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Gender in Trans-it

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Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort	7
<i>Barbara Lüthi</i> Gender in Trans-it: Geschlecht und transnationale Perspektiven	9
<i>Almut Höfert</i> Gender in Trans-it: Geschlecht und transkulturelle Perspektiven	17
<i>Nina Glick-Schiller</i> Global Perspectives on Gender in Transit	31
<i>Belinda Davis</i> Transnation/Transculture: Gender and Politicization in and out of West Germany, 1950s–1970s	51
<i>Stephan F. Miescher</i> Masculinities and Transcultural Perspectives in African History	69
<i>Ulrike Jureit</i> «Raumbilder sind die Träume der Gesellschaft». Geschlechtergeschichtliche Überlegungen zur Kategorie Raum	85
<i>Tatiana Barchunova</i> Gender Studies in Russia as a Transnational Project	95
<i>Claudia Opitz-Belakhal</i> Von der kulturellen Differenz zur nationalen Identität. Kulturtransfer und Geschlecht in der Spätaufklärung am Beispiel der «Deutschen Enzyklopädie»	105
<i>Silke Redolfs, Nicole Schwalbach und Regina Wecker</i> Staatsbürgerrecht: Transnationale Aspekte einer nationalen Institution	117
<i>Carol Nater</i> Par(ad)isische conversation: Die Römer kommen zur Sache!	125
<i>Ilka Borchardt</i> Russischsprachige Lesben tanzen in Berlin: Freizeitkultur als transnationaler/transkultureller Raum?	137

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Gender Studies in Russia as a Transnational Project

The goal of this paper is to analyze gender studies in Russia as a transnational research project which has both specific institutional, research, and discursive configurations. Gender studies in Russia, both in terms of institutional development, research methods, and discourse, go beyond the frames of national academic project and constitute a complicated network of researchers; one that integrates scholars from the West, Russia, and other regions of the former Soviet Union. Here, I will call the former Soviet Union the Region. My point here is that in some aspects the appropriation of gender studies by the Russian academic tradition is similar to its appropriation by other non-English speaking countries and research traditions (say, German): it is a transnational networking, and translation project as everywhere else. But unlike, for instance, the German scientific context, which included a strong element of critical theory by the time the first gender studies translations and research projects were done, in the Soviet world the critical tradition in social analysis was eliminated and supplanted by the conformist ideology of equality of the sexes. Therefore, on a par with the analysis of the gender studies appropriation per se, this paper includes an outline history of the Russian Academy of Sciences and its Soviet heir which aims to explain the theoretical scarcity of social research which made it very difficult for the scholars in the Region to become integrated into the transnational network, theoretical discussions, and empirical research projects.

My analysis is based on my own experience as a gender researcher from the Region, on the analysis of the Russian gender studies discourse and secondary materials, such as analytical materials on the history of gender studies in Russia and post-Soviet space¹ as well as publications related to the politics of translation in Russia.²

Historical Outline of the Russian Academic Tradition

The Russian Academy as an international project. The Russian Academy of Sciences was founded by Peter I in 1725 as the Saint-Petersburg Academy of Sciences. It was one of the tsar's international projects. Peter, of course, was famous for his attempts to westernize Russian life in all its aspects.³ The first Russian

academics were, in fact, foreigners brought or traveling to Russia. Peter's project was also an intellectual import of a Western cognitive project ("learning from nature"), very different from the authentic Russian scholarly tradition that was based on the idea of science as wisdom of life (*uchionost'*) and education.⁴ The XIX c. conflict between Slavophiles who insisted on the *Sonderweg* of Russia and Westernizers who promoted the integration of Russia in the mainstream world development was a further development of this difference. However, "the works of foreign scholars have often been a sort of matrices along which the Russian natural scientists moved".⁵

The institutionalization of the Academy was accompanied by the creation of secular polygraphic facilities and the translation of Western scientific sources. The languages of the Academy's publications were Russian and Latin and the quality of publications was very high. The Imperial Russian Academy was both centralized and based on personal connections. Thus, under Catherine II one of the leaders of the Academy was Ekaterina Dashkova, Catherine's personal friend, who participated in the coup-d'état as a result of which Catherine was enthroned.

The Soviet Academy of Sciences: In the first years following the Socialist Revolution of 1917 the Russian Academy remained an international project. Its members traveled to the West, they knew foreign languages and were familiar with the international trends in science and humanities. The golden fund of the Russian humanities in the 1920s – beginning of the 1930s was created by such internationally known scholars as M. Bakhtin, B. Eichenbaum, V. Propp, V. Shklovskii. Yet, more or less simultaneously, the Soviet Union began to experience huge losses of intellectual capital through the migration (sometimes forced) of artistic intelligentsia, writers, scientists, and philosophers. The situation had radically changed for the worse when the Soviet government realized that the Academy could be used as a means of legitimization of the political regime. In 1934 the Academy was moved to Moscow and here it lost its freedom as a scholarly and publishing project. Systematic persecutions of those who were not loyal to the regime began. It was enough to know a foreign language for accusations of "cosmopolitanism" and high treason to be made.⁶ Access to Western scholarly works was closed for the majority of the scientists. These sources were made available only to those who were ready to openly criticize "bourgeois" science and philosophy along the lines formulated by ideologues such as: "Modern bourgeois sociology openly preaches imperialist theories of racism, racial inequality, cosmopolitan theories of destruction of the national sovereignty of the nations and their subordination to the Anglo-American capital, the reactionary Malthusian philosophy of population, according to which all evil originates not in the bourgeois order of exploitation, but in the excess of the populace, the predatory theory of geopolitics."⁷ Censorship of the academic publications had become a matter for the government and secret

police control. The scientific discursive space was dominated by the Russian language; the opportunity for academic travel was extremely limited.

The situation began to change slowly after Stalin's death in 1953. The so-called Thaw period, a period of a relative ideological liberty, generated a splash of interest in Western social theory and philosophical schools. A whole range of translations of *foreign* textbooks, current and classical scholarly writings was done at that time: "Meaning and Necessity" by R. Carnap (1959), "Die Frau und der Sozialismus" by A. Bebel (1959), "A History of Western Philosophy" by B. Russel (1959), "Modern Sociological Theory in Continuity and Change" by H. Becker and A. Boskoff (1961), "Words and Things" by E. Gellner (1962), "American Sociology" by T. Parsons (ed.) (1972), "Histoire et sociologie du travail féminine" (1973), etc. The level of translations and publications was high since, at that time, the number of printed translations was small and the publication system was the area of strict governmental control.⁸

However, academic exchange programs were still only available to a very narrow group of people.⁹ Command of foreign languages remained the prerogative of elitist scholars concentrated in the cultural capitals – Moscow and Leningrad. In 1970s scientific folklore an ironic truism circulated in which it was claimed that Soviet philosophers could be classified into two groups: those who can speak English and those who cannot. This ironic classification, in a sense, reflected the reproduction of the pre-revolutionary dispute between Slavophiles versus Westernizers of the XIX century. Speakers of foreign languages normally found their niche in areas of research such as history, philosophy and methodology of science, history of philosophy, history of foreign literature. One such philosophical school was in Novosibirsk, at the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy. Historical research was either descriptive and/or ideologically filtered. For instance, there was a tradition similar to the tradition of women's history. But according to this tradition only those women who were either involved in revolution or belonged to the "progressive" classes deserved scholarly attention. → *PEF?*

The mainstream philosophy of the Soviet times was the so-called dialectical and historical materialism, an eclectic combination of sensualism, naturalism, and progressivism. It failed to provide a theoretical and methodological background for research of any complicated issues of social stratification, discrimination, ethnicity, nationalism. Political theory was embodied in the so-called "scientific communism", a simplified exposition of Marxist ideas about development of human society and its inevitable climax – a socialist revolution as a means of attaining a society of justice and equality. In a sense, the approaches adopted by these constituents of the mainstream philosophy followed the pre-revolutionary tradition of doing philosophy as a worldview, represented by philosophical ideas of the Russian writers. However, unlike pre-Soviet thought, Soviet thought was

characterized by apologetic attitudes and lack of criticism toward the current regime. The critical trends in both speculative and empirical studies were perceived as subversion. Thus, since the so-called "women's question" was declared to be solved, problems such as occupational hazards and discrimination against women were silenced. When in the late 1970s a women's group of Leningrad intellectuals tried to openly address these critical issues they were persecuted and finally expelled.¹⁰ Mainstream empirical sociological research was doomed to be neutral and "prudent". Critical assessments of socialist economy and human condition were rare. This is not to say that there were neither critical minds, nor educated people in the country. They existed and they used all possible means, including Aesopian ones, to communicate their ideas. However, the authorities either ignored¹¹ or classified their results.¹² Managers were operating more on the basis of their own common sense and experience rather than scientific expertise.

Post-Soviet Transformation of the Academia and Emergence of Gender Studies

In the 1990s the Soviet world was opened up to political pluralism as well as to all kind of economic, social, and philosophical influences from the West. One of the scholarly traditions the Soviet world encountered at that time was gender studies. Gender studies in the West emerged as a result of confluence of multiple political, philosophical and scientific elements in the late 1970s: as a cognitive practice of Second Wave feminism, as a political theoretical critique of both the "existing gender order and mainstream social theory".¹³ Scientifically, they originate in various research traditions such as women's studies, research of gender roles in structural functionalism, qualitative research in ethno-methodology and symbolic interactionism, and such traditions as philosophical liberalism, social anthropology (M. Mead), and classical psychoanalysis.

Gender studies in Russia emerged as an appropriation of the Western scholarly tradition; a result of the radical transformation of the political and economic system that was Reconstruction (or *Perestroika*) and Post-Perestroika democratization of The Academy which began in the 1990s. It would be tempting to say that, prior to this historical moment, there existed no scientific tradition to facilitate the emergence of gender studies in Russia; but this is not true. Before the 1990s there existed a tradition of women's history. This form of knowledge was controlled by ideologues who filtered the heroes / heroines of women's history. The focus was on those women who participated in the revolutionary movement and "socialist transformation" of the country. Biographies of artists and actresses were also available, but again not all of them, according to the ideological doctrine, deserved

attention. There also existed a tradition of social anthropology (ethnography), and cultural history represented by famous Moscow-Tartu school that aimed to research everyday life and gendered everyday practices. However, gender studies as informed by the idea of power, represented in the famous definition of gender given by Joan W. Scott, emerged as appropriation of Western concepts (the concept of gender, itself) and theoretical approaches such as social constructivism. Initially, in the early 1990s, the women's history and sociology of women's labour, self-referred as *feminology*; on the one hand, and gender studies as such, on the other, have been separated in a sort of Slavophiles-Westernizers debate, but later the differences blurred.¹⁴

In terms of methods emergence of gender studies meant turning to qualitative methods of research, including oral history, biographical analysis, in-depth interviews, etc. The impact of what is loosely termed *the West* on the constitution of gender studies as a research program was multifaceted: it had an impact on institutional, personal, and discursive levels.

Institutional Development of Gender Studies

In the institutional development of gender studies in Russia, the crucial role belonged to Western funders who started grant systems. In her analysis of the development of Moscow Gender Studies Center and the Laboratory of Gender Issues at the Institute of Socio-Economic Problems of Population L. G. Luniakova mentions that their activities would have been impossible without support of Western funders such as The J. and C. T. MacArthur Foundation, The Ford Foundation, and The Soros Foundation.¹⁵ The introduction of a grants system promoted the marketization of academia, including research, translation, publication, and traveling projects. A researcher's adaptation to the new grant economy depended on direct contacts with Western scholars and journeys to conferences and other professional events. "Gender studies [...] became related to "Westward" geographical mobility and, by this, upward social mobility".¹⁶ One of the most popular destinations for traveling was the Central European University in Budapest, funded by The Open Society Institute. The Institute invited scholars from the *West* so that they would teach and meet scholars from the *Region*. The implications of intensive traveling flows of the academic community are substantial: not only have the Russian scholars and other scholars from the Region acquired the feeling of partaking in the international scientific community, but also *Westerners* got an opportunity to undertake fieldwork in the post-Soviet space. The outcome of these intense exchanges is that Russian gender studies cannot be considered a national project. Gender research in Russia is being conducted by Russian scholars whose work is

being produced "in tandem" with that of a whole cohort of Western scholars, such as Sarah Ashwin, Lynne Attwood, Christa Binswanger, Chatterjee Choi, Elisabeth Cheauré, Therese Garstenauer, Rebecca Kay, Helena Gosciol, Gale Lapidus, Eve Levin, Petra Reithmann, Michele Rivkin-Fish, Anastasia Posadskaja (originally from Russia, now located in the USA), Anna Rotkirch, Rochelle Ruthchild, Irina Savkina (originally from Russia, now located in Finland), Valerie Spertling, Sergei Ushakine (originally from Siberia, now located in the USA), Tatjana Thelen, Elizabeth Wood, and others, whom I might have missed without being afraid to repeat the tale of Sleeping Beauty.

Some of Western scholars are not gender scholars *per se*, but they have substantially contributed to understanding of gender relations in Russia and Region. Those are Caroline Humphrey, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Liliya Kaganovsky, Hilary Pilkington, Jeanmarie Routhier-Willoughby, Nancy Ries, Vera Tolz, and a host of younger-generation scholars who keep the tradition such as Magali Delaloye, Tatiana Khristova (originally from Russia and now located in Switzerland), Francesca Stella and others. Western scholars who study current migration use their knowledge of the Russian gender order to explain everyday practices of Russian migrants in the West.¹⁷ Russian scholars are motivated to become integrated in transnational scholarly networks not only for cognitive reasons but also because participating in these networks improves their status in the new, competitive academic milieu. The connections between scholars are supported through traditional means such as conferences and seminars, but also through mailing lists and electronic correspondence.¹⁸

Discursive Developments

The *discursive* situation has undergone changes adequate to institutional changes of academia. Since gender studies in Russia emerged as the appropriation of Western theory and methodology and were institutionalized under the considerable influence of Western grant providers, they became a discursive project *per se*: "Feminist texts became important for Russian gender studies and helped to raise gender sensitivity of the researchers with reference to their own society; they started to be critical of the cultural patriarchy and discrimination patterns in post-Soviet transformation."¹⁹ A command of English was crucial both in terms of communication with sponsors and in the process of appropriation of the Western canon of gender studies and feminism. Translation of the Western canon of gender studies proved to be one of the major constitutive mechanisms of the new discipline.²⁰ However, since Soviet social theory discourse was constrained by ideological frames, translation proved to be a very complicated task. The mainstream Soviet sociological

and philosophical discourse did not operate with such concepts as *agency* (agent, agential), *empowerment*, *advocacy*, *significant other*, *negotiation* (of identity), and other terms, that constitute the conceptual core of gender studies as a research program. Therefore, a translator had to be one of the major actors of molding of the new discursive area. However, commercialization of translation and the publishing system have substantially undermined the standards of publication and the normative control of the academic community over observing equivalence – the major problem of translation. Western grant providers could not figure out the level of complexity of the "translator's task" (W. Benjamin's wording). Now, the essential part of translation projects was observing strict deadlines. Governmental control did not exist, while the agential powers of social actors were undermined by suppressed personal responsibility under socialism. Professional editors could not be involved in the process of preparation of manuscripts. This combination of factors has produced the phenomenon of naïve translation.²¹ Let me give some examples of naïve editing and translating. A non-professional Russian editor has converted the title of the Michael Kimmel's book "The Gendered Society" (Oxford Univ. Press, 2000) into "The Gender Society" (Moscow, 2006), and thus undermined a good work done by translators of the book. A naïve translator interpreted the title of Luce Irigaray's essay "The Sex which is not One" as "The Sex Which is Not Single."²² Thus, the Russian-speaking reader would have a completely different idea of the text than the English-speaking reader. A naïve translator (by the way, his name is not indicated in the book) of S. Benhabib's book "The Claims of Culture" (Moscow, 2003) thinks that "primordialists" are "researchers of primitive societies" (p. 101), "boat people" are "people who live on boats" (p. 105); that "cultural difference" is "exclusiveness of culture" (p. 103), "kinship patterns" are "examples of relations" (p. 100), "significant others" are "influential people" (p. 60), "advocacy" is "propaganda" (p. 59). Another naïve translator does not understand the principle of intersectionality and in his interpretation of Nancy Fraser's article "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a Post-Socialist Age" unjustly omitted almost all mentions of race.²³

In his essay "The Translator's Task" Walter Benjamin asks a paradoxical question: "Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?"²⁴ Naïve translations seem to be useless for our readers who do not understand the original. But they can be used as a good argument to prove that gender studies as a discursive practice in Russia go beyond national borders. If we understand translation not just as an interpretation of the text but see it as a cultural practice whose meaning goes beyond connotative and referential equivalence, then we can look at it as a performative act having an important pragmatic meaning. Translation, says Homi Bhabha, is a "performative nature of cultural communication."²⁵ Thus, in our case the meaning of the performative act of translation might be understood as

code of collective identification: "We did it! We interpreted Judith Butler/ Nancy Fraser/ Rosi Braidotti/ Joan Scott/ ...! We interpret, therefore we are a part of international gender studies community." The act of translation itself as an identification mechanism might be more significant than the quest for the meaning of originals. After years of forced intellectual separation the feeling of participation in the global enterprise might be essential for the collective identity of social scientist; in this case those who are involved in gender studies.

A symmetrical case of a translation project as a performative act of collective identification has been undertaken by German scholar Christina Parnell who translated her own collection of papers into Russian and published it in Germany.²⁶

Concluding Notes

The concept of gender was borrowed from linguistics by American psychologists in the 1950–60s. This borrowing has caused a wave of scholarly interest in the research of socially produced differences between the sexes. The wave reached the former Soviet Union as a part of the tide of democratization of this Region that occurred in the 1990s. This sea change was felt by the entire regional population, including the academics. By that time the stagnating social sciences and humanities in the Region have been impoverished by schemata of so-called Marxism-Leninism and lack of direct contacts with the international scientific community. Therefore, under transformation transnational connections with colleagues and sponsors have become one of the most essential resources for academic movement and development. Direct human contacts and translations from English have transformed the Regional scholarly discourse. However, this transformation is of a limited scale. First, the hunger for transnational connections and mobility, so natural after decades of complete isolation, seems to outweigh the importance of accurate interpretation of the borrowed concepts and ideas. As such, the facts of translations seem to be perceived as more important (performativity of translation) than the meaning of the translated works. Second, the volume of the international scholarly work that has been done before the Region got access to them is incommensurable to regional intellectual resources. Therefore, the appropriated Western gender studies canon, and the original scholarly work in feminist theory and various gender studies areas (economics, history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, etc.) have still a limited impact on the wider social environment which is one of the major concerns of the gender studies experts in the Region. Though the recent developments I discussed above seem quite novel it is always interesting to see them in a historical perspective. As early as in 1825 Russian writer Alexander Herzen wrote an essay "Dilettantism in Science". In this essay he

addresses the issues of borrowing Western scientific ideas. Herzen argues: "One of the most essential merits of the Russian character is a wonderful ability to perceive and appropriate the fruit of somebody else's labour [...]. However, this merit is at the same a demerit: we rarely demonstrate the ability to engage in intensive labor persistently. We love to bank the fire with somebody else's hands. We think it is right that, through blood and sweat, Europe has obtained every [scientific] truth and discovery, that she suffered all the tribulations of hard pregnancy, difficult delivery and breastfeeding – and the child is ours. We have overlooked the fact that the child is adopted, that we don't have an organic connection with it [...]. Science never gives fruit where it lacks roots: it must grow not only in every nation adopting it, but in every person. Still, we tend to borrow the result and to catch it as we catch flies. But then we open our hand and the hand is empty."²⁷

Alexander Herzen's is known to combine critical evaluation of appropriation of Western ideas by Russian mind and tireless promotion of Western ideas in Russia. It seems to be a healthy combination.

Notes

- 1 Voronina, Olga, "Sotsiokulturnyie factoryi razvitiia gendernoi teorii v Rossii i na Zapade" [Sociocultural Factors of Development of Gender Theory in Russia and in the West], *Obshchestvennyie nauki i sovremennost'* 4 (2000), p. 9–20; Khochina, Zoiia, "Gendernym issledovaniyam v Rossii – desiat' let" [10 years of Gender Studies in Russia], *ibid.*, p. 21–26.
- 2 Wachtel, Andrew, "Translation, Imperialism, and National Self-Definition in Russia", *Public Culture* 11 (1999), p. 49–73; Id., "Perevod kak kulturnaia institutsiia: na granitse sovetskikh konvensiit" [Translation as a Cultural Institute: on the Fringe of the Soviet Conventions], *Novoiie literaturnoie obozreniie* 6 (2008), p. 78–139; Gabowitsch, Mischa, "Spreading the New: Russian Translations in the Humanities and Social Sciences", *Kritika* 12 (2006), p. 13–17.
- 3 Tolz, Vera, *Russia*, London 2001, p. 31 ff.
- 4 Kuznetsova, Natalia, *Sotsio-kulturnyie problemy formirovaniia nauki v Rossii* [Socio-cultural Problems of Formation of Science in Russia], Moscow 1997, Chapter 2.
- 5 Wachtel, Perevod (cf. note 2), p. 132.
- 6 Wachtel, Perevod (cf. note 2), p. 117–118.
- 7 *Kratkii filosofskii slovar'* [A Concise Philosophical Dictionary], Moscow 1954, p. 559–560.
- 8 Dubin, Boris, Samopal, *Slovo – Pis'mo – Literatura* [Word, Writing, Literature. Essays on Sociology of Modern Culture], Moscow 2001, p. 292 ff.
- 9 Richmond, Yale, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War. Raising the Iron Curtain*, University Park PA 2003.
- 10 Aivazova, Svetlana, *Russkie zhenskiny v labirintie ravnopravniia* [Russian Women in the Labyrinth of Equality], Moscow 1998, p. 93–99.
- 11 For an evidence of this situation see: Grushin, Boris, "Gor'kii vkus nevostrebovanosti" [A Bitter Taste of Being Ignored], *Rossiiskaia sotsiologia 60-ih godov* [Russian Sociology of the 1960s], Saint-Petersburg 1999, p. 205–228.
- 12 Josephson, Paul R., *New Atlantis Revisited. Akademgorodok, the Siberian City of Science*, Princeton 1997, p. 243–249.

- 13 Zdravomyslova Elena; Temkina, Anna, "Gender and Women's Studies in Contemporary Russia", in: Bidwell-Steiner, Marlen; Wozonig, Karin S. (ed.), *A Canon of Our Own? Kanonkritik und Kanonbildung in den Gender Studies*. Innsbruck 2006, p. 242.
- 14 Zdravomyslova, Temkina (cf. note 13), p. 241.
- 15 Lunnikova, Larissa, "Vklad laboratorii gendernykh problem ISPEN RAN i MCCGR v razvitiie i rasprostraneniie gendernykh znaniy" [Contribution of the Laboratory of Gender Issues of Institute of Socio-economic Problems of Population of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow Gender Studies Center in the Development and Spreading of Gender Knowledge], in: *Gendernyie stereotipy v sovremennoi Rossii*, Moscow 2007, p. 302.
- 16 Gapova, Elena, On „Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition and What We Saw There" <http://www.iub.edu/~reiwelb/events/2005/Gapova%20paper.pdf>.
- 17 Cf. Borchardt, Ilka, "Russischsprachige Lesben tanzen in Berlin – Freizeitkultur als transnational/transkultureller Raum?", this collection.
- 18 Zdravomyslova, Elena; Temkina, Anna, "Avtonomizatsiia gendernykh issledovaniy v transnatsional'nom prostranstve" [Autonomization of Gender Studies in Transnational Space] <http://www.gender.univer.kharkov.ua/gunad/15>.
- 19 Zdravomyslova, Temkina (cf. note 13), p. 242.
- 20 Gapova (cf. note 16).
- 21 The phenomenon of native translation exists not only in the field of gender studies. Other cases of native translations are translations of "The problem of trust" by A. Seligman (Moscow 2002), "Orientalism" by E. Said (Saint-Petersburg 2006), "The Transformation of Intimacy" by A. Giddens, Collins Dictionary of Sociology by D. Jary and J. Jary (Moscow 1999), etc.
- 22 Zherebkin, Sergei (ed.), *Vvedeniie v gendernyie issledovaniia* [Introduction in Gender Studies]. *A Reader*, Part II, Kharkov 2001, p. 127–135.
- 23 Zherebkin (cf. note 22), p. 258–288. On implications of these and other native interpretations see: Barchunova, Tatiana, "A Library of Our Own? Feminist Translations From English into Russian", in: Bidwell-Steiner, Wozonig (cf. note 13), p. 133–147.
- 24 Benjamin, Walter, «Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers», in: Ders., *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. IV/1, Frankfurt a. M. 1972, p. 9–21, cited after Rendall, Steven, «The Translator's Task», Walter Benjamin (Translation)», *translation, terminologie, rédaction* 10 (1997), p. 151–165, p. 151.
- 25 Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, London 1994, p. 326.
- 26 Parnel, Christina, *Golosa drugikh. Zhenshchiny i men'shinstvo v postsoverskoi literature* [Voices of Others. Women and Minorities in Post-Soviet Literature], Fichtenwalde 2004. The collection also has papers in English.
- 27 Herzen, Alexander, *Sobremnie sochinenii v 8 tomakh* [Collection of Works in 8 Volumes], Vol. 2, Moscow 1975, p. 8 (translation T. B.).

CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL

Von der kulturellen Differenz zur nationalen Identität Kulturtransfer und Geschlecht in der Spätaufklärung am Beispiel der «Deutschen Enckyclopädie»

In einer programmatischen Einführung in das Thema «Frauenräume» hat Karin Hausen 1992 gefordert, das Forschungsinteresse der historischen Geschlechterforschung verstärkt auch auf die Räume zu richten, in denen Frauen lebten und arbeiteten, die sie (mit-)gestaltet und von denen ihre Beziehungen zu anderen Menschen geprägt wurden. Dabei betont sie zu Recht, dass «Räume [...] nicht durch greifbare Wände abgeteilt sein [müssen]. Auch das zwischen Menschen ausgetauschte Wissen über Grenzlinien kann ausreichen, um Räume auszumessen und zuzuweisen. Häufig genug sind Räume mit symbolischen Bedeutungen ausgestattet.»¹

Des Weiteren weist sie darauf hin, dass in der historischen Entwicklung Europas Geschlechterbeziehungen und Geschlechterrolle stark variierten und dass sie insbesondere im Übergang von der ständischen zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft einem eminenten Deutungs- und Bedeutungswandel unterworfen waren. Besonders im 19. Jahrhundert wurde nämlich, so schreibt sie weiter, «viel Energie darauf gewandt, die Frauen- und Männerbereiche deutlich gegeneinander abzugrenzen. Frauen- und Männerräume sollten verschieden ausgestaltet und die Kontakte und Überlappungen von einem Raum zum anderen gesellschaftlich kontrolliert werden.»² Diese Versuche waren aber langfristig nicht erfolgreich, weil deren Voraussetzung, die Kontrollierbarkeit kleiner Raumeinheiten, im Zuge von Verstädterung, Industrialisierung und wachsender Mobilität verschwanden. Immerhin blieben sie aber noch lange Zeit in den Konzepten von «Öffentlichkeit» und «Privatheit» wirksam und strukturierten dauerhaft die Vorstellungen von der Positionierung der Geschlechter in Gesellschaft und Geschichte, was einerseits dazu führte, Frauen langfristig von bestimmten «Orten» bzw. gesellschaftlichen (Führungs-)Positionen fernzuhalten, zum anderen aber bis heute ganz direkt dafür sorgt, dass anders geartete Geschlechterbeziehungen und -orte – etwa in ausser-europäischen Gesellschaften oder in fernerer historischer Vergangenheit – kaum wahrgenommen bzw. in unangemessener Weise gedeutet werden. Ich möchte diese Überlegungen im Folgenden aufgreifen und den (Be-)Deutungswandel eines weiblichen Raumes genauer in den Blick nehmen, nämlich das