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### **Socially inherited memory, gender and the public sphere in Poland.**

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**SOCIALLY INHERITED MEMORY, GENDER  
AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN POLAND**

**Anna Reading**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 1996**

**University of Westminster, London, UK**

**'I have a memory, which is the memory of mother's  
memory'**

**UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER  
HARROW IRS CENTRE**

## ABSTRACT

More recent theories of the 'revolutions' of 1989 in the societies of Eastern and Central Europe now suggest that the underlying dynamic was continuity rather than disjuncture in terms of social and political relations. Yet such theories fail to explain the nature of and the reasons for this continuity in terms of gender relations in the public sphere.

The thesis suggests that the clue to understanding the nature of the gendered transformation in Poland's public sphere in its mediated aspects between the years 1980 and 1994 lies in the role of 'socially inherited memory'. Socially inherited memory is the dialectical and gendered process by which a given society both remembers and forgets past events, feelings, thoughts and knowledge through representations. The key to Poland's social memory concerns the repressed stories of political right developed during the nation's period of identity formation in the nineteenth century and interwar years. Certain aspects of this social inheritance were recalled by the Polish United Workers' Party and then by Solidarity to legitimize their power: Because Poland's social memory was formed around the public exclusion of women and Poland's ethnic minorities this resulted in the continuation of exclusionary mechanisms and public ghettoization after World War Two, and, in the 1980s and 1990s.

However, the evidence of the thesis also suggests that there were sub-plots of women's resistance and inclusion within the public sphere from at least the nineteenth century onwards. Thus the exclusionary impact of socially inherited memory is not an inevitable historical process: At particular historical moments inclusive representations of women and ethnic minorities are recalled or reenacted in the form of public organisations or alternative cultural productions.

Socially inherited memory it is suggested may provide a useful concept for examining the (en) gendering of the public sphere in other societies.

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### Preface

"Clinicians know the privileged moment of insight when repressed ideas, feelings and memories surface into consciousness. These moments occur in the history of societies as well as in the history of individuals" (Herman, 1994: 2)

"Life cannot be separated from knowledge... who we are means what we know" (Spender, 1983: 30)

People often ask me where my interest in Poland comes from. The honest reply is that its genesis lies in the context of my family upbringing as well as the public context of the time. I am, like many, the product of a private as well as public Cold War. Embodied within me is the 'socially inherited memory' of the ideological and military battle between the Eastern Bloc and the West; between Communism and capitalism and the changes that occurred with Solidarity, Glasnost and the fall of the European 'communist' regimes in the 1980s. That battle and that memory provided part of the genesis for this thesis on Poland.

At the same time I am the gendered product of a private cold war. Ostensibly, I was a bright middle-class girl brought up in democratic England. But as Judith Herman points out: 'A well-established democracy in the public sphere could coexist with conditions of primitive autocracy or advanced dictatorship in the home' (1994: 28). In reality I was born into a hidden continent in which the head of state, my father, ruled through coercion and mystification, abusing family members. Unable to change the reality of my family, I changed it in my mind: I hid subversive thoughts and feelings behind a public mask and routinely practised what Czeslaw Milosc in *The Captive Mind* (1985) called 'ketman' or double-think, like the citizen of a totalitarian



regime. Trying as a teenager to find some sense in this private war, I turned my attentions outwards to the peace movement in the 1970s. Through this public and social movement I understood that I was a pacifist and, simultaneously, that there could be no real peace without equality. Through the peace movement in my early teens I learnt that the beliefs that I held meant that I was also a communist because I believed in equality and in the struggle for a better world for all. Later, at the University of York, as an undergraduate, I understood that I was also a feminist. My involvement with the Greenham Common Women's peace camp in the 1980s provided one arena for the expression of my beliefs. I, like others, saw the razor wire fence at the military base as representing the division of Europe, the division between Communism and capitalism, as well as the division of common land into parcels of private or military property. I also felt it to be like the division of my mind. Symbolically, we attempted to tear the fence down; to clamber over it at night; to sing and dance in the presence of weapons that could destroy the entire planet. I understood that in both the West and the East, pacifists, feminists and communists were considered a menace. I also understood that the key players in this battle were the media and the law. Like many others I was arrested and fought through the courts to have the international law against genocide take precedence over my local breach of the peace. By the time I went to Poland in 1988 to take up a post as a junior lecturer, after finishing an M.A in Women's Studies, I understood that I was against regimes both East and West and would do my small part to disrupt them.

My university room in Lodz was on the third floor of a block with all the other foreigners. In it was a



radio speaker that I was instructed by the concierge to keep switched on continuously, despite the low hum it emitted and the sense of invaded privacy that it gave. I muffled mine with cotton wool and a thick scarf. Foreigners were also allocated a minder who, in the guise of being helpful, latched on to one's daily routine with remarkable speed. My minder, Woyciek, had limpid blue eyes, a permanent cold, dreadful body odour, appalling English and a professed desire to emigrate to apartheid South Africa so he could live in luxury with a servant. I loathed him. After a couple of weeks he knew that I knew he was following me. I deliberately lead him astray, laying false trails to distract him. Meanwhile, I quietly got on with contacting women in the illegal feminist and peace movements. These people kept me sane in an environment which was crushing in every aspect. There was the daily adjustment to ever changing shortages and standing in line for official stamps, authorizations, signatures and forms in triplicate to obtain a bus pass, ration card or book a room to give a lecture. Other queues I joined voluntarily just in case it turned out to be either something useful, such as a delivery of tin-openers, or, the gastronomically longed for, such as the delivery of crates of ripe Brie cheese. The extent to which people were ignorant about what was happening in the West, and Britain in particular, shocked me. Students would ask about the smog in London, based on their reading from books dating from the 1950s. When I gave a public lecture in Lodz entitled "Thatcher's Britain" the majority of the audience refused to believe my descriptions of rising homelessness, unemployment and political repression in Britain in the 1980s; but some did believe me and so we met on a regular basis to discuss what could be done.

At that time in Poland, in the Autumn of 1988, there were strikes and periodic food and fuel shortages. There were also meetings of the student Solidarity movement and a short student occupation of The English Department where I taught. Very often, students would ask if, instead of our seminar, they could take me to a student meeting. It struck me that all the people speaking were men; very rarely did one see a woman on the platform. In addition when I tried to raise issues which I considered essential in any discussion of change, such as women's rights, students would respond by saying that they were sick of such things since they had been drummed into them throughout school.

In the Spring of 1989, I returned to Britain and gave a paper at the University of York examining the manner of the changes in Poland. When I returned to Lodz I found that I had been moved to a different flat. The flat was wonderful, far more luxurious than that of the average Pole. But the downside was the man who sat outside my kitchen window in his yellow car all day reading a newspaper. My telephone calls were either cut-off, or followed with an anonymous call. I came to accept that sometimes we would be followed, often in the most ridiculous manner, when meeting people in the feminist or alternative socialist networks. It was at that time that I became involved with a Polish man who I was later to marry and divorce. That spring, 1989, we saw the beginning of the outward changes in Eastern Europe, which the Western Media called "revolutions". In Poland, there were the Round Table talks. There were also demonstrations, manifestations and riots in Gdansk. I remember waking up one morning and seeing that all the milicja vehicles had been changed to policja. Soon after, there were Solidarity posters on billboards and an office for Solidarity in the main highstreet in Lodz. Nevertheless, in my heart I felt



women were excluded from the political agenda. Consequently, I wrote my second play, "Want", based on the lives of three Polish women and the effect of the changes on their lives in the 1980s. I obtained sponsorship from the British Council to tour with it around Poland in 1990\1, to provide a focus for discussions of the developing women's clubs and feminist groups that were being legalised at that time. The play also toured the UK in 1991.

In 1990 I researched and wrote a book, Polish women, Solidarity and Feminism (1992). I also married the Pole I had met the year before. In 1991, I worked as a freelance journalist during the first 'free' elections in Poland, as well as a playwright and director. In 1992, I got divorced. I then began work with Dr. Colin Sparks, at the Centre for Communication and Information Studies at the University of Westminster. We worked together on a project entitled "The Restructuring of Television in Eastern and Central Europe". I did field work in Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Hungary, interviewing key people in governments, television organizations, universities and the civil services. Working with Dr Sparks, I learnt a great deal about television systems and the way in which they present an opportunity for understanding and theorizing the broader changes in Eastern Europe. At the same time, I tried to develop my own understanding of gender and the media in Poland in relation to the other countries I was visiting and with feminists from other countries in Eastern Europe.

Then, in 1994, the British Ministry of Defense confirmed that my ex-husband had been working for the Polish Security Services. This nearly shattered my courage and my sense of political being. It felt very

difficult to continue with any work connected with Poland and I nearly gave up. At the same time, the wall in my mind, holding back the private reality of my family regime, began to fall. I slowly began to realise that it was the amnesia of private experience that had started off my political and public journey into Eastern Europe in the first place. And, that my experiences of political betrayal in Poland had then taken me back to the Eastern bloc in my mind. I came to the conclusion that what the private and the public share are socially inherited memory. Just as some parents re-enact their childhoods, subjecting their own children to the abuses they suffered, so too do societies through socially inherited memory re-enact exclusion and political abuse. It is then through public spaces, be it the classroom, the street, or, in this instance, the public space of the academic thesis, in which we can learn to understand experience more wholly, consciously and critically. As Madan Sarup points out: "History, literature, storytelling, therefore have important functions because they provide discourses and opportunities for dealing with experiences by discussing them." (Sarup, 1988:151).

In the following pages I try to come to terms emotionally and intellectually with what happened in the former Eastern Bloc between 1980-1994. I develop an explanation of these processes through the concept of socially inherited memory, examples of which are to be found, I argue, in the (en) gendering processes in relation to aspects of the media in Poland. I bring together my empirical research and modest number of publications over a number of years and, I hope, make some sense of them in order to theorize on a broader level our understanding of gender and the public sphere.



### Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been written without all the people who have helped and supported me along the way: The people who have taught me, John and Fiona Sawyer, Dr. Richard Drain and Professor Nicole Ward-Jouve; Colleagues I have worked with, especially Jenny Owen and Martin Gabriel; and, friends, especially Louise Dawson, who have throughout the years shown me real love and trust. I would also like to thank the students I teach at South Bank University for their positive responses when I speak my mind. The thesis could not have been started at all, though, without the women and men who agreed to be interviewed and over the years who have sent me information. I would like to thank all of them for their time and help. I would also like to thank like Dr Colin Sparks of the Centre for Communication and Information Studies. Just when I thought I had escaped from Poland he sent me back there again. He has taught me a great deal about many things. He not only got me writing my thesis but has given me a great deal of encouragement and support in many aspects of my life. I would also like to thank Jean Seaton, the Centre for Communication and Information Studies at the University of Westminster and South Bank University for giving me time to write my thesis and for their financial support. Thank you too to my computer, Beryl, who is able to respond to my voice, even when I shout. It would have been impossible to write this without voice-operated technology. Dr Zig-Zag, my feline friend, should also be thanked for forcing me to paws for thought. Finally, my heart-felt thanks to Gillian and my very special partner, Neil Fraser, for giving me a future by helping me to see the importance of and find the words for socially remembering the past.

## Introduction

PAULINA You concede something. I concede something. Isn't that what this transition is all about? Compromise, negotiation. They let us have democracy, but they keep control of the economy and of the Armed Forces? The Commission can investigate the crimes but nobody is punished for them? There's freedom to say anything you want as long as you don't say everything you want? (From Act Two Death and The Maiden Ariel Dorfman)

Poland never had Communism. We have had dictators. (Solidarity Chairman, Zbigniew Lis, Personal Communication, 1991)

## Preamble

As a child, the Berlin wall was a fixture of my mind as much as it was of Europe. Eastern Europe was the place of darkness, chaos, non-being, lack, badness and madness, with terms such as iron curtain and satellite state serving to construct the feminine other of the Eastern Bloc (Reading, 1992: 11-14). Despite all my expectations the Berlin Wall came down. And by 1995 it seemed that in media discourse at least the former Eastern Bloc was no longer our feminine other, as the portrayal of the docking between the U.S. space shuttle and the Russian space station in 1995 testified (BBC 1, News, 1995, 30 June: 6.00 pm). This, explained a leading scientist, was no simple technological matter but one of deep ideological and symbolic value between the two countries. More than two years research had gone into developing a docking system in which neither world power was required to be the 'female' part, as both countries had refused to be 'entered'. The solution, said the scientist, was the equivalent of a hermaphrodite docking system. Both parties effectively had both organs to achieve symbolic gender parity up in space. Yet back on Earth did (en) gendering mechanisms publicly change?



### Reasons, Objectives and Aims of the Research

This thesis examines the role of socially inherited memory in the gendered transformation of the public sphere in Poland, with particular reference to changes in aspects of the media, especially television since 1980. My reasons for choosing to study gender and the public sphere in Poland are threefold. First, I may claim a modest knowledge of the Polish language and the relationship between gender, culture and political movements in Poland (Reading, 1992; 1994a; 1994b). Secondly, the transformations which have taken place in Poland have been gradual, involving protracted processes of negotiation and pre-adaptation (Jakubowicz, 1990). In this respect, Poland provides a more typical example of the processes of transition in the countries of the region than in some countries in which these processes were overtly violent, as in Romania, or the result of an abrupt break, as in Czechoslovakia (Sparks and Reading, 1993). Thirdly, the revolutions in 1989 in Eastern Europe present key problems for social analysis and it seems to me that a major part of these revolutions is their gendered aspect, particularly in relation to public space and the question of representation in the newly developing democracies.

When my interest in gender and Poland began, there was only a small body of research from the 1970s and 1980s which examined broader aspects of women's lives in Central and Eastern Europe (Jancar, 1978; Wolczik, 1985; Heitlinger, 1979). Since 1989 there have been a number of comparative texts and edited collections which examine women's place in East European Societies (Funk, 1993; Corrin, 1993; Einhorn, 1993). However, this thesis takes a slightly different approach in that it examines the historically gendered processes of exclusion and inclusion springing from Poland's

national identity formation in the 19th century and interwar years and looks at the impact of these on changes to public communication in the period of recent rapid transition between 1980 and 1994. The thesis suggests that essential to our understanding of the transitions in Eastern Europe and broader aspects of representation and public space is the question of what may be conceptualized as socially inherited memory.

In this sense the thesis theoretically extends and builds on my own study of Polish women, Solidarity and Feminism (1992) and later articles relating to Poland (Reading, 1994; 1995). It also extends this work empirically by giving more emphasis to the role of different media, especially television, as part of our socially inherited memory and the construction of Poland's public spaces in the recent transition. The reason for focusing on television, in the main part of the thesis (Part Three), is because in modern industrialized societies to inquire into the nature of the transformations in television organizations is to inquire into the transformations in societies themselves, as Boyle argues (1993:1). Television organizations and television policy also were one of the most fought over areas of communication in public spaces in Eastern Europe during the transition. This spawned a range of studies tackling the democratic implications of this (Jakubowicz, 1994; Sparks and Reading, 1994; Splichal, 1995) but which ignored gender. Whilst Einhorn's timely comparative study of citizenship, gender and women's movements in Eastern and Central Europe does examine aspects of gender, literature and women's magazines in the region, it does not address gender issues in relation to television. Three studies do touch briefly on women and the media in Poland (Witkowska, 1990; Siemieniska,



1982; Sasinska-Klas, 1993), but these are synchronic rather than diachronic. One author provides an account of women journalists and media practices after 1989 (Moritz, 1993). Finally, there are Maciej Mrozowski's studies in Polish on women's and men's attitudes in Polish state television in the 1980s (Mrozowski, 1989). However, these do not make any connections between Poland's gendered social memory and its impact on the gendered transitions of television representation in Poland's public spaces. Overall it is also true to say, as Lisa McLaughlin (1994:27) points out, that there is little which examines gender and the structural transformation of the public sphere over time with particular reference to the media; and none with reference to Poland and television in particular.

Thus one objective of this study is to extend research and analyses of the transitions in Eastern Europe by examining the (en)gendering processes and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion diachronically with an appropriate media aspect. By appropriate media aspect I mean the key medium of the particular age and public space. Different media at different times have different cultural and political power within public spaces and this is as true of Poland as anywhere else. Whilst it can be argued that television should be the logical focus for discussion in the main part of the thesis (Part Three), since it was the most contended form of communication in the public spaces of Poland between 1980 and 1989, this argument is not tenable for the earlier periods under discussion in Parts One and Two of the thesis. In these parts I wanted to establish the historical processes of the (en)gendering of Poland's public sphere, or, the formation of particular socially inherited memory in Poland. It therefore seemed logical to analyse the

media forms appropriate to this period of identity formation. Thus I have chosen to focus on other media, such as print, literature and underground iconography in the nineteenth century, the interwar years and under state capitalism<sup>1</sup>. This, whilst risking the problems associated with shifts in media focus, I felt would enrich the analysis by providing the possibility for intertextual analysis of media over time.

A second objective is to use this country case study as a way of testing and developing a gendered theory of transformations of the public sphere more generally by using the conceptualization of socially inherited memory. For example, an aspect of the transition in Poland has concerned the shift from state television to public service television, with the latter seen as restorative for civil society or the public sphere (Jakubowicz, 1990:15; Druck, 1991:112). However, research in the West since the 1970s clearly shows the inefficacy of public service broadcasters when it comes to the representation of women and ethnic minorities (Rowland and Tracey, 1991:8; Blanchard and Morley, 1982:104; Cockburn and Loach, 1986:15-16). Thus an examination of the indexes of (en)gendering or the form that Poland's socially inherited memory takes in broadcasting structures and policies enabled me to draw conclusions about the nature of the transitions more generally as well as how to (re)conceptualize the public sphere from a gendered perspective. Similar work is currently being done on the transitions to democracy in the new South Africa by Alison Gilman (1995).

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<sup>1</sup> Radio may also have been a most fruitful area of study, but is one which I do not address due to the difficulties of access prior to 1989. Further, according to the Head of Sound Engineering in Polish Radio and Television (Personal Communication, 1993) only more recently have early radio broadcasts become more easily available for technical reasons.

### Hypothesis

The study has a working hypothesis which has guided the research and the research design. The starting point, based on initial reading and my own observations of Polish society, is that what could be conceptualized as socially inherited memory played an important part in the manner and extent of recent transformations in the public sphere in Poland, as articulated through its various media aspects. Because Poland's social memory of political right was inherently gender biased this may have served to reproduce patriarchal structures after 1989. This would suggest that the theoretical frameworks used for the purposes of explaining the revolutions in Eastern Europe and transitions in the public sphere are inadequate in that they fail to demonstrate how or why the (en)gendering mechanisms in Poland remain remarkably constant over time, with gender bias in the public sphere in post-1989 Poland the same if not worse for women. Further, they fail to show that this continuity in the public (en)gendering of representation is not only between the Communists and Solidarity in Poland but also between the pre-Communist and Communist regimes. This continuity suggests a flaw in transition theories which argue that the revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe mark a break at the economic and social levels of society (Fukuyama, 1992; Miliband, 1991) but would seem to support gendered theories of the transition such as that articulated by Einhorn (1994). My sub hypothesis is that socially inherited memory is contradictory and dialectical. This would allow for different kinds of changes in gender representations during particular periods of both stability and rapid transition. This is tested by examining the degree to which Poland's (en)gendering mechanisms resulted in clashes and fissures within public space and thus



limited possibilities for change in gender relations and representations during periods of relative social stability and confidence by the Communist regime and during the period of instability and transition in the 1980s and 1990s.

### Methods and Sources

The diachronic and intertextual approach of the study required a number of methodologies. The first method involved the tracing of primary data from documentary sources such as government statistical yearbooks, television yearbooks, internal media journals, underground or self-published sources, policy-making documents and laws. Additional primary sources came from personal communications and face-to-face interviews with a broad range of women and men representative of Polish society, including former members of Solidarity, working journalists and broadcasters, academics, government ministers, and people working in a variety of key decision-making professions. A list of interviewees is included in the bibliography. Most interviews were between one and two hours long and semi-structured. I conducted these interviews over several years beginning with my first year in Poland in 1988. During that year, whilst I was teaching and writing in Lodz, and working with the underground feminist movement, I recorded in detail on a daily basis meetings and events. The resulting journals documented my own observations of the changes in Polish society during the revolutions in Eastern Europe. I decided to use some documentation from this participant observation as background. Occasionally, I quote from these sources. I have since made eight trips to Poland, some for periods of one or two months, others for several weeks or just a couple of days. I supplemented these with observations and field trips to other countries in the region, including the



Czech Republic, Slovakia, the former East Germany and Hungary. These have proved invaluable in making comparisons with the Polish situation. In the main part of the thesis I briefly draw attention to similarities and differences of other Eastern European countries in the Visegrad Group.

My secondary sources include sociological surveys, literature and press cuttings in Polish from the Jagiellonian University, Warsaw University and Lodz University libraries. The Women's Unit in Gdansk (now in Katowice) and the Solidarity archives in Gdansk also proved to be invaluable sources of unpublished or underground sources. Published secondary sociological and theoretical sources in English and Polish have provided supplementary and background information as well as my theoretical framework.

As is usual with gender science, the personal has been interwoven with the theoretical, the singular with the general, the 'primary' source with the 'secondary' source, the 'objective' with the 'subjective'. The arguments for the validity of this approach and its practice have been well documented since the 1970s (Women's Studies Group, 1978; Bowles and Klein, 1983; Spender, 1983; Williams, 1993). Griffin argues, for example, that the values associated with objectivity and subjectivity are tied up with a whole set of dichotomies that support the gender-system. Objectivity is viewed as rational, neutral, transcendental and therefore providing the whole picture, the facts. Subjectivity is viewed as irrational, emotional, biased, imminent and therefore providing only a partial picture (Griffin, 1986). Often objective sources of knowledge only provide a partial picture: government statistics for example may be biased or constructed in ways which obscure some

people. As Barbera DuBois argues: 'Objectivity and subjectivity are modes of knowing, analysis, interpretation, understanding, they are not independent of each other and should not be' (1983: 111). Ultimately, it is not the pretence of objectivity which will produce academic coherence but attending to the correspondence and conflicts between oneself and one's engagement with the world, whether that be reading a book, writing a thesis or sharing the nightmares in one's mind and heart. It is this that will enrich academic production.

### Questions of Terminology

The key term I use is socially inherited memory. Literally, this means the ability of a society to store, repress and recall past events and knowledge, as well as shared sensations and thoughts. The term is conceptualized in an interdisciplinary manner in Chapter 1 by critiquing and building on a range of different theories from the political and social sciences, linguistics and social psychology. In brief, however, I use the term in a way which is similar to that of Michael Billig in his analysis of what he terms 'banal nationalism' (1996). Billig in turn has drawn on the work of Ernest Renan (1990) who developed the idea of the dialect of remembering and forgetting which forms the collective memory of a nation. Socially inherited memory I suggest constitutes the sum of all that is retained by a society (which tends towards the fiction of the nation state). The retention of a wall pockmarked with bullets from the second world War in Poznan is part of Poland's social memory. So too are the language and discourses we use to describe it. Socially inherited memory is also the particular recollection of an event or people by a particular group. It is suggested that the way that social memory operates is that the individual is

socially constructed through language, and discourse, which articulates different aspects of social memory. Social memory, however, is not simply another word for ideology. If we believe that ideology constitutes a system of ideas about human conduct which is simplified to underpin the social structure of a society, especially that of class society (Watson and Hill, 1993:88) then social memory is different in that it is not the twin of some other, as with ideology and structure, it is both. Socially inherited memory may be understood as more akin to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus (1994). Bourdieu uses the concept of the habitus to explain the acquisition and expression of social taste in terms of class. I suggest that the concept of socially inherited memory is not only classed but also raced and gendered. The hail of bullets unleashed from the guns that are still publicly represented on the wall in Poznan came from armies in which men, but not women, officially fought on the front lines. Men and women learn to inscribe themselves differently within socially inherited memory and relate to and recall it differently. This is because socially inherited memory operates, as does personal memory, through language and myth. Just as individual memory may be stored and expressed somatically and mentally, so too in a sense is social memory. It is stored and expressed in somatic form through representation, the public presence or absence of men and women in public or private spaces, and, in mental form through re-presentation, or through collectively recognised symbolic manifestations. Social memory may serve to operate on or inform the present and future in ways in which the society is not fully conscious. This is why it is necessary to study the role of social memory in order to more fully understand the (en)gendering of the public sphere. Further, I propose that the social analysis of the



public sphere of a given society involves the understanding of the identity formation of that society and the deconstruction of the society's myths to release repressed social memories which may be causing social damage such as (en) gendering bias in the public sphere. The recollection of social memory by a researcher, by the reader, by the participants of any academic project is then a political act. Thus I suggest in this thesis a particular way of understanding transformations of the public sphere which is both gendered and historical. The key to this, I suggest, is the concept of socially inherited memory.

The second term I use throughout is representation. The word itself in terms of its dictionary definition may include written images, statistics, photographs or cartoons. Representation denotes both resemblance or correspondence as well as substitution or replacement. The way in which I use this term is that posited by Gayatri Spivak (1988). Thus, I use representation in two ways. First, there is representation - in terms of having a social presence/absence in the public sphere: for example, the number of government ministers who are women, or the number of women on a broadcasting committee. Secondly, there is re-presentation to refer to the symbolic manifestations of presence or absence. The relationship between these is not one of categorical distinction but of organic continuity and contradiction, rather like the difference between the roots and shoots of a plant which depending on the soil level can change from one to the other. The term is appropriate to the interdisciplinary nature of this study. It bridges what are sometimes seen as different aspects of the public sphere, such as the political and cultural realms. It allows for a sense of linkage rather than disjuncture between the private and public

realms, since the distinction between these is conceptual rather than actual, as Spivak suggests:

according to the explanations that constitute (as they are effects of) our culture, the political, social, professional, economic, intellectual arenas belong to the public sector. The emotional, sexual, and domestic are the private sector ... Feminist practice, at least since the European 18th century, suggests that each compartment of the public sector also operates emotionally and sexually, that the domestic sphere is not the emotions only legitimate workplace' (1988:103).

This is also the sense more recently deployed by Myra Macdonald in Representing Women (1995:2-3). She suggests that the concept of representation usefully refers to politics and culture and suggests the relationship between these spheres. She argues that although the concept of representation is outmoded in cultural criticism it is still politically important. It encapsulates the sense of both political and cultural rights within groups marginalized in the public sphere and seeking to have a voice and be heard (Macdonald, 1992:3). Like Macdonald, I do not use the term representation to indicate that there is somewhere somehow something real that the media should or could re-present to us.

Thirdly, I use throughout the thesis the term state capitalism to refer to the political and economic system of Poland between 1946-1989. Why I use this term, rather than the alternatives of state socialism, socialism, or communism is indicative of my academic/political position. The term seems best to describe the system in Poland whereby the ruling Party, the Polish United Workers' Party, professed the ideals of socialism whilst Poland's economy retained the same contradictions as those of economies in the capitalist West - competition, accumulation and exploitation. The bureaucratic class, the

nomenclature, managed the economy but the wage-labour relation did not in effect change. I thus use this term in preference to others to indicate that there is a difference between socialist theory and the practice of the political class managing capitalism in the regimes in Eastern Europe.

### Structural Overview

The thesis starts from the assumption that the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 present themselves as important areas for social analysis. Further, that the revolutions may have an important gender aspect, particularly in relation to the (en)gendering of the public sphere. One way of understanding and explaining the transformations in the region may be the concept of socially inherited memory. This is tested by examining the exclusion of women from and inclusion of women in public (re)presentations from Poland's period of identity formation through to the the 1990s.

Structurally, the thesis is divided into three main parts. The chapters in Part One of the thesis establish the theoretical and empirical framework for the concept of socially inherited memory. In Chapter One I discuss the theoretical background to the subject of the thesis and suggest that these accounts are flawed in a number of respects and that there is perhaps another way of addressing the problem which may involve the concept of socially inherited memory in the public sphere. Chapter Two attends to the question of the gendering of the Polish language, since language, I argue, operating through different discourses, is important to our understanding of socially inherited memory. Language is the link between the public and private, the social and individual memory. An analysis of the (en)gendering of



language enables an understanding of the gendering of the individual, as psychoanalysis and gender scientists have long since indicated, but also the gendering of a society. In the particular case of the Polish language, patterns of gender bias which have been noted by feminists studying other languages are repeated but with particular manifestations connected with Poland's identity formation. Within the Polish language resides repressed gendered social relations which are then rearticulated in the present. These, consequently, may act to inform mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion within public spaces. Chapter Three attends to the early formation of the public sphere in Poland and the particular historical circumstances which prevailed to create conceptions of female political activity. These conceptions of female political activity are part of the repressed story of political rights which have formed Poland's socially inherited memory. I examine the historical background to the place of Polish women and Jewish women and their representation in Polish society from the 19th century up until the Second World War. The chapter introduces and analyses the figure of Mother Poland (Matka Polka) and the importance of the nation and the Church as on-going aspects of the public (en)gendering process.

Parts Two and Three attempt to demonstrate how this gendered socially inherited memory is and is not articulated in the public sphere and within different media aspects under state capitalism and then in Poland's transformation since 1980, with particular consequences for women. Thus in Chapter Four I examine how the particular representations of female political activity developed during Poland's period of national identity formation were rearticulated by the Communists, although with different inflections at

different times in order to follow the Party-led drive for economic industrialization. I do this by analysing aspects of the public (en)gendering of representation under state capitalism, in ruling Party theory, in law, in the workplace, education and politics. In Chapter Five I continue to address the impact of Poland's socially inherited memory on the gendering of the public sphere under state capitalism by examining aspects of cultural production and literature in particular. Censorship under the Communist regime meant that there were limitations on what could be said, and particular representations of women were used to express that which was censored. These representations drew on the literary imagery of earlier periods. Nevertheless, it was not the case that literary imagery solely rearticulated Poland's gendered socially inherited memory. Some women writers, because of the contradictions of the situation under state capitalism, were able to create spaces in which they actively deconstruct aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory and create alternatives. One such writer was Anna Swir who through her poetry during the period of confident state capitalism in the 1970s was able to write fundamental critiques of both the state capitalist and gendered system in Poland. Her work stands as an example of the best that was possible under Poland's old regime. It also provides us with an indication that social memory is not inevitably rearticulated from generation to generation but contains sufficient inconsistencies and contradictions for new (re)presentations to re-cover social memories which are then gendered more equally within the public sphere.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 in Part Three constitute the key part of the thesis. This is an examination of the



impact of socially inherited memory on the beginnings of the transition in the official and underground public spheres. What we see is that, as the regime started to break up, there were some contradictions but mostly convergences in the representations of women by the ruling Communist regime in politics, in education, in culture and in social policies. What this seems to suggest is that, far from the period of transition constituting a revolution in terms of gender bias and mechanisms of exclusion to women's (re)presentation, both sides sought to actively recover aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory and use them to legitimize their own power base. Because Poland's social memory was inherently gender biased this served to reproduce patriarchal structures after 1989. Thus the development and triumph of the opposition in Poland did not result in any real liberation for women. It did mean that certain subjects could now be given voice but there were a number of crucial retreats in terms of ideology and women's social position. This is demonstrated in more detail in Chapter Eight. This examines (re)presentations of the most fought over medium in Eastern Europe - television - in Poland from 1980 to 1994. With television we see that the roots of gender bias, structurally and ideologically, lie in the historical formation of Poland's socially inherited memory around a contested national identity. This struggle meant that concerns relating to gender were marginalized because they might threaten the unity of the nation. Further, we see from this that in periods of rapid transition gender bias may become over-articulated because of the struggling elite's reliance on its socially inherited memory to offer stability and continuity and thus to legitimize its rule. Chapter Nine draws together the evidence on women in the public sphere in Poland and indicates how the



hypothesis suggested in the introduction and the theoretical questions raised in Chapter 1 concerning gender, change and the public sphere may be understood in the light of empirical evidence from Poland.

Overall, the thesis attempts to understand and explain in Poland the (en)gendering of the public sphere through the conceptualization of socially inherited memory. Neither the concept nor the thesis, however, purports to explain all aspects of the changes or mediated transitions. It is hoped that any gaps or flaws in this approach, and the questions which remain unresolved will lead to further research.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background

"I have a memory, which is the memory of Mother's memory" (Victoria Glendinning, 1996:12)

"Individual consciousness is not the architect of the ideological superstructure, but only a tenant lodging in the social edifice of ideological signs" (V.N. Volosinov, 1973:13)

### 1.1 Introduction

In the introduction to the thesis it was established that the focus of this inquiry concerns the impact of socially inherited memory on the gendered mediatic transitions in Poland's public sphere between 1980 and 1994. In this first chapter, I set the scene for Part One by establishing a theoretical framework for the inquiry. First, I examine explanations of the transformations in the societies in East and Central Europe. Secondly, I look at theories of the public sphere, particularly those by gender scientists that point to gendered versions of the concept. Thirdly, I find it necessary to draw on different aspects of social theory from a gendered perspective to formulate the concept of social memory which I propose will assist us in understanding the social processes in Poland in the late eighties and nineties.

### 1.2 Theories on the Revolutions in Eastern Europe

The changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s have since elicited an enormous body of work by scholars both East and West. Colin Sparks and I suggested that we can group these different accounts of the end of Communism into three broad kinds, which can be illustrated by particular representative thinkers (1994). We argue that the most

well known accounts have been those which make the greatest claims for change such as that articulated by Fukujama (1992). His view is that what occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989 were revolutions which radically altered societies at every level, with the old Communist elites entirely pushed out. From this perspective the 'Communist' order was one which ran against natural human needs and its subsequent collapse signals the return to market led economies with democratic representative political systems. For Fukujama the revolutions are complete. Effectively, they signal the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992).

The second main perspective, represented by Miliband (1991), also sees the revolutions as signifying substantial changes at certain levels. The starting point for these accounts is the understanding that the societies of Eastern Europe were essentially socialist in terms of their economies, but bureaucratized in the political realm. The undemocratic political elites or nomenclatures corrupted what was a relatively egalitarian social structure. 1989 signalled a turn-coat procedure whereby the nomenclature changed from political bureaucrats into capitalists of the first order; pocketing the wealth of previously state-owned enterprises. The revolutions from this perspective are thus primarily social, with societies moving from socialism to capitalism, with few real changes at the political level.

The third perspective Colin Sparks and I outline is that which sees the revolutions as representing little change at any level. This perspective, we argue, is best articulated by Callinicos (1991). According to Callinicos the old regimes were neither socialist nor capitalist. They are better described as state capitalist and were thus not that different from the



private capitalism established in the West. In this scheme of things both economic and political power was held by the same class who 'ruled societies driven to accumulation by the necessity of competition with the West, primarily through military rivalry' (Sparks and Reading, 1994:246). Thus the revolutions signified no real social change, with the majority of people still forced to sell their labour to a relatively small number of propertied individuals. Politically, the dominance of the Communist Parties was transmuted into new democratic forms of government by the same class (Sparks and Reading, 1994:247).

Whilst these theories on the changes in Eastern Europe may be generally useful they entirely neglect the question of gender. However, there is by now a substantial body of theory which includes gender as an aspect of the revolutions in the region. These gendered theories share an emphasis on dismantling the belief that 1989 marked a breaking point for women in terms of real social change. The emphasis in these theories is on the continuity of gender relations. They argue that the changes that did occur, such as growing nationalism and conservatism, restrictions on abortion, the growth of new feminist networks, began long before 1989. Despite these broad similarities, the theories vary according to the country under study. Nevertheless, it is still possible to discern two broad explanations, to which it is possible to assign representative thinkers.

The first is best represented by Barbara Einhorn (1993) who takes the view that the Communist regimes were state socialist societies in which women had expanded work place rights at the expense of their rights as citizens (1993:257). The revolutions of 1989 have sent women back into the home whilst providing

them with greater rights as citizens. Generally, however, neither state socialism nor the new 'democracies' of Eastern Europe have resulted in women's emancipation. What hope there is lies in the non-hierarchical forms of public participation which women themselves are developing through women's networks (1993:260).

The second view is one that is fairly close to that of Einhorn but different in terms of its understanding of the Communist regimes. This is very much a minority view and may be represented by Chanie Rosenberg (1989). This perspective builds from the understanding that the societies of Eastern Europe were state capitalist. It takes the view that the political and social systems of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe before 1989 displayed the same contradictions of economies in the capitalist West: competition, accumulation, and exploitation. The emphasis is on the continuity of the systems before and after 1989, with few real changes either at the social or political levels in terms of gender and class relations. What limited changes there have been at the political level are seen to have been more beneficial for men than for women. The social crisis underlying the impetus for glasnost is seen as resulting in women being pushed back into the private realm with few possibilities for their voices to be heard.

A slightly different version of this I suggested in Polish Women Solidarity and Feminism (1992). In this I began from an understanding that the Polish regime before 1989 was state capitalist: 'There were both East and West those who sell their labour to those (owners) in control. In Poland the owners were the state and top Party officials, and, with increasing debts, the banks and international corporations of the

West' (Reading, 1992:6). I argued that the changes since 1989 have been limited for women. Nevertheless, I put forward the belief that the contradictions of the gendered capitalist system provided for some possibilities in terms of women representing themselves through new feminist networks. The positions of these different thinkers in relation to changes in the public sphere of Poland may be summarised in the form of a table : (see over)



**Table 1. Summary of positions of key theorists on transitions in Eastern Europe in relation to women and the public sphere.**

Theorist	Nature of the transition	Degree of change in public sphere	Degree of change for women
Fukuyama	Revolutionary and rapid changes at all levels of society	Significant	-
Miliband	Gradual change	Some	-
Callinicos	Marked continuity	Very little	-
Einhorn	Gradual change	Some	Greater exclusion. But, new networks
Rosenburg	Marked Continuity	Very little	Greater exclusion. But new networks

Overall, it would seem that the majority of these theorists suggest that the changes in Eastern Europe have been fairly limited. They are perceived more in terms of transitions, with key elements of continuity, rather than as abrupt revolutions. This raises a

number of questions for this study. If this was the case in Poland, then how and why were the changes so limited? Why were exclusionary aspects of gender relations in the public sphere replicated during the period of transition? In the next section, therefore, I look at different accounts of the public sphere which may help to provide a theoretical explanation for this aspect of the transition.

### 1.3 Accounts of the Public Sphere

The work of the scholar who influenced our thinking on the concept of the public sphere, Jurgen Habermas, is now well known. He argued that the public sphere took on a political role initially in 17th century England and was later transformed by the industrial revolution, the development of the modern state and a mass media (Habermas, 1989). Gender scientists, however, have since challenged the Habermasian account in a variety of ways (see Elstain, 1981; Fraser, 1989, 1990, 1992; Felski, 1989; Landes, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993, Pateman, 1988; Reading, 1994). The accounts vary in their scope and focus of inquiry, but, share three bases of contention: the question of androcentrism; the question of alternative spheres versus public spaces; the question of the legacy of the Enlightenment. These three problem areas will now be examined in turn.

### 1.4 The Public Sphere and Androcentrism

The first basis of contention from a feminist perspective to Habermas's normative account is that it is historically idealistic and gender blind.

Feminist scholars argue that Habermas ignores the gender barriers (as well as other barriers such as

class, race, and age) to the official public sphere in the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, Habermas does not account for the formal gender qualifications required to enter the public sphere in 19th century European society (Reading, 1995: 180-82). The public sphere rather than an arena of freely discoursing people was rather an arena which, historically, was characterized by gender and class barriers and conflicts (McLaughlin, 1994). Habermas argues that an embryonic 'representative' public sphere developed in the 17th century out of the feudal authorities of the Church, princes and nobility (Mattelart, 1979:199) yet:

In the Church only men could become priests, bishops, archdeacons or the Pope. Women could not lead the rites for marriages, funerals or baptisms or the ceremonies for confession or communion. Men were depicted in Christian texts as the omnipotent creator of the universe and the saviour of a once perfect world. Whilst women in the Old and New Testaments and particularly the epistles of St. Paul were shown as the epitome of the Virgin or the Whore. In the nobility, power and wealth were patrilineal and female royalty who did not produce the required male offspring could be and were murdered. (Reading, 1995: 181)

Habermas argues that the 19th century heralded the development of the bourgeois public sphere (Mattelart, 1979:199). However, gender scientists such as Fraser (1989) argue that this expansion of the public sphere did not include all women in the same way as it included some men. Lovendowski points to the fact that during the French Revolution of 1789 women were established as the political equals of men. But, by 1793 under Robespierre's Revolutionary Assembly the existence of women's organizations was made illegal and gatherings of more than 5 women banned (Lovendowski, 1986:18). In England women could not vote until after World War I and then they had to be over the age of 30 when they were deemed to be



rational beings. Until the Married Women Property Acts in the 1870s women upon marriage underwent the equivalent of civil death (Reading, 1995: 181-2). In Victorian England women did not have the same freedom in public places as men since under the Contagious Diseases Act any woman in a public place could be detained by the police and forcibly internally examined (Reading, 1995:182). In the 1840s and 1850s in the United States women could not preach from the pulpit or speak in temperance associations run by white men; women had to be accompanied by men to administer to patients in hospitals; white women and black people were banned from certain academies and did not have the right to vote. Black men and women were enslaved, with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 giving unprecedented powers to slave owners (Russo and Kramerae, 1991).

What this illustrates, argue gender scientists, is that, historically, the public sphere has been an unmistakably bourgeois male one: 'despite the rhetoric of publicity and accessibility the very meaning of 'civil society' was constructed through the significant exclusion of women, the proletariat and popular culture' (McLaughlin, 1993: 603). As Pateman argues in The Sexual Contract:

Political theorists present the familiar account of the creation of civil society as a universal realm that (at least potentially) includes everyone and of the origins of the political right in the sense of the authority of government in the liberal state, or Rousseau's participatory polity. But this is not the 'original' political right. There is silence about the part of the story which relates that the social contract is a fraternal pact that constitutes civil society as a patriarchal or masculine order. To uncover the latter it is necessary to begin to tell the repressed story of the genesis of patriarchal political right which men exercise over women. (1981:101) (My emphasis)

The key to this passage and for us in relation to gendered explanations of the public sphere in Poland is the phrase "the repressed story". What is the repressed story of the genesis of political right in Poland? Does this repressed story explain how the public sphere continues to be (en)gendered? How far does this repressed story impact on the more recent transformations in Poland since 1980 particularly in relation to television? And, finally, what indeed is meant by the phrase "repressed story"?

These questions I follow up in the formation of the concept of socially inherited memory (Section 1.7) after I examine the second and third major objections by feminists to Habermas's account of the public sphere.

### 1.5 The Public Sphere v Public Spaces

The second objection that gender scientists have to Habermas's account of the public sphere concerns the assumption that the public sphere is singular and homogeneous.

Thus Ryan (1992) argues that although there were major barriers to women entering the official public sphere, by the middle of the 19th century in the United States middle class white women did take an active part in public life through women-run clubs and campaigns. Russo and Kramarae (1991) show in their collection Radical Women's Press of the 1850s the growth of women's newspapers and magazines addressing public issues of the day in the United States. Joan Landes (1988) provides us with a similar case for France in the 19th century.

The central implication of this is that gender scientists have shown that counter-publics 'always contested the exclusionary notion of the public sphere and its rules, elaborating alternative notions of appropriate political behaviour and public participation' (McLaughlin, 1993:615).

Does the evidence from Poland support these arguments? If it does then this suggests an understanding of the public sphere that allows for alternative spaces or spheres. It also suggests that 'the repressed story' of the genesis of political right in Poland may be better understood as contradictory and multiple rather than singular and homogeneous. Could then the idea of this contradictory 'repressed story' better explain the ongoing presence of these alternatives spaces or spheres? Would this explain, for example, why the development of women's own representative political spaces in the interwar years continued, despite efforts by the Polish United Workers' Party under the state capitalist regime to repress anything other than Party-led organisations?

These questions, as with the previous ones, I follow up in a formulation of the concept of socially inherited memory (Section 1.7) after I examine the third major objection by feminists to Habermas's account of the public sphere.

## 1.6 The Public Sphere and the Legacy of the Enlightenment

The third area of contention suggested in accounts by gender scholars concerns their critique of the concept of the public sphere, particularly the Habermasian version, in terms of its underlying



Enlightenment assumptions.

Gender theorists argue that Habermas's public sphere is based on the assumed neutrality, validity and centrality of the ideas of the political thinkers of the Enlightenment, ideas such as the importance and effectiveness of the rational discussion of public issues to solve society's problems (Pateman, 1988:101). This includes political thinkers not just within the modern patriarchal tradition, such as Rousseau, but, also early gender scientists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (Wollstonecraft, 1792, 1985). Indeed some feminists now argue that the problem with earlier structuralist feminist analysis was its 'untempered belief in rationality and progress and their 'Enlightenment' conception of a universal, unified human subject' (Van Zoonen, 1994:3). Why is it, asks Fraser (1990), that rational discourse is privileged over emotional discourse and public issues privileged over private ones? Anne Phillips adds that it is not simply the 'relentless privileging' of real living men which feminists have critiqued but the way in which 'the category of the male itself has formed and deformed political theory and practice' (1991:2). This division between public and private is seen by some more recent gender scientists as part of a broader discourse that serves to uphold and maintain gendered power structures in society by equating masculinity and femininity as follows:

Dominant	Marginal
Public	Private
Objective	Subjective
Reason	Emotion
= Masculine	= Feminine
= Male	= female
= Citizen	= mother wife
of Nation State	of family

I would add that this conceptual dichotomy is also related to the social construction of class differences: the objective, the public, the cognitive are equated with those with capital, both material and cultural. In contrast, the private, the subjective, the emotive are usually equated with the mass, the uneducated, the crowd - the rebellious mob against the (rational) forces of law and order. <sup>1</sup>

The implication of this aspect of feminist critiques is that hierarchically dichotomous concepts forming the basis of political theory and used as a framework to inform our ideas about the public sphere may not be able to explain the (en)gendering of the public sphere because the dichotomous concepts used hitherto are themselves part of the problem. Indeed, implicit is the suggestion that what is required is a level of abstraction that is neither dichotomous nor hierarchical in the post-Enlightenment sense, but which challenges our usual conceptual boundaries.

This aspect of feminist critiques of the normative public sphere raises several questions. The first question it raises for us is what if 'the repressed story', as Pateman called it, of the genesis of political right in Poland is formed and operates across what has been traditionally conceived of and understood as separate private/public realms? What if, historically, the mechanisms and processes of exclusion to the public sphere operate through the emotional, the sexual, the familial as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> There is not the scope within this study but it should be noted that this gendered dichotomy goes back earlier than the Enlightenment which reworked certain aspects of early Western political thought as Okin testifies (Okin 1980). Okin's analysis of the political writings of Plato and Aristotle in relation to Rousseau and Mill show striking parallels between early political thought and ideas about women and femininity. Only Plato's Book V of The Republic, she argues, provides us with an exceptional instance where the biological implications of women are separated from conventional political matrices. The abolition of the family (as a form of property) in The Republic led Plato to consider women as citizens in their own right (Okin, 1980: 26-8).



political, the cultural and the economic? What if to understand and explain the social processes of the transformations in Poland's public sphere it is necessary to formulate an abstraction that enables us to stretch the conceptual boundaries of the public sphere?

These questions and the questions raised from the other two aspects of the feminist critiques of the public sphere are brought together in the next section to formulate the final step in constructing the theoretical framework for the thesis.

### 1.7 Towards a formulation of 'Socially Inherited Memory'

We have seen how gendered explanations of the public sphere raise a number of questions in which there are implicit suggestions to how theoretical abstractions could best be applied to the study of the transformation in Poland. These questions emerged from the phrase used by Pateman 'the repressed story' and may be summarized as follows. What constitutes the repressed story of the genesis of political right in Poland? How far does this repressed story impact on the more recent transformations in Poland since 1980, particularly in relation to television? What is meant by the phrase the 'repressed story'? Would the repressed story be better understood as contradictory and multiple? Could the idea of this repressed but contradictory story better explain the ongoing presence of alternative spaces or spheres? Does the repressed story of the genesis of political right in Poland form and operate across what has been traditionally conceived of and understood in terms of



the separate realms of the private (emotional, sexual, familial) and public (political, cultural, economic).

Implicit in critiques by feminist scholars of the normative public sphere, I argued, is the suggestion that to answer these questions it is necessary to formulate a concept which enables us to understand and explain the genesis and logic of these aspects of the repressed story of political right in Poland. This concept I would like to propose we call socially inherited memory.

The role of social memory in the construction of the nation was suggested by Ernest Renan, more than a hundred years ago. Renan argued that national identity was created through a dialectic of both remembering and forgetting aspects of its history and the events which made it (1990,11). The concept also finds an early precursor in the ideas of Paul Federn, a student of Freud and a socialist, who in 1919 attempted to provide a psychoanalytical interpretation of the contemporary German revolution. He suggested that some form of patriarchal 'socially inherited feeling' may prevent the complete victory of what he called a 'fatherless society', a society of equal councils.<sup>2</sup> The concept of socially inherited memory that I wish to propose should not be mistaken for "a collective soul" or "collective inner psyche" or "the spirit of the people". As Mikhail Bakhtin, writing under the name of Volosinov in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, indicates such concepts as these imply that they operate within us, when in fact they are better understood as operating without - in the word, the

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<sup>2</sup> According to Russell Jacoby, Federn's analysis was not pursued at the time. Instead, however, the emphasis in the work of Reich, Fromm and the Frankfurt School was on how psychological mechanisms sustained the capitalist system and blocked class consciousness. This, Reich, for example, in his earlier work, formulated in the idea of the authoritarian relationship of father and son which he then generalized into the notion of character (Jacoby, 1973:85).

gesture, the act (Volosinov, 1973:22).

For the purpose of this thesis I would suggest that socially inherited memory may be conceived of as an abstract concept to encapsulate the capacity for society, in this case Polish society, to store, repress, recall, add to and change the story of political right of its citizens. The social inheritance or memory of this story of the genesis of the political right of citizens may be seen to operate not simply in institutional structures or ideological representations but through the sum of these social relations. Further, unlike Federn, I would not explain the gendering of this in Freudian terms. I have strong reservations about the validity of Freud's theory of infant sexuality because of his suppression of the seduction theory. So too do a number of other scholars, including those attempting to explain cultural production.<sup>3</sup> Thus, although I would endorse the suggestion by Federn that this social inheritance is gendered I would argue that this may be better understood as being recalled or repressed through language, over a range of discourses. But, further, that my understanding of the gendering of language is not in the traditional Lacanian feminist manner nor that of object-relations theorists such as Nancy Chodorow for the same reason that I reject Freud, but rather extends Volosinov's idea of language as embodying in some way the memory of social relations. To Volosinov this meant class relations in the sense

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<sup>3</sup> The most well known critique of this aspect of Freud is of course Jeffrey Masson's Freud: the Assault on Truth (1984). Various arguments by object-relations theorists and Lacanian feminists have been put forward for situating women differently within Freud's general arguments. However, as Madelon Sprengnether suggests, these still do not challenge the basic paradigm of the Oedipus complex itself. Consequently, "as long as the father (or his function) remains identified with the achievement of language and culture, the position of women will be marginal to both. The Oedipus complex guarantees the perpetuation of this system (in theory at least) by requiring the submission of both men and women to its patriarchal logic (1995: 148).



that different classes use language which results in the sign embodying class struggle. The ruling class seeks to extinguish the struggle and make each sign uniaccental, but each sign contains its inner dialectic. Further, Volosinov too had the sense of the social inheritance of these relations through signs and language in particular:

This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes. In the ordinary conditions of life the contradictions embedded in every ideological sign cannot emerge fully because the ideological sign in an established dominant ideology is always somewhat reactionary and tries as it were to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday's truth as to make it appear today's. (Volosinov, 1973: 23) (My emphasis)

To Volosinov the inheritance of particular social relations in language meant class relations. To recent scholars in the U.S, social inheritance is understood primarily in terms of race (Morrison, 1992). However, as Michael Billig recently points out, within our collective remembering and forgetting 'the issue of gender cannot be ignored' (1996: 124). Thus, to Volosinov's class I would add the social inheritance of gender relations, in which the dialectic of gender would operate within and through class relations. Socially inherited memory then can be understood as an abstract concept for the sum of the dialectical struggle in both class and gender terms embodied in language which may be used to explain continuity (and disjuncture) in the gendered construction and transformation, i.e. (en)gendering, of the public sphere, and, which bridges the usual conceptual gap between the public and private realms.

This conceptualization of socially inherited memory



may provide a useful theoretical addition to our understanding the (en)gendering of the public sphere. This I propose to explore through an examination of historical processes in the public sphere in Poland.

### 1.8 Conclusions: A Theoretical Framework

What was discussed at the beginning of this chapter was that gendered explanations of the changes in Eastern Europe were not to be found in general social theories of the transformations in Eastern Europe. Instead such explanations may be found in feminist interpretations of the transitions. What many explanations of the changes in Eastern Europe do share, however, is a sense of the underlying continuity of the systems as opposed to radical disjuncture. Nevertheless, gendered theories fall into two types. In some there is a distinction drawn between what is termed the pre-1989 state socialist regimes and the newly developing capitalist regimes. This is best articulated by Barbara Einhorn (1994). The second type is that which provides for an understanding of the regimes prior to 1989 as constituting state capitalist regimes (Reading, 1992; Rosenberg, 1989). This would suggest greater continuity both in class and gender terms in the public spheres of the region between the pre-Communist, Communist and post-Communist regimes. What we are therefore seeking to explore in the rest of the thesis is the degree of disjuncture/continuity in gendered representations in the public sphere under these different regimes and the possible reason(s) for this.

To find a critical tool for the latter I then

discussed the implications of feminist critiques of the public sphere. Out of the questions raised by these came the suggestion for an additional concept to assist explanations of (en)gendering processes. Drawing on earlier ideas by Federn and Renan, in relation to more recent suggestions by Billig and Morrison, I have suggested we conceptualize this in terms of 'socially inherited memory'. It is this theoretical framework and conceptualization of socially inherited memory which I will use in relation to Poland's recent mediatic transformations in the public sphere. Finally, I suggested that socially inherited memory is in some way embodied in language. Consequently, the ways in which the Polish language in particular embodies socially inherited memory is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 2:

### Social Memory, Language and Public Change

"The woman say, the language you speak poisons your glotti tongue palate lips. They say, the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you. " (Monique Wittig. *Les Guerilleres*)

"The language is the homeland" (Julian Tuwim)

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter a theoretical framework for the thesis was established and the concept of socially inherited memory formulated as a critical tool for understanding the (en) gendering of the public sphere in Poland. I suggested that language is an important part of the process by which gender biased mechanisms of exclusion are socially inherited. It is thus to language that we turn in this chapter. I begin by establishing just why it is that language should be given special consideration in a study of the public sphere. Then, I attend to the particularities of the gendered mechanisms within the Polish language. Finally, the implications of this in terms of socially inherited memory in the public sphere are explored.

#### 2.2 Why is Language Important in Relation to the Public Sphere?

Scholars have moved on a great deal in their understanding of language since Saint Augustine's description of language as a neutral system of words, transparent and true, which express and communicate our various thoughts and desires unambiguously (Saint Augustine cited in Wittgenstein, 1974: I). For at least 25 years, language has been understood by



feminists as crucial to an understanding of gendered hegemonic processes, yet, as Myra Macdonald notes, in discussions of the media language is often obscured:

Living as we do in a predominantly visual culture, the significance of words can often be overlooked. For many women, at the same time, being able to speak out, and be listened to, remains an important political objective (1996, 41).

In the 1990s, gender scholars certainly agree that language is a site of representational struggle in some form. But the ways in which this is seen to operate in terms of the public sphere varies, as Deborah Cameron (1985) illustrates. The first approach, according to Cameron, which is grounded in sociolinguistics, centres on the question of sex differences in language use which are said to distinguish men and women publicly. Work by Robin Lakoff on women's use of tag questions would fit into this category (Lakoff cited in Miller and Swift, 1976: 125). The second approach, which Deborah Cameron calls the reformist position, is that which focuses on the sexist structures and content of language, which are seen to classify women in a derogatory manner. Work in the 1970s by Miller and Swift (1976) takes this approach. The third approach, taken by radical feminists such as Spender (1980) and Daly (1979), views language as man-made; from this perspective men control the production of meaning in language and access to language; women, meanwhile, remain a muted group alienated from language. The fourth approach concerns those theories of gender and language related to psychoanalysis. These theories such as those articulated by Cixous (1981), Irigaray (1981) and Kristeva (1986) rework in different ways the Lacanian view of language which stresses that male and female children enter and have a different relationship with

the symbolic order, developing a gendered subjectivity through the acquisition of language.

What is important is that, despite their differences, these different approaches support the view that language is crucial to our understanding of gendered hegemonic processes within societies, and is therefore important to an understanding of representation in the public sphere, as indeed Spivak (1995) recommends. At the same time, there is a significant problem which these approaches share: this is the absence of an historical and contextual dimension to language and gender. Dale Spender, for example, argues that women are denied access to the most concentrated and powerful forms of the symbolic, such as drama and poetry. Yet in India and Brazil poetry is considered the proper medium for women (see Schipper, 1985:163). The status of poetry is also different in Poland, with the circumstances of censorship providing women with a particular kind of cultural space within this concentrated symbolic (Reading, 1992: Chapter 17). Thus it is not simply the case that women are denied voice in the concentrated symbolic but that there may be historically produced mechanisms which may make it more likely for some women to have representation in particular public territories but not others. In other words, women are denied representation in different media in different places; in Latin America it may be literary criticism, in India political essays (Schipper, 1985:13); in Poland, as we will see, the news room.

This neglect of the contextual and historical dimensions of language in many feminist approaches is, according to Madan Sarup, particularly apparent in

post-Lacanian accounts of language gendering. The essential problem is Lacan's reliance on Levi-Strauss's thesis that the incest taboo underlies all human societies. Sarup argues:

The use of Levi-Strauss's thesis means that the terms of the debate are fixed around 'the law of the Father'. Because Levi-Strauss's theory is a universalist one Lacan's account tends to collapse into an account of a universal subject who is not situated historically. (Sarup, 1988:31)

Toril Moi has also criticized Cixous and Irigaray for their ahistoricism (Moi, 1995: 112-119). Whilst Kristeva's approach avoids the essentialism that Cixous and Irigaray slip into, as well as providing a sense of public (en)gendering that would not be monolithic or universal, she does not indicate how the dominant symbolic order and feminine marginality connect with public structures.

In short, whilst these perspectives agree that language is somehow part of the (en)gendering process in society, which may be formulated in terms of a concept of ideology (Spender) or in terms of the development of subjectivity (Lacan), they lack a sense of the historical materiality of language. They do not attend to the part language plays in the social inheritance of gendered (re)presentations in the public realm.

This is, however, suggested by Marxist theorists such as Judith Williamson who argues that rather than timeless psychoanalytical universals we should look at the 'particular historical structures' which have produced the language of our present culture. She proposes a form of "concrete semiotics" (1996:30) in which we stop talking simply about masculinity and



femininity but 'what differences are expressed by the m/f divide'. She sees:

A Marxist semiotics as an enterprise that tries to understand both structure and its content - concerned with a system of meaning, but one whose meanings function within actual historical systems. (1996: 30)

Since it is the historical reproduction of gender in the public sphere which is the concern of this thesis I try to take this approach in examining the ways in which gender operates in the Polish language. I then relate this to the concept of socially inherited memory in the (en)gendering of representation in Poland's public sphere.

### 2.3 Why The Polish Language?

First, though, how should we define language in Poland? As Billig points out, what we mean by language in relation to nation-states is usually thought of as 'common-sense'. In the case of Poland, as well as speakers of Polish (90 per cent) there are also speakers of German and Russian (Plakwicz: 1992:76). Historically, from the early middle-ages onwards, Jews, fleeing from Western Europe, who settled in Poland, would have spoken Yiddish and Hebrew<sup>1</sup> (Richmond: 1995:76); before the second world war there were 3.5 million Jews in Poland, by the 1980s there were just 12, 000 (Plakwicz: 1992: 76):

The net result for historic times was a magnificent patchwork of peoples speaking a babble of languages and professing a profusion of faiths. Ethnic variety must be seen as one of the hallmarks of Poland's population until very recent times (Davies, 1990: 282).

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<sup>1</sup> In the Yavne network of schools in Poland, under the control of the Mizrachi Party, Hebrew was approved of for conversation, as well as instruction (Richmond, 1996: 481).

In pre-partition Poland the official languages were Polish and Latin in the kingdom and Ruski and Polish in the Grand Duchy. But as well as the four main Polish dialects in vernacular speech, there was also Kashub, Goraksi (highland brogue), Ruthenian, Bylorrysian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Platdeutsch, Tartar and Armenian. A variety of written alphabets including Roman, Cyrillic, Hebrew and Arabic were used. It was only over a long period of time that Polish came to be the language spoken by the majority in the region. (Davies, 1990: 317) and became in Julian Tuwim's famous phrase the homeland, the touchstone of Polish national identity (Davies, 1990:329). The emergence of Polish as the official language of the Polish state is thus, as Billig (1996) suggests in relation to the formations of nations more generally, inextricably tied up with its struggle for identity and sovereignty. It is for this reason, as well as the fact that Polish is now the official state language, that I focus on the Polish language.

## 2.4 Gender and the Polish Language

As we shall see in Chapter 3, the partitions in Poland in the 19th century meant that for more than one hundred years the Polish language was taught only in the private sphere - in the home and in underground schools. This teaching of Polish culture and language served to assist in the basis of Polish cultural identity. Material circumstances engineered the situation so that women were vested with the major part of this task (Siemieniska, 1986). The circumstances of linguistic transmission and production were thus privatized and woman-centred. But, the Polish language was in itself the vehicle for the absent and divided nation. Therefore, it may be the case that in particular respects the gendered



mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in Polish are different from those suggested by feminist scholars of the English language. In other words contemporary Polish embodies a social memory of its gendered historical transmission and struggle for dominance. To assess this I now turn to particular aspects of contemporary Polish in comparison with English.

## 2.5 Exclusion and Inclusion in Polish

A number of feminist academics (Spender, 1980; Daly, 1979) have argued that the English use of man to refer to generic human beings and men in particular serves to publicly exclude women in discourse. Since the word man is not a homonym its meaning cannot easily be worked out from the context. The result is that man is understood as the norm and woman the derivative. This point is made clearer if one considers the analogy that if one had a group A's and a group of B's and called the two groups together A, the status of the B's is delegitimized (Miller and Swift, 1976:81). This can be understood as a mechanism in the public engendering of representation by making the world appear to be male, unless proven otherwise. Consequently, men are often given credit for things women may have done (Miller and Swift, 1976:61). However, this dual use of man is absent in Polish. Instead there is the neutral singular person (człowiek) and plural people (ludzie).

Sociolinguistic scholars have also documented what are believed to be differences between male and female speech in English. Robin Lakoff, for example, maintains that women use more tag questions and rising inflections in their speech in order to appear more conciliatory (Lakoff cited in Miller and Swift, 1976: 125). Other studies have shown that women use more raised, weak syllables, more euphemisms and modal



constructions than men (Key, 1975:71; Jespersen cited by Miller and Swift, 1976:125). Some scholars have argued that, whether real or mythical, perceived language differences act as particular mechanisms of exclusion to certain spheres. Women, for example, may be disbelieved in court because their intonation and pitch may be interpreted as hysterical (Cameron, 1985:53). However, arguments concerning actual gendered linguistic differences in Polish language use, in terms of tag questions and modal constructions, are less sustainable. The use of a tag question at the end of a statement by a man or woman would be unusual. Similarly, in colloquial conversations the use of the conditional tense and modal constructions is generally less common (Reading, 1992:24).

The tradition of patronymy in English has been criticized for reinforcing 'the powerful myth that pervades the rest of our language - the myth that the human race is essentially male.' (Miller and Swift, 1976:25). Spender (1980) and Daly (1979) argue that patronymy excludes women from history; it eliminates continuity and tradition for women and makes it difficult to trace their ancestry. Titles such as Mrs., Miss and Ms., serve to make women the property of men, according to Spender (1980:36). The use of the generic man for humanity and the choice of a male pronoun is a way of alienating women from language and ideas (Spender, 1980: 149). Language sets up the male as norm and the female as minus male:

At the most basic level of meaning the status of the female is derived from the status of the male and on this has been enacted many strata of positive and negative classifications. (Spender, 1980:3)

However, simple patronymy is also less common in Poland. It is more usual for a woman to add her

husband's surname to their own (father's) name upon marriage. In this way continuity and tradition for women in Poland has been stronger. Nevertheless, one could argue that the implication is that marriage extends the woman; it somehow changes one aspect of her public representation, her name. The single woman by implication signifies publicly with her name that she is unmarried, unextended. The man, whether married or not, remains publicly the same.

In certain respects then it seems that the Polish language is more gender-inclusive than English. In other respects, however, the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion are similar to those in other European societies. For example, the English pronoun system is said to reinforce the gendered system of excluding women from the public sphere in discourse (Nilsen, 1973 cited by Miller and Swift, 1976; Cameron, 1985). In old English the gender of a word bore no relation to the absence or presence of sex. By middle English arbitrary gender was breaking down to what we now have, which is a natural gender system. However, natural gender is only natural if one is male (Miller and Swift, 1976:71) with many common gender nouns assumed to be male, which results in newspaper headlines that read '14 survivors, 3 of them women' (Cameron, 1985:66). The effects of this, according to Nilsen's study, is that a boy experiences the world in terms of a continuum between himself and the animate world, whereas for a girl her reality is continually violated. For a boy: 'a link is strengthened between his own sense of self and other living things. For a young girl no such continuum exists' (cited by Miller and Swift, 1976:48). The system of pronouns in Polish at first glance appears to be arbitrary. Houses and elephants are masculine, books and parrots are feminine, meat and towns are neutral. However, in the



plural form of verbs there is one form which is used for men, even if there are women in the group. And there is another form for objects, animals and women (Mazur, 1986:17). The significance of this is that one man is worth more than any number of women; conversely, women are worth the same as animals and objects within language.

The words for woman and man, wife and husband also embody the memory of different sexual roles in Polish. The word for woman 'kobieta' before the 18th century was a pejorative word. The pre-fix kob comes from pigswill as it was a woman's duty to care for the pigs. The Polish for wife 'zona' is from the Latin genus meaning 'to give birth to'. Both of the words for man 'mezczyzna' and husband 'maz' have as their etymological roots the verb to think (Doroszeski, 1980; Encyclopedia Powszechna, 1974). Women are thus located in discourse with the particular, the domestic, with animals, and are described in terms of an historical social role and biological function. Men in contrast are located with the general, with the mind and with rationality, those qualities ascribed in Western discourse with the polity and the public sphere. In the phrases for getting married women and men are also located differently in terms of the private and public realms. A woman goes out for a husband "wychodzic za maz", or, is given to a husband "wydawac za maz", but a man "zenic sie" takes a wife. Thus in the discourse of marriage women are the property passed from the private sphere of their father to the private sphere of the husband. The only sense in which women go out into the public realm then is for the temporary and private purpose of finding and being given to a husband. The situation is best summarised by a table.



Table 2: The Socially Inherited Memory of Women and Men in Aspects of Discourse in Polish

	Socially inherited value	Socially inherited role	Socially inherited location
Women	Less than men	Domestic Biological Labour giver	Private (Public only for private means)
Men	One man =infinite number of women	Thinking Reasoning Capital owner	Public

The historic (en)gendering of the public sphere is also remembered through occupational discourse in which in Polish role suffixes mark out women in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup> Almost every noun has its masculine and feminine version, in which the feminine version usually has a suffix added to the masculine version. The female role in occupational discourse is thus derivative. Suffixes remember the gendered development of the structure of industries: most service jobs have nouns with feminine versions, but manual trades such as plumber, fitter, rigger, carpenter, engineer have only masculine forms. There are certain exceptions: weavers can be male and female; one can only be a female cleaner "sprzataczka" or toilet cleaner "babcia

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<sup>2</sup> French feminists, as well as radical feminists such as Spender, have criticized naming and suffixes for denigrating women and making us invisible. Gauthier for example points out:

In French the word writer does not have a feminine form. For poet there is poetess, a particular word, it is synonymous with foolish innocence ... or lady-like respectability. (Gauthier, 1981:164)

klosetowa". There are only male farmers; but peasants are male and female (Reading, 1992:25-6). These inherited linguistic differences are part of a gendered hegemonic process which is not accidental but socially engineered: occupational suffixes were introduced in the 1920s as more women entered the public sphere in the form of the paid workforce (Miller and Swift, 1976: 71). Women and men now inscribe themselves into discourse which marks them out differently in public spaces.

At the same time within the discourse of obscenity women are publicly humiliated (Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge, 1993:267). In English there are a greater number of obscene words which are insulting to women (Miller and Swift, 1976:138). In Polish too, verbal insults are gendered, in ways which are profoundly insulting to women: 'the everyday language in which we describe women is often vulgar and jokes about women are eagerly told in all circles' (Czykwin, 1988: 24). For example, the term 'kobieta samotna' literally means a lonely woman, a woman who has not married, or who is divorced or widowed. The implication is that a woman must be lonely if she is without a man. There is no equivalent for the single 'lonely' man. Instead, there is 'kawaler', which is roughly equivalent to the English bachelor which also denotes gallant, and derives from the word for knight or cavalier.

As in English, a number of words reduce the status of women to that of the sexual object: there is 'lalka' (doll), 'towa' (nice bit of crumpet\skirt), and sztuka (piece; also an art work or play). A woman can be an old cow, old monkey, simply the colour of her hair, or an attractive woman for whom one has no respect. A woman can be 'baba', which has no equivalent insult in English, but roughly translated



means old hag or witch. The most common swear word is 'kurwa' or whore: hence the anger, frustration, and hatred one feels may be relieved by expelling it into the vessel of human sexual depravity, the woman who asks for money to have sex with a man. As

Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge argued there are many sexually debasing insults aimed at women in Polish: '(a woman might be called a 'rura' or pipe), while men are only insulted by reference to women, as in 'skurwysyn' (son of a bitch).' (1993:267) In Spender's view insults against women are not merely a reflection of patriarchy but are a form of social control:

They are verbal violence against women, expressing both our essential qualities in patriarchy (repositories of sexuality, prostitutes) and male woman-hatred, which makes women afraid ... women are daily humiliated" (Cameron, 1985:78)

Despite the emphasis on woman as sexual object in Polish, there are at the same time silences in language in terms of words to describe male violence against women and sexual violence against children:

There is a choice between complicated legal terminology and convoluted euphemisms. There are no concepts or equivalents for marital rape or indecent assault and for child sexual abuse the nearest one can say is 'wykorzystywanie seksualne dzieci'. It sounds pretty nonsensical in Polish and literally means to make the most of a sexual child. (Reading, 1992:27)

The word for incest 'kazirodstwo' is defined as 'sexual relations between family relations' (Encyklopedia Powszechna, 1974). As in English, the word has connotations of corruption, pollution and contamination; and makes no distinction between the ten year old survivor of father-daughter-rape (Ward, 1980:175) and two cousins engaging in mutually



consenting sexual relations. Such a linguistic gap, common also in Western societies, is significant in that it assists in the maintenance of public power relations by denying the gendered abuse of power in the private realm (Ward, 1980). The word for rape in Polish, 'gwałt' or 'zwałcic', denotes an act of violence or force. However, there is, it seems an element of ambiguity within the words because of their semantic link with 'samogwałt' masturbation, literally, self-rape.

As in English, the discourse of sexuality is gendered. Polarization and the location of women within negative semantic space together serve to make women's experiences invisible or classified as non-data; language tends to provide a monodimensional view of sexuality. Spender argues, like Greer in The Female Eunuch, that it is significant that words referring to the sexual act between men and women emphasize penetration, such as fucking, screwing, rooting, whereas a woman-centred word might be something like 'enclosure'. The word 'foreplay' is also misleading since it can be an end in itself for women, argues Spender. In addition it is significant that in English men can be virile and potent, but a woman can only be a nymphomaniac (Spender, 1980:175). In Polish one can have sexual intercourse 'stosunek seksualny' which sounds rather clinical, as in English. One can also make love, as in English; but whereas in English there is a host of other slang words, in Polish there is only 'pierdolic'. A woman cannot 'pierdolic' a man, but a man can 'pierdolic' a woman or a man. What two women do is thereby outside discourse since: 'in Polish sexual slang the penis is central and supreme.' (Reading, 1992:27). The linguistic representation of the sexual act is biased towards the action of the male and thus in public discourse the penis, and by

extension the male, is dominant and supreme, even though between mutually consenting adults, whether heterosexual or homosexual, the act in private maybe otherwise, and understood to be such.

Also of significance is the language used to refer to women who choose to challenge the established order. Feminists in Polish are referred to as 'feministka' and 'walczaca feministka', both of which have negative connotations, including fighting and man-hater. Further, according to most Polish encyclopedia feminism does not exist; although one does describe it as a movement which was active during the French Revolution in 1789 and another states that it consisted of a 19th century movement for enfranchisement (Jankowska, 1989). This is what I would term a classic instance of discourse relocation. The existence of a feminist movement is temporally relocated to the 19th century: this has the effect of denying the existence of a contemporary feminist movement. Or, feminism is spatially relocated to another country: France. This has the effect of denying the historical development of feminism within Poland by different ethnic groups, when empirically the situation in the 20th century is clearly otherwise (Reading, 1992). Thus, representation of public resistance to established gender relations is made invisible and publicly mystified. To publicly campaign as a feminist in Poland is therefore to risk relocation oneself.

Finally, one area of the Polish language which is replete with linguistic watchtowers to police gender relations are 'homely' proverbs and superstitions. These represent women as follows:

*A woman out of the wagon, and the horses have an*

*easier job*

*(Baba z wazu konian lzej)*

*Where the devil cannot go, there he sends a woman  
(Gdzie diabel nie moze tam baba posle)*

*There is no meat without bones, no woman without spite  
(Nie ma miesa bez kosci, a baby bez zlosci)*

*Cats and women should stay in the home (kotki i  
kobiety w domu siedziec powinny)*

*A woman on the threshold, peace under foot (baba w  
progi, cisza w nogi) (Szymanski, 1984: 90)*

Homely discourse represents women as a burden, more evil than the devil, spiteful, fit only for the home, although put out preferably on the doorstep so as not to make a racket. Superstitions, are similarly pejorative. If you see a nun or a woman with an empty bucket then you are bound to have bad luck. If you are a single woman you must never sit at the corner of a table because then you will never marry. However, you can sit in the corner of the room, and patiently wait, and 'then you will be found' by the man of your dreams (Czykwin, 1988:24). Such homely discourse continues the process of publicly devaluing women in relation to men.

## 2.6 Language and historical change

However, what my analysis implies thus far is that the Polish language is unchanging and homogeneous in its representation of women. This is not the case. If we take a diachronic view we find that, significantly, key references to women's value have changed over time. For example, one way of complementing a woman, particularly amongst the women of the older generation



was to use the word *powprawnie*, which literally means that one has improved, or gained a plumper appearance (Eva Bednarowicz, Personal Communication: 1990). Such a complement is common in poorer countries, since to have a little extra fat is to indicate publicly one's wealth. This view is giving way to one which values thinness in women, as in Western Europe (Secondary School Girls, Lodz, Personal Communication: 1991). Thinness has become the public symbol of private wealth: one has the money to eat healthily, the leisure time and money to exercise, the capital to provide enough security to ensure that even if one is without surplus fat, should things take a turn for the worse, one's wife won't starve.

What is clear from this example, however, is that there may have been some change in the way that women are represented in Poland, but that the underlying mechanisms for engendering this are the same: what underlies the complement that one is plumper or thinner is the inherited social memory of a woman's lesser value in relation to a man. This provides the context for what is a change but which in both cases refers to a territorialization of the body of a woman as part of an indication not only of her value, but her value as representing the capital of her partner or family.

There is also the implication in the discussion thus far that there is no public resistance to the devalued representation of women in different discourses. But, as in Western democracies in the 1970s, Poland's feminists in the 1990s attempted to enfranchise women linguistically. For example, in a workshop in Lodz in January 1991 it was pointed out that Polish does not have equivalents yet for words coined by feminists in the West for particular aspects

of women's aggression. The meeting coined the Polish 'tokenizm' and 'assertivenosc' as equivalents for tokenism and assertiveness (Want Project, 1991: Lodz Feminist Workshop). Such linguistic attempts at public enfranchisement are the equivalent of attempts at legal reform according to Julia Kristeva:

There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. (Kristeva, 1980:65)

However, it is also important to note that to many women such newly-coined words usually only benefit a small elite with the cultural capital in the first place; they are worthless currency to those who do not have access to them. As the organizer of the National Solidarity Women's unit explained:

Women from Solidarity rejected the feminists. The feminists - they are very articulate and they spoke a different language from the union women. Although there were feminists from Lodz-they were accepted, because they spoke in a language that was understood. The others used very academic language. (Malgorzata Taraszewicz, personal communication, 1990)

Further, resistance is limited since particular words which may have become building blocks of Western feminists attempts to shift or understand public engendering mechanisms are tainted by the socially inherited memory of previous regimes. For example, consciousness-raising, an essential element of Western feminist thought, is a problematic word to Poles. The word 'swiadomosc', to become conscious of something, inhabits what Spender would term a negative semantic space. It is associated with being forced to know the negative consequences of your actions. To become conscious is to become aware that one should not go beyond certain boundaries; that one must not do particular things (Eva Bednarowocz, Personal



Communication: 1990). This is very different from the sense of gaining an understanding of a situation or oneself as the first step in liberation. Polish *swiadosc* is gained by the fear of the belt, or the fear of Eternal damnation in hell, rather than gained through shared experience supported by others (Reading, 1992: 210). *Swiadosc* has also undergone what Spender would term a process of pejoration under the old Communist regime's distorted version of Marxism. *Swiadosc* is associated with a consciousness of class and capitalist structures forced on people through ideological teaching in schools and in higher education (Secondary School Girls, Lodz, Personal Communication: 1991).

## 2.7 Conclusion

What I would argue from this is that linguistic (en) gendering mechanisms are historically produced and will therefore vary according to the industrial and colonial development of a place and its people. Secondly, that there are gender fossils in language, as the Polish language shows. Words such *kobieta* (woman) and *meczyzna* (man) in Polish resonate with what Pateman calls the 'repressed story of political right'. Through them men and women inherit and are inscribed into the memory of past gender structures and public values. Such fossils I would liken not so much to the isolated ammonite, but more to chalk, the fossil bed of millions of crushed sea creatures laid down in the Cretaceous period, with which our senses are so familiar we fail to recognize the structure of its organic resonance. Language then communicates and inscribes us within a socially inherited memory which is gendered. Further, whatever other changes may have occurred to the public representation of women in the 1980s and early 1990s, these linguistic mechanisms are



still there. Certain new words may have been produced, to alter in some way the mechanisms of exclusion to the public sphere. But, these need to be understood within the context of Polish class relations and the cultural capital required to access them. Further, the impact of Western representations of women in the public sphere, such as imported television programmes depicting rich and thin women (such as Dallas) or newly established Polish versions of European women's magazines (Elle, Cosmopolitan) may have contributed to a shift in the way a woman's body is valued, but, linguistically, it is still her body which is valued within a gendered grammatical structure which pejorates women publicly in relation to men. Overall, this then would suggest that the representation of women in the public sphere since 1989 may have changed very little.

However, before we can look at more recent events we need to unravel further the historical development of the genesis of political right during the period when Polish became endorsed as the language of the 'homeland'. Hence in the next chapter I look at aspects of the gendered development of the public sphere during Poland's identity formation between 1792 and 1939. The socially inherited memory of this, either repressed or recalled, may well have influenced the continuance of (en)gendering mechanisms today.

### Chapter 3: The Gendered Development of Social Memory: the Public Sphere in Poland 1792-1939

Denial, repression and dissociation operate on a social as well as individual level... like traumatized people, we have been cut off from the knowledge of our past. Like traumatized people, we need to understand the past in order to reclaim the present and the future. (Judith Herman Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror 1994: 2)

Poland is not yet lost, while we still live  
Polish National Anthem

#### 3.1 Introduction

Thus far I have established the theoretical basis for the thesis and argued that the conceptualization of socially inherited memory may offer the explanatory tool required to explain the continuation of public (en)gendering mechanisms. A key part of socially inherited memory, I argued, is language since it is through language we inherit and are inscribed into the memory of gender structures and public values. Yet, how in Poland did these past structures and public values come about? In this third chapter of Part One of the thesis I establish the historical background to the early formation of the public sphere in Poland and attend to the particular circumstances which prevailed to create conceptions of female political activity. These conceptions of female political activity, I argue, are part of the repressed story of political right which has formed Poland's socially inherited memory; a socially inherited memory in which certain aspects were remembered but other aspects were forgotten or suppressed. I begin by giving an outline of Polish 19th century history and follow this with an examination of aspects of women in Polish society in

the 19th century. I then move on through to the first half of the 20th century up until the Second World War. The chapter introduces and analyzes the representation of Mother Poland (Matka Polka) and the importance of the Church and the Nation in ongoing aspects of public (en)gendering processes. The legacy of the 19th century and pre-war representations of Polish women and Jewish women in relation to the development of political right, as we shall see, may have formed the basis for a socially inherited memory that has impacted on the (en) gendering of public space under Communism and post-Communism.

### 3.2 Poland as a Nation State

A key factor in Poland's history as a nation state was its continual struggle for identity and recognition. Unlike an island state, Poland has no natural boundaries, except for the Carpathian mountains to the South. Subsequently, its history is one of invasion by other states and peoples (Reddaway, Penson, Haledin and Dybolski, 1950). In 1772 part of Poland was partitioned between Prussia and Russia. Despite a "spirited defense" organized by General Kosciuszko a second partition was declared in 1793 (Davies, 1990: 310). Kosciuszko mounted another defense known as the National Rising in 1794 which was put down by General Suvorov. Poland was then divided into three sections between the Russians, Prussians and Austrians (Davies, 1990: 311). Poland as a nation state was erased from the European map:

Having thus changed the boundary lines, the partitioning powers at once settled the necessary changes in inscriptions, assuring their new subjects in gracious proclamations that this had happened for all time. (Reddaway, Penson, Haledin and Dybolski, 1951: 74)



In 1806 Napoleon Bonaparte set up a provisional Polish government. This was dismantled with Bonaparte's retreat from Moscow. The division of Poland between Austria, Prussia and Russia was confirmed at the Congress of Vienna in 1814. The rest of the 19th century is dotted with attempts at insurrection followed by harsh repression (1830, 1846, 1863, 1905).

It was only after the First World War that Poland regained its independence and returned to the European map. However, in August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to divide up Poland between them. At the end of the Second World War Poland was reinstated as a nation state but its borders were moved several hundred miles to the West. The influence of the Soviet Union on the new socioeconomic and political system in Poland made the country a satellite in the Eastern Bloc sphere of influence. As with the partitions of the 19th century, Polish history was rewritten, street names were changed, Russian was made a compulsory language in schools and people were forcibly moved inside the new borders from East to West (Reading, 1992:18-19).

### 3.3 Gender effects of Partitioning and Nationalism

The history of Poland with its partitioning and struggle for national identity points to a particular process in terms of the socially inherited memory of the gendered development of mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion to the public sphere. First, as Davies points out, the partitions meant that the Poland of the Enlightenment was effectively 'killed by Despotism' (Davies, 1990: 311). In general accounts of the development of the public sphere it is argued that it came out of the principles of the Enlightenment in Europe and the gradual extension of limited rights to the working classes and women in terms of education,

enfranchisement and property rights (see Chapter One). As we shall see, in Poland the partitions meant that this process was disrupted with particular consequences for women and their public representation (Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 51)

First, in accounts of the pre-industrial attitude to women it is clear that there were fewer mechanisms against women entering the public sphere than during industrialisation (Wyczanski, 1981: 141-150). Many of the landed estates of the 16th century were administered by single women known as *Dworka* (Wyczanski, 1981: 141). At the same time, wives were allowed a public voice, but not unmarried women. As Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa puts it: "Already in the 16th century it was said that the wise and esteemed matrons of Poland should be citizens" (1986:51). By 1726 at a meeting of the Polish Sejm it was decreed that it was forbidden not only:

to interfere with women in their public affairs but even to interfere with their places close at hand to the platform on which the married women deliberated. (Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 52)

There was thus in place the principal that some women should have public representation and some public voice. Although they were not, as the writer Wladyslaw Konopczynski argued at the time in *Kiedy Nami Rzadzily Kobiety*, to be permitted direct involvement in public affairs on an equal level with men (cited in Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 51).

However, with the first partitioning of Poland such rights for women, along with rights of citizenship for men, were lost in the annexed territories, which amounted to roughly 30 percent of the country (Dydyński, 1994: 15). The first partition had the effect of a "cold shower" on the Poland that remained (Dydyński, 1994:15). However, the Paris revolutions



reasserted the question of the nation, citizenship and politics (Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 51). Consequently, in the Great Polish Sejm of 1788-1791 a number of important reforms in the public sphere were made, particularly in the areas of public administration, education and the military (Dydyński, 1994:15). The question of women's rights in the public realm again came to the fore. In 1791, a new liberal constitution was ratified which was known as the Constitution of the Third of May. This Constitution, applicable only to the remaining part of Poland, was based on the principles of the Enlightenment in terms of establishing the basis for a liberal democratic state (Dydyński, 1994: 15). In the Constitution of 3 May women were called upon to be full citizens of the country. And in 1794, the commander in chief, General Kosciuszko, acknowledged the special role of women (Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 52). On these rights, Jan Kitowicz, wrote in his journals of the period:

The Polish women, who before had no place in public affairs now begin to imitate the French women ... slowly they want to be lawmakers and have representation in the Sejm. (Cited in Wawrzowska-Wierciochowa, 1986: 52).

What should be noted here is that although before the first partition married women did have limited public rights, this fact becomes obscured, at least in the account of the development of political rights by Jan Kitowicz. This denial, in his discourse, of women's previous rights is then followed with the spatial relocation of the campaign for women's rights to elsewhere - to France. This has the effect of making feminism - or the campaign for equal human rights - not Polish but other or foreign. This as we shall see later has had important consequences for the development of feminism in Poland.

With the Second Partition of 1793, instigated by



Catherine the Great, the embryonic liberal democracy was crushed and the reforms abolished by force (Dydyński, 1994:15). With the third partition of 1795 Poland disappeared from the European map for 123 years, taking with it one of Europe's earliest constitutional attempts to establish equal gender rights.

### 3.4 Nationalist struggles and the development of Mother Poland

The eradication of Poland from the European map with the partitions had other effects in terms of gender representation in the public sphere. Although Poland as a state had ceased to exist, Polish culture, language and to some extent print media continued, although fragmented, underground. The central core of identity and continuity during the 19th century for Polish culture and traditions was, according to Magdalena Sokolowska, the family. She maintains that the family was the "fortress" and "bastion of the national spirit" (Sokolowska, 1977:350). Polish schools and institutions were banned and it was within the private sphere that children learnt about Polish history, literature and language. As Sokolowska points out:

The guiding spirit of these activities was the women. Even though their formal scope within the patriarchal pattern was limited to the household, their actual tasks and functions were of particular importance under the specific conditions prevailing in Poland. (Sokolowska, 1977: 350)

When Polish men were killed, imprisoned or sent to Siberia by foreign rulers this left the women to bring up the children. Women, therefore, became the main cultural channel (Siemieniska, 1986:90). Hence national culture was articulated not through the public sphere or the state but through the private domains of families and women in particular.

This gendered articulation of Polish culture was embodied within the figure of Mother Poland (Matka Polka). In her ideal form Mother Poland was strong but also selfless. Sokolowska states, for example: "Fortitude and adherence to duty were demanded of her and her importance in bringing up the children and in the household was emphasized" (Sokolowska, 1981:107). It is important to note, however, that the figure of Mother Poland and the values she embodied were not solely the product of the partitions. The importance of self-sacrifice for women as a sign of patriotism preceded the partitions, as Donimirski shows (1988:190-196).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the participation and over-identification by women with Mother Poland during the partition years is evident, according to Siemienicka, from the number of women who wore black clothes as if in mourning (1986:10). The memoirs of Polish revolutionaries often paid tribute to the mother or grandmother who schooled them in their patriotism (Davies: 1981:41). The Nationalist, Alexandra Pilsudska, wrote for example:

My grandmother was a woman of great intelligence and strength of character, and in the breadth of her mind and reading undoubtedly excelled the majority of her contemporaries. After her husband's death, she ran the estate herself, controlling the servants and the workmen with an iron hand ... patriotism was the main motor of her life. The entire passion in her intense powerful nature was devoted to the cause of her country's freedom ... and in her conspiratorial work of the January rising she played a prominent part in the neighbourhood, chairing secret meetings in the house and carrying guns. She took on danger with utter contempt. The failure of the rising provoked the greatest trauma of her whole life. Hence forward, she always wore the same black dress with its white lace at the neck and cuffs, and on her finger a ring decorated with a white Cross in pearls on black enamel (Pilsudska, 1960:56).

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<sup>1</sup> Such self-sacrifice for women patriots was embedded in the legend of Wanda who it was said killed herself rather than accept a forced marriage to a Prussian in 1273 (Donimirski, 1988:191)

The grandmother's ring - a white cross on black enamel - is one of mourning. One of mourning not just for close family but for all those who died in the uprising. The ring indicates that, symbolically, the grandmother was married to her husband, the nation and the Roman Catholic Church. Such rings were worn only by true patriots (Reading, 1992:21). A true patriot is "someone who loves Poland above everything else in the world ... and who will abandon everything, even life itself for freedom" (Pilsudska, 1960:56). Mother Poland then is the essence of female self-sacrifice. But, she is also a representation in which emptiness prevails: the Polish for widow, *wdowa*, like the English, is an historical legacy from the sanskrit meaning empty. The development of this representation of Mother Poland places women on a pedestal (in terms of strength and courage) whilst simultaneously denying her meaning, except in relation to loss (of family, Poland).

The partitions and the censorship by the ruling states imposed on Polish writers meant that literature developed a political status and impact greater than other media forms. Poetry, in particular, because of the late development of the novel in the former Polish territories, came to be seen as an expression of the collective will of an oppressed people, with the poet in the 19th century hailed as their charismatic leader<sup>2</sup>. As in other East European countries, such as Czechoslovakia, the equation of woman with nation was linked with that of organised religion<sup>3</sup>. In the case of

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<sup>2</sup> Barbera Einhorn, drawing on an unpublished paper by Bozena Uminska, 'the portrayal of women in Polish literature' (1991) says that the novel emerged as a literary genre after the 1850s in Poland. (Einhorn, 1994:252. Endnote, 36.)

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the imaging of women in the literatures of other East European countries see Einhorn, 1994.



Poland this meant the Roman Catholic Church. The Romantic movement in Poland was nationalistic and dominated by what was called Messianism. With Messianism the central dynamic image of the lost Poland is compared with Christ, the savior of the world. What is important for us is that Christ in this equation becomes female, as for example in the work of Adam Mickiewicz (see Reddaway et al. 1950:323) and in one of the most famous poems of the period Dawn by Zymunt Krasinski:

... And I heard  
 a voice that called in the eternal sky  
 as to the world I gave thee a son  
 So to it, Poland, thee I give  
 My only son he was - and shall be,  
 but in thee my purpose in him lives  
 Be thou then the truth, as he is, everywhere  
 Thee I make my daughter.  
 (Krasinski, 1843 cited in Reddaway, 1950:323)

In such poetry it was not the Mother of God that represented Poland, but the daughter. The female is represented as the nation as both Mother and Daughter. As Mother (Poland) woman is a vessel for the re-birth of the Polish nation, a receptacle for culture and language; the daughter is she who suffers and sacrifices her life like Christ. Poland as the equivalent of a female Christ provided a Christian explanation for the partitioning and suffering of the nation. The daughter, like Mother Poland, takes on heroic proportions. At the same time, the traditional qualities of passivity and sacrifice and unconditional goodness associated with Christ are shifted from the (unacceptable) male sphere to the (acceptable) female sphere reinforcing the stoic Mother Poland. The person of action then becomes not Poland-daughter-Christ but the (male) poet in the persona of an omnipotent and omniscient God, the creator. The overriding message of such a representation was: "Women - you are the heroines, the saviors, but keep quiet and turn the

other cheek; your suffering is for the good of humanity, for Poland" (Reading, 1992:52).<sup>4</sup>

### 3.5 The working situation of women in Poland in the 19th Century

The spheres and structures of employment for women in the nineteenth century are important for the ways in which they are socially remembered within more recent employment patterns. One of the main areas of employment for women was in agriculture, although as in the rest of Europe in the nineteenth century the industrial revolution did lead to an increase in the number of women employed outside agriculture (Zarnowska, 1991:2). Most women working on the land were on family peasant holdings rather than as paid farm hands or agriculture workers. The social status of women and men depended on the size of the peasant holding. For young women, in particular, who grew up in the ordinary peasant villages of partitioned Poland, their material reality included particular mechanisms of oppression not felt by the young men of the time, as Narkiewicz illustrates:

The girls were at the mercy of the master, his son or the labourers. They often had to leave the service pregnant, not knowing who the father was. Serving girls slept in cowsheds on wooden benches covered in straw; the labourers slept in stables. When the master was devout and cared for the maid, she slept in the kitchen. Then the boys could not get near her ... but then they would find one who slept in the cowshed. (Narkiewicz, 1976:34)

The other main sphere of employment for women in the nineteenth was in the textile industry. This, as in Western Europe, brought the majority of women into the unskilled labour market, replacing skilled weavers and

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<sup>4</sup> Even in the literature of mainstream women writers representations of women tend to emphasize self-sacrifice and self-denial. This was also the case in Czech literature. See Einhorn, 1994:230.

spinners. Zarnowska argues that this had important consequences for the economic status of women:

...the entry of women into the labour market meant, as if by definition, the entry of unskilled labour. This starting point affected for many decades the working woman's social status, placing her on a low rung of hierarchy in industry. (Zarnowska, 1991:2)

Women accounted for 46.3 percent of the textile workforce in 1908. In some sections, such as the linen industry, women constituted half of the workforce. Women also accounted for a high percentage of the clothing industry workers. In the Congress Kingdom women workers in the clothing factories made up 57 percent of those working in the industry; in Galicia the figure was still substantial but lower at 40 percent. The tobacco and cigarette industries were staffed almost exclusively by women. By the end of the 19th century the female workforce had stabilized at one third of industrial workers. In the first decade of the 20th century this increased to 34.5 percent in 1908 (Zarnowska, 1991:3-4). This pattern of growth continued overall, although as Zarnowska points out, economic crises such as that in the 1930's tended to hit women hardest:

The proportional and absolute growth of women's employment took place on the whole when the economic situation was good. When it deteriorated, the first to be dismissed were women, who were usually employed in auxiliary work or in work not requiring high qualifications. (Zarnowska, 1991:4)

On the whole then women constituted a similar proportion of the workforce at the end of the 19th century as the first 30 years of the 20th century in other industrial countries of Europe <sup>5</sup>. One difference, Zarnowska argues, was the number of women in the

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<sup>5</sup> Lovendowski (1986:18) shows that throughout Western Europe until about 1850 agriculture provided the main employment for women. This was gradually superseded by the textile and then service industries.



agricultural and service industries. Prior to World War One, in Warsaw, half the number of women employed were in service. In 1892 for every one woman in industry, there were five women servants. This proportion gradually declined, although with a minor reversal of this trend in Warsaw during the economic crises of the 1930s when the 19th century occupational structure of women was restored (Zarnowska, 1991:6). The proportion of white collar workers employed in administration, education and the professions was small in comparison with other European countries. For example in 1897 white collar women constituted only five percent and this had risen to only 13 percent by 1931 (Zarnowska, 1935:125).

The increase in the number of working women was due to economic necessity: Their wages were needed to supplement the man's earnings which were "insufficient to maintain a family" (Zarnowska, 1991:7). Women's wages then were a supplement to those of men and this is reflected in wages differentials: women were paid 50 percent less than men, according to Zarnowska (1991:7). However, Kaczynska (1970) argues that women were paid the same as men at the end of the 19th century when it came to doing piece work. And Krahelska (1932) maintains that during the First World War in Poland men's wages declined and women earned 3/4 of the wages of men. By the mid-1920s the currency had stabilized and there was a return to pre-War gender wage structures, with women in industry earning just 65 percent of the wage for a male unskilled worker. Zarnowska therefore believes that the difference between men and women's wages in industry in Poland was as great as in the industrialized European countries (Zarnowska, 1991:8).

Married women in all sectors worked as well as single

parents, despite the lack of maternity leave for women until after Polish independence in 1918. A quarter of the working female population in the Congress Kingdom in 1897 were married (Zarnowska, 1991:8). Although this proportion was only 20 percent in the service sector (Zarnowska, 1980:130). Overall, the number of married working women in industry was lower than in other industrialized European countries such as Belgium, Switzerland and Austria. This was due to the lack of protective legislation, social amenities and childcare facilities (Zarnowska, 1991:10). Reports by women labour inspectors in interwar Poland show that women tended to do work that could be reconciled with the functions of housewife and motherhood. Despite this, working women were "overburdened by paid and household work" according to factory reports of the period (Krahelska, 1936 cited in Zarnowska, 1991:11).

However, there was also another class of women. These were the skilled workers within the clothing industry who produced luxury clothes such as embroidered underwear and lace. These women worked in artisan workshops or at home and were usually from the impoverished gentry or intelligentsia. Such women were often forced to take such work as a result of loss of land and pauperization. Zarnowska comments:

Landowning and intellectual circles regarded it as a patriotic act when a woman took up paid work to support a family victimized by the partitions. This enhanced the prestige of working women in broad public opinion. (1991:3)

Because of this, and the changing industrial scene, employment of women in factories in the region increased in the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1865 13 percent of workers in factories were women; by 1914 this had risen to 34 percent (Kancewicz, 1974: 23). An enormous number of women were employed in textile factories (50 percent) and in agricultural

production (20 percent). Women employed in heavy industry, such as metal factories, were ten percent of the work force (Kancewicz, 1974: 23). Women employed in industry were, on the whole, located in the great industrial centers such as Lodz and Bialstok. On the whole, women were paid one third less than men (Korespondencje Robotnicze, 1957: 167). Conditions in factories were appalling for both men and women, although they were ameliorated a little with the beginning of factory inspections which began in Krolestwie in 1891 (Szyszko, 1986: 85).

Despite the unequal conditions for women some women did break through the mechanisms of exclusion. Women challenged the efforts to circumscribe their activities in all areas, including science, the arts, politics, medicine and sport (Krol, 1988:16). And as we shall see in the next section there was always a handful of women that successfully entered the public sphere<sup>6</sup>. Gradually, in the nineteenth century with the advent of the women's movements these numbers grew.

### 3.6 The struggle for working class and women's representation in the public sphere

In some respects, the partitions and subsequent development of gendered nationalist representation circumscribed women's activities in the political sphere (Narkiewicz, 1976). Populist movements for national liberation were male-dominated and used women in support roles in the private sphere. The peasant populist Wincenty Witos for example went home after his army service, married and with his wife's dowry bought more land to farm. Narkiewicz comments:

He was very lucky in his marriage, for apart from

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the first women student entered the Jagiellonian University in Cracow in 1415 (Krol, 1988: 15)



having a pleasant wife, he also found that she was an excellent farmer and manager. She arranged everything to do with the farm and the household, so that he could get on with his political activity. (Narkiewicz, 1976:56)

By the end of the 19th century, movements for national liberation, both populist and socialist in inclination, became embedded within the ideologies of the Roman Catholic Church. An illustration of this combination of socialism with Catholicism is a strike in Cracow in 1896:

On the 8th of June the strike ended with the celebration of high mass in the Marian Church, after which workers formed a procession, which went to Grodzka Street, singing the Red flag. ('Naprzod' 11.6.1896 cited in Buszko, 1961: 110)

One consequence of this, according to Walewska (1909), a leading Polish feminist writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, was that because of the partitioning of Poland, the struggle for national identity tended to take precedence over women's struggles for public representation and gender equality:

The movement towards equality of the sexes can only be of a preparatory nature. The women of Wielkopolska, however, are so busy defending the few remaining areas of national life that they have little time to think of their own liberation (Walewska, 1909: 40)

That is not to say that women did not develop their own public spaces. They certainly did. As early as 1830 the Society of Ladies Patriotic Charity was founded. In 1845 to 1848 the Society of Enthusiasts was active. Between 1861 and 1864 there were women's groups called the "Fives" which were underground groups operating in Warsaw. In Silesia there were the Circles of Polish Women and in the Poznan region there

were associations of women called "Warta" and "Promien" (Siemieniska, 1986:10).

However, very often the dominance of the national question meant that women's struggles to break the mechanisms of exclusion to the public sphere, in areas such as education and enfranchisement, were often articulated through nationalist discourses, including the ideal re-presentation of women as Mother Poland. Walewska, for example, said:

Thought of the nation never leaves us for a second; the same is true of our association of self-liberating women, sincerely devoted to work for the education of the people and raising cultural standards. (Walewska Cited in Siemieniska, 1986:44)

Nevertheless, although nationalist discourses were important and the re-presentation of Mother Poland made it difficult for women to negotiate the patriotic Catholic Mother, there were contradictions which made for other possibilities. The relationship between Polish nationalism, feminism and socialism in the public sphere was a heterogeneous and dialectical one (Reading, 1992:159). The spaces that women did carve out in the public sphere were influenced by particular differences and contradictions between the three sectors during the partition years as well as contradictions in terms of class. These were important factors that influenced the possibilities for women to organize and make themselves heard.

Initially, the women's political organisations that did develop in the early 19th century had at their core the demand for national independence. Such organizations drew support, largely, from the middle classes (Wawrzowska-Wierciechowa, 1961: 239). In the Prussian sector, due to the repressive nature of the regime which implemented harsh policies of



Germanization, the women's organizations worked within dominant nationalistic discourses and did not push for rights for women to enter the public sphere on an equal basis with men. However, in the Russian sector education for women had become a key issue, as a result of Russian policies of industrialization. These policies had led to the collapse of the landed gentry, and with it the class of leisured ladies. This class of women, according to Jan Hulewicz, then found themselves in the newly formed urban areas with little possibility for return to the countryside. From necessity these women began to demand the right to work equally with men and in order to do so demanded the right to education (Hulewicz, 1936: 73). In the Austrian sector there were greater possibilities for political freedom in comparison with the other sectors. The denial of women the right to vote, as well as access to other political institutions, led to a movement for enfranchisement. In 1905 12,000 people signed a petition to the governor of the Austrian sector in which votes for women was the key demand (Sokolowska, 1977:350).

One of the contradictions of the partitions was that whilst they meant that any Polish women's political movement was effectively divided they also meant that one step for public sphere recognition in one sector spurred on other sectors to take similar steps. For example, when women in the Russian sector established organizations for women's education, it was not long before similar organizations were set up in the Austrian sector (Sokolowska, 1977:350). In addition, although Polish nationalism did circumscribe women's public involvement, some commentators at the beginning of the twentieth century argued that it acted as a spur to women in particular instances to fight for public representation. Orka argued:



There came a time when devoted women fighters, who had taken part in all the liberation struggles of the contemporary era, began to be systematically denied access to the gains and advantages they had helped to achieve. That was when the need began to be felt for the unity for fighting sex equality. Thus was the women's movement born. (1911:3)

The contradictions of the class system in the three sectors also had particular effects which were significant for understanding the development of women's representation. In the beginning of the 19th century nationalist movements were made up of mostly the middle classes. Narkiewicz asks:

Who comprised the Polish nation? Before the partitions, the state was divided into clearly established classes: The gentry, who were the nation and the peasants, who were serfs, without rights. The nation was Polish, the peasants were peasants. (Narkiewicz, 1976:9)

The idealised representation of woman as Mother Poland was also, initially, class specific. To begin with it was a middle class ideal, like the "Angel in the House" of middle and upper class Victorian Britain. It was only later in the century that Mother Poland became an image that also had working class significance (Reading, 1992:160).

After the failed insurrection of 1831, the movement for an independent Poland began to develop in two directions. One direction was geared towards the gentry and the nation. The other emphasized the importance of the needs of ordinary people within the struggle for independence (Narkiewicz, 1976:9-11). According to Dionizja Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa (1986: 52-72) by 1876 the first groups of women began to hold separate meetings within Polish Socialist circles, which included prominent feminists such as Marie Gajowna and later Helene Konowne. Much of the

work that they did was illegal, publishing workers' leaflets and agitating for change. Consequently, the leaders were arrested and sent to Siberia where they died in 1880. Women were also active in the Party for the Proletariat between 1882 and 1883. This followed a similar pattern of illegal print media production, followed by arrests and imprisonment and /or death. Other socialist women's groups were later established, one producing the socialist feminist periodical "Proletariat" which was closed down in 1885 with the imprisonment of its editor Maria Bohuszwiczowna (Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa: 1986: 70).

The feminist movement in the 19th century mirrored the class divisions of partitioned Poland. Koberdowa argues that there were two distinct strands, bourgeois feminism and working class feminism, with different ideologies and which drew support from different areas of society (1986:27). In the Austrian sector a form of practical feminism, which was influenced by socialist ideas from France, developed. Women founded their own schools, cooperative businesses and established day-care centres. Bohachevsky-Chomiak (1980:50) believes that these served to increase women's sense of identity, cohesion and self-esteem.

In the German part of Poland, in the 1880s a socialist feminist workers movement was established; in Cracow in 1904 the Union of Women was founded and across partitioned Poland women participated in the women's sections of the European socialist movement. There were some organizations which were committed to the development of international socialism and feminism: Maria Konopnicka, for example, advocated day-care centres as the key to enabling women to be economically independent and as providing the basis for a new social order (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1980:55).



An important part of the international movement was the Central Women's Organ of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). This ran its own socialist women's magazine called *Głos Kobiet* (Woman's Voice), edited by Dorote Kluszyńska. This organization was banned in 1939. The Polish Communist Party which worked through the PPS also had a central committee of women to mobilize women for revolution. They produced brochures and magazines for working class women (Koberdowa, 1986:42). The central committee of women in the PPS had its own press, organized national conferences along with workers organizations for youth and children, the People's University, working women's clubs and associations for sport and culture. It also organized the yearly women's day.

At the same time, Miłosz writes that culturally there was a 'feminine invasion' of literature during the latter half of the nineteenth century and suggests that when nationalism took a back seat women were able to come to forefront of culture (Miłosz, 1969:334)<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, writer-women dominated Polish literature at the time when Positivism pushed out nationalistic Romanticism and again in the interwar years. Writers such as Zofia Nalkowska, Zofia Kossak, Maria Kuncewiczowa and Maria Dąbrowska developed their own re-presentations of women, which then were later denigrated or marginalised in literary histories. Miłosz argues for example that Maria Konopnicka (1842-1910) was 'more interesting perhaps as an example of an emancipated woman than a poet' (Miłosz, 1969: 315). This suggests that within Poland's social memory, there is an historical pattern whereby when National Liberation takes priority women were pushed out by

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<sup>7</sup> Before the partitioning of Poland there were many women writers of renown, such as the poet Elżbieta Drużbacka (1695-1765) on whose work Miłosz comments: 'some merits may be found in the prolific poetess Elżbieta Drużbacka who was not even scorned by the literati of the Enlightenment' (Miłosz, 1969: 155).



publishing houses, translators and anthologists: hence the dual meaning of chauvinism in Polish which means national fascism as well as male fascism.

At the turn of this century, there was a change in the socialist movement in Poland which impacted on women's struggle for public representation. The Polish Socialist Party retreated from its internationalist principles and began to support, instead, the principal of an independent Poland:

This was an attempt to broaden its base of support and to meet the demands of a growing urban proletariat, still linked to the land by the soil on its hands and the crucifix round its neck. (Reading, 1992:162)

However, the feminist movement did not follow this strategy. Instead, it became more international in outlook, particularly in the Russian sector. The reason for this was that after the Russian Revolution of 1905 groups committed to political representation in the public sphere in terms of emancipation were legalised. The feminist movement in the Russian sector therefore had established a legal public space in which to gather support. The Polish Association for Women's Emancipation was established followed by the Union for Women's Emancipation (Siemieniska, 1986:12). The feminist Walewska wrote that these newly established organizations were dedicated to improving the conditions of women by:

Facilitating women's education which would put them on an equal footing with men in terms of vocational training. Another of their goals is to spread in society the ideals of justice and justifiability of the new women's demands; Society should educate her to be a citizen fully responsible for her actions, develop her own political and social commitment, lead her out of her narrow-minded parochialism which laid waste to her spiritual resources. (Walewska, 1909:40)

To lay waste (pustoszyć) usually means the destruction

of land, or a place; it is, effectively, the language of foreign domination. Partitioning laid waste to Poland but here Walewska uses this to mean women. Further she combines parochialism with it, which denotes an unhealthy attachment to a place as well as small-mindedness. What Walewska has done is to reverse nationalistic discourse and used it to give public voice to women and their demands.

### 3.7 The Jewish Nation and Jewish Women

The picture given so far suggests that other than the crucial division of class, and the divisions caused by the partitions, women formed an homogenous group. However, the picture is not complete without addressing some of the issues raised by the gendered representation of ethnic minorities in Poland in the 19th century, one of the most significant groups of which was the Jews. As the historian Artur Eisenbach argues, the Jewish Question is one of the 'many struggles for emancipation' that formed the public sphere in Poland (Eisenbach, 1991: 12-13). Jewish people had been long established in Poland since the 12th century. Indeed the Hebrew text Kiddush ha-shem states that Poland (Polin) gets its name from the Hebrew poh lin, which literally means 'Here thou shall lodge', which were the words of God to the Jews in exile as he took a piece of Eretz Yisroel hidden in the heavens and set it down on earth (Sholem Asch cited in Polonsky, 1993: i). A Charter of Privileges in 1264 protected Jews in Poland. In the 15th century there were attempts by the rebellious gentry to force the King to withdraw the Statuta Judeorum. In the 16th century statutory rights for Jewish men in politics, education and the judiciary were confirmed by Zymunt I and King Stefan Bathory (Iranek-Osmecki, 1971: 2). However, in 1764 the Polish Sejm dissolved what was known as the Jewish Congress in Poland (Goldberg,



1994: 45-63). Thus Jewish men were denied political representation before the advent of the first partition. With the first partition, according to Iranek-Osmecki, this awoke ideas for reforming the situation for Jews, by making them fully-fledged citizens (1971: 4-5; see also Michalski, 1994:20-44). But, as Eisenbach shows, citizenship was in fact based on the exclusion of Jews. The municipal Law on Towns of 1791 (Article 2, Pt.1) stated that citizenship was open to all nationals of the Polish Commonwealth, as well as 'aliens' but only aliens who were Christians. This version was included in the 3 May Constitution of 1791 (Eisenbach, 1991: 65). \* The dangers of this were foreseen at the time by Stanislaw Staszic:

Whenever exclusiveness arises, justice disappears, and where there is no justice there cannot be morality. Without morality there are no morals. The spirit of exclusiveness is the main obstacle at every step of civilization. (Cited by Eisenbach, 1991: 74).

Thus part of the repressed story of the political right in Poland of 'national' citizenship, as in other countries, is that it was based on ethnic exclusion, as well as the exclusion of women. This, as we shall see later, was to be socially remembered in the recent mediatic transitions in Poland, whilst earlier attempts at inclusion were repressed.

During the Partition years Jewish men and women in the different regions experienced both exclusion and inclusion at the hands of the ruling powers. In Prussia, Frederick II reduced the number of Jews to 1 per cent of the population, by demanding that each Jew possess 300 talers (Iranek-Osmecki, 1971:6). In Austria, however, a Charter of Toleration was issued

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\* This was very different from the situation of Jews in France who 24 February 1790 were included as full political citizens by the Paris Commune (Eisenbach, 1991: 72).



in 1789 which granted Jews mercantile freedom, and, in Galicia, Emperor Franz Joseph granted equal rights to Jews (Grodziski, 1994: 64-80). In Russia, however, Jews were granted the civil rights of education and the right to abode only within the Jewish Pale of Little Russia and New Russia. These limited rights were withdrawn after the 1863 insurrection (Iranek-Osmecki, 1971: 6).

These shared mechanisms of public exclusion against Jews were also gendered within Jewish culture. Men and women were represented in the public and private worlds differently because of their diametric relationship with religion, language and culture. Shaul Stampfer argues:

Jewish men and women could be seen as occupying adjacent but different cultural worlds in Eastern Europe, in which the expression of a function in one gender was the mirror image of its expression in the other gender. Men and women shared a common spoken language and a common religious\national identity. However, much else was different (Stampfer, 1993: 195).

The essential basis of this difference was related to the education of Jewish children. Education and the teaching of the Torah to girls was said to teach her 'tiflut' or indecency and frivolity and therefore was not allowed. The result according to Stampfer was that whilst there was a standard approved pattern for boys' education, which took place in the public sphere in Jewish schools, there was no such formal structure for girls, who tended to be educated piecemeal in the domestic or private sphere with individual tutors for a few hours a day. Whilst boys learnt to read and write Hebrew, girls learnt to read and write Yiddish. A boy's social life consisted of contact in the public sphere through synagogue, school and hevrot (formal association). Girls, in contrast, attended synagogue

less often, in a different part of the temple and their social contacts were informal within the domestic realm (Stamfer, 1993: 1965-6). Despite this, in Jewish circles the ideal types for men and women were quite different from Polish stereotypes of men and women. The ideal Jewish woman was supposed to be active, aggressive and full-bodied. In contrast, the ideal Jewish man was a retiring, palid, delicate Talmudist (Stamfer, 1993: 196). In addition,

Both men and women generally worked and contributed to the family income, so that there was no clear distinction between the males as breadwinners and women as homemakers, as was common in other societies (Stamfer, 1993: 196).

In these latter respects then, the gendered representation of Jewish men and women was almost in obverse relation to the gendered division of the private and public spheres of Polish men and women.

By the 1860s the reduction in the numbers of Jewish child marriages meant that there was an increase in the number of teenage unmarried girls still at home. Study provided the solution. But, since there was no real tradition of sending girls to Heder (the Hebrew Boys' Schools) Jewish girls began attending the Polish schools. This provided for a reinforcement of the different relationship of Jewish men and women to the public sphere in Poland:

A woman who received a general education was introduced to a world, even if only a literary one, which promised not only status, but a very different set of values. Women often accepted these values and made radical changes in their lifestyle which led to estrangement from traditional forms of Judaism (Stamfer, 1993: 202).

It is this aspect of Poland's socially inherited memory which, as we shall see, seems to positively inform certain aspects of policy and representation in Poland's Communist regime in terms of education for



women and work in the public sphere.

Further, as in other areas of literature, the way in which Jews in 19th century fiction were re-presented is also significant. Zdzislaw Libera argues that in 18th century literature there was an appreciation of the separate identity of Jews in Poland which was both tolerated and appreciated. But, over time, negative stereotypes began to prevail (Libera, 1994: 120). In the early 18th century Jewish men were stereotyped as the greedy, shrewd, comical villain (Libera, 1994: 121). Jews were depicted as responsible for the decline of towns and the underdevelopment of trade and handicrafts (Eisenbach, 1991: 65). A key force in this economic scapegoating, according to Eisenbach, was the Roman Catholic Church which furthered "negative stereotyped opinions about Jews" (1991: 98). By the 1860s, however, assimilationism in positivist literature resulted in a more positive role for Jewish men in literature. This was, though, in relation to the greater good of the nation: positivist literature was concerned with what Jews and Poles together could contribute to a capitalist Poland (Polonskie, 1993: 163). In this respect we can discern a pattern in representations in Poland in which the social memory of Jewish men in the public sphere is related to their economic role. This may be articulated positively or negatively but the inherited meaning concerns their economic value in relation to the Polish nation.

In contrast, by the end of the century the modernist taste for the esoteric and irrational was located with certain portrayals of Jewish women in literature (Polonskie, 1993: 164). For example in *Wesele* (The Wedding, 1901) by Stanislaw Wyspianski all strata of society are brought together for the occasion of a wedding. The acculturated Jewish heroine Rachela



establishes spiritual contact with the 'other world'. She requests the presence of the spirits of Polish history to join the living of the wedding party, thereby initiating a confrontation and coming together of Poland's past and present. In this respect her spirituality has a constructive role to play, according to Polonskie (1993:1 64). A more common representation of Jewish women, however, at the end of the 19th century was in terms of their 'dark and destructive sensuality'. Jewish heroines of this period often inhabited a 'twilight' zone of the strange and exotic between Poland and biblical Palestine. This, argues Polonskie (1993: 164) by the early twentieth century was linked to 'the Jewish political cause' and destructive political terrorism, as in Jozef Weyssenhoff's *Hetmani* (The Hetman's, 1911). Here, there is a discernible resonance in the social memory of re-presentations of Jewish women. Associated with dangerous sexuality, with the exotic, they are the other of Polish Christian mothers and virgins. At the same time it is they, not Jewish men, who represent political value and voice. When they are assimilated with the Polish nation, then they add to the value of the political sphere of the nation. But, when they part of a separate political movement they detract from the political sphere of the nation. Thus like Polish women Jewish women could have a public voice if it was for the nation (in this case the Jewish nation). But, unlike Polish women, Jewish women then become relocated outside the Polish nation and the bounds of seemingly female sexuality (i.e virginity) and therefore become dangerous. However, the Jewish feminist, Zofia Woznicka, born in Warsaw in 1924, argues that Polish literature, unlike German literature, never invoked the same outright hatred against Jews historically (1988:67-76). She argues that some of the most positive representations of

Jewish women's political participation were provided by the Polish writer Eliza Orzeszkowa. She was under police surveillance for her activities in the January uprising 1863 in which Jews in traditional dress carried Polish flags and Jewish youths joined with Poles in the underground resistance movement. Despite attempts after this to restrict her movements Orzeszkowa edited a series of stories about the Jews by eminent Polish writers in an attempt to counteract the pogroms organized by 'Ochrana', the Tsarist secret police (Woznicka, 1988: 70). Nevertheless, as Artur Eisenbach argues, stereotypes of Jews have, historically, "exerted a significant influence" on the rights of Jewish citizens in Poland (1991:12). What we see is that these re-presentations were highly complex and not static. They operated within the nexus of the meaning and construction of the Polish nation in the nineteenth century which was also gendered.

### 3.8 Women in The Interwar Years

In 1918, women in Poland gained equality of civil rights and in 1919 equal suffrage. The Constitution of March 21. 1921, granted equal rights to all citizens, without exception (Iranek-Osmecki, 1971:7). However, these legal rights did little to change women's participation in the public sphere and few steps were taken to improve women's lives on a practical basis (Plakwicz, 1992:78). The new rights accorded women contradicted a legacy of restrictive laws from the partition years. But women's representation, particularly in political terms, was minimal. The number of women in the upper house was a mere 2 percent. Women did little better in the lower house: five percent of deputies elected in the newly formed Poland were women (Siemieniska, 1986:14).

The public sphere in the interwar years was dominated



by Joseph Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski who became increasingly right-wing in their political orientations. Pilsudski had been a key figure in the Polish Socialist Party before the First World War and was also a militarist as commander-in-chief of one of the Polish underground armies. He began a campaign to secure Poland's frontiers and to extend Polish territory into the Ukraine in 1920. This sparked off the Polish-Soviet War in which Poland took parts of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. In 1926 Pilsudski engineered a coup in which he ruled as dictator, with a military junta until 1935, when the junta took power (Ascherson, 1981:34). The largest political group in the interwar years was the Social Democrats, of which Roman Dmowski was a leading member. Originally, this party as a clandestine group, aligned itself with the working classes. In the interwar years it aligned itself with landowners and industrialists. The party greatly admired the Nazi system in Germany and their ideas gained increasing influence in Polish Society. Neil Ascherson comments, 'If they had taken power in the 1930's, their regime would have had little to distinguish it from those of Hitler and Mussolini'. (Ascherson, 1981:34). The bequest of this period of political history, according to Ascherson, is the way in which the party successfully combined ideas which previously could be held separately. The party had at its core nationalism as a 'supreme moral value' and made an indissoluble link between the Roman Catholic religion and Polish patriotism (Ascherson, 1981:34). This as we shall see in later chapters is significant in terms of the articulation of a national public and gendered representations embodied in Poland's new media laws after the changes of 1989.

The emphasis on Polish nationalism was reflected in even mainstream regional periodicals such as Kurjera



Lodzkiego (Figure 1). The magazine in a half folio format, with some colour illustrations, was aimed specifically at the new type of working woman - the women who took up jobs in business in the cities. According to an anonymous article entitled 'Stare Gazety: Kacik Pani Domu' (Old Magazines) the magazine aimed to overturn the stereotypes of women as solely keepers of the home and hearth (Kalendarz Kurjera Lodzkiego, 1938: 92). This perhaps explains its rather eclectic mixture of articles in terms of content. A 1938 edition included articles on women's sports, such as athletes, swimming and hockey; travel pieces, fictional stories, world facts, how to type letters correctly, current postage prices inland and overseas, cartoons, world economic indicators, addresses of key government ministries, an article on palmistry, pictures of international stars such as Ginger Rogers, poetry by women, a short course on photography, nine rules of hygiene for young tourists, home medicine corner, cosmetics, and technical educational courses. Significantly, only 2 percent of the edition was devoted to articles on cookery and 1 percent devoted to articles relating to children. However, 9 percent was devoted to overtly nationalistic and militaristic features and illustrations, including full page pictures of the then President of Poland, Professor Ignacy Moscicki (p.15), General Edward Smigly-Rydz (p.17), the childhoods of great Polish generals (p.18), the Polish Navy (p.37), a national map of Poland (p.53), and photograph of Statua Matki Boskiej (Statue of Mother of God) by the Polish Sea<sup>9</sup>.

The link between the nation, woman and God as in the 19th century was also maintained in literature between the Wars. Representations took a slightly different

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<sup>9</sup> The figures are based on my own content analysis of Kurjera Lodzkiego, 1938.

turn, however, with those by male writers particularly linking the triad with overt sexuality and violence. This tradition drew on earlier poetry by Cyprian Norwid (1821-83) who combined nationalism with sexual voyeurism and violence:

Caught in the brightness, Acteon blenched  
The hounds ignore the trumpets din,  
The Hyperborean wood stands terror-struck  
Quivering like a threadbare shack.  
(Norwid 'Undressed' in Czerniawski, 1988: 17)

Joseph Witlin's later novel Salt of the Earth (1935) describes a gathering of Polish statesmen and soldiers. The main woman character, Magda, is described as being 'in the service of Venus'. She is the mistress of Peter, an ordinary hero soldier: 'Magda's body was the only field on which he felt victor. It is difficult for masculine self-love to do without this.' The woman's body is territorialised as the field, as nature, as a battlefield to be dominated by man. Women in Polish interwar literature are 'taken' and undressed <sup>10</sup>, shot at and sexually used for the sake of the nation.<sup>11</sup>

The stress on the nation and the rising tide of fascism did not prevent women entering the workforce in ever increasing numbers. Neither did it, initially at least, prevent the continuation of the Polish feminist movements which could now work together within a united Poland to work at a national level to improve women's lot. New laws reached the statute books which provided for the protection of pregnant women workers and gave women maternity allowances. The

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Przbyszewski's novel By The Way an extract of which in English is reprinted in Gillan (1981) 122-28

<sup>11</sup> Gombrowicz clearly takes this tack in Philifor - Honeycombed with Childishness. Extract reprinted *ibid*, 212-22.



number of legislative improvements made between 1922-39 were significant for women (Reading, 1992:163). The reason for this was partly due to the Pilsudski regime and its attempts to retain political hegemony through a commitment to gender equality before the law. More importantly, however, were particular shifts within the bases of the feminist movements themselves. Before the First World War some feminist groups had been attacked for betraying the Polish national cause. For example a march in Galicia which included groups from Poland and Ukraine had chosen to sing the Marseillaise. A number of Poles had reacted by saying that feminist movements were covers for revolutionaries. This had resulted in some women resigning their membership of the movements (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1980:57). Some women's organizations allied with the National Democratic Party after World War One, such as the National Women's Organization and the Polish Women's Council, and some, such as the Working Women's Clubs and Society of Women's Social Service, aligned themselves with the Polish Socialist Party. All groups tended to take a more practical and pragmatic stance in comparison with the more internationalist and revolutionary pre-War groups, according to Bohachevsky-Chomiak. Groups often switched alliances and worked with any party which they thought might assist their ends. Bohachevsky-Chomiak argues:

Feminism became, in the interwar period, much more so than the pre-war one, a moderating, liberal influence. Programs of social progress, ironically, tended to become incorporated into organizations which opposed socialism in principle. (1980:59)

The dominant forces within the feminist groups that worked within the public political sphere before the second world War were the newly educated women of the middle and upper classes. Legal equity for them was



essential to further their professional and material ambitions. They did not seek to change or disrupt the basis of the social structure or its economic order. However, there were some groups, just as before World War One, which stuck to their revolutionary principles and challenged the social order. Such groups believed that equality in all spheres could only be established with radical social and economic transformation achieved through the involvement of the working classes. Thus, in 1923, the Communist Party formed a Women's Department which sought to campaign for better working conditions and pay for women and to increase working class women's participation in the public sphere through education and training (Koberdowa, 1986:45). The Socialist women's movement organized women candidates for election to the Sejm (Koberdowa, 1986:43).

The creation of a unified national state meant that women of ethnic backgrounds other than Polish sought to have recognition of their own needs and struggled to develop their own public voices and representatives. In the largest ethnic group, the Ukrainians, forming 15 percent of the Polish nation in the interwar period, women sought to develop their own economic and cultural base in reaction to the imposition of the Polish system of administration and education. By the 1930s, the Ukrainian Women's Movement, made up of women from mostly the peasant classes, numbered 100,000. The movement, according to Bohachevsky-Chomiak, enabled Ukrainian women to forge their own public spaces which had a significant influence on events on a national scale (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1985:88-89).

The second largest ethnic group, the Jews, constituted 9.8 per cent of the population between the wars.

Despite the anti-discriminatory measures included in the constitution of 1921, a welter of 19th century exclusionary mechanisms were left in place and other measures introduced. A quota system in universities worked against Jews and Jewish merchants were excluded from state trade (Lewin, 1985: 34). The Compulsory Sunday Rest Law, passed in 1931, meant that Orthodox Jews were discriminated against (Weissman, 1976: 145). But more insidious, 'The Jewish President', Gabriel Narutowicz, was assassinated in his first day of office and there were pogroms and violent attacks against Jews and Jewish property in many Polish towns and cities. This built to what was known as the 'Owszem Policy' in the late 1930s which called for an economic war against Jews, the freeing of 'Polish' culture from Jewish influence and support for the emigration of Jews to Palestine (Lewin, 1985: 228). In addition, Jews were on the brunt end of the depression. The majority of Jews worked in the cities (Weisman, 1976: 140). Many Jewish women who were employed in textile producing centres, such as Lodz, were pushed out of jobs to make way for Polish peasants fleeing from starvation in the countryside. Four-fifths of Jewish workers, according to Bina Garncarska-Kadari, were below the poverty line in the 1930s (1986:135-173).

Despite this hostile and exclusionary social environment, though, Iranek-Osmecki argues that for the first time in more than 100 years, the chance for Jewish cultural autonomy was created within the established Polish nation. This resulted in a boom in Jewish cultural life, with 250 Jewish periodicals and 715 books published in Poland in 1937 alone (1971: 7). The relationship to Polish culture and in turn the nation(s) was, as in the nineteenth century, gendered, but in a new form. Because of the impact of the

Jewish enlightenment<sup>12</sup> movement and Polish assimilationists in the latter half of the 19th century, this led to the development of a strong Polish language Jewish Press (Steinlauf, 1993: 333). This in turn meant that many Jewish people were unable to read Hebrew or Yiddish. At the same time anti-semitism and 'the Judenrein' Polish press led to the establishment of a daily press for Jews in Polish in the interwar years<sup>13</sup>. This resulted in, ironically, the strongest expression of Jewish cultural identity in Polish, rather than Yiddish or Hebrew. Polish acted as a cultural bridge for Jews to the Jewish nation and culture. This was far greater for women than for men, since the advent of girls attending public Polish schools in the 19th century reinforced the sense of Jewish women's cultural language as Polish. This is born out by the fact that the women's sections in the Orthodox Yiddish Press were in Polish, whilst the rest of the paper was in Yiddish since in many hasidic homes, argues Michael Steinlauf, women read Polish more fluently than Yiddish or Hebrew (1993: 358). Feminist journals during this period such the Jewish Journal for women *Ewa* (1928-33), edited by Paulina Appenszak, sought to:

reflect the opinions, thoughts, problems and aspirations of the contemporary Jewish woman, struggling for complete liberation and active direct participation in the development of Jewish national life. (Od Redakcji, February 19, 1928 cited by Fuks, 1979: 282)

What is important here, according to Steinlauf (1993:345), is that the magazine was European in emphasis rather than Polish. It sought to make links

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<sup>12</sup> The Jewish Enlightenment movement in the nineteenth century itself equated 'becoming civilised' with assimilation in terms of dress, language and social contacts (Eisenbach, 1991:98).

<sup>13</sup> According to Michael Steinlauf the Polish Press was reactionary, Catholic and anti-semitic to the extent that if Jews did contribute as writers they were requested to change their names (1993: 333).



with Jews throughout Europe rather than simply identify with Jews in Poland (Steinlauf, 1993: 345). In this respect Jewish women's organisations and publications with Bundist links shared similar elements with the communist Polish organisations, which had established links with the international women's and socialist movements. However, what resonates with other Polish feminist organizations is the attachment of political voice to national identity: in this case the Jewish nation\Jewish National Life. This is clearer amongst Jewish women's organisations with more Zionist leanings.<sup>14</sup> The Bais Yaakov movement was formed in response to the growing numbers of Jewish women taught in Polish schools who joined the feminist movement and socialist movements of the time. This, Deborah Weissman argues, was seen as a threat to the Jewish household:

Young girls would appear for the family's Sabbath meals in stylish immodest attire, and would respond brazenly to their elders. What was to become of the traditional continuity of Jewish religious life? Where would the dedicated yeshivah students find suitable brides? (1976: 141)

Thus Jewish women's public activity was perceived by some Jews as dangerous for private harmony. This led to the establishment by Sarah Schrenirer, an hasidic Jew, of the Bais Yaakov (House of Jacob) schools especially for girls, as well as summer camps, youth organizations, books and publications in the 1920s (Weissman, 1976: 142). The philosophy of the schools was a contradictory mixture of training young women in economically useful activities whilst also imparting modesty, humility and love - the values of the Jewish 'woman of valor', according to Weissman, who never

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<sup>14</sup> Marian Fuks et al argue that the different factions of Jewish organisations in the interwar years, roughly organised around a Bundist/Zionist axis made for greater alliance between, for example, Zionists and Polish nationalists, than between Jews themselves (Fuks, 1982: 38).

challenged the authority of men (Weissman, 1976: 145). However, the publications of the movement show that whilst many articles upheld women's traditional role within Judaism and criticized the European feminist movement, there were articles and letters which were in favour of the 'emancipation of women' (Weissman, 1976: 146).

Jewish women's publications and organisations thus represented women in a contradictory and complex manner; this provided an irrepressible alternative aspect to Poland's social memory which was to be later recalled by more recent feminist organisations.

The interwar period also saw the establishment of public institutions in the form of women's communes and communities. These disrupted the usual gendered private/public divisions, in different ways according to their political orientation. Some of these communes were Roman Catholic retreats, in the form of convents, in which the nuns did not wear habits and usually worked outside the community (Women's House Cracow, personal communication: 1989). Others, more interestingly, were women's communities established by unions to meet the needs of the growing number of single women entering the industrial workforce in the interwar years. The Cracow House of Women, for example, was founded in 1934 by the Polish Postal Union for its growing number of women workers. Its rules stated that the House was only for single women who were economically independent and without children or other dependents. In the interwar years, according to one elderly member who had lived there since the 1930s, the women would pool their money, cook and eat communally. The women campaigned in local factories and would cook and distribute food for the poor (Women's House Cracow, Personal Communication: 1989).

The community gave great emphasis at that time to the development of a separate women's cultural and political space. It encouraged women to paint and write, to learn about women's culture, and organized political debates and talks. Importantly, such communities went against the representation of women as acceptable in the public sphere only as mothers. The community, said another elderly member of the House: 'gave single women a sense of identity, a sense of worth, in a society which deemed single women unimportant.' (Women's House Cracow, personal communications: 1989). By the late 1930s, however, the junta began to outlaw many political groups, including women's organizations which had pacifist elements to them. In 1938 the Ukrainian Women's Union and the Communist Women's Section were raided by the Polish police. The leading members of both organizations were arrested and imprisoned. The organizations themselves were made illegal. (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 1985:96)

During the Nazi occupation of Poland, in the Second World War, the struggle for national liberation again became the dominant goal amongst underground groups. It became the main aim, for example, of the People's Union of Women, an illegal movement which worked with the Peasant Battalions in the Polish countryside. A few women did gain top positions in mixed underground organizations, such as Wanda Wasilewska who was chair of the Polish Patriots Union and Malgorzata Fornalska who was on the central committee of the Polish Worker's Party (Siemieniska, 1986: 16). These women, along with others who worked as stretcher bearers, messengers, printers and teachers died because of their political activities (Siemieniska, 1986:15). During the war periodicals and newspapers provided a particular kind of voice for women. Zofia Sokol argues that between 1942 and 1945 there were nine women's



publications which represented the needs of women under occupation and which have been ignored by scholars of the period (Sokol, 1995: 94). Some women's communes, however, such as the Women's House in Cracow continued with their activities after the Second World War (Reading, 1992: 166-173).

### 3.8 Continuity and dissonance in the historical representations of gender

In this chapter I outlined the historical background to representations of Polish women and their place in the public sphere. What I hope I have indicated is that an important factor in Poland's history for gender representation and the public sphere is its troubled status as a nation state. The partitioning of Poland and the struggle for recognition of its national identity and the identities of different ethnic groups within this point to particular developments in terms of gender relations, and especially the representation of women publicly. I argued that before the partitions it seems that wives were allowed a public voice, but not single women. This embryonic beginning of the political recognition of women was effectively prevented from gaining a hold since the partitions crushed the establishment of the Enlightenment in Poland. The partitions had another effect in terms of gender representation in the public sphere. The destruction of the state meant that Polish women became the vessels of Polish national culture and language. This gendered articulation of Polish culture was embodied in the representation of woman as Mother Poland (Matka Polka), in which self-sacrifice, loss and emptiness are dominant values.

In terms of the main spheres of employment for women

in the 19th century we saw that these were, in many respects, similar to the kind of changes seen in other countries in Europe which were experiencing industrialization. Similar also was the fact that the 19th century set the pattern for women entering the workforce as unskilled labor, and with overall levels of remuneration between one third and one half of those for men. What was different, perhaps, was the extent to which women from the landed gentry were after the partitions increasingly required to become economically active and thus entered the new urban workforce. This in turn, as we saw, in some areas led to the initiation of campaigns by women for education and enfranchisement: basic rights of representation within the public sphere.

Nevertheless, the partitions to some extent circumscribed women's activities in the underground political movements in which the struggle for national identity usually took priority over women's particular struggles for public representation and arguments for gender equality. Despite these factors, however, there did develop clandestine public spaces for women. Particular contradictions such as those of class and ethnicity and the heterogeneous and dialectical relationship between nationalism, feminism and socialism in Poland made it possible for women at particular moments to organize and make themselves visible. In some instances women even reversed nationalistic discourses to give public voice to women's demands.

The recognition of equal rights in 1918 and equal suffrage in 1919, along with the reestablishment of Poland as a nation state, had a limited impact on women's lives. The interwar period, however, is interesting in a number of other respects. One is the

alliances that the different strands of the feminist movement in Poland made with the dominant political forces of the day in order to forward women's rights. This is contiguous with the suggestion by some commentators that the Pilsudski regime courted women activists and the feminist movements in order to bolster its hegemony.

Parts Two and Three seek to establish whether the social inheritance of the formation of political right in Poland and the particular manner in which historically the public sphere was (en)gendered is remembered in the ways in women were represented by the post-second world war Communist regime in the official public sphere. Then, whether, this was in turn remembered in terms of the strategies later developed by the opposition movement, Solidarity, which drew on aspects of the country's social inheritance. Finally, I examine particular aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory in the articulation of the public sphere in the 1980s and 1990s as shown through the representation of women in Polish television, and particularly the ways in which they are now embodied within media policy.



**Part Two:**  
**Socially Inherited Memory Under State Capitalism**

## Chapter 4

### Women's Representation in the Public Sphere between 1945-79

"Some of the problems of Communism are not the problems of Communism itself. I don't think intolerance and parochialism were invented by the Communists. The Polish stance has always been a defensive one because it is a country ruled by fear, not by popular consent. " (Ewa Bednarowicz, Personal Communication, 1991)

#### 4.1 Introduction

In Part One I discussed the theoretical concept of socially inherited memory. This was then related empirically to a discussion of the conscious and repressed stories of political right in the Polish language, and, to historical developments during the partition years and in between the wars. In Part Two I examine the period leading up to Poland's recent transition in terms of how women were both represented (Chapter 4) and re-presented in Polish society (Chapter 5). In the next two chapters I attempt to demonstrate how Poland's socially inherited memory was articulated historically in (en)gendering the public sphere and how gendered elements resonated within key media aspects under state capitalism between 1945 and 1979. In Chapter Four I examine how particular representations of female political activity developed during the period of Poland's identity formation as a nation state were recalled, articulated and re-articulated by the Communists at different times to bolster the Party led drive for economic industrialization. Further, how a key part of this was the legacy of the annihilation of the majority of Poland's ethnic population. The social amnesia and remembering which followed the holocaust in Poland had particular consequences, I argue, for the

representation of women in the public sphere. Thus in this Chapter I begin by establishing the legacy of the war in terms of Poland's ethnic minorities, with a particular focus on its bequest in terms of the genocide against Poland's Jews. This, I argue, interlocked with Poland's social inheritance after the war of Soviet gender policies and may have influenced the ways in which, subsequently, women were publicly represented under state capitalism in Communist policies, in politics, in workplace structures and in education. This argument is then explored further in Chapter 5 in relation to restrictive cultural policies and gendered re-presentations in cultural production.

#### 4.2 The Jews and Poland's Social Amnesia

The crucial aspect to Poland's social inheritance after World War Two was the legacy of the mass murder of 3 million Jews and other ethnic groups by the Germans. This, as well as the campaign of mass deportation by the Soviets during the war, combined with national border changes in the post-war settlement meant that Poland was virtually ethnically homogenous after 1945. As Norman Davies points out, the ethnic conflicts experienced before the War were not actually resolved in Poland they were silenced through virtual destruction (1993: 238). Krystyna Kersten-Pawelszapiro argues that this had a profound effect on national consciousness:

The stereotype imposed by the Nazi racist selection criteria was absorbed into the consciousness of all living through the day-to-day realities of occupation. Even with full awareness of the criminality of these criteria and with their complete rejecting in theory, it was difficult to ignore them since they defined the fate of individuals: they divided society into those who were condemned to immediate execution and those for whom this sentence was suspended, allowing them to live for a while. (1993: 461)



Whilst the few remaining Jews welcomed the post-war settlement, hoping it would bring equality, many Poles in contrast feared the Soviet empire and everything it represented (Kersten-Pawelszapiro, 1993: 461). At the same time the effect of the holocaust it seems for Poles was that the aspect of social memory which was easily recalled was the martyrdom of Poles and their heroic and dramatic efforts at resistance (Kersten-Pawelszapiro, 1993: 463). But, what for years remained unspoken was the fact that the majority of Poles did nothing and were passive witnesses to the Nazi outrage (1993: 463). If we take further the argument of the psychiatrist Judith Herman (1993) that there is a connection between the remembering of public and private trauma, this makes sense of this social amnesia. Polish society, having witnessed horrific political trauma locked this into a separate part of its socially inherited memory. The collective experience was repressed because it was so horrible it was unspeakable and, short term, may have threatened the survival of the 'nation' if recalled and spoken. Longer term though the consequences for the nation was that, as with other aspects of socially inherited memory, repressed memories found ways to speak through social symptoms or reenactments of traumatic events. Thus aspects of the holocaust were reenacted in the form of what Kersten-Pawelszapiro aptly calls the 'March Inheritance' of 1968 in which the government hate campaign against Jews led to the exodus of 25,000 Jewish people (1993:465). It was also reenacted in the stereotype of Jews that developed after the war despite their virtual annihilation. The Jew as the alien, hostile to the Polish nation was reenacted under state capitalism in terms of the Jewish Communist hostile to both the development of a truly socialist society and the Polish nation (Kersten-Pawelszapiro, 1993: 463-4). As Isaac Lewin notes, in

the period between the wars: 'there was too little time to develop an image of a Jew who was a citizen, consistent with the land's thousand year historical tradition' (1985:34). The murder of virtually the entire Jewish population and other ethnic groups meant that there was a social vacuum in terms of labour, particularly in the cities and amongst the intelligentsia (Davies, 1993; Kersten-Pawelszapiro, 1993; Lewin, 1985). Richard Lucas in Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust notes that the Nazi's murdered 45 per cent of the country's doctors and dentists, 30 per cent of technicians, 57 per cent of lawyers and many leading journalists (Lucas cited by Richmond, 1995: 485). This had a devastating effect on Poland's public elites, which interlocked with the other crucial aspect to Poland after the war: the inheritance from the Soviet Union of a particular articulation of the private and public in terms of gender relations. This inheritance from the Soviet Union itself had resonance with certain aspects of Poland's own traditions of female political activity. This, quite crudely, may have plugged the public gap. In the next section I examine whether this was indeed the case.

#### 4.3 The legal position of women

The People's Republic of Poland set up in 1946 by the ruling Polish United Worker's Party (PUWP) based its new laws and constitutional rights on Marxist-Leninist principles. Essentially, its establishment as a state capitalist country meant that in addition to the stories of political right developed during the 19th century and independence, the country socially inherited the memory of legal gender equality established previously in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. On paper, at least, as in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, the situation for women



with regard to civil rights became far superior to those rights granted women in the West and ahead of similar provisions laid down by the UN.<sup>1</sup>

The Constitution of 22 July 1952 guaranteed women's equality in all spheres of life and ensured provision for those services necessary to make this possible, such as creche and nursery facilities and public restaurants. The Family and Guardianship Code of 1964 to some extent went further in that it stipulated that there should also be equity in the household and family arrangements. The Code established the legality of divorce on the single grounds of "a complete and lasting decomposition of marriage" or battery. Other key policies in relation to gender equality included the 1975 Alimony Fund which regulated maintenance of ex-partners after divorce (Morgan, 1984:556), the legalization of abortion in 1956 and its liberalization in 1960 which made termination free and available on request during the first three months of pregnancy. The law also established that a three day leave from work be available to women who had undergone the operation for abortion (Morgan, 1984:558). Homosexuality was not legally effected under the Communist regime; it was made legal before the Communists came to power in 1932. The new government did not change this. Incest was made illegal under the 1964 Penal Code (Article 175) and was punishable by up to 5 years penal servitude. The same Code also established that rape was a criminal offence with up to 10 years imprisonment for

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<sup>1</sup> In Czechoslovakia, the Constitution of 11 July 1960, Article 20 states: "Men and women shall have equal status in the family, at work and in public activity". Article 27 states: "the equal status of women in the family shall be secured by special adjustment of working conditions and special health care during pregnancy and maternity, as well as by the development of facilities and services which will enable women to fully participate in the life of society." In Hungary, Law XLIII, 1948, forbade discrimination against women in public employment. After 1956, the legal equality of women was reaffirmed by a new Civil Code promulgated by Law IV, 1959.



offenders. Domestic violence was illegal under general family battery laws with imprisonment for offenders up to five years (Morgan, 1984:559). Poland was a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women ratified in 1980 (Leven, 1994: 28). This included the stipulation that all measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life, including cultural, political and public life (part 2, Article 7) and the elimination of "any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels" (part 3, Article 10). Further, under part 1 Article 5 state parties must take all appropriate measures to:

modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1989:7)

Signatories to the Convention agreed that "... the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields." (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1989:1)

#### 4.4 The Theoretical Position of Women

In principle it may seem that the legal position of women in Poland was a remarkably privileged one which would surely provide the foundations necessary to facilitate true gender equality. However, according to Barbara Einhorn, who takes the position, like many Western feminists, that Poland was a "state socialist" country, the new regimes of Eastern Europe inherited from the Soviet Union a set of principles with regard

to women that were fundamentally flawed. These underlying principles to women's statutory equality, theoretically, included those contained in Engel's statement on the origins of the family that the emancipation of women is possible only when they are able to participate in large scale production processes and when domestic activities are converted into public industry (Engels, 1977:152). The new gender laws of Poland thus socially recalled the Soviet tendency to privilege the public sphere over the private sphere and thus ignored the fundamental contradictions between women's productive and reproductive roles. This resulted in the subordination of social to economic goals in discussions of the family (Einhorn, 1994:31). If we examine closely the relevant clauses relating to gender in Poland's Constitution of 22 July 1952 we find that it was women's public role that was emphasized. What was stressed was that women were to have equal rights in all areas of the public arena:

1. Women in the Polish People's Republic have equal rights with men in all spheres of state, political, economic, social and cultural life.
2. The equality of women is guaranteed by: (1) an equal right with men to work and pay according to the principal equal pay for equal work; the right to rest and social insurance, to education, to honours and distinctions and the holding of public office (2) Care for mother and child, protection of expectant mothers, paid holiday during the period before and after confinement, the development of a network of maternity homes, crèches and nursery schools and the extension of a network of service establishments and communal eating places. (3) The Polish People's Republic strengthens the position of women in society, especially of mothers and women who work professionally. (Article 78)

Yet, there are a number of problems with this constitutional guarantee of equality. Firstly, where gender equality is guaranteed separately from human equality the implication is that we are sexual beings



first and humans second. Secondly, there is the assumption that rights alone provide a guarantee for equality. There is no sense that rights require the will and means to uphold them; there is no clear indication where the responsibility lies for upholding such rights; or, any recourse to legal and penal sanction should such rights be contravened and the equivalent of 'civil death' occur. The implication of the Polish Constitution is that the responsibility, if it lies anywhere, for gender equality lies with the state's protection and strengthening of the 'position of women in society'. Whilst the wider responsibilities certainly may rest with society and the state, the individual human dimension should not be ignored. Thirdly, following on from this, there is no mention of men's role in human reproduction (both biologically and socially); it is as if women reproduced through pathogenesis. Thus parenting is reduced to mothering. Fourthly, the implication is that public\state provision for previously private concerns, such as child care and daily sustenance, will resolve the double burden faced by women. This forgets the fact that these matters need to be of human concern to engender equality. It also reduces reproduction entirely to the functional and economic. Whilst Marx could, in his wisdom, see that, ideally, work is something that should allow the human spirit to grow and flourish, somehow this emotional and spiritual side to the human reproductive role was forgotten.

However, as Einhorn indicates 'this is not to assert that gendered divisions of labour within the family were never questioned' (1994:28). In some Eastern Bloc countries Family Codes were introduced in the 1960s which attempted to provide for both equality in terms of rights within the family and for responsibilities



within the family. In Poland, the Family and Guardianship Code emphasized the need for equality in the private sphere; the interdependent relationship between the private and public spheres; as well as the possible role of both men and women in both spheres:

Both partners in matrimony are obligated each according to his\her power and earning possibilities to contribute to the satisfaction of the needs of the family which they founded with their union. This obligation may also be met in whole or in part by personal efforts to bring up the children and by work in the common household.

There are several key dimensions which were forgotten here and which thus ensured the continuance of gender inequalities. The first was the sexual and emotional aspects of family life. The assumption was that human beings only created relationships with each other for economic means; that family unions were solely functional affairs. This tendency, according to Rowbotham, had its roots in the early suppression in Soviet society of the idea that love would provide a basis for Communism, as well as the functionalist tendencies of Marxist theory (Rowbotham,1993).

It also has precedents within the social memory of Poland itself in terms of the positivism that developed in response to the failure of the insurrections in the 1860s. It recalls the representations of Jewish men at that time who were depicted as having a positive public role to play, but only in terms of their economic function or contribution to capitalist Poland (Thesis, p.75). It also recalls aspects of earlier twentieth century socialist-feminist discourse, which itself was part of the Enlightenment tradition that privileged the rational over the emotional, the public over the private (see Pateman, 1988; Fraser, 1990; Okin, 1980).

In Women and Economics , for example, Charlotte Perkins Gilman advocated communal kitchens, day nurseries and public dining rooms as a logical progression towards a more equal society through the specialization and rationalization of society. As early as 1898 she argued:

Eating is an individual function. Cooking is a social function. Neither is in the faintest degree a family function. That we have found it convenient in early stages of civilization to do our cooking at home proves no more than the allied fact that we have also found it convenient in such stages to do our weaving and spinning at home, as our soap and candle-making, our butchering and pickling, our baking and washing (Gilman, 1972:243).

What was forgotten here was any sense that we do not eat simply because we are hungry or share a meal simply because it is convenient; we do not even butcher the pig simply because we require its meat. We kill the pig to dance with our neighbours; we share our meals for human contact; we eat to fill not only the hole in our bellies but the hole in our hearts. The memory of this aspect of collective human life is entirely missing from the ways in which equality was to be guaranteed in People's Poland. Feminists other than Charlotte Perkins Gilman were well aware that improvements to people's lives involved not only the recognition of their material needs but also their spiritual needs: hence the cry for Bread and Roses - a call for wage equity and access to the beautiful aspects of life denied to so many working class men as well as women.<sup>2</sup> However, as Einhorn points out, it was the approach which emphasized the economic functions

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<sup>2</sup> The slogan comes from a strike by 20,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912. The strikers were mostly women and children protesting against poverty wages and inhumane living and working conditions. The banners during the strike stated: 'We Want Bread and Roses, Too'. The strike and the slogan were made into the song still popular today, a version of which on 'Honor Thy Woman Self: Songs of Liberation' is available in the Fawcett Library, London.



of the family which formed the basis of Marxist orthodoxy by the time of the establishment of Soviet society and which was then socially inherited by the regimes of Eastern Europe (Einhorn, 1994:30). The result was collective amnesia about those aspects of family life fundamental to human reproduction: the state failed to remember that its people needed love, respect, sex and beauty as much as food, a roof and a school.

The second aspect of Poland's socially inherited memory which was recalled by the new state capitalist regime was the emphasis given to the importance of the family and a family formed by two people of both sexes. There was no sense that marriage as a legal property arrangement, locating women and men differently within it (as discussed in Chapter 2) might not have a place in socialist society.<sup>3</sup> What was not recalled was the sense that there were other kinds of union or communities which had existed before the war (see Chapter 3) and certainly after 1945. The Women's House in Kracow, for example, continued to provide communal women-only housing after 1945, despite the radical political changes. According to my sources there were known lesbian relationships and covert 'female friendships' (Women's House Kracow, Personal Communication, 1989). Such legislative heterosexism, theorists such as Adrienne Rich have argued, provides for one of the fundamental bases of an unequal society. Compulsory adherence to heterosexuality constitutes a political institution advancing the social dominance of men (Rich, 1980:

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<sup>3</sup> Under state capitalism, the marriage ceremony in Poland and the wording of the vows the couple made were virtually identical to those in the UK. The one difference was that the couple promised to uphold the principles of the socialist family and bring up their children in the spirit of Marxist-Leninism. (Marriage Ceremony, Lodz Palace of Weddings, July 31, 1990)



635-400).<sup>4</sup>

In these respects public policy designed to regulate gender equality after World War Two established the basis for the continuance of exclusion of women in the public sphere. This was because the state drew on not only aspects of the Soviet Union's social inheritance but also its own tradition of 19th century Positivism to fill the public vacuum left by the annihilation of its ethnic population. However, these aspects of social inheritance were themselves part of the much broader social inheritance of the Enlightenment in which the public function of human beings was separated from the private and then prioritized over other aspects of human life. In the next section we shall see whether the effect of this was in fact to include women in the work force, politics and education. Or, whether in fact the repression of aspects of Poland's social inheritance, such as the social amnesia concerning aspects of the holocaust and the 'private' dimensions of human life were to provide for exclusion and ghettoisation.

#### 4.5 Representation of Women in Education and the Workplace

Immediately after World War Two, Poland, like other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, underwent large-scale industrialization. Private banks and private industrial property became the property of the Polish state. People sold their labour to the state, rather than private employers; the state controlled, organized, and planned the manufacture and production,

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<sup>4</sup> Radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin would go a step further arguing that the norm of Western societies is seemingly heterosexuality 'because most men are fixated on women as sexual objects; but, in fact, we live in a homosexual society because all transactions of power, authority and authenticity take place among men ... heterosexuality, which can be defined as the sexual dominance of men over women, is like an acorn - from it grows the mighty oak of the male homosexual society' (Dworkin, 1976:104)

distribution, and sale of goods and labour (Harman, 1988:27-32). These industrial developments in the country required an expansion of the workforce. Western countries, also experiencing labour shortages, drew on labour from their colonies. In Poland, the state saw that its own labour shortage, caused by the losses of the war, could be fulfilled by an increase in the number of women workers (Sokolowska, 1977:358).

One of the first steps the new government took was to implement educational programmes to encourage women into the industrial workforce. A national literacy programme was established which was especially beneficial for women, since they formed the majority of Poland's illiterates. A campaign to get women into further and higher education was also implemented. Evening classes provided supplementary training for women entering new roles (Muszalski, 1982: 127). Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, Member of the Sejm and then Editor-in-Chief of Kobiety i Zycie (Women and Life) asserted that the only 'unquestionable achievement of the communist period is the fact that women were educated' (Personal Communication, 1990). Women entered all levels of education in unprecedented numbers (Siemieniska, 1991: 108). Before 1939 women constituted just under one third of those in higher education (Zollinger-Giele and Chapman-Smock, 1977:361). Between 1950 and 1980 the number of women with higher educational qualifications increased nearly six-fold; the number with secondary vocational and post-secondary school education rose more than five times; the number with secondary vocational education rose three fold (Niedzielska, 1985:16).<sup>5</sup> Polish women after 1945 began to fill the places left

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<sup>5</sup> The dominance of women in higher education was a feature of all East European countries, according to Einhorn (1994: 12).

by Poland's educated Jewish population. Many Polish men, in contrast, were not educated to the same extent because the highest paid jobs were in manual work rather than white collar work (Bednarowicz, personal communication, 1990). Further, education, like the workplace structures women were to enter, excluded women from some areas whilst over-including them in others. Teacher training, languages and the arts in 1970\72 had an average ratio of three women students to one man. Technical subjects in contrast had on average one woman student to three men (derived from Siemieniska, 1990:Table 6. 6.65).

The Polish United Workers Party established state child care in the form of crèches, daily and weekly play groups and nursery schools. There were residential homes for children from one-parent families and for those children whose parents worked shifts: children would be cared for by the state home from Monday to Friday (Miczkowski, 1985:258). State run restaurants were established to provide cheap meals for families to which workers were given meal vouchers as part of their remuneration.

Despite these mechanisms to include women in the workforce this was combined immediately after the War with the retention of the 1932 law on abortion which banned abortion except when the pregnancy endangered a woman's health, or was the result of a criminal act (Fuszara, 1993 :241). The law according to Fuszara was retained for demographic reasons. It was felt that the loss of population suffered during the hostilities needed to be made up (Fuszara, 1993:242). This was part of a process by which particular mechanisms into certain aspects of the public sphere were changed by the state to meet the labour needs of capital. This is more clearly illustrated by analysing the shifts in



these mechanisms, noted by scholars, over the following three decades.

In the 1950s, the political thaw that followed Stalin's death led to new discussions relating to women and abortion rights. A commission was established in 1956 under the Ministry of Health to investigate the situation for women wanting terminations. The Commission argued that a new law was required to prevent back street abortions and to protect women's health. Subsequently, the new act passed by the Sejm in 1956 stated in its preamble that it was to prevent 'abortions in unsuitable conditions by non physicians'. Abortion was to be permitted on the following grounds: medical reasons, if the pregnancy resulted from a criminal act and most importantly if the pregnant woman has 'difficult living conditions'. The latter clause effectively gave women the right to abortion on request, since doctors based their assessments on a patients own assessment of their condition (Fuszara, 1993: 242). The reversal of the 1932 Law, according to Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge, had a dramatic effect on working class women's lives: abortion became the main form of contraception, with other forms easily available only to members of the nomenclature ( 1993:260). People I interviewed in the contemporary Polish feminist groups have argued differently, however. One interviewee, Janina Suska-Jankowska, the chairperson of the Lodz Women's League, for example, maintained that family planning and forms of contraception were, before 1989, available on request and provided free of charge (Personal Communication, 1990). Lecturer and feminist Ewa Bednarowicz said:

I don't buy the stock Polish excuses that contraceptives are not available. It's just that I believe a lot of Polish women for patriotic procreative reasons refuse to develop a sense of self, responsibility and so on ... this is a

sexually squeamish nation and abortions are the simplest method of birth control, if only because you are knocked out and it's not really you doing the dirty work or you preventing the birth from happening, but somebody else. (Personal Communication, 1990).

This would, nevertheless, seem to support the argument that the social inheritance of the Soviet story of political right and the broader inheritance of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on the public rational function of human beings was detrimental to equality. The interviewee suggests that women themselves embedded within social memory repressed their private relationship to their own bodies and submitted to the attempts at territorialization by the Polish state. Such territorialization of women's bodies also recalls the interwar literature representations of women's bodies to be 'taken', undressed and used (See Chapter 3: 80).

Nevertheless, by the late 1950s there had been a decline in the Polish birth rate. This led to fears of a future labour shortage. Subsequently, the state implemented measures which effectively switched the mechanisms of inclusion, which had allowed women into the workforce, back again. Resources for crèches were reduced: wages and family allowances were increased. The government emphasized women's family role (Adamski, 1980:213-14). Over the following decade the state attempted to regulate these mechanisms so that the flow of female labour was more evenly balanced. In 1968, one year unpaid upbringing leaves were introduced (Niedzielska, 1985: 32). By the 1970s the birth rate had declined even further. This precipitated further pro-natalist policies making it more difficult for women to work in the paid labour sphere and easier to fulfill their traditional roles as wives and mothers. In 1972 unpaid upbringing leaves

were extended to three years (Niedzielska, 1985: 32). This was reinforced in the 1980s with the introduction, at Solidarity's request (see Chapter 7) of paid upbringing leaves for parents with children aged from birth to three years old (Adamski, 1980:214). In Poland, in contrast to other East European Countries<sup>6</sup>: 'policy wavered from pro-natalist to pro-workerist measures, with the result that there was never sufficient public childcare provision to meet more than a fraction of demand' (Einhorn, 1994:13).

The result was that women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers in the late 1940s and 1950s (Siemieniska, 1991: 108). However, first of all, they entered professions which tended to be extensions of their established private roles such as education, culture and health (Siemieniska, 1986: 5-35). Secondly, within the gender ghettoized workforce women continued to be excluded horizontally from the elite of the professional ladder. For example, despite women in the education profession being in the majority, they remained virtually excluded from the higher echelons of the profession: in 1970 whilst 37.2 percent of University assistants were women<sup>7</sup> only 8.3 percent were Professors (Rocznik Statystyczny Polski, 1990: 477). Similarly, in the work place structures of periodicals and newspapers top positions remained in the hands of men, even with women's magazines. Zofia Sokol describes how the position of editor-in-chief of 9 selected women's periodicals between the years 1944-82 was in the majority of cases held by men (1991: 87-

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<sup>6</sup> In the GDR for example more consistent policies in relation to reproduction resulted in an effective mixture of freely available childcare and nursery places, adequate contraception, and ongoing abortion rights. This provided women with the necessary facilities to make real choices about having children and returning to paid employment after the birth. (See Einhorn, 1994:12)

<sup>7</sup> Assistant in Poland is the lowest rank signifying someone teaching and writing a doctoral thesis.



98). This recalls the linguistic value of women in Polish who will always, no matter what, be worth less than any man (see Chapter 2).

The other crucial aspect to post-war Poland was that many women were still in fact as the word 'kobieta' remembers - 'keepers of the pig-swill' (Chapter 2) since the country remained a predominantly rural peasant society. Out of a population of 35,525,000 in the late 1970s (Titkow, 1984: 555) there was a rural population of 15-16 million people (Hann, 1985:vii). In most other Eastern Bloc countries peasant culture was broken up by collectivisation by the Communist regimes, but, in Poland 80 percent of land remained in private hands (Adamski, 1980: 218). The Polish United Workers Party, after the War, in order to increase its base of support, passed a series of reforms which gave land to people who had previously been hired farm hands. The plots distributed were very small. The Polish State owned the rest of the land in the form of state run cooperatives. All produce whether from cooperative or private sources was sold and distributed through state run cooperatives (Hann, 1985). Through a system of state credits and loans agricultural mechanisation was encouraged. However, the system rapidly became corrupt, with priority given to those with Party credibility. The system also did little to assist the poorest peasants who could not afford the journey to local Party Administrative Unit's up to 30 kilometres away from isolated rural villages. The result was that even the most basic agricultural machinery, such as tractors and combine harvesters, was only available to a small peasant elite, whilst on the majority of tiny plots work was done by hand and with ancient machinery (Hann, 1985). Whether farms were mechanized or not, women were worse off. Farmers who successfully introduced mechanization

became isolated from other peasants since they had to break the tradition of cooperation in which peasants readily gave each other labour during periods of heavy work. As one peasant family pointed out, a tractor cannot be lent out in the same way since the recipients cannot hope to return the labour in kind (Jakubczak Family, Personal Communication, 1990). Whilst successful male farmers gained status from this self-reliance, women, according to research, did not. Successful women would be described as 'chytre'-crafty and keen on material gain: 'it is they who are more isolated, who must pay the penalty for breaking with traditional values, while their husbands may gain prestige' (Hann, 1985:155).

More than 60 percent of divorced and separated women worked on the land (Morgan, 1984: 556); combined with this was the fact that many men on smaller farms often had two jobs, one on the farm and one in the town in order to make ends meet (Adamski, 1980: 218). The result was that many women found themselves running farms virtually single-handedly (Tryfan, 1987:70). On small farms women would have to plough by themselves (Danuta Jakubczak, Personal Communication: 1990). In most cases such women would work more than 12 hours per day (Tryfan, 1987: 14) and usually seven days a week with just a few hours off on Sundays, as one interviewee described:

I get up at 6 a.m. milk the cows, then I lead the cows to the pasture and about 8 a.m., we have breakfast. Since we had our house redecorated some time has to be devoted to cleaning the house. Then I go to work in the field and come back about mid-day to milk the cows again. In the afternoon I do shopping or work at home until 10 p.m. The cows must be milked again in the evening about 9 p.m., during the harvest the day is different. On Sundays I have time for myself (Danuta Jakubczak, Personal Communication, 1990).

Despite shouldering an increasing burden of work, rural women, like their urban counterparts, were excluded from sharing the same economic and social positions as men. In 1980 women constituted 46 percent of the total agricultural work force yet made up only 31 percent of those employed in state agriculture (Morgan, 1984:556). The majority of women working in agriculture were like the peasant women of the 19th century (see Chapter 3) since they worked predominantly as unpaid family members (Tryfan, 1987:14). In rural political and administrative structures very few women gained positions of power. Tryfan's survey of women and rural life in Poland in the post-war years revealed that under state capitalism for every one woman manager in agriculture there were fourteen men managing cooperatives or state enterprises (Tryfan, 1987:14). As in the cities, the higher the position in the administrative structures the fewer women were found (Tryfan, 1987:40). Research on villages in Bieszczardy in the South East of Poland showed similar gender bias:

The persons who enjoy above average prestige and esteem in the village, apart from the teachers, are those who have demonstrated their competence as farmers. Normally these will be the persons invited to the gmina officials to stand for the local council, and one of them is likely to be vested with the powers of village headman. These are invariably male (Hann, 1985:93).

Hann's study A Village without Solidarity, Polish Peasants in Years of Crisis revealed that the continuation of private peasant holdings under the state capitalist regime in Poland was a significant factor in the persistence of traditional gender attitudes in rural areas. Hann argues that the retention of private property meant that patronymy and the preference for male babies to keep property in the male line remained. In the small villages around



Sanok, where part of Hann's study was conducted, there was only one instance where a farm had been inherited by a daughter. However, stated Hann, after the young woman's marriage to a former logger, formal ownership of the farm she had inherited was signed over to her husband (Hann, 1985: 137). As in many rural societies, large families were still favoured as a form of security in old age. The introduction of state pension schemes did little to change this tradition. Thus, in addition to their largely unpaid farm work, after the War, women remained bound to their traditional roles as wives and mothers:

Marriage is seldom delayed beyond the early twenties for women; those who marry locally seldom see any reason to delay starting a family; pregnancy remains a common reason for getting married (Hann, 1985: 136).

Poland's economic crises in the 1970s led to serious cuts in public services and the closure of many village amenities such as village halls and local libraries. The consumption of vodka, a traditional part of Polish rural culture, increased rapidly during this time with per capita consumption one of the highest in Europe (Malinowska, 1985: 3). Alcoholism continued to rise, with cheap wine used as an alternative when vodka was rationed (Malinowska, 1985: 5). Alcohol consumption was far greater amongst rural men because rural tradition saw male drinking as a positive sign of manliness, but female drinking as a negative detraction from femininity (Hann, 1985: 130). Alcohol related violence and abuse were found to be an established pattern of life. This had a particular impact on women, as Hann points out: 'women are certainly abused and many children must be permanently affected' (Hann, 1985: 130).

Overall the effects of state capitalism on women in Poland were some what different from those in other

East European countries because of the retention of private property and the promotion of the peasant agricultural base. Men had more leisure time, more prestige and more power. The majority of peasant women, 85.1 percent, also saw themselves as benefiting little from the industrial advances experienced by Poland after 1945 (Tryfan, 1987: 64). Such advances were for city dwellers alone, according to the mother and daughter of the peasant family I interviewed in 1990 in Mogilno, near Lodz, (Mrs Jakubczak and Danuta Jakubczak, Personal Communication: 1990):

As the peasant woman watched a programme on her old monochrome TV set about a factory making washing machines, she was reminded that she had yet to do the family washing, in the river, by hand (Reading, 1992: 47).

#### 4.4 Women in Politics up to 1980

Despite some changes in the workforce and education, however, between 1945-1979, the number of women in formal Polish politics remained limited, argues Renata Siemieniska (1991: 108-130). In fact, women's representation in the Communist Party did rise in the decades following World War Two, but, as Jancar shows, the number of women in Communist Party elites throughout Central and Eastern Europe was still very low by 1974: Poland had just three women in the Communist Party Politbureau in comparison with 56 men (Jancar, 1974: 215). \* The very highest positions were all occupied by men (Leven, 1994:30) Overall, the percentage of women in parliament in Poland actually fell between 1952 and 1972 from 17 to 13 percent (Rocznik Statstyczny Polski, 1990: 65).

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\* This is effectively the highest proportion of women in Communist Party elites in the mid-1970s. In Hungary there was just one woman in relation to 35 men and in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia there were no women, in comparison with 19 and 18 men respectively. (Jancar, 1978:215-28).

The percentage of women in political parties also remained pretty low. In 1970, for example, women made up 22.5 percent of the Polish United workers Party; 20.6 percent of the Social Democratic Union Party; and 27.8 percent of the Peasant Party (Rocznik Statystyczny Polski, 1988:34-5; 1987: 33-4). In 1972-76 women occupied just 16 per cent of seats in the Polish Sejm. This was the lowest in Eastern Europe and the USSR, though by no means the lowest in Western and Eastern Europe together (Einhorn, 1994: Table A10, 274) <sup>9</sup>

#### 4.6 Concluding Remarks

An argument put forward by Renata Siemienka as to why women remained so under-represented in politics was that it was due to the absence of grass-roots organisations (Siemienka, 1991: 108-130). However, as we have already seen in Chapter 3, women's organizations have a long history in Poland. Under state capitalism working class women developed their own spontaneous forms of protest, even before the advent of Solidarity. For example, peasant women sick of their husbands drinking would picket village alcohol stores and demand that sales of vodka be stopped (Hann, 1985:86). Under the Gierek government price hikes initiated a rash of all-women strikes in 1971. In one in a textile plant in Lodz the women refused the traditional forms of public negotiation and representation and insisted on collective responsibility. They refused the demands by the government that they represent their demands through a delegate. As a result, when the Polish Premier

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<sup>9</sup> Women occupied a far greater percentage of seats in other East European countries at this time. For example, the Polish figure compares to 28.7 percent in Hungary, 26 percent in Czechoslovakia And 31.8 in the GDR in 1975. France had only 1.6 percent of its seats occupied by women (Einhorn, 1994: table A10, 274).



visited the factory it was not possible to pick off or blame individuals. Negotiation was made impossible, consequently, the government cancelled the price hikes and increased wages, as Siemieniska herself notes in an earlier article (1986:28). Women in a Zyradow food factory strike used the same tactic with equal success (Jancar, 1985:175-76). The unstructured strike, argues Jancar, was a particular form favoured by women in Poland (Jancar, 1985:175-76). This method was one way of breaking through the mechanisms of exclusion to women entering the official public sphere. It is also a method favoured by marginalized groups in other societies in protest situations (see for example Jones, 1983)<sup>10</sup> In addition, state sanctioned women's organisations continued along the same lines the work of women's organisations before the war. The Communist regime set up its own League of Women which continued the pre World War Two middle class work of the National Organization of Women (See Chapter 6). There was in this way what we could term an alternative public sphere which in fact continued after the War.

It seems, however, from the evidence thus far, that the (en)gendering process of exclusion within the public sphere established during Poland's period of identity formation and during the interwar years, on the whole, continued under state capitalism. Women were drawn into the paid workforce but mostly only into areas which were extensions of their 'private' roles as mothers and carers. Women were drawn into education, but again only into certain areas. Women continued their own tradition of a political sphere but were still marginalised within official politics.

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<sup>10</sup> The alternative forms of representation employed by women in an effort to break through the mechanisms of exclusion to the public sphere as far back as ancient Greece. Aristophanes wrote of a demonstration on roof tops by the wives of Athenian senators (*Lysistrata* 387-96 cited in Winkler, 1992: 190)

The reason for this, I would suggest, is not because of a lack of 'grass-roots' organisations, as Siemieniska and Einhorn (1993) indicate, but was, perhaps, because of a complex process of inherited events and values or socially inherited memory. Post-War Poland socially inherited the memory of the exclusion of women and ethnic minorities politically from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It then inherited the economic and social results of the holocaust: the elimination of a large part of its Jewish workforce and intelligentsia, combined with the denial of the Polish population's role in witnessing the events. To fill the public vacuum the state drew on the social memory of Soviet style equality laws. These fitted well with part of Poland's own inheritance of Positivism in which Jewish men were depicted as able to make a positive contribution to society through their labour. Women, effectively, took on this role after the War. At the same time, Soviet style equality laws recalled the Enlightenment tradition of giving priority to the public, the rational, the functional aspect of human beings, whilst repressing the private, the emotional, the spontaneous and the connection between these. The consequence was that women were to re-enact their own ghettoisation and that of the Jews by entering mostly those areas of the workforce and education which remembered their social roles of mother and carer. By emphasising only women's public economic function, and territorialising women's bodies to this effect, women were denied the possibility of either rising to the top in their profession or having a significant political voice. Thus we can conclude from this that although the representation of women publicly under state capitalism seemed radically different in terms of the laws granted women, there was actually marked continuity, even in terms of how equality laws were

framed. Yet was this also the case in cultural representations of women in the public sphere? Or, did the system of censorship within the arena of cultural production result in a radical disjuncture? In the next chapter I address these issues in terms of whether state capitalist censorship in key areas of culture recalled solely the inheritance of exclusive public right between 1945-1979, or, whether there were also re-presentations of women which challenged aspects of Poland's social inheritance.



## Chapter 5

### Speaking the Unspeakable:

#### Social Memory and Censorship Under State Capitalism

A woman who writes commits two crimes: she  
increases the number of writers - and decreases the  
number of women (Julian Tuwim)

She stretches her fists to the sky.  
and with her fists  
she writes across the sky  
from horizon to horizon:  
- I don't want to.

(Anna Swir, 1985)

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the impact of socially inherited memory on the public (en)gendering of representation in Poland leading up to the beginning of the period of transition. In this chapter I analyse to what extent socially inherited memory has impacted on re-presentations of women in cultural production during the same period. During this time a key factor of the regime was its reliance on censorship. This is crucial to understanding the role of socially inherited memory in the post-War period: If we draw again on the work of Judith Herman, who makes the connection between domestic abuse and political terror (1993), then similar to the ways in which individuals under threat censor or repress thoughts and feelings in order to survive, elites in societies censor to ensure their own survival, or position of power within the nation. Herman, who brings together research on the effects of political terror and sexual abuse on the memories of victims, argues that only when an individual is in a position of relative safety and economic security can they begin to speak the unspeakable. Perhaps the same may be said of societies: when ruling elites are confident

and feel secure the gags of censorship are undone. If this is the case, this would also reinforce the suggestion in the previous chapter of the importance of the economic dimension in understanding social memory. In addition, since the development of Poland's socially inherited memory was contradictory and dialectical in terms of gender, ethnicity and class, then the effects of censorship may also be contradictory in terms of cultural re-presentations of women in the public sphere.

Thus what I examine in this chapter are the gendered aspects of socially inherited memory in relation to cultural re-presentations. I begin with an outline of censorship in Poland after the War; I then attend to the gendered implications of censorship policy in relation to culture. The focus on culture is then narrowed to examine re-presentations of women in literature in particular. This is because, as Barbara Einhorn points out, the 'occlusion of the space for articulating alternative views in public discourse meant that literature attained the status of political statement and sociological evidence' in Eastern Europe (1994: 216). Censorship policies also contributed to this heightening of literature's importance. Consequently, 'literature became a more widely read media form than the often turgid daily newspapers' (Einhorn, 1994: 217). I then argue that socially inherited memory had an important part to play in post-War re-presentations of women in literature. But, that this was not an inevitable historical process since in some instances other social re-presentations of women were drawn on and produced. An illustration of the latter I suggest is to be found in some of the work of the playwright, poet and radio writer Anna Swir (Anna Swirszczynska) who was able to challenge the dominant re-representations of women found in both

underground and state produced literature. In terms of socially inherited memory, it is significant that Swir's most radical work concerned with women was published in the 1970s, which was a period of confident state capitalism. Although, as we have seen in the previous Chapter, there was social discord and growing economic problems, during that period the Polish United Workers Party publicly claimed that their project to eradicate class divisions in Poland was almost complete. This meant that there developed a new space for state writers in terms of the subject matter that they were permitted to tackle (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). Furthermore, feminist work, such as that by Swir, provided an alternative to the new voices coming from the underground literary movement in which women were frequently portrayed as sex objects. This, ironically, made Swir's work in state terms officially acceptable. The medium of poetry chosen by Swir is also significant. Poetry certainly did use gender stereotypes after the War, but not to the same extent as fiction. The symbolism of underground poets concerned language and censorship itself. The dominant themes were of distrust with the state and pessimism about life: 'Overall, there is a marked absence of gendered types' (Reading, 1992:58). Thus, what I argue is that at that particular time Swir was able to enter and use poetical discourse to publicly engender re-presentations that effectively challenged Polish cultural traditions and the social inheritance remembered culturally elsewhere.

## **5.2 An Overview of Censorship under State Capitalism 1945-1979**

The state capitalist regime enshrined the principle of freedom of speech in the Polish Constitution of 1945



(Solecki, 1978: 7). Yet under state capitalism censorship was applied to every image and word recorded; this included not only the editorial pages of newspapers and magazines, but also newspaper advertisements, obituaries, stage design, mime and works of art (Mianowicz, 1983: 24)<sup>1</sup>. Publishing houses, bookshops and libraries were owned and controlled by the state. Writers and artists were paid by the state. Thus, in return for a secure financial situation writers and artists had to account for their products (Milosz, 1969: 453). The metaphor usually used to describe the situation for the media in Poland was the gag (Reading, 1992:49).

However, censorship in Poland was not something uniform and unchanging; it was also in some periods the least restrictive of the regimes in the Eastern Bloc. As Goban-Klas shows in The Orchestration of the Media the history of censorship in People's Poland is one of modification and adaptation to meet the political needs of the ruling elite. Initially, in 1944, with the establishment of the Polish Committee for National Liberation, democratic freedoms were restored, including freedom of the press and information. There was a clause, however, that limited this where such freedom was exercised by the "enemies of democracy" (Goban-Klas, 1994:52). In

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<sup>1</sup> Even as late as 1989, plays performed in state theatres were supposed to be submitted to the state authorities for approval, yet increasingly companies ignored this rule. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the authorities were unaware of the situation or even approved. For example, I was advised by Polish feminists for the production of one of my plays "Want" not to submit a copy of the script or to inform the authorities of its performances in seven Polish cities, as the play was highly critical of the Polish regime and equally critical of Solidarity. The English actors and video team thus entered the country as tourists, stayed informally in the homes of Polish feminists and the play itself was performed illegally in a variety of venues from State run Theatres to Houses of Culture. Despite this the play was reviewed in a number of state run newspapers and featured on Polish Radio and Television. Later we learnt that my Polish ex-husband, who had been most helpful in the organisation of the Polish tour, had been working for the security services and informed on all those involved. The play at his suggestion was sponsored by the British Council, an arm of the British foreign office. The lesson to be learnt from this I suggest is that by the latter days of the regime, whilst overt censorship policies were increasingly ignored, covert strategies were not.

practice, argues Goban-Klas, the Communists denied equal access to equipment and newsprint. Gradually, between the years 1944 and 1948, the Communists eliminated opposition and through a series of laws and policy documents established a monopoly over the media industry. At the same time, the Ministry of Information and Propaganda developed a network of publications along with an ethos of what was termed "new journalism" that moved away from commercialism and sensationalism and sought to mobilize the masses for a better society (Goban-Klas, 1994:57). In 1947 the Decree on the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Public Performances was passed. This provided a legal basis for censorship that stayed in place until October 1981, with censorship itself remaining in force until June 1990. The decree allowed for four kinds restriction: introductory control, actual control, post-publication review and secondary analysis (Goban-Klas, 1994:61). The ruling elite put forward the idea that there was a distinction to be made between the absolute freedom of the press found in bourgeois societies and institutions, and, limited freedom which was equated with real freedom by banning expression from enemies of the people, reactionaries and Nazis. In 1949 Gomulka was removed from power and new political cadres were installed in Party newspapers. By the end of the 1940s the Stalinist regime was fully established:

In those years Poland, like the other countries in that region, suffered political terror, ideological subjugation, and the ludicrous cult of Stalinism. The Iron Curtain became a reality - an impassable barrier to the flow of people and ideas. All forms of communications with the West were cut off (Goban-Klas, 1994:71).



Despite the fact that the Polish Constitution of 1952<sup>2</sup> upheld the principles of the rights of citizens to freedom of expression and freedom of the press with access to the material means to use this right, the reality by the early 1950s was very different. In the arts the doctrine of Socialist-Realism was paramount (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75).<sup>3</sup> The essence of Socialist-Realism entailed a style which upheld the ideals of Communism even if these contradicted the reality of the present. The doctrine applied not just to writers but also to journalists and artists who were required to provide positive and optimistic representations of society even under the most depressing of circumstances. <sup>4</sup> A favoured subject of Socialist- Realism, as we shall see further on, was the woman-worker-heroine. Anyone who deviated from this perspective was stigmatized and went unpublished (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). In 1950 and 1952 state censorship was extended to include the control of duplicating machines, the production of posters,

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<sup>2</sup> The Polish Constitution, as Goban-Klas (1994:80), points out was a virtual copy in this respect of the Soviet Constitution of 1936. Article 125 read:

The citizens of the USSR are guaranteed by law: (a) freedom of press; (b) freedom of assembly, including the holding of mass meetings; (c) freedom of street processions and demonstrations. These civil rights are ensured by placing at the disposal of the working people and their organizations printing presses, stocks of paper, public buildings and streets, communications facilities and other material resources for the exercise of these rights.

It should be noted that these rights were only permissible "in conformity with the interests of the working people and in order to strengthen the socialist system".

<sup>3</sup> The origins of this stemmed from a resolution adopted by the Central Committee in the Soviet Union, headed by Joseph Stalin, which outlined the policies of the Communist Party in relation to Soviet literature. This was further developed by Stalin and a group of loyal writers who coined the term socialist realism in 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Goban-Klas points out that the doctrine provided a framework for nearly all forms of public signification including that of the dressing of shop windows. "They were to be dressed in such a way as to offer material proof of the advance of socialism and, at the same time, to scorn the myth of consumption for its own sake" (1994:85). Thus during the 1970s butchers' shops were instructed in the event of the absence of any meat or meat products to display posters of Edward Gierk (Tomasz Bednarowicz, personal communication, 1989).



and the restriction of personnel. The period also saw the development of the networks of Kolhoznik, loudspeakers installed in clubs, private homes and public streets to emit broadcasts of Party doctrine.

After the death of Stalin in 1953 there were demands by intellectuals and journalists to be able to write "the truth". This was reinforced in the Autumn of 1954 by the propaganda campaign of Radio Free Europe which broadcast the confessions of the escaped UB Officer, Joseph Swiatlo, who shook the Party elite with his tales of torture and brutality by the security forces. However, according to commentators, politically "Stalin was dead, but Poland was still Stalinist" (Goban-Klas, 1994:85). It was not until the mid-to-late 1950s that Poland saw the beginning of some cultural and journalistic pluralism:

The Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the Polish October marked the beginnings of a short thaw: although writers had to adhere to state ideology they were allowed to use a variety of styles and forms (Reading, 1992:49)

The thaw included the Fifth World Youth Festival in Warsaw in 1955 and the establishment of a new Journal, *Po Prostu*, in which Jerzy Urban, a regular columnist, told what was happening in Poland at the time. These events were crowned by the denunciation by Khrushchev of Stalin's cult. This contributed to the Polish Party's elite pressure for "democratization" to retain Party hegemony (Goban-Klas, 1994:102). The election of Wladyslaw Gomulka to the position of First Secretary led to a flowering of Polish cultural life. The jamming of foreign radio signals was ended; libraries began to stock foreign books and periodicals; cinemas began to show foreign films and foreign newspapers were sold openly on the streets. According to Goban-Klas: "throughout 1956 the cultural life in Poland

remained freer than at any time since the Communist takeover" (1994:109).

The thaw was short lived, however. By January 1957 Gomulka was calling for the return to restrictive information policies. The journal *Po Prostu* was closed and a new weekly political journal established as a voice of the party, called *Polityka*. The period marked the beginnings of a connection between freedom of expression and representation within Polish Communism with the Polish nation and nationalism. This, as we shall see later on, is crucial for the public (en)gendering of representation. An article in *Polityka* in 1957 stated for example:

Freedom of speech has defined boundaries in post-October Poland. These boundaries end where propaganda directed against the building of socialism in our country starts; they end where the vital interests of the state and nation start" (my emphasis) (*Polityka*, October 28, 1957 cited by Goban-Klas, 1994:117)

Despite this clamp down, Goban-Klas argues that it was also a time in which women's magazines and the ethnic press (re) developed in Poland. By 1963, however, a number of academics and intellectuals had been imprisoned for their views. The Party also began a policy of harassment of the Roman Catholic Church (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). The Six Day War in the Middle East in 1967 led to a different turn of events. The Party leadership shifted its attention from the Polish Catholics to Jews. 1968 saw the development of what was termed the "partisan" faction in the Party which advocated a nationalist anti-Semitic stance. Communication policies began to take a particularly pernicious turn. Firstly, in March of that year a production of *Dziady* (Forefathers Eve) by



the Polish 19th century Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz was banned. The Party stopped the production because of its supposedly anti-Communist tendencies (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). Lists of Jews in politics, mass communications, propaganda and managerial positions were drawn up by General Moczar. Jews and members of the intelligentsia were used as scapegoats by the Party which fuelled anti-Semitic sentiments amongst the workers. By the end of the year two thirds of Poland's Jewish population had been forced to emigrate (Goban-Klas, 1994:140). Further:

As the rifts between classes widened the Party appealed to the patriotism of the people to hold the nation together. The madness of 1968 was to radically alter the intellectual opposition in Poland in years to come: no longer would it seek reforms to socialism - instead it would align itself with Catholicism and the Church. (Reading, 1992:228, note 12)

The atmosphere of repression continued in a different vein in 1969 with the arrests of what were termed the Taternicy. These were a group of people who smuggled books from the West through Czechoslovakia over the Tatra mountains and into Poland. By 1970 the situation was aggravated by the impending economic crisis which led to riots on the Baltic coast by shipyard workers, of which 44 were shot and killed. (Goban-Klas, 1994:141). This instigated the replacement of Gomulka by a Silesian union leader, Edward Gierek. Gierek's rule promised greater intellectual and cultural freedom. Between 1971 and 1973 there was what has been termed the 'little thaw' (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). Nevertheless, the censors continued to distort, alter, mutilate and silence particular subjects they believed threatened their hegemony. Sometimes this resulted in the most ridiculous



alterations. In 1971, for example, the poet and writer Stanislaw Baranczak was prevented from publishing a poem with the words 'liver sausage' in it because it implied, according to the censors, that there was a meat shortage (there was). Baranczak was requested to replace the words liver sausage with salami or steak (Baranczak, 1981: 38).

One crucial difference in information policy under Edward Gierek's rule, however, concerned his attitude to television broadcasting. According to Goban-Klas, Gierek was the first of Poland's rulers to grasp the full significance of television. With his initial policy of openness Gierek initiated a new television programme called "Citizen's Tribune". This, ostensibly, was to provide a forum for debate for ordinary people. Effectively, however, the programme acted as a space for Gierek and the Party to explain its policies. (Goban-Klas, 1994:147-148). Television became increasingly important in the transmission of what was later termed "the propaganda of success" or "compulsory optimism". With this, television news was obliged to present the upside of all news events and their impact in terms of the achievement of a socialist Poland. Furthermore, a crucial facet of the propaganda of the period was, again, the centrality of the nation state. The new information policy established by the Party stressed that it was not only Marxist-Leninism which was being sold to the masses, but the Polish National leadership. The media was expected to gather not so much the people, but the Polish nation around the Party and its programme (Goban-Klas, 1994:149). The editor-in-chief of the News department of Polish television stated:

We, Polish journalists, serve the Party and its leadership. And both the Party and the leadership have no other goal than to serve the nation. (VII Zjazd PZPR. Stenogram W Zespólach Problemowych, 1976: 62 cited in Goban-Klas, 1994: 152)

Gierek it seems was attempting to establish what some commentators have called national communism (Brown, 1991). This recalls the emphasis on the nation that developed in Poland in the 19th century, and, as we shall see, is important in terms of gendered mechanisms of representation in the public sphere.

As the link between the journalist or artist to the Party and ultimately their responsibility to the integrity of the nation was made, Communist Party Information policy was also moving in the direction of increasing centralization and profit-orientation. By the mid-1970s the economic situation in Poland had become so dire workers in the towns of Radom and Ursus protested their opposition to a rise in meat prices. Although the government returned the price to its original level it imprisoned key workers who had instigated the protests. This led to what commentators have subsequently seen as a crucial shift in information accessibility in Poland with the establishment of the opposition's Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) which included Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). The Committee began the impetus for a secondary literary and journalistic system with the publication of a periodical called *Komunikat*. This led the way for later unofficial periodicals such as *PULS* (Pulse) and *Bratniak* (Fraternity). Two unofficial publishing houses NOWA and KRAG were set up which published and distributed literature, leaflets, handbooks, fly-sheets and pamphlets which the official publishers would never print (Pzenicki, 1983: 8-11; Krynski, 1978: 78-75). A system of video tape distribution was established which included copies of banned films, plays, alternative news magazines, cabaret and literature (Diehl, J, 1986: 24-27). An alternative

education movement was also set up in 1978 under the name of 'The Flying University' in which academics and students who opposed the regime met in people's homes to discuss issues of importance and interest (Bartowszewski, 1985: 21-24).

Overall, Poland in the 1970s was much more pluralistic than other East European countries. The situation was later encapsulated by Tadeusz Konwicki's A Minor Apocalypse where a cinema advertises on the outside the officially sanctioned film, whilst screening inside a banned film (Konwicki, 1988). The scene was effectively set for the rise of Solidarity and the contradictory information policies of the regime in the 1980s (See next Chapter).

### 5.3 Censorship and Gender

State censorship to many social scientists and writers is treated as if it is gender-neutral; as if somehow the policies of a male-dominated state serve to exclude each sex equally. The writer Ryszard Kowalski stated, for example:

Nobody will ever know how many books were not written, not even begun, because their prospective authors did not feel optimistic enough (Kowalski, 1980:84).

He argued that state censorship resulted in fear, pessimism and self-censorship by artists and writers. The socio-psychological impact of censorship was indeed one of the most important difficulties under communism, according to regional women journalists I asked. For example, a senior Lodz journalist, whose husband had been a top party official, Elzbieta Adamczewska, said that the worst aspect of communism was:

The fact that you couldn't think freely. It is hard to believe, but I was a grown woman when I started to learn about certain facts. In my



family there was no tradition of talking about some things. For a long time I was not aware of such facts as the 17 September 1939. ... I'm trying to make up for that in relation to my own children. I don't want them to have a blank page of history. ... I'm still ashamed that I could live for such a long time without that knowledge and that I didn't feel that something was wrong, that I wasn't bothered by it. ... The consciousness that it was all a big con came only afterwards. This is the biggest problem and I try to protect my children from experiencing the same. I try to explain to them everything that is ambiguous or unclear concerning both the past and present situation. I don't want them to lose their lives, to have this feeling of loss. The lack of information in these various areas is the problem in my life. It's more important than the stupid work I had to do or the fact that I couldn't work for a long time. (Elzbieta Adamczewska, Personal Communication, 1990)

Another Polish writer, Jan Prokop, believed that censorship led to mediocre writers being praised and elevated simply because they upheld Communist Party doctrine. Conversely, underground writers in unofficial circles were praised and favoured simply because they did not uphold Party doctrine, regardless of the quality of their work (Prokop, 1983: 49-52). The Polish poet Adam Czerniawski extended this argument. He maintained that the underground writer in Poland had, traditionally, to act as the nation's conscience. The writer, he said, had the choice in Poland of either socialist-realism or what he termed Pol-Realism, Polish patriotic realism (Czerniawski, 1979: 3-27). Journalist and writer, Timothy Wiles, writing a few years later, argued that unofficial literature in Poland was hampered by playing to the state and by viewing the state as the source of all evils. This, he said, led to what has been termed the 'monocular perception' of unofficial literature (Wiles, 1983:112-19). Added to this, critics said, was also a covert form of censorship by publishers in the West:

Many a rebuffed hack has been sympathetically received in the West, just because the message he (sic) was struggling to express was the one the West was longing to hear (Czerniawski, 1979: 4)

The problem, however, with these arguments concerning the problems of the circumscribed dichotomy in journalism and literature is that they are gender blind. They fail to analyze the differential impact concepts such as the "custodian of the nation's conscience" and the "state as the source of all evils" may have on women in contrast to men. Censorship and the use of the nation as a political vortex for expression has, as we know, a long tradition in Poland. In Part One it was shown how in 19th century representations of women the dominant images in political discourse and literature were those of Mother Poland linked to organized religion. In the interwar years, despite Poland's independence, nationalism prevailed with a new development in representational terms with the nation linked to woman and her sexuality. In addition, the representation of Poland's ethnic minorities, particularly Jews, in relation to the nation, was inflected differently. What we will see is that it was not simply the case that such representations were an aberration of the interwar years. Under state capitalism the effects of ongoing forms of censorship recalled earlier aspects of the public (en)gendering of re-presentation and the kinds of mechanisms of exclusion which effected women in particular.

#### 5.4 Women and Media Re-Presentations

The re-presentations of women prevalent in the mainstream media in the immediate post-war years, according to a number of scholars, upheld the regime's changing policies towards women's inclusion within the workplace. Anna Titkow maintains:



In the years 1945-54 when all hands were needed for labour, the streets were full of posters with joyfully smiling tractor drivers, women street car drivers. But in 1958 'the home-coming' of women was promoted. (Titkow, 1984:562)

But, from 1958 until the late 1960s the representation of women and their roles in society by the Polish United Workers Party shows a general pattern of what Jolanta Plakwicz has since called ideological 'confusion'. The confusion stemmed, according to Plakwicz, from the contribution women made in terms of reproduction, which the Polish government at that time did not see as part of their economic contribution. Consequently, a woman's reproductive role was seen as "standing in conflict with her productive role." (Plakwicz, 1992:80). The confusion in re-presentation terms was articulated with images of women as both mothers and workers (Plakwicz, 1992:80). But, in the 1970s the representation of women in official literature began to have a different emphasis. The media promoted women as participating in all spheres of life, but well able to perform their traditional duties as mothers and wives (Yedlin, 1980:216). As pressure grew in economic terms for women to perform more of what was previously deemed social duties at home, such as health care and early years education, there was an extra drive in representational terms to ensure that women would recognize and fulfill their domestic and family responsibilities (Plakwicz, 1992:81).

These patterns are also found in literature. The dominant ideology of socialist realism meant that in parallel with the entrance of women into the paid workforce in the 1950s socialist realist novels of the time revolved very often around the worker-heroine of the factory or cooperative. However, it was not the case that such representations of women overturned the



feminine characteristics traditionally assigned women in Poland. The characteristics of the 19th century ideal of Mother Poland, such as empathy, patience and caring, were simply extended to the work place. Rosenberg argues that in the case of literature in the GDR, which until the late 1970s followed the same route as Polish literature, that the female population was generally depicted as:

a huge and conservative mass to be prodded and lured into the work place where the process of socialized labour will turn them into emancipated women is the key characteristic of literature of the 1950s. (Rosenberg, 1985:354)

She adds that in the 1960s literature in the GDR saw the rise of the 'professional' heroine. This was also the case with Polish literature. One of the most respected and powerful figures in the Polish Communist literati was Jerzy Zawiejski (1902-69). He had a woman doctor as the heroine of his popular novel Cry in the Void, a short story about the Nazi extermination of inmates in a psychiatric hospital (Zawiejski, 1981: 322). Tadeusz Rozewicz (1921 -) who was given a literary award by the state and whose work was described by critics as 'warped' by its obedience to the censor (Gillon, 1981: 331) has an artist as the heroine in The Most Beautiful City in the World. However, the manner in which Rozewicz attempts to advocate equality is highly contradictory:

'What's your opinion of M?  
'A decent human being.'  
'A decent human being? But she's a woman.  
'To me she is painter. After all, she herself doesn't want to be a woman'  
(Rozewicz, 1981: 331).

Also in the 1960s, the emphasis by the Party on positively building socialism meant that in literary re-presentational terms a link was again established between women and self-sacrifice for the greater

social good, in this particular case, sacrifice for the socialist vision, rather than independence as in the 19th century. The woman doctor in Zawiejski's Cry in the Void is both an independent professional woman, but one who ultimately sacrifices her life with that of the psychiatric inmates of the hospital in which she works. The inmates effectively symbolize a surrogate family. The extent to which censorship was gendered in its literary impact is further illustrated by a subtle parody of the emphasis on female self-sacrifice by the writer Kazimierz Brandy's who was criticized for failing to provide positive socialist heroes. In the following extract from How to Be Loved, the heroine, a radio actress in a weekly drama, only receives letters of praise from the League of Women when she behaves in a spirit of female Party-mindedness to which self-sacrifice is crucial:

When I say to Tom: do eat that piece of meat darling, the one nearer the bone - I feel their gratitude and know that I shall receive many letters. I am capable of much more in real life, but they know only that piece of meat and self-sacrifice, this spoonful of soup and the certainty that I shan't eat so that he will eat well (Brandy, 1981:283).

A further effect of censorship in (en)gendering public re-presentations in the period before the transition was to perpetuate the longstanding dichotomy of women in Poland as either sexless (virgins) or sex objects (whores). Male writers even by the 1960s began to associate the Party image of the worker heroine with sexless independence. In Rozewicz's The Most Beautiful City in the World the heroine "M" is certainly an independent female artist, but, with her short-cropped hair she is portrayed as rejecting her 'femininity'. The other women in the novel, in contrast, are praised for their bodies and ultimately undergo commoditization and objectification:



Women walk along those streets. They carry around their bodies, their wares, very ingeniously. Even experienced advertisers couldn't show their exhibits to better advantage. One of them not only had her legs raised in stiletto heels, but her bottom too seemed to be raised up on scaffolding (Rozewicz, 1981: 345).

Further on women's bodies are reduced to animals and fruit:

A herd of beautiful naked women paraded around a golden tree. Veils fell from them ... they turned their breasts, bellies, faces. Now a whole bunch of buttocks was swaying rhythmically among the branches of the golden tree (Rozewicz, 1981: 345)

By the 1970s the (en)gendering of women publicly as sex objects was nowhere more apparent than in the growth of unofficial writing,<sup>5</sup> which rose dramatically in Poland with the opening of the independent publishing houses NOVA and KRAG.<sup>6</sup> In perhaps one of the most famous of independently published novels in Poland, Tadeusz Konwicki's A Minor Apocalypse, the representation of Poland as a raped woman is reused; the nation once more is linked not only to women's sexuality but to the patriarchal myth of the woman who enjoys sexual violence and abuse:

Poland has been raped. She defended herself for a long time, she scratched and bit, but in the end she submitted. And she took a certain delight in that passive, unwilling submission. She felt an ambiguous, strange and somewhat filthy pleasure in being raped. Poland lies at the heart of Europe, screwed by lowlife. (Konwicki, 1988:205)

The plot of Konwicki's novel concerns the last day in

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<sup>5</sup> It is at this point that Polish literature and that of the GDR part company. The emphasis in the GDR remained on the socialist heroine, whereas, in Poland the re-presentation of women, particularly in unofficial literature became sexualized.

<sup>6</sup> Whilst it is true that even in the more repressive regime of the GDR there was samizdat, the number, range and distribution of Poland's independent publishing houses was unique in Eastern Europe at the time (Bielinski and Chojewski, 1981: 42-38).



the life of a failed male writer. The writer finally sets fire to himself in front of the Palace of Culture in Warsaw.<sup>7</sup> During the day the hero lusts after and screws Nadezhda, and in the process strips her of her Russian name and renames her the English version 'Hope'. Russian\Communist domination is thus replaced with woman as Christian allegorical virtue, as the hope of the West.

Under state capitalism in dissenting fiction the women who had entered the public sphere after the war were re-presented as gross imitations of men:

Now everywhere there's only little women in pants. Mannish women with long hair; frills and décolletage. Greedy avaricious shameless women with penises concealed in their lace panties. (Konwicki, 1988:96)

More broadly, 'sexless' or mannish women were used to represent publicly what 'Communism' had done to Polish society, as Milosz's description of the Red Army's takeover shows in The Captive Mind:

It was lead by a young woman, felt-booted and carrying a submachine gun. Like all compatriots, I was liberated from the domination of Berlin - in other words, brought under the domination of Moscow (Milosc, 1985:x)

In contrast to the sexless symbol of Stalinism in dissenting fiction, from the 1960s onwards there was also her opposite: the whore or woman as sex object. Literary critic, Keyna-Sharratt, argues that Polish prose from this time on contained a strong Playboy element in which the plot would consist of the male protagonists pursuit of sexual gratification. Moreover, the sexual and emotional spheres in such

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<sup>7</sup> The Palace of Culture, given as a present by Stalin to the citizens of the city, to this day dominates the sky line in Warsaw. A Polish joke asks: What is the best place to stand to get a good view in Warsaw? Answer: Directly underneath the Palace of Culture because then you can't see it.

prose are portrayed as utterly distinct and separate (Keyna-Sharratt: 1985: 133-40). In Konwicki's A Minor Apocalypse, for example, sex has little meaning beyond the simply biological; it is reduced to the level of genitals as instruments and receptacles: 'Nothing had happened ... I had inserted my genital organ into hers' (Konwicki, 1988:211). Keyna-Sharratt argues: 'Women in this scheme of things become sex objects and they play this role willingly and graciously' (Keyna-Sharratt, 1985: 134). In some texts there is sadistic hatred for women as revealed in Michael Choromanski's Radosc in which the main character deliberately crushes the toes of the woman behind him in a queue at the chemist:

Now the heel of my shoe was suspended above the top of her shoe, above her very toes. I froze. I could see no more. It was as if a whitish curtain fell before my eyes. And, at the same time, I felt approaching joy. I remember that I shivered with a light delightful shiver. And then not to delay the pleasure I crushed her foot with the whole weight of my body (Choromanski, 1964: 11).

This trend towards the pornographic or the sexual objectification and humiliation of women was not only a feature of Polish prose. Poetry too developed its share of the virgin-whore dichotomy under state capitalism. In Zbigniew Herbert's 'Pan Cognito on Virtue' the re-presentation of woman as Christian saint is overturned only to be replaced by its opposite:

If only she took more care  
looked human  
Like Liz Taylor  
or the Goddess Venus (Herbert, 1988: 111)

The human woman here is the flickering fantasy of the cinema heroine, or, the classical goddess Venus, who, interestingly, was always symbolized as a mirror (to reflect what? The male poet's ego?). In contrast, as



with prose, the sexless woman or crone publicly represented state repression under State Capitalism:

We were enticed by Baba Yaga  
to the fabulous land of adventure  
and she is feeding us  
to eat us (Grynberg, 1981:496)

Baba Yaga is the old witch of Russian and Polish fairy-tales who lives alone in the forest surrounded by a fence of human skulls and bones. The implication of Baba Yaga, according to Einhorn, is that women and female sexuality in particular have magical powers which will engulf and consume the unwary male to the point of death (Einhorn, 1994:227).<sup>8</sup> Here the witch is symbolic of the vision of a Communist Poland enticed by the Soviet Union, which fed the people propaganda in order to consume Poland's National independence.

The representation in unofficial literature of women as sexual objects were attempts by, mostly, male writers to subvert the woman-worker-heroine of Party approved literature. The unofficial yet public pornography (literally = writing of whores) was a way that writers could 'demonstrate that we are with the West, the West meaning culture, surviving and progress' (Keyna-Sharratt, 1985: 140). After all, censorship in Poland, as in the West theoretically, included pornography (Farar, 1979: 58-61). Pornography was thus the public (en)gendering of dissent. The pornographic (en) gendering of representation is essential to an understanding of the mechanisms of exclusion to women in the public sphere in Poland, whether more broadly, or in terms of women's access to

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<sup>8</sup> Einhorn cites a passage from the classical Russian version of the Baba Yaga tale Vassilisa the Beautiful which illustrates the female cannibalistic sexuality: 'The day passed, and the night, and it was only toward evening of the next day that Vassilisa reached Baba Yaga's hut. The fence round it was made of human bones and crowned with human skulls, the gate was no gate but the bones of men's legs, the bolts, no bolts but the bones of men's arms, and the lock, no lock but a set of sharp teeth. Vassilisa was horrified and stood stock-still' (Einhorn, 1994:227)



literary and journalistic production.

#### 5.4 Women and Literary Production

In the official publishing market the system of 'literary gate-keepers' (Spender and Spender, 1983:487) worked against women and tended to favour men:

In People's Poland it was crucial to be a member of the Polish Artists or Polish Writers Associations to be recognized and have access to resources. But to be a member a writer had to be recommended; to be recommended a writer had to be published or accepted by various cultural commissions; those in the position to give recommendations, as in other sectors of society, were predominantly men. The result was that fewer women were visible on the official market (Reading, 1992:59).

This picture is supported by a leading member of the Association of Polish Artists in Lodz who said that it was more difficult for women to have their work accepted for exhibition, yet, this was crucial in order to become a member of the Association which was necessary for public recognition. She added:

It is easier for men. A woman if she wants to be noticed and get her work exhibited must work for years. She must prove that what she does is not something that happens by coincidence or chance. Women are not treated as seriously as men, neither is their work. Men have an easier start and are treated as if they are some how predestined to be artists; a woman has to prove it. My experience is an example of this; it is not that someone didn't like me or was against me, it is just that they didn't take me seriously. Only now that I have status no one doubts that I'll go on doing what I do (Joanna Wisniewska, Artist, Personal Communication: 1990).

In the unofficial market the situation was the same, if not worse. There was a significant gender gap in the numbers of women and men writers who were represented in print by the new independent publishing

houses in the 1970s. For example, my own headcount, using the lists of the output of the independent publishing house NOWA between 1977 and 1980, shows that no books by women were published between 1977-80 (Bielinski and Chojacki, 1981:35-7).<sup>9</sup>

This situation was reinforced by mechanisms of exclusion used by Western Publishing houses. The overwhelming majority of Polish prose translated for the British market and in print in 1988 was by men (Reading, 1992: 59). In anthologies women are sorely outnumbered. In a collection of modern Polish poetry edited by Adam Czerniawski only two women poets were represented (See Czerniawski, 1988)<sup>10</sup>. In the most extensive English language collection of modern Polish literature edited by Gillan et al there are fifty male writers and 11 female writers represented (See Gillan, 1981). The situation by the late 1980s for dissident writers was the same. A survey of Index on Censorship between 1980-87 of Polish writers published shows that only a few women writers were published.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, what is clear so far is that the socially inherited memory of Polish literature's role as the nation's conscience and the emphasis on the male as the creative force (see Chapter 3) continued to have a significant impact on the public (en) gendering of representation even under state capitalism. This is born out by the way in which the nation was so essential to the (en)gendering of dissident public re-

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<sup>9</sup> Derived from my own analysis of lists of publications during in the period referred to by Bielecki and Chojacki.

<sup>10</sup> Einhorn notes that the dominance of male authors in the former Czechoslovakia was reflected in the 1969 Penguin edition of New Writing in Czechoslovakia which featured not a single woman writer.

<sup>11</sup> From my own survey of 'Index on Censorship 1980-7.



presentation.

### 5.5 Contradictions and Alternatives

Commentators both East and West would agree with my analysis so far of gender re-presentations in Polish culture, particularly with the equation of woman with nation (Uminska, 1991 cited by Einhorn, 1994: 233; Slawinska, 1989). These are also cultural gender patterns found elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Cermakova and Navarova, 1992 cited by Einhorn, 1994:236; Rosenberg, 1985) as well as the former Soviet Union (Buckley, 1992; Du Plexis Gray, 1991; Mamonova, 1989; Hubbs, 1988).

However, it seems to me that many feminist commentators, although they have recognised the resonance of cultural stereotypes, have failed to see occasions where these were also broken down. Admittedly, Einhorn shows how in the GDR there was a definite cultural shift in the 1970s with the development of women writers who challenged the gap between the socialist superwoman and triple burden of women's lives (Einhorn, 1994: 239-242).<sup>12</sup> The editors of a women's poetry collection, Bassnett and Kuhiwczak in Ariadne's Thread: Polish Women Poet's also refer generally to:

The extraordinary energy of so many women writing in Eastern Europe generally - the poets of Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union, the novelists and short story writers of the GDR for example, and the growing numbers of women working for the alternative theatre in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, all of which points to the emergence of a female creativity that transcends patriarchal structures and expectations of the official scene (1988:xi)

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<sup>12</sup> This includes the work of writers such as Christa Wolf whose The Quest for Christa T. became a feminist classic in the West.



There is, however, a lack of cultural and political analysis of female creativity which does challenge established structures and stereotypes in Poland. There were, as we shall see, particular contradictions to the public (en)gendering of representation under state capitalism by the 1970s which provided for different images of women in the public sphere. Where official writers did not challenge the state or the Communist Party directly but challenged patriarchy or men it seems their writing could be acceptable to the state censor.

A key example of such engagement and resistance is found in the poetry of Anna Swir (1909-1984) whose work bridges the interwar and state capitalist periods. The Polish Who is Who (1986: 206-211) recognized Swir as a poet, author, playwright and children's writer and scriptwriter. Before World War Two Swir worked as a writer and editor, as well as contributing to Polish radio. At the same time she was active in underground literary circles against the Pilsudski regime. After the War, in which she narrowly escaped execution, she wrote plays for radio and television, as well as plays and stories throughout the 1950s and 1960s for children. These stories, written in the 1960s, such as Jak Bolko Niemce Zadziwil (1988), O Gdanskiej Burmistrzance (1988), and Paz Krolowej Barbary (1987), reproduced traditional gender stereotypes. In her poetry of the 1970s, however, she forged alternative re-presentations despite the limitations of censorship and the dominant sexual stereotypes of both official and dissident literature. Her dual language collection Budowalam Barykade: Building the Barricades provided a remarkable picture of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw and her own work as a nurse in which she was nearly executed by the Nazi's. When she first tried to write

about the War and to remember the events, she said she found it so traumatic she was unable to and tore up her initial efforts. It was not until the 1970s that she was able to provide a picture in the form of a poetical diary witnessing some of the horrors (Swirszczynska, 1979: 2-5). Remarkably, Swir was given several literary awards by the state for her work, receiving the Officer's and Bachelor's Cross for Services Rendered to the Regeneration of Poland, literary awards for her children's stories and plays, as well as the Lodz Spring Award for Poetry. In this final section of the chapter I analyse in detail the key ways in which Swir's poetry of the 1970s, a selection of which is published in English as Fat Like the Sun (Baran and Marshment, 1986), remembers alternative historical re-presentations of women and goes on to voice her own.<sup>13</sup>

## 5.6 The Case of Anna Swir

The first aspect of Swir's poetry that is striking in relation to Poland's social inheritance is that it provided an alternative to the woman as whore\virgin dichotomy by deconstructing the dualisms on which this rests: mind\body, object\subject, reason\emotion. She demonstrated how these terms lock into each other; how one term holds a superior position and dominates meaning. She then overturned the oppositional hierarchy. And ultimately then displaced the inversion itself and reintegrated the two terms (Reading, 1992:176-179). For example, in the first of a series of love poems 'A Woman Speaks to her Thigh' Swir takes apart the socially inherited dialectic of

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<sup>13</sup> Swir's nine volumes of poetry are as follows: Wierze i Proze (Poems and Prose) 1936; Lyryki Zebrane (Lyrical Assembly) 1958; Czarne Słowa (Black Words) (1967); Wiatr (Wind) 1970; Jestem Baba (I am the Old Woman) 1972; Budowałam Barykade (Building the Barricades) (1974); Szczesliwa Jak Psi Ogon (Happy as a dog's tail) (1978); Wybor Wierszy (Selected Verse) (1980); Cierpienie I Radosc (Pain and Joy) (1985)



desire. In this, as the feminist literary critic Jan Montifiore has pointed out, what is usually at stake is not in fact the woman's beauty or the relationship between the lovers but the establishment of the male poet's identity (1987:198). In Polish poetry we have seen how the male poet traditionally establishes his identity as mind through the objectification of woman as body (Chapters 3, 5). Swir begins her poem with:

It's entirely due to your beauty  
that I can take part  
in the rites of love (Baran and Marshment,  
1986:3-4)

This establishes that the woman's body provides the woman\poet with the possibility to speak and to establish herself in terms of the first person. Simultaneously, this is undermined by the language of debt 'due' and 'owe' which consciously recalls the memory of the equation of woman's body with property (See for example, Chapter 2). Swir continues by mocking this: 'I ought to whip you tenderly each day\with jets of ice-cold water.' (Baran and Marshment, 1986: 3-4). Thus she establishes that traditionally she ought to practice mild self-harm or beauty treatment, but she does not: 'The woman admits a debt yet refuses to pay it. The body object as the powerful opposite of the 'I' self is undermined' (Reading, 1991: 177).

Next, Swir highlights the contradictions of the relationship for women in Poland's socially inherited memory between the body\self and the woman writer\poetry. She writes that it is to her body that she owes: 'the small betrayals exquisite\as scarlet lipstick' (Baran and Marshment, 1986:3). To betray is to reveal treacherously, to be disloyal, to be lead astray: thus Swir recalls the de-meaning inheritance of women's construction and representation, since the



cosmetic-lipstick is a metonym for the betrayal of the self. To her thigh (the representation of woman as body) the woman also owes, according to Swir: 'the perverse rococo\convolutions of the psyche' (Baran and Marshment, 1986: 3). The social inheritance of the woman as object-body thus results in 'a perversion or distortion of the architecture or structure of the mind' (Reading, 1992:177). It also leads to a language of desire 'rococo' which is ornamental and florid which stimulates affection through absence but which strangles the self-woman poet: 'the sweetness of sensual longing\choking the breath in my breast (Baran and Marshment, 1986:3).

Thirdly, having consciously recalled the social memory of the gendered body/self dichotomy, Swir begins to reverse it by using her lovers to engender a public representation in which the woman is subject/mind rather than object/body:

The souls of lovers open before me  
in the moment of love  
and I have them in my power.

Like a sculptor regarding  
his work... (Baran and Marshment, 1986:3)

The woman as sculptor simile recalls the social inheritance of the male gaze, reminding us how women were, traditionally, publicly engendered. At the same time Swir reverses this by putting woman in the position of voyeur. Swir then exaggerates this since she uses as her mirror not one man but many lovers. This recalls the repressed part of Poland's social memory in which women were cultural producers in their own right (See Chapter 3). The poem repudiates the tradition in Polish literature in which women are objects to be entered bodily, as in Konwicky's A Minor

Apocalypse , since her lovers' 'souls' rather than bodies 'open' before her. The woman/poet then suggests the effect that the socially inherited dialectic of desire causes:

... I gaze  
at their eye-lid locked faces,  
tormented with ecstasy,  
thickened  
with joy. (Baran and Marshment, 1986: 3)

Thus the power to objectify (as a woman or a man) imprisons and blinds, restricting the human object from being subjects in their own right. Further on, Swir shows how the simple reversal of the dialectic of desire, in which she depicts the woman poet as similar to the God-like poets of the 19th century with their privileged access to the truth of the nation, results in corruption, in concealment and imposition in terms of public representation. Swir shows that the woman-poet-God, 'relies on the objectification of an opposite - the body as object, or her lovers as object.' (Reading, 1992: 179) What is posited by Swir is the re-presentation of human beings in which neither women nor men are routinely objectified or made into poet-Gods. Swir calls for the equality and bringing together of the socially inherited dichotomies of mind and body, object and subject. In the English translation of the poem, this is not so obvious because some of the puns and word-building established in Polish is, unfortunately, lost. In the Polish original many of the words used are pre-fixed with 'udo' which is the word for thigh. With 'I enter' and 'the souls of lovers open before me' the verb *udostepnic* is used. In the final stanza of the poem the adjective *doskonaly* 'perfect' is connected to the verb *udoskonalic* 'perfect':

the most perfect beauty of soul  
would give me no such treasures  
were it not for your bright smooth charm;



you amoral little animal. (Baran and Marshment, 1986:3).

The poem hence links the perfect soul to the body - udo. Thus Anna Swir, having demonstrated the socially inherited mind/body split in which woman is traditionally the object of desire, overturns it: 'Yet in doing so she does not reject the body and desire is mockingly accepted. Swir forges a different dialectic of desire by finally welding together woman's body-mind, the object-subject, into 'I'. (Reading, 1992: 179-80).

Swir also tackled the prevailing re-presentation of women as Mother Poland. In 'Her Hand' for example Swir attempted to destroy the image:

When my mother was dying  
I held her hand  
When she died I burnt everything  
her hand had touched.  
Only my own hands  
I couldn't burn. (Swir, 1986: 87)

Mother Poland is, traditionally, the one who lives whilst all around may die. In Swir's poem the mother dies and the daughter tries to destroy everything that is connected to her. However, what is impossible to destroy without self-destruction is the socially inherited memory of the Mother within the daughter. This results in fragmentation of female identity. The Mother is split between the third person 'she' and the body 'hand'. This split is then passed on to the daughter who moves from an integrated self 'I held her hand' to alienation between that which is and is not her mother; alienation between the subjective 'I' and the body 'my own hands'. In this poem, as in other work by Swir, the impact and complexity of representing women, is deconstructed. Here Mother Poland



is not the heart of a nation, or the ongoing hearth of the family. The Mother bequests fragmentation; she divides the daughter-poet, she splits self from self. In 'Motherhood' Swir explored this destruction further. The baby in the poem demands that the woman sacrifice her life, her creativity, her public representation of herself. The woman-poet refuses:

I won't be the shell  
of the egg you crack open  
as you burst into the world,  
nor the footbridge you cross to get your own  
life.  
I'll defend myself. ( Swir, 1986: 93)

Footbridge is a metonym for the Mother Poland as bastion of the Polish nation. Swir reject this. However, Swir does not leave the matter there. In the next part of the poem the baby, originally described as 'the small doll' takes on a life of its own. The woman-poet sees the baby's small finger move, and with it her own blood under its veins. The woman-poet becomes torn between the contradictions of her position as writer and Mother. Her public identity - as woman-poet - is ultimately 'swallowed like air'. In a series of poems which followed this the baby becomes a child in which the Mother invests her future; the daughter becomes then the saviour for the Mother. The woman-poet realizes that 'in giving her life, I sentenced her': embedded her within language and the socially inherited memory of women's exclusion from political right. However, in her final poem on motherhood, Swir vows that she will, despite the legacy of history, claim her right to full human egoism 'Reserved for centuries/for men'(Swir, 'Courage', 1986: 100). Swir asserts that the final frontier to equal representation is the hedges of submission in a woman's mind 'Trained for millennia\in the inhuman virtue of sacrifice'.

Swir thus takes apart and makes anew Mother Poland.

Swir also tackles the traditional opposite of Mother Poland in public representation: the image of woman as the epitome of evil - as crone, witch or Baba Yaga. She takes on those negative characteristics traditionally assigned to women who refuse to be 'virtuous': ugliness, madness, fatness and badness. She encapsulates these in a selection of poems entitled 'Jestem Baba' directly translated as 'I am the old woman'. However, as Marshment points out:

The Polish word 'Baba' [is] a word so profoundly insulting one must use a euphemism to refer non-derogatively to a woman of advanced age. 'Baba' is a crone, virago, peasant woman, witch, like Baba Yaga in Hansel and Gretel (Marshment, 1985: 4)

Baba Yaga, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was used in Polish dissenting literature to symbolize the predatory features of Communism. The assertion 'I am Baba' challenges this insult and reclaims the old hag, the old hag, the crone, virago, peasant. Through her poetic re-presentations Swir highlights the barriers to women created by the term 'Baba'. She then recuperates the term by remeaning it with the qualities of endurance, rebellion and beauty. In 'Sisters in the Gutter' the woman-poet describes the beggar women and mad women ignored by the regime, but common to every railway station and park. These were the women who were destitute, who were discarded by the system, who apparently lacked any beauty or value. Swir writes: 'In their eyes are rings\from which the jewels have fallen out'. The poem asserts that the women have their own language; the language of the poor and mad; a language on the margins of public discourse and representation; yet comprehensible. The



poem ends by asserting the beauty of these women: valueless and ugly in the eyes of society yet with cheeks 'delicate as water', the essence of life, changing and sensual. In another poem in the series 'Rebellion', a woman who has run away from an old people's home is described:

She tramps the streets, the fields,  
shouting, singing, cursing,  
Obscenely (Swir, 'Rebellion', 1986: 104)

The action implied by the use of the verbs 'tramps', 'shouting' 'singing' 'cursing' disrupt their noun equivalents: tramp, whore, witch. Here it is not that Baba is the state capitalist institution but a revolutionary force beyond this. It is this wild rebellion, what Rosa Luxembourgh would call spontaneity, which Swir implies will overturn the repressive state, rather than the 'Hope' (woman sex object) of the West implied by some dissenting fiction. Further, this forceful rebellion is carried in her memory 'in the bone reliquary of her skull': which means that it cannot actually be completely gagged or repressed. It is part of the woman, Baba.

Swir also recuperates qualities which are usually represented as the ultimate in feminine ugliness: fatness. To Swir:

She has a right to have a fat belly  
her belly has born five children.  
They warmed themselves at it,  
it was the sun of their childhood.  
(Swir, 'Her Belly', 1986: 126)

The Polish word for sun is 'slonce' and the word for elephant is 'slon': the use of phonolexis reinforces the inversion of fatness and ugliness. In another poem, the woman's belly is 'Fat like the sun': thus the belly is huge, bigger than all known life, the source of all light, energy and colour.



Finally, Swir provided a vision which, whilst officially sanctioned, challenged the dominant socialist realist version of women as worker-heroines capable of doing all duties of motherhood, wifehood and Party worker for the socialist nation simultaneously. Instead of the abstract concepts of nation and 'building socialism' we are presented with the burdens that women must carry in magic real form:

She carries on her shoulders  
the house, the garden, the farm  
the cows, the pigs, the calves and the children.  
(Swir, 'Peasant Woman': 106)

In the next stanza, Swir deconstructs the super-woman-worker:

Her back wonders  
why it doesn't break  
Her hands wonder  
Why they don't fall off.  
She doesn't wonder.  
( Swir, ' Peasant Woman': 106)

The weight of what the woman must carry alienates her from her body: her back, and hands are simply tools, separate from herself. The anaphora re-presents the repetition and monotony of the woman's life. The use of the word wonder, with its religious associations of something miraculous is recuperated: something cannot be a miracle or surprise if the outcome is already known. Finally, Swir overturns the traditional representation of woman's socially inherited role through her own fortitude and courage:

Like a bloodstained stick  
her dead mother's drudgery  
sustains her  
That lash  
shines on her through the clouds  
instead of the sun  
(Swir, ' Peasant Woman': 106)

The implication is that the memory of her mother's

life keeps the daughter in her place but also nourishes or sustains her. The recollection of the memory then simultaneously disrupts the present, since it is voicing the fact that private violence and force engendered women's position. Yet even in this Swir refuses to stereotype the woman as victim. The lash shines on the woman, not out of her: her suffering is externalized rather than internalized as part of her identity. The lash shines not like the sun, but instead of the sun, and, hence the lash 'shines' or appears clearly. The implication is that the peasant woman sees her situation as clearly as the poet: she sees the violence done to her, her mother and grandmother. This confirms her life as not-miracle.

Swir challenges a range of other socially inherited sexual stereotypes, including the battered woman (Reading, 1992:188) and the 'kobieta samotna' or 'lonely women'. With the latter, she both recalls and recreates the social inheritance that a woman without a man is lonely 'kobieta samotna' (See Chapter 2). For example in 'I'll Open the Window' Anthonia's lover leaves and she can sleep in peace between 'clean sheets'. In this 'solitude\is the first rule of hygiene' and 'solitude makes the room bigger/I'll open a window' (Baran and Marshment, 1986:54). This might appear to be the admission of fear, of an opening void now her lover has gone. But by choosing to open the window the space is made larger and through it come 'human thoughts' and 'human affairs': 'Thus to be alone is not to be isolated; it is to connect with the rest of humanity. To be alone is not to feel lonely, it is to be holy; a (w)hole that is full.' (Reading, 1992: 180).

In the final poem of the collection Fat Like the Sun



Swir brings her alternative re-presentations together:

Born under a dark star  
we gave birth  
to the world.  
(Swir 'A Dark Star', 1986:144)

If we compare this to the Biblical version we find that it is, effectively, a re-writing of the creation myth in Genesis. The word 'world' in Polish is 'swiat'. The word 'light' is 'swiatlo'. The world (swiat) thus connotes light (swiatlo) which contrasts with the dark star. According to the Old Testament one of the first creative activities of the singular male God was, allegedly, to make light. Then, on the fourth day of a very creative week he added a pleasing addition - stars:

God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness (The Bible, 1960: I, 17-19)

The poem reverses the Christian order of creation by beginning with division (darkness and starlight) and, hierarchy signified by the word 'under'. Unity and collectivity then follow this. Furthermore, woman as childbearer is far greater than the economic and political divisions of nation states and military blocs. Such collective creation is also beyond woman's re-presentation as the custodian of the nation. The genderless 'we' creates the world. Further, it is significant that Swir used the past tense 'gave birth'. This establishes that this has already happened, despite the dark Star.

### 5.7 Concluding Remarks

What we have seen is that in the period leading up to the period of transition censorship was used by the regime to produce re-presentations recalling certain aspects of Poland's social memory to supplement social



policies. The re-presentations which resulted served to include women in some ways whilst continuing to exclude them in others. Further, the reaction to censorship by the opposition was also to draw on particular aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory in terms of gender, such as the equation of woman with the nation, and, freedom with pornography. This thereby continued the public exclusion of women. However, what I have also argued is that elites in societies, like individuals, are able to relax the gags of censorship when they feel relatively safe and economically secure. Consequently, the reproduction of exclusionary aspects of socially inherited memory is not an inevitable historical process: There may be historical moments and realms of discourse which allow for inclusive representations in terms of gender. An example of this is some of the work of Anna Swir, which radically engaged with, deconstructed and (en)gendered re-presentations which challenged those of the state, of the opposition and dominant literary traditions. It is significant that Swir's most radical work concerned with women was published in the 1970s. During that period the Polish United Workers Party publicly claimed that class divisions in Poland had been resolved and this consequently created a new space for state writers in terms of the subject matter that they were permitted to tackle (Baranczak, 1980: 58-80; Nycezek, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Krynski, 1978: 64-75). Furthermore, since Swir challenged the underground literary movement in which women were frequently portrayed as sex objects this would have made such work officially acceptable, hence the literary awards she received from the party. The fact that Swir chose to use poetic discourse is also crucial since poetry did not use gender stereotypes to express wider discontent to the same extent as fiction. The main concern of underground writers since

World War Two was with language and censorship itself. The dominant themes were of disillusionment, general distrust and pessimism. This provided for a gap in poetic discourse which Swir entered and used to publicly engender re-presentations that effectively challenged Polish cultural traditions. However, having said this, it is not then that Swir poetically re-presents real or true Polish women. It is that her work indicates that even in the 1970s the contradictions in Polish culture and society allowed for the memory and social recreation of the long established but publicly marginalised woman-centred tradition in Poland (see Chapter 3) in which women were publicly engendered neither as sexual objects, or virgin Mother Poland. What this suggests is that socially inherited memory is not wholly negative, since it passes on a legacy of resistance as well as submission to exclusion in the public sphere. The added implication of this may be that the attempt to repress the memory of inclusion and resistance may be impossible, since it is as much a part of Poland's social inheritance as the story of exclusionary political right. In the main and third part of the thesis I examine these arguments further in relation to the role of socially inherited memory during the period of transition in Poland. As with the previous parts I do this by examining the (re)presentation of women publicly in the official public sphere and in Poland's developing oppositional sphere. I examine mediated aspects of this in terms of the representations of women produced by the state capitalist regime and by Solidarity. I then focus the discussion on the most fought over medium of communication in Poland during the period of transition - television. By narrowing the focus in this way we are able to examine in detail the continuation and contradictions of socially inherited

memory and the implications of that for (en) gendering the public sphere in future.



Part Three:  
Socially Inherited Memory in the Transition and  
After: Poland 1980-1994

## Chapter 6

### Contradictions and Convergence in the Official Public Sphere

In relation to Polish women the verses of the Arabic prayer are fully understandable: thank you God for not making me a horse, a dog or a woman. (Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, Personal Communication, 1990)

#### 6.1: Introduction

In the first part of the thesis I established a theoretical and empirical framework for the concept of socially inherited memory in Poland. In Part Two I attempted to demonstrate how this was articulated in the public sphere within different media aspects under state capitalism up until 1979. In this third part I argue that socially inherited memory may help to explain the nature of the gendered changes in the public sphere in Poland since 1980.

The reason I begin the period of 'transition' from 1980 onwards is that scholars have since established that it was from this time that contradictions in eastern Europe began to occur which lead to the 'revolutions' of 1989 (Kovats and Tolgeysi, 1990; Kowalik, 1994: 171). Some media scholars would argue that in Poland the regime began to fall apart from its inception after the War (Jakubowicz, 1992). In terms of gender, I argue that the (en) gendering process in the official public sphere became increasingly contradictory in the early 1980s. But, as the decade continued, there were increasing convergences in the representations of women by the ruling regime and Solidarity in politics, in education, in the media and

in social and communication policies. There formed, effectively, a tripartite alliance between the elites of the Church, Solidarity and the Polish United Workers Party. Within the enlightened calls for democracy and freedom of speech, they sought to recover the most conservative aspects of Poland's repressed story of political right and to use the socially inherited memory of this to legitimize their own economic and political power. However, because Poland's social memory was inherently gender biased this served to reproduce the public exclusion of women after 1989: hence the implementation of a number of mechanisms to exclude women from the public sphere, except in particular roles. Nevertheless, as in Parts One and Two, I also argue that it was not the case that this was an inevitable historical process: I found that men and women themselves in interviews engaged with Poland's social inheritance in complex, contradictory and varied ways; as did women in Poland's women's movement. I then felt that this general argument would benefit from examining one medium in greater detail during the transition; thus, in the penultimate chapter I narrow the analysis and examine the impact of socially inherited memory on changes within television. The logic for choosing television was that it was undoubtedly the most fought over medium during the transition in Poland and the central debates concerned the importance of the 'public' for the medium. It therefore seemed a more appropriate choice than, for example, literature or print media which in earlier historical contexts were apposite examples for exploring Poland's social inheritance.

In this chapter and the next I examine representations of Polish women more broadly by the state capitalist regime and by Solidarity. Thus in



this chapter I begin by deconstructing an example of print culture in the form of official propaganda on women produced in the 1980s in order to demonstrate the growing contradictions in Party representations of women. I then compare this with public policy developments during the period and the impact of these on women's inclusion in politics, the workplace, education, at home and in the official women's movement.

## 6.2 Re-Presentations of Polish Women by the Polish United Workers Party

One of the key propaganda documents produced on women in the 1980s is "Women in Contemporary Poland" by Krystyna Niedzielska (1985). A analysis of the language of this government booklet illustrates the contradictory processes occurring within the state capitalist regime in relation to gender. It begins by stating that women constituted 46 percent of the paid workforce and were present in all professions. Women had access to free state education and in higher education women constituted 50.8 percent of the student population. Women, Niedzielska, states were easily able to combine work with children because of the system of state crèches and nurseries, combined with paid upbringing leaves for either parent with children up to the age of three. Women's health was given top priority with a new hospital devoted entirely to women's health needs in Lodz. The traditional multi-generational family had been replaced in Poland by a family in which members shared everyday chores: in 65 percent of families husbands assisted with housework, according to Niedzielska.

What this re-presentation of women indicates is that on one level the Polish United Workers Party was convinced of the importance of gender equality, even in its latter days in the 1980s. However, if we deconstruct this we find that the public engendering of representation by the 1980s was riddled with contradictions; contradictions which are indicative of the transitionary processes occurring at the time in terms of the established ruling class's atomization.

Firstly, there is the position that the author herself takes. In the first paragraph, Niedzielska writes:

There are 18 million of them - a little more than half the nation. If we could imagine the national economy as one great production plant, every second employee there would be a woman. This however is a purely theoretical picture, for many professions such as in education, health service, trade and finances are dominated by women. (Niedzielska, 1985:4) (my emphasis)

Niedzielska uses the word 'them' rather than us when referring to Polish women. In other words, she does not position herself with Polish women, despite her identity as one. She positions herself with us, the West. This indicates that there is a crucial contradiction between herself and the party re-presentation of Polish women.

Secondly, a deconstruction of this re-presentation highlights particular economic gender mechanisms at work. For example, women are 'esteemed as workers and said to be very good managers' (Niedzielska, 1985:4). The English esteem and the Polish 'cenić' mean to regard or respect, but also to regard as valuable, to rate, to value, to price. To fix the price of an individual is one of the central features of

capitalism. Marx stated that under capitalism "all are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex" (Marx, 1970:42). The phrase 'said to be good managers' contradicts the value or price of women, since women are not as a matter of fact good managers, only reported to be so. It also suggests that there is a rift between representation and representation: a difference between how women are portrayed and their presence in the higher echelons of Polish society. This is further upheld by later paragraphs in the booklet which describe women as 'loving and caring mothers, thrifty housewives, wise and devoted partners of their men' (Niedzielska, 1995: 4). This seems a wholly complementary re-presentation of women. But is it? Love and care and all things sweet and nice are the usual attributes of femininity. It silences the humanity of women: our unlovingness, our carelessness, grumpiness, untidiness, laziness, wickedness, selfishness. All attributes that any human may have, and being a woman certainly does not inoculate one against them. It equates with what Edward Said argues is in racial terms 'the burden of representation', or the pressure for representations of marginalized groups to show only the positive attributes of its members in an attempt to balance negative representations by the dominant order. Furthermore, in this re-presentation, women are wise: prudent, sensible, discreet, unobtrusive in our actions. This implies that there are those for whom we must be discreet. This is reinforced with the adjective 'devoted' which connotes that women give up their lives, themselves to others:

This is hardly Marx's vision of the free development of each as the condition for the free development of all. What it means to be an ideal Polish woman, according to this propaganda, is to be a non-person. The woman's identity is defined not for herself but through others. (Reading,



1992:34)

The official re-presentation of women given here also contains within it a sense of Poland's imminent shift towards the Western sphere of influence: a crucial part of the party image is that Polish women are like women everywhere, concerned with fashion, clothes, the ephemera of their appearance:

Their charm and elegance are widely known not only in Poland but also abroad. Polish women catch up with world trends in fashion and are often even ahead of it (Niedzielska, 1985:4).

Charm is a quality which excites admiration, it is an attractiveness, as well as a power to delight that is indefinable. Charm or 'czar' is both glamour and a spell: to charm is in some way to use magic to ensnare the other. This is part of the social inheritance within discourse which attempts to marginalize women in two ways: first they are sexual objects and secondly any power that women have, whether sexual or otherwise, is somehow mysterious or magical, not, significantly, quite rational.

Further, this example of mid-1980s Polish United Worker's Party gender propaganda purports to uphold the equality of women, and yet, repeatedly, stresses that the mechanisms of exclusion to the public sphere, that the party have attempted to abolish or ameliorate, are something for which women should be especially grateful. The opportunities for women to participate publicly on an equal basis with men are re-presented in terms of something women should feel privileged to have, for which women should feel lucky. Women 'enjoy' political rights, 'enjoy' special state protection, 'People's Poland provided a great chance for women'; 'women have the chance to return to professional work'; 'this privilege is very important

for mother and child'. What is problematic about this from a gendered perspective is that the reverse is not said to be true for men: Thus whilst for men access to the public sphere is usual, normal, expected, for women it is something special. This is a reproduction of the repressed story of political right in which men automatically have political rights but for women they are a privilege, an appendage, an after thought.

Further, when women do enter the public sphere they do so on state capitalist version of the Mother Poland ticket. Niedzielska writes: 'Motherhood has been deemed an important social function and enjoys special state protection'. Motherhood here is an institution; Motherhood is the proper collective activity for women; their contribution to the reproduction of capital in the form of human capital is recognized. But, that is it, fatherhood or parenting is not. What was thus recalled in this propaganda by the mid-1980s in Poland, was, yet again, the 19th century representation of women as Mother Poland:

We have to remember their great social role. It is they (women) who bring up the younger generation of Poles ... it is mainly they who organize cultural life ... this is as if an extension, in new conditions of the historic role of women, mothers in the first place, who were the first to teach the younger generation respect for work, patriotism and respect for others in the society. (Niedzielska, 1985:39)

This suggests that the socially inherited memory of women's public participation only as a vessel for the nation was recalled by the Party during the transition to legitimize its power. Further on, the same document states:

In Poland family (sic) is the foundation of social life and a woman - a mother and wife - a full partner in this basic social cell (Niedzielska, 1985:23)

What is significant here are two factors. Firstly, there is the emphasis on the positive importance of the family. Both Marxist and socialist-feminist literature argues that the family is the locus of oppression for women: it needs restructuring or in more radical texts (Perkins-Gilman; Luxembourgh) actually abolishing. Here, however, the family has not been restructured, or abolished. It is firmly in place, and within it woman is defined by it as Mother and Wife, rather than human. Secondly, the emphasis on representing the family as a social unit is crucial. Social means to prefer to live in a community rather than alone; it denotes relating to human society - hence a system of human organizations which generate distinctive cultural patterns and institutions (Hanks, 1989:1110-1). The family is not represented as anti-social, or as a private haven, which we shall see in the next chapter on Solidarity, but as contiguous with the public structure of Poland and its lifeworld. The family is re-presented here as part of the public process; women within it are re-presented as full partners: the implication is therefore that women are represented publicly on an equal basis with men. There is a contradiction, however, within this representation. The family is represented as basic and a cell. Basic is something fundamental, but also it is the standard minimum for something. Earlier, Niedzielska had stressed that every Pole is awarded a flat fully equipped with modern household equipment (Niedzielska, 1985:27). Cell signifies that in some way the family is a prison; a prison in which the Queen Bee may be fed the monetary equivalent of Royal Jelly in the form of paid maternity leave in order to produce and bring up male children to participate in the public sphere.



The Polish United Workers Party continued use of the socially inherited memory of the re-presentation of women as Mother Poland is epitomized in its description of the Mother Poland Health Center in Lodz:

A unique monument - a monument of a mother's heart ... it stands there to pay homage to all Polish mothers who during World War Two lost their children: mothers from the villages of Zamosc province whose children were taken away to the Reich to be Germanized; Warsaw mothers whose children fell in the Warsaw uprising, to mothers from villages pacified by the aggressor for aiding partitions ... special memory is due to those who in effect of criminal medical experiments performed on female inmates of Nazi concentration camps, were crippled for life without any chances of motherhood whatsoever. (Niedzielska, 1985:9-10)

These were undeniably real atrocities. But, whilst there is mention of Polish mothers, there is no mention of the Jewish mothers who lost their children, of the Jewish children who died in the Jewish uprising in Warsaw; of the Jewish women who died in the prison camps or lost their ability to reproduce. We do not need to be reminded that before World War Two there were an estimated 3.5 million Jews in Poland; in 1983 just 12000 Jews remained (Plakwicz, 1992:76).

Secondly, it is solely as mothers that Polish women are commemorated and celebrated in the form of a monumental re-presentation. Outside the National Polish Mother's Hospital in Lodz, there is a sculpture of a woman holding a baby. Significantly, the female model used for the sculpture was a runner up in the beautiful Miss Lodz contest in the early 1980s. If we compare this re-presentation of women with another key monument in Lodz, we find that a prominent leader of the Polish United Worker's Party, stands in the old town square pointing the way to a muscle bound male

worker who carries a hammer; behind them both is a peasant woman with a baby in her arms. That aspect of socially inherited memory which includes those women who fought in World War Two, who died fighting in the underground movements has been socially repressed. The re-presentation which is 'memorable', which we are asked to recall is of the women who performed acceptable roles within the private sphere of the family and thereby continued the traditions of the Polish nation. These are women who:

Having been left alone, raised their children in the series of Polishness and patriotism ... who protected monuments of Poland's cultural heritage from the looting of the occupier. (Niedzielska, 1985: 8-9)

The manner in which this aspect of socially inherited memory is being used by the ruling elite in the public (en)gendering of re-presentation is clear: those who are deemed monumental by the state, who are made inanimate objects, are reminders (monu=monere=reminder) of the results (ment) of World War Two. But no real mention is made that this was a Polishness and patriotism gained through the elimination of the majority of the Jewish population, a Polish nation constructed from the rubble of 'Poland's cultural heritage', which denies its pre-War multi-ethnic cultural heritage. As Marina Warner has argued, the relationship between public re-presentations, in this instance in the form of monuments, is both a material and dialectical one (Warner, 1985). What we find here is that Polish women's public re-presentation continued to be dialectically related to the public denial of the annihilation of the Jews.

Thus the way that the Polish United Workers Party re-presented women in the mid-1980s appears on one level

to uphold the principles of Marxist-Leninism; Women are re-presented in terms of equal participation in the public sphere; in terms of equal rights in legal policy and in terms of equality in the home, which is socialized. Simultaneously, however, within the same document there are re-presentations which indicate the beginning of the Polish transition and the beginning of a change in the mechanisms of exclusion to women to the public sphere. These re-presentations show a move by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda towards the Western image of women as fashion objects. Others indicate the re-use of the Polish Mother representation developed in the 19th century, with the elimination of other ethnic groups from this representation. Again in the public engendering of representation, a crucial part of this is the equation of woman with nation; but only women of a particular kind. In this case, white "Polish" women. Jews, Ukrainians, ethnic Germans, students from the African region, Vietnamese refugees, in the 1980s, are excluded.

### 6.3 Women in Government Policy in the 1980s

By the late 1970s and the 1980s the way women were represented by the Polish United Workers Party and represented in the workforce and political sphere was also to become significantly re-articulated through new state policies concerning gender relations. An article in *Nowe Drogi* (The New Way) in 1978 encapsulates this shift in emphasis in the realm of policy:

One of the chief aims of the social policy of our party and of the state is to strengthen the family and procreative and educational functions. (Scroczyńska, 1978:81)

The way in which women's socially remembered role in



the family began to be recalled as opposed to their public role in the previous decades is indicated by the change in 1975 to the rights of parents to take paid leave if their child was ill. At the beginning of the 1970s fathers as well as mothers had this right. But the Regulation of the Council of Ministers, 1 January, 1975 cancelled this right so that fathers could only take paid leave for a sick child if the mother was also ill.

What was the cause of this shift? Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge argue that we can locate the beginning to just after the thaw of 1956<sup>1</sup>. It was then, they argue, that state policies towards women began to lose their 'formal egalitarian' content (1993: 259). But, whilst it is true that the return to power of Gomulka did alter the political regime in Poland, in terms of allowing greater possibilities for dissent, I would argue that the impetus for the shift came in the last instance from the necessity to restructure the public sphere as a result of Poland's massively escalating foreign debt, which came from its borrowing in the 1970s. It was not until the mid 1970s that Mother Poland in policy terms began to be so overtly

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<sup>1</sup> After Stalin's death in March 1953, Boleslaw Bierut began what was termed the "new course" later that year. This both relaxed capital investment and allowed for some element of criticism from intellectuals. At the end of 1954 Radio Free Europe broadcast the memoirs of a member of the Security Police, UB Officer, Jozef Swiatlo, who was in what was called the Tenth Department. This was the most feared and powerful section which kept the Polish United Worker's Party itself under surveillance. In the memoirs Swiatlo described how members of the Party had undergone torture and blackmail by the section. The revelations led to public debate concerning Wladyslaw Gomulka, the First Secretary of the Party who had been put under house arrest in 1951. These events led to a period of Party disunity and public protest, called later the October Period. Young Poles In the Union of Polish Youth developed their own brand of Communism and were encouraged to criticize their elders. A central idea behind this new movement was the virtue of manual labour; members of the Union thus labored in voluntary brigades doing construction work and manual labour (See Acherson, 1981: 66-79) This included women members (Adamczewska, 1990, Personal Communication). The Union called for a new Socialist direction, with more open government. Their calls were then supported in 1956 by a rising of workers in Poznan, in which 80 people died at the hands of the security forces. Bierut tried to quell the discontent by introducing reforms, but the Workers' Councils wanted a return of Gomulka to power. Soviet troops were moved to the Polish border in anticipation of the need to put down an uprising. Khrushchev flew to Warsaw to negotiate; in Hungary the uprising began only to be put down. In Poland Gomulka took power. (See Ascherson, 1981:66-79).

rearticulated. This is evidenced by the introduction of the Kodeks Pracy (Labour Code), which is still in force, and which includes all labour laws and regulations in Poland (Kodeks Pracy, 1974). This Code, later reinforced by the power of the decree *Sprawie Prac Wzbronionych Kobietom* (Decree on Matters Relating to Working Women) in 1979, made it illegal for women to work in ninety occupations covering 18 branches of industry. The Code, and later decree, were in Party terms there to provide women workers with a "privileged" position in comparison with men, and to protect women from working in hazardous occupations to their health (Niedzielska, 1985). Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge confirm:

With this decree, the last generation of Communists officially outlawed the archetypal Stalinist 'happy communist woman on a tractor'. (Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge, 1993:260)

Such policies effectively prevented women from working in occupations in which they were previously allowed to do so. The policies acted as new mechanisms of exclusion to women to particular areas of the public sphere; particular areas which were well paid under the communist regime such as blue-collar jobs in construction, underground mining and bus driving (Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge, 1993: 260; Plakwicz, 1992: 82). The essence of such policies is one which sees anatomy as destiny: they serve to perpetuate the re-presentation of women as less strong, more fragile than men. Research in fact shows that women throughout the world often work for longer hours and work doing heavy physical labour. Such mechanisms serve to perpetuate the vertical and horizontal divisions within the public sphere by legally excluding one sex from entering particular professions and thereby giving the other sex a labour monopoly. This means that the included sex have an unfair advantage in

terms of the value of their labour; other areas to which both sexes are legally entitled to enter may then be of less value. It is also significant that there are no laws preventing men from entering particular professions on the basis of their sex.

#### 6.4 Women in Official Politics in the 1980s

Whilst in propaganda terms and policy terms we see the advanced recuperation of the social memory of women as Matka Polka (Mother Poland), in terms of political representation in the official public sphere the regime attempted to create new mechanisms of inclusion for women, whilst abolishing others. The precursors to the new mechanisms of inclusion, according to evidence by Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge (1993:260) were two government offices, created in 1982, called the Council for Family Matters and the Council for the Elderly and Disabled. Then in 1986 a government decree (Uchwala Rady Ministrow Z Dnia 1 Wresnia, 1986, Nr 134) established an office for the Government Representative for Women's Affairs. The Representative (Pelnomocnik) held the rank of Deputy Secretary of State within the Polish Ministry of Labour, Wages and Social Affairs. The function of the representative was to address the needs of women through examining the activities and policies of different government offices to ensure gender equality in all spheres: political, social, cultural, economic. The overall aim of the representative was to better the "living conditions" of women (Uchwala Rady Ministrow, 1986: 134). The representative, in keeping with the broader aims of Communist Women's League, was to ensure the development of nurseries, contraceptive information, the protection of women in the work place, the protection of pregnant women workers, and, was to encourage both parents to participate in child



rearing. The representative was also responsible for the establishment of regular reviews of pay structures to ensure gender equity (Uchwala Rady Ministrow, 1986: 134).

Nevertheless, the actual representation of women in the Polish Sejm was poor, according to the government's own report Women Deputies in National Legislatures (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1983). The percentage of women deputies certainly rose between 1960 and 1985. In 1964 the percentage of women in parliament was just 12.4 percent; this rose to 15.8 percent in 1975; 23 percent in 1983 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1983) and by the mid-eighties women constituted 24 percent of the deputies in the Sejm (Niedzielska, 1985: 4). In comparison with other East European countries, however, this was the lowest number of representatives (Siemienska, 1986: 32). At the level of the people's councils the gender imbalance was similar: women constituted 20.5 percent of councillors at all levels (Niedzielska, 1985:4).

There was in 1980 only one woman minister and one woman as committee chair in the government (Morgan, 1984:555). Women held just three vice-ministerial posts and eight key posts at local level in 1983. Only 10 out of 102 judges in the Polish Supreme Court were women in the mid 1980s (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1983). In 1986 just eleven percent of the members of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party were women. And on the Consultative Board of President Jaruzelski in the same year only five percent of members were women (Titkow, 1993:254).

The membership by women of official political parties was little better. According to the government's own estimate in "Percentage of Women Among Members Of

Political Parties In Poland" women's membership of the Polish United Worker's Party and the other parties doubled between 1960 and 1982 but by the early 1980s this still only constituted one quarter of total membership (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, table 3, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1983). However, women's membership of official trade unions in 1978 was fifty percent (Morgan, 1984: 551).

At local government level political activity increased until the 1980s, assisted by the state capitalist quota system which provided for a guaranteed percentage of women councillors. This mechanism of inclusion introduced by the party had mixed results. The motivation for the quota system was not so much related to a genuine desire for gender equality but a new drive by the Polish United Workers' Party to strengthen its hegemony by broadening its popular political base (Nelson, 1985:151-3). According to Nelson women tended to win seats not because they were *specjalistki* (specialists) in particular areas of the public sphere, but because they were *posredniczki* (intermediaries). They were there essentially to make up the numbers required for the quota demands introduced by the Polish United Worker's Party (1985:151-3). This, according to commentators such as Nelson, had the effect of delegitimizing women's representation in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

However, I should add that although the intentions of

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<sup>2</sup>This was not something specific to Poland; countries throughout the Eastern bloc had introduced quota systems with similar results and which were, after 1989, either dropped or drastically cut. Slavenka Drakulic argues that in the case of the former Yugoslavia under the Communist system of quotas introduced after World War Two there was generally a 30 percent quota in the different regions for women's participation but that "these women were tokens, without power, and unable to make their own decisions" (1993:124). Bollobas states that the situation was the same in Hungary under Communist rule: "women were always present in parliament (25 to 30 percent), they were supposed to fill - often to overfill - quotas. No woman was ever a member of a body with real political power" (Bollobas, 1993:202). Similar patterns of power prevailed in the former Soviet Union in which there were gender quotas for every political body (Lissyutkina, 1993:274-5; 279).

the government may not have been entirely honourable in respect of the introduction of the quota system the results on women according to women M.P's themselves were, overall, positive. Whilst the Polish women M.Ps I interviewed in 1990 had mixed feelings about the integrity of the system, they stressed that the mechanism of inclusion to the political sphere in the form of the quota system had resulted in a greater presence of women (in comparison with countries outside the Eastern bloc). This had the effect of making women used to working in the public sphere and psychologically feeling equal to men (Krystyna Eysmont; Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska; personal communication: 1990). Krystyna Eysmont, M.P for Lodz said, for example, that in comparison with MPs in Western countries she felt that women MPs under state capitalism in Poland were more included in the public political sphere: "We feel at home in the Sejm" she said, and, "we feel equal to men" (Krystyna Eysmont, personal communication, 1990). Similarly, Mirosława Grabarkiewicz, M.P, said: "our conditions forced us to become active in social and political life ... we've got into the habit of being active in the public sphere." (Personal Communication, 1990).

Nevertheless, other research does indicate that the way in which women were represented in the official political arena continued to be structurally gender biased horizontally and vertically. Women were generally assigned roles in the realm of politics as extensions of their "natural" functions in society such as in education, culture and light industry. Whereas in the economy, business and defense departments women were "fillers", mobilized and pushed into positions of limited power (Nelson, 1985:151-3). This was confirmed by the Minister for Health, who stated that she personally did not feel she had



suffered any discrimination but that in wider society: 'nothing much as changed. In relation to Polish women the verses of the Arabic prayer are fully understandable: thank you God for not making me a horse, a dog or a woman' (Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, Personal Communication, 1990)

### 6.5 Women in Education in the 1980s

In education, in the 1980s, the pattern set by previous decades of gender equity in terms of the rising percentage of educated women continued (see Chapter 4). There remained no restrictions on admissions to higher education and the primary and secondary schooling system remained coeducational (Niedzielska, 1985:38). In 1981\82 girls accounted for 48.3 percent of pupils in primary schools; 58.7 percent in vocational and general secondary schools; 74.5 percent of pupils in post secondary schools and in institutions of higher learning female students made up 50.8 percent of the total number of students (Niedzielska, 1985:16). In 1985 women constituted 43 percent of all employees with higher education; just over half with secondary vocational and post-secondary school education and 73 percent of employees with general secondary education (Niedzielska, 1985:16). Statistically, the representation of women and girls in educational institutions was balanced in comparison with the overall sex ratio of Polish society, with women dominating higher education because of state capitalist policies which emphasized 'vocational training and technical skills...designed to advance proletarian males' (Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge, 1993: 266). However, what government statistics fail to show is the continuation of ghettoisation and the gender balance of particular subjects. In 1988 women

constituted 85.9 per cent of medical school students, and 59.3 per cent of the arts, but only 25 per cent of technical schools (Plakwicz, 1992:76). Of the nine young women in two secondary schools in Lodz in my study only one young woman said computer programming was her favourite subject and another mathematics (Lodz Secondary School Students, Personal Communication: 1991). The barrier and choices were more apparent than in further education. Magdalena Niewadowska, an executive in a foreign trade company stated:

Women's discrimination starts with entrance examinations to colleges. In some departments like medicine men are given preference; a man may get 20 per cent fewer points than a woman but he is still accepted. In the Foreign Trade Department it's a rule to have 60 per cent men and 40 per cent women. (Magdalena Niewadowska, Personal Communication, 1990).

A key precursor to these public barriers is the social inheritance of gender stereotypes in school education. Secondary school teachers in Lodz for example firmly believed that innate differences between boys and girls were articulated in terms of their behaviour, educational achievements and particular subject abilities. Agata Kaczan a secondary school teacher of Polish said: 'boys are less meticulous than girls. Girls are better at literature, history and languages' (Personal Communication, 1990). Others admitted to being biased in the way they behaved towards pupils. Anna Lis, deputy head teacher said:

During my classes I pay more attention to boys. If there are many of them, I should make them interested in the subject - they are more difficult to lead. I sooner trust girls, although they cope with their problems more easily than boys. (Personal communication, 1990)

This is confirmed by Czykwin who in research found

that 70 per cent of teachers' time in the classroom was spent with boys (1988:23). Teachers also saw pupils sex related abilities as designing them for particular gendered roles in terms of their participation in the public sphere. Bozenna Kaminska, a teacher of history and social sciences said:

Boys are dynamic, talkative, spontaneous: girls are calmer. Certainly boys are more intelligent and capable than girls, who in turn work harder. Girls are better there where they can memorize well. A woman should take care of the household and children, a man should earn their living. (Personal Communication, 1990)

What we see at work here are (en)gendering mechanisms at work at the micro level which prepare girls and boys for the public (en)gendering of representation. Within the educational institution this is then reinforced with re-presentations of girls and boys in learning materials prescribing particular roles within the private and public realms of society. Despite government policy, according to Krotki (1980: 260) before the 1980s gender stereotypes in school books before and during the 1980s were rife. This is also confirmed by Czykwin:

If we examine the current primer in Poland the heroes of the fishing expedition amongst the rushes at the lakeside are boys, Romek and Marek. On the opposite page sits little Dorothy, all alone, holding on her lap a dolls house, which, incidentally she was given by Adam. Just as the poem 'I shall be a sailor' and 'I shall be a pilot' are accompanied by pictures of smiling little boys clad in their respective uniforms, every one of them the text stresses, confident and brave, so we can be certain that the person with the dustpan and brush in the section on Spring cleaning is of course the little girl, Dorothy. (Czykwin, 1988: 22)

However, this is not to say that women and girls do not actively engage with such (re)presentations. Particularly in higher education I found that the



women I interviewed expressed contradictory attitudes to their prescribed roles and some challenged them outright. The head of the English Department at Lodz University said:

I refused to recognize discrimination too early in life so as not to give up. It was very early in the game when someone told me that it takes for a woman seven times the amount of work it takes a man to reach the same point in his career. I didn't believe it, but now I see the point. (Agnieszka Salska, Personal Communication: 1991)

Ewa Bednarowicz, Lecturer in American Literature at the University of Lodz, agreed that the role model for girls and women in education and Polish society was Matka Polka, but she saw this as increasingly redefined in relation to the West:

The ideal Polish woman? Matka-Polka, looking wistfully back on the glorious past, when she produced gallant sons for the national battlefield, now decorously dressed for Sunday mass, and the dutiful wife during the week. Now it's all changing of course, so she drives a Hyundai preferably - that's the consumer version of the image, and she has her kids learn English and computers. (Ewa Bednarowicz, Personal Communication, 1990).

She continued, however, that in her view the young women she taught did not passively accept this role:

I think there are a million closet feminists in Poland who simply hate the idea of being labelled. My students have the same 'feminist' dreams and ideals of taking charge of their own lives, of having careers apart from their families, but most would sooner die than allow anybody to call them a feminist - I mean, what Polish male would want them? (Ewa Bednarowicz, Personal Communication: 1990)

This was confirmed by young women themselves. When I asked University students about their thoughts on feminism and their own roles they found it difficult to call themselves feminists because of the engagement

with the socially inherited memory of feminism as something restrictive or man-hating (See Chapter 2). One student said for example: 'for some years I thought feminists were some kind of nuns' (Kasia Muszynska, Personal Communication, 1991). Another student said: 'feminism is a total liberation for a woman, who starts living by her instincts, obviously with dose of rationality otherwise she would be too wild.... they reject maternal instinct though' (Isabella Kaczan, Personal Communication: 1991). Another student in her fourth year at University said: ' I think feminists are losing out on something, some aspect of their sexuality' (Joanna Sobczak, Personal Communication, 1991). Yet the same student went on to express, firstly, dissatisfaction with her socially inherited role; secondly, imagining something different, and finally denial of remembering that there are other possibilities for a woman:

I'd like my husband to see me as a good wife, mother and lover. I also hope that after the next two or three years, after we have the child something will change, that I would stop being a Polish Mother only. It would be good if something changed in this respect in our conservative society. If nothing changes in my own family I think that I'd have to leave my husband and live alone, but I cannot really imagine that either. (Joanna Sobczak, Personal Communication: 1991).

The young woman who thought that feminists were some kind of nuns had also said that to her : ' The word feminist sounds very pejorative in Polish'. But she had no difficulty in recognising that this sense of feminism was just one version. She went on to recall another long established version of feminism in Poland:

Later I realized that it can be a way of liberating ourselves and developing in areas which were once considered to be the reserve of men...I realized that feminism shows you how to make decisions about yourself, by yourself, and

when I started doing it in my life I understood what feminism is really all about: it's a way of doing what we want to do, but also knowing what we want to do. (Kasia Muszynska, Personal Communication: 1991)

What we see, therefore, is a complex picture emerging in the 1980s between a government attempting to recall the socially inherited memory of Mother Poland in propaganda and policy and the continuation of this in, for example, education. Yet, this does not mean to say that women themselves were not engaging with this inheritance and struggling to recall something different.

#### 6.7 Women in the Workplace

This was also the case in the workplace. Despite statutory mechanisms to ensure pay equity established by the 1952 constitution, gender bias under the state capitalist system in the 1980s was still evident. Women's public work was low in status and poorly paid. Government research that looked at 17 areas of the Polish economy in 1980 shows that women did earn more than men in the lowest pay category of 6000 zlotys per month. But the proportion of women who then earned more than men fell significantly in the middle and higher income brackets. In the highest pay category of 16000 zlotys per month women were virtually absent (Kobiety W Polsce, 1980). Women in the 1970s were paid on average 30 percent less than men (Kobiety W Polsce, 1975: 44). This pattern remained stable through the 1980s. Research shows that women from 1985-88 were generally paid 30 per cent less than men. The biggest disproportions were in industry, physical culture and tourism, science, technical administration and justice. The smallest disproportions were in forestry, agriculture, trade, finance and insurance. The disproportion was nowhere less than 10 per cent, except in a small number of highly paid jobs, such as



lawyers in which there was 2 percent difference, and mathematicians in which there was 2.9 per cent difference (Plakwicz, 1992: 85). Despite these differences there were no cases between 1983 and 1988 challenging in the courts wage scale discrimination on the basis of sex (Morgan, 1984:556).

The horizontal divisions in the political sphere were also evident in other work place structures. Overall, men dominated top positions. Ninety percent of senior teachers were men, despite the fact that women constituted 70 percent of the teaching profession (Morgan, 1984:556). This picture was confirmed by interviewees working in all spheres of employment. One woman M.P suggested that it was the social inheritance of women's domestic role which was partly responsible for their public exclusion:

equal rights are constitutionally guaranteed, but no one can take from our shoulders the duties of mothers and wives, and Polish women value those primary duties of women very highly. Women get promoted at work around the age of 35, after the children have been taken care of and are more independent. There are few women in top positions in comparison with other countries' (Irena Choynecka, Personal Communication, 1990).

The head of the English Department at the University of Lodz also indicated that there was a link between the socially inherited memory of women as vessels of 'Polishness' and the home and hearth that held them back at work:

I do think that men have greater opportunities. The main reason for this is that ours is culture which is largely based on emotions. And it's been the role of women to cultivate that emotional bond within the family, between families, friends. It limits women's lives in terms of career.... if one of the main values here is time with the family, that means sitting around the table and that means cooking all the time. (Agnieszka Salska, Personal Communication: 1990)

Another MP said, however, that the inherited public invisibility of women meant that they had to 'work really hard to be noticed and promoted' (Miroslawa Grabarkiewicz, Personal Communication: 1990). This was confirmed by artist Joanna Wiszniewska:

It's easier for men. A woman if she wants to be noticed and get her work exhibited must work for years. She must prove that what she does is not something that happened by coincidence or chance. Women are not treated as seriously as men. (Personal Communication, 1990)

Business Woman, Magdalena Niewadowska, saw her lack of promotion as a combination of different forces:

The importance departments are dominated by men, even new employees are mainly men; women are not hired; the less important sections are full of women. The highest positions held by women are vice-managers and if there is choice between a man and a woman, the man is preferred, no matter what qualifications he have ... it is generally thought that business talks are handled better by men. Also, women bring up children, they take leaves, have more house duties; men can stay at work overtime, prepare themselves better ... when I started my work in this company my child used to get ill quite often - that was the cause of conflict between me and my bosses - and a lower salary and slower promotion ... they didn't notice that no one did my work for me, that I do make up for the time when I was absent from work. (Magdalena Niewadowska, Personal Communication: 1990)

Women, as Magdalena Niewadowska observes, as in the West, were also vertically segregated in work place structures. Women were predominant in book-keeping, insurance, health services, social work, education and the food, pottery and clothing industries (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1985). The one exception to vertical segregation common throughout industrialized countries, was the medical profession. This is a common feature of other Eastern Bloc countries. In the

eighties in Poland more than half of medical graduates were women (63.2 percent). The medical profession was regarded as a female domain. The history behind this is significant. After World War Two the Polish United workers Party gave both material and ideological value to particular professions, considered essential to the growth of the economy. At that time more men entered technical rather than service professions:

The profession of engineer was considered more important than that of physician on the grounds that the former is productive while the latter is a service profession (Sokolowska, 1977:367).

Technical professions in comparison with doctors were also better paid. A senior cardiologist stated that the one area of the medical profession which was paid well was that of surgery and most surgeons tended to be male. In the rest of the medical profession women dominated. The cardiologist said:

Our salaries are very low and it's not sufficient for men. Thus a lot of women enter the profession. It's a universal problem. ( Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Senior Cardiologist, Lodz: Personal Communication, 1990)

## 6.6 Gender Mechanisms at Home

In the home the socially inherited memory of women's domestic role seems to have lead to the continuation of gendered mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in terms of domestic arrangements and duties. It is true that in particular sections of Polish society, notably the intelligentsia, couples often shared domestic duties equally. A study in the 1980s of Warsaw couples where both partners were engineers showed that both men and women were equally responsible for domestic duties and child care. A study amongst scientific workers showed similar patterns:



Remarkable in the responses was the lack of sex differentiation in the descriptions of tiresome and time consuming chores - Sunday washing and cleaning, shopping after working hours, lunches prepared for the next day, standing in lines for consumer goods, washing diapers, walking the children to school, done by ... wives and husbands alike. (Sokolowska, 1977:367)

Amongst my interviewees it seemed that members of the intelligentsia certainly shared domestic responsibilities more equally, particularly where couples did not have children. However, many of the women whilst perceiving or perhaps wanting to project during the interview an equal relationship in the home actually then went on to say that for various 'reasons' (time, work location, the dislike of certain tasks by their menfolk) they did the majority of tasks, especially shopping and cleaning:

My family and many other families in Poland are partnership families... after work I do shopping and the cooking. (Magdalena Niewadowska, Personal Communication: 1990).

Another interviewee stated: ' I do the shopping, because of the convenient hours of work, both of us cook' (Ewa Bednarowicz, Personal Communication: 1990) Both partners actually worked full time. The other alternative involved women recruiting other women for low pay or no pay to do their share of domestic tasks rather than their husbands:

I've been very fortunate to get a lot of help in running the family from my mother and my mother-in-law. My husband was always tolerant of my career and he does a lot in the house. Well, technically we have divisions, like he doesn't like cooking, but he can clean up and do the shopping. Not the laundry though. (Agnieszka Salska, Personal Communication, 1990)

Both partners have full time jobs; the woman in this case was more senior than her husband. But because of the socially inherited memory of women's private role

the husband's equal participation in the household is accepted by the woman as contingent on his desire: Any contribution by the husband is perceived as a bonus, hence he is 'tolerant of my career' and 'does alot' (but not the laundry or the cooking) around the house. The woman assumes that she is 'lucky' to have help and accepts that it is other women, not really her husband, who should then take the responsibility to pay for her career in the public sphere. Later on, it is not the man, but the woman who through her social inheritance 'remembers' the debt, despite the fact that it is in reality the inheritance of both, if not more so the man's because he did not do his full share in the first place. The denial or chosen forgetfulness by him of this means that it is the woman, not her husband, who then becomes responsible, or feels responsible for re-paying the socially inherited debt for her public participation:

there are older people in the family now and they need more care, so that's something that I have to assume responsibility for, at least in times of crisis. (Agnieszka Salska, Personal Communication, 1990).

Whilst the average man spent about one hour 13 minutes on housework a day, women spent up to four hours forty-five minutes. For every single meal prepared and cooked by a man, a woman prepared and cooked 12 meals. For each shirt a man washed and ironed under the state capitalist regime, a woman washed and ironed twenty (Sokolowska, 1977:372). Furthermore, the proportional difference in time use of women and men in selected domestic activities in terms of hours per week remained significant between 1965 and 1984 although the overall hours spent decreased for both sexes according to UN statistics (The World's Women, 1991 cited in Einhorn, 1993: 264). In 1965 women spent 33.5 hours on domestic chores and 5.3 hours on child care.

In 1980 women spent 30.5 hours on household chores and 4.4 hours on child care. This compares with just 9.7 hours spent on household chores by men in 1965 and 2.7 hours spent on child care by men in the same year. In 1984 the contribution of men to domestic duties had decreased to 7.7 hours spent on household chores and just 2.0 hours spent on child care. Both men and women experience an increase in personal care and free time but the disproportionate share went to men. In 1965 men had 103 hours per week of free time. In 1984 this had risen to 116 hours of free time. Women in contrast had 99 free hours in 1965 which increased to 108 hours in 1984. (The World's Women, 1991 cited in Einhorn, 1993: 264). This pattern also prevailed in Hungary.<sup>3</sup>

What is also significant in Poland, as in other Central and East European Countries, under late state capitalism were the material conditions people endured which made women's role within the domestic sphere much harder than in the West. After World War Two Western countries were given a significant boost with Marshall Aid. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were denied such aid and also had to enter into unequal trade arrangements with the USSR. The emphasis in Polish economic policy after World War Two was to build Poland's industrial base. The priority was large industrial projects, capital investment and export (see Chapter 4). Production of consumer goods which may have acted as mechanisms to lighten women's load were severely limited for the Polish population. For

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<sup>3</sup> However it seems that this pattern of gender representation in domestic arrangements was not the same throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Einhorn shows in her use of UN statistics that in Bulgaria, for example, the domestic duties of women and men increased between 1965 and 1984 with men participating more in domestic duties than any where else in Central and Eastern Europe or Western Europe. The pattern for Western Europe, particularly the UK, is the inverse of that in Poland. In the UK between 1965 and 1984 the representation of men doing unpaid housework increased from 4.8 hours per week to 11.4; for women in the same years they did 33.9 hours and 30.0 hours respectively. (The Worlds Women, 1991 cited in Einhorn, 1993: 264)



a limited period under Edward Gierek's five year plan (1971-75) consumer goods were given greater priority in new manufacturing plants. In addition, the importation of Western consumer goods such as refrigerators, cookers, vacuum cleaners and washing machines were paid for by borrowing from Western banks. The results were catastrophic for the Polish economy and women in particular. Poland's accumulated foreign debt rose from \$ 764 million in 1971 to \$ 7381 million in 1975 (Harman, 1988:254) and to \$10, 680 billion in 1976 (Harman, 1988:255). As a result, by the late 1970s consumption was again curtailed . Under Martial Law between 1981-1983 rationing was introduced. Coffee, cigarettes, soap, shoes, clothes, alcohol, and butter were all rationed until 1983. Meat was rationed until 1988. The result for women living under state capitalism was that:

to cook meant starting from scratch with few tinned or packaged short cuts; to clean meant heaving a rug down ten flights of stairs to beat it on the rail outside; to shop meant standing in lines every day for goods that might not arrive. And it was women, mostly, who performed these tasks (Reading, 1992:42)

A Senior Cardiologist stated: 'the economic crisis hits mainly women too...there are no ready-made products so cooking takes a long time.' The Reception Manager of The Grand Hotel in Lodz said: 'women work 8 hours and have to deal with the shopping and housework which takes much more time than in other countries' (Barbara Aroniszydze, Personal communication: 1990). The Manager of Poland's first sex shop added: 'Polish women work professionally and run the house. It's not easy: shopping problems, city transport problems add to the greater physical and emotional effort women have to make than that of men (Bozenna Pruszyńska, Personal Communication: 1990). A textile worker said: ' Shopping and the such like - It's very difficult here, queues - and you can't get

what to you want.'

Further, research by Hauser, Heyns and Mansbridge shows that much of life in the domestic sphere in East and Central Europe revolved around the informal arrangement or fixing of things which very often fell to women:

The logic of socialist countries also supported a way of life that placed a high premium on personal ties, social networks, caring relations and the capacities to shop, trade, barter and manage through informal means - the skills the Poles refer to as "Zalatwiac" (arranging things). Women were responsible for creating and maintaining these patterns of informal exchange, which had become culturally if not economically a way of life (1993: 266)

Boys and girls then socially inherit 'zalatwiac' in different ways. Einhorn, for example, shows how where children were expected to help at home their roles and duties were gender segregated. Girls on the whole had more set chores to perform than boys. Boys she maintains had more time to themselves. Girls tended to do cleaning, cooking, child care of younger siblings whilst boys did one off repair jobs or outdoor duties. In other words, boys learned neutral or technical skills, but girls were initiated into social and caring roles. This is born out my study of secondary school girls in Lodz in 1990. Girls stated that of the tasks they were expected to perform at home these were disproportionate in relation to male siblings and fathers. Girls performed tasks such as washing-up, shopping, cooking, ironing and clothes washing. Again it seems that if adult men in the household choose not to do their full share of responsibilities it then falls to the girls, rather than the boys to do their tasks. School girl, Agata, aged 16, said:

At home I often have to do what others don't - like my dad is too lazy to move and he makes me

mad. I'm very unhappy when I come home after classes and I have a lot of housework to do on top of my homework. (Personal Communication, 1990)

The emphasis by the Polish state on developing heavy industry also impacted on women differently from men in other ways. Four areas of Poland in the 1980s were declared 'ecological disaster areas'. This meant that those regions, in which 11 million people, or 30 percent of the population permanently lived (and still do), were so contaminated with chemical and industrial waste that they were no longer fit for human habitation (Rosenbladt, 1988: 16)<sup>4</sup>. For women it added to the battle to keep dirt and dust at bay. In Lodz, for example, the black dust from the industrial power plants situated in the city itself meant that virtually every day surfaces would become covered in fine coal dust and need to be wiped; it was virtually impossible to dry clothes out doors without them getting dirty again. The Vice-Mayor of Lodz, Elzbieta Hibner, and chairperson of the Green Party, said that although, obviously, the ecological threat to men and women was equal it was women who bore the brunt of the extra burden placed on them by this, in terms of extra domestic cleaning and care for children and family members whose health had been effected by pollution (Personal Communication, 1990). Most major cities in Poland did not have water reprocessing plants. Greenpeace journalist Sabine Rosenbaladt wrote: 'they still call what comes out of Polish taps "drinking water" but only for reasons of nostalgia' (1988:16). Even a simple drink of water was and is gendered: one of the extra tasks performed by Polish women was the daily ritual of boiling water. Thus, because of Poland's gendered socially inherited memory the public

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<sup>4</sup> There was a joke in Poland in the late 1980s: what is the fastest way to develop your holiday snaps? Dip the film in the Wisla river down stream from Kracow



inheritance of environmental damage caused by state capitalism was to become part of a woman's private role in a different way from a man's, which in turn further limited women's equal public participation.

#### 6.8 The Official Women's Movement

However, just as on an individual level socially inherited memory was not simply handed down as part of an inevitable historical process, on a social level women's spaces in the official public sphere in the period of transition recalled another aspect of Poland's story of political right. As we know from Chapter 4, the women's movement in Poland after World War Two did not simply vanish. Whilst it is true that, on the whole, until the 1970s the main area of women's public activity took place within official women's groups and organizations, some alternative women's spaces did remain, although transformed and transmuted to fit with the new regime.

Of the official women's public spaces the most active was the League of Women. The League was essentially an organ of the Polish United Workers Party; it was financed by the party and its aims and objectives were, on the whole, to support broader Party doctrine. Yet, the League and its agrarian counterpart the Rural Housewives Circle were not, in my opinion, simple vehicles for Communist Party propaganda and ideology. This was because it was not the case that there was a radical break between pre-War and post-War women's spaces as commentators insist. In one sense this was due to the continuities in Polish society and the capitalist system (albeit a state capitalist one, with the exception of the majority of peasants who kept their land). In addition continuity came from the social memory of pre-war women activists and their

ideology. The strength of the Polish feminist movement before World War Two meant that the League drew as much on that tradition as that of the Polish United Workers Party and its socially inherited memory of Soviet gender relations which it rearticulated. A comparison of the aims of the post-War League of Women in the 1980s with those of the pre-War National Organization Of Women (NOW) in 1928 illustrates this.

The aims of NOW in 1928 included the abolition of all statutes that limited women's rights. NOW sought the promotion of women to all public positions, the establishment of equal pay, and the development of training and education for women. NOW also sought to implement programmes to curtail alcoholism and venereal disease. It established cheap housing for homeless women, a system of home-helps for disabled and elderly women; nurseries and crèches for children of working women; homes for orphans and children's holiday camps. It also ran a lecture programme, evening classes and provided financial assistance for unemployed women (Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet W Lodzi, 1928)

The League of Women after World War Two had the same priorities. It concentrated on key areas of the public (rather than domestic or private) sphere by campaigning for improvements in legislative rights, housing and financial aid to women, as well as education and training. In class terms, both the pre-War and post-War organizations involved educated middle class women usually linked through family or marriage to the parties which gave them political support. Before the War the National Organization of Women was allied with the right wing National Democracy Party and after the War the League was allied with PUWP. Both movements used pragmatic

methods to ease present conditions for women, rather than stressing longer term radical goals, or, empowering women themselves particularly from the manual and working classes. An essential corollary to the stress by both organizations on the public sphere was their support for the family and women's dual role as Mother and Worker to contribute to the good of the (public) Nation. There was of course one significant difference. Whilst the pre-War NOW promoted women's public representation for the good of the Polish Catholic Nation, the post-War League of Women promoted the representation of women publicly for the good of the Socialist (People's Democratic Republic) Nation. In practice how this was done was virtually the same.

Immediately following World War Two the main aim of the League of Women was education and finding work for women. By the late 1970s the emphasis was much more on assisting working women within the domestic environment to perform their roles as mothers and wives. The Secretary of the League in Lodz I interviewed emphasized that in the 1980s the main aim was to prepare women for house-keeping so that this could be combined with their professional roles. Nearly 40 000 household management centres were operating in Poland in the mid-1980s, which organized courses on rational nutrition, needlework, cosmetics and household and personal hygiene (Niedzielska, 1985: 43). By the end of the 1980s women's training included courses for women to establish their own businesses and to adjust their labour skills to meet the changing economic environment which was beginning to make the shift in Lodz from textile manufacturing to micro chip technology and service sectors (Gasiorowska, Personal Communication, 1990). The League, as with organizations in the West, also established various



help lines for women. These included a free legal help line which dealt with rape and domestic violence issues, as well as 500 consulting centres and 200 legal offices (Niedzielska, 195: 41). As with the pre-War NOW, the League women stressed that work relating to alcohol abuse was particularly beneficial to women who were often on the receiving end of violent drunken men, as well as suffering alcohol abuse themselves (Suska-Jankowska, Personal Communication, 1990).

However, it is important to note that the League actively challenged the social inheritance offered by the Polish United Workers' Party and in doing so did not simply rearticulate the tradition that NOW had established of allying itself with the ruling Party. On several issues the League challenged the public representation of women and gender relations themselves in ways which were against Party policy of the time. For example, in the 1980s the League, in the face of discussions concerning abortion, called for sex education in schools to be made a compulsory part of the curriculum. The League published a handbook of sex education for young people which was used for two years between 1986-88. The Chair of the League in Lodz stated that the handbook was then strongly attacked by the Roman Catholic Church and under this pressure the government acquiesced and withdrew the handbook from all Polish schools. The emphasis by the League, in contrast to the Church and the Party at that time, said Janina Suska-Jankowska, was on a broad family planning strategy, which included the right to abortion, but also a programme of contraceptive information, free contraceptives for all and an educational programme which steered people towards reproductive responsibility rather than abortion as the main contraceptive option (Personal Communication, 1990). In other areas the League also

went against the government. During Martial Law (1981-3) when many women were imprisoned for their political activities the League provided bail and support for women of all political persuasions including those in the opposition movement of Solidarity. Consequently, many of those women were released (Gasiorowska, Personal Communication, 1990).

In addition to the League of Women there were a number of other official women's organizations that provided space for women in the public sphere and stressed women's role within it. The Rural Housewives Circles in the mid-1980s had one and a half million members in villages across Poland. The Organization's main goals were to assist in the agricultural work 'for which most often women are responsible' (Niedzielska, 1985:43) such as dairy production, animal husbandry and vegetable growing. The circles ran courses on nutrition, food storage and preserve making. They also ran lectures on child care and general health care, including hygiene.

The third main strand of the Polish Women's organizations under state capitalism was the National Committee of Woman Cooperative Members. Women made up 34 percent of Cooperative members in 1985. As with the other organizations, although initially the stress was on furthering women's civil rights and economic knowledge, by the 1980s Women's Cooperative organizations put special stress on helping women in rational management of their households, training women at "modern housewife" and "practical woman" centres. The overall coordinating body for the official women's movement was established in 1983 with the Polish Committee for Cooperation of Women's Organizations.

## 6.9 Concluding Remarks

The official public sphere in the 1980s was marked by both continuity and contradiction in terms of gender. The overall picture is one in which Poland's economic crisis compounded by the waning confidence of the ruling Party led to contradictions in (en)gendering mechanisms followed by increasing exclusionary convergences. In propaganda we see the operation of socially inherited memory in the form of familial and nationalistic discourses and the recuperation of Mother Poland as the formal egalitarian content of policies became increasingly lost. In the political arena women's public role had become delegitimized as a result of the quota system. In education and the workplace we saw socially inherited memory resulting in ghettoization, gender stereotyping and the continued tension for women between their expected domestic roles and their public participation. Nevertheless, as in previous periods socially inherited memory and its impact on the public (en)gendering of representation both in terms of individuals and social movements for women was contradictory. Women MPs themselves stated that the quota system had made them feel increasingly confident of their public roles. Young women in education engaged with the social memory of feminism and Mother Poland in complicated and unforeseen ways. In the official women's movement, notably The Women's League, we saw marked continuity in terms of the reproduction of the social memory of pre-War feminist discourses and policies, and how the League at times also actively challenged the government of the day in terms of its public representations of women.

However, this analysis only takes into account what we could call the official public sphere of the



transitional period. At the same time, the emergence of Solidarity resulted in the formation of another sphere of public engagement in which women were also represented. Thus in the next chapter I examine the extent to which the increasing exclusion of women from the official public sphere seemed to converge with what was also happening in Poland's unofficial public sphere, with both PUWP and Solidarity seeking to recover the most exclusionary aspects of Poland's repressed story of political right, despite the rhetoric of democracy and freedom for a new public sphere.

## Chapter 7:

### Solidarity, Gender and the Public Sphere 1980-92

In Lodz now there is an office hung with Solidarity banners, and a large V sign: V for victory, V for voting, V for two sides converging - converging in agreement to make abortion illegal and women liable to three years imprisonment (Personal Diary 1989: May 3).

#### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the contradictions that developed in Poland's official public sphere during the 1980s. In this chapter I look at socially inherited memory in relation to the movement which developed an alternative public sphere in Poland, Solidarity. I argue that just as there were convergences in the representations of women by the ruling Party in the official sphere, so too were there convergences within the unofficial public sphere on the same aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory. Solidarity, like the Polish United Workers Party, sought to use certain aspects of Poland's social memory to legitimize its power base. But what it recalled in cultural and political terms was inherently gender biased. This then served to reproduce the exclusion of women from the public sphere after the so-called revolution of 1989. The consequence of this is that, despite the triumph of Solidarity, the transition in Poland did not result in greater inclusion for women in the public sphere. Whilst it is true, as in previous periods, that women's exclusion did not go unchallenged, the retreats in gender terms by all parties made it actually more difficult in some ways for women during

the transition than before.

I begin by describing the events of the early 1980s in order to provide the necessary background to the development of the Solidarity movement. I then examine women's participation and re-presentation in these events and the mechanisms against them entering the newly developing public spaces. In the second part I examine how this precipitated the beginnings of alternative women's spaces and re-presentations in the form of committees and print media. This provides the link to the following chapter in which I narrow the focus to analyze in greater detail the impact of these events on television.

## 7.2 The Advent of Solidarity

One of my early political memories on British television was of crowds gathered in 1980 outside the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk. In that moment I sensed both the power that such a crowd could use and the irony of our own Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher's support. The news feature was intercut with footage from 1971 when workers had been shot dead on the same spot. I had been six then and I was fifteen with the advent of Solidarity. Eight years later in 1989 as events across Eastern Europe hotbedded up I went to Gdansk on May Day to demonstrate. I was flung against a shipyard wall by a wound-up member of the ZOMO (riot squad) who prepared to beat my brains out with a long handled baton. Two years later, armed with a press pass from The European, I was ushered through the shipyard gates:

Metal clangs on metal through the growing darkness. Angular cranes tower above us like giant green storks. Suddenly, like a vision of the Virgin Mary in the depths of hell, there's a dazzling white and blue ship with its name in



gilt. "It's called Nadzeka" (Russian for hope) mutters the chauffeur. "In Poland we say that hope is the mother of a fool." The ship was ordered by the Soviet Union but now he believes it may never be bought (Reading, 1991)

The profound awe and sadness I felt that first time in the Lenin Shipyards never left me. I have returned in different guises and each time I feel the same. The shipyard is one of the largest in Europe covering 146 square hectares. In the 1970s 18 000 employees built 34 ships a year. Since then 11 000 workers have been sacked (Personal Communication, Hans Szyce, Director, cited in Reading, 1991). The building of these gigantic ships to me embodies everything that is magnificent about the potential of humanity and despicable about the destructiveness of slave labour. There on a huge scale in the building of an ocean going vessel is human technology at its most beautiful; with thousands of highly skilled people making something far greater than ourselves. There on huge scale is also utter squalor, pollution, injury, sweat, toil and early death for poverty wages. There, as a memorial to the yard's near liquidation, arrested at the shipyard's heart, are the bones of a revolution in which the struggle over public representation was at its core:

... rows of metal posts stick up from the ground like the fossilized remains of a beached whale's ribs. They are the skeleton of a new TV station. Building was suspended once closure plans were stopped (Reading, 1991).

The beginnings of that struggle began, ostensibly, in 1980. Yet as other scholars have shown in different ways (Goban-Klas, 1994; Harman, 1988) the Solidarity movement was prefigured by acts of resistance against the Communist regime in 1956, March 1968, 1970 and 1976. The strikes of 1976 were crucial in that they led to the formation of KOR, the Worker's Defense Committee which established an underground link

between opposition intellectuals and workers, whose demands at that time were limited to shorter working hours and higher wages. In 1980, however, from the mass movement which became Solidarity came demands which were both political and economic, although the extent to which political necessarily meant radical or gender positive was, as I shall argue, limited.

The initial spark for the strikes in the summer of 1980 was provided by the government in the form of price hikes on July 1. In the first of the strikes which followed workers demanded wage increases. These the government granted in an attempt to quell rising discontent. The effect of this, however, was like opening a door in the event of fire. People sensed that the strikes had an impact. On Thursday 19 August the Lenin shipyard demanded pay rises. They also demanded the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz who had been dismissed by the shipyard management for her activities in the unofficial union. Workers then occupied the yard and other workers at shipyards in Gdansk and Gdynia followed. The Party by the end of August decided to forge an agreement with the strike committee at the Gdansk shipyards. The agreements made at Gdansk and Szczecin and signed by the Interfactory Strike Committee included demands which, as we shall see, were to have a crucial impact on the (en)gendering of representation. They included the establishment of paid up bringing leave for parents and more state provision for nurseries and creches (Reading, 1992:62). There was also a demand for freedom of speech and information, with the possibility for all social groups to participate in a reform programme (Goban-Klas, 1994:168). This as we shall see in the penultimate chapter had important implications in terms of women's representation in Poland's television system.

The signing of the Gdansk accords did little to stamp out the impending revolt, however. Strikes continued on an ever greater scale country-wide. Miners in Silesia stopped work. Workers extended their demands to challenge the legitimacy of the state; there were calls for the end to Party privileges and corruption by the nomenclature. Solidarity grew from a local union to a national movement of 10 million members by the end of September (Harman, 1988:262). By mid October 4, 800 work-places had stopped work (Harman, 1988:263). A student movement was established starting from Lodz and an agrarian movement was established (Hann, 1986). The leadership began to fragment, unsure of what to do to calm the populace. The police acted of their own accord assaulting Solidarity supporters and beating up 200 people in Bydgoszcz. This led to a general strike on March 27 (Harman, 1988:267).

The strike pushed the government into giving more wage increases and a reduction in working hours. Economically, the situation in the country worsened: Poland's foreign debt spiralled and there were shortages of basic goods. In Solidarity a split developed between members of the executive, including Lech Walesa, who sought compromise with the ruling Party elite, and those who wanted to use the mass power of Solidarity to push for more radical self-management of factories and enterprises. Walesa began negotiations with the two key leaders of the power blocs in Poland: Archbishop Glemp of the Roman Catholic Church and General Jarulzelsi for the Communists. At the grassroots level people called for an active strike with factories to be run by their workers and goods to be distributed more evenly. Such a possibility was crushed with the implementation of martial law:

On the morning of 13 December 1981 people awoke to find Chopin playing on the radio instead of



the usual comedy programme. The military were in power: the number of buses and trams were cut by half, there were random beatings-up on the street, passes were required for internal travel and the telephone system was jammed. The leaders of Solidarity were arrested and interned; the ZOMO riot squads broke up occupations, and strikes were banned (Reading, 1992:62).

A curfew was established between 11pm and 6 p.m.; telephones were cut off for two weeks; people queued for two to three hours for essential goods; the Christmas vacation was extended for schools and universities (Lodz English students, personal communication: 1990). The television was taken over by military personnel; ninety percent of journalists were fired and radio and television were 'normalized'. Publishing houses were reorganized; and books already published were withdrawn and re-censored. Martial law officially ended in July 1983, but in February 1984 publishers were given new directives by the Party to uphold Socialist-Realism. Literature yet again was supposed to put forward 'socialist' values and ideas and literary editors were given special ideological training (Nycezeck, 1984: 20; Short, 1982: 8-12; Pszenicki, 1983: 8-11).

Yet, Solidarity did not disappear: It continued its activities underground, with networks operating throughout Poland in factories, schools and universities. Underground literature was still published and throughout the 1980s resistance to the Communist regime continued (Diehl, 1986: 24-27; Bartowszewski, 1985: 21-24). The economic situation, though, was chaotic. Many consumer goods were rationed: by 1988 there were shortages of paper, contraceptives, soap, tea, coffee, chocolate, cigarettes, sugar, cheese, flour and toilet paper. Meat was still rationed. Imported goods, such as bananas, oranges and lemons were very expensive and

beyond the means of ordinary people.<sup>1</sup>

The situation came to a head in August 1988. At this time there were strikes in a number of enterprises; these continued throughout the Autumn and into the Spring of 1989, along with student and worker demonstrations, manifestations, sit-ins and occupations. The tone on the part of the government was, initially, confrontational: 'I have just heard on French radio. The government has decided to close the port of Gdansk because of unrest. Rakowski is going for confrontation, not discussion as we thought.' (Personal diary, 1988: October 22). Czeslawa Jerzykowska, a textile worker at the Poltex factory since 1971 in Lodz also described the differences between the strikes of 1980 and 1988:

I took part in two strikes. During the second one I worked on the strike committee. The first strike in 1980 was in the whole of Poland. I was younger then and it was the first strike and everyone wanted to be involved in it. The second one was more spontaneous. I came to work in the morning and I found that the factory was on strike. It was February\March 1989. It was about financial matters. We were here for 12 days. I left only to take care of my child. It was an important thing for me and it was very difficult - no one wanted to talk to us; the General Manager thought that one should sleep at night, not talk. Minister Wilczek ignored us saying if we didn't like the work here we could go elsewhere. He didn't care about the people who had worked here 30 years or more. It's not easy for them to go to another factory, especially because after 30 years of work here your health is ruined. But now the situation is worse because we don't even know how long we're going to work

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<sup>1</sup> If one saw a queue one stood at the end of it, since any queue signified the presence of something in short supply and hence special. I once stood in a queue for what two hours later turned out to be East German car valves. I decided to buy two even though I didn't have a clue about cars or even have one. Such items proved useful for the unofficial exchanges required for the daily *zawatwiac* (fixing) of things. I used the car valves with my ration coupons to buy a Russian bicycle.



(Czeslawa Jerzykowska, Personal Communication).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the Autumn of 1988 the political tension increased. Solidarity demanded the promise of 100, 000 new jobs before it met for discussion. One hundred people occupied a church in Katowice and went on hunger strike until the people who were arrested on demonstrations in Warsaw and Katowice on November 12 were released. Priests were openly speaking out against the government. Churches became regularly packed with people meeting to hear words of political encouragement from the clergy. It felt as if the government was teetering on the edge of control:

Today there was a manifestation in town. Not a demonstration: that is something organized, a manifestation is something that appears like magic, unexpectedly. People appeared out of doors and vans and out of shops and offices. They gathered in the square linking their frustrations. (Personal diary, 1988: November 13).

It was during the Spring of 1989 that the Round Table Talks between the Polish United Worker's Party and Solidarity began. The talks defused the tension in the country and led to disillusionment amongst Solidarity activists who became increasingly dispirited as the leadership ignored its grassroots demands:

The city was covered in flags for May day. Fighting Solidarity held a small demonstration outside the town hall. Anna Walentynowicz, whose sacking lead to Solidarity in 1981, spoke at the meeting. People looked tired and demoralized. Fists were raised and Victory signs made, but the songs were sung half-heartedly. An era seems to have gone. The Anarchist students then took to the steps as Solidarity marched off up the street. They waved red flags and performed a parody of a government rally, and handed out

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<sup>2</sup> According to workers at two Lodz factories apart from the antiquated machines being dangerous, women suffer from hearing loss due to the noise, contorted spines from standing all day, blood circulation problems and breathing difficulties caused by the cloth fibres in the air (Visits to Lodz factories, October 1991).



leaflets saying 'Communism Must Be Revitalized'. Later on some students barricaded the road with bins and stones were thrown. ZOMOS in their vans screeched up and tumbled out in full riot gear, shield and helmets and long bendy batons, bendy so they make most contact with skulls and backs ... scuffles and sirens continued all afternoon amongst mothers with push chairs and strolling fathers, hobbling old men mumbling vodka slurred curses; they turned their faces away from the violence and steered on to the goods in the shops. (Personal Diary, 1989: May 1).

The Round Table talks resulted in a power-share agreement: The Communists would retain the ministers for Defense, Foreign Trade and Internal Affairs, and, Solidarity would gain the rest. The leaders decided that a new representative second house, the Senate, would be created with democratic elections to elect its members. There would also be elections to thirty-five percent of the lower house, the Sejm. Triumphant, Solidarity opened offices on high streets throughout Poland and the new banners proclaimed:

"Choose Solidarity", in large red letters on white; but now with a splash of blue. Red and white: the colours of Solidarity, the colours of the Polish National flag. Blue the bridge between them. And so the choice and the vote has replaced the word fight now. Though there are still a few who continue to write Solidarity with a fist on the walls of the barracks, whilst anarchists show the Solidarity flag carried by a snail sliding down supermarket doors. (Personal Diary, 1989: May 3)

For the first time in nearly a decade Solidarity was able to operate openly. Candidates were chosen for the National Civic Committee (NCC). This body was to act on behalf of not only Solidarity candidates but all opposition candidates. In the first free elections of July 1989 Solidarity won 98 percent of the seats in the newly created Senate. Tadeusz Mazowiecki became the first non-Communist Prime Minister in the Eastern Bloc since 1945. The Polish United Worker's Party

split and shifted and lost power in its remaining departments. Lech Walesa remained outside the government for the period 1989-90; but, he suggested in the summer of 1990 that Presidential elections should be held. Initially, it seemed unlikely that he would enter the presidential race, but at the last minute he put himself forward against Tadeusz Mazowiecki and an outsider Timinsky. Mazowiecki despite all predictions was defeated with only 16 percent of the vote. He resigned with his government on 26 November 1990. In the second presidential round Lech Walesa was elected as President of Poland; he appointed a new Solidarity led government in 1991 (Reading, 1992:63-4).

### 7.3 Women and Political Activity

In the account of the rise of Solidarity given above, gender is excluded. Indeed, most accounts of Solidarity in Poland (Ascherson, 1981; Davies, 1990; Harman, 1987) are gender blind. Those which do take gender into account in the changes in Eastern Europe concern events in the Soviet Union (Buckley, 1993) or treat Solidarity and Poland as simply another Eastern Bloc country (Einhorn, 1995; Funk and Mueller, 1993). However, I would argue that although Poland certainly may be compared with the experience of other countries in the Eastern Bloc in the 1980s, it is crucial to recognize the ways in which the structure and ideology of Solidarity drew on Poland's socially inherited memory to exclude women. In addition, there were, of course, exclusion mechanisms at work which could as easily be found in any political movement elsewhere. These areas I discuss in the following reappraisal of women and Solidarity in the 1980s.

### 7.4 Women's Early Participation in Solidarity

Solidarity, undoubtedly, gave workers and peasants

alike the strength and confidence they needed to shake the regime. A leading woman activist throughout the 1980s, Danuta Nowakowska, said for example:

What Solidarity achieved then, during those sixteen short months of its official existence, was and still is something so far reaching that its results are being felt and will continue to be felt for a long time to come. (Nowakowska, 1988: 54-55)

Yet, by 1989 at the time of the Round Table Talks, there was a joke which asked: 'Why are the Round table talks round a round table? Answer: because the Polish United Worker's Party, Solidarity and the Church - are all on the same side'. A feminist version was to add that there was only one woman on that side. There were 57 men (Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, M.P and Editor-in Chief Women and Life Personal Communication: 1990).

Unusually, though, for any political movement in Poland, women to begin with constituted half of the membership. This was very different from the strike action of the mid-seventies in which women's participation was minimal (Siemieniska, 1986: 28). Yet, women's representation within the structures of Solidarity was little different from the vertical and horizontal gender divisions seen in the rest of Polish society (see chapters 4 and 6). This is illustrated by the fact that women were less represented at the top levels of the newly developing public spaces and women were rarely elected to the union's committees. There were two women present on The Interfactory Strike Committee, in comparison with 16 men. No women signed the Gdansk accords between the government and Solidarity. No women signed the accords at Szczecin. In the Solidarity elections held in 1981 women were frequently excluded from being representatives: In 16 out of the total 41 areas no women were chosen as delegates. The delegates were to represent people at



the first National Solidarity Congress. The total number of women elected was 7 percent of all delegates, or 63 women (Solidarnosc, 25.7.81:26). The gender balance on the National Commissions was little better: on the Conciliatory Commission there was one woman in comparison with 18 men. On the Auditing Commission there were three women and 18 men. And on the National Commission there were 82 men and only one woman (Solidarnosc, 31.9.81:30). Siemieniska argues:

In the elections of the new authorities it is hard to speak of pure coincidence; the situation clearly reflected some deeper mechanisms and preferences. (Siemieniska, 1986:30).

Yet what were these mechanisms and preferences? And how did they operate?

#### **7.5 Socially Inherited Memory: Nationalising women**

First there is the fact that women in these newly developing public spaces did not see the need for an additional voice for themselves. Women considered their struggle as the same as that of their menfolk. Gender was not an issue. All were united against a common enemy - the Communist state. (Later, this was to change). As we have seen in previous chapters the precedent for women conflating their own needs with those of men has a long history in Poland. The 19th century pattern of a male biased popular front against an alien state was reestablished in the 1970s by the Committee for the Defense of Workers and other core intellectual groups, as Siemieniska notes: ' Women who participated in these organizations did not represent a woman's point of view. They did not demand additional rights for themselves (Siemieniska, 1986:28).

Despite the strong presence of women in Solidarity in

terms of membership, a similar pattern emerged. Women did not, initially, push for their own representation in the new public spaces:

At the time, we didn't consider on any basis whether someone was a man or a woman - the only thing that mattered was our cause, our hope for a free and independent Poland. We wanted to win back that which had been taken from us forty years before. (Nowakowska, 1988:51)

These political values remembered by women activists themselves prevailed within Solidarity so that later attempts to forward the rights of women were made very difficult. One of the newly elected members of parliament in 1990 said that she had tried to draw the attention of the newly democratically elected Sejm to the particular problems faced by women:

I tried to create something like a women's lobby or a special commission to deal with the social and professional status of women. Unfortunately, it was not accepted, especially by Solidarity. Women Solidarity MPs thought that there were more important things to be dealt with first. (Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, M.P., Personal Communication).

These attitudes were prevalent not only in Solidarity but in the other underground groups operating to disrupt and oust the state capitalist regime. One of the first members of Solidarity in Lodz and later a leading woman in the right wing Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN), Jadwiga Goryszewska, stated that whilst one fifth of their members were women very few women were on the Central Committees of the organization. She did not consider this a problem, however: 'our position is the same as that of men. We don't have any special positions just because we are women. Both men and women have one aim - independence'. For the elderly Jadwiga Goryszewska (she is the daughter of one of Pilsudski's soldiers) independence meant the abolition of any influence or control by the Soviet Union on Polish affairs and the

expulsion of the Soviet Army: ' Our main aim is to regain absolute independence from any partitioner, because that's what the USSR has been for years.' Independence also meant the eradication of 'Communist' ideas which were seen to have corrupted people by forgetting the traditional role of women as bastion of the national culture:

I was brought up in the tradition in which a woman was a mother and brought up her children in a patriotic spirit. She educated her children to love their country above all else. Historically, women who were brought up in Polish households and who knew Polish history and literature transmitted their knowledge to their children. No one could do it better than they. No one can teach one to love one's country and God better than a mother can. Children brought up under the Communist system - they don't know about such things (Jadwiga Goryszewska, Personal Communication, 1990)

The future that Goryszewska saw, based on such convictions, was highly contradictory in gender terms:

I'd like total privatization to take place to improve the conditions of life in Poland. I want to add that I'm not someone who thinks a woman's place is in the kitchen. Education and professional work are very important for women, but first of all a woman should take care of the children. (Jadwiga Goryszewska, Personal Communication: 1990)

Neither should it be assumed that such views, and, ultimately, Party policies, were only to be found in groups on the right of the political spectrum. Ecological and green groups propounded similar views. In some places, such as Lodz, the Greens even formed alliances in 1990 with nationalist groups such as the Confederation for an Independent Poland and the National Christian Federation. Green Party chair and the vice-mayor of Lodz, elected in 1990, Elzbieta Hibner said:

It's very difficult to give a general picture of women who work in the Greens. There are not many of them - as in other parties. ... They are



active in associations dealing with healthy food, environmental protection, vegetarianism and so on. But only a few women are involved in the strict sense of political activity. (Elzbieta Hibner, Personal Communication: 1990)

As with other political activists, Hibner saw no need for particular policies to encourage women into the public sphere or to improve women's situation more generally:

A concept such as "women's politics" does not exist in Poland. ... I cannot favour women ... the threat is equal for both men and women; it's impossible to make sex distinctions. (Elzbieta Hibner, Personal Communication: 1990)

Despite this, however, Hibner was certainly able to perceive certain sex distinctions in the public realm:

The vice-mayor of Warsaw is a woman and the mayor of Gdynia is a woman and a few others. But the activity of women may be illustrated by a pyramid: women are active at the lower levels, the higher you go, the fewer women there are. It's apparent in the Sejm. A career is the domain of a man's life: a woman's career is just one element in her life (Elzbieta Hibner, Personal Communication)

## 7.6 Socially Inherited Memory: Domesticating women

The language and arguments of these opposition women activists during the period of late transition are remarkably similar to those articulated in the 19th century by women struggling within the nationalist movements for an independent Poland, free from the partitioning powers (See Chapter 4). This is further born out by the fact that from August 1980 onwards the manner in which women's practical participation in the struggles changed: women fought less and less on the front lines and more and more as part of the home

front (Nowakowska, 1988:51)<sup>3</sup>. Effectively, what we see is a pattern of women acting more as supporters of their menfolk, working in the private sphere to support the efforts of men to shift the boundaries of the public realm. Consequently, one of the key mechanisms that works against women's equal participation in the public sphere continued to be their over representation in the private sphere, legitimized by the socially inherited memory of women's domestic role:

Even if the family is a partnership family, women still have bigger duties. Men help by taking the children for a walk and such like. Men have got used to the fact that their mothers did everything at home, so, they're not eager to help their wives. Women would like to be helped but sometimes they just get fed up with trying to force men to help them, so they give up and do everything themselves. (Magdalena Niewadowska, Personal Communication: 1990) (my emphasis).

The public advent of Solidarity did little to alter women's private responsibilities, and, in fact, in its ideology and policies, as we shall see further on, it reinforced women's domestic role.

Martial Law itself also had a gendered impact forcing many highly active women into the private sphere. These included women whose spouses had been top Party officials and who had been Party members themselves, such as Wroclaw journalist Elzbieta Adamczewska. Her husband had been a leading official and her arrest in 1981 broke up her marriage. This had particular

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<sup>3</sup> It seems that this process of exclusion in revolutionary moments is not uncommon. George Orwell notes, for example, in Homage to Catalonia that in Spain amongst the anarchists in 1937:

There were still women serving in the militias, though not very many. In the early battles they had fought side by side with the men as a matter of course. It is a thing that seems natural in time of revolution. Ideas were changing already, however. The militia men had to be kept out of the riding-school while the women were drilling there because they laughed at the women and put them off. A few months earlier no one would have seen anything comic in a woman handling a gun. (Orwell, 1981:11).



consequences in terms of her taking on traditional feminine domestic responsibilities and put a stop to her public role as a journalist:

I was a member of the Party too - until Martial Law. But I was not an active member who agreed with everything. ... The paper I'd been working for was closed: we were forbidden to publish it. ... I didn't work for many years - since 13 December 1981, since Martial Law. The children got used to the idea that Mother was at home and did the shopping, cooking, cleaning and so on (Elzbieta Adamczewska, Personal Communication: 1990).

The consequence of this was that women, as in the past, had less time to participate actively in the newly developing public spaces. Every woman I spoke to agreed that one of the main factors working against women's public representation was time. Women have less time than men because of their dual roles. A Solidarity activist and textile worker said:

It's easier for men to make a career because they have more time. They're not so involved in the children's upbringing, doing the shopping and so on ... the man is the head of the family, the woman is the neck that has to lift it (Czeslaw Jerzykowska, Personal Communication: 1990)

Consequently, when it came to the first democratic elections in Poland established gender bias was replicated<sup>4</sup>. In 1990 there were 80 women M.Ps out of a total of 460 (Krystyna Eysmont, M.P for Lodz, Personal Communication). There were nine women ministers and vice ministers out of 116 people in the government (Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, Personal Communication). Statistics provided by the Women's Unit of Solidarity in Gdansk in 1991 showed that six

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<sup>4</sup> The increased exclusion of women from political public office after 1989 is a pattern found throughout Eastern Europe. An article in The Guardian 'Eastern Europe's Revolution Fails to Liberate the Women' in 1990 notes that the most pronounced gender bias was in Romania where, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women held one third of seats in parliament before 1989 and in 1990 held only 3.5 percent. In the former Czechoslovakia there was a registered drop from 29.5 percent before 1989 to 6 percent in 1990 and in Hungary from 20 percent in 1989 to 7 percent in 1990. (Eyal, The Guardian 25.7.1990)



percent of those elected on the National Civic Committee slate were women, which was significantly lower than the percentage under the Communist regime in previous years. In local committees, administrative authorities and production managements the political changes of 1989 resulted in women being pushed out of publicly representative bodies: women's representation fell from 15 to 10 percent (Siemieniska, 1986:32). Sociologist, Renata Siemieniska, concluded:

although the upheavals of the early eighties saw the mass participation of women, their representation among activists and executives actually dropped. (Siemieniska, 1986:29)

The Chairperson of the Women's League in Lodz in 1990, Janina Suska-Jankowska, had also observed the public absence of women:

There are almost no women in the top positions of Solidarity and ten out of 80 members in the local government [ are women]. ... millions were invested in the education of women and now their knowledge is not being used. They just don't do anything for women. (Janina Suska-Jankowska, Personal Communication: 1990)

As Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, M.P and Editor of Women and Life, put it:

There were many women in Solidarity at the beginning, but only a few became candidates for the elections and only a few were elected. The same is true for local government elections: in City councils there are two or three women out of 28 members. Women have turned away from political activities. The reasons are complicated And I'd not want to go into them all. (Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, M.P and Editor in Chief of women and Life, Personal Communication: 1990).

A basic gender headcount supports these views. Out of 460 MPs in the 1994 Polish Sejm only 60 were women. 13 of the senators were women. This, however, is a marginal improvement on the gender balance of the first post-Communist Sejm and Senate. In that term

there were 42 women Deputies and 8 Senators (Voice of Warsaw, 1994:5). In the successive post-Communist cabinets the gender balance has veered from bad to better to very bad to bad. In the Solidarity cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki there was just one woman, Izabella Cywinska, the Minister for Art and Culture. When the liberal, Jan Bielecki, headed the government there were two women appointed to the cabinet: Henryka Bochniarz was Minister for Industry and Anna Popowicz was appointed as Government Representative for Women and the Family. The right-wing cabinet in which Jan Olszewski was Prime Minister fired Popowicz and created an all male cabinet. This was followed by an all male cabinet headed by Poland's first woman Prime Minister, Hannah Suchocka. In the coalition government of Waldemar Pawlak, Barbara Blida was Urban Planning and Construction Minister, while Danuta Waniek was Deputy Defence Minister (Voice of Warsaw, November 6, 1994).

### 7.7 Socially Inherited Memory: Criminalizing women

Another reason given by women themselves for their progressive exclusion from the 'unofficial' public sphere was the way in which women activists in the early days of Solidarity were treated differently from men; differently on the whole meaning more harshly, both by other family members, and, the authorities. Artist Joanna Wisniewska said in respect of her family:

The traditional place for a woman is at home, her main aim - to take care of the children, the rest is simply an addition. When this order gets reversed the rest of the family can't cope with it. (Joanna Wisniewska, Personal Communication: 1990)

The same was true for the authorities in their treatment of women activists. In the case of the



activist, Krystyna Stachowiak, for example, she began her work by organizing a strike committee in the shoe factory in which she worked in 1980 in the small town of Wschow. Like many others, with the advent of Martial Law she was taken away by the police:

On the night of the 12\13 December 1981, I was arrested and interned. There were five women including me. We were taken to Ostrow Wielkopolska and put in prison. But it was a prison for men and the warders didn't know how to handle us. So the next day we were transported to Poznan. (Krystyna Stachowiak, Personal Communication).

Krystyna went on hunger strike whilst in prison, losing 14 kilograms of her body weight making half of her hair go white. Her protests secured her release. On her return home she was effectively doubly punished for her political activities: She found that her husband had moved in another woman into their flat and the court had granted him custody of their two daughters. Krystyna was classified as an 'unfit mother' because of her prison record, which then made her homeless and jobless. She suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. She spent two and half years in a Polish mental hospital. When she finally came out she resumed her work with Solidarity in Poznan. Krystyna Stachowiak believes that if she had been a man it was more likely that her spouse would have been more supportive during imprisonment (her husband didn't visit Krystyna at all). She also believes that the court would have given her time to find work and a home before granting custody of her children. It was as if the court saw her as more worthy of punishment because she had abandoned her socially inherited role as Mother and Wife for a public and political role (and an illegal one at that) (Krystyna Stachowiak, Personal Communication: 1990). This is supported by research by journalist Eileen Macdonald with women terrorists and police authorities



in Europe and the Middle East: The authorities treat women terrorists much more harshly than men. Police are instructed to shoot the women first in situations of civil conflict since women who have crossed the dividing line between what is legal and illegal are deemed to have forfeited their femininity and are therefore seen to be more dangerous than men (Macdonald, 1991: 231-241). Research on women criminals also confirms the gender bias of the justice system: Women are imprisoned more often than men for the same crime, longer than men for the same crime and very often are committed to prison for minor property offences for which men would get a fine or community work (Padel and Stevenson, 1988: 1-12). A report on women, crime and prisons in Poland in the 1980s confirms this. It shows that 76 per cent offences committed by women were property offences with only 12.3 percent of women's offences involving violence. The inverse pattern was true for offences committed by men. Although women committed fewer crimes than men and were less violent, more Polish women than men end up in prison (Przestepczosc Kobiet - Aspekty Krminologiczne i Pentilencjarne, 1984). Studies of sentencing in juvenile courts show that Polish girls are sentenced to reform institutions for running away, missing school and nights away from home. Judges and social workers always tried to see whether the girl had had sex, and with whom. Boys were not asked about their sexual practices and were given institutional sentences only for serious crimes (studies by Malgorzata Fuszara at the Centre for Social and Legal Research on the Status of Women at the University of Warsaw, cited in Voice of Warsaw November 6, 1994)

Having said this, however, not everyone would agree. Danuta Zatay, Solidarity Secretary in Gdansk in 1990, had been arrested in 1981, she subsequently lost her

job and her son was prevented from entering University. She stated:

I was discriminated against, but not because I was a woman, but because I was a member of Solidarity. (Danuta Zatay, Personal Communication)

### 7.8 Socially Inherited Memory: Violating women

A further reason women themselves gave for their public exclusion from Solidarity was socially inherited acceptance of male violence in Polish society. The Minister for Health stated:

Our courts are biased - they believe in such folk wisdom that if a man doesn't beat his wife, he doesn't love her and if he beats her a little it's nothing unusual. (Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health: 1990)

The women I spoke to said that their movements were restricted because they did not feel safe in public after dark: 'I am afraid of the streets at night. I try to get back before 10 pm. It's more prudent ' (Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Personal Communication: 1990). Effectively, said one woman, the curfew of Martial Law had gone but a gender curfew remained (Dorota Canert, personal communication: 1990). Furthermore, there was the sense that after 1989 the amnesty on criminals had resulted in a number of violent sex offenders being released back into Polish society who had then gone on to commit the same crimes: this psychologically effected women's sense of confidence in the public realm (Czeslaw Jerzykowska, Solidarity Activist/ Textile Worker, Personal Communication: 1990). This was compounded by the fact that women had little faith in the authorities acting on their behalf against male violence:

Women are ashamed to bring such cases to court and even if she does it's difficult for her to prove she was raped, especially if she knows the man who did it (Dorota Canert, Personal Communication: 1990)



The connection between the psychic and physical invasion of women by men has been shown by a number of Western feminists to damage women emotionally, physically and intellectually (see for example Ward, 1984; Clark, 1987; Brownmiller, 1975 ). Dworkin, for example, calls rape ' an act of political terrorism' (1983: 196). This I would argue militated against women's full participation in the alternative public sphere in Poland.

Combined with this there continued to be problems with women having full control over their sexuality and bodies. Grazyna Zawi, Head Nurse, Polish Hospital for Mothers in Lodz stated:

Contraception is a big problem. We are way behind in comparison with other countries; knowledge about contraception is very unsatisfactory; often abortion is treated as a form of contraception (Grazyna Zawi, Personal Communication: 1990)

Inadequate contraception does not effect women and men equally: it is women who must bear alone the physical impact of abortion and the biological burden of pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding all of which were both in Communist and post-Communist Poland still incompatible with full participation in the public sphere. This is not to say that it is inevitable that such things are publicly incompatible: it is the value given such things and the way society is structured which creates the friction.

## **7.9 Socially Inherited Memory: Economising women**

The women I interviewed said that one of the deciding factors working against equal representation was the economy. In particular, Poland's relative poverty:

These problems are not connected with one or another system - centralization or



totalitarianism - they're connected with our standard of living; Poland is a poor country; it takes time to build up the material base ... I think Polish people sometimes have a primitive view of the future - change the system and everything will be all right, we'll be rich, we'll have democracy. It's not true. (Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Personal Communication: 1990)

But it seems that the underlying economic mechanisms worked with an aspect of socially inherited memory to exclude women from full representation in the alternative public sphere. For example, one of the problems facing Polish society in the early 1980s was hidden unemployment. Solidarity addressed this issue not by suggesting the creation of worthwhile and fulfilling jobs for all but by suggesting that if women moved out of the workplace this would make space for men. This, according to Solidarity, was justified since then women would be more capable of fulfilling their 'pre-destined' domestic role. This position was not simply one put forward by men: Many women also supported it. Magda Reja, in an article headlined 'Instead of Unemployment Benefits' in the Solidarity newspaper *Solidarnosc* in July 1981 argued:

A million women bringing up small children would gladly leave their work places. Society would benefit in that those women would make way for men redundant due to economic reforms (Reja, 1981: 16)

In May 1990 1,434,506 people were registered as unemployed in Poland, of which just over half (742,902) were women (Voice of Warsaw September 8, 1991: 38). By 1991 the numbers of unemployed women outweighed the number of men by 53 to 47 per cent (Minister for Health, Personal Communication: 1990). In 1990, 270,073 Poles were eligible for unemployment benefits and most of these, 142, 516, were women (Voice of Warsaw September 8, 1991: 38). As one textile worker said, under the new government: 'women

are afraid of losing their jobs (Czeslawa Jerzykowska, Personal Communication.) Behind this fear was the reality of the Balczerowicz plan. As Teresa Sasinska-Klas points out, the shock therapy approach of the plan, initiated by the first non-Communist government in Poland, was regarded by many as signifying progress towards a new order of equality of opportunity in the public sphere, yet:

Polish women have become increasingly vulnerable and often the first victims of 'progress'. Indeed women are the majority of the new unemployed and have already lost their right to long-term parental leave. (Sasinska-Klas, 1993:6)

Following on from this, one woman said that the exclusionary mechanisms in the (en)gendering of representation came therefore from the material effects of this poverty, rather than socially inherited ideas within Solidarity:

Solidarity has changed people's mentalities, although it is traditional in its attitudes towards women; Solidarity is a social movement and I think it has some influence on women's attitudes, but don't exaggerate this, because generally in everyday life the things which limit your freedom are lack of money, lack of housing ... it is these things which limit one's mentality, rather than ideas themselves. The ideology of Solidarity is important for politicians and for independent women who have a good material situation - they can think about ideology (Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Personal Communication: 1990)

#### 7.10 (En) Gendering mechanisms at Work: Idolising Women

Yet if we look more closely we find Poland's socially inherited memory in relation to Solidarity was crucial. As Teresa Sasinska-Klas points out, accompanying the economic impact of Solidarity's



liberal capitalism was also a 'moral conservatism', with the Roman Catholic Church establishing Christian values as the foundation of the post-1989 Polish nation. Thus Poland's new Constitution stressed a relationship of cooperation (rather than formal separation) between the Church and state (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej). This was reinforced by the introduction of Christian religious education in schools, thereby denying other religions a voice (Sasinska-Klas, 1993:7-9). The outcome of this conservatism is highly detrimental in terms of gender bias in the public sphere, with the Roman Catholic Church forwarding a Christian notion of procreative sex, linked with 'women's special mission as wife and mother' (Sasinska-Klas, 1993:6).

The roots of this go back to Poland's socially inherited memory of its response to partitioning in the 19th century. Within Solidarity the socially inherited link between women and the Christian Polish Nation was there at the movement's inception. The way in which women were re-presented in Solidarity publications for example was indicative of this. The weekly newspaper published by the movement, *Solidarnosc*, between early April 1981 until Martial Law on December 13, virtually ignored issues concerning domestic problems, children, contraception, male violence, occupational gender bias, unequal pay, and women's double burden, despite the fact that women constituted a significant number of the editorial positions. Some editions did deal with issues concerning motherhood which was dealt with as an extension of women's roles (Siemienska, 1986:29). This view continued throughout the eighties. Anna Walentynowicz wrote for example:

Sisters, I turn to you as a mother and a worker, who has laboured for many years in Poland. I know



the everyday concerns of mothers and wives: the endless hours spent obtaining food and basic necessities. I know what it is like to stand in shop queues, to wait in doctors surgeries, to struggle with the official bureaucracy. I am one of you, worn down by the everyday reality of Polish socialism. (Walentynowicz, 1987: 18-19)

The emphasis was on women's identity as mothers and wives. What of those women who are neither? The representation by Walentynowicz places the concerns of women firmly in the realm of the private sphere; furthermore, women are the ones re-presented as solely responsible for obtaining such necessities; for caring for the ill. And, the blame is laid firmly at the feet of 'Polish socialism' rather than men and capitalism. Further on, Walentynowicz makes a claim which could have been articulated by a woman nationalist of the 19th century:

Women have a duty to defend health and life, Polish women have a right to speak their minds on matters important to Poland (Walentynowicz, 1986: 19).

This publicly engenders women as the sex responsible for health, for life. Combined with this is the sense that women may have their voices publicly included on these matters; but, publicly excluded if they attempt to speak on other matters such as the economy or law. Ultimately, women in Solidarity could represent the nation, but not their own interests.

These mechanisms articulated within these examples of Solidarity print media are also evident in Solidarity's popular cultural forms, particularly cartoons and underground stamps. In Polish Women, Solidarity and Feminism (1992) I argued that a common re-presentation of women in underground satirical cartoon forms was woman as Mother Poland. A typical

example was one back cover of the Voice of Solidarity which showed a line drawing of a monument to Mother Poland, in which a wreath of barbed wire is laid at her feet, rather than flowers. The female figure is large and sexless dressed in rags and holds a banner which proclaims: 'zbusowalismy socjalizm ( building socialism) a typical slogan of the regime in use in the eighties. Underneath the cartoon an inscription reads: 'to the Polish Mother to who we did everything and will do more: signed The Party'. The implication, I argue, is similar to that of underground literature by intellectuals analyzed in Chapter 5. The cartoon states what has been done to Polish women, thereby casting them as victim-objects. Women, the cartoon implies, have been made sexless and ugly and the state is firmly to blame. (Reading, 1992:68)

In re-presentations of women on underground stamps used in Poland's unofficial postal system<sup>5</sup> in the 1980s it was Mother Poland that dominated re-presentations. Mother as Virgin Mary holding Jesus; Mother holding shopping bags and child; Mother touching the face of a young baby (Reading, 1992: figs 6,7,8). In the re-presentation of Mother with shopping bags and child:

the woman is strapped to the child; she has no free hands. She cannot go beyond the representation of herself as monument because of the wall of black letters: POLSKA, 50, Pomnik Matki Polski - monument, mother, Polish - object, appendage, Nation. (Reading, 1992: 68)

One stamp was different. In this stamp a woman is re-represented without children or husband. She is shown as static, seated, powerless, unable to stand, because

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<sup>5</sup>In the 1980s an underground postal system developed as an alternative to the official network in which letters were censored, went missing or were simply ripped open. In contrast to the official stamps which elevated Party figures and Communist heroes the underground stamps celebrated Solidarity activists and the Roman Catholic Church. Such stamps were printed on ancient presses or by political prisoners in the internment camps from pieces of cut linoleum using vegetable inks on tiny scraps of paper. The stamps were smuggled out of the prisons and became symbols of resistance against the regime. (Editorial, Triquarterly, 1983: 6)



of the weight of the words above her head: Kobieta Samotna, lonely woman. The implication is that a woman without a man, or, children must be needing company, needing others, must be lonely (Reading, 1992: 68; fig. 9).

After 1989 the public representation of Mother Poland in official and unofficial discourse was joined by pornographic images of women, building on the socially inherited memory of the underground equation in the 1970s and 1980s of pornography with Western Freedom (see Chapter 5). Pornography, as in the West is subject to legal restriction, but, it soon spread rapidly in Poland's developing market economy. Jonathan Eyal in The Guardian in 1990 noted:

Liberalization, and an almost automatic imitation of anything Western, also transformed the image of the woman into a sex object. Engaged in a fierce battle for survival, most newspapers adorn their articles with nudity. Poland's news stands are full of badly printed pornographic material, and the American Playboy monthly sold out its first Hungarian language edition within days. Beauty contests are held in every state. (Eyal, 1990)

By 1990, Poland had a number of sex shops which because they were considered to be enterprise initiatives were given financial aid from local councils (Reading, 1992:70). In these shops, sex was overtly connected with violence. In the first sex shop in Poland in central Lodz the sign outside was of a woman's breasts with a pistol resting across them and the words 'Sex and Gun Shop' in bloodied red letters. Inside, inflatable women and pornographic magazines were displayed next to guns, knives, nerve sprays, and gas guns. The manager and owner of the shop, Bozena Pruszyńska, when asked in 1990 why she wanted to run a sex shop said:



Everything in Poland is returning to normal. We're to be a part of Europe. All the world has sex shops and we thought that something like that should appear in Poland too. (Bozenna Pruszyńska, Personal Communication: 1990)

Thus what we see is the justification of this in terms the socially inherited equation of pornography with freedom and Europe. In response to the question why she sold sex toys, pornography and guns together she replied:

it's just a coincidence. But we find this conjunction quite sensible. This shop is for selected clients. Not many people buy guns one or two clients a day. Weapons were to be the primary goods here. The idea for a sex shop came when the room was being refurbished and adopted for trade activity. We could do it legally and we thought it would be interesting for Polish people. That explains the conjunction - gun shop/sex shop. (Bozenna Pruszyńska, Personal Communication: 1990)

The conjunction is taken to be simple coincidence yet it recalls the socially inherited memory of the equation of violence with sex (see Chapter 5). The combination thus proved to be highly popular and successful, especially with the assistance of positive media coverage:

Its popularity has been very big - the press, radio and TV visited us often and they gave us a lot of publicity. ... There is now another sex shop in Lodz, similar to this one. They sell toys and guns, like we do. (Bozenna Pruszyńska, Personal Communication)

According to Pruszyńska she provides a positive service for both men and women. And, ultimately, for women 'shops like this one meet their ambitions; they make women more liberated.' (Bozenna Pruszyńska, Personal Communication: 1990).

### 7.11 Socially Inherited Memory: Illegalising women

Another mechanism of exclusion to women in Solidarity from 1980 onwards are the policies of Solidarity itself and gender biased laws passed by the successive post-communist governments since 1989. As we already know, the Gdansk accords included the extension of parental rights by establishing the principal of paid upbringing leave. This in effect reinforced the policies of the Polish United Worker's Party and resonated with the ideology of the Roman Catholic Church. Apart from this one stipulation, however, the accords contained nothing to ameliorate the working conditions for women. In its sixteen months of official existence at the beginning of the eighties women's issues were not raised. Sociologist Siemienka states:

The agreements did not contain any specific postulates to increase women's participation in political decisions or their say in running work enterprises. (Siemienka, 1986:29)

But it was not the case that gender issues were simply neglected after 1989. In forming Poland's new 'democracy' the new regime overtly attempted to legally limit women's freedom, recalling the nation's social memory of excluding woman in the political realm in order to justify its actions. This exclusive public (en) gendering of representation was thus not accidental but crucial to the reconstitution of the new ruling class after 1989. For example, reorganization of divorce procedures made divorce a lengthy and complicated process. In January 1990 the state subsidy to the Family Development Society was cut (Polish Feminist Association, 1990). This was the only family planning organization in Poland which received a state subsidy. Cuts to public spending sent crèche and nursery fees sky-high, with many women opting to leave work and care for their children



because childcare costs were greater than their weekly pay (Polish Feminist Association, 1990). The rightist Union for Real Politics argued that women should have limited access to education since they would be unlikely to use their qualifications. A member of parliament suggested that women should be disenfranchised. Jacek Debski publicly stated: 'the place of women is in the home, with her family. Without women in the home, there is no order in society.' (Debski in Lodz Feminist Association Collection 1989). He was publicly supported by Maciej Jankowski who stated: 'this society has no future because it produces too few children.' (Jankowski in Lodz Feminist Association Collection, 1989). On the cusp of Poland's moves to democracy Debski argued:

Of course in the present conditions in Poland to return women to the home is not possible. It will be possible in a liberal society which allows a man an hourly wage in order to maintain his whole family. (Debski, in Lodz Feminist Association Collection, 1989)

When Korwin-Mikke was questioned as to how single, divorced or widowed women should support themselves in Debski's ideal liberal society he replied:

And why are they alone? ... Because they are allowed to exist so, because of the protective system of society ... women are falsely alone, they choose to be alone, they are enabled by the system. This lonely phenomena appears in America. The more protection of society all the more divorces. (Korwin-Mikke, 1989)

The overall consequences of these socially inherited beliefs was the introduction of a number of legislative measures which run counter to those of European Union legislation and International Acts such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ratified by Poland in



1974), the International Declaration of Human Rights, The Declaration on Social Progress and Development, The UN Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Covenant, The Philadelphia Declaration and the European Social Charter. A study by The Institute For Labour and Social Affairs in Warsaw entitled 'State Policy on Women, Family and Children. Poland Vs Europe' showed that there was the tendency in Polish law since 1989 was towards the territorialization and objectification of women and the infringement of the principal of equal rights for men and women and equal duties in marriage and family life. The gender biased effect of laws does not necessarily result from statutes overtly relating to men or women's issues, but from the socially inherited androcentricity of legislation. The impact of privatization legislation, for example, has been to reduce social benefits and state-funded childcare contrary to European Union Standards. (Voice of Warsaw, August 21, 1994: S1-3).

The key area of women's objectification and territorialization concerns Poland's Abortion legislation. With this the efforts by the new regime to restrict women's public representation were articulated through attempts to establish a restrictive anti-abortion Law. It was through this that the debate concerning the differences of women and men and the restrictions to public space that should be accorded women became manifest. In the early 1970s the Roman Catholic Church had made efforts to criminalize abortion: By 1988 anti-abortion legislation was seen as part of the necessary process of 'Destalinisation' (Uminska, Plakwicz, Odrowaz-Pieniazek, Siwek, Fiszler, 1994: 199-200) with the Roman Catholic Church organising public Pro-Life exhibitions in major Polish cities (Personal Diary,

1988-9)<sup>6</sup>. The then illegal Polish Feminist Association publicly called for tolerance in the women's magazine Kobieta i Zycie in December 1988 and organised its first (illegal) anti-criminalization protests. In Solidarity the male dominated executive of Solidarity sought overtly to exclude women's representation from public debate over abortion. At the meeting of the Solidarity Congress in 1989 it was decided to carry a motion about the protection of the fetus. Activist, Krystyna Stachowiak, said:

I realized that it would limit women's freedom in the future and women would be the victims. There were only ten percent who were women at the Congress and they were men who decided to carry that motion. I don't think a trade union should deal with such things at all, but if it does why should men decide? (Krystyna Stachowiak, Personal Communication: 1990)

Stachowiak subsequently began a fight against the anti-abortion bill going through parliament which would make women who had terminations liable to three years imprisonment and the doctors who performed them liable for up to two years in prison. She was, however, prevented by Solidarity from carrying out necessary research with working women to establish their views on abortion and the forthcoming bill. She said:

I wasn't allowed to distribute the questionnaire because it contained the question: have you ever had an abortion? If so why? The men from the regional commission in Poznan were strongly against it. (Krystyna Stachowiak, Personal Communication: 1990)

But Stachowiak was determined and in 1990 distributed through alternative networks the questionnaire,

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<sup>6</sup> 'In the main Church in the Rynek, there is an anti-abortion exhibition. Displays of the unborn fetus, of aborted babies, of pictures of couples lovingly holding hands. And all against a backdrop of glittering gold and rich sculptures and paintings, the wealth and might of the Vatican' (Personal Diary, 1988: Dec 29)



despite Solidarity's continued resistance. Such overt resistance to women's participation in the democratic process was also voiced by the Chamber of Physicians. Watson (1993) in 'The Rise of Masculinism in Eastern Europe' New Left Review argues that the Chamber believed that the participation of women in the abortion debate was highly undesirable:

One of its representatives equated the possibility of their participation to asking thieves to have a say as to whether they should be punished for stealing (Watson in Tsagarousianou, 1994: 12)

The original anti-abortion bill put forward in February 1989 was drawn-up by a group of male experts on behalf of the Catholic Episcopate and presented by the Roman Catholic Union (Polish Feminist Association, 1990). The bill underwent a number of alterations before being reintroduced in January 1990. The bill was shelved because of the presidential elections. The Polish Chamber of Physicians then adopted a Code of Ethics in 1991 stating that doctors should only carry out abortions if the pregnancy was life-threatening to the mother or if the pregnancy was the result of rape (Fuszara, 1993: 249). As Rosa Tsagarousianou notes (1994: 12) between 1991-3 there was a contradiction between the Medical Code and the Law of 1956 which still permitted abortion. In January 1993, however, a law was passed which permitted abortion only when pregnancy threatened the health or life of the woman, or, if the pregnancy resulted from a crime, such as incest or rape. The Sejm then introduced an amendment to the law which was passed in June 1994 which would allow women to have abortions due to difficult living conditions or 'difficult personal situations'. The Senate also passed the amendment in a 40-36 vote one month later. But the President, Lech Walesa, vetoed the amendment a month later, stating:



Human life is the highest good protected by law. An attempt at human life may only be justified by a state of higher necessity. No economic premises can legalise an attempt at human life, and especially not the personal conditions of a woman which cannot be objectively verified. (Walesa quoted in 'Abortion Yes, Walesa No', Warsaw Voice 1994: 3)

The Sejm then had the option to override the President's veto with a two-third majority. In a vote on September 2, 1994, the Sejm failed to overturn the veto. The law remained highly restrictive, allowing abortion to be performed in public hospitals only if her life was endangered, the fetus was seriously deformed, or the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest. Thus, one man, just as the socially inherited grammar of the Polish language commands, effectively outweighed the views of 16 million women and girls who in public opinion surveys in Voice of Warsaw (September 11, 1994:5) were shown to be in favour of a law which permits abortion in private clinics if the woman is in a difficult life or personal situation. A top medical practitioner, whilst agreeing that abortion was not ultimately good for women's health, stated:

I am absolutely against the new anti-abortion bill. It is a massive regression and if it is passed then women are no longer free. Women should have the freedom to decide and women should be treated like human beings. If this law is passed women will stop being human beings. This law should be discussed by women. Women should decide. (Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Personal Communication: 1990)

Roza Tsagarousianou argues that this struggle over reproductive rights has been a common feature of post-communist Eastern and Central Europe societies and amounts to the 'nationalisation of female bodies' (1994:2). Laws which criminalize the termination of a pregnancy effectively give the state rights over

women's bodies which they do not have over men's bodies. The woman who chooses not to continue with a pregnancy is rejecting the nationalization of her body; rejecting the penetration of the law; but, is also by definition unpatriotic, unchristian, a traitor and a criminal.

These examples indicate that the policies of Solidarity and its first 'post-Communist' government actively worked against women or ignored gender all together, thereby continuing the exclusion of women from the public sphere. The one right accorded people which could, perhaps, have corrected public gender bias - paid up bringing leave - essentially pushed women back into the home, since the wage gap between men and women was left untackled by Solidarity: for a man to take paid upbringing leave this would result in greater financial hardship for families. Consequently, the percentage of men taking leave was minimal.

Further, not only did Solidarity seek to silence women's voice on abortion, they also attempted to prevent women establishing an organisation for women within Solidarity itself. The Executive and Congress were determined to resist women's efforts to establish a National Women's Unit after 1989 said Malgorzata Taraszewic. She had worked for the underground group, Freedom and Peace, in the 1980s and later became the head of the Women's Unit in Gdansk. She, with other women activists, nevertheless, put out publicity to establish the women's section and came up against resistance on the part of Solidarity:

Many people said, 'we don't want another League of Women. And, Communism is finished, so why should we have a women's organization?'  
(Margorzata Taraszewicz, Personal Communication)



As in previous eras, though, the attempt to exclude women did not go unchallenged. Ironically, it seems that it was partly the struggle over women's reproductive rights which spurred women's own political organizations into action in the public sphere.

#### 7.12 Socially Inherited Memory: Including Women

As we have already seen, women's organizations have a long history in Poland. The Communist regime set up its own League of Women which continued the pre-World War Two Middle class aims of the National Organization of Women and working class women also developed their own spontaneous forms of protest, even before the advent of Solidarity (see Chapter Four). Women in the eighties retained their tradition of spontaneous street rebellion. In December 1988 inflation was rife and particular goods were scarce. Women in a meat queue had stood for three hours waiting for a delivery. When the van finally arrived, the women were so enraged that a group surrounded the driver whilst others entered the van and then distributed the meat free to all the waiting women. In addition, those women imprisoned for political reasons under the previous regime formed strong networks of their own, according to ex-prisoner and Minister for Health, Krystyna Sienkiewicz (Personal Communication: 1990). These networks sometimes resulted in the production of re-presentations which challenged the usual stereotypes of Mother Poland. One underground stamp, for example, produced by women in Goldap Women's internment camp in the mid-1980s uses the image of the witch, Baba Yaga, but in a new form. The witch, whose power to reshape the universe threatened the established order of the Roman Catholic Church



throughout Europe<sup>7</sup>, is depicted as flying over a forest and the words poczta (post) and Goldap (the name of the camp). Effectively, a re-presentation was created of a free-flying woman beyond the nation (forest) traditional communication (post) and beyond state imprisonment (Goldap). (Reading, 1992:194).

The overt resistance by the all-male executive of Solidarity to gender equality in the 1980s pushed a number of key Solidarity women activists to seek special representation. The efforts of Malgorzata Taraszewicz resulted in a week long seminar at the end of January 1989. The seminar was funded from abroad after the women appealed for help by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The seminar examined the mechanisms working against women's equality and identified the double burden, followed by the pay gap and discrimination at work. The seminar outlined a number of resolutions which it presented to Solidarity. These included flexible working hours and part-time work for women; the provision of more day-care centers, equal domestic responsibilities, equal pay, a commitment to training for women returning to paid work and the establishment of the right to parental leave for both men and women to care for sick children. The seminar also established within Solidarity a Women's Commission with the main aim of promoting women's representation in the union.

The Women's Commission was interesting in the way they themselves re-deployed aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory concerning feminism to ensure eventual recognition by Solidarity. Although in reality both the Women's League and the Solidarity

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<sup>7</sup> Witchcraft was consistently opposed by the Roman Catholic Church and between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries 9 million people, mostly women suspected of witchcraft, were tortured and executed with the approval of the Church (see Warren, 1980:489-90).

Unit did in fact co-operate (see Chapter 6) the Solidarity women argued publicly that their concern with women's rights was in no way a social legacy of the Women's League, or of the previous regime. Instead, they argued that their concern stemmed from trying to win back the disinherited memory of Europe, the West and that which was 'modern':

Poland is looking to the future. It is trying to imitate Europe. This is also in terms of the women's section: the women's section is to show that we are European. (Malgorzata Taraszewicz, Personal Communication: 1990).

In this respect the women returned to the story of political right, where the women of Poland during the Enlightenment had been said to imitate the women of France (see chapter 3) and turned it round to use it in that historical moment to their advantage. Women's representation in the public sphere, in the form of the Women's Unit, was thus made possible but through the denial of its own inheritance of a long-standing feminist tradition in Poland itself that goes back to the Enlightenment at least. Only by equating itself with the West, by representing itself as a Western import during the peak of the transition in 1990 could it be acceptable within Solidarity. At the same time this was given actual material weight by the financial and personnel support provided by unions from the West. Taraszewicz said that initial funds for the Commission, as well as trainers and training materials were provided by a number of Western sources (Malgorzata Taraszewicz, Personal Communication: 1990). In this respect, therefore, the fall of the Berlin Wall, did not simply provide for the resurgence of nationalist ideologies and the reconstitution of the patriarchal ruling class but resulted in particular contradictions that allowed for new possibilities for working class women's political



representation. In real terms this meant the development by the Unit of four key areas to combat gender biased mechanisms: research, consciousness-raising, legislative equity, economic parity. More specifically, the Unit began a research project to find out the numbers of women in Solidarity and the positions they held; further, a questionnaire was distributed on a national basis to establish the opinions of women on abortion. (Taraszewicz, Personal Communication: 1990). In terms of consciousness-raising the Unit put its emphasis on training for women to become chairpersons, to learn how to make reports of sessions and working groups in Solidarity so that they could work through the whole process of organizing meetings and setting up seminars (Taraszewicz, personal communication: 1990). The Unit took on the legislative battle concerning abortion and its experience of that battle indicates the attempts by men in power to block women's attempts at representation. Taraszewicz stated that the Unit demanded a hearing with the Senate in 1990 concerning abortion legislation. The chairman of the Senate meeting criticized the Unit for being out of line with the Solidarity executive. After that the government became increasingly secretive about its proposals for abortion legislation. The Unit was, however, given verbal assurances that it would be informed of any steps that the government wished to take to limit women's right to abortion. But the Senate did not invite representatives from the Unit again and, consequently, the information that the Unit was to receive all came via the media. (Taraszewicz, personal communication: 1990). This, is a key example of the ongoing struggle for equal representation and the means used to prevent it.

Another strategy introduced by the Women's Unit was to



try and shift economic mechanisms of exclusion by using the Canadian idea of mobilizing women to start up their own business enterprises, with tax incentives in favour of women establishing their own nurseries, kindergartens and household equipment factories. A scheme was established to provide training and financial credit to start up such businesses. And a number of small regional units were set up, such as one in Poznan headed by Krystyna Stachowiak whose main aim was for Poland 'to be a fully democratic country' ( Krystyna Stachowiak, Personal Communication: 1990).

At the same time that the women within Solidarity during the 1980s had begun to forge their own representative public spaces, women in intellectual circles began to establish new spaces too. The impetus for this came, initially, from the Department of Sociology at the University of Warsaw, where Renata Siemienka offered an option in feminist studies. This inspired a group of women at the University in the 1980s, who were disillusioned with both the sexism of Solidarity and the gender bias of University courses. The women set up separate lectures and seminars addressing women's issues and delivered leaflets round factories and schools (Beata Ficzer, Personal Communication: 1990). However, after Martial Law, the group, as with every other opposition group, went underground. It continued with its work but on a cultural rather than overtly political level. The women organized screenings of films made by women; compiled a bibliography of feminist texts from the West; translated key Western feminist texts; held seminars on Polish feminist history. They also wrote editorial for the underground presses. In such articles, which addressed Solidarity supporters, the women had to tread a tightrope between Solidarity and

the regime. To challenge the mechanisms of exclusion within the discourses of both was a hard task. Yet writers did this by using strategies of humour and irony to undermine the socially inherited memory of women's traditional role deployed by Solidarity and the regime, as the following extract from 'What Are Polish Women Fighting For?' illustrates:

As for motherhood - Polish women can be proud that they perform the role traditionally assigned to men since pre-historic times - obtaining meat. We all know that it is women who hunt down the scraps and fight in the queues for a piece of rationed ham (Gazeta, 1987).

By 1990, in response to the attempts by the new regime to rescind women's public rights further, about 30 small groups of women had begun to operate in different towns and cities. These included the Polish Feminist Association in Warsaw, Cracow and Lodz; the Movement for Protecting Women's Rights in Bydgoszcz; Women's Honour in Torun and the Women's Clubs of Poznan. With sponsorship by the British Council I was involved in a small way in helping to establish some of these groups in 1991. A British Company, Strip Search Theatre, toured with my second play *Want* which was based on the lives of three Polish women. The play provided an initial focal point for new women's spaces and we also made of a series of videos which were subsequently shown at a number of British and Polish Universities. The play itself showed in dramatic form the mechanisms working against women entering on an equal basis the public sphere in Poland, including the endemic sexism of male Solidarity workers. Each show was then followed with a discussion, and very often the establishment of a new group.

The Women's Unit itself in 1991 began to tackle the question of media and gender representation. They set up a magazine and a small training scheme to teach



women how to use the less media. As Taraszewicz said: 'setting up a magazine and teaching women how to use the mass media is so important. It's giving women the tools to express what they think.' (Taraszewicz, personal communication).

### 7.15 Concluding Remarks

Undoubtedly, the changes since 1989 have allowed for discussion of issues once suppressed by the former regime. As one peasant farmer's daughter said:

Solidarity gained freedom for people. Now you can say what you want to about politics and other things. People can learn about many historical events that were kept silent and were not taught in school. (Danuta Jakubczak, Personal Communication: 1990).

Yet the 'politics and other things' that may be discussed are circumscribed by a gender bias that (en) genders public discourse and representation. Again and again the women I spoke with confirmed their disappointment with the possibilities for their voice to be heard under Poland's post-Communist regime. The store manager of one of Poland's largest department stores said simply 'the new government hasn't brought any changes for women or at work' (Stanislava Dworzynska, Personal Communication: 1990). Poland's then Minister for Health reiterated this:

Under communism there were - there still are - many problems for women. Nothing much has changed (Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, Personal Communication: 1990)

Despite the efforts by the women's groups in Poland to represent women through new spaces their impact seems limited (Taraszewicz, Personal Communication: 1990). There certainly were contradictions particularly at the peak of the transition in 1989 which allowed for



such resistance, but what we see on the whole is that as the 1980s progressed both the Polish United Workers Party and Solidarity, along with the Church, each sought to legitimize their power by recalling aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory that excluded women from the public sphere. This may be more clearly illustrated through a specific analysis of the processes of transition and socially inherited memory within one medium, television, over which debates concerning 'the public' and representation have been most concentrated (Goban-Klas, 1994: 244). This is the subject of the penultimate chapter.

## Chapter 8: Socially Inherited Memory and Polish Television 1980-1994

‘You can’t have a revolution that is velvet’  
(Milan Bauman, Former Director of The  
International Organisation for Radio and  
Television - OIRT, Personal Communication, 1992)

### 8.1 Introduction

So far I have examined the broader mechanisms of exclusion to women’s equal representation in Poland’s public sphere, through various mediated aspects, such as print media and literature, and attempted to explain the continuity and contradictions of this process in terms of the concept of socially inherited memory. However, one of the most fought over media in Eastern Europe during the transitions in the 1980s and 1990s, as studies on Hungary (Hankiss, 1994) Poland (Jakubowicz, 1992) and the former Czechoslovakia (Smid; 1992) have since shown, was that of broadcasting, and television in particular. Television not only provides us with a useful microcosm of the wider (en) gendering processes of society, as Mary Ellen Boyle (1993: 1) points out, but was also a key contested area of public representation in the transitions in Eastern Europe from state capitalism to capitalism (Corcoran and Preston, 1995: 8; Boyle, 1994: 183-216 ). In some cases, as in Moscow 1993, state television proved to be the chief prize between the rulers and ruled for which some were even prepared to kill (Reading, 1995: 176). Although there was no such violence in Poland, it is television, rather than literature or the press, which has been most debated in relation to what is meant by ‘public’ (re)presentation since 1989; it is thus the medium which best illustrates the problems of socially inherited memory in (en) gendering the public sphere.

In this penultimate Chapter I bring to bear the theoretical and empirical evidence developed thus far on socially inherited memory and the public sphere on the (en) gendered changes which occurred in television in the 1980s and early 1990s. I begin by arguing that the impetus in Poland was towards public service television. I then look in more detail at attempts since 1980 to broaden the basis of public representation within Polish television. Next I examine the place of women in Polish Television and (en)gendering mechanisms which, despite these efforts, were, nevertheless, reproduced structurally and ideologically, and reinforced, as in wider society, through new policies informed by Poland's socially inherited memory of the development of exclusive political right. Finally I make some brief comparisons with other countries in Eastern Europe.

## 8.2 Polish Television and Democracy

The struggles over television control in the societies of Eastern Europe have focused mainly on the attempts to change the television systems from ones under state control to public service systems. There was an underlying assumption that a shift from state control to public service television would equate with a shift from totalitarian rule to democracy. The model most often used to describe the 'totalitarian' media systems of Eastern Europe before 1989 is that of Siebert's Four Theories of the Press (1963). In this the media system of the former Soviet Union was explained in terms of a propagandist model in which the press acted as a transmission belt for the ideas of the Communist Party. The Soviet press was described as a biased and didactic proselytizing organ of the state (Siebert et al, 1963: 137). As Elena Androunas put it:



This system served the interests not of the audience, not of the society as a whole, but of the party-government elite. With its total control over the country, it alone determined the media's well-being and prosperity. The major function of the media system has always been promotion of ideological uniformity as dictated by official doctrine. (Androunas, 1993: 108)

However, as Colin Sparks and I point out (1994a:250), this may have been a useful description of the situation in the Soviet Union<sup>1</sup>, but actually bears little resemblance to reality in post World War Two Central and Eastern Europe. Polish writer, Karol Jakubowicz, suggests that in Poland the breakdown of the Stalinist model of communication began virtually from the moment of the Polish People's Republic's inception. After 1971, the departure from the Stalinist model rapidly increased, with the implementation of Martial Law as a temporary and short term hiccup in this more general process of decay (Jakubowicz, 1992a).<sup>2</sup> Colin Sparks and I identify three areas of departure from the Stalinist model of the press in Polish Television from the 1980 onwards: types of programmes shown; advertising and openness to foreign signals (Sparks and Reading, 1994: 250). Jakubowicz states that by 1986 42.8 percent of feature films and 47.1 percent of series shown on Polish Television were imported from the West (Jakubowicz, 1989:154). The amount of advertising carried in the 1980s was tiny at just 2 per cent (Polskie Radio i Telewizja Foreign Relations Department, 1987:20) compared with Western Europe, but, nevertheless

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<sup>1</sup> Even within the Soviet Union there were marked differences between different republics. In Lithuania, for example, recent research notes that after 1956 broadcasting became more lively and diversified: 'stilted and submissive speaking styles were replaced by normal everyday human discourse. Reports were no longer read out from previously prepared scripts.' (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 1993: 205).

<sup>2</sup> Sociologists Kovats and Tolgeysi present a similar argument for the breakdown of the Soviet media system in Hungary. They maintain that the system began to decay after the uprising of 1956 and that this process accelerated after economic reforms implemented in 1968 (Kovats and Tolgeysi, 1990)

'signified a very small but real adjustment of broadcasting away from political and cultural ends towards those dictated by its economic position' (Sparks and Reading, 1994a: 251). The geographical location of Poland meant less access to Western terrestrial signals in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries, but, evidence suggests that there was some broadcasting plurality provided by access to video recorders and satellite from 1987 onwards (Sparks and Reading, 1994a: 252).

At the same time, however, Polish Television remained under the control of the Polish United Workers Party via the Radio and Television Committee under the Broadcasting Act of 1960 (Sabbat-Swidlicka, 1994: 40). Since the 1970s, according to Goban-Klas, television was placed under the direct rule of the Department of Press, Radio and Television (Goban-Klas, 1994:149). This was renewed by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers in December 23, 1987, which stated that the Committee was a central government office with the exclusive right to produce radio and television programmes (Resolution of the Council of Ministers, No. 202\87).

Thus the impetus amongst those in the opposition centred on the attempt to loosen these direct state controls and develop a television system based on the principles of public service (Reading, 1994: 176-77). In one of its first drafts for a new broadcasting law in 1980 Solidarity stressed that the move towards public service television would be a crucial part of the process of democratization (Jakubowicz, 1990: 15). Even within the government itself there were those who sought to reform Polish Television in the direction of a Western public service model. In 1985 the government appointed a Commission to investigate ways in which



television could be made more like the BBC (Goban-Klas, Personal Communication: 1992).

Since 1989, the key area of conflict arising over the drafting of new broadcast laws in Eastern Europe, including Poland, concerned the balance between a public service model for television and commercial imperatives (Reading, 1994:177). The Polish Broadcasting Act of 1992 embodies the principles of public service television in a manner accepted by scholars such as Paddy Scannell in that it covers most of the Poland's national territory and provides a mixed menu of programmes (1992:318).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the Polish Parliament accepted the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 22 April 1991 to establish broadcasting on the principles of plurality, independence and balanced content (Druck, 1991: 112). The resolution stated that the broadcasting systems of countries should not be left to market forces. This suggests that there was a strong commitment to public service broadcasting in Poland. Even where there was not direct support for public service broadcasting but calls for a shift to commercial television, as by writers such as Dougan, Dennis and Heuvel soon after 1989, there was, nevertheless, the assumption that the emergence of broadcasting free from government control would articulate the plurality of voices necessary for the functioning of democracy and, thereby, extend the public sphere (Dougan, 1990; Dennis and Heuvel, 1990).

However, the evidence suggests a different picture in terms of gender representation. The gender bias in Poland's socially inherited memory (en) gendering the public sphere prior to 1989 was reproduced in

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<sup>3</sup> Scannell defines public service broadcasting as that which is capable of covering most of a national territory and that which provides a mixed menu of programming (1992:318)



television. Furthermore, it seems that this gender bias continued after 1989 even with the shift from state run to public service television along with limited commercial organisations.

### 8.3 Socially Inherited Memory and Broadcast Space Before 1989

The mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion found in wider Polish society as described by social scientists such as Jancar (1978), Wolczik (1985) and Heitlinger (1979) were, before the changes of 1989, equally endemic in broadcast space. As in North America and Western Europe, the numbers of women entering the media as journalists did actually increase from 1960 onwards: 25 percent of journalists were female in 1960; 32 percent of journalists were female in 1970; and by 1980 35 percent of journalists were female (Goban-Klas, 1985: 27). According to Goban-Klas this increase was, proportionately, greater in Polish Television and Radio during this period (Goban-Klas, 1985:27). There tended to be more women journalists working in foreign news bureaux (27 percent); even more on radio programmes for abroad (30 percent) and in documentaries (50 percent) (Institute of journalists, 1976:187). As in the USSR the 1970s also saw a general rise in the number of women students studying journalism.

Yet, despite this, empirical research shows, firstly, that the number of women at management level in television and other media was small (Goban-Klas, 1985:27) and, secondly, that 'to get promotion they [women] must always or in general behave like men' (1985:27). Goban-Klas concluded from his research in the 1980s that there were several factors working

against the equal participation of women in Polish Radio and Television. The first was that as women came to represent 50 per cent of those working in the media generally, concerns about gender bias were not seen as important. Secondly, the lack of promotion of women within television structures was attributed to inherent biological differences between men and women with women viewed stereotypically as responsible for mothering and the home. Goban-Klas argued that the situation could only be improved by including women in management structures (1985: 28). His research is supported by three television studies by Maciej Mrozowski. Mrozowski in his first study 'Status of Women in Television' found that the gender bias of wider Polish society was replicated in television structures, both vertically and horizontally (Mrozowski, 1985). A second study published in 1989 on men and women in Polish Television indicated the continuance of such patterns. His most recent study published in 1991 both extends and confirms the picture of the occupational status of men and women in Polish Television in the 1980s. In this study, Mrozowski conducted a small scale survey in 1988 of 100 individuals drawn from the staff of Polish Television to see how their perceptions of their occupational status conformed to gender stereotypes. Mrozowski's work confirmed that as in wider society women were under represented at management levels in Polish Television. They were over represented in cultural, education and children's programmes, whilst they were under represented in economic, business and technical spheres. Women as in wider society earned less than men for the same work; promotional prospects were better for men than for women. Respondents perceived clear differences between the psyches of men and women which they said led to predispositions for different programme types and hence assignments based



on sex. What we see is the operation of the social inheritance in television of women's and men's places in society. This was then reinforced by the institutional context of the television workplace: Its organization, promotional mechanisms, pay scales, vocational training and general climate of relations amongst television workers were set up in a way which benefited men over women. Women, argued Mrozowski, had to compete 'on men's terms' or not at all (Mrozowski, 1991:88-110). This created a situation of role dissonance between competing on men's terms in the public sphere and the demands of women's socially inherited roles within the Polish family. Mrozowski also saw, as in other areas of Polish society, that the social memory of Mother Poland acted to legitimize the exclusion of women (Mrozowski, 1991:104). Further, he argued that television as a profession is different from other professions in terms of its impact on personal time and family life and respondents agreed that this further worked against women (Mrozowski, 1991:103). Finally, in Mrozowski's study men considered that women's promotional prospects were worse because of their domestic obligations and the naturally 'weaker physical and psychological stamina of women' (Mrozowski, 1991:100). But, women themselves stated that the primary exclusionary mechanism working against them was not their socially inherited role but the male political cadres in management (*polityka kadrowa kierownictwa*) who favoured men (Mrozowski, 1991:99). What this suggests is that for men in the television workplace the socially inherited memory of woman's domestic role is used by them to justify their own dominance; women in contrast resisted this image of themselves and used their own observations of the machinations of state capitalism in their present situation to explain their oppression. This is also



supported by a study in the 1980s which revealed that although Polish State Television was dominated by male ethics, women workers did agitate for improvements in their status in terms of equal pay and promotion in accordance with the law. It was not lack of resistance to their social inheritance but overt pressure on the part of the union and management which resulted in the failure of their efforts (Witkowska, 1990: 10). Further, when women instituted a campaign to establish child care facilities within the television organization; this again was not given full support by the Union (Witkowska, 1990:10).

The structural bias of Polish Television also reproduced bias in the gender content of television programming (Mrozowski, 1991: 99). This is supported by a content analysis of television in the early 1980s which showed that whilst the employment of women was taken for granted in media images, this was combined with an ideal of women's family duties often shown as more important than their work (Siemienska, 1985: 307).

#### 8.4 Socially Inherited Memory Within Broadcast Space After 1989

Since 1989 most evidence suggests that the representation of women in broadcast structures has changed little. The Head of Polish Television's Channel 1, Leszek Wasiuta, said: 'The structure is the same as under Communism because it's a very good structure that works equally well under Communism or capitalism' (Personal Communication, 1992). The question is, though, good for whom? The Director of Coopers and Lybrand, David Thomas, in Warsaw stated that Polish Television since 1989 functioned like a secretive male club and 'as one man is pushed out another moves in' (Personal Communication, 1992).

Between 1989 to 1992 there were five different Director Generals. All were men (Maciej Strzembosz, Personal Communication, 1992). At the media sub-table, which was part of the Round Table talks between the Communist Party, Solidarity and the Roman Catholic Church in 1989 no women were included (Goban-Klas 1992: Personal Communication). Women have been consistently denied representation on the new Broadcasting Council created since 1992. As Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, leader of the cross-Party Democratic Union of Women and then editor of Women and Life magazine said in 1990:

There is discrimination against women. Statistics clearly show it. About 50 percent of working people are women but only 4 percent hold positions as managers or higher (Reading, 1992:141).

In 1992 out of a total of 3,894 Polish Radio and Television workers in Warsaw there were 2182 men and 1712 women. The number of women graduates were 459 and the number of male graduates were 464 (Andrzej Wojnach, Head of Staff Training, Polish Television, Personal Communication, 1992). Thus although there were fewer women employed overall, proportionately, there were more women graduates employed in relation to graduate men. Despite this, however, in the same year, Polish Television had only 2 women directing programme departments, in comparison with ten men directing programme departments. Further, the gender ghettoization of wider society was also evident within Polish Television: Women headed departments that were extensions of women's socially inherited role - the children and education departments (Polish Television Yearbook, 1992). Danuta Celeyska-Bejger, Head of Programming for Channel One, said that although 1989 marked a watershed in terms of general attitudes,



programming and increasing commercialism, the one constant that remained was gender bias. Of the six new key executive appointments made in January 1991 only one was a woman, Barbara Pietkiewicz (derived from Polish television and radio personnel department information, 1994). In 1992 the head of programming for Channel 1 was male, the head of Channel 2 was male, the head of advertising was male, the head of finance was male, the head of training was male, the head of technical facilities was male, the Director of the Polish Television Theater was male, the Director of the film production department was male, the head of the Television Information Agency was male. One key department, International Relations, was headed by a woman, Marta Suchodolska (Marta Suchodolska, Personal Communication: 1992). She was replaced by a man in 1993 when the department was restructured. The head of personnel was also a woman.

By 1994, there were still very few women in positions of power in the organization. There was 1 woman Director of Live Production Staff, 1 woman responsible for the Archives; one Deputy Controller of Channel 1; 1 Deputy Controller responsible for artistic production in Channel 2. All the 9 regional Television Director Generals were men in October 1992 (Tomasz Trabic, Editor, Media Section Nowe Europe, 1992: Personal Communication). This exclusion was then reproduced at the highest board levels: A report for the Austrian government stated that the Parliamentary Committee of Culture and Media of the Mazowiecki government in 1990 comprised the Editor-in-Chief of *Polityka*, the Editor-in-Chief of the Catholic periodical, *Gosc Niedzielny*; a Professor of Law, and a legal representative from the Polish Journalist's Association. None of these were women and, yet, one of their considerations was to protect the rights and



interests of print and broadcasting employees (Giorgi and Pohoryles, 1994: 105). Of the 9 strong Radio and Television Council appointed in 1993 all were men.

Thus a broad headcount reveals that the sexual discrimination described by Mrozowski in his studies in the 1980s continued to be reproduced in the Polish Television system in the 1990s. Neither was it the case that attempts were made to counteract this with education or training. The training department in Polish Television after 1989 sought to deploy Western training methods for programme makers and journalists. Trainers such as Rick Thompson from the BBC in Wales and others from London were brought in to provide training both at the centre in Warsaw and in the regions. None of this training involved training in equal opportunities for key personnel (Andrzej Wojnach, Head of Training, Personal Communication, 1992). The new training booklets produced since 1989 which included information on ethics for journalists and international law did not include training in how to deal with gender bias. Similarly, an established course in Polish language for the media (Poradnik Jezkowy Dla Kazdego) includes nothing on verbal gender hygiene (Andrzej Wojnach, Head of Training, Personal Communication: 1992).

The mechanisms of exclusion thus continued to be reproduced after 1989, according to the Head of Czech Television, Ivo Mathe: 'the actual attitudes and mechanisms of Polish Television are exactly the same' (Ivo Mathe, Personal Communication 1992). Dobrochna Kedzierska-Trusuzynska, Vice-Chair of the Committee for Culture and Media in 1990, also described the situation in terms of the socially inherited memory of women's 'proper place' working against their promotion:

When the boss has a choice between a very good woman employee and three worse men, he will choose a man - because women take leave to care for children and on top of that, her place is in the kitchen (1990, Personal Communication).

Danuta Celeyska-Bejger, Head of Channel One, added that in her opinion, it is not simply that women were accidentally forgotten or excluded since 1989 but that certain values or attitudes concerning women or the socially inherited memory of a woman's place in the public sphere was actually used by men to justify the overt exclusion of women from key television positions (Celeyska-Bejger, Personal Communication: 1994). An example of this was the case of the woman newsreader, Malgorzata Szelewnicka, who had worked for ten years on prime time Polish television news. She was sacked in April, 1994, and moved to Polish Radio (Celeyska-Bejger, Personal Communication: 1994). Professor Walery Pisarek, Professor of the Institute for Media Research at the University of Krakow, who followed the case, stated that it was a clear case of sexual discrimination, since they would not have had the same objections if she was a man (Walery Pisarek, 1994: Personal Communication). The Director of News had sacked Szelewnicka for being 'too young, too beautiful and too stupid' (Teresa Sasinska-Klas, 1994: Personal Communication).

The Polish Television and TV Reform Commission which was established to report on proposed structural changes to the organization made no reference at all to female staff, despite the large proportion of female staff working at Polish Television (Witkowska, 1990:10). In 1990 the station had a beautician and a hairdresser, but still had no child care facilities for the children of its workers. Shift work and the unsocial hours of television production, combined with social cuts to state childcare provision after



1989 meant that women with children were hit particularly hard. As Witkowska put it:

Given the national childcare crisis with state creches closing down due to lack of funding and the special situation in television work, where hours are long and often irregular, establishing a crèche would seem to be the ideal solution (1990:10).

Further, after 1989 Polish Television experienced not only a continuation of party political interference but also interference on matters of sexuality and morality. At a conference to celebrate the 40th anniversary celebration of Polish Television in October 1992, the organization promoted the image that the new public service station would address issues relating to a broad spectrum of people including documentaries on pornography, prostitution and child sexual abuse (Polish Television Video, 40 Lat, 1992). However, the Vice-Director of Gdansk Television, Ryszard Grabowski, which contributes programmes to Central Polish Television, said that in reality journalists were very cautious about tackling subjects which might result in them being publicly accused of undermining the moral authority of the Church. Abortion, he said, was one issue which journalists felt very uneasy about representing publicly on television. Consequently, the 'television picture is a safe picture. We haven't even tried to make anything on such controversial topics. The shadow of the centre reaches us even here' (Ryszard Grabowski, 1992: Personal Communication). The Head of the Department of Radio and Television in the Ministry of Telecommunications, Marian Kislo, admitted in 1992 that whilst the government was still preparing the new Broadcast Bill which would allow for the establishment of commercial Radio and Television stations, that the only legally operating stations were essentially Church stations (Marian Kislo, Personal Communication,



1992). At that time there were already 20 Radio stations for the Roman Catholic Church, but only three other commercial Radio stations: Solidarnosci, Warszawa, and Radio Fun in Kracow with one local commercial TV station - Telewizja Echo (Ministrem Lacznosci, 1992) The then chairman of the Polish Journalist's Association, Maciej Ilowiecki, speaking at the Warsaw based European Centre for the Media, stated that the power of the Church over the media presented journalists with a major problem (Warsaw, 23 September, 1992). A member of the Polish Feminist Association in Warsaw, in response to the effects on broadcast space by the Church said: 'Catholic priests have always used their churches to preach against reproductive freedom. Now they have the mass media and are invited to take part in virtually all state events' (Plakwicz 1992:91).

This conservative moral climate which prevented discussion of key gender issues such as abortion was accompanied by a fear of returning to the days of prior restraint and the little 'Black Book' of censorship. Such fear of legal censorship was used to open the gates to pornographic material which exploited and objectified women and girls. Women's bodies and body parts:

are used to advertise virtually all kinds of goods from soap to building equipment ... porn films are distributed on video tapes ... the general trend implies that freedom means, among other things, free access to women's bodies. (Plakwicz, 1992:91).<sup>4</sup>

Underlying this, as we shall see, were legal sanctions which provided for gender-biased intervention in the form of priority provided for Catholic representation in broadcasting, as well as the 1992 Broadcast Law and

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<sup>4</sup> In Hungary, young women are able to make an average of two months wages for sexually explicit acts on video. The fastest growing industry in 1991 was the sex to business (Corrin, 1992: 67).

supplementary media laws which recalled the most exclusionary elements of Poland's socially inherited memory of the development of political right.

### 8.5 Socially Inherited Memory (En) Gendering Media Policy

The fulfilment of public communication needs were important to movements across Eastern Europe in the seventies and eighties: one of the central demands of opposition groups in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 was for a more open media. Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia demanded freedom for the dissident playwright Vaclav Havel; in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev took Glasnost an old Russian word meaning 'giving voice' to promote a new wave of communicative freedom. The degree to which at the policy and legal level this occurred in Poland, however, is questionable. Even more questionable is the degree to which this communicative freedom included women.

A number of commentators maintain that when Solidarity drafted its first media laws and policy directives during 1980-1 it stressed the concept of social control over the media (Jakubowicz, 1990:3; Galczynski, 1991). Indeed, the Final Resolution 'Thesis 32' adopted by the Solidarity Congress in 1981 stated: 'the media of social communication are social property and must serve the whole of society and operate under its control' (Cited by Galczynski, 1991: 27 ). In this original proposal all major parties, movements, political and social organizations were to have access to air time. One activist stated:

We believe that radio and television belongs to the people. We pay for it with our taxes. If the Party wanted to have control of them, they should use their dues of their 2.5 million members to build their own television system. This one belongs to be people. (Solidarity activist,



Polityka July 25, 1981: 15 cited by Galczynski, 1991:36))

Furthermore, the endorsement of the principal of social representation was articulated in broadcasting in the early drafts of a broadcasting law prepared by Solidarity. The drafts challenged the monopoly granted to Polish Radio and Television and the rights granted to the Committee for Radio and Television as a central administrative organ of the state (Law on Radio and Television, 1960: 2 December). For the governance of television some form of social representation was suggested. For example, the First Draft in 1980 provided for fifty percent of seats on the governing body of Radio and Television to be given over to representatives from political and social groups, artists' organizations and trades unions. The other fifty percent would be given over to representatives from television and radio. In the Second Draft Law, also in 1980, the governing body was to include in equal parts parliamentary delegates, broadcasting workers and representatives from civic associations such as women's groups and youth clubs. The Third Draft Law gave forty percent of seats on the governing body to broadcasting staff, thirty percent to parliamentary delegates and thirty percent to social organizations, including women's groups. Karol Jakubowicz argues that in these early drafts Solidarity 'sought to reclaim for the people the existing centralized and monopolistic broadcasting system' (1990: 13-14).

Such an initial commitment to social representation, which included some sense of the representational needs of women, was in keeping with the broad definitions of the right to communicate outlined in the MacBride report and adopted as 11 principles of the Belgrade Resolution by the 32nd General Conference



of Unesco in October 1980.<sup>5</sup> This included the principal of greater social access to and control of the means of communication (Ansah, 1992:53). It is also keeping with UN gender policy to which Poland was a signatory.

It is now well documented, however, that the initial impetus for empowering the citizens of Eastern Europe through social representation and media access enshrined in media policy was quickly dropped in favour of elite forms of control (Jakubowicz 1994; Splichal 1993; Sparks and Reading 1995). My own analysis of Solidarity news letters and documents shows that early on a split developed between how the grassroots of Solidarity and its leadership thought media freedom should be codified (Reading, 1994: 7-12). If we take that further we also see that within the genesis of elite control and thus exclusion inherited from the memory of political right was also the beginnings of gender exclusion in opposition discourse concerning the media.

The Solidarity leadership began to argue by the Autumn of 1980 that information output in the opposition media should be controlled by the Solidarity executive. The internal Union newsletter *Informator Wewnetrzny* (Internal Informant) in November 1980, for example, stated:

In matters of access to the central mass communications networks, the National Executive of Solidarity (NSZZ) represents most diligently the needs of the union's public information and publication needs. Union representatives confirm that NSZZ will make the best use of access to the press, radio and television, as well as publishing shares, in the interests of workers

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<sup>5</sup> Point 11 of the MacBride Report states that a key principal of communication needs should include: 'respect for the right of the community, of social and ethnic groups, as well as individuals to have access to information sources and actively participate in communication flows.' (Marques de Melo, 1992: 15)

and union members and with full respect to legal obligations. (My emphasis) (Informator Wewnetrzny, November, 1980: 15).

Like the exclusionary ethos developed in the public sphere in the interwar years the executive of Solidarity began to forget its original statement that all citizens should have the right to communicate. Instead, the National Executive Council of Solidarity was said to be capable of representing the interests of workers and union members. The problem with this was its in-built gender bias. Despite laws to the contrary, as Parts Two and Three have shown, under state capitalism men were workers in the public sphere, whilst women were workers in the public sphere but also unpaid domestic workers responsible for nurturance of household members and reproduction of the workforce (See also Einhorn, 1994; Funk and Mueller, 1993). Women therefore did not occupy in the same way as men the term worker. Therefore, even if, for the sake of argument, the Executive were able to represent and articulate the interests of male workers it would be unable to represent the interests of female workers in the same way. Similarly, as we already know, women union members in Solidarity were vertically and horizontally excluded (Siemianska, 1986). Such a media policy replicates the socially inherited memory of the marginality of women in the public sphere and in public debate.

By October 1981 an analysis of Solidarity documentation shows that the Gdansk leadership began to make public its change of direction in media policy (Reading, 1994: 7-12). The Executive expressed that the unrestricted model of social access originally hoped for by union members would be replaced by a model in which the media, including television, was to be controlled and articulated by the chiefs of the Union. Lech Walesa stated that although access to



airwaves could be given to some groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, different groups would find representation through the Executive since 'their essence has dutifully emerged from us' (Servis Informator - Biuro Informacji Prasowej KKP NSZZ Solidarnosc 10 October, 1981: 28). In effect what Solidarity did was to use the social memory of the media policy of the Polish United Worker's Party, which in law articulated itself as the vanguard of the people. Walesa added that social control of and access to television would not be practically feasible. Furthermore, he stated that although Solidarity should not support censorship he did envisage that certain restraints would be necessary in order to retain the political line of the Executive. He said that whilst some editors would be given the support of the Union others would be expelled (Servis Informator - Biuro Informacji Prasowej KKP NSZZ Solidarnosc 10 October, 1981: 28). In an interview for Solidarnosc in the Autumn of 1981 Lech Walesa said: 'This is not censorship but we are obliged to frame somethings' (Walesa, 1981: 14).

The advent of Martial Law on 13 December 1981 crushed Solidarity's attempts for communication freedom. The membership of Solidarity did not try to establish social control again over broadcast space. By the time of the Round Table Talks in 1989 virtually all concepts of social control over broadcasting had been lost. The tug of war between factions wanting social control and those wanting elite control witnessed in Hungary after 1988, for example, was not present in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In Hungary early drafts of the new Broadcast Law such as that of October 1991 included a radical provision along the lines of the German broadcast model for up to half of the supervisory board to be nominated from 13 spheres of interest (Hungarian Broadcast Draft Law, 1991, November: Articles 42-44). A later version suggested a system of rotation to achieve greater representation on the supervisory body to avoid it becoming too unwieldy. (Edit Papaczy, Deputy Minister for Justice, Hungarian Government, 1992: Personal



In the Draft Broadcasting Law of 14 December, 1990, the supervisory body for broadcasting was to consist of 11 members nominated and appointed by the president, subject to parliamentary approval (Draft Broadcasting Law, 14 December, 1990: Ch 2. Art 7.1 and 7.2). Two remnants of the philosophy of social representation remained. Representation of workers was to be provided by a union representative from broadcasting on the supervisory body (Ch.4.Art.9.3). Both public and private broadcasters were enjoined to provide programmes for special interest groups (Ch 5, Art. 18.8).

By 1991, however, even these remnants of the memory of social control had gone. Chapter 2, Article 8 of the 1991 draft law states that members on the regulatory body should suspend membership with outside bodies such as trades unions. In terms of content the draft law had become increasingly contradictory. Article 18 states that programmes of public broadcasters 'shall not propagate actions, attitudes or use contrary to the law, morality and public good'. Whilst Chapter 4, Article 20 enjoins broadcasters to: 'Facilitate participation by citizens and their organizations in public life by presenting diverse attitudes and views and exercising their rights to criticism and public control.'

The clause recalls the early tradition of greater gender balance in public life. However, it is somewhat contradicted by Chapter 4, Article 21: 'Public broadcasting stations shall enable political parties, National trades unions and employers organizations to present their views on the crucial problems of the country'. The sense here is that

representation in broadcast space should be given to political parties (which are gender exclusive) trades unions (which are gender biased) and employers organizations (which are gender exclusive). The socially inherited memory of framing political representation within the nation is then recalled, which excludes any views other than those expressed within the context of 'problems of the country'.

The draft laws drawn up after 1989 set the scene for the final broadcast law accepted by the Polish Parliament on 29 December 1992. This goes further in its endorsement of gender biased mechanisms of exclusion to the public sphere. It is also supported by the Post and Telecommunications Act of 1990 which, as we shall see, enshrined gender bias within the public (en)gendering of representation in broadcast space.

All notions of social control and access were erased in the 1992 Act. Thus the Broadcasting Council, the main supervisory body for broadcasting in Poland, consists of delegates appointed and chosen by Parliament. Since Parliament is, as we have already established, structurally gender biased, this excludes women.

In addition, there are three areas which provide a legal basis for gender biased control over the content of programmes. The first concerns the social inheritance of the privileged rights of the Roman Catholic Church. As we have seen, the role of the Catholic Church in the mass media greatly increased after the imposition of martial law in 1981 and during the 1980s it entered radio and television (Prevratil and Goban-Klas, 1993: 50). This was a crucial shift in media policy from one which was essentially inclusive



to one which was exclusive. In the 1992 Broadcast Act it became law that programmes should uphold Christian values:

Programme items shall respect the religious feelings of the audience, particularly the Christian system of values. (Article 18, paragraph 3).

In addition, Chapter IV, Article 21, paragraph 2 states that broadcasters must 'respect the Christian system of values'. This is problematic in terms of ethnicity and gender. Firstly, whilst the tradition in Poland of people's religious feelings are remembered, the non-religious, secular or atheist feelings of audiences are denied. The social privileging of Christian values excludes the non-Christian minority. Such discourse is based on socially inherited assumptions about what it means to be both Polish and European. As Charles Husband points out, our notion of what it means to be European and its development in the 1980s, which East European states have recalled during their periods of transition, is based on ideas about a 'common heritage' stemming from ancient Greece, Roman Law and Christendom (Husband 1995: 200). Yet no European state is, in terms of ethnicity or religion, homogeneous. In addition to its 12 000 remaining Jews, Poland has three quarters of a million people of German, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Slovak origin (Plakwicz, 1992: 76). Neither is compulsory adherence to the Christian system of values gender neutral. Christianity has traditionally represented women as either virgin or whore; women as inferior to men; mystery; the source of evil in the world; the cause of the fall from innocence; secondary and marginal to the work of Christ. In the Christian system of values public authority is male (GOD, the father). Reproduction\creation is both male and public. It is a system of values based on the



endorsement of incest <sup>7</sup> (see Warren, 1980: 97; Rich, 1983: 175). Furthermore, in Poland, Christianity essentially means Roman Catholic Christianity. As we have already seen (Chapter 7) this means that the key medium of the new 'democratic' public television must support the Vatican with its accompanying belief in the territorialization of not just women's minds but also their bodies through the abolition of abortion and contraception. It is thus not simply that there is a reluctance on the part of journalists to tackle issues which might go against the Church (see above) but that this is enshrined in law. This is reinforced by a number of other key laws.

The first of these is the Law on the Relations between the State and the Catholic Church of 17 May 1989. Article 48 of this act states that the Church has the right to broadcast on the airwaves. This was further strengthened by Article 88 of the 1990 Post and Telecommunications Act. This states:

- (1) The Church has the right to broadcast through the media the Holy Mass on Sundays and holidays and programmes, particularly on religious-moral, social and cultural issues.
- (2) The manner of exercising the rights of point one is governed by an agreement between the Polish Radio and television Committee for radio and television and the Secretariat of the Polish Episcopate Conference.
- (3) The Church has the right to install and operate radio-Communications equipment for broadcasting radio and television programs and to allocation of the necessary frequencies for this purpose.
- (4) The manner of exercising the rights of point one is governed by an agreement between the Minister of Post and Telecommunications and

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<sup>7</sup> A male God (the father) creates a man, Adam who creates a woman, Eve, who is effectively thus his daughter whom he then marries (Ward, 1984).

the Secretariat of the Polish Episcopate  
Conference.

No other organizations or institutions are provided with the right to broadcast or technical means of access to the airwaves in this statute.<sup>\*</sup> As Karol Jakubowicz points out: 'access by other parties to Polish Radio and Television has proved less easy than might be expected' (1992:91). The Church has its own weekly religious programmes and its own department staffed by the Jesuit Order (Jakubowicz, 1990b: 24-29). This growing influence over the public airwaves by the Church was reinforced by a new communication doctrine of the Roman Catholic Episcopate which aimed to 'embrace by its pastoral care media people' (Statement by the Roman Catholic Church, May, 1992 cited by Goban-Klas, 1993:9) through the establishment of Roman Catholic schools for journalists founded by a former Minister in Lech Walesa's cabinet (Goban-Klas, 1993: 14). The Broadcasting Council members since 1992 have not only been all men but also predominantly supportive of the Roman Catholic Church. Of the nine male members, the two chosen by the Senate and three chosen by the president were known supporters of right-wing Christian values (Warsaw Voice, 1993:4). Reports show that this body influenced decisions to remove television programmes against the Church. In 1993 a

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<sup>\*</sup> It should be noted, however, that the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Poland retains the 1952, Article 71, statement on citizens rights in connection with access to the media:

- (1) The Polish People's Republic of Poland shall guarantee its citizens freedom of speech of the press, of assembly and gatherings, of processions and demonstrations.
- (2) To put these freedoms into effect the working people and their organizations shall be given the use of printing shops, stocks of paper, public buildings and halls, means of communication, the radio and other necessary material means.

The 1992 Broadcast Act thus contradicts this. Theoretically, a range of social organizations and individuals, including women's groups could contest their lack of access and representation in broadcast space but by September 1993 no such protests had occurred.



television programme was banned because it did not pay enough respect to Christian values (Radio Free Europe/RL Report, No 16, 1993). Thus, 'democracy' in broadcast space since 1989 has been informed by the socially inherited memory of the rights of the Roman Catholic Church, which has in turn, been at the expense of equal gender representation in broadcast space.

The second key point of interference in programming concerns the social inheritance within media policies of national framing and the built-in gender bias of this. Giorgi and Pohoryles in their analysis of broadcast restructuring noted: 'the former ideology of Communism has been replaced with that of nationalism' (Giorgi and Pohoryles, 1994: 8). Other scholars such as Slavko Splichal also see the 'nationalization of the media' and 'nationalistic editorial policies' as warranting particular attention (Splichal, 1992: 171). Thus in the 1992 Broadcast Act enjoins commercial broadcasters to uphold national culture:

2. A license shall not be granted if the applicant's programming could:
  - (i) infringe on the National culture, public decorum, National Security and defense or violate state secrets.
 (Article 26, para 2, subsection 1)

The law states that the license may be withdrawn from commercial broadcasters who infringe the interests of National culture (Article 38). Consequently, the new commercial station, POLSAT, was awarded its license on the condition that it used 30 percent Polish programmes. At the core of this policy is the idea of media dissociation, the principal that it is desirable to halt the deleterious effects of the transnational market by enshrining the right of nations to some cultural autonomy. Yet, as Leslie Steeves points out,



it is important to ask, 'whose culture is being protected? To what extent are women, lower-class people, and minorities forgotten? (1989: 97). The concept of nationhood is in itself premised on the exclusivity, forgetting and lies of imagined communities (See Said, 1993). The socially inherited Polish 'national culture' tends to remember and recall an elite pale male culture which excludes women and ethnic minorities. This aspect of culture represents women as Mother Poland; the raped nation, the female Messiah (Reading, 1992; Einhorn, 1994). The emphasis in media policy on national quotas thus hides the internal inequalities of gender, race and class. As Steeves suggests: 'efforts to put quotas on imported films may well serve merely as a mask for greater profits to sectional local interests, no doubt controlled by upper class males' (1989:97). Because Poland's socially inherited memory of political right developed around the centrality of the nation this then reinforces the 'naturalness', the 'common sense' that national quotas should be included in media policy, but not gender quotas to (en)gender a sexually equal broadcast space. Thus the commercial company, POLSAT, was also awarded its license in 1994 because its capital was essentially Polish rather than foreign. The Chairman of the Broadcasting Committee for Culture and Media, Juliusz Braun, which put together the Broadcasting Law said it was 'a big plus that Polish capital was behind POLSAT.' (Personal communication, 1994). Why should Polish capital be privileged over foreign capital? Polish capital as well as Polish national culture is essentially elite pale male capital which excludes women and ethnic minorities. To back Polish capital simply perpetuates one male-dominated elite over another in the public sphere: it does nothing to (en)gender democracy.

The third area of media policy which enshrines gender bias is that of the family. The Polish Broadcasting Law of 1992 states:

Programme services of public radio and Television should:

- 7. serve the strengthening of the family,
  - 8. serve the combatting of social pathologies.
- (Article 21, paragraph 2, subsections 7 and 8)

Underlying this is the social memory of the centrality of the family as the centre of Polish culture, remembered from the 19th century. This was recalled by the state capitalist regime in terms of the socialist family and also by the opposition who called on the memory of the family as the realm of freedom and liberty in contrast to the restricted public realm dominated by the Stalinist state. The 'anti-politics' idea of this alternative 'civil society' was based, however, on a polity which was gender biased. Goven says for example:

Anti-politics endowed the family with a key political role in recognizing it as the major locus of autonomy from the state. As the home became the site of democratic strivings, the power distribution within the family and private life also left its mark on the practice of anti-politics: women were expected to provide where possible, the emotional and material support for men's building of civil society (1993: 225)

The family as we have already seen has been an established site of women's oppression in Poland. Women are over-burdened with the nurturing and reproducing responsibilities of the family. It has been the locus for male violence and the territorialization of women's bodies. Furthermore, the central role of the woman within the family has been represented as crucial to the public production of the nation in the 19th century and the public production of socialism in the later 20th century. Consequently, to enshrine in broadcast law that programme content



must serve to strengthen the family whilst combatting social pathologies constitutes an endorsement of the already established pattern of social gender bias, publicly and privately. The Law recalls the socially inherited dichotomy between the family (to be valued) and all 'social pathologies' outside it - for example the Kobieta Samotna and Baba Yaga - which are thus to be devalued and marginalised in public representation. No definitions of what constitutes either strengthening or the family are included; neither is the term social pathology defined. Such a clause provides the regulatory body, appointed by the male president and predominantly male parliament with a mechanism to ban programs on subjects which they deem threatens the established capitalist-patriarchal order, such as sexuality, single parents and abortion. The law seems a far cry from the first non-Communist Prime Minister's statement in 1989: 'The right of access to television and radio must be equal to all. Television and radio will be pluralistic in character' (Mazowiecki, Address to Sejm, 12. 10. 1989).

The Polish Broadcast Law of 1992 and related laws indicate that far from 1989 marking a revolutionary shift in terms of the (en)gendering of the public sphere it marked a realignment of the ruling class which rearticulated and legitimized its power through the socially inherited memory of exclusive political right. Solidarity activist Karol Modzelewski foresaw the situation as early as 1980:

The Union has created a king which rules over it. Around the King is a court, and power lies in his court and then a parliament. And since the King is no dummy, power resides in his court. (Modzelski, 1981: 293)

In the Polish case it seems that it is the King that rules.



## 8.6 Socially Inherited Memory in the Commercial Broadcast Sector

The picture of Polish Television in transition from a state run system to a public run system thus far, unlike previous chapters looking at mediated aspects of the public sphere, seems unrelentingly bleak. However, what of the development of the commercial sector? Will this, perhaps, provide new outlets for women's representation in the newly developing private television networks?

So far, it seems that the representation of women has not been improved by the development of commercial television in Poland. By 1992 six unregulated private television stations had been established using non unionized labour in the cities of Warsaw, Wroclaw, Poznan, Lublin, Szczecin, and Lodz (Tomasz Trabic, 1992: Personal Communication). The lack of union protection had serious consequences for all workers, and especially women. Women, already put in a weaker position in the labour market, found themselves often forced to take low paying jobs and in some cases give voluntary labour in the belief that there was the possibility of paid work in the future, once the stations were properly established. Basic rights such as nursery support, fully paid maternity leave, and paid child upbringing leave were ignored despite the fact that Lodz Pirate Television Station established for a short period in 1992, had substantial capital backing (Pirate TV Workers, Tele 24, Lodz, 1992: Personal Communication). The pirate stations were backed by Italian millionaire Nicola Grauzo (Chief of Nowe Telewize, Mirosław Chojecki, September, 1992). The new deregulated labour market which underlies this developing economic pattern, already familiar in the West, has a built in gender bias. Temporary and short term contracts under the guise of 'flexibility'

bend against workers generally and women in particular. Such contracts are particularly biased against women of child-bearing age, who may already have or want to plan a family. Such women are forced to make a choice between family and work. Such contracts reinforce the (en)gendering of the public sphere by relocating what were established public responsibilities (paid maternity leave, child sickness leave, parental upbringing payments) within the private sphere. Within societies in which women are over represented in the private sphere, such as Poland this gender bias is then reproduced. The new national territorial commercial television station, POLSAT, in 1994 did not in May of that year have childcare facilities (Boguslav Chrabota, Director of POLSAT, Personal Communication, 1994). Research shows that the trend in countries where casualisation is now established practice is for women to form the bulk of the temporary workforce (Holman and Ortiz, 1992). This could, as Margaret Gallagher argues, lead to a shifting female media workforce around a core of men with permanent contracts (1994:102). The introduction of cable and satellite television is also unlikely to substantially change biased gender representation, if the situation in other countries is anything to go by. A state-by-state survey conducted in the United States found that in cable stations structural discrimination against women remained and television content continued to re-present women in stereotypical ways. Gallagher argues: 'It is doubtful whether even the public service applications of satellite technology will offer women scope to develop programming which challenges accepted definitions of reality' (1987:28).

### **8.7 Comparing Poland With Hungary and Czechoslovakia**

The situation for women television workers in Poland



in the 1980s was also similar throughout the Visegrad group of Central and Eastern European countries: women were mainly represented at the top levels of management structures in the Czech Republic and Hungary. In Czechoslovakia, for example, in 1985 there were 11 male departmental directors and no women (Ceskoslovenska Televizia V SSR Rocenka 1985: 63). In Slovakia, in 1980, there were 11 male departmental directors, and of the deputy directors, 9 were male and only 2 were women (Ceskoslovenska Televizia V SSR Rocenka 1980). In Hungary, in the 1970s, out of 5 directors, all were men; out of 8 editors-in-chiefs only 2 were women; out of 34 foreign correspondents only 2 were women (Jancar 1978: 219).

The situation after 1989 was little different. In Hungary the talks between the government and opposition in 1990 on the media included only one woman, Dr Edit Papaczy, the Vice Minister for Justice (Edit Papaczy, Personal Communication: 1992). The top six positions after 1989 remained in the hands of men and of the 64 production chiefs only 4 were women (Moritz, 1993). In Czechoslovakia all the new directorial appointments made to the Czechoslovak Federal Television Channel between 30 June 1989 and 12 March 1990 were men. The 11 foreign correspondents which the Channel boasted was reduced to 3 in 1989, none of whom were women. In Slovakia the situation was only marginally better with two women appointed for brief periods after 1989. But after 12 March 1990 the directorate was entirely male (Ceskoslovenska Televizia v SSR Rocenka 1989-90).

Similar moral climates concerning the content of programmes were also observable in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. In 1993 the National Television Council in the Czech public prevented Czech Television



from broadcasting the pop video *Laska je Laska* (Love is Love) by Lucie Bila before 10 p.m. the Council's Vice-Chairman at the time stated publicly:

the Council must be the flagship of morals ... sexual acts are shown which are taken out of the context of the general relations between man and woman. It creates a false picture to youth about sex and life and violates the paragraph of the law which states that TV should disseminate spiritual values ( Masson 1992:11).

Precise grounds for the intervention were not provided by the Council. However, a translation of the lyrics shows that they contain the passage: 'love is love when boys go out with girls, boys with boys and girls with girls'. In Hungary in January, 1993, a filmmaker said that he had experienced 'the worse totalitarian management style' by superiors who told him that his Christmas series lacked a sense of festive spirit because he had used 'blacks, idiots and women with cheaply dyed hair.' (Woodward, 1993: 9)

However, some subtle differences in relation to Poland were also observable. The media policies themselves established after 1989 are marginally less closed than those of Poland. In Hungary one of the issues of contention after 1989 in drawing up the new broadcast legislation was the degree to which the supervisory board should be socially representative (Sparks and Reading 1995: 45). The law as it stands provides for a socially representative supervisory body to include members from ethnic minorities and religious bodies as well as women's organizations. For local and regional supervision the specification that women should be represented was dropped (Article 55, 3). The law also states: 'The audience must be warned if the programme contains visual sound effects which violate human, particularly female dignity, ... show violence or disturb one's piece of mind in any other way (Article 14). The Hungarian policy therefore includes women as

special case: women are added on to gender-biased categories and working practices. In this respect the Hungarian policy is based on what Beverley Thiele (1992: 26) would call the tradition of pseudo-inclusion within political theory, as opposed to Poland's tradition of exclusion.

In the Czechoslovak Broadcast Law of October 30 1991 no mention of gender is made, but provision was included for a representative ethnic mix of programmes (Article 9.2.c). It stipulated that broadcasters should cater to 'all strata of society' (Article 9.2.b) and reflect the pluralism of society (Article 9.1). Further, it included the provision that broadcasters should uphold basic human rights (Part Two, Article 5, Paragraph a). In these respects the policy is based on what Beverley Thiele (1992: 28) would call the tradition of alienation within political theory. With the split of the country into the Czech Republic and Slovakia this trend continued. For example, the Slovak broadcast law requires that special programmes be made for national minorities, religious minorities and the disabled. No mention is made of gender equity quotas. In the license conditions for commercial broadcasters established in 1993, broadcasters 'must not incite chauvenism' nor must they allow one religion to dominate or contain pornography (Slovak Appendix to Broadcast Licence 001/1993: para 2,3). Chauvenism in Slovak means nationalism, rather than simple sexist bravado: although as we have seen in Poland, the two are historically connected.

What this suggests, and which would make an interesting further study, is that within Hungary and Czechoslovakia were elements of pseudo-inclusion and alienation within their socially inherited memories of

political right'. Certainly the overt exclusion found in Polish law as well as practice is not to be found there in quite the same way. However, as with other aspects of the transition, it is not the case that the new elite has drawn solely on Poland's inheritance of exclusionary political right. In the case of media policy it is clear that throughout Eastern Europe countries inherited the gender-biased models already established by male-dominated international policy advisory bodies in the West.<sup>10</sup> The Director General of Czechoslovak television admitted that they sought to replicate Western models: 'We respect the European model in the Czech Republic' (Personal Communication, 1992). Whilst there was concern for women as (passive) recipients of culture they continue to be excluded from positions where they can be (active) makers of policies.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that to increase the democratic base of the public sphere and the media is not enough, in psittacine fashion, to recall past laws, but crucial to (en) gender media laws and other policies anew.

### 8.8 Conclusion and Contradictions

Thus a more detailed examination of the key medium within the public sphere during the period of transition, television, suggests that the ways in which the public continued to be (en) gendered was still based on exclusion. 1989 did not provide the

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<sup>9</sup>In Czechoslovakia there is indeed evidence that women were included in opposition elites before 1989 to a greater extent. In Charter 77, in the 1980s, out of the three delegates acting as representatives of the organization a woman was usually included. In May 1980 there were two women. (Funk and Mueller, 1993:93). In Hungary women too were very active as rank and file members of the many unofficial movements which challenged the authorities in the 1980s (Corrin, 1992: 42).

<sup>10</sup> The principle officers of the OIRT and the EBU in 1985 were all men (OIRT InterUnion Document, 1995). With the merger of the two organisations in 1992 little changed.

<sup>11</sup> Broadcasters and market research companies have shown a distinct interest in the gender of the recipients of culture in Eastern Europe. See for example, The BBC in Czechoslovakia: The Classic English Gentleman International Broadcasting Audience Research, 1992.



yeast to prove the future of democracy. The state-run broadcasting organization in Poland before 1989 was, like Polish society, male-dominated. Since 1989, even though there have been some shifts towards what can be defined as public service broadcasting this has not constituted a change in terms of gender representation. Neither does the introduction of a commercial sector offer much change to this general picture of exclusion. As in the rest of Polish society this does not mean that this is an inevitable historical process. We also saw how, historically, within television women have made attempts to change the mechanisms of exclusion. Women in Eastern Europe, as elsewhere, continue to organise and develop their own media initiatives, such as the Czech and Slovak co-operative venture ASPEKT, a feminist Journal established in 1995 (Grunell 1995, 105). In Poland too, women continue to recall its long tradition of feminism and political inclusion through challenging at conference level the gender bias of democracy itself. Beata Grudzinska, who runs the Polish feminist magazine, *Baba Polka*, stated:

We should go back to democracy and what we mean by democracy and equality in Poland ... in Eastern Europe what we need is gender democracy. And I this I been the acceptance of women in politics, in social life, in labour. (Beata Grudzinska, Personal Communication. (1990)).

Yet, the people in power in the nineties are mostly men, the mechanisms of production are androcentric and new policies have reproduced Poland's gender-biased socially inherited memory of exclusive political right. This suggests that not only is public service television empirically male-dominated, as substantial research in the West already shown<sup>12</sup> in the 1980s, but

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12 Whilst debates and government policy began to shift towards some notion of public service broadcasting in the regimes of Eastern Europe, including Poland, in the 1980s, commentators in the West became increasingly disillusioned with the public television systems. Research showed that public service

that the concept of change in the public sphere which underpins it may be better understood in terms of the recollection and forgetting of socially inherited memory: This perhaps may help explain why the revolution in Poland was not so much a revolution as an organized coup under the flag of democracy, in which the mostly male elites were temporarily reconstituted from one state centralized to capital centralized form. As Blackburn notes: 'the main effect of 1989 is that capitalism and the rich have, for the time being, stopped being scared (Blackburn, 1991: 122). As the former Director of the OIRT, Milan Bauman, once warned: 'You can't have a revolution that is velvet' (Personal Communication, 1991).

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broadcasting in Western democracies was élitist and statist (Rowland and Tracey, 1990:8); structurally gender biased (Gallagher, 1987:28); serving best a pale male audience (Reilly, 1993:124-34); its content marginalized and stereotyped women (Baehr and Spindler-Brown, 1987; Rakow and Kranich, 1991); minority women were either absent from representation or marginalized (Manuel, 1987: 42-4); women script writers were squeezed out (Hyen, 1987: 151-63); and women oriented programmes allowed to fail (Coward, 1987: 96-106). Davies and Dickey asked:

Public service broadcasting is a very fine notion but which public is currently being served? Broadcasting certainly does not serve the relatively powerless or disadvantaged groups in society well at all, and their means of access or redress are minimal (1987:5).

A number of attempts were made to rectify the situation with television companies seeking to redress gender bias. In the UK, Channel 4's remit when it was established in 1982 included the statement that it would forward the rights of women (Women's Advisory and Referral Service Action Group 1982:104). But, patterns of structural gender bias continued into the nineties. The French public service broadcaster in Belgium, RTBF, had only three women out of 14 men on its administrative board In 1991 (RTBF 1991: 4-6); whilst the Italian broadcasters, RAI, had in the same year no women at all on its 12 man administrative board. The company makes provision for union representation at management level but all seven are men (RAI 1991-2: 475). The news rooms of public service broadcasters throughout the Western World also remained under the control by men; figures based on those provided by Television Broadcasting International in 1992 which included Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States showed that only Canada had a news service headed by a woman (derived from TBI 1992: 44-46). Neither should one be deceived by the apparent increase in visibility in terms of female newsreaders. According to research they tend to be young and attractive in comparison with their old and ugly male counterparts (Baehr, 1981: 124-34). ultimately it seems that in periods of crisis even such surface changes are rescinded: research during the Gulf War on Israeli Television shows that women news readers were replaced by men in all but one instance (Lemish, 1993).



## Chapter 9: Conclusion

Long afterward, Oedipus, old and blinded, walked the roads. He smelled a familiar smell. It was the Sphinx. Oedipus said, 'I want to ask one question. Why didn't I recognize my mother?'

'You gave the wrong answer,' said the Sphinx. 'But that was what made everything possible,' said Oedipus. 'No,' she said. 'When I asked, what walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening you answered, Man. you didn't say anything about woman.' 'When you say Man,' said Oedipus, 'you include women too. Everyone knows that.' She said, 'That's what you think.' Muriel Rukeyser 'Myth' (1987:135) (My emphasis)

Freedom (to move, to earn, to learn, to be allied with a powerful centre, to narrate the world) can be relished more deeply in a cheek-by-jowl existence with the bound and unfree, the economically oppressed, the marginalized, the silenced. (Toni Morrison Playing in the Dark 1992:64)

### 9.1 Introduction

On the BBC's Radio Four (9.00 Wednesday, June 1996) Joy Hendry devoted a series to research and ideas on the concept of memory. The series developed a sense of memory as something both individual and social. Similarly, recent academic discussions in the U.S., such as that articulated by Toni Morrison in Playing in the Dark (1992), suggest that the suppression of the memory of slavery by white Americans has resulted in the internalization of hatred by African-Americans themselves and the continuation of exclusion from the public sphere. At the same time Black culture in the West continues to provide a cultural and social memory of inclusion: Hendry cites the example of the African rhythms recalled in the writing of James Berry. (Joy Hendry, BBC Radio Four 9.00pm June 24, 1996).

In the light of these debates and the evidence of this



study, it is suggested that the concept of what could be called socially inherited memory may also be worth considering in terms of gender and the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Thus in this final chapter I bring together the evidence on women in the public sphere in Poland and indicate how the hypothesis suggested in the introduction and the theoretical questions raised in Chapter One are illuminated and to some extent resolved. I conclude by indicating the ways in which this study suggests a reformulation of our understanding of the public sphere and the (en)gendering of change.

## 10.2 Theoretical Questions and Answers

In Chapter One it was argued that scholars addressing the changes in Eastern Europe could be divided in terms of those who perceived greater societal transformation or continuity. In Poland, as in the rest of Eastern Europe, after the initial euphoria of 1989, many scholars in fact began to argue that there was greater continuity between the Communist and capitalist systems than was previously supposed. This also included gendered perspectives on the changes, such as those articulated by Funk and Mueller (1993) and Barbara Einhorn (1994). My study of gender and the public sphere in Poland would certainly confirm those theories of the changes in Eastern Europe which stress continuity in the societies of Eastern Europe and in their mediated aspects, rather than rupture or radical break in 1989. This study also confirms the picture given by Einhorn (1994) and Rosenberg (1989) of women's continued exclusion from the public sphere, which some would argue has actually increased:

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<sup>1</sup> Oral historians in the 1990s already consider memory as gendered in individual terms. Joan Sangster, for example, recently argued that in telling their stories peoples' memories of events are gendered (1994). Louisa Passerini has suggested a similar process in a study of car workers memories of the Second World War in Italy (1994).

Within the framework of the emerging masculinist cultures in East-Central European society, masculinity becomes increasingly identified with the public domain. As traditional ideas of difference, including gender-difference, are redefined\reconstructed in such a way as to advance exclusionary advantage in the new public sphere, masculinity is increasingly identified with citizenship. (Tsagarousianou, 1993:8)

Yet, if those theories that suggested continuity in Eastern Europe were correct in the case of women in Poland, I argued in Chapter One, this then raised a number of questions about the nature of the transitions in the region. How and why were the changes so limited? Why were exclusionary aspects of gender relations in the public sphere replicated during the period of transition? Accounts of the public sphere, particularly feminist theories, I suggested, might provide some clues.

The first clue, I argued, to gendered explanations of the transitions in the public sphere in Poland might be found in Pateman's theory that: 'it is necessary to begin to tell the repressed story of the genesis of patriarchal political right which men exercise over women' (1981:101) (my emphasis). Following this I asked what then is the repressed story of the genesis of political right in Poland? Does this repressed story explain how the public sphere continues to be (en)gendered? How far does this repressed story impact on the more recent transformations in Poland since 1980, particularly in relation to television? And, finally, what indeed is meant by the phrase 'the repressed story'?

The second clue to theorizing more fully the transition in Poland, I suggested, may lie in an understanding of the public sphere that allows for alternative spaces or spheres. This would then



indicate that the repressed story of the genesis of political right could be understood more clearly as multiple and contradictory, rather than singular and homogeneous. This idea of a contradictory repressed story might better explain the ongoing presence of alternative women's spaces and political movements.

The third clue, I maintained, to understanding the transition in Poland, theoretically, came from the critique by some scholars of the underlying Enlightenment assumptions of the concept of the public sphere (Fraser, 1990; Van Zoonen, 1994; Phillips, 1991). I suggested that the implication of such critiques was that the dichotomous and hierarchical concepts used to form the basis of political theory and used to frame our understanding of the public sphere may be unable to explain the (en)gendering processes because the concepts themselves are part of the problem. This then raised a number of further questions. What if the repressed story of the genesis of political right in Poland is formed and operates across what has been traditionally conceived of and understood as separate private\public realms? What if, historically, the mechanisms and processes of exclusion to the public sphere operates through the emotional, the sexual, the familial as well as the political, the cultural and the economic? What if to understand and explain the social processes of the transformations in Poland's public sphere it is necessary to formulate an abstraction enables us to stretch the usual conceptual boundaries of the sphere?

These questions were then brought to bear on developing a formulation of socially inherited memory. Although, as I indicate above, the concept of some kind of social memory has been developed and discussed in terms of race in America, I suggested that earlier



precursors to the idea were to be found in the arguments of Ernest Renan (1990:11) and the socialist Paul Federn (Jacoby, 1973:85). It was Federn who suggested that some form of patriarchal 'socially inherited feeling' may have prevented the complete victory of what he called a 'fatherless society'. However, socially inherited memory I argued was not to be confused with the idea of 'a collective soul' or a 'collective inner psyche'. It was better understood in the sense suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin (writing under the name of Volosinov) as operating not so much within us as without, through the word, the gesture, the act (Volosinov, 1973:23). I argued that socially inherited memory could then be conceived of as an abstract concept to describe the way in which societies, in this case Polish society, repressed, recalled and changed the story of political right of its citizens. The social inheritance or socially handed down memory of this story of the political right of citizens could be seen to operate in both institutional structures and ideological representations. The collective remembering and forgetting of this story would be communicated through language, over a range of discourses. I proposed that socially inherited memory may be understood, ultimately, as an abstract concept for the sum of the dialectical struggle in class and gender terms embodied in language which may be used to explain the continuity (and disjuncture) in the gendered construction and transformation of the public sphere, and, which bridges the usual conceptual gulf between the public and private realms. The concept I said may provide us with a useful theoretical addition to our understanding of the (en)gendering of the public sphere in Poland.

## 9.21 Poland's Repressed Story of Political Right

What the evidence from Poland shows is that the continued exclusion of women from the public sphere in its recent transition to a capitalist society is not a recent phenomenon, but, may be better understood as the re-enactment of a longstanding problem within the public sphere and the ways in which it was historically (en)gendered. This view is also suggested by Lovendowski in relation to Western Europe. She argues that throughout Europe state structures in the 19th century were established on the assumption that women were there to be controlled. Legal mechanisms were introduced which supported male dominance. The century and a half which followed has been the history of a gender struggle in which women have fought for the abrogation and dismantling of gender-specific legal apparatus (Lovendowski, 1986:296). The evidence from Poland on women's representation in 19th century partitioned Poland would seem to support this. Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his Considerations on the Government of Poland clearly regarded serfdom as illegitimate (see Okin, 1980:126 and 142) but did not include women in his assertions for their political equality (See Rousseau's Emile). What was crucial in the case of Poland's repressed story of political right at this time was its troubled status as a nation state. The partitions in Poland resulted in particular formulations of women's public activity which crushed the earlier impetus for the inclusion of women. Polish women came to be the self-sacrificing vessel of Polish national culture and language, unable to have a voice except in terms of the Nation. The embodiment of this was Matka Polka, or Mother Poland. Evidence from the interwar years indicates the continuation of this story of exclusion built upon their public sacrifice for the nation. Under state capitalism the



social inheritance of the exclusion of women within the public sphere established during Poland's period of identity formation and during the interwar years combined with the social memory of Soviet style equality laws which gave priority to the public, the rational and the functional domains of human life. The result was the re-enactment of women's exclusion and ghettoization in the public sphere. In representational terms this resulted in the reworking of old stereotypes such as Mother Poland, Kobieta Samotna and Baba Yaga. During the transition 1980-1994 in both the official and unofficial public spheres there was increasing convergence in the representations of women by the state capitalist regime and Solidarity. Despite the calls for democracy, the Church, Solidarity and the Polish United Worker's Party all used restrictive aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory to build and legitimize their own power bases. The aspects they chose were those that were inherently gender biased: The result was the reproduction of the exclusion of women from the public sphere after 1989 and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Finally, the detail of these processes of exclusion was most clearly indicated in the transition of state television into a public service television in terms of the exclusion of women from its organisational structures and within media policy.

#### **9.22 Subplots of Political Right and Women's Cultural Spaces**

At the same time, however, it is also clear from this study that within Poland's repressed story of political right are the sub-plots of women's struggles for political and cultural representation. From the 19th century onwards (and probably before) there is evidence of campaigns by women for enfranchisement and



education in all three sectors of partitioned Poland. Connected to these were also a number of women's publications and key women writers presenting a different perspective on Polish women. This inheritance was continued through various organisations and publications in the interwar years, supplemented by the development of women's communities. Under state capitalism these women's organizations mostly became subsumed by the Polish United Worker's Party but in the spirit and actuality of their activities they had more in common with Poland's own pre-war feminist inheritance. In some instances Party organizations such as the Women's League went against the Church and the Party. Some organizations, such as the Women's House in Krakow, although losing some of its original political impact retained their autonomy from the Polish United Worker's Party, provided single women and lesbians with a positive community environment. Further, despite the gendered effects of censorship, there are examples, most clearly illustrated by the poetry of Anna Swir, of women challenging the dominant representation of women as Mother Poland, Whore, Baba Yaga and Kobieta Samotna. During the period of transition this sub-plot of the struggle by women for cultural and political representation continued, with women's units established within Solidarity and various groups set up by middle-class feminists in most major Polish cities. These too were accompanied by cultural representations in certain spheres, particularly print but less so in highly controlled areas such as television.

In addition a further sub-plot to the repressed story of political right in Poland is the struggle by different ethnic groups and the women within these for political and cultural recognition. These provided

contradictory representations in political and cultural terms for women in the 19th century and interwar years. The recollection of the nineteenth century Polish Mother representation by the Polish United Worker's Party after World War Two and the inclusion of women in the workforce and education can then be understood as built around the repressed story of the annihilation of the Jews and other ethnic groups, rather as Toni Morrison suggests that the identity of white Americans was built around the repression of the story of slavery and society's historical denial of the presence of African-Americans in society (1992:6).

During Poland's transition, the Church, Solidarity and the Polish United Worker's Party chose to deny Poland's small but not insignificant ethnic community representation. The result was most clearly illustrated in Poland's recent broadcast legislation which seeks to deny its non-Christian minorities a voice. The result is the recollection of Poland's inheritance of exclusion developed in the 19th century and established in ethnic terms in the interwar years.

This evidence would then seem to support those feminist theories of the public sphere which give recognition to the historical development of alternative public spaces, such as work by Fraser, who highlights the importance of alternative publics and stresses notions of difference and resistance within popular culture and media forms. However, what this study also shows is that in Poland the fact that Polish women and women from different ethnic groups were able to develop their own spaces from the 19th century onwards does not mean that all these spaces were egalitarian and democratic. Some were and some

are not, as the recent examples of women in the KPN and the Green's illustrate, and the historical example of the Bais Yakov in the interwar years also highlighted. As McLaughlin warns us: We should be aware of accounts of the public sphere that idealise alternative publics. The National Front as well as Gay Rights activists mobilize around identity, she points out, yet not both are equally emancipatory (McLaughlin, 1993:616).

### 9.30 The Dialectic of the Private and Public

What this study also confirms is that it is not possible to understand public (en)gendering processes without also understanding their links with certain elements of private (en)gendering processes within the family and domestic spheres. Both the private and public domains are dialectically connected. This is especially important in terms of understanding Poland's story of political right, since the development of the nation state and Polish men's political intervention during the partition years relied on the private or domestic activities of women and was reinforced by the ideal image of the Polish woman as the centre of the home and hearth in the form of the self-sacrificing and patriotic Mother Poland. This was also the case under state capitalism, and, again during the period of transition in which women Solidarity activists increasingly took a back seat to support the public activities of their menfolk.

At the same time the evidence from a number of women themselves highlights how the dialectic of remembering and forgetting gendered historical roles works to inscribe women and men differently within the private sphere. For example, we saw how women perceived their participation in the public sphere as being paid for



by an accumulating debt of domestic and family responsibilities. The women but not the men they suggested would remember to repay this debt at some point in their lives in terms of, for example, childcare given by grandmothers understood as an exchange for the later care of the same elderly relatives. In contrast, a man's role in the private sphere was contingent solely upon his desire; thereby leaving him free to participate in the public realm whilst his family - in terms of female children and his wife remembered to pay his accumulating domestic debts.

### 9.31 The Contradictory Process of Socially Inherited Memory

What this study thus shows is that the impact of socially inherited memory on the continuity of structures and ideologies of societies is a powerful force: During Poland's period of transition the ruling elite and the opposition sought to actively recover aspects of Poland's socially inherited memory to legitimize their own power. Because Poland's social memory was inherently gender biased this served to reproduce patriarchal structures and ideologies after 1989.

Having said this, however, empirical evidence also shows that this is not an inevitable process. We saw, for example, how when the ruling patriarchal class are confident spaces emerge for women to represent themselves differently, as with the poetry of Anna Swir. Further, socially inherited memory should not be understood as static or homogenous; the relationship between different elements in Poland, such as nationalism, feminism and socialism for example was a heterogeneous and dialectical one, resulting in gaps

and fissures for women to enter the public sphere, as illustrated by the example of 19th century feminists using nationalist discourse (Chapter 3).

In addition what this study also suggests is that socially inherited memory should not be understood as a singular phenomenon anchored to the nation state: We saw how after the Second World War, the regime drew on Poland's political inheritance as well as that of the Soviet Union. Similarly in the period of transition both the opposition and the ruling party began to draw on aspects of Western inheritance, as well as its own. On the whole, this worked against women, as with the use of aspects of Western media policies in Poland's broadcast laws. But, in particular instances the inheritance of the West provided for greater support for women's issues, as shown by the example of the Solidarity Women's Unit after 1989 which was able to justify its existence on the grounds that to be modern, to be Western, meant accepting the need for women's units within the new Union (Chapter 7).

Further, socially inherited memory I would suggest from this study should be understood as something which effects us simultaneously on an individual level as much on the collective level. We saw, for example, how socially inherited memory is used not just by ruling elites or movements to legitimize their power but by individuals to justify or legitimize the place of men and women in the public and private spheres. Women it seemed, from interviews, engaged with different aspects of socially inherited memory to understand, to justify and indeed to challenge their own positions in society.

Further, what this study also suggests is that we should be wary of making the concept of socially



inherited memory itself an ahistorical concept. Phillips (1992) stresses this in relation to the concept of the public sphere, adding that we need also to avoid becoming overly functional in the development of feminist social theory. What is evident is that the concept of socially inherited memory should not be understood as a formulation for a static fixed realm with which like a ruler we may count out the legacies of cultures and historical epochs. Rather, socially inherited memory is a formulation that should be understood as in itself fraught from the legacy of contradictions and over-articulations of our own historical epoch of the 1990s, re-enacting or engaging with in this case my own 'memory of mother's memory' (Glendinning, 1996:12).

Further, the ways in which socially inherited memory is communicated it has been suggested in this study is ultimately through discourse and language; our social memory is stored and expressed in somatic form through representations - the presence or absence of men and women in public or private spaces, and in mental form through re-presentation - our collectively recognised symbolic manifestations. But the relationship between these and the way in which social memory may serve to operate on or inform the present and future in ways in which a society may not be fully conscious should also be understood as subject to change. As Joy Hendry suggests, the role of individual and collective memory in industrialized societies has substantially altered with the advent of literacy (BBC, Radio 4, 9.00 pm, June 24, 1996). With predominantly oral cultures, as Hendry points out, memory is the people. With literate cultures memory becomes much more externalized, something out there. This points to an area which has not been resolved by this study: To what extent did women begin to engage with Poland's socially inherited



memory after the War differently because of rising literacy levels? The historical changes to people's engagement with and the ways in which socially inherited memory alters would provide the basis for interesting further research.

#### 9.4 The Broader Implications of The Thesis

Finally, with the benefit of hindsight in the 1990s, we can now see that the challenges in the 1980s to the Enlightenment foundations of social theory coincided with the changes and revolutions in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The meaning we choose to give to the transitions in Eastern Europe therefore also may have broader theoretical implications in terms of the public sphere and what some intellectuals would call the post-modernist break. Indeed, the historical events in Eastern Europe have been used by some theorists to support their belief that the end of the Cold War signified the end of the great ideological joust of the 20th century: The battle between the champions of capitalism and the white knights of Marxism. Fukujama (1992), for example, made the claim that what we were witnessing at the end of the 1980s was the end of history and that the fall of Communism signified the end of modernity. Yet, in Poland, we have seen that historically the values and meaning of 'modernity' itself has been different for Polish women and different again for women and men from various ethnic groups in Poland in terms of their (re)presentation in the public sphere. The picture for Polish women, for example, has been one of continuity and replication of established gendered public relations: Despite the changes that Poland has undergone the features of over-articulated exclusion continued in slightly mutated form after 1989. Women's (re)presentation within a so-called 'post-modern'

society is thus little different from the 'modern' that some theorists suppose went before. As Balsamo has pointed out:

From a feminist perspective the crises which preoccupy post-modernism do not appear as such, largely because the break between modernism and post-modernism is indistinct and arbitrary; patriarchal relations of domination have continued undeterred. Women's voices are still actively suppressed. (1987:69)

What this study of the public sphere in Poland highlights in terms of wider social theory, therefore, is that whilst there is certainly marked continuity in the mechanisms and processes of exclusion to the public sphere, these, at the same time, should be understood as operating across conceptual boundaries; conceptual boundaries which have within certain aspects of 'modernism' tended to be understood as separate and distinct. We have seen how socially inherited memory, for example, works across the public and the private, the emotional and rational, the objective and subjective realms to reproduce continuity and disjuncture in gendered relations of dominance and marginality. Conversely, I would suggest that if in our understanding of the public sphere we remain imaginatively and intellectually stuck in the circumscribed dichotomies of Enlightenment assumptions this may obscure aspects of gendered reality and relations of exploitation and oppression.

Increasingly, in fact, the workings of democracies are understood, as a result of feminist and post-structuralist interventions, as a combination of the private and the public; as riven with conflicts and inequalities; as continually in a process of struggle for voice and representation (Garnham, 1992; Mouffe, 1992). Yet, as Angela McRobbie points out, if being

attentive to the assumptions of social theory and boundary making is indeed challenging some of the foundations of Western scholarship, this does not then mean the end of history, politics or society (McRobbie, 1994: 5). Rather, it is an act of public truth telling, which, as Herman reminds us is, 'the common denominator of all social action' (Herman, 1994:208).



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Personal Communication (Taped Interviews in  
alphabetical order by surname)

Elzbieta Adamczewska, Journalist, Wroclaw (5.7.90).

Barbara Aroniszydze, Reception Manager, The Grand Hotel, Lodz (30.7.90).

Ewa Bednarowicz, Feminist and Lecturer in English and American Studies, University of Lodz. (7.2.91).

Juliusz Braun, Chairman of the Broadcasting Committee for Culture and Media, Ministry of Culture, Polish Sejm, Warsaw (May 1994).

Dorota Canert, Homeworker, Lodz (18.7.90).

Danuta Celeyska-Bejger, Head of Programming, Channel One, Polska Telewizja, Warsaw (20.5.94).

Miroslav Chojecki, Chief of Nowa Telewiza, Warsaw, (September, 1992).

Irena Choynacka, M.P. Polish Sejm (13.7.90).

Boguslav Chrabota, Director of POLSAT Commercial Television, Warsaw (May 1994).

Stanislava Dworzynska, Manager of 'Central', Lodz Department store (17.7.90).

Beata Ficzer, one of the founders of the Polish Feminist Association (13.8.90).

Krystyna Eysmont, Member of Parliament, Polish Sejm (10.7.90).

Elzbieta Gasiorowska, Liga Kobiet Polskich (Polish Women's League) Lodz (11.7.90).

Jadwiga Goryszewska, active member of Confederation for an Independent Poland, one of the first members of Solidarity in Lodz, member of of the Committee for Preserving the Memory of Pilsudski. KPN Headquarters, Lodz (7.8.90).

Tomasz Goban-Klas, Professor of Sociology, Jagiellonian University, Kracow (October, 1992).

Ryszard Grabowski, Director of Gdansk Television, Gdansk, (September 24 1992).

Mirosława Grabarkiewicz, Member of Parliament, Polish Sejm, Warsaw (13.7.90).

Elzbieta Hibner, Vice Major of Lodz, Chairperson of Lodz Green Party. (10.8.90).

Maciej Ilowiecki, Chair of Polish Journalists Association, (23.9.1992).

Danuta Jakubczak, Polish peasant farmer (28.8.90).

Czesława Jerzykowska, Textile Worker, active Solidarity member, Poltex factory, Lodz (5 and 6.7.90).

Isabella Kaczan, 4th Year Student, Department of English and American Studies, Lodz (3.291).

Marian Kislo, Head of the Department of Radio and Television, the Ministry of Telecommunications, Warsaw (24.9. 1992).

Zbigniew Lis, Solidarity Chairman, Gdansk Solidarity HQ, (October 1991).



Dr Maria Krzeminska-Pakula, Senior Cardiologist,  
Professor of Cardiology (24.7.90).

Members of The Women's House, Cracow (9.1.89).

Ivo Mathe, Head of Czech Television, Interview at  
Polish Television 40th Birthday celebrations, Warsaw  
(October 1992).

Kasia Muszynska, 5th year student, Department of  
English and American Studies, Lodz (5.3.91).

Magdalena Niewadowska, Business Executive, Ciech-  
Stomil Foreign Trade Company, Lodz (17.7.90).

Dr Edit Papaczy, Deputy Minister of State of the  
Department of Justice, Budapest, Hungary. (November  
1992).

Pirate TV Workers, Lodz (24.9. 1992).

Professor Walery Pisarek, Chair of Institute for  
Media Research, Jagiellonian University, Kracow (5.  
22.1994).

Bozenna Pruszyńska, Manager of Sklep Ares, Poland's  
first Sex and Gun Shop, Lodz (30.7.90).

Professor Agnieszka Salska, Head of English,  
University of Lodz (5.2.91).

Dr Teresa Sasinska-Klas, Head of Journalism,  
Jagiellonian University, Kracow (23.5.1994).

Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, Polish  
Sejm (13.7.90).

Joanna Sobczak, 4th Year Student, Department of English and American Studies, Lodz (3.2.91).

Krystyna Sienkiewicz, Minister for Health, (13.7.90).

Marta Suchodolska, Head of International Relations, Polish Television (23.9. 1992).

Anna Szymanska-Kwiatkowska, Member of Parliament (Polish Sejm) and Editor in Chief of Kobiety i Zycie (Women and Life) (13.7.90).

Ewa Szczepanik-Mazurska, Textile Weaver, Poltex Textile Factory, Lodz (6.7.90).

Janina Suska-Jankowska, Chairperson, Liga Kobiet Polskich (Polish Women's League) Lodz (11.7.90).

Krystyna Stachowiak, Director, Poznan Solidarity Women's Unit; founder Robmy Swoje (Do Your Duty); founding member Poznan Polish Socialist Party (PPS); member Citizen Committee (28.8.90).

Maciej Strzembosz, Independent media consultant, lawyer and journalist, Warsaw (September, 1992).

Malgorzata Taraszewicz, Co-ordinator of the National Solidarity Women's Unit, Gdansk. (7.8.90).

David Thomas, Director of Coopers and Lybrand, Warsaw (September, 1992).

Tomasz Trabic, Editor, Media Section, Nowe Europa (22.9.92).

Leszek Wasiuta, Head of Channel One, Polish Television (28.9. 92).

Andrzej Wojnach, Head of Staff Training, Polish Television (23.10.92).

Joanna Wiszniewska, Artist, Member of Association of Polish Artists, Lodz (8.8.90).

Danuta Zatay, Solidarity Secretary, Solidarity Headquarters, Gdansk, (17.8.90).

Personal Communication (Written Statements)  
Secondary School girls, Fourth Year, School 164,  
Lodz. February, 1991

Agata Kaczan, Secondary School Teacher of Polish,  
Lodz, February 1991.

Bozenna Kaminska, Secondary School Teacher of  
History and Social Science, Lodz, February 1991.

Anna Lis, Deputy Head Teacher, Lodz, February 1991.

#### Participant Observation

Journals 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991,

Want Project Video, Lodz Feminist Workshop, Part  
Two, 1990.