have changed. On the one hand, conservatives have acquired a more instrumental attitude towards politically active women, seeing them as potential wives and mothers. On the other hand, non-conservatives have become more patriarchal in their attitudes towards women. This change of attitudes proves that a conservative turn has occurred in Russia.

### *References*

Akunin, Boris. *Statskii sovetnik*. Moscow: Zakharov, 1999.

Billington, James H. *Fire in the Minds of Men. Origins of the Revolutionary Faith*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1980.

Bluhm, Katharina and Martin Brand. “Traditional Values” Unleashed. The Ultraconservative Influence on Russian Family Policy”. In *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*, edited by Katharina Bluhm and Mihai Varga, 223-244. London; New York: Routledge, 2019.

Budnitsky, Oleg. *Terrorism v rossijskom osvoboditel’nom dvizhenii: ideologiya, etika, psikhologiya (vtoraya polovina XIX – nachalo XX v.)*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000.

Budnitsky, Oleg. “Zhenshiny-Terroristki: Politika, Psikhologiya, Patologiya”. In *Zhenshiny-Terroristki v Rossii: Beskorystnye Ubiitsy*, edited by Oleg Budnitsky, 3-28. Rostov-na-Donu: Fenix, 1996.

Epstein, Alek D. “Confronting the socio-psychological environment: Feminist/political art protest in contemporary Russia from Pussy Riot to ‘Spiritual Combat’ exhibition”, *Environment and Social Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2016): 13-24.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18063/ESP.2015.01.001>.

Feindt, Gregor, Félix Krawatzek, Daniela Mehler, Friedemann Pestel, and Rieke Trimçev, "Entangled memory: toward a third wave in memory studies", *History and Theory* 53, no.1 (2014): 24-44.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10693>

Frolova, Ekaterina. "Mikaela: "V Rossii, govorya o sovremenno iskusstve, - pocti vsekh možno upreknut v neprofessionalizme"". 365. Accessed June 6, 2018. <http://365mag.ru/culture/mikae-lanuzhno-sozdavat-gde-tol-ko-vozmozhno-feministskij-kontekst>

Geifman, Anna. *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Goodwin, James Frank. "The Afterlife of Terrorists: Commemorating the People's Will in Early Soviet Russia". In *Just Assassins: The Culture of Terrorism in Russia*, edited by Anthony Anemone, 229-246. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 2010).

Gradskova, Yulia. "Recovering traditions? Women, gender, and the authoritarianism of "traditional values" in Russia". *Baltic Worlds* 13, no. 1 (2020): 31-36.

[http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/BW\\_1\\_2020\\_pdf\\_FULLL.pdf](http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/BW_1_2020_pdf_FULLL.pdf)

Gradskova, Yulia, Irina Sandomirskaja, and Nadezda Petrusenko, "Pussy Riot: Reflections on Receptions. Some Questions Concerning Public Reactions in Russia to the Pussy Riot's Intervention and Trial", *Baltic Worlds*, Winter 2013.

<http://balticworlds.com/reflections-on-receptions/?s=pussy%20riot>

Johnson, Janet Elise. "Pussy Riot as a feminist project: Russia's gendered informal politics", *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 583-590.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.916667>

Jones Hemenway, Elizabeth. "Mothers of Communists. Women Revolutionaries and the Construction of a Soviet Identity". In *Gender and National Identity in twentieth-century Russian Culture*, edited by Helena Goscillo, and Andrea Lanoux, 75-92. (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

Jonson, Lena. *Art and protest in Putin's Russia*. New York: Routledge, 2015.



Kolonitskii, Boris "Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution. New Challenges to Old Paradigms?", *History & Memory* 21, no. 2, (2009): 34-59.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.2979/his.2009.21.2.34>

Linchenko, Andrei and Daniil Anikin, "The political uses of the past in modern Russia: the images of the October revolution 1917 in the politics of memory of Russian parties", *European Politics and Society*, (2019): 1-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2019.1645430>.

Lobin, A.M., "Istoriya i revolyutsiya v tvorchestve B. Akunina (na material tsikla romanov "Priklyucheniya Erasta Fandorina")", *Vestnik Vyatskogo gosudarstvennogo gumanitarnogo universiteta* 10 (2014): 148-154.

Malinova, Olga. "The embarrassing centenary: reinterpretation of the 1917 Revolution in the official historical narrative of post-Soviet Russia (1991–2017)". *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 2 (2018): 272-289.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1386639>.

Mamonova, Tatyana. "Foreword". In *Narodniki Women: Russian Women who sacrificed themselves for the Dream of Freedom* by Margaret Maxwell, vii-viii. Pergamon Press, 1990.

Marsh, Rosalind. "Women in Contemporary Russia and the former Soviet Union". In *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism* edited by Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller, 75-103. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.

Mason, Jessica "Pussy Provocations: Feminist Protest and Anti-Feminist Resurgence in Russia", *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc.201805>

Mulcahy, Robert. "A not-so-thrilling thriller: Adapting Boris Akunin's The State Counsellor". *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 7, no. 3 (2013): 311-335.  
[https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.7.3.311\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.7.3.311_1)

Norris, Stephen M. *Blockbuster History in the New Russia. Movies, Memory, and Patriotism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Petrusenko, Nadezda. *Creating the revolutionary heroines: the case of female terrorists of the PSR (Russia, beginning of the 20th century)*. Stockholm: Stockholm university, 2017.

<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1159550/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Petrusenko, Nadezda. "Female Terrorists: Political or Just Mad? Conservative Narratives in the historiography of early 20<sup>th</sup> century female terrorism in Russia". *Baltic Worlds X*, no. 4 (2017): 83–89.

[http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Theme-Herstory-Revisionism-BW-4.2017-pp-39\\_98.pdf](http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Theme-Herstory-Revisionism-BW-4.2017-pp-39_98.pdf).

Ravnopravka. "Mikaela: Interviyu o strit-art proekte "Narodovolki". Accessed March 23, 2020. <http://ravnopravka.ru/2012/09/mikaela/>.

Rendle, Matthew and Anna Lively. "Inspiring a 'fourth revolution'? The modern revolutionary tradition and the problems surrounding the commemoration of 1917 in 2017 in Russia". *Historical Research 90*, no. 247 (2017): 230-249.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12177>

Savinkov, Boris. "Kon bledny". In *Zapiski terrorista. Avtobiograficheskaya proza* by Boris Savinkov, 399-484. Moscow: Zakharov, 2002.

Savkina, Irina. "Taste the Difference" The Children's Book for Boys and The Children's Book for Girls in Boris Akunin's "Genres" Project". *Russian Studies in Literature 52*, no. 2 (2016): 190-204.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611975.2016.1243383>

Setsko, Tanya. "Mikaela: Ya ochen dolgo shla k tomu, chtoby zanimatsya iskusstvom". MAKEOUT. Accessed June 6, 2018. <https://makeout.by/2014/11/09/govorit-chestno-intervyu-s-mikaeloy.html>

Shcheblanova, Veronika and Elena Yarskaya-Smirnova. "Explanations of female terrorism. Discourses about Chechen terrorists in the Russian mass media: "Easy girls", "coarse women" or "fighters?". In *Gender Dynamics and Post-conflict Reconstruction*, edited by Christine Eifler and Ruth Seifert, 245-268. Frankfurt am Maine: Peter Lang, 2009.

Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. "The Pussy Riot affair and Putin's démarche from sovereign democracy to sovereign morality", *Nationalities Papers 42*, no. 4 (2014): 615-621.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.917075>

Sherlock, Thomas. *Historical narratives in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia: destroying the settled past, creating an uncertain future*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Sperling, Valerie. "Russian feminist perspectives on Pussy Riot", *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 591-603.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.924490>

Sperling, Valerie. *Sex, politics, and Putin: Political legitimacy in Russia*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Stack, Alisa "Zombies versus black widows: Women as propaganda in the Chechen conflict". In *Women, gender, and terrorism* edited by Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry, 83-95. Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011.

*Statsky sovetnik* website. "Interviju Borisa Akunina, avtora romana "Statsky sovetnik". Accessed May 8, 2020. <http://statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=727>.

*Statsky sovetnik* website. "Interviyu s Leonidom Vereschaginym, produserom filma "Statsky sovetnik". Accessed May 8, 2020. <http://www.statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=753>.

*Statsky sovetnik* website. "Interviyu s Nikitoy Mikhalkovym, produserom kartiny "Statsky sovetnik". Accessed May 8, 2020. <http://www.statskyfilm.ru/press/text.mhtml?PubID=682>

Stites, Richard. *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Torbakov, Igor. "Celebrating Red October: A Story of the Ten Anniversaries of the Russian Revolution, 1927–2017". *Scando-Slavica* 64, no. 1 (2018): 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00806765.2018.1447820>.

Tumarkin, Nina. *Lenin lives! The Lenin cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge, Ma; London: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Turbine, Vikki. "What does the Pussy Riot case tell us about women's human rights in Russia?", *e-International Relations* 2013.

<https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/80400/1/80400.pdf>

Weibel, Peter. *Global Activism. Art and Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014.

Wijermars, Mariëlle. *Memory Politics in Contemporary Russia. Television, Cinema and the State*. London; New York: Routledge, 2019.