Abstract

SOVIET WOMAN AND BODY-POLITICS:
THE CASE OF MATERNITY

Yulia Gradskova, BEEGS, Sodertorn Hogskola

Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

The presentation shows some preliminary results of my research on the problem of embodied motherhood in the context of the Soviet history. The presentation is devoted to the problem of contradictions in representations and self-perceptions of women with respect to their experience of pregnancy, childbirth and beginning of motherhood. The main focus is on the construction of maternity in the Soviet cultural and political context. I study the contradictions in representation of motherhood as consequences of the ideological constructions of the soviet woman as "an equal to man" and as "a childbearing machine". The special attention is paid to the study of everyday practices and hidden tactics of survival and compatibility of the two perceptions. The presentation is based on the analysis of the popular magazines of the years 1940-60s and interviews with women of the "soviet generation" about their experience of motherhood.