

**PERAET 2021****International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»****THE IMAGE OF A WOMAN IN RUSSIAN SONGS AS A SOCIOCULTURAL REFLECTION**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the study of the change in the image of a woman in the texts of popular songs by Soviet and Russian performers. Musical culture, being a part of the general socio-cultural system, concentrates and reflects the ideas and values existing in society. The article is based on the results of a content analysis of the sixty most famous songs in Russia over the past half century, from 1970 to 2020 (based on popularity in the hit parades and charts), reflecting the change in ideas about women in musical culture. The study of popular culture (popular songs) helps to understand the changes taking place in society, not only at the level of gender models, but also from the point of view of the entire social system. The transition from traditional ideas about a woman (pronounced femininity in the external image and behavioral style, idealization of motherhood, the emphasized importance of external attractiveness, romanticization of the female image, the need to conquer a woman as a lover) to the modern model (egalitarian partnership of a man and a woman, mercantilism and rational foundations in relationships, sexual objectification of women, a decrease in the importance of the maternal role component in the image of a woman, exaggeration of external data combined with ignorance of internal qualities, a general degradation of attitude towards a woman). Based on the identified dynamics of the female image, a conclusion is drawn about the change in the socio-cultural system in Russian society.

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## 1. Introduction

Musical culture is the most important part of social life, reflecting the current trends in the existence and changes of society. In the modern world, more and more attention is paid to the consumption of digital content, including listening to music. Music, being the second form of transmission of narratives, meanings, images after speech, participates in the socialization of the individual, performing socializing, educational, cognitive, and other functions, that is, under its influence, the worldview, value orientations, as well as the individual's attitude to others are formed.

Of course, music cannot bypass such an important part of human life as relationships between people. The attitude towards certain objects is projected into the lyrics of the songs, their image is formed. These images are transformed over time, and, therefore, they are already broadcasting other images of the same objects and attitudes towards them, thus influencing the course of the process of socialization of individuals of certain social groups where this music is popular.

The dynamics of the image of a woman in popular musical compositions can not only reflect the prevailing view of the image and place of a woman at a particular time in a particular society, but also influence the formation of a certain attitude towards a woman in each social group. The institution of family and marriage, gender models are the most ancient social institutions that have experienced many changes, transforming following the change in social systems (Rostovskaya & Kuchmaeva, 2020). Along with it, the attitude towards women also changes, which cannot but affect the image of a woman created by culture, in particular music.

## 2. Problem Statement

Sociological research in the field of musical culture has a special, specific character. The emphasis in the analysis of musical culture should be placed not so much on the activity or behavioral aspects as on the tastes, needs and preferences of the audience. The attention of sociological science to the study of musical preferences in society is due to several reasons. On the one hand, musical works “mark” the most important events, states, moods, ideas, and values in society. The transfer of symbolic narratives, meanings, value attributes occurs by creating a material artifact of a musical work, which connects its creator and listener as subjects of interaction.

Max Weber, who laid the foundations for the sociology of music, linked the increasing rationalization of Western societies with the development of musical culture (as cited in Darmon, 2015). Emphasizing the most important “socio-cultural role” of music, Sorokin (1992) wrote:

*People often ascribed magical and mystical influence on the sacred forms of music, which governs the universe, gods and people. In some forms, the music produced tremendous effects on listeners, both good and bad. Its sociocultural role has always been very significant. (p. 209)*

Listening to music is a type of cultural consumption (Korsunova, (2019), which in turn characterizes the lifestyle of an individual, is included in the stratification criteria of society. In Bourdieu's language, popular music belongs to a low, mass repertoire of preferences (Bourdieu, 1984). Social strata with sufficient time and material resources, as well as a high level of cultural competence

and education, is characterized by a passion for recognized works of art (Willekens & Daenekindt, 2020), including musical ones - visiting opera and ballet, concerts of famous opera singers, performances by orchestras with world-renowned conductors. Mass culture, including pop music, does not require large educational and cultural resources for consumption and understanding, therefore it is more widespread and characteristic of the lower classes of the social structure. Studies show a correlation between adherence to different types of music content depending on the social stratum, for example, representatives of the upper social strata are more inclined to listen to classical music (Thomas, 2018).

The art of many countries of the world has always been rich in images of a woman in her most diverse forms: spouse, lover, mother, and so on. Music is no exception. The image of a woman, which is described in the lyrics of various performers from different time periods, often becomes a central aspect of the music industry. When we talk about women as representatives of gender, we often identify them with an abstract female image. In reality, female representatives are not examples of unambiguous and clearly fixed femininity, but, on the contrary, as in a kaleidoscope, appear in the form of numerous female images and types (Ilinykh, 2013). At the same time, in their personal and professional life, women are guided by gender models accepted in society (Thoman & Zelin, 2020).

If we talk about the representation of female images directly in the lyrics, it is worth mentioning the article by Ul'chenko (2015) "Lexical representation of the images of a man and a woman in contemporary songs of Russian performers". Although the author speaks about the images of both men and women, we still managed to identify some tendencies in the representation of images of women. For example, when analyzing data describing appearance, it was concluded that performers often emphasize the same external features: beauty, grace, slim or athletic physique. Such names, as a rule, are not specific and are presented in a generalized way. The article also mentions that it is very important for male performers to emphasize the sweet and gentle image of a woman, while the performers themselves try to emphasize the masculinity of the appearance. Trends are changing, in the songs of the last decades, the emphasis is not only on the pleasant appearance of men and women, but also on their sexuality. In post-Soviet Russia, old prejudices are disappearing, and the topic of sexuality is no longer taboo (Ul'chenko, 2015).

Turning to the topic of the image of a woman in popular music, it is worth noting the work of Tkachuk (2019) "Sexuality in the context of modern popular music": it examines ideas about sexuality and its norms, generated by the inclusion of elements of intimacy, eroticism in musical compositions, clips, and image performers. The author concludes that the growth of interest in research on the elements of sexuality and violence is directly related to the development of song clips in the music industry (Tkachuk, 2019). Often in clips they resort to the typical objectification of the female image, endowing it with eroticism and sexuality, while male images within the same clip can be varied.

The topic of the representation of the female image in song lyrics has been little studied, but individual studies are worth mentioning. The article by Sarkis'yan (2019) "The linguistic image of a woman in love songs: constants and variables" presents the results of a study in which an attempt was made to compare the lyrics of love songs of different years in terms of the reflection of the image in them women. The results of the study showed that the songs of the Soviet period formed the image of a girl as a companion, an ally, whom the lyrical hero deifies, treats her as a shrine, and the heartfelt experiences of

a girl and a young man in love songs were portrayed through poetic pictures of life, from bright and joyful to sincerely sad. In modern songs, the girl is most often referred to as a mistress, “mommy”, who “always scolds for bad behavior.” This is a fundamental difference, which gives a fairly accurate reflection of the changes in the image of the beloved. The interest of researchers is also caused by the stylistics of the texts: the lexical and grammatical content of the verses of a lyric song. The Soviet period is characterized by the use of “high” vocabulary, the absence of pronounced colloquial words, distracting by rudeness from the image of the beloved woman, a large number of artistic poetic techniques for greater imagery and beauty of speech. Modern songs often contain simpler vocabulary, even obscene one. This also expresses the attitude towards the beloved girl.

Thus, the analysis of linguistic means representing the concept of a beloved woman in songs of the Soviet period and in modern songs allows us to conclude about the structural and semantic richness of this concept, which reflects the life realities of the time of songwriting. Of course, the image of a woman in a modern lyric song has undergone changes, even the very attitude towards the beloved has changed. In the modern period, sexual attractiveness comes out on top, and, as the results of the study show, the image of a woman-lover becomes dominant.

Value orientations are the main component of the personality structure and correlate with the idea of the ideal, they reflect all the life experience accumulated by the personality in its development. Music performers may be the ideal of some modern youth, since music is not the last among the leisure preferences of young people. The information contained in the lyrics of the songs influences the formation of the worldview of young people. It should be noted that a person lives in a tense field of audio information that powerfully affects thinking, ethics, morality, ideas about the values of being. The texts of popular songs, thanks to the memorable plot, play an important role in the process of creating and developing a “picture of the world” in the mind of a teenager. An easy communication style, the absence of a semantic load become a model, an example of behavior in everyday life, thereby developing into life values. For example, some authors (Hill et al., 2021) associate the fact that sexual violence of men against women is becoming normal with the influence of rock music: the use of emotional violence, controlling and coercive behavior through the objectification of women.

In modern society, the system of value orientations is the main characteristic of a personality and an indicator of its formation. The texts of musical works contain references to various human values. They touch upon such problems as money, women, fame, success, friends, alcoholic beverages, drugs, which affects the desires of people, their value and worldview guidelines. Mentioning these topics in song lyrics can attract an audience, make a song more popular, rated, trending, which can be important for individuals who follow fashion trends in the music industry. Over time, the fashion for music changes, the influence of the financial sphere on the music industry is inevitable. The law of “supply and demand” has become a full-fledged part of it. In this regard, modern music touches on other topics that were previously taboo, socially condemned, or simply are still unknown to mankind. Music has become more widespread and accessible; it has acquired a competitive character. In such conditions, of course, modern music will influence the formation of completely different values among listeners, these values will correspond to the new era of the music industry.

In Russia, starting from 2014-2015, there has been an annual significant increase in the consumption of music content, mainly through digital and streaming channels. So, in 2016, Russia became the fifth market for subscribers for Apple Music, after the USA, Great Britain, Japan, and Canada (Morshhagina et al., 2018), which indicates a significant consumption of music content by Russians.

### **3. Research Questions**

- 1) Identify the attitude towards the image of a woman in the music industry, created through the texts of popular songs by Soviet and Russian performers of different periods (1970-1980; 1990-2000; 2010-2020);
- 2) Determine the influence of factors on the formation of a woman's image of different time periods;
- 3) Characterize the content of the prevailing images of women in the music industry for different periods.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Analysis of the specifics of the change in the image of a woman created by Soviet and contemporary Russian representatives in popular music, which reflects changes in the socio-cultural section of society. Social problem of the research: against the background of growing interest in movements for women's rights and freedoms, for equality between men and women (Kurzman et al., 2019), musical compositions, whose lyrics are based on the image of a fallen, greedy woman, are increasingly gaining popularity therefore, on this basis, one can make an assumption about the degradation of the image of a woman in the music industry, which contradicts the basic feminist positions prevailing in economically developed social groups (Scarborough et al., 2018). Gender inequality is reflected in other digital content research (Vandenberghe, 2019).

### **5. Research Methods**

Content analysis was chosen as the method of research work. Within the framework of this research work, a sample of 60 songs of various Russian and Soviet performers of different time periods (1970-1980; 1990-2000; 2010-2020), in which the topic of attitudes towards women is touched upon. From each period, 20 lyrics are analyzed. Song ratings of different years are used as data sources (including "Song of the Year" (1970-1980), "Golden Gramophone" (1996-2000), "Muz-TV Prize" (2010-2020)). Songs selected from the top of the rating (from most popular to least popular). The unit of analysis of the study is the text of the song, the units of count are the appearance of signs in the text (frequency) and the frequency of their appearance (intensity). The following categories of analysis are used: 1) the theme of the song (love, relationships, friendship, family, etc.); 2) emotions mentioned in the song (sadness, joy, surprise, suffering, disgust, contempt, fear, shame, not mentioned); 3) mention of sex; 4) mention of the statute of a woman (wife, bride, girlfriend, etc.).

## 6. Findings

Turning to the topic of our research, analyzing the lyrics, we chose semantic units that confirm or refute the judgments we have defined, revealing the image of women, their roles, and attitudes towards them. Further, the selected examples of the use of semantic units were compared, based on which we were able to draw some conclusions about the dynamics of attitudes towards women in musical compositions. The quantitative results of the study are presented in the table (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Content analysis data of popular Russian songs

Judgments	Confirmation			Disproof		
	1970-1980	1990-2000	2010-2020	1970-1980	1990-2000	2010-2020
1. Woman as a standard of tenderness, care, kindness	1	4	1	0	0	2
2. Woman as a standard of beauty	4	2	0	0	0	0
3. A woman is fragile, requiring care and attention	1	2	2	0	1	4
4. Mercantile woman	0	2	7	0	0	0
5. Woman is easily accessible, amorous	0	4	5	4	9	2
6. Woman is extraordinary, exceptional, special, unearthly	10	11	5	0	1	1
7. Woman depends on a man (economically and socially)	1	2	0	4	14	4
8. Woman as a sexual object	0	0	11	0	0	7
9. Woman's opinion doesn't matter	0	0	4	0	0	1
10. Woman as a mother	1	2	1	0	0	0
11. Beloved woman, love is declared to her	10	8	5	0	0	1
12. Woman is missed	1	6	2	0	0	1
13. Woman is deceitful	1	4	0	0	0	0
14. Acts done for the sake of a woman	2	21	8	0	0	1

Considering this table, you can see the dynamics of the judgments put forward. If we talk about external characteristics, then there is a noticeable transition from external beauty described by means of the epithets “beautiful”, “sweet”, as well as comparisons of the beauty of a woman with the moon, dawn, spring, flowers, to a description using obscene vocabulary, verbs, while the epithets used to address women are practically not used. The beauty of a woman in musical compositions 2010-2020 undergoing changes in descriptive structure and content.

Beauty begins to unfold through the mention of a woman's sexuality. This form of description takes on an extreme degree, expressed in the objectification of a woman. Verbs of the imperative mood, profanity, comparisons with animals are used to address women. This conclusion correlates with studies reflecting the growth of violence against women in our country: “in 2018, Russian women were recognized as one of the most vulnerable in the world, Russia scored zero points in the field of legislation to protect women from violence, being among such countries, like Liberia, Gabon or Yemen” (Bezverbnaya & Rostovskaya, 2020, pp. 94-95).

If we talk about inner beauty as a quality of a woman, then over time this characteristic is mentioned less often in the texts of musical compositions. In 2010-2020 even a refutation of these

qualities appears. However, the image of a woman is not filled with new characteristics, does not become more complex, but acquires a diametrically opposite character (from “tenderness” to “audacity”). We would also like to conclude that the external beauty of a woman was appreciated more in the songs of 1970-1980.

Such a quality as deceit is most actively mentioned in the lyrics of songs from 1990-2000. Further, within the framework of this sample, such a characteristic is not attributed to a woman. But it is worth noting that the category of female commercialism is beginning to be used more often. According to the lyrics, women in all analyzed periods were little dependent on men, but in 1990-2000 this figure has increased. Therefore, it can be assumed that women's independence has increased. But at the same time, from the period 1990-2000 in the lyrics of the songs, the woman begins to appear as easily accessible and amorous, and this figure is growing. In our opinion, the dynamics of this factor may be associated with the spread of feminist views, which speak not only about the equality of men and women, but also about the freedom to make decisions related to personal life. The same can be said about the fact that a woman ceases to demand attention and care, thus her independence is manifested. It is important to note that with the collapse of the USSR, censorship disappeared, in connection with which the number of topics monitored in the lyrics of songs increased, as well as the lexicon used by authors and performers became more extensive.

Thus, the external beauty of a woman is one of the most important gender norms within the framework of the traditional gender model (Klecina & Ioffe, 2019), while being adjacent to the internal beauty - personality traits. Attractiveness becomes the most important female resource, while for men, in accordance with gender stereotypes, power and status are usually important (Matud et al., 2019). If a woman is beautiful, looks good, she is in demand in traditional society. Modern society offers a different look at the external female beauty, here the emphasis is shifted towards a healthy lifestyle, a wider variety of standards of attractive appearance, egalitarianism presupposes the same importance of social achievements of men and women. At the same time, the modern model of woman's perception is characterized by sexualization and objectification of woman's perception. Therefore, the shift in attention from the beauty of a woman's appearance, in conjunction with the inner virtues of the personality towards the sexual characteristics of the appearance and social competencies, can be considered as a change in the traditional gender model towards a more modern one.

The most dynamic change can be seen in the characteristics of a woman as a lover. A woman not only ceases to be considered beloved, but also is less often confessed in love, in 2010-2020 there is even a denial of sublime love for a woman. Also, in the lyrics of the songs, one can notice a tendency towards a decrease in affection to a woman, she is less often missed. The nature of the actions performed for the sake of women has also changed. If in 1970-1980 a man for the sake of a woman wanted to “throw snow at her feet”, give her the “endless north”, in 1990-2000 he promises that the world would be at her feet, that he would “rediscover America”, then in 2010-2020 actions become more every day in nature: he goes to a woman in wet sneakers, wherever he is, he buys flowers for her. Egalitarianism in the relationship between a man and a woman is manifested not only in the equality of rights and responsibilities in the family, equal chances in the professional sphere, but also in the fact that a woman has “left the pedestal”

of admiration and worship, and quite trivial actions are enough to maintain relations now, for example, flowers.

The role of a woman as a mother is present in the lyrics of all the selected periods. Although it is worth noting that in 2010-2020 the role of the mother is mentioned in the text indirectly, through the fact that a woman has children, while in earlier periods the words “mother”, “mater”, “beloved” are used. In modern Russian society, the emphasis is shifting from the role of the mother as the dominant woman in the life of a woman as to one of the other equally significant roles: partner, wife, professional, lover (Kalachikova & Gruzdeva, 2019).

During the analysis, it was concluded that the image of a woman in the lyrics of the songs of performers of different periods of time is presented differently. The differences are characterized by both the use of vocabulary characteristic of a certain time, and the sexual objectification of women, which occurs with the development of the music industry and the emergence of a tendency to present songs in the form of music videos, that is, through visual channels of information perception. Of course, the image of a woman transmitted in the lyrics has changed over time, but it is worth noting that the images of women are still diverse, in the songs of the present period they describe girls, women through various characteristics and lexical devices inherent in the trends of the time.

## **7. Conclusion**

Social changes, the transition from traditional to modern culture affect gender attitudes and change the usual traditional image of a woman. The female image is multifaceted and is found in many world cultures, manifesting itself in a wide variety of social roles: spouse, lover, mother, and so on. Music is no exception, the image of a woman, which is described in the lyrics of various performers from different times, often becomes a central aspect of the music industry.

The modern music industry is tied to economic relations. In this regard, music has become a full-fledged digital commodity. For more successful “sales” performers not only resort to increasing the release of music albums, following fashion trends, but also touch on topical and acute social topics in their compositions (to increase the popularity and discussion of the track). It is also important to mention that many years of experience of the existence of socialist ideology, censorship, as well as the weakening of their influence had a great influence on the music industry in our country. Thus, contemporary Russian music forms different value orientations among listeners than the music of the Soviet period.

Summing up all the above, it is possible to fix the dynamics both in relation to a woman and to her image in the work of representatives of the music industry. This dynamic is reflected in the fact that when describing the image of a woman in the lyrics, poetic comparisons, epithets are less often used, verbs in the imperative mood, obscene vocabulary are more often used. The beauty of a woman, manifested in the designation of female sexuality, began to be perceived differently, but it is worth noting the extreme degree of this phenomenon, which consists in the objectification of a woman.

Having examined the popular musical culture in Russia over the past 50 years, one can draw conclusions about the dynamics of the change in the image of a woman in the lyrics of songs. Firstly, a woman has ceased to be the standard of external and internal beauty, an ideal that needs to be achieved and conquered. Currently, women appear to be easily accessible, rational, and even mercantile in the texts



of musical compositions. The direct dependence of a man's success among women, depending on his financial well-being and especially his external attributes (money, cars, exotic places of leisure and recreation, clothing, and accessories of famous brands) emphasize the importance of the material factor in modern Russian society. We can talk about the degradation of the female image. Secondly, there was a rethinking of female beauty, an appeal to sexuality. The most noticeable change in the image of a woman was her identification with a sexual object, emphasizing the external parameters of attractiveness, singers often mention the physical characteristics of a woman's body. Sexual objectification of women is characteristic of all worlds popular music (McCallum & Dzidic, 2018). Third, the emphasis on the role of the mother is used by authors and performers much less frequently than during the Soviet period. Thus, changes in the value system of society are reflected, among other things, in the socio-cultural sphere - in the field of mass popular music, demonstrating significant changes in the perception of women in society.

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