Russian Women Writing Alcoholism: The Sixties to the Present

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I simply do not comprehend my existence here on earth... you came to the right person with your aching soul: my soul aches too. Only you came looking for a ready answer, while I'm trying to delve into the depths — but it's an ocean... So we drink this loathsome brew.

— V. Shukshin, I Believe!

Fyodor wasn't a big drinker. He hardly drank at all in fact... and if he did he never acted up... Next morning he'd wake up and say: “Forgive me for yesterday.” But what was there to forgive? He was only a man after all.

— I. Grekova, Ship of Widows

Alcoholism is one of Russia's oldest and most persistent social problems which over many generations has become a cultural norm and Russian "institution" in the sense that “the popular craving for alcohol has played as equally important [a] role as a set of needs, values, and attitudes related to the most essential determinants of social behavior: needs for food, for sex, for freedom, and for prosperity and success.”¹

Russian alcoholism has been a predominantly male problem — although the incidence of female alcoholism has increased in the late Soviet and post-Soviet period — and its consequences effect the relationships between men and women and those within the family. It is a particularly charged site in contemporary Russian culture because it provides a focal point for burgeoning concerns about such issues as gender roles and
relations, and the increase in social and domestic violence. Less than a
decade ago, G. Skvortsova identified the “psychological and social posi-
tion of woman in the man-woman relationship” as being “a touchstone
issue of contemporary society,” and as the subject of considerable dis-
cussion among specialists and the general public. N. Ivanova, writing at the
height of Soviet glasnost, claimed that “the unmasking of the violence in
everyday life is contemporary culture’s primary task.” A few examples
suffice to illustrate these claims in relation to Russian alcoholism and the
interpersonal problems which are engendered: there is a high correlation
between drinking and violence (especially violence toward women and
within the family); women in families where the husband drinks have an
above-average abortion rate (the Russian average is already high at 8); and a full 50 percent of women filing for divorce charge their husbands
with alcoholism. The insidious and often devastating effects of alcohol-
ism on familial structure and indications of individual well-being are only
now beginning to receive proper attention in post-Soviet Russia.

Since the early 1960s, the dual themes of alcohol abuse and drunken-
ness have been treated in Russian prose fiction with increasing frequency
and directness. Male- and female-authored texts which were published in
the Soviet Union between 1960 and 1990 provided models of appropriate
behavior vis-à-vis alcohol and gender relations which were officially sanc-
tioned and instrumental in the formation of society’s attitudes toward
these linked problems. One of the major trends in modern Soviet litera-
ture, “village prose” (derevenskaia proza), is predominantly male-au-
thored and male-centered and offers literary treatment of alcoholism
more systematically and consistently than any other corpus of recent
Russian writing by men which was published in the Soviet Union. The
early prose of the “derevenschiki” (village prose writers) treated themes
suggesting that rapid postwar urbanization had created a displaced, frus-
trated, and lonely population of new city-dwellers and a demoralized and
dismal Russian countryside. An increase in alcohol abuse, among other
grave social consequences, was the tangible result of this process. Initially
the development of the theme of male alcohol abuse was often limited to
descriptions of drinking bouts in the village or in a worker’s settlement,
that is to the culture and rituals of drinking and to the violence that
frequently accompanies it. Stories like Solzhenitsyn’s “Matriona’s Home”
(“Matrion in dvor,” 1963), Rasputin’s “Vasily i Vasilisa” (1968), and Shuk-
shin's “The Bastard” (“Suraz,” 1970) and “‘Oh, a Wife Saw Her Husband Off to Paris...’” (“‘Zhena muzha v Parizh provozhala...’,” 1971) incorporate drinking into the daily routine but speak to larger issues of the heroes' worldview and of how they live. The connection between quality of life and alcoholism is strongly suggested in these stories, but drinking is simply a common motif which links them. Until recently, Soviet literary censorship tolerated only guarded allusions to the fact that the problem of alcohol abuse was, at least in part, bred and sustained by the system; writers were thus cautious in their treatment of the topic. In pre-glasnost Russia, Vasily Shukshin, whose name is often linked with village prose, was best able to convey the angst, anomie, disillusionment, cynicism, and alienation felt by his protagonists who want to dull their senses and escape from the world around them, perhaps temporarily to an altered reality.

Since the early 1980s, Russian prose fiction has treated the question of alcohol in Russian society even more openly and candidly: it depicts drinkers of both sexes from all social and economic classes — the military, artists, intellectuals, the bureaucracy. To a considerable degree, the expansion in the parameters of the theme was due to the gradual emergence, particularly during the glasnost period, of women’s prose as a viable literary voice in Russia.

Russian women’s prose published in the Soviet Union has been the most effective corpus of urban-based writing that presents the alcohol problem in literary refraction. Women’s writing is noted for its attention to “byt,” — that is, to all of the details and activities of daily life that taken together constitute its practical or mundane side — as well as for its themes that reflect the host of problems found in the popular press and in rudimentary sociological surveys, and for its treatment of interpersonal and familial relationships. It is gynocentric writing: drawing on the well-spring of “byt,” Russian women give voice (narratively and figuratively) to issues and problems of daily life that profoundly effect them. In greater or lesser detail, these stories depict women living and coping with husbands and fathers and other family members who drink. This prose intuits and anticipates the phenomenon that, along with the alcoholic, the spouses and children, parents and siblings may suffer progressive psychological, emotional, and spiritual deterioration which mirrors that of the drinker. An important element in female-authored prose is its
acknowledgment of alcohol abuse and alcoholism among Russian women, a phenomenon which is virtually ignored in male texts. Specific works by women which deal with alcoholism include: I. Grekova’s novella Ship of Widows (Vdovyi parakhod, 1981), Galina Shcherbakova’s “The Wall” (“Stena,” 1979), Viktoria Tokareva’s “Five Figures on a Pedestal” (“Piat’ figur na postamente,” 1987), “Every Hunter” (“Kazhdyi okhotnik,” 1987) by Tat’iana Nabatnikova, “Be Still, Torments of Passion” (“Uimits’, volneniia strasti,” 1986) by Liudmila Uvarova, “Parade of the Planets” (“Parad planet,” 1990) by Larisa Vaneeva, and Liudmila Petrushevskaiia’s “Ali-Baba” (1988), her novella Our Crowd (Svoi krug, 1988), and the one-act plays Cinzano (1973, premiere 1978) and Smirnova’s Birthday (Den’ rozhdeniia Smirnovoi, 1977, premiere 1978). Certainly Petrushevskaiia makes alcoholism a prominent theme, while simultaneously portraying the disillusionment and spiritual atrophy which are the consequences of alcoholism at the social level. Shcherbakova examines in great detail the intimate, inner, and destructive workings of a relationship between a typical, well-educated upper-middle-class couple who contend on a daily basis with the husband’s alcoholism. In reading these and other stories, it is possible to conceive of the theme of alcoholism in Russian literature as a synecdoche which embraces society at large; subsumed within this larger frame of reference the theme functions as a catalyst which reveals values, attitudes — gender stereotypes and social and cultural myths, for example — as well as perceptions of self and of others. In her 1992 study, Women with Alcoholic Husbands, Ramona Asher supports such a conceptualization when she contends that “the social experience and status of women married to alcoholics say something important about the collective experience and status of women in [a given] society.”

With these ideas in mind, pertinent questions arise: what are the cultural and social processes which underlie the abuse of alcohol in Russia? Why have women allowed themselves to bear the brunt of it for so long? More specifically, how do Russian women authors manipulate and comment on this phenomenon and its multifaceted effect on women’s lives? Is there a difference in the way in which Russian women and men perceive and represent the problem of alcoholism and its familial consequences in their prose?

Answers to the latter two questions often lie within the literary texts themselves; in order to attempt to answer the first questions, we shall
briefly consider both the social function of alcohol in Russia and the
general cultural landscape for women and men in that country.

Russian social drinking — that is, nonaddictive, male drinking behavior —
incorporates two aspects — the celebratory and the utilitarian. Russians
mark virtually every occasion — joyful or sad — and every holiday — reli-
gious and secular — with drink. Vodka and brandy are preferred but
moonshine ("samogon"), medical spirits, and even technical spirits will
suffice. Russians prefer to drink in groups — and as few as three people
constitute a serious drinking party — although binge drinking in solitude
(zapoi) is the most characteristic behavior of Russian alcoholic males.
Drinking to get drunk is a normal behavior favored by much of the male
population and drinking in great quantities is regarded as a sign of virility,
courage, and character. The "mystique" of vodka in Russian society
attributes blame for intoxication to the vodka rather than to the drinker,
and drunken antics and even unconsciousness are tolerated because "it
can happen to anyone." Even regular sprees do not stigmatize a man as
an alcoholic as long as drinking is confined to leisure time and the drinker
can continue to provide for his family.

Drinking in Russia also has a crucial utilitarian component for it is
used as a means of making contacts, of consolidating business deals, of
maintaining good relations with superiors. Alcohol plays a large role in
Russia's second economy and is often used as currency. Bottles of vodka
go to people who provide a service or who can exert influence; such deals
involve anything from connections for receiving good food, fashionable
clothing, repairs or renovations, telephone services, apartments, to en-
trance to private schools and even university. Thus for most interactions
between people, alcohol is regarded as a necessity in contemporary Rus-
sian society and its role in social and cultural processes is vital. One
researcher even suggests a link between the spread and intensification of
Russian drinking and the evolution of Soviet society; he interprets these
phenomena as being engendered by identical socioeconomic and psycho-
logical processes: "widespread drunkenness . . . [is] an essential mecha-
nism of fitting a person to Russian society, a tool for cultural conditioning
and for developing national behavioral patterns."

Soviet authorities had sporadically campaigned against alcoholism
which affected productivity and involved such legal violations as drunk-
driving, disturbing the peace — the so-called “anti-social” activities. However, they were consistently sympathetic to “normal” drinking as an extremely lucrative source of state revenue. While some observers, like economist V. Treml, attribute the permissiveness of the authorities toward drinking to purely cynical financial calculations of the Soviet government (and the Tsarist government before it), others attest to the deliberate “alcoholization” of the Russian people: “National drunkenness is the best way to fog the mind. More than anything else, clear, sober minds are feared by those who are trying to make a nation of 250 million people into a nation of robots.”

In order to better understand the historical, political, sociological, psychological, and gender issues that are embedded in literary texts which manipulate the phenomenon of alcoholism, a theoretical model is an appropriate aid. Cultural anthropologist Edwin Ardener’s construct of intersecting “dominant” (male) and “muted” (female) circles can incorporate the Russian male alcohol problem within the dominant sphere and the problems of women involved in alcoholic relationships within the “muted” sphere and thus offer some insights into how such women are perceived by the dominant Russian male culture and how they perceive themselves and others. While the “dominant” and “muted” group boundaries of culture and reality largely overlap, there is a crescent of the muted group circle which is not wholly contained by the dominant group. Spatially this zone, which Ardener terms “wild,” is forbidden to men and experientially it represents aspects of female life-style which are unlike and outside those of men; in each case there is a corresponding zone of male experience alien to women. However, metaphysically, that is in terms of consciousness, there is no equivalent male space to the female zone. Since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure, it is structured by or accessible to language. For men, the female zone is consciously unknowable for the very reason that it lies beyond. For women however, pure male space is knowable because it becomes the subject of legend. This is a crucial point in understanding the persistence of Russian male myths about drinking — the need for “freedom,” “release,” “time-out” are all the stuff of legend. Russian women know these myths and appear to have internalized them.

Thus, as a recurring theme in Russian literature, alcoholism may be interpreted as a factor which distinguishes the daily life of Russian women
from that of men, that is, women’s condition from the general condition. Commenting in general terms on women’s writing, N. Zekulin suggests that women’s lives are fundamentally differentiated from men’s by “the domestic aspect of life, with its inequitable distribution of labor, its family pressures, the inadequate social and economic services, and above all the necessity of living with alcoholism [italics mine – TP].”19 Despite the increase in women citing their husbands’ alcoholism in divorce cases, coping with a drunken husband (which is reflected as a critical problem in women’s prose) is still widely accepted as part of a woman’s role in Russian culture, where essentialized roles have long been the norm in gender relations.20

Russian men’s writing in general, and village prose in particular, paint positive portraits of women as meek, self-sacrificing, forgiving, compassionate, and moral in the tradition of nineteenth-century prose fiction. On the other hand, contemporary, professionally successful women, and those who are self-motivated and striving for personal realization and happiness are portrayed negatively by the “derevenshchiki,” for they are perceived as undermining the family as the foundation of society.21 Vasily Belov, who has been criticized by some Russian women writers for misogyny in his prose, illustrates this view in “Morning Meetings” (“Svidaniia po utram,” 1977) through his hero, Zorin: “[M]any modern women had more female vanity than maternal love. Tonja was no exception. Zorin knew that more than once she had sacrificed Lyalka’s [their daughter’s – TP] well-being to her own idiotic self-assertion. He had been horrified when he made this discovery.”22 When Zorin eavesdrops on the conversation of a group of women talking about their husbands, he indignantly comments that “the woman who felt that men should be fed well to make them drink less was in such a tiny minority that she fell silent instantly. . . . In short, it wasn’t fashionable to love Slavik—that is, one’s own husband—according to this jolly company.”23 Also typical in varying degrees of much of the writing of the conservative and nationally oriented “derevenshchiki” is a dichotomy in attitude toward woman-as-mother and woman-as-wife which may be regarded as a variant of the madonna/whore stereotype that is prevalent in much male fiction. The mother, the Heroine and the Savior is Mother Russia—“Rossia-Matushka,” while the often shrewish wife is the antithesis of that romantic notion.24

In treating the theme of alcoholism, the approach in village prose is
quite distinct from that found in women's urban texts. Here the main concern is with male characters and the emotional or physical crises they experience. This male fiction portrays men as frustrated to the point of violence, edgy, and alienated. They seek release in drink, in "a form of national escapism." One critic has succinctly summarized the motif of drinking in the extremely popular short stories of Vasily Shukshin: "Vodka is an obligatory accessory in Shukshin's stories. . . . Vodka as medicine for spiritual pain. And vodka as the single means of going out 'to freedom.' "

Shukshin and Belov almost invariably portray woman-as-wife as a handy scapegoat for the drinking of her husband. She becomes the main obstacle in the male quest for freedom and the soul and the women thus depicted exhibit any number of the negative and stereotypical features outlined above. In the writing of the "derevenschiki" male self-respect has been eroded and men are made to feel "weak" and "unneeded," confused by and resentful of their wives' demands. Thus, the nagging, sharp-tongued wife is rooted in the real world and is perceived as the ultimate stimulus that pushes the man, who desires so much more spiritually from life, to drink. In Shukshin's stories, alcohol abuse most often acquires an existential mystique: inebriation is an essential part of Shukshin's "holiday for the soul" ("prazdnik dla dushi") and "spiritual release" ("volia"), which are metaphors for illusory freedom.

A different approach is taken by Valentin Rasputin, whose abusive drinkers embody "the destructive and aggressive male ethos" which threatens the peace and stability created and sustained by the aged Russian women, emblems of Mother Russia, who are his favorite heroines. Younger women, including wives with citified and pretentious manners or with philistine interests, are not sympathetic in Rasputin's writing; however, in contrast to the works of such writers as Shukshin and Belov, a wife is never blamed for her husband's drinking. Indeed in Rasputin's story "Vasily and Vasilisa," a wife evicts her husband after twenty years of married life after he has beaten her and caused her to miscarry. Rasputin attempts no justification of the beating. Vasilisa is a unique heroine within the works of Russian village prose; she is too sympathetic a figure for the paradigm of the hostile Shukshinian wife, yet her rejection of her husband disqualifies her from the male ideal of woman as maternal savior and redeemer. Rasputin depicts Vasilisa as virtually free from the crucial psychological bonds of self-sacrifice, blame, and guilt which dictate a
Russian woman’s tolerance of physical and psychological abuse from a drunken husband. At least in this important aspect, Vasilisa’s portrayal is nonstereotypical of much women’s and men’s prose which treats the consequences of alcoholism in relationships. On the other hand, Rasputin’s worldview emphasizes the ideologically nationalistic and apocalyptic, and in this story Vasilisa may be conceptualized as Mother Russia. A constant in Rasputin’s prose is the often violent, sometimes morose alcoholic who is estranged from his family, and by implication, from his Motherland. Rasputin fiercely condemns alcoholism in Russia as a collective evil, and the relationship between Vasily and Vasilisa has been interpreted symbolically as “a microcosm of the fate of rural Russia in the modern world, where disruption and chaos threaten the order and harmony of centuries.”

Village prose reflects the relationship between alcohol abuse and divorce and physical violence against women, but most often the point of view indicates that it is the man who is the victim: all of his vices are glossed over, and women are portrayed as calculating and unfeeling. In “The Anguish of Young Vaganov” (“Stradaniia molodogo Vaganova,” 1972), a lawyer reviews a wife’s petition against her husband for drunkenness; if found guilty her husband will face a three-year prison sentence. But the lawyer, Vaganov, feels that the husband has been set up by the wife who wants to move in with her lover. In men’s writing, portrayal of abuse is usually “motivated” by the nagging of the wife. For example, in another of Shukshin’s stories, “‘Oh, A Wife Saw Her Husband Off to Paris . . . ,’” the hero is portrayed as anguished over his unhappy marriage and the prospects of losing his child to divorce. He is driven to distraction by the insults of his wife, who doesn’t want to put up any longer with his drinking and neighborhood accordion concerts. When she hits a raw nerve concerning his family, the hero reacts: “That was quite enough from her. It was time to put an end to it! Any more of this self-imposed torment, and he’d become a mental case or an alcoholic. . . . ‘One way or another I’m going to kill you today. . . . You’ve asked for it. And you’re going to get it.’”

In the writing of the “derevenshchiki” then, there are two distinct, male-oriented agendas in portrayals of alcoholics. These agendas are formulated at a level which is perceptibly more abstract than the one at which women’s prose expresses itself, which is the level of “byt.” One formula exalts and romanticizes the existential male striving for “release”
and "freedom," while the other, with a nationalistic zeal, abhors that striving for defiling Mother Russia. In contemplating the national character of the Russian, émigré author Andrei Siniavsky, with marked irony, associates the significance of alcohol use with the realization of an essential facet of Russian culture: "The Russian people drink not from need and not from grief, but from an age-old requirement for the miraculous and the extraordinary — drink, if you will, mystically, striving to transport the soul beyond earth's gravity and return it to its sacred noncorporeal state."  

Predictably, the portrayal of female drinkers by the village prose writers is exceptionally rare; this fact tells us much about the extent to which Russian society tolerates the abuse of alcohol by women, but also, invoking Siniavsky, it suggests that Russia's male-dominant culture is not prepared to share the legend of the miraculous, the extraordinary, the mystical, and ultimately the spiritual, with women.

Much of Russian women's writing is mediated through male-dominated literary structures and, while women's prose is gradually being legitimized in Russia, in general women still lack a suitable code by which to express their views in an acceptable form to men and women brought up in the male idiom. Many Russian women writers, the foremost among them, do not believe that gender is relevant to the creative process: they protest the label "women's writing," refuse to see differences between female and male writing, and adopt male authors as models to emulate. However, this set of beliefs does not hinder the best authors from writing, upon occasion, what Western criticism would call "feminist critiques" of their patriarchal culture.

The basic conservatism of Russian women in terms of their ability to bring to consciousness many women's issues is rooted in a behavior of accommodation to the patriarchal culture; by examining the theme of alcoholism in women's literature we see graphic proof of this behavior in depictions of women and their reactions to the drinker. Focusing on the manipulation of the phenomenon of alcoholism we can see how the weight of the dominant culture's ordering of the world constrains women; it questions their self-perception and inundates them with literary stereotypes of what a "good wife" should be: meek, self-sacrificing, forgiving, compassionate, and entirely nonthreatening. If a woman does not exhibit these qualities, if she refuses to facilitate or opposes her husband's drinking, then in the writing of men, the wife is typecast as aggressive, overpowering, domineering, treacherous, philistine, selfish, cruel, greedy. Sex-
ual wantonness is often linked with woman’s lack of moral scruples and stifling banality. Such stereotypes of women are the surface forms with which men in the Soviet period have articulated their fears about women and sexuality. At base is an ongoing and elemental struggle with the suppressed old Orthodox Christian concept of sex as sin and of woman as its source. With characteristic irony Siniavsky has commented that: “Vodka is the Russian muzhik’s [male’s — TP] White Magic; he decidedly prefers it to Black Magic — the female.”

The underlying feelings of insecurity and enmity toward women/sex so widespread in Russia have combined with many other sources of anxiety in a male complex of drunkenness, for alcohol temporarily alleviates hostilities and sexual anxieties.

As an attempt to escape from any type of hardship or trouble, Russian men take to drink. Folk sayings, truisms, and jokes — the mouthpiece of the dominant culture — respond to this phenomenon. For example, consider the maxim “when times get tough, men get drunk and women head for church”; the punchline to a joke “I’m not a ladies man, I’m a decent Russian alcoholic”; a ditty which names an alcoholic spouse as one of the “cornerstones” in the life of the average Russian woman “In her right hand — a string bag/ In her left hand — snot-nosed Tos’ka/ On her back — dead drunk Ivan/ Before her — the Five-Year Plan.”

Author and playwright Zoiia Boguslavskai a alludes to the extent to which women in Russian society have internalized these myths when she comments upon the traditionally closed nature of Russian society: “any information about women, the family and relations between the sexes was considered washing our dirty linen before strangers.” Another commentator corroborates this view and sees ostentation as pronounced in Russian society and responsible for destructive effects in personal and family life, since “much effort is expended on maintaining form and appearances.” One of I. Grekova’s characters illustrates this attitude in relation to the alcohol problem: “My late husband drank but I stuck it out. If he threw up, I wiped it up so that I wouldn’t have to be ashamed in front of the neighbors. I did his laundry, the mending and ironing — spick and span, neat as a pin.”

Feminist critic Barbara Heldt has called such literary treatments of women’s role in society “the phoney glorification of making do.” The occurrence of women’s writing which “wears a smile” could, in Soviet Russia, be directly related to its accommodation to the male-dominated
literary establishment: "Works on women publishable in the Soviet Union may show women’s difficult lives, weak or inadequate men, nasty interactions at work, losses great and small; but always they must contain hope for the future, show male reasonableness at the very top . . . and end on a positive note for the main character."  

How do Russian women write alcoholism? Their treatment typically conveys a deeply personal concern about the drinker, his problem and its repercussions in the life of a woman and of her family. The heroine is usually the wife, lover, sometimes mother of the drinker; she bears the direct brunt of the drinking and is always aware of the larger context of trying to reconcile his needs with her own and with those of her family, if there is one. This type of all-encompassing, processual approach to problems reflects widely held gender expectations of women in general which relate to self-involvement and tending to the whole.  

From a woman’s perspective, usually conveyed in first-person narration or through quasi-direct discourse, this corpus of fiction, mainly stories and novellas, presents emotions, thoughts, and the psychology of the Russian woman through such stylistic and narrative devices as retrospection, irony, and interior monologue, all of which coalesce to create a personal and confiding narrative tone. There is no generalized moral judgment of the problem in women’s writing, rather each story attempts to rationalize and explain the motivations of an individual and particular drinker. There is also a sense of the need to give voice to a certain type of lived experience which is common and shared.

In Viktoria Tokareva’s recent story “Five Figures on a Pedestal,” we see a reflection of many of these characteristics. The heroine, Tamara, a journalist married to a sculptor who is a hopeless alcoholic, is cognizant of many aspects of her situation. For example, at times she regards the myth of the alcoholic creative artist ironically: “He has a lovely way of putting it: ‘the pathology of the gifted.’ Similarly pathologically gifted friends, or simply smart bums, will come around — people who are just as degenerate as the husband of old Dusya, the yardkeeper, only they’ve read more”; she has closely analyzed her husband’s pattern of drinking — two weeks in an alcoholic stupor, a period of remission in which he works, and then pre-alcoholic ennui which signals the onset of another binge; and she is even aware that “wives of alcoholics” may be considered “a separate social subunit, capable of being studied as an individual group or species” (Tokareva, 155). Tamara is also very concerned about both the
environmental and biological effects of the father's drinking on their son. She regards her own position as a typical Soviet woman with an alcoholic husband with heavy irony: "Nowadays, in the 1980s, it was the woman who kept the family afloat. Women toiled like Volga boatmen, giving men the opportunity to be true to themselves, to be creative, and not to bring home any money" (Tokareva, 154). Yet when the opportunity for a more satisfying life presents itself, predictably with a man whom she meets on a business trip, Tamara rejects it. Although Iura possesses only redeeming features (she perceives him as an angel), Tamara ends their affair essentially because he is from a Ukrainian city and she believes that her Muscovite "mentality" would inevitably clash with his "provincial" ways. The story ends as she returns home to a husband who does not even know she has been gone, but who "hid his face in her hair, and clung to her, like a child in the dark. . . . Tamara led her husband out of the studio. He held her hand tightly, as if afraid he might get lost" (Tokareva, 197). Tokareva's use of maternal imagery reflects the same iconization of motherhood that is so prevalent in much Russian men's writing. The literary expectation that fictional women and female narrators should be "good" mothers, not only to their children but to their men, reflects the larger cultural expectation which is realized in domestic relations.

Typically, Tamara prefers to stay on her "treadmill" and use her job as an escape: "In addition to the money it brought in, the editorial department was a social club for Tamara. Here she could breathe a sigh of relief and get away from the storms that were always threatening to break at home. . . . [H]ere, Tamara was in touch with herself, with her standing in society" (Tokareva, 156).

Tokareva's story is fairly representative of the corpus of women's writing which treats the theme of alcoholism; the wives of the drinkers experience a lengthy and trying relationship which rocks the foundation of their self-definition and social worth. They are often portrayed in a variety of self-abnegating modes: pity and overprotectiveness toward the drinker, feelings of responsibility and guilt, and self-sacrifice. While such stances have been labeled as "codependent" in Western studies of substance abuse, the women involved often perceive them as simply protective or caring behavior and a form of marital obligation.41

Like Tamara, most of the wives depicted in women's writing are aware of the dynamics of their husband's drinking and its effect on themselves and their families. Nonetheless, they hesitate to take decisive action and
are most often portrayed as engaged in some sort of coping behavior. For example, at the beginning of Tokareva’s story Tamara reflects that she has not divorced her husband because she believes he will fall apart if she does, yet she knows that if she stays with him, *she* will fall apart. By story’s end, however, she has reached the conclusion that “everyone is dependent on everyone else... [but] no matter how much life puts you through the meat grinder, no matter what kind of mincemeat it makes of you, other people aren’t supposed to be affected, to suffer” (Tokareva, 200). These noble words are applied only to herself; she does not hold her husband accountable to the same standard. Thus for the sake of her child, her mother, her husband, she will continue as before: “she had to go on holding their life together single-handedly... a confident May Day-parade smile always on her face” (Tokareva, 156).

Women’s feelings of guilt are evident in this particular body of female-authored prose and they frequently underlie plot choices which keep relationships together. For example, Tamara feels guilty toward her son and her mother for “she had wanted to be happy without them, apart from them. But what about them?” (Tokareva, 191). In I. Grekova’s *Ship of Widows*, one of the women has had a son by another man but is reunited with her husband after World War II. We read that: “Anfisa, always conscious of the wrong she’d done [her husband], was shy and deferential with him.” When her husband takes to drink and periodically threatens her or beats her, Anfisa takes the entire blame onto herself. On one occasion, she effectively nullifies his apology: “‘But it’s my fault... It’s all right if you hit me, Fedenka. It’s better than I deserve.’ Fyodor waved her aside disdainfully” (Grekova, 76). Clearly, an element of self-sacrifice (martyrdom) is emotionally related to women’s guilt in these excerpts, but self-sacrifice is motivated by other factors as well. For example, a desire to maintain appearances is a mode which is also portrayed. A psychologically revealing internal monologue from Galina Shcherbakova’s “The Wall” discloses much about both the wife, V.I., and her alcoholic husband:

For them, the better things are, the worse they get. But nobody knows that, not a single soul! She hates women who moan and complain. Nothing and nobody will force her to speak badly of him. But does he know what that costs her? How badly she wants to yell sometime! But she can’t. She can’t allow herself that luxury. Let everybody think that everything between them is as it was at the beginning.”
In these thoughts are undeniable elements of self-sacrifice and an unhealthy suppression of the speaker’s emotions, particularly of her anger, all for the sake of preserving an outward facade of well-being.

A sense of moral superiority provides yet another motivation for a self-sacrificing stance: in Shcherbakova’s story, V.I. has a prestigious job and many connections, yet she is powerless to save her husband from his alcoholism. She is aware though, that her position and influence can keep him dependent on her; he knows that she can “pull him out” of any alcoholic predicament. She feels a smug satisfaction as she thinks:

One day he’d have a heart attack, and she’d have to pull him “out of there.” She’d do it with her characteristic conscientiousness and pull him out . . . she was certain of her own abilities and strength. Of how she’d get all the specialists going, secure a private ward and sick-nurse, and obtain any medicines from any country. (Shcherbakova, 106)

Beyond the range of behaviors of wives who choose to stay with their husbands, very occasionally Russian women’s prose which writes alcoholism depicts a woman who ends the relationship. For example, in Liudmila Uvarova’s “Be Still, Torments of Passion,” the heroine decisively terminates her relationship with her common-law alcoholic husband and is compelled to reject him yet again when he returns years later, asking for another chance:

[Veronika] cried, choking, cursing herself and her misfortune, cursing Arnold, whom she gradually began to despise — not pity; not hate, of course, but despise. . . .

“That’s it,” Veronika told Nastia. “We’ve got to put an end to this whole business.” . . . And soon Arnold vanished from the house, vanished as if he had never been there at all. . . . Veronika didn’t have a tear in her eye. She silently held out her hand to him. “Take care of yourself,” she said rather calmly.44

Veronika goes on to develop her career as a successful actress and to live in a supportive family-like grouping of women with no feelings of guilt or remorse about the decision she has made.45 The author counterposes Veronika’s self-assurance and independence to a second female point of view, that of Nastia the housekeeper. Such a duality is a common technique used by Russian women authors and here it serves to implicitly question Veronika’s judgment:

So Ver[onika] didn’t miss him after all. That meant she was satisfied with everything that had happened, and that was the main thing. She wasn’t suffering
because of anybody. She wasn't heartbroken over anyone. But just the same, Nastia felt sorry, sorry for Arnold, poor fellow. It happens, and often, a man just can't control himself. He'd rather not drink, but he can't help himself; he doesn't have the strength, the will, the discipline. But Nastia didn't say any of this aloud. No point. (Uvarova, 182)

This story ends with Veronika's vindication — on a tape-recorded message Arnold admits that her decision had been the right one: "Well, what do you say to that?" Veronika turned to [Nastia]. 'As you can see, he blames himself for everything; not me, but only himself'" (Uvarova, 190). Both Veronika and V.I. are depicted as women whose professional aspirations and subsequent position afford them a good measure of autonomy and social value (and therefore social power), crucial factors in staving off a disruption and alteration of self-identity which, to varying degrees, happens to the wives in some of the stories examined above.

As a corpus, however, Russian women's fiction rather infrequently portrays wives who deal directly and decisively with the drinking of their husbands. Only indirectly does it reflect the statistical incidence of divorce on the grounds of alcohol abuse: it is not unusual in women's writing that the heroine is a single mother who has left her alcoholic and possibly abusive husband. Similarly, when women's writing does acknowledge the violence — physical, psychological, and emotional — inflicted upon wives by drunken husbands, it does so not with a sense of outrage but as a quiet statement of the facts. For example, in Shcherbakova's story, the upper-middle-class couple has substituted the arguments and physical beatings that accompany drinking in working-class homes and amongst the peasantry with subtle and sophisticated variations of those activities; theirs is an ongoing but silent physical and psychological battle. Silence has evolved as a weapon to be used against each other, but even the limited verbal exchange that occurs between them is described in a narration which employs such verbs as "attack," "ambush," "defend," and "barricade." A possible explanation for such omissions and silences in women's writing may have to do with the message, which was pervasive in Soviet Russian male-dominated society, that only as a last resort should families be disrupted by separation or divorce. One Soviet commentator gave the following advice regarding divorce in a newspaper article: "There are simple cases of heavy drunkenness, betrayal, cruelty. . . . But all the same, don't hurry to take the final step." Debates in the popular media, agencies such as family consultation services, and discouragement
of divorce through the legal system all conveyed this message which alluded to a deep concern about demography and gender relations in contemporary Russia.47

Generally in this particular corpus of women’s writing, male drinkers are portrayed as objects of pity — tender creatures whose motivations for drinking are valid and need to be understood by a stoic wife who most often functions as a mother-figure. These men are essentially kind but lack strength and self-esteem. In “Ship of Widows” the husband explains: “I don’t know why I do it myself... You’re sobbing inside with depression sometimes, and there’s nothing you can do but drink. And then it doesn’t matter any more and everything seems better” (Grekova, 79). The “maternal complex” in Tokareva’s story reaches its culmination as Tamara contemplates her husband’s latest sculpture — a fallen warrior and five grieving women — which is thematically reminiscent of the Pieta. She instantly fathoms the depths of her husband-child’s emotions and implicitly excuses his alcoholism: “he, with an artist’s sensibility, had intuited the pain of the times. . . So everything that hurt people hurt him. That was why he was an artist. And why Tamara was an artist’s wife” (Tokareva, 196). In this excerpt Tamara’s maternal pity for her husband becomes inseparable from her feelings as a wife and the passage acquires a tone of near-exaltation as Tamara evokes the deep-rooted myth of the artist as alcoholic which has a very rich tradition in Russian culture. This passage is reminiscent of the words of an Esenin poem: “And I, myself dropping my head, fill my eyes with wine so as not to see fate’s face, so as to think, at least for a moment, about something else.” In the Soviet period alone, this tradition extends from such romanticized and mythologized literary figures as Aleksandr Blok and Sergei Esenin in the 1920s through to Vladimir Vysotsky and Vasily Shukshin in the 1980s. Thus, conveniently linked together are two myths of the male-dominated culture (the image of woman as mother and the image of the sensitive alcoholic artist), which Russian women have internalized and accept as valid.

In contrast to images of drinking men, the comparatively rare portrayals of women drinkers by women are “positive”; the woman drinker is debased (but no more so than others around her), and at times she is openly rebellious or nonconformist. A sense of irony and a rejection of patriarchal society and men as validators are key elements in this portrayal, for these heroines are mostly unmarried women, usually divorcees. Additionally, women writers who portray drinking women do not engage
in moral statement, and do not pass judgment on their protagonists; their implied criticism lies elsewhere and is aimed at such targets as the inevitable double (gender) standard in Russian society, normative views of gender roles, and at a degenerate society in general. For example, in Liudmila Petrushevskaya’s 1988 novella *Our Crowd*, the first-person narrator, a divorced mother, finds that she is terminally ill. Hero(ine)ically, she renounces her son in order to save him but she accomplishes this in a way specific to Russian society, a way which reveals much about gender relations in that country. She deliberately stages a “drunken” scene and beats her child in front of her ex-husband, knowing that a nonprivileged woman with a drinking problem in Russia will have her children taken from her. In a weird psychological twist she reasons that in order to ensure that the father will take responsibility for the child, she must debase herself and prompt the father into righteous action; without the threat that the boy will be placed in an orphanage while she is still alive, the father will never agree to look after him after her death.

I’ve arranged his [her son’s — TP] fate at a very cheap price. Otherwise after my death he’d have gone from one boarding school to another and would have had a hard time being received as a visitor in his father’s own home. . . . The whole child-beating scene . . . gave a push to the long, new romantic tradition in my orphan Alyosha’s life with his noble new foster parents, who’ll forget their own interests, but will watch over his. That’s how I calculated it all, and that’s the way it will be.48

Clearly this mother does not fit the stereotype of most women portrayed in Russian fiction written by men; she is neither submissive nor amorphous, nor is she amoral, materialistic, or egotistical. Motivated solely by concern for her son, her decisive actions and means of achieving her goal fly in the face of Russian cultural perceptions of motherhood. In a wonderful combination of farce and tragedy, she acts the part of the villain, the father becomes the savior, and she directs the entire spectacle with great flair. Ironically she employs the traditionally male vehicle of alcohol to effect a tangible change for the better rather than for the worse. Even more iconoclastic in the Russian cultural context is the heroine’s attitude toward her own death: once her son’s future has been secured, death becomes inviting and preferable to remaining alive. Petrushevskaya rejects the Russian cultural glorification of motherhood, but she does reclaim it on her own terms: she creates an image “whose authority proceeds from the maternal body and subverts the power and authority of
the male-generated abstract icon of the maternal." In this way, Our Crowd provides fitting commentary on the tradition of the "mother image" in Russian culture which is "symbolized and valorized as long as it is within non-female discourse."

Heroines who drink in such female texts as Vaneeva's "Parade of the Planets" and Petrushevskaya's "Ali-Baba" are depicted as profoundly lonely, and prostitution, either explicitly or implicitly, accompanies their drinking. Family and friends have abandoned them or cannot be counted on to help. Both Petrushevskaya's and Vaneeva's stories are examples of the "chernukha" (darkening) which has appeared in recent Soviet and post-Soviet writing, although Petrushevskaya has for years been critically berated with this term for her theme of "the fate of woman in a cruel world."

"Ali-Baba" is stylistically typical of Petrushevskaya's "hyperrealism" or her "post-Soviet naturalism." She depicts a homeless young woman, the story's namesake, whose drunken one-night stand inevitably lead to suicide attempts. Only in the story's final sentences do we learn that these episodes provide her with the only truly human contact now available to her:

Ali-Baba ... lay in a clean bed in a ward for mentally-disturbed women. She would be there no less than a month and there would be hot breakfasts, talks with the doctors, the woeful tales of the other patients. She had a lot to tell too, especially about the first time she took the tablets when she went blind for a month, or about the second time when she slept for thirty-six hours solid, and about the sixth time when she woke up at 8 am, absolutely sober.

Larisa Vaneeva's "Parade of the Planets" produces a startling effect through the combination of its subject matter and its disjointed modernist narrative. The narration alternates between a first- and third-person point of view. The protagonist, "I"/Savaleva, observes herself both internally and subjectively through the first-person narration or externally and objectively through narration in the third-person. She is a woman whose body and mind have been ravaged by many years of alcohol and tobacco abuse and by moonlighting as a prostitute. The story takes place during one of her alcoholic highs. We are within her hallucination: we see the four red-headed aliens from a UFO, we hear the sounds of the after-hours subway station where Saveleva has fallen into a drunken sleep, and we are privy to recounted bits of Saveleva's violent and unhappy recent and distant past which mingle with other elements in the hallucination.
As we piece together the deterioration of her life we learn that her daughter has become a prostitute and a drug addict who sneers at her mother’s alcoholism: “Saveleva’s daughter had always despised her, as all drug addicts despise alcoholics. Alcoholics are crude, uncultivated creatures who don’t understand or know how to achieve a pure high, her daughter thought.”

Until recently, prostitution per se was a taboo subject in (Soviet) Russian literature. The loosening of literary censorship in the late 1980s occurred in tandem with a rapid proliferation of pornography and an increase in prostitution with its concomitant substance abuse. It remains to be seen how these phenomena will be further refracted in women’s literary texts.

Most of the women’s texts that I have discussed which deal with alcoholism were published during Gorbachev’s six-year campaign for glasnost; the fact of their appearance can be taken as a sign of the potential impact that social change can have on gender portrayal in Russian literature, particularly in women’s writing. One critic has, in fact, already acknowledged the “salutary subversiveness of [Russia’s] indiscreet women’s writing.” Contemporary Russian literature now has a small body of iconoclastic texts by women authors who present their heroines through nonstereotypical points of view and engaged in nontraditional life-styles which give a fuller and more complete picture of women’s lives in late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

In general, the images of women in the fiction of Russian women writing alcoholism in many ways still resemble those dominant models found in male prose, which portrays positive images of self-sacrificing, forgiving, compassionate, and supremely moral women. Both feminine and masculine writing is guilty of a normative approach to gender roles and of attributing certain characteristics (irrationality, emotionality) and traits (concern about money, appearance, material possessions) to women. However, the deviations in women’s writing on alcoholism from the stereotypical norm — the wives who leave, the female alcoholics — and the problematizing of worn-out formulations, are significant. Coupled with the uniqueness of a “holistic” perception and approach to the problem, they highlight myths that Russian culture, which is still largely created within a male idiom, takes for granted. They also speak to the great need for the empowerment of women in Russia at levels above those of the family.
The prose of a younger generation of women writers has begun to evidence broader thematic and stylistic representations of women; it consciously manipulates language, it is engaged in the exploration of physiology and the concomitant de-mythologizing of the body, and it is spiced with a healthy dose of skepticism. It is one critic's opinion that "the coercive exemplar of 'femininity' has perceptibly weakened its hold over women's self-conceptualization. . . . Nowadays female authors ironize or impugn gender stereotypes, adduce alternatives to sanctioned models, or write as though the latter did not exist."56 Such changes, supported by the gradual legitimization of women's writing in contemporary Russian culture, indicate the great potential of Russian women's writing to aid in the de-mythologizing of male alcoholism. Such an achievement would, in turn, help to release women from a sense of personal inadequacy and to gain some awareness of the gender politics which transmit the essentialized view of gender still prevalent in today's Russian society.

NOTES

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1. Boris Segal, *The Drunken Society: Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the Soviet Union: A Comparative Study* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990), 527. Apropos of the late Soviet period, economist Vladimir Treml has written that "the magnitude and scope of alcohol abuse and the severity of its impact on Soviet society are unique in terms of international experience." "Alcohol Abuse and the Quality of Life in the USSR," in *Soviet Politics in the 1980s*, ed. Helmut Sonnenfeldt (London: Westview Press, 1985), 56. Some comparative data are useful to gauge the "magnitude and scope" of the Soviet alcohol problem. In total alcohol consumption by litre for persons fifteen years and older, the Soviet Union ranked fourth or fifth in 1980 among thirty countries for which data was available. However, the Soviet Union ranked first in the world in per capita consumption of strong alcoholic beverages (i.e., drinks with an alcohol content of 40 percent and higher). In terms of "severity of impact," strong alcohol is acknowledged as being more detrimental than wine and beer to health (according to the incidence of chronic and acute poisonings, and mental disorders) and the social environment (as gauged by the incidence of violence, accidents, absenteeism). See Treml, "Alcohol Abuse," 56–57.

2. Galina Skvortsova, "Sem'ia i lichnoe shchast'e (Muzhchina i zhenshchina na
4. Demographic economist Anastasia Posadskaia writes that "in the private sphere [the greatest threat to women today] is violence. We have many institutions in our society where sexual life is barbarous. This is not to speak of the effects of alcoholism . . . on men’s behavior in marriages, which leads to a great deal of violence." "Self-Portrait of a Russian Feminist (Interview)," New Left Review 195 (Sept.–Oct. 1992): 17. Based on a 1978 study, Boris Segal estimated that of 11.1 million annual incidents of Soviet women beaten by their husbands, 9.4 million of such incidents could be attributed to alcohol. The Drunken Society, 267.
6. Tat’iana Mamonova, "Is There Perestroika for Women," Women East-West 23 (May 1990): 5. Anastasia Posadskaia gives the supplementary statistic that every third marriage in Russia breaks up and that women initiate 60 percent of the divorces; Posadskaia, "Self-Portrait," 14.
7. According to Kathleecen Parthe, "village prose" ended as a literary movement in the late 1970s, its canonical texts appearing from the mid-1950s to 1980. Russian Village Prose: The Radiant Past (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), xii. Other male-authored texts written between 1960 and 1990 which treat the theme of alcoholism were never published in the Soviet Union. These include poems and songs by Vladimir Vysotsky and Aleksandr Galich, and fictional works by Viktor Nekrasov, Venedikt Erofeev, Sergei Kaledin, Sasha Sokolov, Aleksandr Zinov'ev, etc. By 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist, most of these authors had emigrated.
8. I will confine my discussion to women’s texts which were written and published in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia since the 1960s. It would be worthwhile to compare these images with those in works which treat the theme of alcoholism by such emigre writers as Julia Voznesenskaia, Ruf' Zernova, and Liudmila Shtern.
9. In its approach, "literatura byta" (the literature of daily reality) treats the individual rather than the universal, does not resolve personal or general problems, and comments neither on philosophy nor ideology. Because women’s writing shares these features with the genre, "literatura byta" has increasingly become synonymous with the derogatory critical term "damskaia proza" (ladies’ prose) despite the fact that one of its most successful practitioners was Iurii Trifonov. In general, Russian literary criticism has assumed female experience to be too narrow or parabolic as compared to the "universality," logic, and rationality of male experience. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Barbara Heldt, "Gynoglasnost: writing the feminine," in Peresstroika and Soviet Women, ed. Mary Buckley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 160–75; and Helena Goscilo, "Skirted Issues: The Dis-


11. Cocktails and mixed drinks are disdained, while male drinkers categorize wines and champagnes as “ladies’ drinks.” The typical style of drinking requires that vodka be drunk by the glassful accompanied by a light appetizer; the effect is rapid intoxication. A feature of grain-based drinking is the rapid oscillation between friendly and affectionate feelings and irritability, resentment, and anger.

12. See Segal for a description of the different drinking styles of various social groups in Soviet society; *The Drunken Society*, 108–27.

13. Social female Russian drinking behavior follows a rather different pattern and approximates the norm for American female drinkers. Women tend to drink wines and champagnes, although small amounts of vodka or brandy are acceptable. The degree to which public intoxication of women is tolerated by Russian society is significantly lower than its toleration of the same behavior in males.

14. Moonlighting tradespeople are a particularly notorious group in this respect; without vodka, an electrician, plumber, mover, or repairman is not to be had. It is additionally difficult to engage their services since they are often drunk.


17. By the term “muted,” Ardener refers to problems both of language and of power.

18. For a full explication of Ardener’s construct, see Edwin Ardener, “Belief and the Problem of Women” and “The Problem Revisited,” in *Perceiving Women*, ed. Shirley Ardener (New York: Halstead Press, 1978), 1–17, 19–27. I have adapted this model so that each circle contains subgroups: in the dominant circle, I posit the subgroups “male alcoholics” and “male writers”; in the muted circle the subgroups are “women + alcoholics,” “women writers,” and “female alcoholics.” Given the magnitude of the Russian alcohol problem it is safe to assume that the subgroups “male alcoholics” and “women + alcoholics” are not much smaller in size than the respective full groups. Thus the discourse about Russian female and male perceptions of alcoholism and about each other is maintained at the broadest societal level. The alcohol factor within both subgroups appears to amplify aspects of gender relations in Russia that are present in the larger groups.

20. As Segal states: "Russian women have been expected to take care of their drunken husbands and sons"; *The Drunken Society*, 235.


25. Posadskaya, "Self-Portrait," 16. Segal also links Russian drinking to escapism: "drinking was not only a source of pleasure, it was also the most stable ritual-related custom and the most reliable means of escapism." *Russian Drinking: Use and Abuse of Alcohol in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (New Jersey: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1987), xvii.


29. Barbara Heldt suggests that contemporary Russian writing be broadly conceived as "feminine" and "masculine," with the gendered dichotomy referring to the text rather than to the sex of the author: "Feminine writing... is about how all the little things in life go wrong... [M]asculine' writing... may be politically daring [but] this sort of writing tend to be conservative on gender issues. Masculine writing is about how all the big things go wrong. Big things include history, ecology, and patriarchal values, such as religion and the family. 'Masculine' writing often rings with accusatory rhetoric"; "Gynoglasnost," 169-70. Heldt makes it clear that "masculine" writing may be written by women and "feminine" writing by men.


31. A reason for this apparent paradox is suggested by Helena Goscilo: "The stumbling block... is less feminist theory... per se than the label 'feminist.' Discredited by class associations in earlier phases of Soviet history and still rendered suspect by disillusionment with any comprehensive political agenda, the term 'feminism' as entertained by Russians is culturally overmarked and consequently stigmatized." "Monsters Monomaniacal, Marital, and Medical:

32. Siniavsky, *Unguarded Thoughts*, 348. He continues that in Russia “the skirts-chaser, the lover, take on features of the foreigner, the German ... the Frenchman, the Jew. But we Russians will surrender any beauty for a bottle of pure spirits.”

33. A recent wire-service report illustrates this phenomenon. Reporting about families in Russia with children suffering from AIDS, the article tersely states: “As with so many family matters in Russia, the burden of an AIDS-infected child usually falls on the mother. ... Fathers, upon learning their children have AIDS, often leave their families or start drinking heavily.” *Arizona Daily Star*, 24 Aug. 1993: A5.

34. Zoia Boguslavskaiia, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 5 Aug. 1987: 12. Anastasia Posadskaiia, when asked in interview about the stresses in patterns of relationships in post-Soviet Russian society, admits that: “It is a bit difficult to answer that ... because the subject doesn’t lend itself easily to investigation, especially in our culture”; “Self-Portrait,” 16.


38. In contrast, widespread expectations concerning men have to do with problem solving and mending parts of the whole with minimal disruption to and involvement of self. Ramona Asher invites feminist investigation of expectations of women by asking: “to what extent is an introspective, all-encompassing approach to problems women’s ... natural way — thus to be honored and preserved as their unique contribution? [and] ... to what extent might this be a socially created, institutionalized gender pattern that confines women’s energy and choices — thus to be examined, exposed, and perhaps modified?” *Women with Alcoholic Husbands*, 199–200.

39. Alternative terminologies for this mode of discourse include “represented speech,” “narrated speech,” “erlebte Rede,” “style indirect libre,” and “free indirect discourse.” In this mode, the viewpoint is limited and the voices of the author, narrator, and protagonist are often blurred.


41. Codependency is a phenomenon by which those people around the drinker, that is, those that love him and/or whose well-being is linked with his, step in to protect him from the consequences of his irresponsible and often antisocial
behavior. Enabling wives act out of a sense of love and loyalty, out of shame (to preserve self-respect), and out of fear that she will have to share the consequences of the drinker's behavior. As Tony Crespi defines it: "the non-alcoholic begins to develop a repertoire of behaviors as an outgrowth of attempting to cope with alcoholism. In essence though, these behaviors make them as much a slave to the alcohol as the drinker, so the efforts at stability and comfort are actually ineffective." Tony Crespi, *Becoming An Adult Child of an Alcoholic* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1990), 8.

Some very important questioning of the "codependent" label has been recently voiced. Ramona Asher comments that "The designation of actions ... as codependent means that women's experience is being judged in terms of "appropriate" male experience, which is based on standards of independence and separation, as Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982), and Rubin (1983) have established"; *Women with Alcoholic Husbands*, 198. She agrees with other critics of the codependent label that such behaviors would be more usefully thought of as essentially positive behaviors that have become extreme and unbalanced under certain conditions.

42. I. Grekova, *Ship of Widows*, trans. Cathy Porter (London: Virago Press, 1985), 75. Further references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.


45. In Russia today, for a variety of interrelated social, economic, and political reasons, family has become associated with women, and fathers, having dissociated themselves from domestic and parenting responsibilities, are figuratively, and often literally, absent. Thus, support for women comes from other women and they rely on themselves and one another to solve daily problems.


47. According to a 1981 report in a Russian sociological journal "only one in three men and one in five women marry a second time. This means that divorce results in an irrevocable loss in terms of the number of children born." Quoted by Attwood, *The New Soviet Man and Woman*, 200. Attwood goes on to present more Soviet views which hold that "women have gone beyond the achievement of equality and have created a new system of patriarchy under which men are the oppressed sex. As G. Naan puts it 'the battle against patriarchy has been transformed into a battle against the husband, against everything that he does or likes,' " 200.

52. These terms are used and defined by Melissa T. Smith in one of the earliest critical discussions of Petrushevskaya’s drama: “In Cinzano Veritas: The Plays of Luidmila Petrushevskaya,” Slavic and East European Arts 1 (Winter–Spring 1985): 120.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


TERESA POLOWY


