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MOTHERHOOD AS THE SUBJECT-FORMING ELEMENT OF THE WOMAN REPRESENTED BY FEMINISM**

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Abstract: This paper is dedicated to defining and solving the problem of the subject in feminist discourse through analyzing the concept of motherhood and investigating how women are introduced to it. The problem derives from lack of a single utopian future without oppression in feminism, and, inherently, the absence of a fully actualized subject. Therefore, the need arises for a type of individual that is suitable for representational politics, one able to absorb potentially infinite numbers of actors while maintaining a feminist focus. The first part of the paper shows that previous feminist attempts to identify women have failed to meet the challenges of feminism, excluding certain circles of women, etc. The analysis is conducted on the basis of a generalized representation of the feminist subjects of essentialist and anti-essentialist tendencies. The second part of the work is devoted to the construction of a new subject based on motherhood, which is considered one of the subject-forming elements. This proposed foundation is then correlated with the critique of how women are introduced to motherhood and why it, as the basis of the feminist subject, might allow to form a new type of subject. Thus, previous understandings of femininity are critically viewed as implicit in motherhood, and are replaced by the concept of a subject in which motherhood is not a condition of its existence, but one of its fundamental elements.

Keywords: Feminist Subject, Woman, Feminism, Motherhood, Essentialism, Anti-Essentialism.

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TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF THE FEMINIST SUBJECT

Within the framework of patriarchal discourse, the concept of “woman” lacks definition and is used according to an internal intuition: women are seen as subordinate to men and in opposition to them. The origins of this intuition lie both in the unreflective borrowing of the division into females and males from the animal world and in the reproduction of the social myth of the “weak woman,” as described by Beauvoir (De Beauvoir, Malakhova et al., 1993). For a long time, femininity was thought of by analogy with

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masculinity and was correlated with it, so the subjectivity of women in patriarchal discourse was not articulated, which led to the perception of women as objects. Feminist discourse sought to move out of this approach and break it down by beginning to articulate the concept of “woman” and forming a stable subject.

Feminist discourse was first to position women as active subjects. In connection to the discussion on defining woman as a subject in feminism, it is customary to distinguish its essentialist and an anti-essentialist branches. Of course, it is inaccurate to speak of a pure division, since anti-essentialism also needs to imply some essence, and essentialism often refers to the “mobile” in the sense of a changing state. In this paper the terms essentialism and anti-essentialism will be used in their in its broadest sense—the problem of the division will be omitted as it is not an obstacle for further reasoning. The divide is necessary in order to describe existing feminist positions and to present their critique more clearly. For the purposes of this article, it will be considered that both positions reclaim female subjectivity, but construct it in relation to the patriarchal: either, as in the case of essentialism, through the presence of some shared experience acquired through patriarchal oppression, or through a pluralistic relation to the patriarchal, as in the case of anti-essentialism, which formulates female subjectivity as including the patriarchal experience to varying degrees.

Thus, feminist female subjectivity is determined by oppression from the patriarchy, thereby it always contains some essentialized idea of the oppression of the female subject.¹ Anti-essentialism, in this sense, tries not to universalize the experience of oppression, but to preserve it as some basis for the experience of the feminine. Along with this, the search continues for a concept that would aid women in reclaiming their femininity, that is, something that in a utopian feminist future would be preserved for the woman taken out of oppression. Thus, one can immediately say that the experience of patriarchal oppression is not determinative—in which case each successful step in the struggle for women’s rights would seem to reduce the level of femininity of those whom feminism seeks to represent.

Hence, the more substantial female subject must be embodied, on the one hand, in elements subject to patriarchal oppression and, on the other hand, in characteristics that will not be lost in overcoming oppression. The first and perhaps most obvious way of defining woman in this way was proposed by essentialist feminism.

¹This is necessary to preserve feminism as a movement that fights for women’s rights.

Frequently, a key characteristic of women in essentialist feminism is the biological difference from men. *Sex difference*² (Irigaray, 1993) allows for a “generalization” of the experience of all women through genetic, sexual, chromosomal and other differences. The often overly simplistic biological division³ specifies the relationship between “subject and discourse, subject and society.” (ibid.: 14) “The natural” becomes the basis of the essential: the male hunter and the female gatherer define a vector for attributing characteristics far from the obvious to each sex. Man is metaphorically expressed through time and self-perception, while woman — through space, signifying her maternal and fertile potential. *Binarities*, according to Luce Irigaray, always veil power and hierarchical relations. By introducing something third — a third gender, a discourse independent of male and female, a cyborg without gender, etc. — they are deconstructed and lose their universalist and total claims to represent the universal. However, the natural binary opposition remains the common essential experience for women.

Another explanation of the inherent difference between men and women in essentialist feminism is the division of culture into masculine and feminine as something natural, pre-discursive. Masculine culture is seen as a culture of violence and feminine as a that of silence (Gilligan & Snyder, Arkhipova, 2020: 35). The culture of violence is viewed by essentialist feminists through the lens of the public, whereas the culture of silence through the lens of the private. Thus, the masculine is closely associated with the accumulation of economic capital, with political inclusion (Friedan, 2010), with power and advantage in the liberal arts (Woolf, Akopyan, 2019: 21–26), with consciousness and with the publicity of one’s position (Hayden, Krasil’nikova, 2022). The feminine, on the other hand, is constructed as a culture of subjugation, as situated within the institution of family and motherhood, as a culture of the bodily, closed-off, and connected to the culture of the home — to the space of unpaid female labor and the multiplication of capitalism (Marton, 2000: 219–242). This is precisely how a woman became⁴ (De Beauvoir, Malakhova et al., 1993: 336), but, unlike the “becoming” in anti-essentialist feminism, which will be discussed later, this concept assumes that the one who becomes a woman is necessarily female. The overall experience that a woman must have, needs to have been determined

²The term is introduced by Luce Irigaray in the eponymous work.

³For example, such a division may not consider the experiences of intersex persons.

⁴Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first feminists to speak of gender as a construct, defending the thesis that women become women by cultural coercion.

by the experience that a man will have as a result of a willful decision. Thus, the experience gained immediately after birth is of necessity determined by the experience of the other.

The concept of woman in the framework of essentialist feminism is constructed on the assumption that all women have some common experience: biological or cultural; either a “natural” crystallized biological essence or a product of social and economic relations.

The ideas of essentialist feminists were quite productive in describing women until the rise of poststructuralist ideas. The biological “common experience” does not stand up to the criticism of intersectional feminism, which points to multiple identities affecting women’s experiences. Biological generalizations fail to account for the experiences of intersex persons and the experience of transgender dysphoria, which go against what is suggested by such generalizations. However, communicating some common cultural experiences to women proves even less stable.

The critique of essentialist feminism is based on the fact that this kind of experience excludes the colonial experience of women, including the experience of women of the Soviet period. The culture of silence, described above, and its foundations, including theoretical ones, are derived from the experience of female theorists who lived in what used to be colonizing countries (England, Spain, France), and their experience differs in many ways from that of women from colonial or less developed countries. The division is also irrelevant for women who lived in the USSR, where the institution of family and childbearing was taken out of the private realm and women’s political participation was observed at all levels of the government hierarchy.⁵ As a result, the contradictions between the ideas of essentialist feminism and the actual experience of women became the basis for the development of anti-essentialist ideas.

Within this new anti-essentialist framework, women theorists proposed a non-universalist conception of the feminine. They had sought to find a grounding of female subjectivity that, on the one hand, would represent the greatest number of women and, on the other hand, articulate a stable subject as required by representational politics.

⁵Naturally, different periods of development and degradation of women’s rights in the USSR are not to be ignored, including the abolition of the right to abortion and the return of the family institution to the status of a private one, but it is not enough to speak of the same cultural experience of women in the USSR and women in capitalist Western countries.

First, anti-essentialist feminists try to construct a definition of woman through her judicial and political status. That is, through over-body institutions that seem to accumulate women's experiences independently. In such a framework, the feminine and the masculine are seen as a "cage"⁶ of set practices, words, and legal statuses that prescribe someone to be called man or woman. To be a woman means to be in some status as a woman, relative to legislation or proto legislation. This definition of the feminine allows to get rid of the universalizing notion of patriarchy, which does not include the experience of matriarchal societies (Haraway, 2006).

Second, the feminine is defined through the violence of gender standards (Butler, Sarkisov, 2022: 24–25). Of course, it can be said that gender norms are violent a priori and that masculinity is determined in this way no less than femininity, but this division should be looked at spectrally and, in a sense, from an intersectional position. Thus, if there exists a hierarchy from the completely masculine to the absolutely feminine, then each step from one end of the spectrum to the other is an experience of gender violence. Those who experience this more intensely turn out to possess more "femininity" and vice versa. Thus, femininity turns out to be the perception of a set of violent norms based on gender oppression. Understanding gender oppression requires clarification on a theoretical level, but in this paper, I will attempt to utilize some of the cultural conventions discussed by anti-essentialist feminists. Those individuals who perceive a gendered violent experience at the same time receive a feminine experience (ibid.: 54–58). This definition allows for a hierarchy of oppression to be constructed that will not depend on identity and biological sex.

The concept of the feminine for anti-essentialist feminism demonstrates the desire of female theorists who support this approach to avoid attributing some common essence to all women, since the rejection of such an essence leads to the rejection of the concept of identity, and, consequently, to a reconstruction of "woman," a rejection of the submissive position.

In summary, both approaches turn out to be quite problematic: neither of them finds something that does not contain a contradiction — either a substantive feature of women is emphasized that excludes certain groups of women from feminist discourse, or the basis of women's subjectivity turns

⁶The concept of the cage as a collective image first appears in Paul Preciado's *Je suis le monstre qui vous parle*, but similar images (trap, snare, entrapment, jungle) are used in other works of anti-essentialist feminist theorists. For example, by Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, Teresa de Lauretis, Donna Haraway, and others.

out to be vulnerable to the feminist struggle of reducing oppression. The reason for these contradictions is absence of confidence in the notion that patriarchy will ever end—there seems not to be a unified utopian concept of what the ideal feminist future would be, because the vast variety of types of oppression and ways to combat them could be explored further. The fact remains, however, that oppression exists and the points of its application (biological, cultural, social, political, legal, etc.) have been used productively by feminists in defining female subjectivity. That said, I also find that elements of female subjectivity in essentialist and anti-essentialist feminism have something in common, and that is motherhood.

As discussed above, for essentialist feminists the definition of the feminine is based on attributing to women some essence that would be distinct from masculine. This turns out to be crucial for feminists, since the binary division into male and female by gender or cultural difference serves the reproductive purposes of the coercive reproduction system: a feminist definition of the feminine, based on some shared experience, necessarily includes a connection to the experience of motherhood, to reproduction, among others. Breaking the implicit connection between woman and motherhood would lead, they argue, to the destruction of gender as an attribute and the possibility of getting rid of the binary opposition of male-female.

The experience of motherhood envisioned by essentialist feminism includes not only the act of directly gestating, giving birth, and then raising a child, but also pre-experiential practices. These usually include behaviors that society replicates before a girl is of childbearing age. For example, within the medical discourse that constructs the “normality” of motherhood—medicine perceives women through the perspective of their role as mothers: medical examinations, representations of the body, and medical restrictions on women are often motivated by the issue of fertility (Shchurko, 2012: 69–90). Also, for instance, one can talk about the concept of “normative motherhood,” which is brought up in girls from childhood: playing mother-daughter games, reading fairy tales and watching cartoons in which childbirth takes place in a heterosexual registered marriage, reproduction in the media of ideas about the age at which a woman should give birth to a child and raise them, including criticism of “early” or “late” motherhood, etc.

Thus, the definition of femininity in the discourse of essentialist feminism reproduces patriarchal attitudes about a woman’s need to be able to carry, give birth to, and raise a child. The function of a woman as a mother is the most important, it defines the “essence” of the feminine both culturally and biologically, and becomes the basis for breaking binary oppositions, since

the elimination of the woman-mother connection implies a redefinition of the feminine in feminist and patriarchal discourses.⁷

Within the framework of anti-essentialist feminism, motherhood is not directly included in the definition of the feminine, as this position involves breaking the relation with the corporeal, the biological. Often this connection is consciously eliminated. The mother is brought closer to the concept of “maternal body,” which refers to the relation of inseparability and dependence of the infant on the mother, rather than indicating the subject (Kristeva, 1980: 135).

The juridical and political status that anti-essentialist feminists use as one possible definition of the feminine, in fact, not only defines the feminist subject, but also provides a referent for the women who possess these statuses. That is, by defining woman as that which feminism represents women, theorists seem to confirm the connection between the feminine and the maternal, for at the state, society, or community level in which status is established, the referent for status can often be a woman performing a reproductive role. Indirect references to this are found in law, mass media, propaganda, state medical policy, and others. Those institutions that are supported by the state and in which it represents a woman, become the main ones for the status bearers within this state, and thus the elimination of the status of the maternal function as the main female function does not happen.

Speaking about the definition of the “completely female” as the most exposed to gender-based violence, it is worth paying attention to the essence of the latter. Its expressions can be found particularly often in bodily harm, in the expropriation of women’s bodies (Aristarkhova, Zhayvoronok, 2017: 53). The female reproductive function is seen as a capacity that needs to be actualized. That is, the possession of the ability to give birth is not defined in terms defending its bearer’s right to use it at will, rather, it is understood as a function that must be “given away.” Hence, the sacrifice of motherhood is perceived not only as a woman’s own decision, but also as the result of gendered violence: the exceptional child-bearing potential is made irreplaceable, therefore it is necessary to commodify it or the knowledge of it.

Thus, within anti-essentialist feminism, a similar connection between the feminine and the maternal emerges, although not explicitly. The feminine

⁷Of course, this eradication of communication involves the transfer of “procreative responsibility” to another actor.

is defined through supra-bodily, supra-cultural aspects, but remains independent only as long as it is the subject of feminist representation; in “real” women, the connection seems implicit in the chosen aspects.

Therefore, both essentialist and anti-essentialist feminism do not sever the connection between the feminine and the maternal and, in defining women, are rooted in practices that perpetuate their statuses as either mothers or potential child-bearers. Interestingly, despite the absence of any fixed definition of the feminine in patriarchal discourse, aspects of this perception of the feminine also influence the feminist view of the subject.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF MOTHERHOOD: CONSTRUCTING A NEW TYPE OF FEMALE SUBJECT

The implicit incorporation of motherhood into the definition of the female subject, it seems to me, may be a substantive aspect of female subjectivity that, on the one hand, is linked to all the areas of female oppression articulated, and, on the other, is the basis for a stable female subject separated from the goal of the feminist movement, whatever it may be. The feminine subject is one that has the possibility of engaging with the real-maternal and has a pre-experience of the maternal.

The pre-experienced maternal and the real-maternal is the way in which women are generally introduced to motherhood. That is, motherhood comprises the actual status of woman as a mother and her potential parental status, which includes aspects of motherhood that are internalized before actually giving birth. At the same time, the experience of motherhood for a woman in the first status is different from that in the second status. Therefore, it is necessary to consider, first, how a woman is introduced to motherhood before her direct experience of it, along with the patriarchal attitudes it incorporates, and, second, how it differs from the actual status of a mother.

In analyzing how a woman’s pre-experience of motherhood is forced upon her, it is necessary to study approaches towards the body and the norms of gender socialization. The former shows that, often, the perception of women as mothers reduces “mother” to a space (Aristarkhova, Zhayvoronok, 2017: 27): the female body is mainly seen as a receptacle for the child. The latter approach showcases how women’s gender socialization presupposes motherhood as an “ethic of care” in the private domain, which is seen as a space of legitimate coercion to ensure the reproduction of the image of the perfect mother.

To begin with, let me consider the female bodily experience in the optics of the maternal. Here I include any experience related to the conceptualization of the female body as a potential maternal body. The very fact of such conceptualization refers to the understanding of the body as a project that must be reconciled with sociocultural ideals: the social system manifests itself in corporeality (Bordo, 2013: 83), which means that the woman's body is perceived as the body of an object within the patriarchal gaze. This perception emasculates and imposes bodily practices (Gol'man, 2018: 130) that, because the culture itself presents women as "more corporeal," realizes the social institutions of marriage, religion, and medicine by exercising control over women's bodies. In capitalist societies, this control is intensified because of the influence of a woman's reproductive age on her working capacity (Walby, 1990: 213–234).

The control of women's bodies based on their ability to bear a child shapes the "maternal destiny" of the body in the woman's consciousness and thus determines the patterns of her behavior, which reproduce the attitude about the need to fulfill the reproductive function. Sandra Bartky writes that even in societies in which there exists resistance to patriarchy, new forms of body domination are emerging that are based on a normative heterosexual femininity that must lead to the start of a family (Weitz, ed., 1989: 25–45). Thus, the current situation appears to be one of transforming norms for the female body, at the top of which the reproductive function always remains, hidden by cultural layers. For the woman, this again means mediated acceptance of the experience of preparing the body for motherhood.

The more cultural layers and the desire to hide the root cause of the objectification of women's bodies, the less obvious to women the practices of objectification of their bodies become. At the same time, the patterns of behavior associated with women are perceived and reproduced by them forcibly (De Beauvoir, Malakhova et al., 1993: 40). Thus, a woman, in relation to her body, turns out to be either in a situation of unreflective development in accordance with coercion, or in a situation of purposeful change based on the negation of patriarchal patterns and destabilization (Stankovskaya, 2010: 110). In the first case, there is a complete entrenchment of the woman in the matrix of reproductivity; in the second case, the woman's body is in the matrix only within the framework of state control over the body, since in the sphere of the private, the woman can arbitrarily change the boundaries of the body's transformation (*ibid.*: 110–114). Of course, transformations coming from the sense of self cannot rid women of the primary perception gained because of social experience of their bodies.

Thus, patriarchal social institutions implement practices aimed at tying the need to give birth to a woman's body and reproduce the practice of depriving women of their subjectivity. The consequence of such practices creates a woman's perception of her own body as a mother's body, an incubator body, and maintains it until the woman begins to reflexively relate to it, which, as it was found, can only happen in the sphere of the private, but not the public.

Now to consider the supra-bodily experience of providing the maternal. Here I include patterns of behavior, patterns of actions, "necessary" social experiences, etc., which patriarchal society postulates and replicates as feminine. It is important to note that culture develops corporeality at the symbolic level (Dondokova, 2019: 24–26), so the experience of corporeality cannot be considered without linking it to the cultural component of female subjectivity, again based on the feminist experience of representing women as subjects.

First, it is necessary to pay attention to the peculiarities of a person's identification as a woman. It turns out to be mainly parental, largely due to the girl's inclusion in the continued relationship with her mother. This inclusion determines the acquisition of female gender role and cultural superstructure in the form of imitation of the mother.⁸ This includes the imposed experience of motherhood: from the simplest forms, such as playing mother-daughter or baby-bon dolls, to more complex ones, such as the specifics of women's check-ups at health clinics. A doll for a girl is a child, and this experience should prepare the girl, if not to fulfill maternal duties, then at least to accept that her subjectivity is defined through motherhood and caring for offspring.

Second, women are often referred to as being "at the center of the reproductive sector of medicine" (Zdravomyslova & Temkina, eds., 2009: 7). This includes the influence of the bureaucratic organization of medicine, the limitation and lack of sexual education, the low effectiveness of contraceptive policy, and the monopoly of the power of medical knowledge (ibid.: 8–9). Because of the special position of women in the reproductive system of the state, the medical system, in fact, lacks not only the resources to correct the above problems, but also the motivation, since such policies would entail a decrease in fertility rates and a potential increase in women's reproductive autonomy (Fuko, Naumov, 1999). In this way, the process of medicalization

⁸That said, boys, as Chodorow writes, are not as included in the relationship with their father, due to upbringing under the sign of differentiation from others.

of motherhood turns out to apply not only to being directly under the supervision of doctors during pregnancy, but also in a pre-experienced form, which cannot but lead to another cultural layer for women, predetermining their attitude to motherhood and themselves as mothers.

Third, the notion of “perfect motherhood” (Mitsyuk, 2015: 22), which includes a generalized image of a good mother broadcasted through media and mass culture, must be mentioned. Such an image of a woman is closely connected with ideas about the moral revival of society (Lozinskiy, 1904: 49), with the sanctity of motherhood and with the culture of mother’s participation in the life of the child, conscious refusal of other ways of self-realization (Mitsyuk, 2015: 23–25). The reproduction of this image should lead to the consolidation in the woman’s consciousness of some basis of motherhood, which she should internalize and repeat. Such images typically do not include the negative experiences and complexities of motherhood, as their task is to illustrate a purely idealized experience that would be perceived unreflectively. Social threats of family destruction, childlessness, and women’s unhappiness become not one of many possible options for the development of a woman’s life after refusing to give birth, but an imminent fate (Zdravomyslova & Temkina, eds., 2009: 115).

Therefore, the supra-bodily experience of motherhood is related to three main directions. First, with the experience of female identification, which includes a patriarchal idea of the female gender role unreflexively imposed on girls. Second, with the special position of women in the medical system: inequality in information entrenches women in a state of ignorance of the truths and negative elements of motherhood. Third, with the image of mothers in culture, which often broadcasts a very limited view of motherhood (Sassatelli, 2011: 123–143).

Certainly, it can be said that all the above-mentioned representations of supra-cultural pre-experienced motherhood are undergoing changes in developed countries: the availability of information inspires critical thinking, skepticism, etc., but this experience is one of the main for women, as seen earlier.

To explain why patriarchal attitudes are incorporated into the bodily and supra-bodily practices described above, it makes sense to turn to the structures of patriarchy itself (Walby, 1990). Sylvia Walby identifies six interacting structures. For the purposes of this paper, I am interested in three of them: patriarchal cultural institutions, patriarchal sexual relations, and the patriarchal state. The patriarchal cultural institutions include medicine, family, various media, etc. These institutions reproduce patriarchal

attitudes and influence women's self-determination (Walby, 1990: 90–109). Among the ways of reproducing pre-experienced motherhood that have been examined; there is a certain amount of these patriarchal social institutions. They prescribe both bodily and supra-bodily patterns of behavior for women. Patriarchal sexual relations are manifested in “compulsory heterosexuality” and the reproduction of heterosexual relations (*ibid.*: 110–128). This structural element is also involved in the reproduction of the patriarchal in the pre-experienced motherhood granted to women: when one talks about the perception of the female body as an incubator and the female identification of herself through the mother figure. Finally, a patriarchal state that seeks to protect patriarchal interests and the threat of demographic crisis (*ibid.*: 151–173). State-controlled medicine, state propaganda and channels of power, and legislative restrictions on women's rights entrench in women's minds an idealized experience of motherhood that needs to be duplicated.

In fact, it seems that motherhood is much more contradictory than patriarchal conceptions of it. First, a woman's body, perceived through its reproductive function, “bends with nausea and malaise” (De Beauvoir, Malakhova et al., 1993: 281); for the first time, a woman's body exists not only for herself but also for another. Patriarchal structures prepare the woman only for the realization that, having reached fertility, she will have to reproduce the species, but do not declare that the woman loses part of the rights to her own body, which is now between the body of the subject and the body of the object. The woman loses the independence of her body in a way that she never had before the moment of motherhood, even while under the patriarchal designation of “incubator body.” With the bodily experience of motherhood often comes the fear of the biological act of childbirth, which together with the religious, moral, and legal attitudes that influence their decisions, comes into conflict, and brings the woman into a situation in which pregnancy is a drama experienced by the woman within herself (*ibid.*).

Speaking about the supra-body correlation between the pre-experience and the experience of motherhood, it is impossible not to consider that women who decided to experience motherhood have a certain cultural basis that determines their vision of being a mother. A purely patriarchal perception of the image of motherhood often leads a woman into a state of cognitive dissonance (Chodorow, Oreshin, 2006: 249), which results in non-acceptance of the child or maternity, and hence in a woman's rejection of what previously defined her as a woman. In the opposite case, with too strong a sense of unity between mother and child (*ibid.*: 250) that the

patriarchal structure offers, there is a lack of distance between them, and the woman turns the child into an object that becomes determinant in the formation of her subjectivity.⁹ Interactions with the child are, as it were, a continuation of the experience of motherhood, only manifested not in pregnancy, but in the process of upbringing and socialization of the child.

It turns out that in the pre-experienced form of motherhood, it is mythologized, and during its direct reception, the real image of the mother is uncovered. Motherhood is exposed, the veil of patriarchal attitudes is removed from it, hiding the ambiguity of the mother's position, the inaccuracy and falsity of the image created by patriarchy. The maternal role of women in the patriarchal framework finds its realization in caring for children and enjoying motherhood, while such perceptions are not fully reliable, and sometimes even false.

Furthermore, a woman having a maternal experience finds herself in a position that a structure based on the perception of the feminine as the negation of the masculine is unable to perceive, because the experience of motherhood cannot be described through the masculine. If patriarchy, which presents the female as an object, were successful in defining the experience of motherhood through the masculine, then the actual experience of motherhood would be virtually at odds with pre-experienced motherhood. Yet this seems not to be the case, and the gap between actual and pre-experienced motherhood is a lacuna that points to an exclusively non-patriarchal experience that cannot be understood in non-feminist terms and defined in a patriarchal framework because it does not fit as a binary opposition to any male experience.

For the feminist perspectives that were discussed at the beginning, it is the pre-experiential understanding of motherhood that is most important, yet it appears not to be enough to understand the realized phenomenon of motherhood. The fact that it also contains a pure non-patriarchal experience also ought to be considered when talking about female subjectivity.

Several insights may be gained from an understanding of female subjectivity. First, the female subject becomes maximally fluid: one might consider "absolute" motherhood as carrying a child and giving birth together with the assignment of the reproductive function to the woman — in that case, the function can be partially or completely transferred to the state and artificial

⁹This is manifested at the linguistic level in the form of "we-formulations:" "we have eaten," "we are going to bed" — this refers only to the child's actions, which is a symbolic indication of a woman's definition of herself as a mother.

reproduction, and society, as a result, becomes genderless,¹⁰ since the woman in the “absolute sense” will disappear. Or one can view motherhood as pure potency—the predisposition or ability to either bear or give birth to a child, or both, and also to raise it—in this sense, a multigender society may be achieved, in which femininity and masculinity are correlated in different proportions in each individual, depending on the amount of pre-experience and actual maternal experience. Second, it solves some of the problems of feminist theory—the resulting subject’s substance is stable, which fulfills the need for a feminist policy of representation, and, at the same time, it does not end with women gaining new privileges and escaping oppression.

It seems to me, therefore, that motherhood as a basis for the formation of the female subject is a rather productive idea within feminist discourse: on the one hand, it resolves the movement’s internal contradictions and, on the other hand, makes it possible to fight for women’s rights regardless of what utopian feminist future one branch or another imagines.

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¹⁰In the sense in which it is used by second wave feminists such as Shulamith Firestone and Alison Jagger.

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АНАСТАСИЯ АДАМОВА

СТУДЕНТКА

НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ «ВЫСШАЯ ШКОЛА ЭКОНОМИКИ» (МОСКВА);
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МАТЕРИНСТВО КАК СУБЪЕКТООБРАЗУЮЩИЙ ЭЛЕМЕНТ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИИ ЖЕНСКОГО В ФЕМИНИЗМЕ

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Аннотация: Работа посвящена постановке и решению проблемы субъекта в феминистском дискурсе через понятие материнского и того, как оно дано женщине. Проблема возникает из-за отсутствия в феминизме единого утопического будущего без угнетения, а значит, отсутствия полностью актуализированного субъекта. При этом нам необходим такой субъект, который бы был стабилен для репрезентативной политики и при этом вбирал бы в себя потенциально бесконечное количество субъектов, сохраняя при этом феминистскую направленность. В первой части работы показывается, что предыдущие попытки феминисток определить женщину не отвечали задачам феминизма, исключали определенный круг женщин и т. д. Анализ производится на основе обобщенного представления о феминистском субъекте эссенциалистского и антиэссенциалистского толка. Вторая часть работы посвящена конструированию нового объекта на основе материнства, которое рассматривается как субъектообразующий элемент. Далее предложенное основание соотносится с тем, как материнство дано женщине и почему оно, положенное в основу феминистского субъекта, позволяет нам сформировать субъекта нового типа. Так, предыдущие понимания женского и женскости критически рассматриваются как имплицитно имеющие в себе материнство, и на их место предлагается концепция субъекта, в котором которой материнство является выступает не одним из условий существования субъекта, но его основополагающим его элементом.

Ключевые слова: феминистский субъект, женщина, феминизм, материнство, эссенциализм, антиэссенциализм.

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