Global Feminisms
Comparative Thematic Studies
Women’s Activism and Research

RUSSIA

Interviewee: Marianna Georgievna Murav’eva
Interviewer: Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva

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University of Michigan
Women’s Studies Institute
1136 Lane Hall Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1290, USA
Telephone: 1 (734) 764-9537

Email: um.gfp@umich.edu
Web-site: http://www.umich.edu/~lblfem

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Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva was born on September 23rd, 1959 in Moscow, Russia. She is currently a Professor, Chief Research Fellow, and the Head of the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences. Her interests include gender history, history of family relations, the social anthropology of the academic community, as well as the history of sexuality in medieval, modern, and contemporary Russia. The chief editor of the yearbook Sotsial’naiia istoriia (Social History), she also serves as president of the Russian Association for Research in Women’s History. From 1981 to 2016, she has edited more than thirty essay collections, published dozens of articles for both academic and non-academic magazines, and written dictionary and encyclopedia entries as well as monographs. Pushkareva is considered to be a principal founder of the field of women’s studies in Russia.

The Global Feminisms Project is a collaborative international oral history project that examines feminist activism, women’s movements, and academic women’s studies in sites around the world. Housed at the University of Michigan, the project was started in 2002 with a grant from the Rackham Graduate School. The virtual archive includes interviews from women activists and scholars from Brazil, China, India, Nicaragua, Poland, and the United States.

Our collaborator in Russia is Dr. Natal’ia L. Pushkareva, who gathered a diverse group of feminist scholar-activists and colleagues for the Russia portion of the Global Feminisms Project and conducted the majority of the interviews. Our work in Russia was supported by a Collaborative Planning Grant from University of Michigan’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender.
Natal’ia Pushkareva: Marianna Georgina Murav’eva, a professor at the Department of Theory and History of Law at the National Research University Higher School of Economics. Marianna Georgievna, please tell us about your life and your career. Where are you at in your career right now? How do you evaluate how far you have come, to what extent you’ve accomplished and what remains to be done?

Marianna Murav’eva: It’s hard to say. It’s especially hard to say at which stage you are at a given moment because you can’t be certain what’s still coming. Even with a well-planned life and career, it’s difficult to determine internally and subjectively where you are at and at the same time to take into account some academic milestones. I think, I’m somewhere in the middle of my journey because of my biological age, and possibly, because of my academic age. There are still heights to conquer, while I’ve achieved some things. My sense is that quite a bit has been accomplished but that’s not... But those accomplishments aren’t the most significant part of my professional or personal life. And maybe it’s quite a positive feeling. I think that...

NP: Please share with us how your life started out?

MM: With birth, I’d have to say, like usual.

NP: What year was that?

MM: I was born in 1975, way back in the Soviet period. By Soviet standards, my family was considered well-off. My father was in the military and had a high rank. He retired. In addition, he was a member of the Communist Party, of course, and at some point he was also a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet, but that had no impact on our situation because he was an honest Bolshevik and he believed that we should live like everyone else, without privileges. Not that that upset me because I grew up with an understanding that a family of a party member had to be more disciplined, more self-sacrificing, and more stringent. That is, I had to be better than everyone else because we belonged to the party elite. That was his conviction. I think that upbringing served me well because later I was a pioneer, I was a Komsomol...
member,⁴ and a Chair of the Pioneer School Board. I was very happy that the Komsomol⁵ disbanded as soon as I became a member.

**NP: Did you hear anything about feminism and the women’s movement in those days, in the seventies?**

MM: No, they said… that’s not the right way to put it. There was official discourse about women’s rights; and when I was in school, it was discernible in all the rhetoric of the Pioneers⁶ and the Komsomol: "You women should be… You are Soviet women... You have to do this, you have to do that." But all of this certainly existed, of course, alongside with everyday discrimination and sexism: “You’re girls, you shouldn’t be fighting. You have to wear your skirts just right and braid your hair.” And, of course, there was an immediate dissonance. But because I grew up in a military family, this dissonance for me was not as perceptible because I went to school in military towns – because, of course, my father was sent to remote areas and we went with him. In a military town things were a bit different: there were few children, we did everything together – played soccer and hopscotch together. And so, it seemed as if there was no clear gender division. So it was very surprising for me, when I went to an ordinary, well ordinary... a more or less advanced school, to see I was so such clear segregation and gender division between boys and girl, between what was masculine and feminine. At first, I was surprised. And I constantly clashed with this Leningrad⁷—Leningrad in quotation marks because this could apply to any urban Soviet area—with this urban gendered order, where everyone constantly reminded me that I couldn’t play soccer, or that I couldn’t do this, I couldn’t do that, because I’m a girl and as a girl I was supposed to do other things. So I was constantly surprised. And it was a huge problem for me. Even at the university I constantly clashed with this. But for some reason it did not break my desire to be myself and ignore gender stereotypes.

**NP: At that time, when you entered the university, what was your goal? Was it to teach or to do research? How did the subject of women appear in your studies?**

MM: It was not initially there. My issue was, when I enrolled in the university, I knew that I would be a scholar. This is quite uncommon. I understand that with a lot of... I have been teaching for 20 years and only a few of my students know what they want to be in their first

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⁴ Notes to the transcript suggest Murav'eva misspeaks here. She was a candidate member, and the Komsomol disbanded before she became a full member.

⁵ Komsomol (Коммунистический Союз Молодёжи/ Kommunisticheskiy Soyuz Molodyozhi) was established as a political youth organization in 1918 and was completely independent from the CPSU. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomol)

⁶ Pioneers or Russian Pionery, was a former Soviet organization for children aged 9 to 14 with a motto of “Pioneer, be ready to fight for the cause of the Communist Party!” to educate youth to be loyal to communism. [https://russiapedia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/pioneers/](https://russiapedia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/pioneers/)

⁷ Leningrad was the name of Saint Petersburg from the time of Lenin's death in 1924 until 1991. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leningrad_(disambiguation)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leningrad_(disambiguation))
year. Some of them, even in their fourth year, still don’t know what they want. And that, of course, sometimes worried us, teachers or the older generation. But for me it was all a little boring because I knew from the start that I would be a scholar. I had no doubts. I still have no doubts that I chose the right career, which, as I understand of others, is rare.

Before I started university, when I returned to Leningrad from all our military bases, I studied in a specialized history group. At that time, in the late eighties, there was a movement to create specialized groups in schools that conducted in-depth study of specific subjects, such as geography, philology and history. But the lecturers themselves, the teachers themselves... I lucked out with my first and my second history teachers. Both of them were passionate about their subject, and they attempted to teach us at the university level. (At least what the university level was then in 1987, 1988.) They poured their hearts into us; we had many hours of history classes per week; they invited university professors to lecture us; we understood what it was like to think for ourselves and think independently. And then later we had perestroika\(^8\), the destabilization of the party line. We learned very quickly not to interrogate sources and not to respect authoritative opinions without proof. I was very fortunate to be in this class. So, when I was in 9th and 10th grade, I participated in our city Olympiads\(^9\) on history, and the subjects that I selected at the time and other times were quite thought-provoking. The subjects I picked were, surprising for me because I was for a long time a student of English history, on Russian history. One of them was *The Evaluation of Boris Godunov\(^{10}\)*'s Reign in Russian Historiography. I was so struck by how variously Godunov has been perceived throughout history. I still remember how various historians... And suddenly I got it: the evaluation of Godunov depended often on the political situation and the time in which the historian wrote. Yet, no one viewed him positively. This was so surprising for me because for some reason I thought that Godunov was an elected Tsar\(^{11}\), a democratically chosen Tsar, and therefore he should have been seen positively.\(^{12}\) That started me thinking about an academic career. My teachers helped me so much, and I had no problems. I easily

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\(^{8}\) Perestroika was a policy proposed by Leonid Brezhnev in 1979 and widely associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. It referred to the goal of meeting Soviet citizens’ needs through liberal economics. Although it aimed to make socialism more effective, it actually created shortages and tensions that were responsible for the dissolution of the USSR. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika)

\(^{9}\) Soviet and post-Soviet schools regularly hold academic competitions, called Olympiads, in various subjects, such as history, geography, physics, etc.

\(^{10}\) Boris Fyodorovich Godunov was a member of an ancient Russian family of Tatar origin, who ruled the Tsardom of Russia from c. 1585 to 1598 as de facto regent. He was also the first non-Rurikid tsar from 1598 to 1605. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Godunov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Godunov)

\(^{11}\) Tsar is a title to nominate supreme leaders of Eastern Europe or East and South Slavic monarchs. The word “Tsar” means “Emperor.” Tsardom of Russia means the state from when Tsar Ivan IV held power in 1547 until Peter the Great established the Russian Empire in 1721. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsar)

\(^{12}\) Tsars before and after Godunov received their position by way of birth and divine right.
matriculated... easily? I matriculated easily enough, yes – I got in with 20-something points on the entrance exam and with the point for my school grades and everything, I got into Herzen State Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad. I wanted to go to university—I was talked out of it—and I am very glad that they talked me out of it. I am very glad I did not go there, because I ended up in the experimental course, at the History Faculty (which was renamed the Faculty of Social Sciences when I was there). They introduced a brand-new program and replaced regular history courses with the history of civilizations, and replaced... added a number of additional subjects, sociology, political science, and so on, which were taught differently than in Soviet times. Our professors—I’ve consistently been lucky with professors—they tried to teach us everything that they had only just learned for themselves. In my first year no one discouraged us from research; on the contrary, all of them were so supportive.

Unfortunately, it quickly came to an end. I wanted to specialize in Russian history to continue my research; however, the Russianists were not so flexible when it came to innovation. Because I was always suggesting new approaches, which I believed for whatever reason would be important. I finally went to the General History Department where innovation was welcomed. I became involved with English history of the XVII-XVIII centuries because everyone in that department supported me. They thought it was a waste of time to reproduce the things that were already written, that it was important to be an independent thinker and to try to offer a new interpretation if you couldn’t use original archival sources (which were not available in those years because I couldn’t visit England and work in those archives). But I could use published sources, I could read books that were at the time available in the library. This was before the Internet and digital era. And the subject of women came about because I went into social history and family history. It happened so quickly. I studied the history of aristocracy, and I was immediately interested in demographics of reproduction of the English elite. At that time, the subject of women, it was not only about women, it was gender-based, because this was British historiography, the concept of gender studies was already completely acceptable and a part of any social history, although Lawrence Stone was still alive. He constantly mocked women’s history. By the way, Lawrence Stone was my second thesis reviewer at Oxford, where I was finishing my thesis. He was very sexist, and he condescendingly said, "Well, of course, you women should study the subject of women – marriage and family – it’s all good, it’s helpful." I was terribly offended, but... though I was offended – unfortunately, he died that very year—it was 1998 when he did my dissertation review and died that year—you can’t stay upset with someone after that.

I think that it was my studies of English history, because I had an amazing academic advisor, who guided me since my second year, starting with my first term paper. My first term paper on this subject was The English Peerage: Class or Estate? A Critique of the Marxist

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13 Now Herzen University.

14 Russianists are people who learn about and are experts on Russian culture, history and language. [https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Russianist](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Russianist)
Understanding of Class Theory. And I remember the departmental meeting when I gave a talk about Marx\textsuperscript{15} erroneously classifying as class-based the English society of the XVIII century, during the era of the industrial revolution. Naturally, this caused an uproar from professors, who all scolded because IBut the head of the department, a specialist in Soviet-American relations Viktor Konstantinovich Furaev\textsuperscript{16}s dared to question Marx... aid,"Marianna, you are a real scholar, you were not scared to lay out your theory logically." I was very pleased, but it was still terrifying. Because of the political attitude toward Marx or any other relationship with him as a thinker or philosopher—yes, this was already 1992—so as a philosopher he was a sufficiently recognized authority and enjoyed the same amount of respect as before the fall of the Soviet Union. No one had yet cancelled the theory of political economy just because the Soviet Union fell apart.

NP: What were your next key milestones – your dissertation defense in the early nineties?

MM: First, I defended my Bachelor’s thesis, which was on the subject of socio-demographic characteristics of the English peerage and in which I first used the word gender. For the first time I encountered resistance to this term from my defense opponent, who was quite young at the time, advanced and, I thought at that time, progressive, Sergey Egorovich Fedorov (he is now a full professor at the Department of the Middle Ages at the Leningrad State University, now St. Petersburg State University). The fact that he didn’t think much of my Bachelor’s work didn’t stop me; it was easy for me to get accepted to graduate school afterwards. Because at that time my degree was not only a Bachelor’s degree, but also a specialist’s degree.\textsuperscript{17} So it’s was not like now; I entered the graduate school afterwards. I should note here that it was at the graduate school at the Department of Modern and Contemporary History at the St. Petersburg State University, where I encountered such undisguised and reactionary sexism and rejection of gender and women’s studies. At the time Komissarov, a specialist in the history of Latin America, was head of the department; he was not negative but not supportive either. I did not get any support or encouragement for

\textsuperscript{15} Karl Marx was a German philosopher, historian, and sociologist who lived from 1818 to 1883. His main theories, often known as Marxism, were that human societies evolve through class struggle and that capitalism would create internal tensions and ultimately be replaced by socialism using historical materialism. He believed the working class should achieve socio-economic emancipation through well-organized revolutions, and the progress of class consciousness would lead to the formation of a classless, communist world. His political ideas were widely discussed and had a huge influence on modern social science. \url{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx}

\textsuperscript{16} As M. Morav’eva states, V. K. Furaev (1921 - 1999) did indeed serve as a professor in the History Department at The Leningrad State Pedagogical Institute. He authored and edited several books, and the one volume that relates most explicitly to the subject expertise M. Morav’eva associates him with is aptly titled \textit{Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1939} (Sovetsko-amerikanske otnoshenia, 1917-1939). Moscow: Mysł, 1964.

\textsuperscript{17} Russia moved to the Bologna Process of degree granting only in 2003. Before that time, in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, students studied for five to six years and received the Western equivalent of an MA.
this topic in my graduate career there. Again, I lucked out with my thesis advisor, Kirill Borisovich Vinogradov (a specialist in the liberal history of the XIX century England), though he didn’t understand my topic. Despite that, he was a great writer, an old party member, and approved of what I did. He always told me, "I understand, it’s good. What I don’t understand is why you need to do such... such... that's sociology, not history." I replied, "But it's the XVII century, how is it not history?" And he said, "No, this has nothing to do with history because, in his understanding, history was a liberal Whig's historiography, stories that we tell which include the analysis of political and economic processes."

NP: What subjects interested you... women's, in what way were they women's histories?

MM: I studied marriage and family at the time, and I continued with socio-demographics. I began to study marriage and the family initially from a demographic point of view. And because there was a lot of literature on the subject—it was 1996—, already a huge amount of literature, it was just the time when studies on marriage and family was developing, and gender history too. I started reading so much... so much on gender and feminism. For me probably... of course, I knew about feminism before, but now I was learning about theory that would be interesting and applicable for me. This is what I was learning in graduate school.

NP: Did you have to read it in English?

MM: Yes, of course. Nothing was available in Russian, only the traditional stories about women in England, outside of England, and in Russia. The book by Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva's Women of Ancient Rus’ remained interesting, of course. It was available—there’s no getting away from it—but it did not match my interests. So much was available in English, and it helped me tremendously because if I had studied history of Russia, I would be again in a void of information. But for British history, there was a ton of information at my disposal. And it was top quality, with high standards. I had to begin with Judith Butler's

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18 Referring to CPSU.

19 Whiggish refers to "a view which holds that history follows a path of inevitable progression and improvement and which judges the past in light of the present." [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Whiggish](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Whiggish)

20 Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva (23 Sep 1959-) is a Russian-Soviet historian and a faculty member of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology Russian Academy of Science who focuses on gender history and social anthropology. She was a founder of the field of women's studies in Russia and is the interviewer. [https://iea-ras.academia.edu/NataliaPushkareva](https://iea-ras.academia.edu/NataliaPushkareva)

21 Judith Pamela Butler (24 Feb 1956-) teaches at the Department of Comparative Literature and the Program of Critical Theory of the University of California as the Maxine Elliot Professor. She is a gender/queer theorist and philosopher. She supports lesbian and gay rights movements publicly and promotes the theory of gender performativity in her most well-known book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Butler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Butler)
writings because so many specialists referenced her work on masculinity and gender identity. At the time, I was more interested in the subject of men than women, because I wanted to know how the masculinity of elites was pushing them toward specific social practices (for example, violence). By the way, it was the subject of violence that finally got me. At the time, that's what guided me to the topic of women. Because at that time domestic violence, violence towards the wife, spousal violence, and sexual violence became my research interests. It's been a long-standing interest. It continues into the present. Yes, this was in the late nineties, in 1997. I defended my dissertation in 1999. My dissertation was called *Marriage and Family in the English Aristocracy*. And I will never forget the moment: I came to Moscow and spoke with Lorina Petrovna Repina, who was at the time the head of the section, a specialist in England, and so on. When I handed her my paper, she said nervously, "All these feminists are thinking that I am going to give some feedback on feminists, I won't do it for you." I replied, "This has nothing to do with feminism, did you read the abstract? It's about marriage and family." She said, "It doesn't matter. I don't know why those coming to me are only feminists. I am not a feminist." And I asked her then, "You just recently wrote a book on gender history, how could you study gender without feminism?" And she told me that they are completely different concepts: gender is about men and women and feminism is a collection of radical notions about men. I was stunned that a full professor and a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences could speak so unprofessionally on these topics. What surprised me was not the negative view of feminism—anyone can be negative about anything—but her lack of professionalism in her assessment of what feminist theory is. If you know what feminist theory is and are negative about it, that’s one thing. And if you don’t know and are negative, then questions about your professionalism arise. And... and eventually that’s how I arrived at what I have been doing for many years. I am still involved with sexual violence, what is called “gender-based violence” (violence based on gender discrimination); and I’m interested in the history of violence as a whole, in women’s history, in women’s rights, and in violence against women in the modern world. I have a second degree in law. Eventually, my research brought me into activism For a long time I worked in different kinds of volunteer projects, at shelters, and with many types of activist projects on the subject of modern gender discrimination.

**NP:** So, your research topic had an impact on your public image, wouldn't you agree?

**MM:** Yes, exactly. Yes, all the time for me... it probably had something to do with my upbringing, that I always had to do something, I couldn’t just leave it alone. And I always wanted to do something. Suddenly, with gender research it became easy, because it was possible not only to do research but also to participate in gender education (to teach students and so on); all of a sudden, there were such numerous issues in this area that it was possible to do activist work with these organizations.

**NP:** What impact did your research have on your activities outside of the university and the family? In what form did you your cooperate or interact with other women’s organizations, perhaps, international or foreign ones, or those organizations in our country, etc.? We know that there was so much interest in the nineties on the topic of
gender; summer schools and conferences on the subject appeared. How did that activity in the 90s affect your life? Or did it pass you by?

MM: I did not participate in any projects on women or gender in the nineties. I didn’t apply for grants because I did not think it was possible, I thought I was doing something different than what grants funded at the time. The MacArthur Foundation22, Ford Foundation23 and the others. It was in 2001, when, for the first time, I went to a conference on gender, a school in Pharos24. There I met Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva and other scholars who were involved at the time with this subject. I began my teaching at in the History Department at the Herzen State Pedagogical Institute as a lecturer, as an assistant. I taught a course called “Comparative Gender History of Russia and Europe.” This was in 1999. This course was taught at the same time as another. I was in the Department of World History. Valentina Veremenko from the Russian History Department taught the other course, a course on the history of the women’s movement. She defended her dissertation on Russian noble families, now she is a full professor and studies women’s issues. Valentina never employed gender theory or feminism in her work. She simply described the history of the women’s movement, which was interesting—well, actually not very interesting. Anyway, as soon as I announced my course—this was at a time when students at all Russian higher educational institutions could now choose their courses—all the students came over to my course and Valentina became very upset with me. She kept thinking that “you’re luring them all over to the West” because I was teaching about England or France. But I think that students were interested because they wanted to know the theory, not just to hear about women’s organizations. They wanted to understand why it all happened, and I think that I, a young scholar who had read all this gender history and gender theory from the perspective of a feminist analysis of history, offered them an interpretative framework. I think these naïve... but my students liked it. They were, similar to me, because they also were searching, looking for their identity; they also tried to understand their past, women and men, how they are constructing their identity, how it was in the past, today, and so on.

When I went to Pharos in 2001, for the first time I met other people interested in gender. I was amazed that they existed, that so many were involved with that. There were quite a few of us at that school. This was not the first such school of Russian gender scholars. Earlier, I edited a collection Gender History: Pro et Contra, which was published in 2000. The article I contributed was my independent study; I read so much, I read everything that was written

22 The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, founded in 1970, is the 12th-largest private foundation; it supports non-profit organizations around the world by providing grants. It intends to support "creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MacArthur_Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MacArthur_Foundation)

23 The Ford Foundation was created in 1936 to reduce poverty and injustice and advance human welfare. It has remained the largest private endowment in the world for many years, with assets of US$12.4 billion and grants of US$507.9 million. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Foundation)

24 It should be the Crimean city of Foros, which was the site of conferences on gender in the early 2000s.
in Russia about this subject. So when I arrived in Faros\textsuperscript{25}, I knew their names and their works; but, of course, I did not know their faces. I had existed independently for so long; honestly, that’s why the nineties passed me by.

However, in 2001, 2002 I started working in the Law Department and became interested in legal topics, although I had started with marriage and family. In any event, it was a legal topic - marriage and family law. But that wasn’t enough for me... By chance, I became involved with a center for teens \textit{Juventa}, which assisted pregnant teenage girls. The organization not only offered abortions, but also counseled them, helped them find solutions if their families kicked them out of the house, and so on. My friend worked at this center and the organization needed more hands, literally, and she just invited me. She had her own personal tragedy, an incident with her... her uncle killed her aunt and attempted to kill two of her young cousins. They survived. To help the boys cope, she decided to ask me to talk to them, perhaps as an outsider, to occupy them with something, and she asked me to give them history lessons – it would keep them busy. That’s how all of us ended up at \textit{Juventa}. So I worked there for a year. I worked with them for a year and it was such an emotionally difficult time because this was my first experience working with girls, most of them were victims of sexual violence, the vast majority by their stepfathers or fathers. As a result, they ended up in the streets, fled from their families, became sex workers and got sick and pregnant. Our job was to help them, sometimes to find them a place to stay for the night. Incidentally, we worked a lot with Russian Orthodox\textsuperscript{26} organizations at that time, which were very different then. Women’s and sisterhood communities, as was traditional in old Rus\textsuperscript{27}, helped us and didn’t even try to convert them to Christianity. At the time I had good relationships with several of them: they always took in the girls, they fed them, took care of them and treated them, while the girls were deciding what to do about their pregnancies... this was my first experience.

Naturally, it got me thinking more about activist work and what each and every one of us can do in our current jobs. I did not want to change my job and devote myself only to this. On the contrary, it sort of made me think about what each of us can do as we are. At the time, because I was a lecturer, a historian, and a scholar, I thought about what I could do from my position. Gender education is obviously great, but perhaps another approach would be better. That pushed me to... Well, since I always participated in these conferences; and as a British historian and a specialist in British history, I was always a part of it and was a member of the

\textsuperscript{25} Faros (37°40′18″N 26°20′57″E) is a village located at the southeast end of the island of Ikaria, Greece. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faros

\textsuperscript{26} The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), often known as the Moscow Patriarchate, is associated with Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and its primate is the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus.’ It is separated from the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church

\textsuperscript{27} Old Rus’, or Kievan Rus’, is a common way of referring to the territories and peoples from whom contemporary Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians claim cultural heritage.
British Social History Society, in which those interested in gender had some pull. A lot of people were part of this. Then later there came a women’s network of British historians “The Women’s History Society.” I was also a member of this society because I was working on marriage and family; naturally, everyone ended up a member. That’s how I connected with the International Federation for Research in Women’s History who study women’s history. As it turned out, they were having some problems with the creation of a Russian national committee, which I felt we Russian scholars were needed to do. And because we had so many specialists in women’s history and gender history at the time, I together with Natal’ia L’vovna Pushkareva, Natal’ia Novikova, and a few more women who joined us.—Later came Zinara Mukhina and many others (it’s quite a large organization)—we formally organized our Russian division or the “Russian national committee,” which is now called RAIZHI (Russian Association for Research in Women’s History). In 2008 we held our first conference in St. Petersburg and nearly 150 people attended. We did it without any extra money, our membership dues paid for sandwiches, we cut them up and assembled them. To hold the conference, I used the space at the Herzen Federal State Institution at the time, which proved large enough to serve our needs: we shared our ideas and interacted. I would like to note that there was a lot of negativity not only from the outside, but also from within the feminist community. Many said that this was going to be the only conference and there will never be another, which turned out to be untrue. These conferences have been held annually since then. Now it’s 2016, and another conference will take place in Smolensk this year. This was a proper initiative, perhaps, because we did not think about where to get the funding. That is: we didn’t think, “we are going to do it only if we get the funding.” We just did it, and the money was a secondary issue. In other words, we knew that if we wanted to conduct gender research and science in general, we, as women, had to get together and make it happen. I have to admit that our national committee was not our first attempt at creating an organization. Olga Shnyrova tried to do it first and the same thing happened. They held

28 For more on the Social History Society, see http://socialhistory.org.uk/

29 The International Federation for Research in Women’s History (IFRWH), was founded in 1987 and organizes international conferences. It aims “to encourage and coordinate research in all aspects of women’s history at international level...” and is affiliated with the International Committee of Historical Sciences. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Federation_for_Research_in_Women%27s_History

30 Zinara Mukhina is a faculty member at the Department of Humanitarian Studies of the National University of Science and Technology MISIS. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Zinara_Mukhina

31 Smolensk is the administrative center of Smolensk Oblast, Russia with a population of 326,861 (2010 Census). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smolensk

32 Olga Shnyrova (Feb 1985-) is an associate professor and researcher of history at Ivanovo State University as well as the director of the Ivanovo Center for Gender Studies. She is a member of the board of the Russian Association of the Researchers in Women’s History and the American Association of the Advanced Slavic Studies. She has participated in projects of UNESCO and UNDP and has arranged summer schools for NGO leaders in Europe and Russia. https://independent.academia.edu/oshnyrova https://ru.linkedin.com/in/olga-shnyrova-11954832
a conference in Ivanovo, but nothing came of it. Olga Shnyrova is a part of our Russian national committee, but she failed to establish a permanent organization. It's important to mention her here because she holds the honor of trying to do it first, I think in 2003.

NP: Were you aware in those days of any other women's organizations that were not involved with women's history, but represented an independent women's movement? They began showing up in the nineties independent of state initiative while the Soviet Women's Committee was completely dormant. An independent women's movement began at the end of the Soviet era, but only a limited number of researchers knew about it and the events organized by its members. Were they talking about this in universities or St. Petersburg at the time?

MM: Again, we intellectuals only interacted with each other, and when I finally became a part of the gender studies crowd, the women's movement became clear to me. Because I am first and foremost a scholar, when I was working on my book Gender History: Pro et Contra, I read everything available in Russian that had the words gender and woman in the title. Actually, a lot of them were useless, essentialist publications about how to act like a lady. But among my readings, quite a few publications came from the women's movement, and the women who were a part of it. For example, the Zabelins, a mother and daughter active at that time, produced a lot of literature; they weren't scholars but activists. Natalia Khodareva wrote about that Women's Crisis Center, which we in Petersburg knew about because it was the only one, there weren't any others. And, of course, they published too. However, again, if they hadn't published, most likely you and I wouldn't have known about them. The one we heard about all the time was, of course, Ekaterina Lakhova and her Party "Women of Russia." It wasn't very clear what they were doing exactly, besides offering some initiatives. They attempted to promote a law on gender equality, but it was shelved in 2003, and it hasn't moved from there since and never will. Never say never, but for now it's shelved. As long as we have these traditional values. And so I wouldn't say that we intellectuals knew about these organizations, that there were many of them, no, but they were out there. But if, if... Of

33 Ivanovo is the administrative center of Ivanovo Oblast, Russia with a population of 408,330 (2010 Census). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivanovo

34 The Committee of Soviet Women was established in September 1941 to unify the efforts made by women of the USSR and foreign countries to encourage peace among nations. It has belonged to the Women's International Democratic Federation since 1945, and published Sovetskaia zhenschina (Soviet Women) in ten languages with the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Committee+of+Soviet+Women

35 Ekaterina Filippovna Lakhova (26 May 1948-) is a politician from Russia and the former deputy of the State Duma of VI convocations. She is also the Chairman of the Union of Women of Russia and a member of the Federation Council; she is one of the authors of Dima Yakovlev Law and the main supports of the introduction of juvenile justice in Russia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekaterina_Lakhova

36 The All-Russian Socio-Political Movement of Women of Russia, often shortened to "Women of Russia" was founded by Ekaterina Filippovna Lakhova in 1996. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_of_Russia
course, I wasn't a part of the aloof intellectual crowd that included many of my colleagues who studied whatever, like France in the Middle Ages, the Nine Years’ War\textsuperscript{37}, the French Revolution\textsuperscript{38}, blah blah blah. But they didn't understand gender theory. For them gender theory and feminism were something that they couldn’t understand the reason behind. It seemed to them something for special, something that the political situation favored, something that got money and financing, etc. but was ultimately unimportant. So that’s why they were suspicious and skeptical; and, of course, they knew nothing about women’s organizations that used some of this theory.

**NP:** Were you yourself interested and was it necessary for you to know about women's organizations connected with feminism?

**MM:** To know about women's organizations connected with feminism?

**NP:** Most importantly, with feminist theory and how important was feminist theory in your research interests at the time? The early modern period is far from the collection of ideas that we commonly understand as feminism, etc. How relevant and necessary was this type of knowledge?

**MM:** Feminist theory was definitely necessary for the study of the early modern period because of the discussions of patriarchy at that time: Filmer\textsuperscript{39}, Locke\textsuperscript{40}. Again, being an expert, I was fortunate. you could interpret the Filmer-Locke debate in terms of "Locke is trying to prove to Filmer that the king's power is not absolute". That is how Soviet textbooks, traditional textbooks on political theory interpreted their debate, but I wasn’t satisfied with that reading. It was obvious to me that Locke, particularly in his First Treatise of

\textsuperscript{37} The Nine Years’ War (1688-1697), also referred to as the War of the Grand Alliance, was between the European coalition of 6 countries and Louis XIV of France. The fighting mainly took place in the areas of France's borders, in the Duchy of Savoy, the Rhineland, and the Spanish Netherlands. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Years%27_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Years%27_War)

\textsuperscript{38} The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a political upheaval that altered the course of modern history by stimulating the trend of replacing absolute monarchies with liberal democracies around the world. It was triggered mainly by discontent with the poor economic policies of King Louis XVI, and the bad harvests caused by deregulation of the grain industry. It was also believed to be influenced by the American Revolutionary War. [https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution/](https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution/)

\textsuperscript{39} Sir Robert Filmer (c. 1588-26 May 1653) was an English political theorist who promoted an absolutist concept of kingship. He believed that submission to patriarchal authority was essential to political commitment. His work *Patriarcha* (1680) was condemned by John Locke as "glib nonsense". [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Filmer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Filmer)

\textsuperscript{40} John Locke (29 August 1632-28 October 1704) was an English philosopher and the “Father of Liberalism”. He was profoundly influential after proposing that “a man earns ownership over a resource when he mixes his labour with it.” He was an important critic of hereditary monarchy and patriarchalism. He argued that government should be regulated to secure the life and property of citizens and wrote the *Two Treatises of Government*, which then became a classical philosophy masterpiece. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke)
Government, attempts to prove that a woman is also a human being. And he constantly... And he describes why Eve is equal to Adam, why it's not the father's power that matters, but parental power, which includes the mother, why children must respect Eve, i.e. their mothers, as much as they do Adam, their father, and so on. Clearly, this argument was there for a reason. And as a seasoned researcher, I understood that this argument indicated that at that time women didn't have the same status as men, that no one spoke about equality, and that there were discourses that belittled women.

Being a woman, I felt uncomfortable. I was upset about statements made by men and other women about things like "well, we are women, we are different, we are not as smart as men, we will never be like them." One colleague asked me, "Oh come on." Our dean was a woman – I always had women as deans. She said, "Come on. Valentina Yurievna is a dean, she’s not a woman; she is a great dean because she thinks like a man." So I asked her how she defines masculine thought. "Her intellect did not get transplanted from a man, she has the body of a woman and, consequently, she has women’s intellect. It's biologically set." "No, you don't understand, she is very analytical, and so on." Those were the kinds of conversations I'd have with people. So I can’t say that feminism wasn't important to me because I studied sexual violence. Without feminism it would be impossible to study this subject. Again, thanks to my knowledge of English history, the first works that I started reading... right away I read *Against Our Will* by Susan Brownmiller, it was the first book that literally fell into my hands. It's absolutely impossible without it. When you search for "sexual violence," it's the first thing that any catalog gives you, it's a feminist book. And though I disagree with many things, and at that time I disagreed with many things that Brownmiller described, that book led me to *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, etc. Without feminism it would have been absolutely impossible to pursue my studies of violence and gender-based violence.

And a few years ago, when I was giving a talk on family violence in Soviet Russia—I had a huge project—I was surprised when (I think it was at the Aleksanteri Institute in

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41 Susan Brownmiller (15 Feb 1935-) is an American feminist author, journalist, and activist who insists that rape should be understood as part of larger social structures in which men force women to have sex in order to maintain women in a state of fear that preserves male dominance. Her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975) challenged the Freudian concept that women crave male domination, reflected in rape fantasies.  
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Brownmiller

42 Simone de Beauvoir (9 January 1908-14 April 1986) was a French writer, feminist, and existentialist philosopher who represented the idea of the "Ethics of ambiguity" and had a huge influence on feminist theory. Her book *The Second Sex* (1949) is about the treatment of women throughout history. It is considered to be the starting point of second-wave feminism.  
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Brownmiller

43 The Aleksanteri Institute was founded in 1996; it is an independent academy that serves as the national centre of research and studies social sciences and humanities. It focuses on Russian Studies (Choices of Russian Modernisation) and also promotes interaction between the academic world in Russia and Finland, as well as other nations. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksanteri_Institute
Helsinki is the capital of Finland and the most important center for education and culture with an urban population of 1,268,296. It is the third largest municipality in the Nordic nations apart from Stockholm and Oslo. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helsinki

Deviantology refers to the study of deviant behavior and interaction. It is also related to characteristics of deviant groups and how deviants influence one another. https://forum.deviantart.com/devart/general/793125/

I was giving this talk. I am a competent and experienced researcher, and I was in a room in which I thought that everyone understood feminism, and everyone understood patriarchy, etc. I said something like this: that the only theory, which explains domestic violence against women, is feminist theory. Period. That’s why I work within the framework of feminist theory, and here are the results. My colleague rebuked me angrily – she is British, and I don’t want to mention her name. Unfortunately, she is quite famous; she specializes in Polish women. At that time, she studied gender-based violence in Poland, health issues, things like that and she asked me, "What do you mean by feminism? Which feminism, liberal or no?" I was trying to explain to her that to me feminism means the equality of men and women, the possibility of empowerment. Let’s... And she continued: "No, that’s not right. And what do you understand by patriarchy?" And that surprised me. That is, she found... She acted like those people in the nineties acted when they had just learned about feminism. I was upset because she was British and had worked in this field for a long time. She behaved inappropriately and lashed out at me. Later, another colleague, a Finnish woman, said, "well, you know, she sees some Russian woman speaking about feminism and thinks that you understand nothing about feminism." I responded, "well, this is what discrimination looks like," and it makes me sad to see it among women. If this would have been a man, and there were enough men who always asked dumb questions, then that’s one thing. This was in 2012, not a long time ago. In other words, such relapses still happen anyway.

NP: Here’s something interesting: at work, where you have been for many years after graduating from university and from Herzen University, and at other universities, do you now feel any negativity today toward your subject or to the approaches, which come from feminist or gender theory?

MM: At Herzen State Pedagogical University everyone just got used to me. The attitude was always negative, never positive. Absolutely never. Neither in the History Department when I was there nor then later in the Law Department. To them the subject, even the word gender was met with hysterics. I had a terrible clash with professor Gelinskii, a very famous deviantologist he lashed out angrily at my master’s student (her thesis was on the topic of sex work). And when she told him that there is this gender theory, which explains sex work this way and that, he screamed at her for twenty minutes: “how dare you feminists ruin our morals in...”. I was stunned because I always thought that Gelinskii was fairly liberal. Nevertheless, these things constantly happened. But I’m a good teacher, I put a lot of effort into it, I have great relationships with my students (my 15 years of teaching experience haven’t gone to waste). They just got used to me and when I... they all know that since she’s been at this for so long, there’s probably something to it. I mean my teaching colleagues here;
but the students, they always, always—even with the return of traditional values—wanted
to talk about it, they were always interested. I’ve taught the courses “The Concept of Gender
Equality in Contemporary Law” and “Women’s Rights in the System of Human Rights.” These
were courses that were required for all students. We had a master’s program on human
rights, which I launched, on human rights advocacy.

NP: Do other universities offer these courses?

MM: No. Not like mine, because these were my courses that we created because as a
pedagogical university, we were responsible for the Federal State Education Standards.46, We eventually added it to the standards and were successful. Initially, when I taught the
courses, there was some resistance because students had their own stereotypes about boys
and girls, etc. However, at the end of the course, even if we did not get to feminism, we
discussed the feminist agenda. And they came at least to an understanding that feminism is
not about women who burn bras and who want to castrate men and put them in camps.
(Though we all know that some radical feminists would not mind that.) But we discussed the
theory, and they learned to differentiate the political agenda from the academic one., They
liked Judith Butler—you might laugh—even though it’s a very difficult book. Her Psychic Life
of Power47 was required reading in my class; I wouldn’t say that they all understood it, of
course not, not initially. But, they enjoyed reading Michel Foucault48. Especially his Discipline
and Punish49; however, they weren’t much interested in The History of Sexuality50. But they
were immediately interested in The Discipline and Punish... And because Foucault is
permeated with discourses on power, the book also discusses gender and other things. It
helped them, allowed them to move forward and gave them some food for thought. I can’t
say that it was always so wonderful, no, there were moments when students misbehaved,
and so on, but we got through it. I’ve never had any issues with students, like a student would
never say things like, "why do you need this gender of yours." But teachers did it constantly.

46 Since 2009 the Federal State Education Standards refer to the collection of rules and regulations
established by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation for all levels of educational
institutions in the country.

47 The Psychic Life of Power is a book written by Judith Butler in 1997. It corresponds with the author’s other
works and offers a more continuous explanation of the theory of subject formation.
https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=819

48 Paul-Michel Foucault (15 Oct 1926-25 June 1984) was a French social theorist and philosopher who mainly
addressed the connection between power and knowledge. He demonstrated structuralism in his early works
and became a left-wing group member who fought against racism later on.

49 Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison analyzes the social and hypothetical mechanisms of the
transformation of the Western penal systems, and illustrates that the “disciplines” in prison can also apply to
other institutions.

50 The History of Sexuality mainly argues that Western societies adopted the notion that "every individual has
a sexuality” not long ago and criticizes the “repressive hypothesis.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault
Men more than women, but women did it too. I can't say that it was always so wonderful, but I was fortunate to be in a position which allowed me to do what I wanted. And I did. Of course, after I left the Herzen State Pedagogical University, that's another story... I worked in Finland, then in England; and in England no one asks dumb questions like "why do you need gender?" They understand. I was at the University of Oxford, no issues there. Now at the Higher School of Economics I encountered the same old probably, surprisingly, in the Sociology Department. I was stunned that despite having five leading female gender sociologists such as Elena Omel'chenko, Nadezhda Nartova... In other words, I don't know how it would be possible without gender, but the administration is resisting. Particularly, professor Aleksandrov, who is the director of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, thinks that gender is nonsense and there is no way... He is supposedly a sociologist and studies youth; he has a Laboratory of Sociology, Education, and Science, where they survey schoolchildren. Every time I ask, "well, what about gender?" his sociologists reply "sex is an uncontrollable unit." That is to say, there is resistance. When I offered to teach gender research in English for the English-language master's program—it's the HSE, a progressive school you'd think—they said, "you can teach that but where would we find students for your course?" I said, "believe me and my experience, as soon as we announce it, 52 students, eager to take it, would show up right away." But our director, an economist, he is this conservative, traditional type, from the Urals (no, sorry, this is not our Professor Aleksandrov) thinks that this course will be unpopular. Here in Moscow at the Law Department, it's an absolute "no-no"! Undoubtedly, everyone looked at me, the new professor, suspiciously after I held an introductory workshop for our department and I used feminist theories and gender theories regarding access to justice; there we have another... It's very interesting that the older generation just can't handle value judgments. But the younger generation—those who are, what, thirty-five—handle value judgments just fine. In other words, the department has a negative attitude towards feminist and gender theory, but they still don't know what it is. And that's normal now. Well, you could say that it's become worse. I would say that. What

51 Elena Leonidovna Omelchenko (9 Oct 1957-) is a Russian sociologist who specializes in youth sociology. She is a professor in the Department of Sociology of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Higher School of Economics and Head of the Advertising Department of UISU. She is recognized as one of the most influential Russian economists and sociologists in 2000-2010. https://clever-geek.github.io/articles/3620970/index.html

52 Nadezhda Nartova is a senior lecturer and research fellow at HSE Campus in St. Petersburg and Centre for Youth Studies. She is also a programme deputy academic supervisor at Modern Social Analysis. https://www.hse.ru/en/org/persons/20185147 https://hse-spb.academia.edu/NadyaNartova

53 The National Research University of Economics, originally established in 1992, is a state university in Russia which expanded its lessons of economics and social science to many other subjects. It is one of Russia's National Research Universities and ranked 8th in the QS World University Ranking. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_School_of_Economics

54 Ural is known as Ural Federal District and Ural economic region today. It is located around the East European and West Siberian plains with a historical center called Cherdyn. However, it does not have an administrative capital presently. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ural_(region)
surprises me is that it became worse at the Higher School of Economics that presents itself as...

NP: Maybe, because of a changing society?

MM: Maybe. I don’t know about other universities in the Russian Federation because I haven’t been in them. I don’t know what’s happening in Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Perm, Smolensk and at other places. But my inner feeling tells me that it has to do with the general rhetoric on traditional values and the advance of “gender backlash” and attacks on feminism. Those who used to be silent are now openly saying, that is, they are openly telling people, that “what you do is nonsense.” I’m defending my position, but I don’t think that... well, gender theory is not going anywhere.

NP: How do you feel about this notion that gender studies couldn't have developed in Russia without the support of Western foundations? About the idea that modern gender research centers disappeared from the foreground and from the political agenda because grants from western foundations are not supporting them now? To what extent have and do researchers like you consider themselves tied to Western academia and Western funding?

MM: I would like to separate cause-and-effect relationships here. First, I think the women’s movement would have existed without Western funding. The two aren’t connected; the women’s movement would have existed; moreover, it does exist now. We forget that so many non-profits, women’s non-profits – they have no feminist agenda because they simply are not aware that their agenda is considered feminist. If what they practice is defined as feminism, it does not mean that their agenda is... We, as scholars, classify it as feminist; we see it that way, but they probably don’t because of the negative connotation of feminism. Because their goal is not to present themselves as feminists – their goal is to act. And to act means to help, to save, to work, to contribute, and so on. It’s a completely different story. As concerns the centers for gender research, I was always negative about Western funding. I've always been that way. I do believe that Western foundations have corrupted a very vulnerable part of our Academy. Not everyone, but a vulnerable part of our academy. Not all of our academy, but a vulnerable part, which quickly took advantage of the political situation

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55 Novosibirsk is the administrative center of Novosibirsk Oblast of Russia and the third-most populous city with a population of 1,612,833 (2018 Census).

56 Tomsk is recognized as one of the oldest towns in Siberia and is the administrative center of Tomsk Oblast with a population of 524,669 (2010 Census).

57 Perm, previously known as Yagoshikha, is the administrative center of Perm Krai, which is located on the banks of the Kama River with a population of 991,162 (2010 Census).
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novosibirsk

58 “Backlash” refers to an intense response to a thought, action, or object. “Gender backlash” is specifically related to a hostile or negative reaction to women’s rights and gender equality.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backlash_(sociology)
and the funding. Despite many wonderful experts who used gender research funding for scientific advancement, so many others just started putting the word “gender” in their work, and the foundations looked the other way because it was important to them simply to promote their agenda. And this practice totally destroyed and corrupted a certain part of the academy, not the majority, but a certain part of it. These Western foundations created a bunch of centers, but after the money was gone… Because the centers no longer had this agenda (which was to get the money and use it); consequently, they also disappeared. The only centers that remain are those truly involved in the advancement of science. Period. That is, for me… I’ve always made this point: it’s on tape and in films and song. In 2006 I received my first grant, Western funding. At that time, receiving Western grants or any other grants wasn’t considered criminal. On the contrary, universities demanded that the staff, professors and lecturers apply for grants. We started integrating into global scholarship, and they demanded that we have these grants. Before that, I was just fine without any Western grants, and I still worked on feminism. I just did not connect the dots. One of the movement participants (I don’t want to mention her name) said to me in a public interview that without Western money she couldn’t buy a computer and work. Honestly, it surprised me because my family was not well-off, especially in the nineties it was just as bad as now. I was married, we were a young family, earning money was nearly impossible; nevertheless, we, both me and my husband, found a way to buy a computer, and having a computer had nothing to do with my academic work. A lot of people did not have computers until a certain point. So there are some things that I don’t understand. As I said, I had this attitude: first, we’ll do our work, and we’ll keep doing it no matter what, and then later we’ll look for money. Second and third, or in general, Western funding as such, as soon as we begin talking about it, right away it brings up the agenda related to colonialism and the positioning of "West-East", etc. There were a lot of excesses, and I would like to mention that, at the time, the foundations like MacArthur, Soros, etc. behaved very ethically in the Russian Federation; they did not push or demand any political agenda, they did not give money only for specific things, nothing of this sort. They did not demand any specific results, like criticizing Russia or something like that. No such things. I think, those who were unhappy with our situation—there is a certain negativity we have, it’s there—are those same people who try to ingratiate themselves with their master before the master himself understands what he wants. It’s those same people. They are absolutely the same everywhere. They thought that the Soros Foundation or someone else wants us to criticize Russia or the women’s movement, or to say that our women by comparison to Western women are so poor. It’s just an uncritical, unscientific, and pseudo-academic attitude towards the material. Period. Those who were committed to

59 Murav’eva here references the documentary Russian Feminism; Twenty Years Forward, which premiered in 2009.

60 Soros Foundations refers to the foundations that are created by investor George Soros to assist the maintenance of “open societies.” They provide funding for initiatives of “arts and culture, children and youth, civil society development, economic reform, education, legal reform, media and communications, and health care” around the world. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Society_Foundations https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/on-the-web/soros-foundations-network
actual science used that money for great projects. For instance, Elena Smirnova-Iarskaya\textsuperscript{61} and Pavel Romanov \textsuperscript{62} created a brilliant school with Western funding and our funding too (the Russian Foundation for Humanitarian Research, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research). And for some reason they weren’t pushed to criticize Russia despite the money they received. There are those who think that it was a disgrace, that that’s what Western foundations demanded. I don’t remember such things, no one ever demanded it of me. And I don’t think they ever would.

**NP:** Do you consider yourself a part of the women's movement?

**MM:** I think so, yes. Because as much as I do as a teacher, and as a lawyer (being an expert on human rights, etc.), I am absolutely a part of the women's movement. Moreover, I am part of the feminist movement because I remain true to the feminist agenda, it hasn't gone anywhere for me.

**NP:** My last question is about future prospects. How do you see them for the women's movement, for our research on women in various humanities fields? You, in this case, represent historians, and we also want to hear from philologists, art historians, economists, and demographers, etc. What is your opinion as an historian? How do you see the prospects based on what has been done already and what remains to be done? Of course, this raises another question about how to interact with women's organizations and women themselves, whom we are trying to liberate.

**MM:** I'm not liberating anyone, I am for choice. If you want to remain enslaved, stay there only if it's your free and informed choice. I hope I have no such messianic desire to liberate everyone from abject slavery. Regardless of what we might say about them, women in the Russian Federation have a lot of freedom. The Soviet gender experiment gave Soviet women more freedom in the sense that... in a social sense such that women’s understanding of their role in society wasn’t pushed into the background as it was for, say, American or British women, who were truly liberated only because of the revolution in the late sixties. And they finally got the opportunity to work. Our women, on the other hand, worked whether they wanted to or not; they got an opportunity to get an education, blah blah blah. All of this, of course, is something else. I don’t want to liberate anyone. In terms of what the future holds, firstly, I think we are at the stage when quantity finally has grown into quality. Despite traditional values, despite the obvious negative and hostile attitude towards gender and feminist studies, despite this gender backlash, which today exists not only in the Russian

\textsuperscript{61} Elena R. Iarskaia-Smirnova is a professor of sociology at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow since 2008; she is also the Chief Editor at the *Journal of Social Policy Studies*. https://www.hse.ru/en/org/persons/4013457

\textsuperscript{62} Pavel Romanov (May 22 1964-June 9 2014) was a Russian sociologist, professor in the social politics department of the HSE University, and director of the Center for Social Policy Studies. He was also one of the most influential Russian researchers who contributed to the ethnographic method in Sociology. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Romanov
Federation, but this neo-conservative⁶³ wave is a global phenomenon. In the end, I think we, as gender studies experts, as historians, as philologists, we are finally at a point at which we have excellent gender scholarship. We have the science and the feminist agenda, and those who want to carry out our agenda academically can do so. Moreover, you asked me: you, as an historian. But I am not really an historian, I don’t perceive myself as an historian. I think this is a characteristic of our current situation. I think our contemporary qualitative shift has been possible only because of interdisciplinary studies, which is now the default. As much as I would like to study only history, I just can’t. That’s impossible now, both in terms of methodology and in terms of future prospects for an academic career.

**NP: Do you see yourself as an historian of law now? As a legal scholar?**

**MM:** I don’t see myself as an historian at all. I see myself as a social scientist. That is, in a broad sense I use social-science methodology in my research to study the phenomena I am interested in. This methodology includes qualitative and quantitative methods; if necessary, it includes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the disciplines that are best suited for studying the phenomena.

**NP: Does it somehow serve the women’s movement?**

**MM:** It serves the women’s movement in the sense that in academia, within the gender studies framework, it’s too late to be dividing ourselves into sociologists, lawyers, etc. It’s applied science. If you want to be a lawyer and practice, yes, that’s your identity. But if you want to do science, no one cares about it because, as a part of gender research and, say, a women’s organization, you are working on a project about women’s access to justice, or about how women go to court and stand up for their rights, you can’t suddenly cordon yourself off disciplinarily. You can’t say: “here we are sociologists and here we are not sociologists.” You need a socio-legal methodology, that allows you to study it. Without qualitative methods, without interviews, without doctrinal analysis, without theoreticians, you just can’t do your project. You’ll come to some conclusion like: “oh, women are so emotional; they go to court because they want to talk about, I don’t know, their problems with a judge who also happens to be a woman.” Things like that. I’ve heard, it’s true, conclusions just like that. So we have good prospects despite this neo-conservative wave, I feel optimistic on this subject, I have absolutely no doubt that in ten years – in fact, compared to the nineties, the level of scholarship is so much higher, and a ton of people study the subject of women and gender. Back in the nineties, when we all knew each other—I don’t know anyone now except for those whom I met long ago. A ton of people are doing it now. That’s great. Of course, nothing is easy, only men have it easy. For us, for women, nothing happens easily. You have to resist, your resistance makes you stronger; but again, it does not interfere with the research itself. When it comes to the women’s movement, that’s another story. The women’s movement is currently going through very challenging times because

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⁶³ “Neoconsevative” refers to people who formerly held relatively liberal or left-leaning beliefs, but rejected them in favor of more traditionalist/conservative ones.
https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neoconservative
nothing will happen until the political will is there. It’s not there because Russian society is tired and apathetic when it comes to politics. It’s nearing a generational change, and after this happens (it happens all the time), we are going to see if the younger generation wants to think of themselves differently than the older generation. That is, the older generation doesn’t think of themselves in terms of "we are men, we are women," or “we are not men or women,” but rather “we are poor and downtrodden and all we need now is to have a TV, a refrigerator, and to travel abroad and we’ll be happy. Let Putin sort out our foreign policy ‘Crimea is ours!’” Will this new generation think of themselves as humans who have the freedom to choose absolutely anything, including their self-expression, which includes their gender identity. I don’t know how they are going to think, I can't make any conclusions. I teach students; they all think differently. They’re not set in their views, and that makes me happy. Again, from an academic point of view, from an historical point of view, a generational change creates a certain tension in society, which can be both negative and positive. The next generation may turn out to be much more conservative than ours. Easily. This happens all the time. So...

NP: What's the difference between the Russian and the international women's movement? Does the Russian women's movement have any unique properties in terms of how the women's movement is developing today? Perhaps, it has faced its own challenges that the West didn't experience, or other things. Are there any particularities, specifically, of the states of the contemporary women's movement here and in the West that make it possible to compare them?

MM: I always had this feeling as to why it appears that the women's movement here is not growing as actively compared to that in the West. The difference is in the fact that we have such a strong tradition granted to us by the pre-revolutionary women's movement. It was so vibrant before the revolution, very active. Our women demanded and fought for their rights. English militant feminists paled in comparison with ours because ours didn’t rely on parliament; there was no reason to. We all know it’s true that Anna Miliukova publicly

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64 The Crimean Peninsula was annexed by the Russian Federation between 20 February and 26 March 2014. Russian President Vladimir Putin commanded troops to take over the Supreme Council of Crimea on 27 Feb after meeting with security service chiefs. Crimea’s independence was declared on 16 March. Russia opposes the “annexation” label and criticisms from the United Nations and Ukraine, and argues that they protect the referendum of people. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea

65 Anna Miliukova. There is little published information about her, and none about this event, in English. However, this passage provides some context, and appears in a published article in Russian, translated here into English: "Pavel married in 1885, which led to a complete cessation of contact with his mother, who in the years just prior had more and more insistently tried to maintain her "power" over her son. He met his future spouse, the daughter of the Rector of the Troitse-Sergievskia Academy, Anna Sergeevna Smirnova, in Kliuchevskii’s [Vasilii Kliuchevskii, a Russian historian - CF] home. Anna, having left her family against the wishes of her parents, was living at that time in a boarding school (she made ends meet by teaching piano) and attending the general history courses of professor V.I. Ger'e, in which Kliuchevskii appeared as a guest lecturer. Anna became a loyal partner of Miliukov, was an activist in the movement for the emancipation of women, and actively participated in the Kadet party [Constitutional Democrats - CF]. The couple remained...
discussed with her husband Pavel Miliukov why Russian women did not have voting rights. And he allowed his wife to discuss it in public, in the presence of a large number of people. No British politician would ever allow such thing, that would be considered not comme il faut, but in Russia, it was completely normal. And no one ever even thought that Anna Miliukova committed a disgraceful act against whomever. On the contrary, others thought that this was the right way to fight for your rights.

It appeared to me that in the nineties, the Russian women's movement was actively developing precisely because, compared with "Western women,"—and I’m referring here to Anglo-American women; I am excluding Europeans because Europe is not a monolith, all of their women’s movements are so different; Scandinavian women, for example, I wouldn’t even begin to touch because they’re a completely different thing entirely—we’re always looking at America and its women’s movements, comparing others to theirs. But, compared to American women, both Russian and Soviet women, and later, the Russian women have had quite a bit of freedom. That is, American women who came here after the fall of the Soviet Union to lecture us said things like, "now we are going to teach you about budgeting, you have to take the budget from your husband," our women replied, "What for? We already manage the budget, and we don’t want to! Because with the 90 or 120 rubles that our husbands don’t drink away—what amounts to my pay—I need to figure out how to feed my children and take care of them, feed my husband. So I already have to figure out how to take the money away from his stash in order to survive." Our women had and continue to have control over the family budget. They still do, despite our very different times. But for the American woman, control over family earnings was a liberation and independence, while for the Russian woman, without a doubt, that control was always a burden that she wanted to be freed of, the so-called “double burden.” She would happily have nothing to do with it, if only someone would do it for her. But she couldn’t afford to. And my feeling then and now is that our movement here is not developing because we are not interested in a political agenda, which has been so characteristic of the American or British women’s movement. We already had it. And because we’ve already had it—and not only in the 20th century, but for

66 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Milyukov
67 Pavel Miliukov (1859-1943) was a Russian historian and politician, best known as the founder of the Constitutional Democratic party, the leading liberal party in the late Russian Empire.
68 “Comme il faut” is a French term which means “correct in behavior or etiquette” or “as it should be.” https://www.dictionary.com/browse/comme-il-faut
69 Anglo-Americans refer to people from the U.S. who speak English as a native language. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Americans
70 Scandinavia refers to the area of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in Northern Europe. Sometimes Finland and Iceland are also included. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandinavia
quite a long time—because Russian women have always had economic and property rights, which for so long have presented them with so many difficulties, even in the 17th-18th centuries—they need to defend their property from their talentless, from their loathsome husband, who is constantly trying to acquire that property and then send the wife off to a monastery after she's signed a deed or some other document over to him—all of this means that we had a completely different set of problems. So in the 90s, we did not form our own agenda, which would serve us, because this was a moment when we were all looking elsewhere for this agenda. Somewhere beyond Russian borders. And so it happened that the Western agenda that many adopted didn't present an interest. And an agenda, like, for example, family violence, which is serious, or domestic violence—that's probably one of the most problematic spheres, there's, of course, the economy and so on but those can be addressed quickly and easily—but the level of violence in the family especially against women, was fairly high. An agenda did not come about at the time because then, in the nineties, violence in the family was an afterthought compared to the violence in the streets and high levels of crime. We were happy that we were alive, that we survived. However, today, for some reason, it seems that the topic of domestic violence is not so interesting or it's uncomfortable to talk about it. It's acceptable to talk about children, but not women because they are adults. Perhaps, this might have been the agenda that we needed; but, again, it simply did not come into being within the context of historical development, within the context of attitudes toward domestic violence, toward women themselves and toward, the authorities, etc. Therefore, concerning our particularities, I think our particularity is found in the fact that we very early acquired these rights, and we've had them, and in order to have a strong political agenda, first and foremost, the Russian women need understand what they want. And I think they don't understand this very well. Some women understand what they want as a collective, but they avoid collective action through personal strategies for building a career and personal strategies, which addresses immediate, individual problems—That's obvious. Individual women do get ahead. And they don't need feminism for that. At the same time, they don't reflect that without the example of other women who did the same thing and who were feminists, they might not have been able to do that. Nevertheless, they handle these issues on their own because they can resolve them independently in our system. They are allowed to study in universities, no one discriminates against them; the female students are always saying that they don't feel any discrimination. They encounter it for the first time when they get a job. That's exactly when they start hearing that they may get pregnant, that they are girls, that they are not as smart as boys, etc. Their personal strategies are working, but in order to be aware of their power they must have an awareness of what they need, as women, as a separate category, and they do not have that awareness now. The women's movement will come about after this understanding develops. As far as I can see, there is nothing that can be done about it. I educate as much as I can; but here in Russia, that understanding depends on human rights and how we are going to address them.

NP: Marianna Georgievna, thank you so much for your time and for answering my questions.