

## Opposing The Construction of Femininity in Неделя Как и Любой Другой by Natalya Baranskaya

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The media in Russia, particularly initiatives such as the Stakhanovite movement, has significantly contributed to promoting women's empowerment in Russia. Despite leaving a lasting influence, these efforts also resulted in unintentional outcomes, including the portrayal of women idealistically through propaganda that can be seen in one of Russian Literatures. This article delves into the construction of femininity in Natalya Baranskaya's novel *Неделя Как и Любой Другой* (1969) within the context of the Soviet state. The qualitative method is used for analysis with the aim to demonstrate that terms addressed to women in the Soviet Union were forms of propaganda rather than empowerment, aimed at shaping female characters according to the state's needs. The paper employs Gender and Nation theory by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997). The study reveals that slogans like "The Real Soviet Women" along with women-targeted questionnaires and state-imposed childbirth quotas, served as instruments employed by the government to manage women's reproductive choices, influence gender norms, and uphold patriarchal ideals. In conclusion, this critique serves as Baranskaya's opposition against heavily enforced patriarchal systems within the Soviet government.

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## Introduction

Soviet women, distinct from their Western counterparts, are celebrated for their unique traits and lifestyles. Throughout the era of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), spanning from 1922 to 1991, these women were ideally characterized by their feminine qualities, adeptly balancing professional responsibilities with domestic duties, all while demonstrating a profound commitment to peace (Peri, 2018). This perspective finds resonance in the views of Aleksandra Mikhailovna Kollontai, an influential Russian figure known as the Bolshevik feminist or Red Feminist Kollontai, who notably served as the sole woman in Lenin's new government and held the role of Minister of Social Welfare, played a pivotal role in advancing women's liberation during the communist rule. Through her advocacy within both public and private spheres, she emphasized the importance of independence, self-expression, and resistance against gender oppression

across various aspects of life (Elfira, 2005). The reason why the standard is different is because women in the USSR were significantly influenced by the ideology upheld by the Soviet government, which diverged from that of Western countries. This divergence resulted in distinct behaviors and social conditions for women throughout the Soviet Union's era from 1922 to 1991, with Marxism-Leninism serving as its foundational doctrine. This ideological framework, rooted in the revolutionary politics developed by Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), was solidified by V.I. Lenin (1870–1924) and further implemented under the leadership of J.V. Stalin (1879–1953). The doctrine of socialism in one country was central to Soviet policy, which paradoxically utilized the Communist International to regulate and control foreign communist parties in accordance with the political objectives of the USSR's domestic union policy (Morgan, 2015).

The October 1917 revolution, marking the birth of the Soviet state, aimed for radical societal reconstruction, aspiring to eliminate inequality and establish an egalitarian social order (Lapidus, 1978). However, Marxist parties in power, including the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, resisted feminist movements, perceiving them as conflicting with socialist principles (Sunny & Morgan, 2015). Ultimately, the Bolsheviks rose as the dominant revolutionary faction, governing the Soviet Union era.

The Soviet Union's departure from Western feminist ideals doesn't imply opposition to women's advancement but rather a unique approach to supporting women. Socialist states rejected Western liberal feminism, promoting equality while recognizing gender differences, emphasizing state intervention to mitigate women's reproductive biology's potential disadvantages (Ghodsee & Mead, 2018). This perspective influenced Russian women, including Aleksandra Mikhailovna Kollontai, a prominent Russian revolutionary, diplomat, and socialist feminist. According to Elfira (2005) she empowered women by advocating socialist feminist values, facilitating their political rights, and enabling independent involvement in the workforce.

These initiatives have had a lasting impact, extending beyond the USSR era, as women from former socialist countries continue to advocate for gender equality in various fields, benefiting from greater access to prestigious roles compared to their Western counterparts (Ghodsee & Mead, 2018). This underscores the enduring legacy of women's empowerment initiatives in shaping education and employment opportunities for Russian women.

The strides made in advancing Russian women, echoing through to today, underscore the success of socialist ideology in promoting gender equality. However, it's crucial to recognize that actions by the USSR government often led to unintended consequences, with women's interests not always prioritized. Unfortunately, this idealization was often driven by propaganda, sacrificing women's well-being for political ends. Women in Eastern Europe face the dual burden of formal employment and household chores, exacerbated by inadequate male participation in domestic responsibilities (Ghodsee & Mead, 2018 and Young, Rap, Kruks, 1989).

Following the collapse of communism, women faced significant challenges, with rising poverty and inequality. This period saw the resurgence of traditional gender roles, promoted by political factions, leading to refeminization and remasculinization (Johnson & Robinson, 2006). "New Russian" men sought to reclaim their former roles, aligning with women's aspirations for traditional gender dynamics, known as "new traditionalism" (Elfira, 2007). This reflects a societal longing for familiar norms amid post-communist upheaval.

Natalya Baranskaya's novel *Неделя Как и Любой Другой* or *A Week Like Any Other* (1969) vividly depicts the impact of Stakhanovite propaganda on Russian women. The protagonist, Olga, faces the pressure of conforming to the ideal of the "The Real Soviet woman" balancing her career with family duties. Despite recognizing the toll on her well-being, societal norms glorify her struggles, leaving her feeling trapped and exhausted. This narrative highlights the weight of societal expectations, and the challenges individuals face in juggling conflicting roles.

Baranskaya's portrayal resonates with many women, reflecting their experiences during the Soviet era and prompting scholars to view her works as critiques of women's injustices. Despite being labeled as a feminist author by some, Baranskaya herself rejects this classification, asserting that her stories explore life's struggles and brilliance distinctively (McLaughlin, 1989). This divergence between scholarly interpretations and the author's perspective invites critical examination of gender, politics, and identity within her literary oeuvre.

Previous studies, including analyses by Elfira (2002) and Widyastuti (2015) have explored Baranskaya's novel from a feminist perspective, highlighting the double burden experienced by Soviet women in both workplace and domestic roles. These analyses underscore the persistence of gender inequality within Soviet society, despite purported ideals of equality. Additionally, Tutoveanu (2010) discusses how Soviet propaganda and art, exemplified by iconic sculptures like "worker and collective farm woman" by Vera Mukhina, shaped women's identities to align with political discourse. These studies collectively illuminate the complexities of women's experiences in the USSR, showcasing the intersection of gender, politics, and propaganda in shaping societal norms and perceptions (Elfira, 2002., Widyastuti, 2015., Tutoveanu, 2010). Baranskaya's literary work provides a nuanced exploration of these dynamics, offering insights into the challenges and aspirations of Soviet women within a patriarchal society. In contrast to prior research, this study seeks to elucidate how Baranskaya's literary works challenge the notion of the "The Real Soviet woman" purportedly empowering women, revealing instead that the idealization of Soviet women serves as a form of propaganda, rather than genuine empowerment.

This analysis will be linked with theoretical concepts such as social construction and gender and nation by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) to illustrate the state's influence on women's roles, providing insights into criticisms and ideologies presented in the novel.

Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that one is not born but rather becomes a woman underscores the role of social construction in shaping gender identity (de Beauvoir, 1953). This social construction then molds women and men to have different gender roles in society. Gayle Rubin further elaborates on how patriarchal societies construct masculine and feminine identities based on physiological differences, empowering men, and disempowering women (Rubin, 1975). In this process of shaping gender roles, the state also participates in constructing femininity due to its own interests in maintaining national continuity. Women are exploited by utilizing them as one source of power for reproducing human resources. Nira Yuval-Davis, in the book *Gender and Nations* (1997), highlights the state's exploitation of women's reproductive capabilities to serve national interests, wherein a woman's body is regulated by the state. According to Davis (1997) women, similar to men, belong to the collective entity. However, distinct rules and regulations are always in place that pertain specifically to women based on their gender. This underscores the patriarchal system's dominance and exploitation of women (Walby, 1990).

The objectives of this study are to investigate the concept of femininity as perceived by Russian society during the era of the USSR and explore how, in the aftermath of the USSR's collapse, many women from the former Soviet Union sought to reclaim a less burdensome form of femininity.

The discussion is divided into two coherent sections. The first section explores the construction of femininity in Soviet women, focusing on the portrayal through the slogan "The Real Soviet Women" and in the second section, the analysis delves into the state's involvement in shaping gender roles and upholding patriarchal values, focusing on the state's involvement in shaping gender and maintaining patriarchal values.

## Methods

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative. This method produces descriptive data in the form of written or verbal descriptions of observed people and behaviors (Bogdan & Taylor, 1949). With this approach, words can be examined and used as a tool for learning from the experienced situation (Creswell, 1998).

The data source utilized is *Неделя как неделя* or *A Week Like Any Other* (1969) by Natalya Baranskaya. To analyze the novel, researchers applied three processes such as collecting data consisting of sentences related to the oppressed condition of Russian women due to the existing government system, data analysis, and discussion of the data analysis. In the data collection phase, researchers employed close reading as a method to extract scenes considered as criticism toward the Soviet Union's government. The results of the data analysis will then be linked with theoretical concepts such as social construction and Gender and Nation by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) to illustrate how the state influences women's roles.

## Results and Discussion

The novel *Неделя как неделя* or *A Week Like Any Other* portrays the daily routine of a woman named Olga in the Soviet Union, depicting her experiences in both public and private spheres from Monday to Sunday. Throughout the narrative, certain irregularities in Olga's life are highlighted. Chapters one and two delve into two specific irregularities: the enforced concept of femininity imposed on women in the Soviet Union, and the utilization of the slogan "The Real Soviet Women" as a means of controlling women's bodies.

### **The Construction of Femininity of Women in The Soviet Union through The Slogan of The Real Soviet Women, Questionnaires for Women, and State-mandated Quotas on Childbirth**

In this literary work, women in the Soviet Union enjoy privileges as they are granted freedom to participate in the public sphere by pursuing education and employment. Olga is portrayed as having the opportunity to pursue higher education and work as an ambitious researcher alongside other women, demonstrating that the Soviet Union did not discriminate against women who had the will and ability to actualize themselves. According to Ghodsee & Mead (2018), the socialist government actively encouraged women and girls to study science and technology, being highly successful in identifying and training their most talented women in technical fields.

*"Между прочим, я тоже с высшим образованием и такой же специалист, как и ты..."* (Baranskaya, 1969: 35).

"By the way, I also have a higher education and am just as much a specialist as you..." (Baranskaya, 1969: 35).

The phrase I also have a higher education and am just as much a specialist highlights equality in education and profession. However, there is an underlying ambiguity regarding the internalized values of femininity within Soviet families, resulting in unequal domestic responsibilities despite equal professional status between men and women. This inequality is emphasized through sarcasm, illustrating that while Dima enjoys relaxation time, Olga still must attend to her tiredness and take care of their child. This unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities reinforces traditional gender roles and undermines the true equality that should exist between men and women in Soviet society.

In addition to care responsibilities which remain within the private realm, femininity of women is also measured by their ability to reproduce. In the public sphere, the state expects women to continue bearing children. This can be observed in how the state is keenly interested in the situation of women who have children and work. Olga is asked to fill out the questionnaire *Анкета для женщин* or Questionnaire for Women by the demographer because at that time, many women were choosing not to have children. According to Olga's friend Luska, the ideal woman is one who has several children. Here is Luska's statement regarding the questionnaire.

*"Анкета — это теперь модно. В общем, они надеются выяснить важный вопрос: почему женщины не хотят рожать?"* (Baranskaya, 1969: 5).

"The questionnaire is now trendy. In general, they hope to find out an important question: why don't women want to give birth?" (Baranskaya, 1969: 5).

*"Только называли это «недостаточные темпы прироста населения». Мы вот с тобой даже не воспроизводим населения. Каждая пара должна родить двоих или, кажется, даже троих, а у нас только по одному... (Тут Люся вспоминает, что беленькая — «мать-одиночка».) Тебе хорошо — с тебя не посмеют спрашивать. Оле тоже хорошо — она план выполнила. А я? Мне вот дадут план, и тогда — прощай моя диссертация!"* (Baranskaya, 1969: 5).

"They only called it 'insufficient population growth rates. You and I aren't even reproducing. Each couple should have two children or, it seems, even three, but we only have one each. (Here Lusya remembers that being fair skinned makes her a 'single mother'). You're fine - no one will dare to ask you. Olga's fine too, she met the quota. But me? They'll give me a quota, and then goodbye to my dissertation!" (Baranskaya, 1969:5).

The quotation reveals the Soviet Union's perspective that women's primary role was to bear children, with the state seeking to reinforce this through questionnaires. Acting as a patriarchal agent, the state perpetuated traditional gender norms by emphasizing motherhood as integral to femininity. This aligns with Rubin's assertion. According to Rubin in Tong (2017) that patriarchal societies normalize cultural constructions, defining normalcy based on adherence to gender roles. Lusya's statement reinforces this notion, suggesting that women who conform to societal expectations, like Olga and Lusya, are considered successful, while those who don't risk career and academic repercussions. Despite superficial support for women's careers and education, the Soviet Union prioritized women's roles as mothers, valuing traditional femininity over professional or educational achievements.



Married women like Olga eventually face a dilemma where they can pursue their aspirations, but these aspirations will always be accompanied by the consequence of a double burden because men cannot be involved in household chores, and the state expects women to continue having children. This can be seen from the quote where Olga's husband Dima does not appreciate Olga's achievements and is indifferent when Olga expresses frustration due to exhaustion from her roles. Referring to the context of the Soviet Union, the double burden indeed became a primary issue for women at that time. Ghodsee & Mead (2018) stated that Eastern European women struggled under the double burden of formal employment and household chores. Here is a quote illustrating Olga's frustration due to the double burden.

*“я устала, понимаешь ты, устала!..” “Мне становится ужасно жаль себя”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 36).

*“I'm tired, you know, tired!..” “I feel terribly sorry for myself”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 36).

The unbearable fatigue indicates that the expectations on women are excessively high, placing them in a position where they are required to balance both masculine and feminine roles. She has come to realize and critique that the life she is living cannot be balanced anymore. Therefore, the only choice she has is to carry out everything to the best of her ability, even if it is not optimal. This demonstrates the oppressive nature of societal expectations and the construction of femininity, where women are expected to fulfill traditional roles as caregivers and reproducers, often at the expense of their own personal and professional fulfillment. This phenomenon is common in the Soviet Union, and even individuals facing similar conditions are considered "successful" because they play an important role in advancing the state. This can be seen from the slogan uttered by Marya Matveyevna (M.M), praising Olga as a 'The Real Soviet Woman' because she is a strong figure who can pursue studies, work, and marriage simultaneously. In this regard, “the real Soviet woman” is one who can meet the expectations of both the family and the state. According to Ruthchild (1983), Soviet women must be everything, serving as the physical and spiritual creators of the future world. The following quote demonstrates that the slogan The Real Soviet Woman becomes an effective tool to make women proud of their situation and endure challenging circumstances.

*“Не выдумывайте, Оля. Вам надо гордиться тем, что вы хорошая мать, да еще и хорошая производственница. Вы настоящая советская женщина!”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 8).

*“Olya, stop imagining things. You should be proud that you are a good mother and at the same time a good worker. You are a real Soviet woman!”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 8).

*“Эм-Эм говорит, а я спрашиваю — про себя, конечно, — почему мне надо гордиться; такая ли уж я хорошая мать; стоит ли меня хвалить как производственницу и что входит в понятие «настоящая советская женщина»?! Бесполезно спрашивать об этом Марью Матвеевну — она не ответит”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 8).

*“M.M. speaks, and I ask, silently, of course, why should I be proud? Am I really such a good mother, is it right to praise me as a worker, and what exactly does the concept of “a real Soviet woman” entail?! It is useless to ask Marya Matveyevna this. She won't answer”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 8).

The term “the real Soviet women” was not coined by M.M herself. As mentioned earlier, it is a slogan she obtained from Soviet media to make women feel that they have become complete women and are useful to their country in the movement known as the Stakhanovite movement. The Stakhanovite movement is a state initiative that encourages women to embody the ideal woman who can both work and take care of her family effectively. Women also have secondary obligations: being active in the party or trade union, being excellent homemakers, and being attractive (Ibid). Once again, the state plays a role in perpetuating gender roles that benefit the state. Through gender roles, patriarchal society can easily access and control women. "Because male control in both the public and private spheres creates patriarchy, male domination must be eradicated if women are to gain freedom. To eliminate male domination, women and men must abolish gender, especially the status, roles, and sexual temperaments as constructed under patriarchy (Millet in Tong, 2017). Therefore, the elimination of gender roles is something that the Soviet Union sought to avoid as much as possible to maintain patriarchal control over women.

In the final part of the story, Dima tries to restore Olga to her traditional role as a homemaker and suggests that he will work more to cover expenses. However, Olga rejects this suggestion and decides to continue working despite exhaustion. This refusal demonstrates Olga's resistance to assigned femininity and serves as a strategy against male domination over women. The key for women is to recognize their capability beyond passivity and develop traits that reflect their individual personalities (Rubin in Tong, 2017). She continues with her job unaffected by Dima's proposal.

*“Вот и кончилась еще одна неделя, предпоследняя неделя этого года”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 43).

*“And yet another week has ended, the penultimate week of this year”* (Baranskaya, 1969: 43).

The conclusion of the story subtly suggests that Olga's journey does not culminate in a conventional "happy ending" typically associated with narratives. Despite her resilience and strength, she is depicted as tired, indicating that the burdens she bears remain present. However, this portrayal also underscores Olga's endurance and refusal to succumb entirely to societal pressures. Despite the challenges she faces, Olga maintains her position and agency, demonstrating her inner strength and resilience. This depiction challenges traditional gender norms that portray women as submissive or easily controlled by male counterparts. Dima's inability to exert significant control over Olga further reinforces her autonomy and independence, suggesting that she refuses to be confined by societal expectations or male dominance. Thus, while Olga's journey may not end with a conventional notion of happiness, her resilience and ability to assert herself against external pressures offer a powerful portrayal of female strength and agency in the face of adversity.

The analysis of Olga's experiences, starting from the questionnaire and extending to the concept of the The Real Soviet Woman reveals the extent of her powerlessness within the Soviet governance system. The state plays a significant role in shaping women's femininity, dictating their roles and behaviors in society. Rather than empowering women as promised by socialist ideologies, the state instrumentalized them for the benefit of the nation, reinforcing traditional gender norms and patriarchal values. This highlights a discrepancy between the state's rhetoric of equality and its actions, ultimately perpetuating gender inequality and subjugation. In the subsequent chapter, this article will delve deeper into the mechanisms through which the state shapes gender

roles and perpetuates patriarchal values, shedding light on the complexities of women's experiences within the Soviet Union.

### **The State's Involvement in Shaping Gender and Maintaining Patriarchal Values**

Overall, this narrative illustrates that Olga, as a *настоящая советская женщина* or “the real Soviet woman” finds herself in an ambivalent position. On one hand, she is valued for her body's contribution to the nation's progress (being able to bear many children), yet on the other hand, her existence is not deemed significant as Olga's well-being ranks secondary (due to the double burden that leaves her exhausted). This ambivalence suggests that the Soviet Union merely utilizes women as biological instruments to fulfill the state's interests. The Soviet Union is not ready to provide genuine equality as promised by the Bolshevik Party, which promoted that socialist communism could solve the issue of the double burden prevalent in capitalist societies. Socialism proposes transferring household chores to communal facilities, allowing women to participate equally in the public sphere by relieving them from domestic duties, thereby fostering gender equality in education, income, and personal development (Goldman, 1993). In essence, the state's objective remains consistent regardless of the ideology it espouses, which is to fully construct women possible to serve the interests of patriarchal society. Women often hold contradictory roles within communities, symbolizing unity and honor yet facing exclusion; they're often objectified rather than recognized as active participants in politics, and societal norms often confine them to a position of limited power through strict definitions of proper womanhood (Davis, 1997). In Olga's context, the ideal woman is one who gives birth to several children. If the state genuinely cared about Olga's well-being, she should have found satisfaction and relief in living a life aligned with the state's supposed “good” intentions. Instead, this story demonstrates that Olga suffers. In other words, Olga is truly an object of the state, and she is “the other.” The reason Olga is seen as an object here and cannot be considered equal to men is that there are no policies established by the institution, she works for to provide relief for a working mother. If there were clear policies that could serve as a basis for asserting her rights as a female worker, Olga should have been able to demand flexibility so that she could balance her household duties more evenly. She would not always be late and ultimately could pursue her career like her other female friends who have not yet started families.

This literary work underscores the extent of state control over women's bodies through two distinct mechanisms: the distribution of the “Questionnaire for Women” and Lusya's statement regarding the state's expectations for childbirth. Both instances highlight the Soviet Union's vested interests in regulating childbirth, shifting it from an individual to a communal concern. The questionnaire and state-imposed childbirth quotas reflect a disregard for women's autonomy, treating them as vessels for fulfilling national objectives rather than as individuals with agency. Davis (1997) notes that such pressure on women's reproductive choices often stems from their perceived role within a national group, reinforcing the dominance of men's positions and undermining women's autonomy in matters of reproduction. Thus, the state's intervention in women's reproductive decisions serves as a manifestation of patriarchal control, relegating women to subordinate positions within society.

The state's intervention becomes apparent through the utilization of propaganda, exemplified by the slogan “The Real Soviet Woman” which serves to reinforce traditional gender roles. When Olga voices her grievances about her dual responsibilities, her friend



M.M responds by invoking this slogan, portraying Olga as the epitome of the ideal woman. However, this ideal is not M.M's invention but rather a product of mass media campaigns like the Stakhanovite movement. This movement aimed to imbue women with productivity while emphasizing their femininity. Consequently, the state shapes women according to its needs, emphasizing their 'natural' role in childbirth, thereby perpetuating traditional gender roles. This reinforces women's lower social status compared to men, as their 'natural' roles do not afford them advantageous positions (Davis, 2017).

From the analysis of *Анкета для женщин* or Questionnaire for Women the state's pronouncement on childbirth quotas, and the notion of the "The Real Soviet Woman" it becomes evident that the Soviet Union grapples with a looming crisis of motherhood, which poses a significant concern for state authorities. This crisis arises from the realization that the pool of potential mothers, a valuable resource for the nation, is diminishing. Davis (1997) underscores the importance of the "people as power" notion, stressing that a nation's vitality relies on fostering and enlarging its population, a pivotal component of its interests, warning that inadequately tackling this issue could leave the state susceptible and weaken its influence; thus, the sustained growth of the nation in the future is contingent upon harnessing women's reproductive capabilities to fulfill nationalist, civilian, and military requirements, encompassing labor, colonization, and military enlistment.

The "motherhood" crisis occurring at that time can also be viewed as a disaster. According to Davis (1997), the state's encouragement for women to have more children is a national strategy to address a national disaster. In the Soviet Union, pro-birth policies were a means to tackle the issue of declining population numbers following the revolution and civil war (Rilley in Nira-Yuval Davis, 1981).

From the discussions, it is evident that this ambivalence arises because women are constructed as tools for reproduction by the Soviet Union. Women, as with men, belong to a collective, yet they are also subject to specific regulations and provisions pertaining to their gender, which is vital to bear in mind when examining the political significance of women's role in the biological reproduction of the "nation" (Davis, 1997).

The Soviet Union's efforts to regulate women down to their reproduction demonstrate that the Soviet Union at that time was devising strategies to maintain values more beneficial to its interests, namely patriarchal values that were beginning to wane as many women had chosen not to have children and were altering their gender roles. Patriarchy allows for the space and understanding to sacrifice someone solely based on their gender. Patriarchy is a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Walby, 1990). Indirectly, the Soviet Union realized that the collapse of patriarchy also had implications for national resilience. When women can no longer be dominated by men, the state also loses its power to dominate women. Thus, the state reinforces the patriarchal system to restore its strength.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Russia's entry into the era of openness did not resolve the nation's anxieties regarding existing gender dynamics. This can be observed in how Russia experienced significant setbacks in terms of women's empowerment. Inequality increased, women bore heavier burdens, there was a rise in ideological support to encourage women to fulfill their roles in household and maternal duties, reduced participation in political representation and governmental agencies, and numerous sources of new power "sponsoring" the growth of neo-traditional gender ideologies, advocating for the re-feminization and re-masculinization; these ideologies, in turn, sideline women from power and overlook many new issues for women (Johnson

and Robinson, 2006). Thus, the state once again constructs femininity in women according to its needs.

Through the excerpts from Baranskaya's literary work, she exposes the loopholes held by the state through propaganda and other state efforts to control women and their bodies. The findings from the analysis suggest that in Soviet society, gender roles were heavily influenced by state intervention, leading to an ambivalent position for women. Through strategies such as the slogan "True Soviet Woman," questionnaires for women, and mandated childbirth policies, the state sought to control women's reproduction to meet national needs, ultimately reinforcing patriarchal structures and limiting women's freedom and equality. Baranskaya's literary work serves as a critique of the Soviet governance system, highlighting the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and the detrimental impact on women. These findings underscore the importance of a feminist perspective in uncovering hidden gender issues within society, shedding light on the challenges and inequalities faced by women in the Soviet era.

### Conclusion

Through this literary work, it becomes evident that gender roles are molded to align with the state's interests, often relegating women to the status of objects or "others." Despite their significant contributions to the state's productivity and reproduction, women find themselves in an ambivalent position, simultaneously elevated and marginalized by the state. Baranskaya's depiction of the state's involvement in gender formation, exemplified through slogans like "The Real Soviet Woman," questionnaires, and mandated childbirth, underscores its detrimental impact on women. This critique within the novel reveals the enduring presence of patriarchal structures enforced by the Soviet governance system. It emphasizes the importance of literature in shedding light on the injustices faced by women, advocating for a feminist perspective to uncover hidden gender issues.

The limitations of this study lie in the number of characters and literary works examined. The researcher solely focused on investigating from the perspective of Olga, the main character, and did not delve into other characters with diverse backgrounds, nor did they examine other novels published during the same era. To gain a deeper understanding, further study of other characters within the novel or even stories from other novels from the same period is still required.

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