

**Shattering the Ideal:  
Depiction of Womanhood in the Short Fiction of  
Ludmilla Petrushevskaya – A Socio Literary Study**

*Thesis  
Submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the Award of the Degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Comparative Literature**

*Submitted by*  
**Jiji M. K**

under the supervision of  
**Dr. Sreekala M**  
Assistant Professor



**Department of Russian and Comparative Literature  
University of Calicut.  
2023**



## **Declaration**

I, Jiji M. K do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Shattering the Ideal: Depiction of Womanhood in the Short Fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya -A Socio-Literary Study**” , submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature, is a bonafide work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Sreekala M, Asst. Professor, Department of Russian and Comparative Literature, University of Calicut, and that I have not submitted it or any part of it for any degree, diploma or title before.

Calicut University  
Date

**Jiji M K**



## **Certificate**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “**Shattering the Ideal: Depiction of Womanhood in the Short Fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya- A Socio-Literary Study**” is an authentic record of research work carried out by Mrs. **Jiji M. K** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature, under my supervision and that no part thereof has been presented before for any other Degree, Diploma, or Associateship in any other university

Calicut University  
Date:

**Dr. Sreekala M**  
(Supervising Teacher)



## Acknowledgements

*I would like to register my deep sense of gratitude to all instrumental figures behind the successful completion of my doctoral thesis entitled “Shattering the Ideal: Depiction of Womanhood in the Short Fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya -A Socio- Literary Study”. First of all, I express my heart felt gratitude to Dr. Sreekala M, Asst. Professor, Department of Russian and Comparative Literature, University of Calicut, for her exemplary guidance and supervision of the research work. The scholarly guidance as well as intellectual support that has been rendered throughout the course of the study is ineffable. I express my greatest obligation to Dr. S. Nirmala, Professor (Rtd.), University of Calicut, for her guidance and the valuable time and effort she spared in helping me to shape my thesis to the present design.*

*I am extremely grateful to Dr. K. Divya, Head of the Department of Russian and Comparative Literature for her cordial support and academic help. I am thankful to Dr. Priyalekha and Dr. Ebin Thomas for sharing their expertise and knowledge with me while doing this work. My thanks are due to all the members in the department for their support in respective fields.*

*I extend my thanks to the staff in the Department library and C.H.M.K. Library. Special mention should be made of Mr. Gafur, the Librarian of the Dept. of Russian and Comparative literature and Mr Shaji, the Librarian of CHMK library. Particular thanks goes to the staff at the Russian Department Library, University of*

*Kerala. The thesis wouldn't have been in the present shape without their immense help.*

*I extend my sincere gratitude to my friends Varsha , Revija and all the research scholars and students of the Department of Russian and Comparative Literature for their perpetual support. I thank Ms. Soya Francis and Mr. Dineshan K for making the proof reading of the work and giving valuable suggestions. The infinite patience and love of my mother, father and mother-in-law is beyond expression. I thank my better half Mr. Dinil P K , my sister Shilpa, brother in law visranth and sister in law Deepa for their constant encouragement and loving care without which this work wouldn't have been materialized.*

***Jiji M. K.***



# Content

	<i>Page No.</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-18</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>19-69</b>
<b>Narrative of Endurance and Subversive Realities: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Intervention in Soviet Literary Landscape</b>	
Ludmilla Petrushevskaya: Life of a Rebel	20
Soviet Censorship in Literature and Petrushevskaya's Subversive writing	33
Socialist Realism in Literature	34
Underground Literature	39
Nikita Khrushchev and Political Thaws	46
Alexander Solzhenitsyn: The first Major Exposure of the Gulag	49
'Everyday life' and 'Women Writing'	54
Era of Stagnation	56
Literary Career and Early works of Petrushevskaya	59
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>71-107</b>
<b>From Censorship to Celebration: Petrushevskaya's Acclaim at the dawn of Perestroika and Glasnost</b>	
Perestroika: A Vision towards Progressive Development	71
Glasnost: A vision towards Democracy	75
Impact of Perestroika in the Thematic Concern of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya	84
Petrushevskaya in the Post-Soviet Era	88
'Personal is Political': postmodern elements in Petrushevskaya's Stories	92
Postmodern Narrative techniques in the stories of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya	99

<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>109-139</b>
<b>Feminism Redefined- Select Reading of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Oeuvre</b>	
The Time: Night: Unveiling New Dimensions of Motherhood	115
Another Land: Revealing Single Motherhood	123
Xenia's Daughter: Beyond the Labels	125
Father and Mother: Challenging Patriarchal Dimensions	129
Our Crowd: Redefines the Maternal love	132
A Case of Virgin Birth: Breaking the Holy Bond	133
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>141-187</b>
<b>Shattering the ideal and creating an Inclusive society: A study based on Petrushevskaya's selected stories</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>189-196</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>199-215</b>

## **Introduction**

Literature is not just a social construct rooted in ideas, fantasies or imaginary situations. Instead, it is a social institution, a form of tradition, which has existed for a long time. Literature is recognized as an important component of society and it performs certain functions. Sometimes it reflects the social reality and harshly criticizes it or sometimes it hides the reality and creates a parallel utopia where everything is perfect. Literature produced under certain ideological propaganda creates idealized versions of men and women as heroes and heroines who possess extraordinary virtue and characteristics, and ideal societies that are meticulously designed to eliminate societal flow and create a perfect environment. By presenting such idealized vision the writers aim to inspire readers to strive for a better future. But at the same time, such literature hides the truth about the real condition of the society and may not provide practical solutions for real world challenges. When analyzing the depiction of gender in literature, until recent times, most of the writers portray the patriarchal notion of femininity and masculinity in their works.

Patriarchy creates the gender ideals such as 'man' and 'woman' based on differences in sex: male or female. An ideal is a standard, absolute, or model for imitation in actual life. According to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, "perfect forms found in the eternal realm of form and that everything in material reality comes from and returns to this form". The patriarchal society defines certain standard criteria to reach this prospective ideal. And they impose these rules on all the domains of social and individual life through the frameworks of religion, art,

culture, and literature. Masculinity and femininity have been interpreted as idealized binaries by patriarchal society. It categorizes one to a particular sex, either 'male' or 'female' and is subjected to gendered behavior of 'masculine' or 'feminine' in a gendered society. According to the patriarchal concept of gender, man is associated with masculinity and woman is associated with femininity. This is what Simon de Beauvoir says "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". Here Beauvoir argues that gender is a cultural construct. At this point, American feminist critic, Julia.T.Wood, observes that not only the entire society but also the institutions, cultures, religion and rituals teach a woman how 'to be a woman'. Women are instructed and indoctrinated to become what they are supposed to be, and how they should perform their roles in the fabric of the so called patriarchal ideal. Patriarchy teaches that a woman should be obedient and self-controlled and they also teach about the value of virginity, which is her great asset. She should be prepared for marriage by keeping herself chaste for her future husband and by learning all the skills necessary to manage the household and to rear children. Intellectual women are condemned as unfeminine since a woman's 'heart' is valued over her 'mind' because the mind is being associated with the masculine. It is only in the late 1960s and early 1970s the impact of feminism on literature brought alteration in academic studies of literary texts and the parallel processes of publishing and reviewing literary works mostly by women, which created an impact on literary reception as well. Similarly, Russian literature has reflected social processes a great deal, and the 19th century Russian literature contributed an abundant part to world literature and made it more fruitful. Although Russian literature during this time created several legendary fictional heroines, including

Pushkin's Tatyana Larina in 'Eugene Onegin', Tolstoy's Anna Karenina in 'Anna Karenina', Maria Bolkonsky in 'War and Peace', Dostoevsky's Sonya Marmeladovna in 'Crime and Punishment', Chekhov's Lyubova Ranevsaya in 'The Cherry Orchard', and others, all of these women characters were profoundly moulded by the deep patriarchal foundations of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in Russia.

After the revolution, Russian literature was under the strict censorship of the Communist Government, and the literature was dominated by the trend of socialist realism. The mainstream writers of the period portrayed women as a replica of the "New Soviet Woman" an ideal model put forward by the Soviet government. Later, when the literary censorship was partially eradicated during the period of Nikita Khrushchev, many writers emerged in Russian literature under the new trend of 'women literature'. They presented women's gendered experiences in everyday life through their works. It was during this period that Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, who later became one of Russia's most popular writers, began her literary career. She portrayed the day to day life of women and their miseries caused by hunger and poverty. But she couldn't publish her works during the period because the publishers of the Soviet official journal excluded them, proclaiming that they had no artistic quality. The biggest irony is that, it was the period of "second wave feminism," which was launched with the publication of Betty Friedan's '*Feminine Mystique*' (1963), which was against traditional gender roles in society and to stop sexist discrimination. Petrushevskaya's stories were rejected because she wrote about the agonies of the women's lives. The Soviet authorities were never interested in the women's experiences. Petrushevskaya's stories did not represent the ideal woman as

envisioned by the Soviet Government, while her fellow writers wrote about the lives of women struggling to take on the soviet-imposed feminine task of balancing career and family from a feminist perspective, Petrushevskaya approached the women issues by rejecting the feminist idea of 'being gendered'. The present thesis is a study on Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's selected works on the basis of postmodern gender theories.

This is an attempt to study literature in a socio literary perspective, which is a kind of literary criticism directed to understand literature in a larger social context. The social context of a text has two aspects: the kind of society in which the characters live and the one in which the author's text produced. The study focuses on the short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, who began writing in the 1960s but was published during the Perestroika period of 1980s and the immediate post- soviet years. Therefore, the study is in a critical perspective within the socio political context of Soviet Russia and the Perestroika era of late Soviet Russia.

### **Research Question**

Gender is a social construct, masculine and feminine are the ideal genders for the society. Patriarchy divides human being as men and woman according to this gender dichotomy. Man is dominant and woman is considered as the submissive. Feminism emerged as a protest to attain equality between genders. Feminism argues that it represent woman. The movement influenced on various fields such as politics, economics, education, science and technology, healthcare, law, human rights, media and culture. Feminism also made impact on Literature and literature was created and studied under the frame work of feminist theories. Russian literature has

ideologically and aesthetically influenced world literature. It also reflects the changes feminism brought in gender representation. Natalia Baranskaya's "A Week like Any Other" is the first literary work that came under the framework of feminism in Russia. In this story, Baranskaya portrays a working mother who suffers with the double burden of being a mother and a professional. She is a scientist by profession and she regrets of getting married and is accused as 'anti- social'. For instance, the protagonist Olga Nikolayevna is advised by the senior professional who has a long experience in public service that, she should be proud of being a good mother and at same time a good worker. She Replies "why should I be proud? Am I really such a good mother, is it right to praise me as a worker and what exactly does the concept "a real Soviet Woman" entail?! It Is useless to ask Marya Matveyevna this. She won't answer" (Baranskaya 666). Here, Baranskaya directly challenges the ideal concept of womanhood, the 'New Soviet Woman'. When Russia's prominent contemporary writer Ludmilla Petrushevskaya enters to the literary scene, she portrays her women characters that shatter the gender ideals and gender roles prevalent in Russian culture and literature. She rejects the feminist view on gender. While traditional feminism claims that it represents woman, it does not eradicate the gender binary, instead it persists the gender dichotomy. Petrushevskaya approaches gender in postmodern view. For example, the protagonist Anna in the story 'The Time: Night' rejects the gender categorization. Anna is a poet and does not agree with being called "poetess", the feminine form of poet; Anna says:

I'm a poet. Some people like the word 'poetess' but look what Tsvetaeva said- or Ahkmatova- my most name sake, we have this mystic link between

us, there's only a few letters difference,; she is Anna Andeevna and I'm whenever I get to give a reading, I always ask them to announce me as 'the poet Anna...' ( Petrushevskaya 9).

Here, Anna is unwilling to accept the gender discrimination. She is not ready to categorize her gender identity 'feminine'. Thus, she rejects the word 'poetesses'. She likes to call her as 'poet Anna' and she believes that 'poet' is a group that includes writers without gender difference. Petrushevskaya rejects feminist attempt of feminization of language and she uses gender neutral language, which does not peep into one's gender identity. Throughout the story, Anna's character deals with issues of gender performances.

In this context the existing studies on Petrushevskaya's stories in feminist perspective seen to be peripheral and the researchers observe that her stories are merely 'women –centered'. Thus the hypothesis of the present study is that Petrushevskaya's stories are postmodern and the gender depiction in her stories shatters the existing gender dichotomies and gender roles. Her women characters do not have that single entity of 'womanhood'. Her characters open up all the possibilities of being human at any circumstance rather than a gendered one.

The study proposes to look into the problem of how Petrushevskaya demythologizes the images of women portrayed in her short fiction. In the course of the study the analysis develops into an examination of how Petrushevskaya shatters the Soviet model of 'ideal woman' through her women characters. The postmodern gender theory is used to substantiate the arguments as well as issues concerning how the theories address the gender, are incorporated into the research question.



## **Objectives**

The present study critically evaluates Socialist realism as the dominant trend in literature and culture during Soviet period. The thesis gives a brief description of Socialist realism and its influence in literature and the social life of soviet Russia.

There are two divergent groups of writers prevalent in Soviet literature – the official soviet literature and underground writings. The proposed study probes into the literary censorship in Russia and the official and underground literature of the period.

It is during the period of Perestroika and Glasnost, the censorship in Russia mellows. Therefore evaluation of Perestroika and Glasnost movement in freedom of expression in literature is one of the main objectives of this study.

The present study intents to problematize short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, without gender stereotypes. It identifies how Petrushevskaya shatters the ideal images of women prevalent in Russian culture through her stories.

The main objective of the study is to analyse Petrushevskaya's depiction of womanhood on the basis of postmodern gender theory. Judith Butler's gender performative theory is used.

The thesis aims to analyse short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya from a humanistic perspective without considering gender. It also intends to create an awareness of the equalitarian expression in society, culture and literature, irrespective of gender dichotomies.

## **Scope of the Study**

A country's political conscience is shaped through literature, and this is visible throughout the history of Russian literature right from the reign of the Tsar Emperors. When the Soviet regime comes to power, literature was used as a tool for communist propaganda under the guise of Socialist realism. During Soviet rule, Stalin's position was strongly opposed to westernization process, and Russian cultural identity was to be kept intact. This had been continued by the later Soviet rulers. They created ideal Soviet models like 'New Soviet Man' and 'New Soviet Woman' through literature to instruct the people to keep this cultural identity. This concern with Russian identity and its effects becomes the fundamental scope of the present study. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's stories reject soviet model of ideal woman constructed within the frame of socialist realism.

## **Research Methodology**

The present work follows the inductive methodology. As in inductive method, the study is a close reading of the selected stories of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. Six stories are selected. Hypothesis is formulated on the basis of observation. Historical criticism is also used as a method to analyse Petrushevskaya's writings in the socio- cultural context of Soviet Russia. Analytical method is used for the thesis. The generated hypothesis is analyzed by the postmodern gender theory of Judith Butler. The comparative and contrastive methods are also used in the study. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's novella 'The Time: Night' and her short story collection 'Immortal Love' are taken as primary source materials. Other works written by the author and her interviews are referred to

during the writing process. Books, articles, and internet sources related to the subject are cited to validate the argument. The 8th edition of MLA format is used for the present work.

### **Sources**

The primary sources of the study are the Selected Stories from the collection “Immortal Love”, which was published in 1988. Though these stories were published as a collection in 1988, they were written during the period between 1968 and 1985. Secondary sources are collected from various universities and websites. Different books, articles and discussions regarding the social situations and literature during Soviet Period, Perestroika and post-soviet period, theories of feminism, post modernism, and gender studies are collected from various university libraries. Various articles on Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and her works are accessed from websites, online journals, e- books and YouTube videos. Interviews of Petrushevskaya published in the websites are also taken as the secondary source of the study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The present thesis is a study on a Russian contemporary writer Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, solely relying on her works translated in English. As per the advice of the experts, the thesis is written by using translations done by renowned translators Sally Liard and Anna Summers who are very famous and specialists in translating Petrushevskaya into English. Their translations do all-out justice to the original works which mellow the translation issues to some extent, even though

there are some limitations, primarily the dialectal nuances and untranslatability of cultural context. The translation may not fully capture the tones of the original language. Russian literature, like any literature, contains unique word play, cultural references and stylistic elements that may be challenging to translate accurately and it may lead to a loss of the writer's intended meaning and literary techniques. Thus the current study relying on translated versions may also have such limitations.

Russian literature is deeply rooted in the country's history, culture and social context. Translations may not adequately convey the cultural context and it leads to the lack of proper understanding of the writer's work in its original context. Besides this, the translations may not fully capture the unique writing style of the author. Another most important limitation of the study is the inaccessibility of the untranslated works that are not available in English for the complete understanding of the writer's literary contributions.

To overcome these limitations, the study is supplemented with additional research materials such as critical analysis, biographies, interviews and scholarly works available on the similar topics. Advice and guidance of the bilingual experts and scholars familiar with the writer's works are also accessed for the fruitful completion of the thesis.

## **Review of Literature**

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's writings get recognition and critical acclaim in Russia mainly after the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the 1990s. Therefore, there

are only a few studies available, which critically analyze her works. They are as follows:

*In populist Clothes: Anarchy and Subversion in Petrushevskaya's Latest Fiction* is an article by Alexandra Smith about the narrative style of Latest stories from the category of 'Fairy Tales' of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. The study focuses on Petrushevskaya's relation to postmodernism. Smith argues that Petrushevskaya's latest works are postmodern. Her anti-elitist as well as anti-authoritarian approach is reflected in the democratization of her outlook (Smith).

*'Controlling the Uncontrollable: Navigating Subjectivity in the Perestroika and Post-Soviet Prose of L. S Petrushevskaya and L.E Ulitskaya'* is a Ph.D. thesis by Natalia Jean McCauley. The thesis re-examines the works of Petrushevskaya in 1978 through 2000. The study focuses on how any perception of control is portrayed as dubious and how individuals work against traditional patriarchal power structures (McCauley).

Gala Arias Rubio's article *Vision on Civilizational Collapse: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Tale 'The New Robinson Crusoe'* analyses the unique vision of civilizational collapse presented by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya in her tale 'New Robinson Crusoe'. It is the story of a family, who returns to nature, to find salvation in a crisis. The study also analyses how humanity should evolve if it intends to face the challenges posed by the twenty first century (Rubio 3).

*Contemporary Russian Women Writers: Rejecting Definitions in Literary Rebellion* is a senior Honors Thesis by Rebecca A Muff. In this study Muff

discusses the treatment of Gender in the short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, Tatiana Tolostaya and Nina Sadur. The study concentrates primarily on author's approach to gender binaries, motherhood and femininity (Muff).

*Reality Through Phantasm: A Study of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Fantastical Tales* by Shraddha Pal is a scholarly article attempted to study the reality and fantasy in the selected fairy tales from the book "There Once Lived a Woman who Tried to Kill her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales". The author observes that Petrushevskaya's tales blur the lines between folktale and fairy tales where tragedies of everyday life of common people are dealt within fairy tale style (Pal).

The article *The Effacement of History and Postmodern Urban Fantasies in the Prose of Petrushevskaya and Pelevin* by Alexandra Smith is focuses on the representation of Moscow and the author's playful engagement with the so called Moscow text developed in Russian literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to outline some distinct traits of the postmodern thinking of Petrushevskaya and Pelevin linked to the perception of Russian contemporary life as the end of history (Smith).

The article *Motherhood as an Exploitative Tool Depicted in Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's A Case of Virgin Birth* by Jiji.M.K examines Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's depiction of theme of the motherhood in her short story 'A Case of Virgin Birth'. Mother- son relationship is the core subject of the story and the author argues that Petrushevskaya uses motherhood as an exploitative tool in her story (Jiji).

*Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Fairy Tales between Subversion and Tradition* is a Ph.D. thesis published by Izabela Zdun. The research work was focuses on the creative practice of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's fairy tales in a postmodern perspective (Zdun).

*Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Dialogue with Hans Christian Andersen or "Andersen Forever Revisited"* is a scholarly article by Izabela Zdun which investigates fairy motifs of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's fairy tales from Western culture, especially her fascination with Hans Christian Andersen (Zdun).

The article *The theme of Loneliness in the Stories of L. Petrushevskaya* by Goncharova Nina Vasilievna is a thematic study. The paper analyses the theme of loneliness, death and mortality, rock and fate in the stories of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya (Vasilievena 38).

All these studies conducted by the scholars and experts based on the short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, touch various range of topics such as post modernism in her latest fairy tales, challenges against patriarchal power structure, Petrushevskaya's approach to the myth of motherhood and gender binarism and the fantastical and folklore elements in her works. By analyzing the above mentioned studies, it is evident that there is no particular study conducted on the womanhood depicted in the short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya in the light of Judith Butler's performative theory on gender. While the existing studies on Petrushevskaya's women characters concentrate on her portrayal of challenging the feminine myth within the context of Russian cultural scenario, the present study focuses on her postmodern view on gender in a humanist outlook.

## **Structure of the Study**

The present study *shattering the Ideal: Depiction of Womanhood in the Short Fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya- A Socio Literary Study* has been presented in four chapters along with an introduction and conclusion.

The first chapter titled as *Narrative of Endurance and Subversive Realities: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Intervention in Soviet Literary Landscape* explains the life of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya during the Stalin era. It describes the society and socio political condition of the Stalin period to analyse the socio- cultural background of the author and her works. The chapter explains the subversive writings of Petrushevskaya during censorship in Russia. The two divergent categories of literature during this period are Official and Underground literature. This chapter helps to understand the literary scenario of the Soviet period, which is dominated by socialist realism. It demands from the artist to create artistic representations of reality which must be linked to the task of the ideological transformation of workers in the socialist spirit. The writers who were rejected for writing according to the ideological propaganda of the Soviet government did not get published during the period. Such writers circulate their manuscripts in an unofficial way. They are the underground writers, and their literature is called underground literature which happens parallel to the 'Official' Soviet literature.

Besides this, the chapter examines the emergence of women writers in the literary scene of Soviet Russia. After the Stalin era, censorship was somewhat mellowed during the period of Nikita Khrushchev's political thaw of 1960s. During this period, a new phenomenon emerged in Russian literature: the so-called



'women's literature', with the publication of Natalia Baranskaya's 'A Week like Any Other' (1969). Novels and novellas by I. Grekova from the 1970s and 1980s are also included in this new category. Like I. Grekova, Natalia Baranskaya (1907-2004) also uses women's issues in post Stalinist Russia as the focus of her fiction. They began to subvert the 'ideal' portrayal and wrote the reality, the everyday life of the Russians under the communist regime. The main focus of the chapter is the emergence of Petrushevskaya in to the literary field and the rejection of her earlier works during the soviet period. Major themes discussed in her early stories are detailed in the chapter.

The second chapter is *From Censorship to Celebration: Petrushevskaya's Acclaim at the dawn of Perestroika and Glasnost*. This chapter examines the political changes during Perestroika and Glasnost and their impact on the reception of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. In 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev came into power, he planned for a political and economic restructuring and called for a new era of transparency and openness. Therefore, he launched reformation policies: Perestroika and Glasnost. Perestroika made great impact in the economy of USSR. At the same time Glasnost unveiled censorship in USSR and it made a tremendous change in literary field in Russia.

This chapter also discusses the writers who got published during this period and their major themes. The main focus of the chapter is the reception of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and her early works and her major works written during Perestroika era. The chapter focuses on the postmodern elements presented in her works and the narrative style and techniques of her stories.

The third chapter is a re-reading of Petrushevskaya's selected stories- "The Time: Night", "A Case of Virgin Birth", "Xenia's Daughter," , "Another Land", "Father and Mother", and "Our Crowd". The chapter is titled *Feminism Redefined- Select Reading of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Oeuvre*. Even though the above-mentioned stories were officially published during Perestroika, they were written during the Soviet period, and the time period represented in these stories is also the same. During the Soviet period, the state created an ideal image of working women. Stalin coined the term "New Soviet Woman" and the concept contained two aspects. They are productivity and reproductivity. It means that women should work in factories and other enterprises for the state and at the same time should take care of her family. It suggests that in order to be a new soviet woman, one has to bear the duty of a mother and demonstrate the virtues of being a mother by raising multiple children up to the hope of the country's future. The present chapter analyses how the women characters in Petrushevskaya's stories shatter this Soviet model of the ideal woman through her works.

The fourth chapter is the core chapter of the thesis, and the chapter is titled "Shattering the Ideal and Creating an Inclusive Society: A Study Based on Petrushevskaya's Selected Stories." The chapter analyses how Petrushevskaya shatters gender ideals through her women characters and analyses her depiction of an inclusive society where people can live without being conscious of their gender identity. The stories are analyzed using the postmodern gender theory of Judith Butler.

## Work Cited

- Jiji, M.K. "Motherhood as an Exploitative Tool Depicted in Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's A Case of Virgin Birth." *Academia.edu*, 2021.  
[www.academia.edu/resource/work/91086525](http://www.academia.edu/resource/work/91086525).
- McCauley, Natalia Jean. "Controlling the Uncontrollable: Navigating Subjectivity in the Perestroika and Post-Soviet Prose of L.S Petrushevskaya and L.E Ulitskaya." 2018. *University of Michigan*, MLibrary Deep Blue Documents, [deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/145839](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/145839).
- Muff, Rebecca. "Contemporary Russian Women Writers Rejecting Definition in Literary Rebellion." Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2008.
- Pal, Sraddha. "Reality Through Phantasm: A Study of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Fantastical Tales." Research Scholar, 2016. *ACADAMIA.EDU*,  
[www.academia.edu/resource/work/85392233](http://www.academia.edu/resource/work/85392233).
- Rubio, Gala Arias. "Vision of Civilizational Collapse: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Tale The New Robinson Crusoe." *Green Theory & Praxis Journal*, 2018.  
[www.academia.edu/resource/work/37632917](http://www.academia.edu/resource/work/37632917).
- Smith, Alexandra. "In Populist Clothes: Anarchy and Subversion in Petrushevskaya's Latest Fiction." *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1997): 107-125. [www.jstor.org/stable/23806798](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23806798).

Smith, Alexandra. *The Effacement of History and Postmodern Urban Fantasies in the Prose of Petrushevskaya and Pelevin*. *Die Welt der Slaven*, 2009.

[www.academia.edu/resource/work/3199111](http://www.academia.edu/resource/work/3199111).

Vsilievna, Goncharova Nina. "The Theme of Loneliness in the Stories of L.

Petrushevskaya." *Progressive Academic Publishing*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2020.

[www.idpublications.org/wp-content/uploads/20/20/05/full-papaer-The-](http://www.idpublications.org/wp-content/uploads/20/20/05/full-papaer-The-Theme-of-Loneliness-in-the-Stories-of-L-Petrushevskaya-pdf)

[Theme-of-Loneliness-in-the-Stories-of-L-Petrushevskaya-pdf](http://www.idpublications.org/wp-content/uploads/20/20/05/full-papaer-The-Theme-of-Loneliness-in-the-Stories-of-L-Petrushevskaya-pdf).

Zdun, Izabela. *Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Fairy Tales between Subversion and Tradition*. Ph.D. Dissertation, McGill University, 2020.

Zdun, Izabela. "Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Dialogue with Hans Christian Andersen or 'Andersen Forever Revisited.'" *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, vol.

51/52, 2017, pp. 68-86. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/26939874](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26939874)

## Chapter 1

### **Narrative of Endurance and Subversive Realities: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Intervention in Soviet Literary Landscape**

“I could tolerate hunger, but I couldn't tolerate lack of freedom”

-Petrushevskaya

The Soviet Union under the rule of Joseph Stalin and his successors was a period marked by immense challenges, political repression and social transformations. During this era Soviet people endured innumerable hardships directing a complex background where state control and ideological conformity infused all aspects of life. One among those who experienced and chronicled these Soviet realities is Russia's most renowned writer Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. Her life can be seen as the resistance against state interference in personal life of individuals, communalism and collectivism. She is known as the rebellious prose writer as well as playwright. Besides this, she is famous for her paintings and cabaret singing. She was born in Moscow on 20th May 1938 in a Bolshevik family. She has had a tough life under Stalin's rule. Her childhood experience during the war time such as evacuation, hunger and the social stigma that branded her family as 'enemy of the people' greatly influenced her stories later. Therefore, critics mark her as a controversial writer because her works stresses the social miseries and moral decay of soviet and post-soviet Russia. The present chapter analyses the life and experiences of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya in the context of the socio-political condition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia.

### **Ludmilla Petrushevskaya: Life of a Rebel**

The first half of the twentieth century was a turbulent period in the history of Soviet Union. Under Vladimir Lenin's direction, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Tsar Empires in the Great October Revolution. Significant changes were made during Lenin's period in the Soviet Union, especially with regard to the country's social, political, and economic systems. A turn towards communism and a rejection of capitalism were highlighted by the establishment of the Soviet Union. Socialist policies were put into place by Lenin's Bolshevik administration with the purpose of eradicating poverty and inequality as well as establishing universal healthcare and education. The country's economic stagnation as a result of ongoing conflict was Lenin's biggest problem. Even though the government made efforts to improve people's lives, hunger and poverty due to poor productivity persisted. So, they introduced 'New Economic Policy' in 1921, which marked the return of free market and privatization of property. Small private enterprises were allowed. Government allowed farmers to sell their crops in the market. Therefore, the trade increased tremendously. The standard of living has increased. Instead of fully centralized socialism, private producers and the marketers controlled the economy to some extent. New economic policy and land reforms boosted the agricultural sector. Grain production and growth rates have risen sharply.

But the situation changed when Joseph Stalin came into power in 1924 after the death of Lenin. Stalin was a leader who was most instrumental in developing the Soviet Union as a major economic power. Lenin's New Economic Policy was abandoned in 1929 by Stalin. Agriculture was forced into public ownership. Growth

in the Industrial sector was progressed rapidly. He inaugurated 'command economy' in which the Government controls and regulates production, distribution and price of the goods as a result of Stalin's policies of rapid industrialization and forced collectivization of 1929, which aimed to consolidate farms into large collective farms in order to increase agricultural productivity and feed the growing urban population. Although the country began to prosper economically, the benefits did not trickle down to the common people, especially peasants who belong to the old Bolshevik Party because they were against Stalin's idea of collectivization. The collectivization centralized wealth to the state ownership and the party elites and bureaucrats enjoyed the privileges and access to resources not available to the broader population. Stalin considered Bolsheviks, who supported Lenin's thoughts, as enemies. While the Soviet regime aimed to eliminate class distinction, socio-economic inequalities persisted. Stalin targeted perceived enemies of the State, including communist party Officials, military leaders and intellectuals as well as ordinary citizens who were suspected of disloyalty to the Stalin Government. The party officials and bureaucrats who supported Stalin got political, social and economic advantages. Thus a new form of class hierarchy emerged and it resulted in the fall of a true egalitarian society. As a result, nepotism and corruption were common during the period.

In such a socio- political condition, Russia's most prominent and dissident writer Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's life was moulded. Her resentment and opposition towards such social condition can be seen excessively in her stories.

Petrushevskaya was born in a Bolshevik Family. Therefore, her family had a tough life under Stalin's rule. They were the victims of Stalin's brutality. The government arrested and executed Petrushevskaya's relatives in the late thirties because they were prominent Bolsheviks who participated in October Revolution. Her great grandfather Illya Vager whom she affectionately called Dedy was a Bolshevik who was against the 1930 regime. He was a doctor and he worked among the poor all his life, treating all the sick from the surrounding village and he never accepted money for his services, living only on his salary. He is well known for his contributions to cardiology, including his role in the development of the first Soviet artificial heart valve. He was a member of the Russian social Democratic Workers Party since 1898. But he was also critical to certain aspects of the Soviet policies including the handling of the Chernobyl disaster. So, it should be assumed that the humanitarian approaches seen in Petrushevskaya's stories and at the same time conflict with the system were inherited from her grandparents. Dedy's son Vladimir was an old Bolshevik and the leader of the underground revolutionary cell in Moscow and one of the organizers of the 1905 uprising. In 1937 Dedy's younger son Zenya, two sisters Asya and Lena and their spouses, all prominent Bolsheviks were arrested. Their official sentence was ten years of hard labour without the right to correspondence.

Illya Vagar's daughter Valentina, grandmother of Petrushevskaya was also a Bolshevik since 1912. She is a revolutionary, a member of an underground cell. She was married to Nikolai Yakovlev, Petrushevskaya's grandfather, who was also arrested by the secret police. He was accused of being an enemy of the people, a



traitor to the Soviet Union. He was suspected of being a Trotskyite, a counter-revolutionary, and a spy. But he was simply a scholar who had spoken out against Stalin's policies. But in those days, speaking out was enough to get one arrested, the charges did not matter. He was taken away in the middle of the night and put into a mental asylum for 20 years. Anyone who was considered to be a political rival or dissident was given the title 'Trotskyite', which was employed as a catch-all. Leon Trotsky, a well-known Marxist revolutionary and a pivotal figure in the early years of the Soviet Union, served as Joseph Stalin's main foe. In 1929, he was ousted from the party and forced into exile from the Soviet Union because of his rivalry with Joseph Stalin for control of the Communist Party and the nation. Trotskyites were his adherents who remained steadfastly loyal to Trotsky and his principles. They objected to Stalin's rule. Particularly during the purges of the 1930s, those accused of being Trotskyites sometimes faced arrest, incarceration, and death.

Petrushevskaya's father Dimitry Petrushevsky was also accused of being a Trotskyite during Stalin's purges and was subsequently arrested and sentenced to ten years in a labour camp immediately after her birth. During these years all those who opposed were arrested by the Stalin Government. A million of so-called enemies were executed during the period between 1930 and 1936, which is known as Great Purge. Petrushevskaya lost many of her blood relations during this period. As a child who grew up without a father's love and support, later in her stories, father did not appear as a character. Even male characters are very rare and if they are present, they are relatively less important. Most of her stories are about single mothers.

Even though Petrushevskaya was born in the most famous residential building in Moscow, The Metropol Hotel, her family migrated to Kuibyshev during the war time. As Bolsheviks, Petrushevskaya's family had to face all the hardships in communal apartments. Housing remained another great problem in Stalinist Russia as people were not able to buy an apartment. They could only receive it from the state for free according to their working time at factories. Clubs and sports facilities were provided by the state. As a Bolshevik family Petrushevskaya's family was exempted from all these. Therefore, apart from hunger and cold they also had to endure the discriminations from the neighbours and the police. Petrushevskaya narrates her life in Kuibyshev in her memoir 'The Girl from the Metropol Hotel':

In Kuibyshev we led the life of pariahs, untouchables. "Enemies of the people" wasn't an empty phrase. We were enemies to everyone: to our neighbors, to the police to the janitors, to the passer by, to every resident of our courtyard of any age. We are not allowed to use the shared bathroom, to wash our clothes, and we didn't have soap any way (68).

Petrushevskaya's father had left her mother, leaving them at the difficult phases of their life. After two years of her birth, one day her grandmother and her two daughters found their doors sealed by the Party's own police and intelligence agency NKVD (Narodni Kommissarist Vnutrennikh Del). During Stalin's rule in Russia, the social life was unbearable with the state interference and control over the individual's freedom of choice and expression. NKVD was an agency tasked for regular police work and overseeing the countries prison and labour camps. The main task of NKVD was to protect state security. Therefore people were always under the

surveillance of secret police and they actively encouraged people to inform about neighbours and co-workers. NKVD undertook mass judicial executions of citizen, created Gulag system of forced labour camps. They particularly targeted old Bolsheviks. Therefore they sealed the door and the family was left with nothing; clothes, utensils, bedding, books, furniture and paintings. All remained in the sealed apartment. Therefore, they had to take residence in Dedya's room in the same building.

Petrushevskaya's family left Moscow and migrated to Kuibyshev during the Civil War of 1941. There they lived in a communal apartment with two rooms. Even though the government promised to get legal rights for education and equality in work place, practicalities of these rights were not easy, especially for the Bolshevik family members. They lived in ultimate poverty and the state considered them as the enemies of people. When Petrushevskaya's mother moved to Moscow for her graduation at Moscow University, Petrushevskaya lived with her grandmother and aunt. Her Aunt was an engineer at the munitions plant but was fired after an all-night interrogation because her relatives had been executed as enemies of the people. At that time Petrushevskaya attended day care for a short while. And she has to stop going because they could not pay and there was the problem of shoes. She had no winter boots, no clothes of any kind and no food either. It was a real hungry time for her family. During this period, life of the common people met with hardships due to the shortages of food production and distribution problems, but the party officials and skilled factory workers got exempted. During Soviet period, one could purchase food only with ration cards. The bread line forms early before dawn and had to wait

for hours to get inside the store. The weight of the loaf was always less than the regulation stipulated. Petrushevskaya's family did not get their ration properly. With each purchase, the store cut out coupons from their cards. Before the end of the month all their bread coupons would be cut out. It was the hardest period in Petrushevskaya's life. During the day time, she begged in the street like many unsupervised children. Her grandmother has become bed ridden and her aunt occasionally went to the port to help unload cargo ships where she received a bottle of raw spirits that could be exchanged for bread. Petrushevskaya narrates her pathetic life with her grandmother and aunt:

Some night they fed me cabbage soup, made from crushed leaves that Vava picked off the ground at the market place at the end of the day. "that's for your goat right?" the seller women asked her, probably trying not to get upset. My aunt, a recent student of military academy, burst into tears over those dirty crushed cabbage leaves. Late at night, as usual, I was sent to the kitchen to retrieve our neighbors' garbage (47).

The profound impact of extreme poverty she suffered in her childhood is evident in her literary works as well.

Even though hunger and poverty were a part of her life, what she never had to endure was discrimination and deprivation. The insecurity she felt as a little girl from the family of 'enemy of the people' made her childhood darker. It was during Stalin era and according to his propaganda, childhood was presented as a happy and positive time. Children were presented as the loyal socialists of the future and Stalin was portrayed as the 'little father' bringing up the next generation of 'New Soviet

Men and Women'. However, this was not the case for the millions of children whose parents were caught by Stalin's terror. Some were raised in the Gulag camps and some were in State orphanages. It was common that the children from the old Bolshevik families who were called as the 'enemies of the people' left to live for themselves on the city street because most of them lost their parents as a result of Stalin's terror. These children all found themselves marginalized, persecuted, rejected and forgotten by mainstream society. Their lives were dominated by daily battle for survival. Petrushevskaya was one among them. Absence of mother and the discomfort she felt under the protection of grandmother and Aunt Vava prompted her to run away from the house several times. Therefore they locked her in a room but one day she escaped from their home and started living in the street for several days. She wrote in her memoir about her evacuation from home as "I could tolerate hunger, but I couldn't tolerate lack of freedom" (44). It indicates that at the very young age, she valued personal freedom. Petrushevskaya firmly believed that the important thing for a person is freedom even at a crisis. This desire for freedom in Petrushevskaya can be seen in her women characters also. Most of her characters yearn to escape to a space of their own amidst frequent bout of poverty and hardship and struggling with family relationships. Her women characters are the ones who often create an imaginary but parallel world, breaking down all barriers and lead a free life.

Petrushevskaya returned home only after she knew that her mother had returned from Moscow. It was in 1947 that mother took her to Moscow. It was the beginning of a new life. They reached at the Metropol hotel where Dedya occupied.

Petrushevskaya says that she was not fit for the Metropol establishment because she did not know what school or discipline was. So they have to move to her grandfather Kolya's apartment. There they lived under grandpa's dinner table. There, little Petrushevskaya was packed off to summer camps one after another where she got four daily meals, clean sheets, a personal towel, a common bath once a week etc. Her consolation was in art. She signed up for the choir, the theatre, drawing class and dance class. Petrushevskaya says that such camps have helped a lot in awakening her inner creativity. She wrote in her memoir about the disrespect she received in the camp for her performance:

With my talents I hoped to achieve recognition by the camp society- post war children who grew up in conditions of total famine and old school discipline. But I can't remember a single case in which a child was respected for her singing and drawing. At the camp, singers and actors were treated with contempt, as in the Middle Ages (92).

Her words show her disappointment, regardless of her abilities. In Stalinist Russia such individual creative abilities were not much supported especially for girls. It was at the camp that she realized her ability to write. The camp life intended to make children strong characters. The aim of such camp was to train physically fit young people to work for the progress of the country. But for someone who likes creative flair like Petrushevskaya, the atmosphere of the camp was not at all tolerable. They always put her down by labelling as uncivilized. She was often punished for indiscipline. Four meals a day was a luxury for her, but she hated constant supervision and collectivism of camp life.

Even though Petrushevskaya was born in an educated family, circumstances prevented her from attending school. She started schooling at a boarding school when she was twelve. Then she went to high school at PS 170 of Moscow. She was an academic star in both, but her passion was singing and performing. During this period, the cultural life of Soviet Russia under Stalin was dominated by the Government imposed style of socialist realism. It was officially declared in 1934 and continued till the collapse of USSR. This is called the 'cultural revolution' and it was launched to eliminate any one considered to be a class enemy of socialism. The goal of Cultural Revolution was to ensure the dominance of proletariat over the society. Art, culture, and the life of the common people were displayed publicly with strict control. Only the optimistic, positive and realistic depiction of soviet men and women were allowed. It was an attempt to mould 'New Soviet Man'. Socialist realism was also the official literary 'method' or 'theory' of soviet literature until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Charles A. Moser, the editor of 'Cambridge History of Russian Literature' defines socialist realism as:

Socialist realism is the fundamental method of soviet literature and criticism, demands the artist to a truthful and historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. At the same time this truthfulness and historical specificity in the depiction of reality must be linked to the task of ideologically remolding and educating the workers in the spirit of socialism (459).

The main characteristic of the socialist realism was the depiction of communist values such as emancipation of the proletariat with realistic imagery. It

glorified the Russian Revolution as it improved the living standards of the common people. Art was used for educational purpose. During this period, the censorship was tightened and government had a control over printing press. State controlled unions for writers and musicians were imposed and the government shutdown theatres and art studios. These actions of the government effectively blocked any material that was deemed politically inappropriate and it severely hampered creativity. Criticism of the party was strictly forbidden. Writers who decided to stay in the Soviet Union were forced to work within the confines of socialist realism. But some of the restrictions were brutal, hence, they had to migrate and others committed suicide and some were imprisoned and executed.

Along with this, socialist realism played a major role in the creation of Stalin's cult of personality, which glorified Stalin. The slavish attitude towards Stalin became compulsory and universal. Stalin came to be recognized as a genius in politics, sociology, Marxism, military affairs, science and even linguistics. Along with this image of a father, Stalin was portrayed as the heir of Lenin, a chosen and loyal successor who built the Soviet Union. His image was like a God, one who could commit no error. Anyone who did not agree with Stalin was not allowed to hold their official status in government institutions. They would have been kicked out ruthlessly. Among those expelled was Petrushevskaya's Grandfather Nikolai Yakovlev. Petrushevskaya wrote about how he got fired from his job in her memoir:

He was a professor of linguistics and knew eleven languages and seventy dialects of the Caucasus, for which he had created alphabets based on Latin



script to replace the old Arabic- based ones. For some remote villages he had to invent a written language. He is believed to have developed the theory of phonemes, in 1923, and the mathematical method in linguistics. He was an authority among Slavists, linguist and mathematician. He was fired because he wasn't quick enough to praise Stalin's article "Marxism and Problems of Linguistics (78).

Stalin's closest collaborators of the time- Nikita Khrushchev, Anastas Mikoyan, Nikolai Bulganin and others helped to create a demi-god image of Stalin. Artists, poets and writers should glorify Stalin through their works. Artists painted pictures and writers wrote novels and poems in a manner that worship him. Soviet art and literature portrayed Stalin as a national father figure. He got the nick name 'Uncle Joe', which was an image of a kind, homely man who was the father of all Russians. But this personality cult was intolerable for the people of the state. Petrushevskaya's great grandmother and grandmother were dissident writers who rejected praising Stalin and his policies. Therefore, they had to circulate their works through underground. Later when Ludmilla Petrushevskaya came into the literary field, she could not get published her works in the official journals in Russia because her creativity infused her own experiences and those around her into her stories.

Adult life was also not easier for her. Her first husband, Zhenya, died at the age of 32. She was left alone to raise their son, Kiril, Her second husband, Boris Pavlov, latterly a film historian and the father of her two younger children, died suddenly of a heart attack. Although there were many ups and downs in life, they never gave up. Petrushevskaya was trained as a journalist at Moscow University.

She worked as a radio reporter and an editor at the Central Television Studio when she entered the field of writing. The literary scenario and her legacy as a dissident were not favorable for her as a writer. She was not frightened by circumstances. She was continuously rejected by the publishers but she was not ready to circulate her writings through underground. She waited till the censorship mellowed to publish her works officially. In an interview, Petrushevskaya says, what compelled her to write even after her works were rejected:

Not the desire to just get published or to become famous. I'm still indifferent to that. I reject invitations to talk at foreign book fairs; my books tour confined to Russia. I needed to get published so that my stories could be heard, put on record. I wrote in the name of those who suffered. I'm a witness for the prosecution. All these years later, people still can't forgive and forget the pain my fiction had caused (2013).

In these words it is clear that as a writer she believes that her duty is to portray the suffering of the people of her country. She wrote it for the common people of Russia. She never wanted to be popular with writing, instead, she needed her works to be read by the people. She never feared the circumstances or she was not ready to enslave her creativity for the soviet propaganda writing. Petrushevskaya says: "A little warmth, a little bread, my little ones with me and life begins, and happiness begins"(13). Petrushevskaya says about her life and this lightness of being can be seen in her stories too.

### **Soviet Censorship in Literature and Petrushevskaya's Subversive Writings**

When Ludmilla Petrushevskaya came to the literary field in 1968, the Soviet literature was under the strict censorship of the Communist Government. She was continuously rejected by the publishers even though she had not directly criticized Soviet government or party leaders. According to David Garza, "Petrushevskaya's fiction is not polemical. It never uses the word 'communism' or 'soviet' nor does it offer characters who are direct victims of any regime's oppression. Her works are far more dangerous" (2013). Her writings often portray the harshness and misery of human existence and reflect the reality of Soviet society and the harsh living conditions of the Soviet people.

Even though censorship is a process that is strictly enforced by government agencies in Russia for ages, when the Bolsheviks came into power, they radically changed the Russian literature. After a brief period of relative openness, literature became a tool for state propaganda during the 1920s. One of their first decisions was to limit free speeches through harsh censorship. Soviet government signed the order on press that prohibited publishing any bourgeois articles criticizing the Bolshevik authority. In 1921, the soviet government created a body called 'Glavlit' (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press) which for decades remained as the main instrument of controlling literature. During the soviet period, the party leaders selected the main themes and topics of literature and carefully supervised its ideological content of which the chief ingredients were prejudice of both Soviet and Great Russia, hatred of foreign things especially western, praise of the superior 'New Soviet Man' and most importantly the glorification of Stalin

(Brown 2). The Great Russian classics written during the soviet era were supervised by the Party leaders. Whereas, Petrushevskaya, as a writer was born and brought up in a Bolshevik family and with the literary legacy of her dissident grandparents, never afraid of the Party authority. She wrote for the people of her country, their sufferings, and loneliness in the day- to -day life. Therefore, Petrushevskaya was never fascinated by the Great Russian works written during the period. According to her “none of the Great Russian authors wrote about the Russian peasants”(2013). It was the literary scenario when Ludmilla Petrushevskaya entered the field of writing and literary legacy and spirit of dissidence she inherited from her grandparents deterred her from praising Stalin and his policies. Instead she wrote the social realities like poverty, hunger, alcoholism and abortion during the soviet rule. In Soviet Russia, The dissident writings could not be published officially. Thus, it had to be kept underground. Therefore, when talking about the Soviet literature, it consists of two divergent parts-The official soviet literature and Underground literature. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya did not belong to either of these categories.

### **Socialist Realism in Literature**

During the soviet period, only literature produced under the semblance of Socialist realism was published officially in the USSR. Socialist realism's historical antecedents may be found barely fifteen years after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. A single union of Soviet authors was established in 1932 when the government issued a decree abolishing all autonomous writers' groups. Ivan Gronsky was chosen in April 1932 to be one of a five-person commission to examine the state of Soviet art. He met privately Joseph Stalin before the

commission meeting, when they talked literary politics and came up with the phrase "Socialist realism" to describe the official genre of Soviet literature. Gromsky introduced the phrase 'Socialist Realism' for the first time in a speech to the authors' union organizing committee. The Great Russian writer Maxim Gorky and other authoritative figures of Writers' Union clarified the term through articles and speeches of 1932-34. Therefore, the source of definition of socialist realism was, two key note addresses to the congress of 'Union of Soviet Writers', the first was made by Maxim Gorky and the other by Andrei Zhdanov, the chief representative of the party's central committee. These two speeches functioned as the authentic source for definition, together with Lenin's 1905 article 'Party Organization and Party Literature' and Gorky's article in the book 'On Literature' published in 1933. A number of features identified these sources that socialist realism should contain. In 1934, 'The All Union Congress of Soviet Writers' describes Socialist realism as the fundamental method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands from the artist a truthful and historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation of workers in the spirit of socialism.

Socialist realism made conditions about 'the subjects of taboo- that is the literature should be both aesthetically and thematically conservative and practical. It restricts the fundamental duty of literature that the enlightenment of society through the exploration of social realities and a medium for the social criticism. But during the Stalin period social criticism was prohibited. Literature was produced as a part of

propaganda writing. Even though the socialist realism was claimed as the progressive writing, it banned subjects of social taboos such as women body, female sexuality, alcohol, abortion, divorce etc. Each work of socialist realism assured happy ending. The ending may be sad for the hero, who runs every possible risk in his fight for communism, but it is happy from the point of view of the superior purpose. And the author never neglects to proclaim his firm belief in the final victory either directly or by a speech of his dying hero. Literature with characteristics of lost illusions, broken hopes, unfulfilled dreams etc. is contrary to Socialist realism. Vladimir Mayakovski brilliantly used the techniques of socialist realism in his works. All his major works after the revolution end with a passage about communism or describing the fantastic scenes of life in the future communist state. Maxim Gorky also wrote his works before revolution with an ending note of a vision of the victorious revolutions, which paved the way to communism. Socialist realism did not always demand for such a grand ending but it should exist implicitly or symbolically. For example, themes like factory work, electrification and communal farming are allowed. Language should not be accessible to the masses, i.e. dialects, dirty words etc. were restricted' (Cornwell 175). Most socialist realist writers used standard Russian.

Other limitations had a stronger ideological bent. It is completely forbidden to express any religious or mystical thoughts or positive occult views. The Bolshevik party's ideology and practices mandated that literature be upbeat and prospective. In addition to being politically correct, socialist realism authors are also required to be "engineers of the human soul" and must present the state with a story

that justifies itself by having its subjects emulate "the positive heroes." The positive hero is more than just a decent man. By the standards of the most perfect of all ideals, he is the epitome of a hero. The basic qualities of a positive hero are ideological conviction, courage, intelligence, will power, patriotism, respect for women, self-sacrifice, etc. Katrina Clark divides Soviet Literature into three categories. They are 'those that exemplify socialist realism', 'those that are read as anti-Soviet, but which happen to have been published in the Soviet Union' and 'those that are representative of Soviet Literature but not specifically socialist realist' (Cornwell 174-77).

The official classics of socialist realism include Dmitri Furmanov's 'Chapaev'(1923), Alexander Fadeyev's 'The Rout'(1927), Maxim Gorky's 'The Life of Klim Samgin'(1925-36), Nicholai Osrovsy's 'How the steel was Tempered'(1934), Michael Sholokov's 'The Don Quite Flows'(1928-40) etc. Dmitri Furmanov was a writer and Commissar of Bolshevik. His well-known novel, Chapaev, is regarded as the socialist revolution's heroic epic. Vasily Ivanovich Chapaev, a well-known civil war leader, is the hero, and the role of the party in instilling the communist ideal in the populace is the subject of the book. Throughout a large portion of the book, in-depth details of several engagements and conflicts are used to highlight the Red Army's triumphant victory against the anti-communist Whites. In most situations, the Red Army presses ahead despite encountering some resistance. He always wants to move on and not giving the men time to rest. He says that they do not need to. The ideologically committed writer Alexander Fadeyev's 'The Rout' is another novel that is considered significant among the socialist

realistic novels. Alexander Fadeyev is a writer and co-founder of Soviet Writers Union and chairman from 1946 to 1954. He was a firm supporter of Stalin and he proclaimed that Stalin is the greatest humanist the world has ever known. The novel tells the story of a group of Bolshevik supporters. The novel has the author's own experience with the partisans in 1919 when they were forced to retreat deep in to the Taiga. Maxim Gorky's novel 'The Life of Klim Samgin' he was written as a message to the future generation. The novel had four volumes and the final part remains unfinished. The novel is about the decline of Russian intelligentsia from the early 1870s, the assassination of Alexander II, and the 1917 revolution as seen through the eyes of an ordinary petty-bourgeois intellectual Klim Samgin. Nikolay Ostrovsky tells the story of how a war hero Pavel Korchagin, who was wounded in the October Revolution, overcomes his health handicaps and became a writer who inspires the workers of the post war reconstruction. The writer's own autobiographical elements and passionate sincerity are involved in the creation of the novel. Mikhail Sholokhov's 'The Don Quite Flows' is considered as the seminal work of socialist realism. It is an epic novel about Russian revolution and civil war. The novel depicts the struggles of Cossacks who lived in the Don River before the First World War and traces the tragic clash of the Whites versus Red Cossacks in the Don. Sholokhov won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1965 for this novel and his stories about Cossacks. In determining the shape of all socialist realist works, the above mentioned works have played a crucial role.

The most appeared genres of the period were long novels and novellas and narrative poem of epic proportions and for them the writers and poets had to choose



topics like the recent war, patriotic heroism of the soviet man, leading role of the party, personal greatness of Stalin and the corrupt of the West etc. Post war reconstruction has also become a major topic- the fulfillment of the new five –year plans and rehabilitation of collective farms through socialist competition etc. Here, the writers had to emphasize the guiding functions of the party and work as devoted to society. Individual’s social discipline and his willingness to work without rest during the war time are counted as most important themes. Even though the writers were allowed to consider the problems of personal post war adjustment, the welfare and felicity of the individual was clearly a matter of secondary importance. Writers avoided dealing with moral and social evil in its real quality and dimensions. They were forced to revise and rewrite to ensure exact conformity as they insist. The aim of the ‘Union of Soviet Writers’ was to gain government control over literature. If a writer wishes to publish anything, it requires membership in the union. Otherwise, they cannot publish their work officially in the USSR.

While all the above mentioned writers and their writings were officially published in the USSR, many of the talented writers were rejected due to their anti-Soviet attitude and activities. Those writers circulated their writings in the form of manuscripts and attracted the reading public more. Those writings were called ‘Underground Literature’ which happened parallel to the ‘Official’ Soviet Literature.

### **Underground Literature**

The term ‘Underground Literature’ is used for the literature was published and circulated through the medium of ‘Samizdat’-the hand written or type written manuscripts distributed like a chain-letter principle, which is not published legally in

the USSR. According to Deming Brown, there are three main reasons for a piece of literature to become underground. They are the bureaucratic decision of the publisher- work should run through strict censorship; the author's decision not to submit his works for publication; the editors rejecting them for the lack of literary merit (Brown).

The main reason for the existence of underground literature is the official censorship and writers' lack of respect to the law by the authorities. Even though 'Zamizdat' were not illegal and they did not violate the statutes, authorities were forced to suppress them. This arbitrariness of authorities to control the printed works and actions against the dissidents include various forms of harassment by KGB (Komitet Gosudastvennoy Bezopasnosti). The secret police of the soviet government), sedition trial, punishment in prison camp and mental hospitals and exile force a large number of literary activities to be into underground. The most significant feature of underground literature is that, it has been found unacceptable for political and ideological reason. Writings of Osip Mandelstam and Boris Pasternak are the finest examples of such literature. Osip Mandelstam (1891--1938) was a Jewish poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He began writing in the early 1910s and his first work 'Kamen'(Stone) was published in 1913. During that period, symbolism was the dominant form of poetic expression but Mandelstam's poems were the direct expressions of his thought, feelings and observations. His poems were said to be rooted in the humanistic perspective. During the period of Russian revolution, Russia's governing body recommended him to apply his poetry to the political culminations. But Mandelstam continued to write poems that promoted his own

humanity, which were at once profound yet personal. He refused to produce art for political aims even though he was a supporter of Bolsheviks. So, when Bolsheviks established their communist state in 1920s, the nonconformist Mandelstam had to face difficulties to remain as a poet. His second collection of poems 'Tristia' (1922) celebrates the individual over the masses and love over commandership. This work contributed Mandelstam to become alienated from the other compromised artists and intellectuals. He had to face recriminations from the newly empowered communists and found increasingly difficult to get published his poems in the literary journals. Despite continued antagonism from the state officials, Mandelstam managed to publish his autobiographical account 'The Noise of Time' in 1925, which is about the haunting evocation of the cultural influence on him as an adolescent and its three more volumes in 1928: 'The Egyptian Stamp', a surreal novella about the sufferings of a Russian Jew. These works attributed the ban of publishing Mandelstam and at the same year he was accused of the stealing credit of a publication. Finally, Nikolay Bukharin, a prominent figure from the Stalin's ruling circle sent Mandelstam and his wife to Armenia as journalists. When he returned in 1930, he began expressing himself in prose also. In his 'Selected Poems' (1933), one of the poems characterised Stalin as a gleeful Killer. It led to the arrest of Mandelstam and he was tortured physically and psychologically and sent to exile. The government reported his death in the late 1938 caused by heart failure.

The underground movements became distinctly noticeable towards the end of 1956 and 57 with the events such as suppression of 'Doctor Zhivago' and the persecution of its author Boris Pasternak. 'Doctor Zhivago' was rejected by the

editor of the journal *Novi Mir* for the reason that “The spirit of your novel is the spirit of nonacceptance of the socialist revolution” (649) The novel was about the effect of Russian revolution and its aftermath on a bourgeois family. Dr. Yury Zhivago is a poet, philosopher and physician whose life is disrupted by the war and his love for Lara, wife of a revolutionary. Dr Zhivago as the central metaphor not only sympathized with socialist ideology and its principles of justice and equality but also worked tirelessly to provide medical aid to wounded soldiers from various diseases that broke out in the wake of the socialist revolution. He is represented as getting disillusioned with abstract socialist ideology due to the gap between its idealized theoretical principles and its ground manifestations in the form of Socialist revolution 1917. He resists the ideology of Socialist revolution from inside and exposes it as full of contradiction and hollow. The novel was completely rejected by the soviet authorities and when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1958, he was compelled to decline it. Soviet authorities declared him a traitor and attacked him with a campaign of persecution, terrorizing him until his death in 1960.

During the period, works of direct and social protest or satire had printed in their own way such as Yevgeni Yevtushenko’s ‘Baby Yar’ (1961) and Alexander Tvardovsky’s ‘Tyorkin in the other World’ (1964). ‘Baby Yar’ is a poem condemning the massacre of 1941 in Kiev perpetrated by Nazis. It exposes the inhumanity done to the Jews and injustice of the Government’s refusal to raise a monument for the thousands of Jews executed by the Nazi troops. The poem made a tremendous impact in soviet society that the people woke up to a new realization. ‘Tyorkin in the Other World’ is a satirical war time epic of Alexander Tvardovsky.

The poem is about a soldier, Vasily Tyrokin, who died and went to the other world, the Hell and the hell turns out to be like the Soviet Union under Stalin, an oppressive, bureaucratic, and culturally conservative society of the dead souls. Though the work was circulated in Soviet Union through underground channel for several years, it got published during the thaw period of Khrushchev thaw.

At this point, some writers attempted to break the prescribed pattern for literature and their aesthetic explorations were constantly hampered even though they got some what freedom in stylistic experimentation and gradually the freedom of thought started growing in the latter half of the 1950's and first half of the 1960's. The writers started to tell the truth according to their understanding and as a result of the revelation of the twentieth congress of the communist party about the brutality and criminality of Stalin reign, soviet literature was officially encouraged to discuss the evils of the past. But it was a limited freedom because the discussions of the contemporary evils are strictly restricted. So, the freedom had not reached the expectation of the rebels and their writings were discouraged by the soviet intellectuals. Thus, they went underground.

The most noticeable manifestations of 'Zamizdat' are underground magazines and contents of these magazines are chiefly poetry, fiction, essays, and criticism, most of the time are not sensational or intensely political, but the aesthetic quality of some exceptions were quite high. The first substantial underground journal was 'Syntaxis' (1959) edited by Aleksander Ginzburg. The content of the magazine was nonpolitical but it expressed the discontent with the quality of contemporary life. Therefore, as editor, Ginzburg was arrested and imprisoned in

1960. Another journal 'Phoenix' came in 1961, edited by Yuri Galanskov. It was explicitly political and contained harsh criticism of contemporary Russian culture and laments over the state of the arts in the Soviet Union. Therefore, Galanskov was expelled from Moscow University and sent to a mental hospital. By 1964 the decision of Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev to reserve the trend of liberalization provided greater encouragement for underground literature and there were persecutions and trials happened during the period. The trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel happened in 1966 for producing anti soviet propaganda through their writings, which were illegally published abroad under the pseudonym. Sinyavsky's (1925-1997) 'The Trial Begins' (1960) is a novel in which the characters reacting differently about their roles in a totalitarian society, told with fantastic elements and 'The Make Peace Experiments' (1963) is an allegorical novel about the party leaders who used impractical powers to rule. Another work 'A Voice from the Chorus' (1973) is written in the form of a letter to his wife from prison about scattered thoughts and comments and conversation of fellow prisoners. Yuli Daniel's (1925-1988) 'This is Moscow Speaking' (1962) is the story that the Moscow radio announces an official day of public murder, a day which permits any citizen to murder any other citizen. Through this work he satirized slavish nature of literature, Soviet broadcasting, political ingenuousness, racism, anti-Semitism and the Soviet intellectuals. Yuli Daniel and Sinyavsky were arrested and trialed in the infamous Sinyavsky- Daniel trial. Daniel was sentenced for five years of hard labour for anti-Soviet activity while Sinyavsky was sentenced for seven years. Later Yuri Galanskov and Alekander Ginzvurg the editors of the dissident journals also were subjected to got trial in 1968. The underground literature also included

Chukovskya Grossman's 'Forever Following' (1988), Losif Brodsky's poetry, memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam and works of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Among these writers Pasternak later published his works under the pseudonym *aboard* and the works of others were taken *aboard* without the knowledge of the authors, because once a work starts circulating in *Zamizdat*, the author loses control over it.

The favorite topic of underground prose was the soviet internal security system. The most famous works on this topic are Solzhenitsyn's 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich', which depicted an autobiographical account of arrest and concentration camp lives. The novel is based on the author's own experience described as a typical day in the life of an inmate of a forced labour camp during soviet era. Solzhenitsyn had to face criticism and harassment from the authorities while he emerged as an opponent of repressive government policies. The novel was circulated through underground for many years and got published in 1962 during the Khrushchev's thaw. Georgi Bladimov's novel 'Faithfull Rusland'(1975) is also a finest work about the camp life. It is an allegorical novel that clearly communicates the cruelty of Stalin's forced labour system by which approximately 14 million people passed away between 1929 and 1953. Evgenia Ginsburg's 'Journey into the Whirl Wind' is a memoir of the author, which was published as two parts in 1967. It is a detailed account of her life and sentence during the period of Stalin for the revolutionary activities despite being party member. She was accused of playing double role. Anatoly Marchenko's 'My Testimony'(1969) is an autobiographical work that deals with his experience at labour camp and prison. It was published in the West in 1969 after circulating as *Zamizdat*. The novel 'Ward Number Seven'

(1965) by Valery Tarsis is an autobiographical novel about the uses of a mental institution to torment political offenders. Many works emerged on the theme of moral and social exploitation such as 'Vladimir Maksimov's' 'Karantine' which was later published in the West in 1973, which is about the aimlessness, moral trauma, and disillusionment of the common people and 'My Apologia' (1970) written by Victor Velsky about a sensitive, lonely alienated young intellectual who betrays his friends to KGB.

Many satires among the 'Zamizdat' were also later published in the West, most notably the works of Yuli Daniel's 'Atonement'(1975) and 'Hands'(1975), 'This is Moscow Speaking'(1962) and Vladimir Voinovich's 'By Mutual Correspondence' (1973), 'The life of Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin'( 1969) etc. These works contributed to the category of 'Tamizdat'. i.e. while Zamizdat was the publication and distribution of works that had been either banned from official publication or written with the intention of not being officially published, Tamizdat was the works that attracted the attention of the West and published hugely, especially in the United States, Germany and France.

### **Nikita Khrushchev and Political Thaws**

Even after the death of Stalin in 1953, socialist realism remained as a valid concept till the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the harshness of soviet realism was somewhat mellowed after the death of Stalin. When Nikita Khrushchev came to power, he denounced Stalin in Party Congress of 1956 about his 'personality cult' and its consequences like Great purges that killed million and traumatized the people of Soviet Union. Khrushchev had effectively led the Soviet Union away from the



harshness of Stalin period. He brought relaxation in the rigid controls within the country both in domestic affairs and foreign policy. Millions of political prisoners were released from Gulag labour camps. Soviet society began to enjoy a series of cultural and sports events and entertainments. During this period, some writers came to the forefront to defend the party's control over literature and demanded for intellectual freedom in the 1950s and early 1960s. As a result, several thaws occurred with the writer's liberal enquiry. He gave a little freedom to publish previously banned works, especially works by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Dudinstev, Alexander Lashin and Nikolai Zhdanov etc. in limited editions.

Thus, the first thaw of 1953-54 was marked by the publication of critical article in literary 'thick' journals (Cornwell 223). For example, Ferror Ablamov's article 'People of the Collectivized Village in post-war Soviet Literature', which was published in 1954, attacked the falsity of literary conventions in the depiction of rural Russia since the war and Vladimir Pomerantsev's 'On Sincerity in Literature' denied the ideological authority on literature and gave concern to the writers own personal intuitions. Both articles were attacked mercilessly in the Party press. As a consequence of publishing these articles in 'Novi Mir', the editor in chief, Alexander Tvardovsky, was removed and replaced by Konstantin Simonov. But this expulsion was only for a short time. In 1958, he was again appointed the editor-in-chief of Novi Mir during Khrushchev's second thaw.

The second Thaw occurred in 1956 with the appearance of many new literary works which depicted the negative aspects of the Stalinist Russia such as Vladimir Dudinstev's novel 'Not by Bread Alone' (1956) and several controversial works

especially by Alexander Lashin and Nikolai Zhdanov. The novel 'Not by Bread Alone' by Vladimir Dudinstsev was published in the official journal 'Pravda' and other periodicals. The novel is about an engineer who struggled with the bureaucracy in an attempt to help the Soviet pipe industry with his invention. Initially, the novel got wide acceptance, but later the Party officials began to attack the novel. Nikita Khrushchev praised the powerful imagery of the novel, but stated that the novel was "false at its base". He criticized that the author had "basically scissored out the negative facts for tendentious presentation from an unfriendly angle" (New York Times). Novels of Aleksander Lashin depict the historically concrete reality of the revolutionary development. In his novel 'Liver', which was published in 1956, he criticized Stalin who considered the people as levers, a simple machine that gives mechanical support in building socialism. The story is about the ordinary people who listen to the radio in anticipation of the changes brought about at the twentieth party congress after Stalin's death. Nikolai Zhdanov was a poet, prose writer and soldier at Red Army. His stories deal with the heroism of the Soviet people during the revolution. Zhdanov's 'The Petrograd Story' (1960) tells the story of a boy who witnessed the storming of the winter place during the Great October Revolution.

In 1961, the third thaw came, marked by the removal of Stalin's body from Lenin's Mausoleum, which was embalmed and kept together with Lenin's body, and culminated by 1962-63. This is the most significant event as a part of the De-Stalinization of Khrushchev. This event did not cause a large scale political revolt, as there was no opposition from Stalin's supporters as Khrushchev feared. De-

Stalinization was also very strongly expressed in literature. Other stories of Nikolai Zhdanov like 'Sea Salt', which was written in 1947, and 'New Sea' written in 1954 were published in the collection 'Childhood of a Contemporary' in 1962. These stories are children's stories and they depict the life of the people during the revolution. 'Minute of History' (1966) is a collection of stories about the October days in Petrograd and Lenin. The struggle of the people based on the real events is depicted in the stories. All of the above mentioned writers were banned during the Stalin period because of the depiction of the reality about the Revolution and the struggle of the people. The third thaw of Khrushchev facilitated the official publication of such works.

### **Alexander Solzhenitsyn: The First Major Expose of the Gulag**

It was during the period of the third political thaw, Alexander Solzhenitsyn published his novels about the repression in the Soviet Union and his Gulag experiences with an official approval. Publication of Solzhenitsyn was marked as a great event in Russian literature. His major works especially 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich' (1962), 'In The First Circle' (1968), 'Cancer Ward' (1968), 'The Gulag Archipelago' (Three volumes written between 1958-1968) and 'The Oak and the Calf' (1975) were published during this period. But only limited prints were available for the public. He was a writer who opposed the Soviet Union.

Solzhenitsyn and his companion Koka Vitkevich denounced both the war and two leaders, Stalin and Lenin, as individuals while he was serving as a captain in the Red Army during World War II. In 1944, they proposed 'Resolution No. 1,' which said that the war would further heighten the conflict between capitalism and socialism. It

also states that by organizing increasingly greater groups of people, the Soviet Union would try to win by inflicting a deeper drop in the population and level of living. In addition, it was declared that the Party would compel literature to articulate a cult of leadership while the State would dominate historical narrative and explain the conflict through the statements of its leaders. As a result, the resolution put forward a plan to attack the post-war edifice of conservative ideologies. In an effort to form an organization of "Active Socialist Builders," Solzhenitsyn and Vitkevich looked for supporters. Solzhenitsyn promised Vitkevich in a letter that seven individuals would be back with their revolution, and the police discovered the letter. Solzhenitsyn was detained and given an eight-year prison term as well as a lifelong exile.

Since the release of his debut book, 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich in 1962,' Solzhenitsyn has gained significant international recognition. He received a lot of praise from the critics for the novel's contentious subject matter and strong literary style. The narrative focuses on a single day in the life of a common prisoner, Ivan Denisovich, in a Soviet labour camp in the early 1950s. Solzhenitsyn has kept up his prolific publishing since 1962, releasing several publications. His willingness to tackle contentious subjects while utilizing his own creative voice has helped him remain at the top of the writing industry. His semi-autobiographical novel 'Cancer Ward' (1966) was published in Russia as *Zamisdat* and was outlawed the following year.

The narrative takes place in 1954, a year after Stalin's death, and centres on a tiny group of patients in Ward 13, a hospital's cancer ward. The moral accountability

of individuals involved in the killings of millions transported to camps or deported during the Great Purge is examined in the narrative. The book was later released in 1968 in Europe. His novel 'In the First Circle' (1968) is highly autobiographical. In his nonfiction book 'Gulag Archipelago' (1973), Alexander Solzhenitsyn describes how the Soviet authorities imprisoned, tortured, and killed millions of innocent civilians, mostly between 1929 and 1953, primarily under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. His first goal was to document the truth for the populace, as this is what took place when the government only acknowledged a portion of reality. In addition to having a messianic duty to the killed and oppressed, Solzhenitsyn also feels a responsibility to the present and coming generations. The nation in order to experience a spiritual and political rejuvenation, he wants the full reality of government crime and civil rights to be openly acknowledged and repudiated. Official publication of Solzhenitsyn paved way to the emergence of many writers and their vivid subjects which were banned during the Soviet era.

Along with the publication of Solzhenitsyn, the period also witnessed the appearance of a new group of writers belonging to the category of 'village prose'. Their major themes were replica of the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature used the vivid images of the estates, collective farms and villages to record the changes in both the perspective and the reality of rural Russia. They depicted the idyllic picture of estate life. But it ended with the Chekhov's play 'Cherry Orchard' (1903), which dramatized the abolition of serfdom and decline of the power of aristocracy. But the 20<sup>th</sup> century prose was not a return to the theme of gentry estate in Russian literature, but a nostalgic backward look into that life.

Vasily Belov's novel 'The Eves' (1977) shows how the house and its former master still alive are attractive, but are quite peripheral and are vulnerable to the forces of change in the late 1920s. Most of the village prose writers had maintained some balance in depicting the problems of rural life and sympathetic look at peasants and village. As most of them were grown up in village and moved to urban areas and looking at village life in the form of a distance of space and time, and they mixed current observation with childhood memories. Three novels that were published in the mid and late 1960s marked the mature stage of village prose. They are Feder Abramov's 'Dve Zimy I tri Leta' (Two winters and Three Summers), Boriz Mozhaev's 'Iz Zhizni Fedora Kuzkina' (From the Life of Fyodor Kuzkin) and Vasili Belov's 'Privichnoe Delo' (Business As Usual).

The far north of European Russia is the setting for Abramov's novel 'Dve Zimy I tri Leta' (Two winters and Three Summers). As the title implies, the changing of the seasons has a significant forming impact on the book's characters. Their lives are organized around a series of lengthy winters and brief summers. The people must make use of the long hours in the summer to plow the ground, sow and harvest barley, and mow the hay. Then, during the unending winter months, they battened down the shutters and got ready to fight for survival, while the men went off to the lumber camps, fell the large fir trees, transported them to the river bank, got ready to set them afloat with the thaw, and watched and repaired the guidebarriers that kept them sailing downstream and prevented them from piling up in the backwater.

Mozhaev's novella, *Iz zhizni Fedora Kuzkina*, is something of a contrast a lively, salty piece of writing with an optimistic ending. Its main character, Fedor

Kuzkin, also known as Zhivoy, is a perky and resourceful peasant figure who knows how to take on the bureaucracy and score points off them. His story is recounted in a sharp, racy language, with a slight exaggeration here, a touch of fantasy there, like a tale that has gone the rounds and emerged the better for the telling. It begins with a family in disunion. In Fedor's family all misfortunes take place on August 18 and there have recently been many of them: his own father was killed by a brother in a quarrel over a piece of land; another brother died in a drunken orgy. The greater is Fedor's devotion to his wife, Dunia, and their five children. The story revolves around his efforts to make a living that will support them in the face of natural difficulties and indifferent, when not actively malicious officialdom. The irony of his situation is that he himself, had it not been for his peasant instincts, might have been a member of that officialdom.

Vasili Belov's hero Ivan Afrikanovich in the novella 'Privichnoe Delo' is a childlike character, affectionate and dependent, easily led by others, given to the irresponsible pranks and not very competent at the task which a peasant needs to master in order to survive in the far north. In these features he resembles many male members of the soviet intelligentsia in an era when women often earn as much as men and strict political control permits restricted scope for personal initiatives and responsibility. Ivan's family runs with the income of Katerina, wife of Ivan, who is a milkmaid. But the collective farm regulations do not allow them to maintain enough hay for the cows. Without enough hay they cannot keep the cow which is the only source of income of the family. Such difficulties for survival are common for each peasant family. In this situation Ivan had to leave his family and village and

migrated to town for a better life. Apart from these stories these writers had written many other stories under the guise of Village prose. Those works openly discussed the injustice in collectivization of agriculture.

Even though the political thaw of 1960s brought tremendous changes in the soviet literary scene, the government approach to women and their issues remained the same. The liberal journal 'Novi Mir' published even Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who directly wrote about the labour prison camp life during Stalin government, his contemporary female writer I. Grekova was hard to get published because her work focuses on the daily lives of soviet women. The government even promoted the direct attacks to the Party and leaders, the nostalgic memories of gentry' farm houses and Russian country sides during Tsar Empires, but they never promoted the gender issues of women in public discussions. Therefore, the writers like I. Grekova who wrote about the daily lives of Soviet women were rejected by the Soviet publishers.

### **'Everyday Life' and 'Women Writers'**

While the male writers of the period wrote even directly against the party and Soviet authority and Stalin, the 'women writers' emerged during 1960s discussed the theme of everyday life of Soviet women. Therefore, such writings were rejected by the Soviet publishers and they gave prime importance to the serious literatures written by the male writers. I. Grekova was the prominent one among such writers who were disallowed to publish during the period. Grekova began writing in the early 1960s and her prose echoed the experience she had lived through like science inception of Soviet power, the purges, the war, the world of scientific



intelligentsia, the research institutes and the reality faced by women bringing up children alone during and after the war. Her major works 'Beyond the Gates' (1962), 'The Ship of Widows' (1985) etc. mainly centers on the lives of women and their views of life. 'The Ship of the Widow' is the story of a middle aged woman who is a widow, struggling to balance home and career and keeps it altogether almost impossible odds. The theme of her novella 'Little Garusov' (1970) is the effect of collective upbringing or of prolonged deprivation and abandonment on the child's personality. Grekova's stories often took her readers into the areas of traditionally off limit to the average citizen. 'The Department' (1978) explores the private life of the professorate and student body in a mathematical department in Moscow. In the story 'Threshold' (1981) a cybernetics institute becomes the setting within which a former researcher attempts to reintegrate himself into the scientific community. Grekova's most controversial novella 'All the Test Site' (1982) is set at a 'top-secret' army test site on the lower Volga. In this story she tells the truth as she witnessed the living conditions in the provinces during the last years of Stalin's rule, moral in the army, anti-Semitism, the deplorable level of education among the country's leaders, and strategies for survival during the purges. When the story appeared in *Novyi mir*, within months, virtually every literary journal and newspaper in the Russian Republic had published abusive reviews which in some cases had nothing to do with the story itself. Tvardovskii's decision to go ahead and publish the piece may well have hastened his own demise. Its appearance also forced Grekova to undergo a prolonged period of chastisement at her institute during which she was called upon to publicly renounce her ideas in a series of humiliating forums. She categorically refused to do so. Although her colleagues ultimately voted to keep

her on staff, she resigned in the wake of this humiliating episode and went to work at the Moscow Institute of Railway Engineers (MIIT) where she continued teaching for fourteen years until her retirement. Grekova wrote about her ordeal in thinly fictionalized form in her story 'Without Smiles' written in 1970, but published only during the first year of Glasnost in 1986. Grekova never recanted and never backed down from what she tried to do in 'All the Test Site' and until the end of her career considered the piece as her greatest literary achievement.

### **Era of Stagnation**

The political situation changed again during the period of Leonid Brezhnev and it affected the literary field also. In 1964, Khrushchev had been pushed out by Leonid Brezhnev and his allies who were unhappy with the way some of Khrushchev's reforms were going on. Between 1964 and 1982, the focus of the next Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev was on Foreign and military affairs. To support the spread of communism internationally, he developed the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' that any threat to any country of the Soviet Union was a threat to all bloc members and therefore justified military intervention to aid communist forces. He expanded Soviet Union's Navy and military capabilities and therefore the Soviet Army became the largest worldwide. Brezhnev's continuous expansion of defense and aerospace sectors deprived other areas of the economy of resources. As a result, soviet agriculture, industries, and healthcare services worsened during the 1970s and early 1980s. The result was shortages of production and the lack of living condition of the soviet people. 'The Era of Stagnation' was the name that was given to this particular period in Soviet Union mostly because of the economic problems. Soviet

economy had endured years of massive military spending, short falls in natural resources, bureaucratic mismanagement and rising corruption.

Economy was not only the area that seemed stagnant but also politics, society and arts. The political and social freedom under Khrushchev's thaw was frozen again. As a firm follower of Stalin, Brezhnev brings back the social and political repression of Stalin era. Brezhnev increased the repression of political dissidents and state security organization, the KGB regained power. He increased the centralization of the soviet economy leading to stagnation. Therefore, the era of Brezhnev is called 'The Era of Stagnation'. Art and literary works had to promote socialist realism. A literary work should depict the author's political view, but 'literatures of everyday' portrayed the day-to-day life of Russian people.

During this period, a new phenomenon that emerged in Russian literature was the so called 'Women Literature' with the publication of Natalia Baranskaya 'A Week like Any Other' (1969). Novels and novellas by I. Grekova in the 1970s and 1980s also contributed to this new category. Like I Grekova, Natalia Baranskaya (1907-2004) also used women issues of post Stalinist Russia as the focus of her fiction. Her protagonists were most probably the USSR scientists and engineers, who were usually single mothers or widows. The novella 'A Week like Any Other' was soon translated into English and other languages and widely interpreted as a feminist work. But it did not get much appreciation from Soviet Union because it depicts the daily life of a soviet woman and her 'double burden' of managing family and profession. In the novella 'A Week like Any Other', the protagonist Olga Voronkova is a scientist and a married mother, who is struggling to deal her work

and household in a parallel way. She is constantly busy and often loses her sleep. She does not even get time to do some simple things of her own. Her day starts before 6 am and ends after midnight. At work, Volga and her other female colleagues have to face a mandatory questionnaire that shows how much time in a week is spent on work, children and leisure. It requires Olga to calculate how many working days she missed in a year and she feels guilty when she realizes that she has lost 78 working days as her children became sick. Volga jokes about leisure category that her hobby is the sports of running; running here and there to the store, to catch bus with a full grocery bag in each hand. The novella presents the detailed and realistic view of Soviet women's daily realities in the 1960s. It depicts the tension between the traditional expectations of women in the Soviet Union and their emerging demand for freedom and individuality.

Baranskaya's first collection of stories and novellas 'A Negative Giselle' was published in 1977. The psychology of adolescent girls and their problems in the family, school and at work are the central theme of these works. The teenage protagonist of the story 'Lyubka' faces a citizen's court for disturbing the peace of her neighbours. In 1977 she published another novella 'The Color of Dark Honey' about Pushkin's wife. It is written in the point of view of Pushkin's wife as she commemorates his death after one year. His wife narrates how her flirtatiousness and infidelity lead him to his death in a duel. Baranskaya's second collection of stories 'The Woman with the Umbrella' appeared in 1981. The themes of these stories are the ethical problems women confront, their loneliness after the Second World War and conflict between the sexes and generations.

Both Grekova and Baranskaya depicted the double burden of the working mothers, emotional and social difficulties of single mothers, widows and pensioners. These were the critical social issues that had not become the subject matter for literature before. From early 1960s to the mid-1980s, female authors employed images of everyday life to raise women's issues in mainstream soviet prose. Both Baranskaya and Grekova were widows when their relatively late literary careers began. This similarity between creator and Character parallels the strong relationship women prose tried to create between the quotidian and its fictional counterpart during the thaw and stagnation. Later when Ludmilla Petrushevskaya emerged as writer at the end of 1960s, she had the same bitter experiences from the soviet authority as Grekova and Baranskaya. The reason behind such an experience lies in Russian culture's enduring uneasiness for concerning the everyday and female experiences. Petrushevskaya portrayed everyday life of the Russian women in her short fiction but she was not able to publish it. They banned it for the reason that there was no artistic merit. But Petrushevskaya decided not to become a dissident, so she had to wait till perestroika gets her works published. Finally, in the 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev came into power and introduced Perestroika and Glasnost, it resulted in ending the years of censorship in Russia.

### **Literary Career and Early Works of Petrushevskaya**

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya made a strange profile with her shocking themes and pessimistic vision of public life during the soviet period. Therefore, she was not admitted to the 'Writers' Union' and the publishers rejected her literary works and advised to rewrite them with happy endings. The Government's strict censorship in

literature prevented publishing anything with depressing and pessimistic themes in Soviet official journals. But Petrushevskaya was not ready to surrender her creativity to please the authority. In her interview with Kristina Rotkirch, she says that during the soviet period anyone who wanted to become a writer or more precisely, a member of the Soviet Writer's Union could do so. All that was required was to be able to set forth your thoughts coherently and to observe certain ideological rules. As a writer who wrote about the hardship of life under soviet conditions, they never became members of the Writer's Union (88-90). Petrushevskaya says:

Themes such as church, the sexual life of soviet people, to say nothing of repression, the camps, the destroyed ecology, undermined health of the people, the problems of orphans, the elderly, single mothers, abandoned wives and children, the general lack and shortage of essential goods such as shoes or clothing (not to mention sausage or cheese, for which you stood in line for hours), and in the horrible details of life of the ethnic minorities were all forbidden. Truth was in general forbidden (Rotkritch, 90).

Soviet literature emphasized collective values and importance of collectiveness over the individual. Themes that focus on individualism or non-conformity to the socialist norms were often suppressed. However, Petrushevskaya's works written during this period depicted personal experience of women. Petrushevskaya's first Story, 'Nets and Traps' written in 1968, first appeared in the journal 'Aurora' in 1972. The story depicts the hard life of a woman, who is ignored by her future husband while she gets pregnant. The insecurities she

faces during her pregnancy and cheating of her future husband make her fall into mental agony. The story was officially published in Russia and its English translation in the collection of stories ‘Immortal Love’ in 1988. In 1972, Petrushevskaya wrote her another work ‘The Story of Clarissa’. The story is about the physical and mental growth of a woman. Clarissa, the central character of the story is a girl who cannot attract any one’s attention with her physical beauty or character traits. Different concepts have existed in each culture since ancient times and people’s obsession and adoration for beauty has been around for ages. But none of this affected her at all. She believed that every situation had something to do with her, although very few did. This thought was the reason for her fight with a boy at school when provoked by the insult from him. Here, Petrushevskaya presents her heroine as a brave young girl who can react and resist the offenses against herself even physically. This bravery can also be seen in her later life. When she becomes a wife, she is not ready to sacrifice her life for her absent husband. So, it did not take long time for her to decide on another marriage. In the role of a mother, Clarissa is not better or worse, but she exhibits practical intelligence. Here, Clarissa challenges the ‘maternal instinct’. Patriarchal society as well as the State imposed regulations on women. Women are experiencing motherhood as an institution, as a set of rules and regulations imposed by outsiders. Institutionalized motherhood demands of women’s maternal instinct rather than intelligence; selflessness rather than self-realization. Through Clarissa, the author portrays a very mature woman who chooses her life very lightly but wisely. Clarissa shows through her life that one does not be bewildered at difficult times and not to be hooked by the emotions, but

take accurate decisions and move forward with one's lives according to one's comfort and not according to the demand of society.

Petrushevskaya utilized her voice to portray the inner sufferings of humans in raw, unfiltered manner (Hunton 5). Physically and morally repulsive things such as suicide, alcoholism, prostitution, one-night stands, fictitious marriage, unwanted pregnancies and abortion, neglected children, crushing poverty, theft, physical and psychological violence are presented more terrifyingly in her works. This was particularly marked in the rejection of Booker Prize Award for the novella *The Time: Night* in 1993. Alexandra Smith quotes in her article: "If the proceedings and sumptuous hospitality were televised –seeing as the ordinary Russians were going very hungry" (Smith 6). Petrushevskaya's tough experiences in Stalinist Russia are effectively echoed in her stories. Poverty and injustice from the authorities get reflected in her stories. Most of the early stories of Petrushevskaya were written during 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, the fall of Russian economy, which affected the daily life of the public is also revealed in her stories. Petrushevskaya's novella 'Chocolate with Liqueur' (1989) portrays a struggling family of Soviet Russia. The central character of the novella, Leila and her children, lives in the midst of poverty and cruelty of her husband Nikita. Leila and the children lives in extreme hunger. At this point she had to ask for the leftover bread at a hospital cafeteria- presumably for a pig she kept. Along with poverty and hunger, Nikita's cruelty and fight for the apartment lead the family into the horrible atmosphere. All of Petrushevskaya's stories are set within the walls of communal apartments. During the Soviet time, apartments were given to people for free, according to the time they worked on the



enterprise. Though one should only pay a small fee for communal services, the state norms for giving the apartments were rather tough, with 5-8 square meters for a person. A family with two children of the same gender would get only two-room apartment of about 30 square meters. Therefore, fights between family members for the share of the apartments and factitious marriages to get registration in the apartments became the themes of Petrushevskaya's stories. The novella 'Chocolate with Liquor' explores the horrible picture of cruelties and murdering attempt of a husband to his wife and children for the apartment. Leila is the central character of the story, who is left by her husband Nikita, and lives with her children in a two-room communal apartment. Even though Nikita and Leila are separated, they live in the same apartment because of nowhere to go. During Soviet times, housing apartments were allotted by the authority and residential housing construction was almost neglected. So, people lived in communal apartments. It is common that the shortage of housing meant even divorced couples remained in the same apartment for want of anywhere to move to (Fitzpatrick 47).

'Father and Mother' (1988) is another story of Petrushevskaya which depicts hunger, poverty and desolated family life. The story is about a mother with numerous children living in poverty. The father escapes every morning for his job and reappears in the family only after eleven O' clock at the night. The whole day the mother and her little children spend at home with hunger. Besides the poverty, mother in this story does not have a job and has to face difficulties to raise her children. The story explores the daily life of a late soviet family that lives in the midst of hunger and poverty.

During the soviet period, erotic contents were forbidden in literature. The Soviet Union had strict guidelines and a state-controlled publishing industry that aimed to promote socialist realism and uphold moral values according to the communist party's ideology. As a result, explicit or overtly sexual content was generally discouraged or banned. It was during this time, Petrushevskaya depicted the sex work as a theme in her story 'Xenia's Daughter' (1988). In this story Xenia and her daughter are sex workers who long for love and care from the people around them. The story gives hints about the pathetic life of sex workers in society and in prison. In the beginning of the story the author gives an introduction to the people's attitudes to writing about prostitutes. The author targets the soviet writers who write under the guise of socialist realism by portraying the ideal heroes and heroines to educate the society. They depicted prostitution as a sin and if a woman went for adultery, she should regret and finally fall into despair and commit suicide at the end as in the novel 'Anna Karenina' of Leo Tolstoy.

In Russia, prostitution is usually held by the lower class women who lived outside the boundaries of the patriarchal family. Therefore, the police conducted periodic rounds up in the places where they lived, to ensure the health of the sex workers. Thus, prostitution becomes tolerated, although not strictly or legal (Engel 64). But no one noticed their inner feelings and that is what the prime concern of Petrushevskaya's. The author calls them as simply the product of melancholy and caprice. Frustrated desires, unconsummated love and sadness make them terribly melancholic. The story explores the life of sex workers and people's attitude towards them through the character Xenia. Sex work is a major theme in the story

'This little Girl'(1988) also. The central character in the story is a sex worker. The narrator describes her as a 'real professional whore'. Her family circumstances lead her to become a sex worker. Her father starts to openly bringing women to their house after the death of her mother. Therefore, Raisa runs away from home and resorts in an apartment with a bunch of boys for several months. They would not let her out at all. Even though she gets married, she continues as a sex worker.

Children are always an inevitable part of Petrushevskaya's stories. As a narrator of harsh realities of social life, Petrushevskaya tries to present the cruelties and misbehavior towards children in her stories. Her novella 'Our Crowd'(1988) explores the terrible picture of the brutality of a mother to her seven year old child. The boy is not so talented or handsome or good at his studies. At the same time, he has many ill manners such as eating sloppily, without chewing, dropping food and wetting bed while sleeping. Therefore, his father is not much fond of him and he slaps the boy for wetting bed. The mother beats the child in front of her husband and their circle of friends. Though it is an action by the mother to save her child from the status of an orphan, the cruelty she does to the child is terrible.

Hospitals often come in stories of Petrushevskaya in the form of maternity wards, Psychotic institutions and others. The story 'Our Crowed' gives hints about the rough treatments in hospitals. The mother of the narrator is hospitalized with the unknown disease of gradually becoming blind. The mother melts from 160 pounds to 70. Therefore, her doctors decide to look for a non-existent ulcer. The story portrays the tragic treatment she gets from the hospital. The story 'The Time: Night' also depicts the terrible situation of the mental institutes of the Soviet period. The

author calls attention to the horrible conditions of the psychiatric institutions through the word of the protagonist. Her mother is admitted in a mental institute and the hospital authorities inform that they are planning to shift her to a psychiatric institution for the severe patients. She brings her mother home because the patients of such hospitals 'will die like flies'. In these stories Petrushevskaya portrays the dangerous conditions of mental hospitals of Soviet time.

Most of the heroines of Petrushevskaya are separated or single mothers who are struggling to survive in the midst of poverty and solitude. 'A case of Virgin Birth' (1988) is about a single mother who is a middle aged woman longing for the attention from her adult son. The story reveals the terrible picture of a single mother with her son. The mother is wandering to make something for herself when the son was at kindergarten and then at school but when the son grows up, he starts avoiding the mother. The story portrays the loneliness and isolation of an old mother. The mother in the story 'Another Land' (1988) lives separated, along with her little daughter in a one room apartment. She is addicted to drink and lives hidden from every one- from her former circle of friends and her blonde haired fellow. The mother in 'Our Crowd' is divorced from her husband Kolya who is preparing to leave his family for another woman while she is suffering with an unknown disease that may cause death at any time.

As a writer who deals with the domestic themes- issues related to the private life of the ordinary family of soviet Russia, Petrushevskaya portrays women as the central protagonists in all her stories. But the characteristic of these stories is that neither these women are accused of being the victim of these problems nor these

issues are reduced to 'women's issues' but they are portrayed as the common predicament of the society of the time. In her stories women are central characters and male characters are rare, therefore, it is natural for women to suffer the ills of social evils. Petrushevskaya preserves no partiality in her writings. Poverty, prostitution, fight for shelters, brutalities against children, rough treatments in hospitals, separation and single mothers are the main social menaces that can be seen in the stories of Petrushevskaya. Her narratives are deeply introspective, delving into the psychological depth of her characters and presenting a bleak yet powerful portrayal of human existence. Her unconventional themes made her a weird image as a writer and she could not get her works published in Soviet Russia till the censorship was removed by Mikhail Gorbachev. It was during the period of Perestroika and Glasnost in the Soviet Union, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's stories gained significant attention and recognition.

## Work Cited

- Brown, Deming. *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin*. Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Cornwell, Neil. *The Rutledge Companion to Russian Literature*. Routledge, 2001.
- Engel, Barbara Alpern. *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*. New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2004.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia." *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 65, no. 4, Dec., 1993, pp. 745-770. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2124540>.
- Hunton, Vasilisa. "Lyudmilla Petrushevskaya Bravely Exposing the Depth of Human Sufferings During the Soviet Era and Beyond." B.A. Dissertation, Skemman.Is, June 2019.  
[skemman.is/bitstream/1946/32892/1/VasilisaHunton-4.pdf](https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/32892/1/VasilisaHunton-4.pdf).
- Moser, Charles A. *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*. Press Syndicate of Cambridge University, 1996.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *A Girl from the Metropol Hotel: Growing up in Communist Russia*. Penguin, 2013.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Complete Interview with Ludmilla Petrushevskaya." Interview by David Garza. *Kirkus Review*, 2013,

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/complete-interview-ludmilla-petrushevskaya/>.

Rotkrich, Kristina, and Anna Ljunggren. *Contemporary Russian Fiction: A Shortlist. Russian Authors Interviewed by Kristina Rotkirch*. Glas Publishers, 2008.

Smith, Alexandra. "In Populist Clothes: Anarchy and Subversion in Petrushevskaya's Latest Fiction." *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1997).

Wines, Michael. "Vladimir Dudintsev, 79, Dies; Writer Dissected Soviet Life." *New York Times*, 30 July 1998, sec. D, p. 19, [www.nytimes.com/1998/07/30/world/vladimir-dudintsev-79-dies-writer-dissected-soviet-life.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/30/world/vladimir-dudintsev-79-dies-writer-dissected-soviet-life.html).





## Chapter 2

### **From Censorship to Celebration: Petrushevskaya's Acclaim at the Dawn of Perestroika and Glasnost**

“The essence of perestroika lies in the fact that it unites socialism with democracy... we want more socialism and therefore more democracy”

“Without Glasnost there is not and there cannot be democratism, the political creativity of masses and their participation of management”

-Mikhail Gorbachev

During the era of Perestroika and Glasnost, which marked a period of political and social reforms under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, there was a notable shift in the cultural landscape of the Soviet Union. The loosening of censorship and the increased openness to artistic expression created a more favourable environment for the authors like Petrushevskaya who had previously faced difficulties in publishing their works due to their critical and unusual themes. Petrushevskaya's stories primarily focus on the lives of ordinary people, especially women, and portrayed their struggles in a society marked by repression and social stagnation. The present chapter analyses the impact of Perestroika and Glasnost in Russian society and literature, major themes and reception of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya during the period.

#### **Perestroika: A Vision towards Progressive Development**

As a communist party politician, Mikhail Gorbachev took power in 1985. At that time, the USSR was distressed with stagnant economy and a weak political system. The economic and political chaos of the time compelled Gorbachev to

introduce two sets of reforms- Perestroika and Glasnost. The core intention of such policies was to make the Soviet government and Soviet economy more efficient.

Gorbachev once said:

Imagine a country that flies in to space, launches Sputniks, creates such a defense system and it can't resolve the problem of women's pantyhose.

There is no tooth paste, no soap powder, not the basic necessities of life. It was incredible and humiliating to work in such a government. And so our people were already worked up, and that is why the dissident movements occurred (Gorbachev).

This was the condition of the USSR after the world war second and the following cold war which continued during the 50s and 60s. The state had to suffer unimaginable casualties and enormous economic devastation caused by the World War II. The common people of the country suffered due to poverty, hunger and material hardships. Petrushevskaya's stories written during this period explore such pathetic day to day life of the ordinary people, especially women. The absurdity is that while the people of the country were suffering, the state was in the peak of prosperity

After the World War II, the Soviet Union emerged as one of the most powerful states in the world. The USA was the opponent of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was fallen under the control of Soviet Union. Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapon technology and it led to the tension between the two super powers, Russia and America. During the 50s and 60s, both the countries were in competition for military superiority and cultural prominence. But the state could not overcome

the economic damage caused by the war. The Soviet war in Afghanistan which began in 1979 also affected the Soviet economy. Soviet Union's rapid industrial and technological growth had come at the expense of its agricultural sector, which shortened gradually during 1970s. By the 1980s, Soviet Russia could not produce enough grain to feed the population of the country. This economic downturn had a terrible impact on the living standards of the people. They had to face shortages of food and consumer goods. This was the condition of Russia before Gorbachev took charge as the leader of the Soviet Union. When he came to power, he planned for a political and economic restructuring and called for a new era of transparency and openness. Therefore, he launched reformation policies –Perestroika and Glasnost

In order to renovate the Soviet political and economic system, Gorbachev introduced Perestroika (Re-structuring) in 1987. As a result, he originally followed an economic strategy designed to boost economic development by boosting capital investment. Gregory A. Yavlinsky, a radical economist, counseled Gorbachev that a trade-market economy was necessary for success in the West. Therefore, the USSR started trading with Western nations, particularly the United States. The capital expenditure had the dual goals of advancing the Soviet economy's technological foundation and fostering specific structural economic improvements that would enable the Soviet Union to catch up to the West economically. It caused the USSR to undergo its first significant wave of modernization and Westernization.

Gorbachev introduced many other deep structural changes as a part of Perestroika reforms. In 1987-88 his reforms like call for privatization gave way to the mixed economy. But this shift from command economy to mixed economy was not a

successful attempt because, for the Soviet, it was a new experience and they were not familiar with this new kind of decentralized economy. Years of suppression made the people reluctant to face the new freedom with restraint. Therefore, it made a negative effect in society that hoarding of good and emergence of black markets. It leads to the growing deficit of goods and products undermining the whole concept of Perestroika. Along with this, the rise of commercial banking which provides financial services to entrepreneurs, rapid sale of state properties and deep cut in the budget of the KGB security services, defense ministry and foreign aid made Gorbachev unpopular among the party officials.

Gorbachev declared that Perestroika is to re-structure the present system as Lenin did –against the force of ‘legal nihilism’. He believed that the aim of Perestroika can be achieved through democratization and without democracy there can be no socialism. Gorbachev presented Perestroika as it is about the need to revive the system of government in Lenin’s interpretation (McForan 168). He was completely against the bureaucracy. Gorbachev brought Perestroika in foreign economic sector and it eliminated the monopoly of the ministry of the foreign trade. It permitted the ministries of the various industrial and agricultural branches to conduct foreign trade under their responsibility without the interference of the bureaucracy.

As Perestroika is a re-organization of Soviet economy by replacing the time honoured Soviet administrative method, the opposition to perestroika was widespread from every level of the communist party. Opposition comes not only from bureaucrats but also from the massive number of ordinary people. The promise

of Perestroika reforms did not meet at the expectation of the people because the corrupted bureaucrats misinterpreted Perestroika. They knew well that they would lose power over labours. The practice of ordering people by bringing pressure to bear on them and restraining their initiative was the method of the Communist party, which was hopelessly outdated with the emergence of Perestroika. As a result, the black marketers seemed to thrive as the length of line at stores and number of shortages increased.

Gorbachev's Perestroika reforms were not only limited to economic policies but it also affected the culture of the Soviet people. It made possible the Soviet people to travel abroad. It increased the possibility to access western culture which was limited during the Soviet period for the ordinary Soviet citizens. The people got to know the contemporary Western music, films and the translations of the best sellers of Western writers. Many Russian works were translated into Western languages, especially the works that depicted the harsh realities of Soviet life. Even though the soviet people hungrily consumed this freedom which was previously forbidden, Gorbachev's this kind of liberal approaches were meant to erode Russia's linguistic and cultural hegemony over the rest of the countries of Soviet Union. Therefore, Gorbachev was accused of destroying the proud national identity of Russia, which was highlighted during the Soviet era through art, culture, literature and media.

### **Glasnost: A Vision towards Democracy**

Gorbachev Launched Glasnost in 1986 as the second effort of his reformation. Glasnost literally means openness- openness in making information

public. The government provided more information on its activities. The term Glasnost was particularly associated with reforms of the judicial system that permitted the attendance of the press and the public at the trials whose judgments were read aloud. In 1965 there was a Glasnost rally that took place in Moscow, demanded the access to the close trial of Yuli Daniel and Andrei Synyavsky which was considered a key event in the emergence of the Soviet Civil right movements. In 1986, Gorbachev adopted Glasnost as a political slogan. According to Gorbachev, Glasnost “speak to the people in the language of truth”(Dzirkals 4). In 1985 Plenum Gorbachev told party committee to practice Glasnost. He stresses that the press and media must attack bureaucratic corruptions and air social problems and people’s views (Dzirkals 4).

Gorbachev started this policy because he hoped that due to more open public debate and constructive criticism of government policies the Soviet Government would perform better. While Perestroika re-structured the Soviet economy, Glasnost helped to advance the goals of the Perestroika. He believed that the opening up of the political system was the only way to overcome the inertia in the political scene and among the bureaucrats. Even though Gorbachev had to face oppositions within the party itself and did not get a chance to develop the power to implement his policies in the initial years, by the end of 1988 he weakened the party control over the Soviet Government. Gorbachev introduced political reforms under Perestroika and Glasnost by calling for the first truly democratic election in which the former dissidents and prisoners including Nobel Laureate physicist, Andrei Sakharov, were elected as candidates. He formed a new parliament ‘The Congress of People’s

Deputies' and he was elected as the President. It resulted in the loss of monopoly on political power of the Communist Party in the vast Soviet Union.

Glasnost provides more information about the party affairs and exposing corrupted officials. The citizens were allowed to criticize low ranking officials for inefficiency, corruption and drunkenness. This would help the leadership to spot these people. It gave chance to offer constructive ideas by the general public to improve the governmental and economic operations that they personally observed. This could help the leadership to improve the quality of the work done by the governmental agencies and economic enterprises. This new openness was not only reflected in the party affairs of the time but also in the revelation of the past, that is the Soviet history under Stalin which was re-examined. It was in the late 1980s when most of the people in the Soviet Union began to learn about the atrocities of Stalin and learn about the previously suppressed events.

During the period of Perestroika, Russian literature experienced the benefits of Glasnost as a new openness. The walls of the censorship which had stood firm for about seventy years suddenly collapsed. The public criticism of the state began with attacks on Stalinism, went on to challenge Lenin and the October Revolution and catastrophes like Chernobyl disaster, ethnic tensions and anti-Soviet protests in Eastern Europe (Sutcliffe 695). The 1985 -87 was the period when many writers who were banned previously since the 1920s got published. Glasnost, literally means 'openness' began with the publication of poems and prose of the explicitly anti Soviet poets such as Nikolai Gumilev (1886-1921), Vladislav Khodasevich

(1886-1939) and novels of Vladimir Nabokov like 'The Defense'(1930) and some of his poetry and literary criticism.

Following these many major writers got published such as Mikhail Bulgakov's 'The Heart of a Dog' (1987) and Andrei Platonov's anti-utopian work 'The Foundation Pit' (1987). Bulgakov's 'Heart of a Dog' is an allegory written against the communist Revolution and it was released in 1987. The novel is about a dog named 'Sharik' and of a surgeon who is committed to communism and the dog undergoes surgeries for experimental purpose to create an ideal Soviet man. Platonov's works were banned for their cynical attitude towards collectivization and other Stalinist policies. The novel 'Foundation Pit' is about a group of builders who are digging for the foundation of a building where all the inhabitants of the town will live happily. The novel is clearly an attack on the utopian ideas of the authorities.

Another feature of Glasnost was the appearance of the previously banned works by the living writers of the period. They include Sergei Antonov's 'Ravines' (1988), a novel about collectivization seen from the point of view of the activists who came to enforce it from town. The bitter hostility of the peasants to gain requisitioning and forcible collectivization is the theme of this novel. And Andrei Bitov's 'Pushkin House' (1987), is an investigation of the corruption Soviet intellectual life and history. Vladimir Dudintsev's 'White Robes'(1987) is a fictional account of the persecution of geneticist in the late 1940 and the notorious policing of the biological science for ideological reasons and Anatolii Rybakov's 'Children of Arbat'(1987) is an anti-Stalinist novel about a young communist sentenced to three



years of exile in Siberia for publishing a newspaper. During this period, many important writers from emigration and from within Soviet state became known to the reading public of the state including Leonid Dobychin, Mikhail Osorgin, Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971), Boris Poplasky and Kostantin Vaginov. Leonid Dobychin made his debut in 1924 with his stories in Leningrad magazine 'Ruskiy Sovremenik'.

The cultural shift of 1980s resulted in the rise of new voices in literature like young writer such Sergei Kaledin (1949- ) and many female writers such as Valeria Nabrikova (1958- ), Tatiana Tolostaya (1951- ), Ludmilla Petrushevskaya (1938- ) etc. Sergei Kaledin was constantly rejected by the publishers for ten years in the beginning of his literary career and finally got published in Perestroika days. His first collection of stories 'The Corridor' appeared in 1987. In the following years he got his other works published such as 'The Humble Cemetery' and 'The Construction Battalion' etc. Subject matter of Kaledin's stories is the lives of Soviet underclasses. During perestroika "women's prose" had shown a visible and voluble presence in Russian literature accompanying hesitant academic discussion of feminism against a backdrop of conservative gender roles. After 1917 revolution feminism is considered as a bourgeois movement because equality between sexes was conflated with Soviet ideology and it was guaranteed on paper. The party assigned responsibility to a particular women section founded in 1919 called 'Zhenotdel' to resist the bourgeois feminist movement. This group of writers depicted 'new woman' a socially and sexually emancipated individual supporting the revolutionary ideals (Cornwell 156). The communist government had

supposedly guaranteed equality between sexes and gave women equal educational and professional opportunities. Therefore, there was no longer any need for feminism. But in real life the matter was different. Even the women get equal opportunity in education and employment, the labour division especially in families did not change. So, the women required a huge effort to combine work and family responsibilities. According to Julia Kristeva, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the time of first generation of egalitarian and existential feminism. Their demands were women's economic, political, professional and sexual equality. The first of these demands were guaranteed by the state but the fourth one is taboo in Soviet society. After the post war period women writers emerged largely both in official and unofficial literature. But they were not interested in advancing the ease of militant feminism as it is understood in the West. 'Women's prose' is characterized by an intuitive approach to human problem. In practical terms, in the works of women writers, the narrator and the protagonists are usually women. Issues of love and marriage, family and infidelity, children and parenthood are always the focus of their narration. The most gifted female writers of the period are Nina Sadur (1950- ), Lyudmila Ulitskaya (1943), Ludmilla Petrushevskaya (1938- ), Nina Gorlanovna (1947- ), Tatiana Tolostaya (1951-) and Valeria Nabrikova ( 1958- ) (Cornwell).

Women's prose came to be associated largely with the conflict of Perestroika. They responded to post 1985 cultural shifts while following the thematic patterns of the older stagnation authors who paved the way for them, using 'Byt' (Russian term for every day existence) as common cultural context and female protagonists as the central focus. After 1985 they-introduced previously private

taboo, or politically suspect topics into the public arena for discussion. These things while shocking the readers continued the documentation by foregrounding an appeal to the truth, contemporaneity and the importance of the every day. However, many of the female authors openly and systematically criticised gender difference, claiming that the state neglected or even actively victimized women. Many writers like Tatiana Tolostaya, Nina Gorlanovna addressed this problem by emphasizing collective crisis over personal tragedy. The appearance of women's prose in both Moscow and other states created a cultural space within which authors and critics could discuss women's prose. Unlike in previous decades, however, critics used gender generally as an artistic and ideological criterion, with 'Byt' no longer serving as a coded reference to women's experiences and creative abilities, instead critical supporters and opponents saw this writing as a distinct literacy trend arising from the author's identities as a woman.

Tatiana Tolostaya used the opportunities of 'Byt' in her prose to portray the worker's existence which makes her work fascinating or terrifying with her rich and textured language. Her literary career starts with the publication of the story 'On the Golden Porch' (1987), which makes her a foremost writer of Perestroika era. Many of the women characters of Tolostaya emerge from the oppressed late Soviet Byt and women who were aware of their personal happiness. Her heroines are similar to each other ( Sutcliff). Another well-known writer, Valeria Nabrikova, is known as the author of 'erotic' prose and her prose are women centred. She presents them as provocative. And new voices from the older writers who were unable to express their true selves including Ludmilla Petrushevskaya emerged. Petrushevskaya along

with Tolostaya is the author most often identified with women's prose during Perestroika. Her high dignity was largely due to her shocking themes and narration and bleak vision of private existence in public life. As Helena Goscilo observes the physical and morally repulsive becomes common in her fiction. Petrushevskaya's prose exemplifies Perestroika's negation of idealism and obsession with exposure. The author focuses the hesitating female quotidian in her works. Another author Lyudmila Ulitskaya wrote stories inspired from the real life experiences. She was interested in the fate of people outside the mainstream of society.

Authors of Perestroika made use of the increased openness of the time. Perestroika radically altered the subject matter and tone of public discourse by reassessing the past and present. Public discussions of the everyday became a sign of the Soviet empire's impending demise during the Gorbachev period. Perestroika promoted a negative aesthetics that depicted reality as gradually deteriorating. The opposing viewpoint, which female writers helped to build, drove out the optimistic Soviet worldview since it was no longer useful. Female authors reinterpreted the intelligentsia, criticized the government, and discussed taboo themes of private life by using the era's inclination toward negation and disclosure. Prose and literature as a whole underwent a significant transition after 1992 as a result of the Perestroika's economic and cultural upheavals, which gave way to the disintegration of the USSR.

As the cultural climate in the Soviet Union began to liberalize, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's works gained more exposure and were able to reach a wider audience beyond Russia's borders. Her international recognition grew significantly

during and after Perestroika era. During Perestroika, as censorship restrictions eased, Petrushevskaya's writings started to be translated into many other languages including English, French, German, Spanish among others. But the critical reception of her stories in Russia during Perestroika era was mixed. While her works gained critical acclaim and recognition among some literary circles, her narratives, explored the complex dynamics of relationships, hardships faced by women and the consequences of living in a repressive society, particularly her earlier works, were seen as controversial and even subversive by some. However, Petrushevskaya's stories resonate with readers who were yearning for a more honest and unfiltered depiction of Soviet society. Her ability to capture the essence of human struggle and the emotional turmoil experienced by her characters struck a chord with many readers. Therefore, Petrushevskaya's works began to be translated into English in the late 1980s and early 1990s around the time of collapse of the Soviet Union and the Perestroika era. Some of her translations include 'The Time: Night (translated by Sally Liard in 1992), The Tales of Belkin (translated by Lydia Razran Stone, 1993), and Sputnik Sweetheart (translated by Anna Summers, 1993). Since then, many of her other works have been translated into English and made available to international readers.

During the Perestroika era, several critical studies were conducted on Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's stories particularly on her early works. These studies focuses on various aspects of Petrushevskaya's writing, including her unique style, use of dark humor and satire and her portrayal of woman characters. One major aspect of these studies was Petrushevskaya's ability to expose the harsh realities of

Soviet society through her stories. Her portrayal of the everyday struggles and hardships faced by ordinary people, particularly women, was seen as a powerful critique of Soviet society and its values. Another aspect of the study was Petrushevskaya's use of language and narrative style. Her sparse and direct language, combined with surreal and sometimes grotesque imagery, was seen as a departure from traditional Soviet literature and a reflection of the changing cultural landscape of the Soviet Union during Perestroika. Many of the stories of Petrushevskaya focused on the role of women. Her female characters were often portrayed as strong and resilient, yet vulnerable and marginalized in a patriarchal society. This portrayal of women was seen as a significant departure from the traditional portrayal of women in Soviet literature and a reflection of the changing role of women in Soviet society during Perestroika. The critical studies conducted on Petrushevskaya's stories during Perestroika era highlighted the unique and groundbreaking nature of her writing, as well as its contribution to the changing cultural landscape of the Soviet Union during that time.

### **Impact of Perestroika in the thematic concern of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya**

The new openness of Perestroika which brought about a relaxation of censorship and a more liberal atmosphere for artistic expression had a significant impact on Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's works. The difficulties she had faced to get her works published were over and she gained more freedom to openly explore and present her narratives. The new found openness of Perestroika allowed Petrushevskaya delve into the complexities of human relationships, societal issues and personal struggles. Like her earlier works, her stories during this period also

depicted the lives of ordinary people especially women, who faced various challenges and confrontations within their families, relationships and society as a whole. The lifting of censorship also allowed Petrushevskaya to explore more daring and unconventional themes, incorporating elements of fantasy, magical realism and dark humor into her works. She skillfully blended reality and imagination to create surreal and thought-provoking narratives that challenged traditional literary conventions. Her stories highlighted the changing social and cultural landscape of the time. She explored the Soviet system, the impact of social changes on individuals and their relationships. Her works reflected the anxieties, hopes and uncertainties of the period, capturing the unique atmosphere of transition. The Perestroika period provided her the opportunity to fully express her artistic vision and present her unflinching observations of Soviet society. Her works during this period became more daring, introspective and socially engaged, solidifying her position as prominent voice in Russian literature.

Her major short stories during this period are 'New Robinson Crusoe' (1989), and 'The Time: Night'. 'The new Robinson Crusoe' is about a family belonging to the intelligentsia; striving to survive in the country side during the time of social breakdown with farming and making orchards. The story appeared in the journal 'Novi Mir' in 1989. It was a strange example of Petrushevskaya's stories. The story offers a glimpse of hope related to the capacity of human beings to overcome difficulties and work together for survival. Her best-known work 'The Time Night' is written during the Perestroika but published in 1992. Before it was published originally in Russia, its translation was published in Germany. In the story

'The Time Night', the main protagonist is a struggling mother in the midst of poverty and desolated family. She is also a poet, who writes short poems for children. But she cannot earn much from her writing. Thus, she lives on the pension she gets for her mother who is in mental hospital. Even in such a hardship she is continuously exploited by her children. The terrible situation that leads her to the mental trauma is portrayed in the story. The story explores the poverty, hunger and desolated family life of the common people of the soviet society. Though the story was written during the Perestroika period, the setting of the story was the stagnation period of the 1960s. Many stories written during this period were later published in the collection "There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby; A Scary Fairy Tale" published in 1992. They are 'Revenge' (1990), 'Hygiene' (1990), 'The Arm' (1990), and 'A Mother's Farewell' (1990). 'Revenge' is a tale of two women who were neighbours and in close but not longer. When one gets pregnant, the other feels jealousy and then after the baby is born, she covertly tries to harm the baby. But the mother saves her child by acting in front of the neighbour that her baby is dead. When the neighbour hears about the news, she decides to end her life by swallowing a bottle of pain killer. The mother waits until the woman nears death and then tells her that the baby is still alive. In this story Petrushevskaya portrays the jealousy and hatred between neighbors and cruelty towards children which were common in communal life. 'Hygiene' is a story of a family in an epidemic of plague. A stranger appears in the family and informs them that there is an epidemic in the town, an illness that kills in three days and mice are the carriers of the disease. Therefore, the family goes quarantine in the closed apartment. But the little girl in the family gets diseased from her mouse eating cat and the rest of the



family locks her in the room without proper food and latrine. The essence of the story is that when the family has to face the situation together in the time of a disaster, the selfishness, cruelty and lack of solidarity among them lead the whole family to get disease. The story presents the domestic antagonism. 'The Arm' is a scary fairy tale and the central character is a Colonel who loses his party card during the funeral of his beloved wife. He discovers that his party card has been missing. His wife in a dream directs him to find it in her coffin and insists not lift the veil from her face. When he fails to restrain himself, in his return trip he falls into a nightmarish world. Without the party card, the Colonel is temporarily stripped of his former status and any coherent sense of identity. He has become a no one, transformed into a member of the living dead. In this story Petrushevskaya attacks the patently real stricture of Party bureaucracy. The story 'A Mother's Farewell' reminds that the family ties and the happy environment they provide are the most important and if they are lost due to misunderstanding, they are never replaced. When the mother in the story dies, the son left as literally an orphan. His elder sister who makes a verbal argument with him suspicious of their mother's character leaves him soon after the death of his father. But when the brother is sick she visits him and talks to him the truth about their mother. But years later, he realizes the truth that it is not his sister who came to visit him and she was dead before that. Despite moving away from the social criticism to scary tales, Petrushevskaya's stories are about family relationships.

While Petrushevskaya's early works are getting popularity among readers, her works during Perestroika also made an impact in the reading community.

Petrushevskaya wrote many scary fairy tales during the period, which were comparatively mellowed its social criticism.

### **Petrushevskaya in the Post-soviet era**

Gorbachev's reforms of Glasnost and Perestroika aimed to rejuvenate the Soviet system but inadvertently accelerated its disintegration. Perestroika decentralized economic control, weakened the authority of the central government, and fueled regionalism. Similarly, Glasnost, promoting openness and political transparency, inadvertently unleashed nationalist sentiments, exacerbated by historical grievances and cultural tensions among diverse Soviet republics. Economic hardships and growing nationalism precipitated political instability, culminating in the failed 1991 coup attempt. These reforms exposed systemic flaws, eroding public trust and leading to the Soviet Union's collapse, reshaping the geopolitical landscape.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia underwent substantial socio-political transformations, transitioning from a centralized socialist economy to a market-based capitalist system and experiencing a shift towards democracy. However, this period was marked by economic instability, political turmoil, and the rise of oligarchs. This upheaval profoundly influenced Russian literature, granting writers greater freedom to explore diverse themes and perspectives, leading to a critical re-evaluation of the Soviet past and the emergence of varied voices and narratives, symbolizing a transformative era in Russian literary history.

Post-Soviet literature stands as a testament to the profound turmoil and transformation across Russia and its neighbouring states in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It embodies a rich tapestry of themes, styles, and voices, each reflecting the complexities of this tumultuous era. From ideological divergence to economic struggles and artistic experimentation, post-Soviet literature encapsulates the diverse and multifaceted nature of the post-Soviet experience. One prominent aspect of post-Soviet literature is its exploration of ideological divergence. Writers grapple with the legacy of Soviet communism and the challenges of transitioning to new political and social systems. Liberal authors critique the shortcomings of the new order, advocating for democratic reform and individual freedoms, while conservative writers pay attention to traditional values and a sense of national identity. Economic realities also loom large in post-Soviet literature. The authors confront the harsh realities of economic collapse, widespread poverty, and corruption, depicting the struggles of everyday life in a society undergoing rapid transformation. These themes resonate deeply with readers who have experienced first-hand the challenges of navigating the uncertain terrain of post-communist capitalism.

Artistic experimentation is another hallmark of post-Soviet literature. Many writers embrace innovative forms and styles, drawing on elements of postmodernism, surrealism, and magical realism to push the boundaries of literary expression. This willingness to experiment reflects a broader sense of openness and possibility in the wake of the Soviet era's rigid ideological constraints. Feminist voices also emerge as a powerful force within post-Soviet literature. Women writers

challenge traditional gender norms and explore themes of female empowerment, identity, and agency. Their narratives provide a counterpoint to the predominantly male-dominated literary landscape, offering fresh perspectives on the complexities of gender and society in post-Soviet Russia. Generational shifts play a significant role in shaping the route of post-Soviet literature. A new generation of writers, born or coming of age after the collapse of the Soviet Union, brings fresh perspectives and thematic preoccupations to the literary landscape. These younger authors grapple with the legacy of their predecessors while forging their own paths forward, contributing to the on-going evolution of post-Soviet literature.

After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the tone of Petrushevskaya's prose mellowed somewhat, and the intensity of her social criticism softened while her contemporary writers began criticising the Soviet past. In 1992 she published her most brilliant novella 'The Time: Night'. The image of motherhood has become an inimical and destructive force in the novella 'The Time: Night'. Motherhood is represented in the narrative through three generations of motherhood.

Petrushevskaya focuses on desperate situation and conflicted feelings of the protagonist as a mother, a daughter, a woman and a poet. The story depicts all the sufferings of poverty and hunger experienced by ordinary families in soviet society at its height. Even though the story is relentlessly depressing, the author uses black humor to portray a family in crisis. The novella gains her an international acclaim.

Petrushevskaya is not only a writer of bleak fiction but also a writer of fairy tales. She writes fairy tales for both adults and children. Her most popular Fairy tales are 'There Lived an Alarm Clock', 'Well, mum, well! – Fairy tales Told to

Children' (1993), 'Little Sorceress, and Doll Romance' (1996). She published collections of fairy tales as well. They are 'There Once Lived a Mother Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tale' (2009) and 'There Once Lived a Girl Who Seduced Her Sister's Husband and He Hanged Himself' (2013).

Petrushevskaya's incomparable story telling talent has also received well deserved awards. Her first novella 'The Time: Night' was shortlisted for Russian Booker prize in 1992. She was awarded the Pushkin Prize in 2003 and Russian State Prize for Arts in 2004. In 2005 she was awarded the Stanislavsky Award for her contribution into Russian theatre and in 2006 she was awarded the Russia's prestigious prize 'The Triumph'. Her prose collection 'There Once Lived a Mother Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy tale won World Fantasy Award in 2010. But as a rebellious writer Petrushevskaya obviously relishes life as an outcast. She wants no part of the literary mantle Russia wants her to assume.

From her age of 73, she has turned her back on full-time writing and embarked on an anarchic second career as a cabaret singer. Her critics consider it inappropriate that a woman of her literary status and dissident background should be singing at student nights in dodgy nightclubs. In a way both Petrushevskaya's writing and singing fulfill a deep need in modern Russia to reminisce, often ironically, about the "good old days" under Communism. Singing was always her first love anyway, she says.

I always sang- only without an audience. I sang in Choirs; took vocal lessons at college. I sang at home. I began to perform professionally after an impromptu party, when actors were goofing around, performing all kind of

nonsense. So I performed a little song- and was greeted with a defeating applause. So for the lyrics, I compose my own because the old ones don't satisfy me. Why would a poet use someone else's verse? (Petrushevskaya).

As a dissident writer she chooses cabaret songs for her musical performances and for her it is a right choice because cabaret is a form of entertainment that allowed performers to express social and political comment through music and lyrics.

### **‘Personal is Political’: Postmodern Elements in Petrushevskaya’s Stories**

The phrase "personal is political" was the slogan of second wave feminism used to compact the view that women's issues were not merely personal or psychological issue, it could be addressed through political action. It encapsulates the idea that personal experiences and individual lives are deeply intertwined with broader political and social structures. Till then politics has been connected to government and it was the writings of Karl Marx that challenged the State centered view by showing that government is only one body of power and an analysis of economy is essential to any full understanding of power. As a result, by early 1960s, government economy and society were all legitimate subject for political discussion, reform and revolution. At the same time personal or private domain remained unbeatable for political scrutiny. Later feminists called attention to the topic such as sexuality, beauty myth, marriage, house work, and childcare as political issues. This concept suggests that personal struggles, choices, and relationships are not isolated from the larger systems of power and inequality that shape society.

Postmodern writing on the other hand challenges traditional notion of objective truth, writer's authority and grand narratives. Postmodern writing highlights the subjectivity and multiplicity of human experience. It admits that personal narratives are shaped by various factors such as social context, culture, and power dynamics. By deconstructing the traditional notion of identity, postmodern writers challenge the idea of a single, fixed reality and emphasize the political implications of personal perspective. While examining the life and works of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, this notion becomes particularly relevant.

Petrushevskaya's writings often reflect the personal as political, as she draws from her own experiences and observations to shed light on broader social issues.

According to the postmodern feminism, women's experience and identities are shaped by multiple factors such as race, class, sexuality and nationality. In the case of Petrushevskaya, as a writer born and brought up in a Bolshevik family in communist Russia under Stalin regime, her life experiences are far different from her generations. In the introduction of Petrushevskaya's memoir 'A Girl from the Metropol Hotel' Brought up in Communist Russia', her translator Anna Summer says; "At a time when everyone was cold, dirty and hungry she and her aunt and grandmother were hungrier, dirtier and colder than everyone else". (Petrushevskaya xiii). The sufferings and endurance she faced in her life is reflected in her stories also. Her women characters are also from the unprivileged category who lives in poverty and material hardships.

Petrushevskaya's stories do not give any direct indication of the general issues affecting society as a whole. They only tell the life of a character most

probably a woman, her family relationships, and her psychological conflicts. But the peculiarity of Petrushevskaya's stories is that the life of that one particular woman character could be the life any woman in Soviet Russia has. These characters, which she creates from her life experience and surroundings bear the issues of any ordinary woman in Soviet Russia. Petrushevskaya witnessed first-hand the oppressive nature of the regime and its impact on the lives of ordinary people. This personal experience of living under a repressive political system deeply influenced her work and her exploration of themes such as poverty, communal life, and the struggle for personal freedom. Intense poverty during the Soviet period can be seen as a theme in almost all of her stories which make them potentially gruesome. Poverty and hunger prevalent in Soviet society reflected in the story 'The Time: Night'. It is the story of emotionally and economically unstable family. Tima, the child in the story is called 'The child of hungry times' by his grandmother Anna. She managed to feed Tima from her neighbour's house even though she was starving. Petrushevskaya's writings show poverty in its extreme level as she experienced in her personal life. In her story 'Chocolate with Liquor', the protagonist Leila who is living amidst of the scarcity of the scarcity of food and other utilities, used to buy food from neighbourhood by exchanging shots or sometimes raw spirit from the hospital lab, where she is working as a nurse. Her husband gobbled all the food she brings from neighbours while she is starving and he does not give her a penny. She even brings food from the hospital cafeteria as she asks for leftover bread- presumably for a pig she kept. The austerity of hunger and poverty which the ordinary family undergoes in Soviet period is skillfully portrayed in her stories through her characters such as Leila of 'Chocolate with Liquor' and Anna of 'The Time: Night'.



Settings of most of the stories of Petrushevskaya are communal apartments. After revolution the state outlawed private ownership of housing, and so family apartments across the city were turned into rooms to accommodate the people. Over time, these communal apartments were broken up and families were moved into cramped, weird blocks of apartments. Like Anna's family in 'The Time Night', lives in fifteen square meter apartment, registered with five members portrays the struggling life of communal apartments. The story Chocolate with Liquor presents the crimes for getting apartments. The story explores the cruelties and murders happening in communal apartments. In this story the central character Leila and her two children narrowly escape from a murder attempt by her husband Nikita for hiring the ownership of the apartment. When the communist government dreamed of equal status for everyone by bringing communal apartments and distributing them equally to implement socialism, it was women who had experienced the practical difficulties. The stories of Petrushevskaya point against the pretension of the authorities not to see the problems of women and marginalising them without addressing their sufferings.

In her stories, Petrushevskaya inquires the personal lives of her characters, exposing the ways in which their individual struggles are intimately connected to the political and social contexts in which they exist. The story 'Xenia's Daughter' portrays the tragic life of sex workers in society and in prison. Petrushevskaya explores the inner feelings of sex workers in this story. In Russia, prostitution was usually held by the lower class women who lived outside the boundaries of the patriarchal family. She calls them as simply the product of melancholy and caprice.

Frustrated desires, unconsummated love and sadness make them terribly melancholic. The story explores the life of sex workers and peoples attitude towards them through the character Xenia.

Furthermore, Petrushevskaya's writings often address the emotional toll and psychological hardships experienced by individuals. The protagonist in the story 'The Time: Night' is confronted with failure and frustration at every step in her life, and is clearly sad, bitter and sardonic unto the last. Several obstructions come her way, and she does not know how to overcome them, she feels helpless and disappointed. Feeling of being rejected and verbal abuses of her daughter lead Anna into a psychic disorder such as aching of joints and insomnia or nightmares.

Petrushevskaya explores themes of isolation, loss, and the search for meaning in a dehumanizing environment. By probing into the personal struggles of her characters, Petrushevskaya emphasizes the broader political climate in which these individuals exist, highlighting the ways in which personal lives are affected by political and social conditions. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's life and works exemplify the concept that the personal is political. Petrushevskaya says about her stories that it is all based on the true story. She says "besides as a rule, every tale is a true story. It's true, the characters do not recognize themselves, I crucially change the surrounding circumstances" (Petrushevskaya). Whatever she had to suffer in her life, hunger, poverty, problems of communal life, difficulty in publishing her works, low income from the job as a reviewer etc. came as themes of her stories too. Therefore, Petrushevskaya is said to be a bearing witness to the fight to survive both as a writer and as a human being. While comparing Petrushevskaya's life with the life she

portrayes in her stories, the former is more pathetic and the characters she create are luckier than her. By intertwining personal experiences, emotions, and relationships with broader social and political themes, she highlights the ways in which individual lives are shaped by and connected to the systems of power and inequality that exist in society. Through her writings and activism, Petrushevskaya offers a powerful exploration of the complex interplay between personal experiences and political realities.

Petrushevskaya operates the power within personal relationships both in personal life and in her stories. Post modernism often seeks to expose power structures and hierarchies by incorporating personal narratives. Petrushevskaya never liked to live under any kind of domination. She escaped from her home when she was a little child to live freely in street, and at school she behaved as uncivilized child. Petrushevskaya's this resistance of dominance can be seen in her stories. She shatters the hierarchies in family relationships like parent- child hierarchy, power dynamics in romantic relationship, hierarchies in professional space etc. in her stories. In family relationships parents typically hold a position of authority as they are responsible for the care, guidance and wellbeing of their children. It makes a power imbalance and parents having decision making authority and the responsibility to provide guidance and set boundaries. In the story 'The Time: Night' Anna tries to hold a position of authority but she never insists her children or grandchildren to stay under her dominance. They have their own choice and decisions. Similarly in the story 'Xenia's Daughter', Xenia, has a great dream on her daughter's education and career. But she never insists her daughter for that and the

daughter chooses her sex work as profession. It is her choice and the mother has nothing to do over her personal choice. Xenia's daughter hit a policeman who inspects their home at a non-convenient time. Here Petrushevskaya shatters the dynamics of institutional power over the public. Power play between mother and child can be seen in the story 'A case of Virgin Birth' in which the mother loses her power to dominate over her grown up son. The son behaves indifferently towards the mother while he commemorates his mother who abandoned him in his childhood. Therefore, the mother feels helpless when he keeps emotional distance which the mother is afraid to break.

Petrushevskaya smashed the power imbalance in her profession as writer in her stories 'The Time: Night'. Petrushevskaya had a hard time before she became famous as a writer and had no job at all. At this time, even though her writings were constantly rejected by the editors of the magazine 'Novi Mir', Inna and Assia, the two women who were working in the magazine helped her to find a job as a reviewer in 'Novi Mir'. She was paid three Rubles for reviewing 24 pages of fiction. Thus, she got 60 Rubles per month for reviewing the submissions that arrived in mail. Similarly, Anna in 'The Time: Night' also got a job as a reviewer in a magazine. Anna reviewed all those manuscripts sympathetically. She quoted, advised, praised and criticized them but Mr. Burkin, the head of the department look positively ill when he read them. Anna says that behind every one of these manuscripts I saw real people, some of them sick, some of them perhaps even bed ridden. The author had seen herself among those people, who send their creative

writings to Anna. Here the author blurs the boundaries between personal and fictional to portray the literary scenario in the period of political repression.

Though her works, Petrushevskaya challenges the idea of a universal, essential womanhood. As a writer Petrushevskaya values diversity of women's experience and perspective and her women characters are from different circles of society and they did not represent the 'Soviet woman' the group which is addressed by the Communist government of Soviet Russia.

### **Postmodern Narrative Techniques in the Stories of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya**

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya has a unique literary style which combines elements of realism, surrealism, and dark humor, creating a haunting and evocative atmosphere that resonates with readers. Petrushevskaya's exploration of the human condition, particularly the struggles and sorrows of women in Russian society, is often characterized by a raw and unflinching honesty. One of the striking aspects of Petrushevskaya's aesthetic is her ability to portray the everyday realities of life in post-Soviet Russia with uncanny touch. Her stories often feature ordinary characters grappling with extraordinary circumstances, blurring the boundaries between the mundane and the supernatural. By infusing her narratives with elements of the fantasy, she challenges conventional notions of reality and invites readers to contemplate deeper truths hidden beneath the surface of everyday life.

Petrushevskaya's aesthetic is marked by a distinct sense of melancholy and despair, reflecting the harsh realities of Soviet and post-Soviet life. Her protagonists often endure hardship, loneliness, and the weight of oppressive societal norms. However, amidst the bleakness, there is a glimmer of hope and resilience that shines through

her works. Her characters, though battered by life, often display remarkable strength and determination in the face of adversity.

Petrushevskaya's use of language and imagery contributes to the overall aesthetic of her works. Her prose is rich in symbolism. She employs vivid and evocative descriptions to create vivid mental landscapes that hang on in the reader's imagination. Through her precise and evocative language, she captures the essence of human emotions and experiences, evoking a visceral response from her readers. Petrushevskaya's aesthetic sense is deeply rooted in the Russian literary tradition, drawing inspiration from the likes of Anton Chekhov and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Like her predecessors, she explores the complexities of the human psyche, love, loss, isolation, and the struggle for personal freedom. Her works offer a window into the often-hidden aspects of Russian society and the universal struggles of the human condition.

### **Metafiction**

Metafiction is the highlight of the postmodern narratives. It gives attention to the fictionality of the text before the reader. It gives sense to the readers that they are reading a fictional work. This technique of narrative can be seen in Petrushevskaya's stories like 'The Time: Night' and 'Xenia's Daughter'. In the opening of the story 'The Time: Night', a woman is talking over a telephone with someone in the publishing house. She is talking about publishing a manuscript written by her mother and the story continues through the manuscript. Here, the author gives hints to the readers that they are reading a piece of writing someone wrote for publishing. Petrushevskaya's another story 'Xenia's Daughter' also contains metafiction. In this

story the author reminds the readers that she is going to write a story about a prostitute.

### **Unreliable Narrator**

Unreliable narrator is a typical feature of postmodern narrative. The story is told from the perspective of an implied narrator – a story teller. In Petrushevskaya's stories that implied narrator is usually a woman, who is describing another woman, reveals a good deal about herself and her own values. Narrator tells the story to the readers. Most of the time the narrator misleads the readers and casts doubt on narratives.

The story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' begins with a simple incident that a son revealing of his love affair to his mother. Here, the mother, son and the narrator are nameless and there is nothing mentioned about the relationship of the narrator with this family but the narrator knows all the very details of their present and past. When the story begins the narrator's voice sides with the son and accuses the mother by enumerating whatever she had done to him. The narrator comments that 'He had many times suffered these torments from her' (Petrushevskaya 18) and the following minute details of the incidents from their life is like an eyewitness account. But the narrator does not sympathize with the son at any point and the story ends with narrator's justification for the mother's actions.

Petrushevskaya followed the same kind of narration in the story 'Another Land'. Here, the story begins with the narrator's monologue about the life of a young mother who is an alcoholic and her little child. The narrator says:

Who can say what life is like for a quiet woman addicted to drink, who lives hidden away from everyone in a one room apartment with her child? Who knows what it is like for her, night after night, no matter how drunk, to gather up all the little things her daughter needed for kindergarten, so they should all be to hand in the morning?(Petrushevskaya 80 ).

These words lead the reader to develop an idea about the whole story.

‘Xenia’s Daughter’ is another story with an implied narrator but in this story narrator is a writer who is writing instead of telling the story about the life of a prostitute. The uniqueness of Petrushevskaya’s narration is that she creates a literary world in which the private thoughts and inner feelings of the character are rare or totally absent and leaving the reader with a strange image of the plot and characters depicted in the story (Lindbladh) This kind of narrative method can be seen in her story ‘Another Land’. Narrator says:

“...and nobody knows what divine dreams they dream, mother and daughter at night in bed, nobody knows how they both fall asleep the minute their head touch the pillow, to return once again to that other land, where in the early morning they’ll both come back in order to run, who knows why, who knows where, down the dark frosty street- when in truth they’d do better never to wake at all.” (Petrushevskaya 81-82)

Here, the narrator is not only articulating her own opinion but also a collective opinion. The narrator tells the story of the character without entering into their emotional part by keeping a distance from them. The author leaves a gap to fill the reader, the cause of the fate of her character by analyzing their action and



surroundings. She also deliberately forces her reader to examine his or her own moral evaluation in relation to the story and its character.

‘The Time: Night’ is narrated in first person voice. The entire story is narrated by the protagonist. The story is presented as manuscript that found after the death of Anna in which she described every detail of her family and their daily lives. It indicates that she is talking to the reader from beyond the grave, but leaves the reader to wonder how and when she dies. The rest of the story goes through the diary entries of Anna without any chronological order. Fragmentation is the other characteristic feature of postmodern narrative. The idea is to reject the earlier notion of the unity of the time, place and action or linear flow of plot and character. Using this technique will add playfulness to the novel that the reader will never be able to guess what comes next. In ‘The Time: Night’, the story goes in order to the thought process of the narrator Anna. Petrushevskaya used the techniques of stream of consciousness to present Anna’s traumatic psyche. This technique is usually used to portray an individual’s point of view by giving the written equivalent of the characters’ thought process, either in a loose interior monologue or in connection to his or her sensory to external occurrences. The novel is presented as a manuscript of Anna’s unrevealed thoughts written by Anna herself after the departure of Alyona and her children. She writes about her thoughts and comments of each event that occurred in her life in the manuscript.

The most important characteristics of the narrators of Petrushevskaya’s stories are some narrators may even have names and detailed personal histories and other narrator merely suggest to the reader that they are persons perhaps the occasional use of ‘I’ in their narrative and their narrations account for the histories

of other peoples. As a writer from the culture of collectivism has been given priority over the individual, Petrushevskaya's stories also focus on collective opinion. The author uses rumors and gossips to make this collective point of view. This can be seen in the story 'This Little Girl'. The narrator says: "they all said she was a complete dud; not just that she behaved like she couldn't care less but she actually seemed to find the whole thing disgusting (Petrushevskaya 237). Here, the narrator asks what the men who did sex with Raisa say about her. Narrator uses this gossip to substantiate her own superiority over Raisa in tempting men and says that Raisa is a dead loss in that respect.

### **Temporal Distortion**

Guiding questions about the time- space of a narrative are 'where? , when? under what circumstances? under what cultural context?' etc. In postmodern narrative, there is the relaxation of strict time line. In such narratives, there is no clear border between several events. In Petrushevskaya's fiction "time is disjointed and action is achronological" (Woll 3).

Literature unfolds itself in time and at the same time represents time. In a text there is a time of representation and a represented time. Tense system of language is designed for the representation of time in a text. Time of representation is used as an icon of the represented time. The represented time is called story time. In Petrushevskaya's writings there is no clear suggestion about the time when the story takes place. Woll observes: "Petrushevskaya's characters are little concerned with conventional calendar time. Her women and men move about in their isolated microcosms, not unaware of events in the larger world but not connected to that large world in any meaningful way" (Woll 3). Season of the story is occasionally

mentioned in the stories. The use of “dark frosty street” in the story ‘Another Land’ is the only indication about the season of Winter but that Winter may in any year. Any kind of temporal markers are avoided in her stories whether explicit or implicit like war time, Afghan invasion etc. Therefore, the reader could get no idea about the time period, for example, when the Anna of ‘The Time: Night’ lived and died, or at what time Xenia’s daughter was arrested by the police etc. Petrushevskaya’s stories let the reader to create a time line. As a postmodern writer her, narratives create shattered time line to depict several overlapping contradictory situations.

**Work cited**

- Cornwell, Neil. *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Dzirkals, Lilita. "Glasnost and Soviet Foreign Policy". *A Rand Note*, 1990, <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3008.pdf>.
- Garza, David. "A Russian Writer's Hard Won Happy Ending." *Kirkus*, 2013, [www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/russian-writers-hard-won-happy-ending/](http://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/russian-writers-hard-won-happy-ending/).
- Gorbachev, Mikhail. "The Impetus for Change in the Soviet Union." Interview conducted by Commanding Heights, 23 April 2001, [www.pbs.org/wgbb/commandheight/shared/minitext/int-mikhailgorbachev.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbb/commandheight/shared/minitext/int-mikhailgorbachev.html).
- Gorbachev, Mikhail. *Perestroika*. HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1987.
- Gorbachev, Mikhail. *Glasnost*. *New York Times*, 1986, Sec.4, P.3.
- Lindbladh, Johanna. "The Quest for Narrative Identity: A Textual Analysis of Petrushevskaya's 'The Wall' and 'The Story Teller'." *Slavica Lundensia*, vol. 24, 2009, pp. 121–144, <https://journals.lub.lu.se/sl/article/download/10011/8447/23829>.

McForan, D. W. J. "Glasnost, Democracy, and Perestroika." *International Social Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1988, pp. 165–174. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41881835>.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Complete Interview with Ludmilla Petrushevskaya." Interview conducted by David Garza, *Kirkus*, 21 February 2013, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/complete-interview-ludmilla-petrushevskaya/>.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *A Girl from Metropol Hotel: Growing up in Communist Russia*. Penguin, 2006.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *Immortal Love*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1995.

Sutcliffe, Benjamine. *The Prose of Life: Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin*. 2009. Research Gate, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37699684>.

Woll, Josephine. "The Minotaur in the Maze: Remarks on Lyudmila Petrushevskaya." *World Literature Today*, vol. 67, no. 1, 1993, pp. 125–130. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40148873>.



## Chapter 3

### **Feminism Redefined: Select Reading of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's Oeuvre**

Feminism has played a significant role in shaping societies worldwide. Over the years, feminist movements in Russia have emerged to challenge gender inequality, advocate women's rights, and promote gender justice. However, throughout its history, feminist activism in Russia has faced unique challenges, particularly under Soviet authority. The feminist movement in Russia can be traced back to the late 19th century, during a time of intense social and political transformation. Women actively participated in revolutionary activities and were at the forefront demanding equality. Influenced by Western feminist ideas, Russian women sought to address issues such as right to vote, education, and employment rights. The early feminist movements in Russia were characterized by various factions with differing goals and strategies. The foremost among them are social democrats and feminists. Social democrats envisaged women's emancipation as a part of overall social revolution, whereas the feminists demanded equal right for women in all walks of life. One of the notable figures in early Russian feminism is Nadezhda Stasova, who was an influential literary critic and feminist activist. Stasova actively supported and encouraged women writers, contributing to the rise of feminist voices in Russian literature. Her efforts helped pave the way for subsequent generations of feminist writers. In the early 20th century, prominent female writers like Alexandra Kollontai, Sofia Petrovna, and Maria Shkapskaya emerged. They addressed gender inequality, explored female identity, and critiqued

patriarchal structures in their works. Kollontai, in particular, was a key figure in the Russian feminist movement and wrote extensively on women's rights and socialist feminism.

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 presented new opportunities and challenges for women's rights in Russia. The Soviet government, led by Vladimir Lenin, promised to address gender inequality and included several progressive policies in its early years. Lenin implemented policies, such as granting women the right to vote, promoting gender equality in the workplace, and establishing institutions to support women's rights and education. The new Soviet state introduced maternity leave and divorce laws. It also facilitated women's access to education and employment. These changes created an environment where feminist ideas could flourish and further influence Russian literature. In the Soviet era, female authors like Lidia Chukovskaya, Nadezhda Mandelstam, and Elena Guro continued to contribute to feminist literature. Their works explored themes such as the experiences of women in a changing society, the challenges of balancing personal and professional aspirations, and the struggles against oppressive social norms.

Despite initial advancements, the Soviet government gradually curtailed independent feminist activities in the 1920s. Feminism was classed as a bourgeois movement and a Marxist Leninist strategy for solving the 'women question' gradually took shape. Marxist Leninist ideology addresses class struggle as essential for social change. Within this perspective, social movements that did not explicitly challenge class-based exploitation were often seen as a secondary or even bourgeois.



While analyzing the dominance of Marxist Leninist ideology within the light of Theodor Adorno's theories of Frankfurt School, it rejects the dialectical thinking. Adorno's believes that dialectical thinking is inevitable to understanding social phenomena. By proclaiming feminism as a bourgeois movement, the Marxist Leninist ideology rejects the critical approach to the social phenomena. According to Adorno, theory the social control that reinforces the dominant ideology and stifles critical thinking can be considered capitalism. He argues that social reality is marked by contradiction and tensions (Zuidervaart). However, the Communist Party consolidated power and centralized control over societal institutions, including women's organizations. Feminist groups and individuals were expected to align their objectives with the state's vision and were absorbed into state-controlled bodies, such as the 'Zhenotdel' (The Women's Department of the Communist Party). Under Soviet authority, feminist activism was subsumed under the banner of state-sponsored feminism. Alexandra Kollontoi, the prominent feminist activist of the time received strict instructions to bring women's emancipation back in to the approved Party framework. The Zhenotdel aimed to promote the participation of women in the construction of socialism, emphasizing their role as workers and mothers. The state utilized propaganda to shape gender roles and promote the image of the Soviet woman as a selfless, devoted worker and mother, reinforcing traditional gender norms alongside women's economic participation. As the Soviet Union transitioned into a totalitarian regime, dissident and independent feminist voices were suppressed. Feminist groups that deviated from the state's prescribed ideology were marginalized or disbanded. In the 1930s, feminist organizations were largely absorbed into the larger structure of the Communist Party, leaving little room

for critical engagement. Party's Zhenotdels were closed down and the women question was proclaimed as resolved. The decline of feminist activism in the Soviet era had lasting effects on the condition of women in Russia. Crimes against women increased and the government legally prohibited abortion. After three decades, the women question resurfaced in academic and political debates during the period of Krushchev's political thaw. But it made no impact on the status of women because it was not rehabilitated as a movement but studies of feminism were conducted with the sole aim of criticising the object of study. During this period, the prominent Marxist- Leninist ideology stressed women's three roles: worker, mother and house wife. As in the past, women were trapped in the traditional sphere of their natural duties.

During this period literature was written under the dominant ideology of socialist realism. They produced literary works with positive heroes and presented utopian society where the progress and prosperity as well as equality between sexes were ensured. This dominant ideology rejects any kind of critical approaches in literature. Socialist realism prohibits writing about the sufferings and isolation of the common people. Thus, the socialist realism rejects the artistic freedom of writers of the period. According to Adorno, society and culture from a historical totality, and pursuit of freedom in society is inseparable from the pursuit of enlightenment in culture. If there is lack or loss of freedom in society- in the political, economic, legal structures within which we live, it signals a concomitant failure in cultural enlightenment- in philosophy, arts, religion and the like (Zuidervaart). In this context, socialist realism was a failure in addressing the real problems of women.

Perestroika transformations of society also made less impact on the status of women even though the official line on women has changed. During this period the official policy oscillates between two basic approaches: the politicization and de-politicization of women. The politicization of women happened with a set-up of nationwide network of women's councils under the support of the politically reliable Soviet women's Committee. Such individual committees took independent stand, formulated their own objectives and that paved way for new women's movement independent of officialdom. The government policy of de-politicization was introduced by Gorbachev. Despite the opening up of the political system under Gorbachev, the legacy of the state's manipulation of women for its own purpose continued to shape the discussion about women's right and position in Russian society and state policies affecting women, especially in labor, family and reproduction (Racioppi 820).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, feminist discourse in Russia underwent a transformation, responding to new challenges and opportunities. Contemporary feminist writers, such as Svetlana Alexievich, Maria Arbatova, and Marina Palei, tackle issues like gender inequality, domestic violence, sexuality, and the changing roles of women in post-Soviet Russia. They brought forth diverse perspectives, often critiquing traditional gender norms and shedding light on women's experiences. While feminism in Russia had faced various challenges and opposition, it continues to play a crucial role in shaping Russian literature. Feminist writers provide a platform for women's voices, challenge societal norms, and explore the complexities of gender, identity, and power dynamics. Their

contributions have enriched Russian literature and contributed to the on-going conversations about gender equality and social change (Posadskaya).

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya stands out among the 20th-century feminist writers in Russia due to her unique style and approach to storytelling. While sharing some common themes with her feminist contemporaries, Petrushevskaya's works have a distinct postmodern flavor that sets them apart. Her stories offer a fresh perspective on the female experience and challenge conventional narrative structures. A postmodern feminist reading of Petrushevskaya's stories reveals her exploration of the complexities of female identity, and the subversion of traditional gender roles.

Motherhood is a major theme in the short fiction of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya. According to Monica Katz, Petrushevskaya “sees the maternal bond as a great myth which needs to be shattered” (Quoted in Muff 20). Since motherhood has been a recurring theme in literature for ages and most of the time, the mother characters are portrayed as the source of love, nurture and sacrifice. Such characters provide unconditional love and support to their children, and are often depicted as selfless, perfect and possess all the virtues and wisdom to raise their children. On the other hand, Petrushevskaya depicts the most ‘disturbing mothers’ in her fiction. Rebecca Muff observes that, in Petrushevskaya’s texts, maternity is neither the ultimate fulfillment for women, nor the supreme nurturing role, as motherhood is purported in Russian society (20).

### **The Time: Night: Unveiling New Dimensions of Motherhood**

The story 'The Time: Night' (1992) portrays a woman headed family of late soviet Russia. In the story 'The Time: Night' the protagonist Anna challenges the societal expectations placed on women. Anna is a single mother who struggles with domestic responsibilities and care for her family amidst the extreme poverty and material hardships. At the same time, Anna maintains her professional life as a poet, which is her great passion. She spends time to read her short poems in the public even for very low amount of money. Through Anna, Petrushevskaya challenges the traditional gender roles that confine women to the domestic sphere.

In 'The Time: Night', the protagonist Anna is a mother who struggles to survive in Soviet Russia. Her family lives with the small amount of money she earns from her poetry reading and the pension her mother receives from the state. Before receiving the pension, Anna is forced to wander off for money and food for the family. Anna's family lives in a communal apartment and financial crisis is the major difficulty her family faces. Most of the time she stays starved at home. Therefore, she depends her friend for food and money to feed her grandchild, Tima. Her children Andrei and Alyona exploit her for food and treat her as unwanted. Therefore, Anna's relation with her children is not a happy one. The pressure of circumstances and the unkind behaviour of her children make her feel she exists and be treated as a fellow human being rather than a mother. Anna is threatened by her son Andrei to claim his share of room cost and it makes Anna panic. He visits Anna to make arguments about the apartment and demand rent for his share. Anna lives in a crowded apartment with daughter and her family. Therefore, she cannot

accommodate Andrei there and his regular appearances make Anna annoyed.

Anna's uneasiness can be seen in the story as follows:

Andrei turns up regularly to claim his share. Why on earth I can't help asking he's got a wife, why not make do with her. What does he want from me? Why you suck your mother dry and steal from Granny Sima and the kids? Why, why, why? (*The Time: Night 12*).

The lines show that the unwanted presence of her son make Anna a furious mother. She showers harsh word upon him. She considers him as 'cruel as to suck her dry'. In this context, Petrushevskaya destroys the loving image of mother and Anna's harsh words to her son are not fit for the cultural definitions of a mother.

Anna calls him 'miserable creature' while she argues for the alimony from Tima's father. Anna never shows her affection towards Andrei even though he is in a state of tragedy that broke his two legs while falling from the second floor window. Anna says that she is scared of both Andrei and her wife because she feels Andrei would be a burden to her amidst the extreme poverty and hunger.

Anna's relation with her daughter Alyona also is problematic. Anna has a love-hate relationship with Alyona as Alyona appears intermittently in Anna's life with pregnancies from unsuitable men (Marsh 1207). Anna loves Alyona but at the same time she openly expresses her objection against Alyona's missteps and harshly criticizes her and seriously mutters for her parasitic life. At the same time, Alyona hates Anna and she even attacks her with a table cloth and scolds her as an 'old bag'. Alyona invites guests to the house and eats whatever Anna buys and says 'my

mother is completely bonkers' (Petrushevskaya 39). It makes Anna feel as an 'insulted, rejected' mother. Anna takes a firm stand in the case of her residence registration that she is not ready to register Alyona's husband at her place. Anna says to Alyona:

Go and live as you please with your future offspring. But if your sole aim is setting up family is get him residence permit, you might at least pause to think is it honestly worth it? Is it worth the sacrifice of our whole family- Andrei without roof over his head, my mother languishing in mental hospital..?( *The Time: Night 40*).

Power dynamics is evident in Petrushevskaya's stories. Anna is shouting at her daughter Alyona, to leave her home with her children. Anna resists Alyona's aim of getting a residential permit by setting up a family with Sasha, who claims as Alyona's current husband. He is the one who comes uninvited to Anna's house. Anna is not ready to accept him in any way and her hatred for him is evident in Anna's words. Here Anna breaks the maternal duty of a typical mother to protect her children and her family. Anna's monologue goes like this:

She didn't take me with her. But she collected alimony. No straight away, it's true. It was only when she realized he was a complete skinflint, a stingy bastard who'd never dream of squandering his money on her. Love in these people's cases is always lofty and platonic- i.e. they're never prepared to pay for anything. Their love is entirely spiritual, because their need for money is always greater than anyone else's. Spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar that's the kind of people we're talking about. They've always got some plan on the

go. Be it a car or a computer or a video camera; they spend their whole lives saving up for something and love ‘getting married’ for free on the side, think they’ve paid a woman in hard currency just by sticking their thing inside her (*The Time: Night 29-30*).

These words of Anna show her power to encounter the man’s exploitation of woman for money and apartment and Anna challenges the traditional notion of woman as passive and dependent. She also shatters the image of a self-effacing mother who may give up her own peace of mind to ensure the protection of her children and their better life. The harshest face of Anna can be seen when she talks Alyona about abortion. She says abortion is normal for a woman who sleeps with many men for money. But when Alyona responds indifferently about earning money by sexual affairs with men, Anna’s words become more vicious. Anna’s conversation with Alyona goes like this:

You shouldn’t have had it, you should’ve just gone and had it scraped out!

‘Scraped out- Kolya? What are you saying!!!’

Heavens above, girl everyone has abortions even when they’re far gone...for money,’ I tell her.

‘Right up to god knows when. For money!’

What money? Whose money?’ she mutters.

“Theirs! You should have thought about that when you opened your legs to them! And instead you had to take it from us! You slut! I said from the



bottom of my heart. And went off to prepare for the long march (*The Time: Night* 133).

This conversation between Anna and Alyona shows that Anna thinks, it is auspices that abortion is legally prohibited. It happens in Soviet society during 1960s which is approximately the time period of the story. As a woman, Anna thinks that it is normal to get abortion if they do it for just money. She is against the social taboos surrounding female sexuality.

In this story, Petrushevskaya delves into the complexities of motherhood and the limitations it can impose on women. Anna realizes it is too difficult to be a 'Sacred mother'. Anna says:

Anna Ah mothers, mothers! It's the holiest words, but time goes by and you will find you have nothing to say to your child, and your child has nothing to say to you. Love them they will tear you to pieces. Don't love them and they'll leave you all the same. That's how it is, yes, that's how it is, alas (*The Time: Night* 51).

Anna's experience as a mother is depicted as overwhelming and suffocating emphasizing the hardships that women often endure in fulfilling societal expectation of motherhood.

Grandmother- grandson relationship is the centre of attraction of the story 'The Time: Night'. Anna loves her grandson very much and it can be seen throughout the novel. Her happiness and relief in life are totally associated with grandson, and he is the only person who makes her life a little bit alive. Anna is too

much worried about her little grandson, for whom she is not able to bring enough food. Anna calls Tima as “child of hungry times”. Therefore, Anna is conscious of feeding Tima in the midst of life-threatening poverty. Though Anna feels sympathy towards Tima, she alleges him for disturbing while she is on the stage for reading poetry. Tima is so withdrawn to insist to sit with Anna on the stage. Such actions of Tima worry Anna because she is afraid of losing her chances for reading, her breadwinning job as a poet. Anna narrates the situation when she brings Tima for her poetry reading:

Tima comes everywhere with me, I go up on the stage and Tima comes and sits right there at the table with me, he'll never go and sit with the audience. He sits there and puckers his lips, poor fellow, it's his nervous tic. So I stroke his hair and make my little jock: 'Tamara and I go everywhere together' -and invariably some idiot, one of the organizers, starts shouting ' why doesn't little Tamara come and sit in the audience' - they don't realize I'm just quoting a bit of verse. Of course Tima then pipes up: I' not Tamara, he says, getting all in a huff, and then he won't even say thank you for the sweets, just obstinately climbs up on stage and sits down beside me at the table. Very soon, Tima darling, no one's going to invite me anywhere to read, d'you realise?-and all because of you”( *The Time: Night* 10).

At this point, Anna asserts that Tima is jealous of her success and he wants everyone to know Anna is his grandma. Here, Anna keeps a detached position from Tima to earn something for herself. It reveals in Anna's words: “what can I do, sweetheart, your Anna has to earn a crust for herself” (Petrushevskaya 11). Here,

Anna subverts the image of the loving and affectionate grandmother of Soviet household. Anna even yells at Alyona to feed her son and call her brutal words such as ‘rotten bitch’ and ‘she devil’.

But Anna loves Tima passionately and physically. She narrates the cuteness of the baby and finds happiness in him. She enjoys the pleasure of holding his tiny hand, looking in those round dark blue eyes with lashes so long, great thick curling lashes and little fans etc. Anna sees something unclean in this kind of love for children. She says:

All parents, and grandparents especially love their, babies physically like this, make them make up for everything else in life. It’s sinful love, I tell you, it make the child callous and unbridled, as if it understand there’s something unclean in it all. But what can you do? Nature intended us to love  
(*The Time: Night* 58).

Anna’s physical attraction to Tima recalls what Nancy Chodorow’s observation on Mother child relationship that “women turn to children to fulfill emotional and even erotic desires unmet by men or other women means that a mother expects from infant what only another adult should be expected to give” (Quoted in Marsh 1208). Petrushevskaya subverts the holy nature of motherhood through the character Anna in the story ‘The Time: Night’.

Working women are very rarely presented in Petrushevskaya’s stories. The image of ‘working mother’ is celebrated in Soviet literature and this image dominated in the daily lives of Soviet women. Women are expected to fulfil both

roles as a worker and a mother. In official speeches, women were presented as pillars of the family. But in reality, this is unattainable because of the long working hours and hard labour. In Petrushevskaya's stories most of her women characters are unemployed and they struggle to meet the expense of their daily life. In the story 'The Time: Night', Anna is a poet but not very famous. She cannot achieve popularity as a poet because in the post-Soviet literary scene the publication honorariums were small and royalties are low. So, a very few authors could survive and support their families on the income generated from writing. The fee Anna gets from her writing is very low. At this point, Anna overthrows the image of 'working women' who do the double role of the care taker of family and the responsible worker for the state.

The story 'The Time: Night' portrayed Soviet and post-Soviet women's conditions. The protagonist Anna is confronted with failure and frustration at every step in her life, and is clearly sad, bitter and sardonic unto the last. She is thrown from one problem to another, from one torture to another without getting any solution or relief. In such a traumatic condition Anna fails to attain the ideal image of mother and grandmother, instead she tries to fight for her own existence in the midst of extreme poverty and exploitation of her grown up children. However, in the midst of such a poor condition, Anna brings her old mother from the mental hospital even though Anna knows that her daughter and grandchildren are not interested to bring their Nanny home. But Anna is stuck with her decision and is not ready to leave her mother die in the mental hospital. In this situation, Anna proves that even though her living environment is full of misery, her humanity has not perished.

### **Another Land: Reveling Single Motherhood**

'Another Land' (1988) is a story of a single mother who lives with her little daughter. The mother is abandoned by her husband and falls into alcoholism. She lives hidden away from everyone with her child in a one room apartment. It is a common tendency to subject women who live alone to social auditing. Such a tendency of the society to look curiously into the life of others, especially a single mother who looks after her children alone without the support of her husband can be seen in the narrator's side. At this point, the narrator shares various concerns like how a woman can live alone without the support of her husband, and what kind of a life is theirs. From this, the writer upholds the common logic of the society that a family is formed only when it consists of father, mother and child. It can be seen in the opening words: "who can say what life is like for a quite women addicted to drink, who lives hidden away from everyone in a one room apartment with her child" ("Another Land" 80). The narrator wonders how to accomplish the little things her child needs for kindergarten. Through this, the narrator also shares the anxieties of the society that how a woman can carry out the responsibilities of the family alone. But the mother and child live their life peacefully by overcoming all such concerns of the society.

A woman who is abandoned by her husband does not get the status and respect that a married woman gets in society. The mother in this story who loses her former friends and happy life with them is an example of this mentality of the society. And similarly by addressing the mother as the 'mother whose daughter the blonde fellow fathered' the narrator stresses the patriarchal concept of motherhood

in relation to marriage as Adrienne Rich says “motherhood is ‘sacred’ so long as its off springs are ‘legitimate’” (42). But the mother is not bothered about such things; they just continue their usual habits. The narrator says it as: “whole thing becomes much simpler, everything took its natural course” (“Another Land” 81).

Child caring is the biggest responsibility given to mothers by the society such as feeding, clothing, loving and being affectionate. But the alcoholic mother in the story drinks all the time and does not have much attention to feed her daughter. The author narrates:

Usually the little girl sits and plays quietly on the floor while her mother drinks, sitting at the table or lying on the divan. Then they both go to bed and turn off the light and in the morning get up as if nothing had happened and run through the forest and the dark to the Kindergarten (“Another Land” 80).

These lines show that, for mother it is a normal way because it never matters the little girl. They live in poverty. The kid gets her food at the kindergarten and the mother spends her money on the wine bottles. The little girl also seems to be adjusted to it. The isolation and loneliness of a child raised by the single mother, especially a woman addicted to alcohol, can be seen in the story. The narrator describes the girl’s isolation as: “the little girl doesn’t mind at all; she sits on the floor playing with her old toys” (“Another Land”81). The mother’s drinking habit will never matter the child and the mother does not show an emotional connection with her daughter. Through the mother in this story, the author defies the most glorified emotional extent of the mother –daughter relationship through this story.

The society's angst about how they live in such a poor condition does not affect the mother or the child in any way. Both the daughter and mother sleep quietly at night and wake up in the morning 'as if nothing had happened'. Here, the author portrays a single mother, who fails to satisfy the patriarchal concept of ideal motherhood but at the same time runs her little family and fetches little things her child needs for kindergarten.

### **Xenia's Daughter: Beyond the Label**

Petrushevskaya's another work 'Xenia's Daughter' (1988) is a story of a sex worker and her daughter. The narrator says that presenting a sex worker as the central character is what not many writers have dared to do in literature. According to the feminist theories, sex work can be seen as in two different perspectives, of which the first one is the libertarian perspective which views sex work as a matter of individual freedom to be detached from the structure of gender dominance and as an activity that gives consent to adults to engage in freely without restrictions and it also views sex work from a work perspective and the second perspective is against all form of prostitution. They see sex work as a sin and sex workers as 'fallen women' to be rehabilitated. It also sees sex work as an oppression of woman. The story 'Xenia's Daughter' opens with the author's perception on the treatment of sex workers in literature. She says:

From the time immemorial, whenever literature has seized its pen to describe the life of prostitutes, it's always and everywhere sprung to their defence.

Indeed it would be absurd to imagine an author undertaking to describe a prostitute just in order to cast slur upon her. The task of literature, it seems, is

precisely to present, as people worthy of respect and pity, all those who in life are commonly despised. Thus authors adopt a rather lofty position in relation to the rest of the world, taking up on themselves the role of sole defenders of the aforesaid despised, assuming the role judges, defence and prosecution rolled in to one, and undertaking the hard task of educating the masses and purveying great ideas (“Xenia’s Daughter” 90).

In this story Petrushevskaya harshly criticises the great authors in world literature like Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Leo Tolstoy who wrote the life of prostitutes in their works. According to Collen Lucey, even though they portrayed sex workers as ‘virtuous heroines’ rather than the image of ‘fallen woman’, these are romanticized version of reality (Everet-Hayness). These women are from the elite or middle class and she says that in these works the voice of Russia’s real-life prostitutes and courtesan are not heard. In Russian literature the ‘authors’ approach to prostitution is cautious, moralising and somewhat idealizing’ (Zink). But in Petrushevskayan stories she portrays the miseries of downtrodden sex workers and their struggles in life. Xenia and her daughter in the story ‘Xenia’s Daughter’ are sex workers who live in utter poverty. They have emotions and feelings as all the other human beings have. For them prostitution is not a business to earn money, instead they need love and warmth. Generally, in literature love is forbidden to the sex workers and many authors are not even willing to let such women fall in love because they have an inherent thought that how the readers would accept them if they fall in love. But in this story Petrushevskaya breaks such trends in literature by depicting an ordinary sex worker Xenia who is not particularly



feminine. It subverts stereotypical image of the ‘beautiful prostitute with the heart of gold’ that is usually seen in Russian literature (Marsh 1206).

The image of a whore is a new phenomenon that emerged in literature during the Perestroika era. Expressing the natural sexual desires was prohibited in literature in the earlier period and when the censorship was removed, an incredible amount of erotic and pornography were released. Most of the literature and cinema were male centered. It is made by men for men, where women are merely exploited and utilized as objects. Image of women as Barbie doll or pin up beauty became a model that is promoted as the real, feminine woman so dear to Russian male culture. The beauty markets were developed rapidly and plastic surgeries were available to those who want to correct their inadequacies. As a contradiction, Petrushevskaya’s heroine is fat and bare headed. The author describes her:

And indeed whose heart- even in those most steeped in prejudice- would not be wrung with pity at the sight of a whore, one who in Russian cries out to be called *Prostushka*-A simple soul, a bare headed creature. Mind you this one does have a scarf of sort on her head, a crude rough thing like an old felt boot, pushed to the back of her head so all her hair draggles down. That’s what you’d have to call her a *prostushka*: a bit on the fat side, a wee bit short, no Madame Universe, unlike some of those women- thoroughbred champions with great broad shoulders and withres and narrow waists and legs plump in the calf and tapering at the ankles (“Xenia’s Daughter” 90).

Through Xenia, Petrushevskaya presents an image of a prostitute which is clearly contradicting to the image of feminity created by man and which is promoted

by the Russian male culture. During the Perestroika period, prostitution was considered as a successful career and there were so many articles which came in newspapers and other printed Media. They fostered the image of women as sex object. And there was a rapid increase in the profession because it was seen as a successful way of making a living. Unemployment of the educated women in the cities was the main reason behind this.

Prostitution is a profession to earn money by selling one's own body. The narrator defines the qualities a sex worker should have. "for being a whore means you can't despise anyone, old or young or plagued with pox; a whore can't turn a soul away- she can't, she is not allowed, perhaps doesn't wish to" ("Xenia's Daughter" 93). But Xenia and her daughter do not meet the expectation and definitions of a sex worker imposed by the society. The narrator inspects the reason for the people's visit to Xenia and her daughter and find out that they need only the ordinary love which requires no payment but just warmth and attention. The narrator says:

there is ordinary love to be had, requiring no payment, just warmth and attention, just a few words and the presence of someone, someone who'll accept this waiting, unselfish love and who'll give in return, not something costly either, but the simplest of things, a mere nothing, a trifle- and yet, in doing so, will celebrate his own need; do what he has to, yet give happiness too ("Xenia's Daughter" 93).

In this context, the author re- defines the profession of prostitution as an exchange of unselfish love instead of a money earning business. In this story

Petrushevskaya portrays sex workers as ordinary people who long for love and affection requiring no payments. And the author re-defines the physical features of a sex worker. Femininity, agility, and softness that a prostitute should have cannot be found in Petrushevskaya's characters. Instead, she portrays ordinary women who find happiness in small things and suffers from sudden irritable depression.

### **Father and Mother: Challenging Patriarchal Dimensions**

'Father and mother' (1988) is a story of the family of Tanya, a seventeen-year-old girl. The main focus of the story is the disputed marital relationship of Tanya's mother and father and how it affects the life of Tanya as a daughter. Tanya's mother realizes that Tanya's father has illicit relationships with many women and her mother tries to stop him in any possible way. But every time he runs away from his family in the name of work and continues his affair. In a society where it is natural for a man to have relationships with many women, it is the women's responsibility to maintain the family. Here the Tanya's mother questions this injustice and the undeserved position of power he gets in the family. The narrator describes this scene:

Every morning Tanya's mother (Mrs. P) ran after her husband with her little son rounded on her breast, to stop him escaping to his accused work, where all he did was engaging in debauchery. She had run till she dropped with the little baby with her arms, run down the street to catch up her husband, yet her husband escaped every morning. She was overcome by despair ("Father and Mother" 98).

The author presents a woman with self-esteem and is intolerant of the of man's falsehood. A woman who has the courage to act against the actions of man is beyond the definitions of the ideal woman. Tanya's family is unable to satisfy society's vision of the ideal family because in general, the concept of family consists of parents and children and each one has their own role to play for the running of the institution. Tanya's family demolishes the patriarchal idea of the ideal family, at the same time, demolishes the great position of the family in the Soviet society.

According to the traditional concept of family, the power is vested in men and obviously it would be a male dominated system. Therefore, the woman has no right to question the male because she was subordinated or suppressed in the family. Women are supposed to accept and tolerate any kind of exploitation from men. While men are the breadwinners of the family, the women are only destined to take care of the household and children. But in Tanya's family the situation is different. Tanya's father does not meet his family's expense or look after his children and he disturbs the peaceful atmosphere of his own family. But at the same time, he creates the impression of a perfect family in front of others. Tanya's mother cannot tolerate this and openly expresses her annoyance and tries to defend him at any cost. The author makes observations on the relation between Tanya's father and mother that: "Tanya's mother burned with hatred for her husband, the sharp painful hatred that a suffering woman feels for a drone, a spendthrift, a man who lets his whole family down" ("Father and Mother" 99).

From the ancient times itself a father's role in the family is a pivotal one. He is called upon to be a leader and protector of the family. In Tanya's family, even

though the father returns to the family in the evening and shows affection to the latest child, the mother thinks that this is a dirty ruse, something a guilty male does just for show. And they started fighting and the mother hates his dishonest game. She wants to destroy the lie, the deceitful picture of the father who acts like the protector of his baby. The narrator says it as: “the father wresting him from his furious mother and mother struggling to stop his showing off” (Petrushevskaya 99).

In this story we can see the general tendency of the society which ignores the grave mistakes of the man and at the same time sees the woman’s resistance to it as a big mistake. In the case of Tanya’s mother, she feels that she is surrounded with the people with disgust and disdain. Meanwhile she feels pity on her husband. The mother also protests against the opinions received from the people around her to scare the man and to turn him off for good, otherwise, never gets anything out of him. But Tanya’s mother is not ready to compromise with the false image created by the father. She needs to destroy the lie about the peaceful family. Petrushevskaya presents the mother as a strong woman who protests against the domination of man in a family.

The authors comment on the nature of motherhood as: “In fact all the mothers seemed to see in her children was the material proof, a face after face, of her life’s effort, her superhuman work, and her indisputable yet daily disputed value in the face of her dog of a husband”( “Father and Mother” 99). Here, Petrushevskaya presents motherhood not as a magical power vested in women but as the most suffering and difficult role of a woman in her life. For Tanya’s mother, motherhood is the most challenging role, physically, mentally and financially.

### **Our Crowd: Redefines the Maternal love**

‘Our Crowd’ (1988) is a story of a seven-year-old boy and his mother who lives within the circle of her friends. Even though the entire story is not about the bond between mother and child, at the end of the story the narrator claims herself as a mother hated by others in order to secure her son’s life. The narrator of the story claims herself as extremely intelligent. Intelligence is a person’s mental ability to handle situations and solve problems and the popular belief that women are not so emotionally intelligent as men. But the narrator introduces herself as: “I’m a tough, ruthless character, full of mockery towards everyone, always with a smile on my full red lips” (“Our Crowd” 312). She says that if there is something she doesn’t understand, and then it doesn’t exist. She thinks she is very clever and will not make any kind of mistake on her part. On every Friday she and her husband used to go to her friend Marisha’s house for their usual gathering with a circle of friends who are well educated but amoral. They drink and carouse until neighbours call the police. Petrushevskaya present them as a remarkable contrast to the ‘ideal Intelligentsia’ who are the guardians of morality and truth in Soviet society. (Marsh)

Petrushevskaya’s most disturbing text which destructs the ideal motherhood is ‘Our Crowd’. Petrushevskaya presents an unkind mother who lacks the so-called characteristic features of a mother such as tenderness, affectionate, loving and caring. The mother leaves alone her seven years old son Alyosha at home till mid night or next day morning. The narrator’s husband Kolya is mad at Alyosha because of his bad habits such as wetting bed, eating food without chewing and dropping food all over his trousers. Alyosha is not much talented, good looking brilliant or

strong to draw his father's love. Kolya shouts at Alyosha for his bad practices and even slaps him on his face for wetting bed. But the narrator behaves indifferently to her husband's offensive attitude to her son. It reveals in her narration "I just smiled ironically, left the room and set off to work, leaving them to sort out the mess between them" (Petrushevskaya 338). The narrator turns into a mother who leaves her little boy to the brutality of his father.

Later, when the mother is diagnosed with a terrible disease and she decides to assure her child's future in the hands of his father, before her imminent death, by making him a victim of child abuse. She beats the child in front of her ex-husband and their circle of friends to get their sympathy. Here, by presenting herself as an unnatural and vicious mother, she transforms Alyosha from a real child, one who eats sloppily and wets his bed, into a victim and proves her intelligence. Here Petrushevskaya presents a strong woman who is intelligent and has the mental capability to handle the situations without being addicted to the emotions. As a mother, she smashes the ideal concept of loving nurturing mother by breaking the emotional bond with her son.

### **A Case of Virgin Birth: Breaking the Holy Bond**

The story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' is the story of a single mother who escapes from her husband and lives with her son for long years. Though the title 'A Case of Virgin Birth' recalls the biblical story of Virgin Mary and birth of Jesus Christ, mother-son relationship depicted in the story is a scar for their divine bond because religion and society define motherhood as always split off from sexual attractiveness and sexual pleasure. But the mother in this story has love affairs

concurrently with her son and she wants to explore her love affairs in front of him. When the religion uses the term 'Virgin Birth' to glorify the dignity of the mother Mary, the author uses the term as an exploitative tool used by the mother to highlight her superiority. The mother tortures her little son in his childhood using the word 'Virgin Birth' the meaning of which he cannot even understand, but he fears the word. She starts telling the terrible agonies she had been through giving birth to him. As a young boy it haunts him horribly at night. She says: "She'd been a virgin when she lay down in the labour room but the doctor hadn't wanted to interfere surgically, so it was her son who'd made her a woman" (Petrushevskaya 18). This secret of his mother instills in him a sense of inferiority and thereby deprives him of the joy and vigour of his childhood.

As a third person narrative story, the narrator stands with the son, and censuring the mother's attitude to him in his childhood days. The narrator says: "He had many times suffered these torments from her..." ("A Case of Virgin Birth" 18). But the mother had no pity towards him. The narrator states:

...his mother had no pity. It was if she pined for her own family, the family she hadn't had for ages now, and couldn't wait for her son to grow up a bit so that she get even closer to him, explaining to him how much he belonged to her, how much he was hers ("A Case of Virgin Birth" 19).

Here the narrator reveals the harmful mother who torments her innocent little boy by revealing the dreadful secrets of her in spite of being not yet grown to understand. He was in his tender age and longs for the love and closeness of his mother, but the mother does not show her affection, instead pushes him into a



mental trauma. Here, the author tarnishes the magical power entrusted with mother that the potential to bear and nurture the human life.

From ancient times itself motherhood is acceptable in its 'nurturing, selfless, self-sacrificing form. But the mother in the story abandons her child in a kindergarten without giving him love, care and closeness that he deserves as a child. At the same time, she insists her son's assistance whenever she needs. She calls her son to be with her even during his term-end exams. The son senses that the mother has some grown up business of her own which he is not yet old enough to deal with and this makes the son to become emotionally distant from his mother.

Later, even seeing the word 'maternity' written somewhere has made unbearable feeling in his life because the memories of maternity that his mother had told him haunted him. It shows how he is tortured by his mother. Although the mother feels guilty about such actions which happened in her younger age, she refuses to express or admit it, instead, she never mentions a word about those incidents. According to the narrator 'what she wanted and was poised and waiting to take him under her wing, consoles him with her greater experience of life and in return console'. The narrator also justifies her action as "But what she could do! She was still so young then" ("A Case of Virgin Birth" 27). Here the author presents a selfish mother who makes her son suffer mentally and abandons him for a longer period in his tender age and disrupts his term end examinations in his schooldays for her own businesses. Hence, the mother in this story overthrows the self-sacrificing and nurturing mother purported by religion, society and Russian Nationalist Mythology.

Petrushevskaya's stories explore the complex roles, societal perceptions, and challenges faced by women in different contexts. She portrays various dimensions of womanhood in her works and offers alternative perspectives that expose the details of women's experiences. In 'The Time: Night', Petrushevskaya examines the complexities of motherhood and explores new dimensions that subvert conventional narratives and recognize the multi-faceted nature of motherhood. In the story 'Another Land', Petrushevskaya confronts the prejudices and judgments faced by single mothers in society. Through her portrayal of the mother character in this story, she challenges societal norms and exposes the hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of those who stigmatize them. By presenting a single mother who is marginalized by society, Petrushevskaya questions the prevailing biases and acknowledges the strength and determination of single mothers.

In the story 'Xenia's Daughter', Petrushevskaya probes into the complexities of identity and the struggle against societal labels. Petrushevskaya's characters transcend the stereotypes imposed upon them, challenging expectations and building their own paths. Through their journeys, Petrushevskaya emphasizes the importance of self-discovery and the power of individual agency in overcoming societal restrictions. In 'Father and Mother', Petrushevskaya criticises traditional gender roles and challenges the patriarchal structures that govern society. By presenting a woman character who questions traditional expectations, Petrushevskaya challenges the limiting constraints imposed on women by patriarchal norms. The story 'Our Crowd' showcases the complexity and diversity of maternal love. Petrushevskaya explores the various forms of maternal relationships. Through the mother characters

in the story, she reveals the transformative power of love and the capacity of maternal care, which extend beyond traditional boundaries. 'A Case of Virgin Birth' exposes the expectations and pressures placed on sex workers. Petrushevskaya challenges the ideal image of sex workers by dismantling the sex workers portrayed in great classics. Petrushevskaya presents her sex workers as real human beings with all deformities and demands to recognize and respect individual choices and autonomy through this story. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's exploration of women characters in her works offers a profound and multifaceted examination of womanhood. Through her stories, she challenges conventional narratives, exposes and subverts societal prejudices, and redefines womanhood. Petrushevskaya's characters embody strength, resilience, and a quest for self-determination. By shedding light on the intricacies of womanhood, Petrushevskaya's works challenge existing norms, raising a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of women's lives in society.

**Work cited**

Everet-Hayness, La Monica. "Prostitutes Seen as 'Paradoxical Figures' in Russian Literature." *University of Arizona*, 2017, news.arizona.edu/story/prostitutes-seen-paradoxical-figures-russian-literature#:~:text=Lucey%20argues%20that%20writers%20%22imagine,many%20judicial%20and%20medical%20authorities.

Marsh, Rosiland. "New Mothers for a New Era? Images of Mothers and Daughters in Post-Soviet Prose in Historical and Cultural Perspective." *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 107, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1191-1219. JSTOR, doi.org/10.5699/modelangrevi.107.4.1191.

Muff, Rebecca. "Contemporary Russian Women Writers Rejecting Definition in Literary Rebellion." Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2008.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *A Case of Virgin Birth*. In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 17-27.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Another Land." In *Immortal Love*, New York: Pantheon, 1995, pp. 80-82.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Father and Mother." In *Immortal Love*, New York: Pantheon, 1995, pp. 98-103.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Our Circle." In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 309-312.

- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "The Time: Night." Translated by Sally Liard. New York: Pantheon, 1992.
- Podaskaya, Anastasia. *Woman in Russia: A New Era in Russian Feminism*. Verso, 1994.
- Racioppi, Linda, and Katherine O'Sullivan See. "Organizing Women before and after the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia." *Signs*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1995, pp. 818-850. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3174884](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174884).
- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Zink, Andria. "What is Prostitution Good for? Dostoevsky, Chernyshevsky, Tolstoy and the Women Question in Russian Literature." *The Dostoevsky Journal*, 2006, [Accademia.edu](http://Accademia.edu).
- Zuidervart, Lambert. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [Plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno](http://Plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno).



## Chapter 4

### **Shattering the Ideal and Creating an Inclusive Society: A Study based on Petrushevskaya's Selected Stories**

I was born a Zionist, because I didn't have a choice about that. It was the ether of my family life, but I certainly broke with it as I asked more questions about it. And that doesn't mean I want to see the destruction of the people. It means I want to see a state structure that might embody the more substantially the basic principles of democracy

-Butler

Feminist theories claim that masculinity and femininity have been interpreted as idealized opposites by the patriarchal society. It categorizes one to a particular sex, either 'male' or 'female' and subjected to gendered behaviour of 'masculine' or 'feminine' through gendered socialization. The French existentialist philosopher and feminist critic Simon de Beauvoir says that:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (Beauvoir 273).

It indicates that gender is socially constructed. Patriarchal society defines the characteristics of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Beauvoir also says "Every female human being is not necessary a woman: to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity" (Beauvoir 41). At this point the American feminist critic Julia T. Wood observes that not only the entire society

but also the institutions, cultures, religions and rituals teach a woman 'how to be a woman' (Wood). It indicates that women are indoctrinated to be what they supposed to be, how they should look and the images, identity and ideal they should represent. It takes place primarily during childhood, when girls and boys learn the appropriate behaviour of their sex. The society imprints an ideal image of womanhood and trains a girl child from very younger age to be an ideal woman. It teaches that a woman should be obedient and self-controlled and teach the value of virginity as her great asset. She should be prepared for marriage by keeping herself chaste for her future husband learning the skills necessary to manage the household and rear children. Intellectual women were condemned as unfeminine since a woman's 'heart' was valued over her 'mind' because the mind is being associated with the masculine.

Feminist critics assert that the patriarchy end owes the power in the hands of man and sets up the codes of law against woman because of his economic interest and moral pretention. He defines her in relation to himself by creating myth in which his projects are reflected. Simon De Beauvoir exemplifies the myth of women characters like 'Delilah, Judith, Aspasia, Lucretia, Pandora, Athena and even Eve and Virgin Mary' as man's creation of woman as the idol, servant, source of life, power of darkness, sorceress etc. She says that for man 'she (Woman) is everything that he is not and that he longs for' (Beauvoir 151). To subordinate woman, men portrayed her as delicate and weak and she needs to be protected by the male family member. But at the same time, she is assumed as the pillar of moral strength and names her as 'Angel in the House' whose primary purpose was to impart moral



guidance to her family. Patriarchy divides women into 'good woman' and 'bad woman'. As Simone de Beauvoir says 'If a woman uses her erotic capital to attract men to scatter patrimonies, she is considered as evil and in contrary women at home with their father, brothers, husband or lover as their guardian angel is considered as muse, goddess mother etc. (Beauvoir 268).

As an institution, religion plays an important role in shaping the position of woman as that all world religions should agree on the respect for women and their role in family life especially as mothers and wives. But they have duality in their attitude towards them that they declare women to be inferior to man and fated to be controlled by him. The gender segregation of the Russian Orthodox Church and their model for 'good woman' was deeply entrenched among the Russians. And they followed the rules of 'Domestroi'<sup>1</sup> which was a guideline for being a good Russian woman. It demands women to be an obedient wife to her husband and loving, caring and self-sacrificing mother to her children and a selfless matriarch to her family. Each 'good woman' has an evil correlative which society defines according to their choice to distinguish, instruct and project a myth to adopt the values which women should adhere. For example, the 'saintly mother' has the correlative of 'cruel step mother' and angelic young girl has that of the perverse virgin.

As a reflection of society literature replicates the attitude and perception of society and also conveys instruction, information and delight to the society. When tracing the history of literature until recent times most of the writers were men and they portrayed women in their works as an object for pleasure. It was only in late 1960s and early 1970s that the impact of feminism on literature brought alteration in

academic studies of literary texts. Parallel process of publishing and reviewing literary works mostly by women made impact on literary reception also. Anita Nair, the famous Indian author remarks about the representation of women in literature that:

Literature has always been ambivalent in its representation of women. Good women as in ones who accepted societal norms were rewarded with happily ever after. Even feisty heroines eventually go onto find content and life's purpose in a good man's arms, be it Elizabeth Bennett (*Pride and Prejudice*) or Jane Eyre (*Jane Eyre*). Alternatively, they are left to rue their lot with a contrived courage as with Scarlett O'Hara (*Gone with the Wind*) or have to take their lives like Anna Karenina (*Anna Karenina*) or Karuthamma (Chemmeen – Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai) or Emma Bovary (*Madame Bovary*- Gustav Flaubert) (Shukla).

Similarly Russian literature has reflected social processes a great deal and 19th century Russian literature contributed an abundant part to world literature and made it more fruitful. This era was called the golden age of Russian literature because during this period literature enjoyed greater prestige in Russia and literary critics were the leaders of Russian intellectual life and political thought. The dominated intelligentsia includes Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov who usually adopt a specific set of manners, customs and sexual behaviour for their novels. But the great writers like Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Anton Chekhov were sharply contemptuous of the intelligentsia who regard themselves as superior to ordinary people. But in the writings, in both the groups, male voices were enjoyed

greater acceptability than women's voice. Though Russian literature has produced many iconic fictional heroines during this period like Pushkin's Tatyana Larina (Eugene Onegin), Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (Anna Karenina), Maria Bolkonsky (War and Peace), Dostoevsky's Sonya Marmeladovna (Crime and Punishment), Chekhov's Lyubova Ranevsaya (The Cherry Orchard) and so on. Russia's strong patriarchal roots which are grounded in Eastern Orthodox Christianity has a great influence on these heroines (Youkhanna).

Since the Russian Revolution in 1917, the literature has become an official carrier of political propaganda for the communist state and rejected aesthetic criteria or apolitical works. The writers emphasized the guiding function of the party and work as a measure of devotion to society and the noblest expression of the human personality. They were called as the 'engineers of human soul' helping to produce 'The New Soviet Man'. The typical members of intelligentsia came to include Lenin, Stalin and other Bolsheviks who seized power in 1917. Despite all these changes, the Bolsheviks were not able to change the traditional opinion regarding the inferiority of women even though women were granted political, legal and social equality and given opportunity for better education and job (Youkhanna). During Stalinist era, the repressive government promoted the image of the 'New Soviet Woman' who was able to perfectly balance work and family life. Gender inequality was also prevalent in Soviet society even though state offered legal equality and women were encouraged to enter the workforce. Even though the state declares women have the equal job opportunity, education and engage various professions traditionally dominated by men, the reality was different. Policies such as paid

maternity leave and access to child care services aimed to support women participation in work force. Political participation of women was not encouraged by the leaders but at the same time they have to work in factories and collective farms equal with men but with low wages. Women from the Bolshevik family are even pathetic that they got fired from their job accused of being the 'enemy of the people'. At the same time, Literature reflects the idealized images with values and aspirations promoted by the communist regime, emphasizing qualities such as strength, resilience and dedication to the collective good. One of the prominent idealized images is 'Mother Heroin'. This archetype represents a selfless and nurturing figure who sacrifices personal desires for the wellbeing of her children and the progressive development of the state. An example can be found in Maxim Gorky's novel "Mother" where the protagonist, Pelageya Nilovna embodies the spirit of revolution and maternal love. Another idealized image woman is 'working woman'. Soviet literature celebrated women's participation in the workforce and their contribution to the socialist economy. They are depicted as women who dedicated to their profession. Valentin Kataev's novel "Time Forward"(1932) depicts a skilled factory worker Lyuba Ogudalova who embodies the values of labor and collective effort. Some soviet literature portrayed women as active participant in revolutionary struggle. These women were depicted as fearless, principled, and committed to the ideas of socialism. An example can be found in Nikolai Ostrovsky's novel "How the Steel was tempered", where the character Tanya fights bravely as a partisan during the Russian Civil War. These idealized images of women in Soviet literature served to reinforce the values of collectivism, equality and social progress promoted by the communist regime.

In such a scenario the political thaws of Nikita Khrushchev made impact on the writings and women writers got more voice during this period. They began to subvert the 'ideal' portrayal instead they wrote the reality, the everyday life of the Russians under the communist regime. Such writings had to go through hard censorship or rejection from the publisher during the Soviet period. The liberal journal 'Novi mir' published even the works of Alexander Solzhenitsyn; many of his contemporary writers like I. Grekova did not get published because their works focused on the daily lives of soviet women. She was rejected by the journal Novi Mir by proclaiming that there was no artistic merit for such narratives. It shows the Russian culture's enduring uneasiness for concerning the daily life and gendered experiences. Soviet authority promoted the patriarchal vision of heterosexual society where the image of woman as noble figures and man as the ideal hero. Women were praised for their sense of sacrifice and their capacity for resistance and men were selfless, healthy, muscular, intellectual and disciplined. The soviet government assigned the duty of literature and art to contribute role models for society by hiding the reality. Therefore, years after Ludmilla Petrushevskaya also had the same experience from the editor of the same journal because, characters which confirm patriarchy's prescribed gender role cannot be seen in Petrushevskaya's texts. Her works portray the struggling life of Russian families during the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet period. Her characters are ordinary people. Her stories are based on the miserable lives shown around her. Therefore, they do not have anything to model for the society, but through them she was reveals the hypocrisy of the society.

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya was much different in portraying characters in comparing her predecessors. When writers like Grekova and Baranskaya wrote about the lives of women struggling to take on the Soviet- imposed task for women like balancing career and family, the actions of Petrushevskaya's characters never consolidate their gender. According to the second wave feminist theoreticians 'women' keeps a common identity. That means if one is a 'woman' she should transcend the specific paraphernalia of that gender. While the feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity understood through the category of 'women', Petrushevskaya's stories convey the idea that humans can live free and equal life based on humanity without the labels of gender. Here Petrushevskaya's women characters validating Judith Butler's post-modern humanism which rejects the gender identity. According to Butler, gender issues cannot be approached on the basis of women as single entity. She argues:

If one 'is' a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre gendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (Butler 6).

While analysing Petrushevskaya's women characters on the basis of this theory of Butler, they are different and never surpass that common identity but

rather transcend multiple attributes because they are from different class, regional and sexual categories. Petrushevskaya choose her women characters from the lower strata of the society. Most of them are labelled as ‘enemies of the people’ as Petrushevskaya herself, they are single mothers’ lives lonely life with their children without any man’s support, and some are alcoholics, sex workers or suffering with severe diseases. All these categories of women do not represent the privileged group ‘The New Soviet Woman’. Petrushevskaya’s women characters represent women who have been marginalised from the forefront of society. Therefore, their experiences will be different from the privileged category. Petrushevskaya’s women characters live in hunger and poverty and are struggling to survive in any possible manner without bothering about their gender.

Petrushevskaya presents matriarchal families in her stories. According to French philosopher Michel Foucault, various institutions exert power on groups and individuals but they are not the source of power but it realized in everyday activity (Balan). It is the oppression of powerless by the powerful. According to the feminist consciousness, a patriarchal definition of power is clearly masculinized such as wealth, intelligence, influence, verbal authority, leadership, physical strength etc. Such stereotypical notions about the construction of power defined as man’s ability to dominate others. In sociology, Max Weber defines “power as the ability of one or several persons to do what they want to do, behaving in ways that others do not approve of, that is against their will” (Quoted in Groshev). The postmodern trait of power dynamic can be seen in her stories.

Petrushevskaya portrays women centred families to challenge the heterosexual concept of family in her stories which generally considered 'normal'. According to Butler heterosexual relationships produce gender hierarchy. Petrushevskaya is against the gender hierarchy and by rejecting the heterosexual relations, Petrushevskaya creates a 'new normal' family through her stories. Most of her characters are single mothers. According to feminist critics Petrushevskaya treated motherhood as a 'great myth need to be shattered' (Muff 20). Petrushevskaya's mother characters do not satisfy the social expectations of 'being a mother'. They did not act the gendered actions assigned to the gender role of 'mother.' According to Butler, "gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practice of gender coherence. There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expression" that are said to be its results" (Butler 33). It indicates that gender roles are not fixed but socially constructed and forced by the regular practices. Therefore, 'the maternal instinct', is not true but imposed and insists on performing by the society. The women characters of Petrushevskaya are the ones who overcome such efforts of society and create their own identity.

Petrushevskaya subverts the most acclaimed concept of motherhood through the portrayal of the protagonist Anna Andrianovna in the story 'The Time: Night'. Anna's relationship with her daughter Alyona is contrary to conventional thinking about the psychological link between mother and daughter. They live like two human beings with all kinds of emotions and physical needs. Both the mother and daughter fight each other for food, teasing and insulting each other whenever they



get a chance. The story reveals Anna's relationship with her daughter Alyona which is filled with quarrel especially for money. One of such situations Anna wrote in her diary described in the story is given below:

The whole scene took place because I'd had a word with one of the girls at the post office, a girl about my age, and told them that if So- and So- appeared they weren't to let her lay hand on Tima's money, so on the day her alimony was due my daughter appears in a white rage on the door step pushing a red pram before her( 'So we've got a girl now' flashes through my mind) and looking all spotty again like she used to be when she was feeding Tima, a great fat female, all breast and shrieks, and stats yelling 'Get Tima ready, he's coming back of his f...g mother'. So then Tima started wailing in his thin little voice, like a puppy, and I calmly went and told her she should be deprived of her maternal rights- how could she go and dump her child on a frail old woman, etcetera etcetera. 'Come on Tima, you'll go mad living with this old bag,' says she, whereupon Tima starts yelping and squealing and I just stand there smiling calmly; yes, I say, yes for the sake of fifty roubles you'd gladly have the child sent to the madhouse. Look who's talking, says she, it's you who went and dumped your mother in the loony bin. And for your sake, I did it', I said, "because of what you'd done"— nodding in the direction of Tima, who's meanwhile standing there squealing like a piglet, eyes full of tears, refusing to come either to me or to his 'f...g mother' just stands there rocking to and fro. I will never forget the way he looked then, barely able to stand, a little child shaking from grief. As for the

creature in the pram, her bastard daughter, she wake ups and yells too: you don't even want to look at your very own granddaughter, and this is all I've got for her, this is the whole lot! (*The Time: Night 14*).

In this part of the story, Alyona is talking to Anna about taking back her son for his alimony. And she accuses her mother as 'old bag'. At this point Anna reacts to Alyona and she wrote in her diary all the details about the situation. She calls her daughter 'F...g mother. Her expressions are never suitable for the gendered behaviour assigned to 'mother' by society. Anna's character is seen as contradictory to the image of the nurturing mother represented in literature and culture, who provides unconditional love and support to her children. According to the conventional beliefs, a mother is always selfless, sacrificing her own needs for the well-being of her family. But Anna in the story shatters all these conservative ideas of motherhood. She calls her daughter Alyona 'f...mother' and yell at her little child as 'creature in the pram, her bastard daughter'. Through the portrayal of Anna, Petrushevskaya challenges the most celebrated gender role assigned to women as the loving and self-sacrificing mother. Anna's subversion of the typical motherhood can be seen throughout the story.

Anna's relationship with her grandchild Tima shows Petrushevskaya's insurrection against the patriarchal notion of maternal instinct. Anna claims herself as an affectionate grandmother to Tima whom she feeds, takes him along with her wherever she goes, in short a saviour to him. To amplify her as a protector, Anna calls Tima as "poor little orphan". Her happiness and relief in life is totally associated with grandson, and he is the only person who makes her life a little alive.

At the same time Anna blames Tima for his erratic behaviour at Masha's house because Anna believes that Tima's behaviour without sense of propriety is the foremost reason why her friend Masha has dropped out of favour with her. Anna was eloquent about her polite behaviour to confirm it. Anna narrates the situation when they are at Masha's house by expecting food and money from her, Tima fights with Denis, grandson of Masha for a toy car:

I tore away from Denis and his car, Tima was mad at me but what could I do, that would be the last we'd see of them- as it was Masha had thought twice before opening the door when she'd seen us through the peephole! It all wound up with me taking him off to the bathroom to wash his tear stained face – fancy throwing a tantrum in someone else's house! That's why people don't want to see us, because of Tima. Of course, I behave like the queen of England (*The Time: Night 2*).

It is evident in Anna's words that she believes Tima's behaviour is the reason for Masha's misunderstanding on her. Even though Anna describes her love for Tima as 'the eternal refrain of her life' Anna began to feel Tima would become a liability to her friendship with her neighbour. Anna's love for the little Tima is more of a bodily attraction than the emotional bonding. She accuses her grandchild of his impolite behaviour in front of the audience of Anna for her poetry reading, when Tima obstinately climbs upon the stage and sits down beside Anna at the table. This behaviour of Tima maddens Anna. She hurled rude words on Tima. At the same time Anna loves the child physically. Her love for boy shows when she memorises about changing his diaper:

Very soon, Tima darling, no one's going to invite me anywhere to read, d'you realise? - And all because of you. He is so withdrawn poor child it makes you weep, of course he's had such a difficult time. He is so quiet and still sometimes, my little shining star...he always smells of flowers...how it smells like a camomile his pee and his hair when it wasn't washed for a while smell like phlox. And when he is been washed all over the smell of him's inexpressible, that lovely fresh scent of a child's body (*The Time: Night 10*).

These lines from the story show how Anna adores her grandchild Tima and his tender body. Anna loves Tima passionately physically and she justifies her love for her grandchild. Petrushevskaya challenges the holy nature of mother's love. Anna makes clear her temperament:

I love him passionately physically. The pleasure of holding in my hand his own tiny weightless one, of looking in to that round, dark blue eyes with lashes so long- as my favourite author wrote- shadow of them fall on his cheeks. And on everything else nearby- you can even see their shadow on the wall when he sits up in bed in the lamplight. Great thick curling lashes, little fans! All parents, grant parents especially, love their babies physically like this. Make them make up for everything else in life. It's sinful love, I tell you, it make the child callous and unbridled, as if it understands there is something unclean in it all. But what can you do? Nature intended us to love. Once love was let loose it stretched its wings to cover everyone, even those it

was never meant for- the old. Poor old souls, you warm your old heart too!

*(The Time: Night 58).*

In these lines it is clear that Anna's love for Tima is corporeal rather than the pure, selfless love. The novel reveals the strange thought of Anna to explode the affectionate love of grandmother to her grandchild. Anna's relationship with Tima is chaotic. Anna often sees Tima as her rival and Anna's love for Tima is being questioned when she says that she loves him physically. The story reveals more examples to Anna's confused relationship with Tima. Anna never calls herself grandma, instead she calls Anna to him and she never wants Tima to be a burden to her own existence or way of life even though she loves him abundantly and did everything possible for the sake of her grandchild. Here Anna breaks Russia's most adoring mythical versions of womanhood; the 'Babushka' (grandmother), the gentle and caring but often silent.

Petrushevskaya's woman characters are intelligent and sensible to handle even the bleak situations in their life. While conventional believes about intelligence is always associated with masculine and femininity is related with sloppiness, Intellectual women were judged as unfeminine. Petrushevskaya's women characters shatter this belief on intelligence. In the story 'Our Crowd' the author breaks the feminist assessment of patriarchal definitions that woman is intelligently and emotionally weak. In this story Petrushevskaya presents a woman protagonist who is intelligent and cunning. She points out a mistake of her friend Serge, who is an aeronautical engineer, made in his project. The protagonist says that:

Quite beyond me, in other words, and I'm extremely intelligent. If there's something I don't understand then it doesn't exist. So Serge must have made a mistake with his point of origin. And the fact is it's long time since he's read anything, he relies just on intuition, but you can't get by without reading. He also discovered a new principle for the working of a locomotive with a seventy percent efficiency factor, once again a completely outlandish thing ("Our Crowd" 312).

Through these lines Petrushevskaya presents the intelligence of the protagonist to attack her friend for his stupid inventions. According to her, it was all complete nonsense of artificial constructions from a completely illogical point of origin and completely odd thing which was made without reading much but relies on intuition.

Similarly In the case of Anna in the 'Time: Night,' she is sensible to take right decisions. When once a man approaches Anna for a one-night stand at her house, she drives him away and shuts her door against him. Anna describes the incident as:

Just the other day someone mistook me for a young girl from behind: Excuse me, young lady- oh! I beg your pardon, madam, do you know the way to such and such street? He was all dirty and sweaty- all the hotels are full up, he says, that's the problem. Oh we know yor type! Oh yes! For half a kilo pomegranate he wants a free night's lodging, not to mention a few other little services- so it make up the bed and put the kettle on, fasten the hook on my

door so he can't come begging- I took the whole thing in at first glance, like a chess player ( *The Time: Night 9*).

Here Anna's intelligence is equated with that of a chess player's. She foresees an upcoming unfair situation and avoids it wisely. Petrushevskaya's women are those who gained strength from the lessons of their life. They are educated even though they are struggling in the hardships of life for their own existence. Therefore, her characters overcome male hypocrisy with their intelligence and wisdom. The patriarchal society has seen intelligence as a talent that only men have inherited. But Petrushevskaya's stories are distinguished by challenging this kind of gender hierarchy prevalent in the society. In both the stories Petrushevskaya presents the protagonists who are liberated from the gender norms of the society therefore they cannot be categorised by their acts.

There are many examples of this kind of rejection of gender identity which can be found in Petrushevskaya's short fiction. In the 'Time: Night' Anna is a poet and does not agree with being called "poetess, the feminine form of poet. Anna says:

I'm a poet. Some people like the word 'poetess' but look what Tsvetaeva said- or Ahkmatova- my most name sake, we have this mystic link between us, there's only a few letters difference,; she is Anna Andeevna and I'm whenever I get to give a reading, I always ask them to announce me as 'the poet Anna...' ( *The Time: Night 9*).

Here, Anna is unwilling to accept the gender discrimination. She is not ready to categorize her gender identity 'feminine'. Thus, she rejects the word 'poetesses'.

She likes to call her as 'poet Anna' and she believes that 'poet' is a group that includes writers without gender differences. Petrushevskaya rejects feminist attempt of feminization of language and she uses gender neutral language which does not peep into one's gender identity. Throughout the story, Anna's character deals with issues of gender performances.

According to critics like Helena Goscilo, Petrushevskaya's fictions are shockingly unpleasant and notorious because of her subject matter. Her portrayal of grotesque body contradicts the 'ideal' depiction of the soviet time. According to the Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism, the grotesque body is unfinished and open to the outside world. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limit in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating drinking or defecation (Groshev 58). This grotesque body is against the idea of whole body. Body is commonly considered a signifying machine, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and committed what is essentially private (Groz 9). According to the postmodern concept, grotesque body or meta body is a self-reflexive body. 'Grotesque body is against the dominating single- dimensional narrative that resembles the body parts are in a condition that deconstruct and annihilate the normal idea of wholesome body foregrounding body orifices' (Chaudhury). Petrushevskaya's text turns the body 'inside out' by using grotesque interiors. In her works the marginal elements of the human body which are essentially disregarded as gross are given voice, a personality to challenge the binary of good body part and bad body part. Petrushevskaya depicted childbirth not as holy but as a pain of a female body. In the story 'The Time Night', Anna narrates the



sufferings she had during the childbirth and describes the creative process of a new life:

Here's what happens: out of all these tears and groans and blood a tiny little cell is born, one cell in the spawn, a tiny tadpole, that's the result of this explosion, this eruption, one little creature happens to be the first to swim in on the waves and take root, and that applies to all of us, that's how we all began! Ah Nature, what tricks She plays on us! How great She is! Why does she wring from us all these sufferings, this horror, blood, stench, sweat, slime, convulsions, love, violence, pain, sleepless nights, hard labour- apparently just so that all should be well in the end! (*The Time: Night 25*).

Here Petrushevskaya directly attacks the biblical story about the holy birth of Jesus. Divinity of the Mother Mary acquired through the virgin birth is probed here by the detailed description of the grotesque body.

Petrushevskaya's portrayal of grotesqueries can be seen throughout the story. Her treatment of woman body with all kind of physical urges and activities such as hunger, sex, childbirth and abortion make the author controversial during the Soviet era. When the Soviet literature portrays the 'incomplete' ideal female body which is beautiful and perfect according to the beauty measures defined by the male aesthetic vision, the story 'The Time: Night' shatters the entire conventional aesthetic concept about the female body through the portrayal of Anna and Alyona. They feel hunger, have diseases, and have sex and experiencing orgasm. Hunger is the hardest problem of a human being. Petrushevskaya's women characters live in terrible hunger. The story 'The Time: Night' presents the protagonist lives in

poverty and hunger. The story reveals the pathetic situation of her hunger. Anna thought it as unbearable to sit starving at someone else's table, so used to brought bread when she went to visit her friend's house. Most of the time, Anna is starving at home. Anna narrates the situation that her daughter Alyona and her partner make delicious foods for their guests while she sits starved at home:

When I'd dragged home two full bags of shopping after a whole day's queuing and then- 'a hungry guest turned up and ate it all' (to use her happy phrase). Those guests certainly didn't let the grass grown green on the path to our house; all of them were so moved by the situation of these starving newlywed parents to be. She of course behaved majestically, queening it in the kitchen over His Majesty's Potatoes, His Majesty's three ounces of butter, His Majesty's sausage; delicious smell came wafting out and it got to the point where they even carted off my only kettle and I meanwhile, starving myself in preparation, waiting for my one and only beloved son to come back, scrimping and saving on everything, was reduced to boiling up water in a saucepan , just plain water, bread and tea was all I had for breakfast lunch and dinner (*The Time: Night 39*).

Petrushevskaya portrays problems of hunger and poverty existing in Soviet society through her protagonist. Besides hunger, Anna is dissatisfied with the oldness that affects her body. Anna is suffering with joint pain and insomnia. She cannot sleep at night and she feels that her life starts slipping away. Anna acknowledges her body's discomfort and mocks the people who cover them up. "...but we'll draw a veil over that, everyone has their secret and many bear them to

the grave, there are some things you can never ever divulge” (*The Time: Night* 44). Here Petrushevskaya portrayed the grotesque body which is beyond the gender divisions. She substantiates Butler’s corporeal humanism based on the precariousness and vulnerability of human body. Petrushevskaya also defends the cultural definitions of the image of woman by depicting the blurring boundaries between the use and abuse of the body. Anna comparing herself with the image of the Russian grandmother ‘Babushka’: Anna’s self-referential narration can be found out in the following context:

I walked off, locked myself in my room and wept long and bitterly. I was still only fifty years old then! Ah, when I look back now on those vanished years of my youth, when my joints had barely begun to ache, my blood pressure was fine- I had everything then, everything! At nights, it’s true, I was already suffering from insomnia, I’d fall asleep then wake again, fall asleep, then wake. Then, like an avalanche, my life started slipping away... but we’ll draw a veil over that, everyone has their secrets and many bear them to the grave, there are some things you can never ever divulge. You folk that are old and sick, I weep for you (*The Time: Night* 44).

In these lines, Petrushevskaya directly attacks the ‘Babushka’ image in Russian popular culture an elderly woman or grandma with a headscarf and master of anything, who loves children and feeds them with delicious food and makes her grandchildren happy.

Petrushevskaya subverts the power dynamics within love relationships. According to the British feminist sociologist Carol Smart, “Love is an aspect of

patriarchy's ideological armament which women become hooked into dependent relationships with men, entered into an unfavourable legal contract (marriage) and ultimately ended up with care of the children" (Grossi). In Petrushevskaya's story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' the mother has a love relationship. The story opens like this: "Both the mother and son were having love affairs concurrently" (17). This is an unconventional idea that a mother and son having love affair simultaneously. According to Pierre Bourdieu love is the most subtle and most invisible form of violence (109). For him 'perfect reciprocity of the loving dyad'(112). is uncharacteristically romantic and idealistic. In Bourdieu's view men do not lay aside their male power when they love. Thus, Love becomes oppressive and women are the oppressed. The social context in which it is constructed and divided as public and private is another reason for love becoming oppressive. In most of the stories of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya marital relationships is presented not as a legal contract but as a mutual agreement for the survival. Extramarital affairs and separation are common theme in her stories. In this story Petrushevskaya presents a single mother who had many love affairs in her life. The mother in this story longs for an intimacy with the grown-up son and considers him as an individual who could understand her life and let her understand his life too.

Petrushevskaya presents the mother through the eyes of her son. He sees the mother as a woman who grabs his attention and closeness in the name of motherhood. Therefore, he does not show interest in talking to his mother about his love or hearing about her relationships. Even though the mother thinks that the son will tell her about his love and thereby establish a bond with him, the son sees this

thought of the mother as an exercise of power over him. The author says that the mother is waiting for the moment to take the son under her control. The story reveals the emotional fluctuation of mother and son portrayed in this context:

“When his mother started laughingly telling him something about her sailor, he got up and went in to the kitchen. She carried on talking in the other room. Smiling at her own story but he couldn’t take any of it in and stood there frozen over the sink. At last, his mother fell silent, as if expecting him to tell her his own story now about Natasha Kandaurova. And you could sense in her silence that she felt somehow sated, as if she had got just what she wanted was poised and waiting to take him under her wings console her with her greater experience of life and in turn receive consolation. And there are something idiotic, female, over excited I her glee at how the two of them- in a little family plot- would join forces now against the two ‘Kans’. It was as if she were over joyed at a sudden unexpected victory- overjoyed that’d finally grown up and could understand her life and let her understand his life too (“A Case of Virgin Birth” 17).

Here Petrushevskaya presents a mother in the eyes of a son. The son is no longer ready to endure the dominance of his mother. He fears his mother who spoiled his childhood with the terrible stories of ‘Virgin Birth’. Petrushevskaya challenges the selfless image of motherhood through this story. The story reveals the power play within the family relationships. The mother uses her dominant power upon her son when he was young, but now when the son is grown up, he realized

that the invisible power play and he withdrew from that. The annoyances that he suffered in his childhood are revealed in the story as:

He had many times suffered these torments from her; when she was washing him in the tub as a child, for instance, she'd tell him that certain boys indulged in silly things, but that was very bad, you could land up in hospitals and have to have injections. And when he was bit older, she had suddenly started telling him what terrible agonies she had been through giving birth to him- she was only eighteen years old and her case was one in a million, a case of virgin birth... she 'd been a virgin when she lay down in the labour room but the doctor hadn't wanted to interfere surgically, so it was her son who'd made her a woman' (" A Case of Virgin Birth" 18).

The mother asserts her authority over him at his very young age by establishing before him that his son was born of 'virgin birth' to highlight the sovereignty that he belongs to her alone and when the son grew up he realizes that 'motherhood' is a tool for the mother to establish power over him. In this story Petrushevskaya rejects the idealized image of motherhood by concurring Butler's idea of motherhood as "the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual origin" (Butler 31). The mother in the story was manipulating the son from his very tender age with her power as a mother. An affectionate mother -child bond is absent in their relationship. The mother asked for the assistance whenever she needed without considering his conveniences. Once she asked him straight out to accompany her to the hospital and another time, she shouted him to come and visit her at hospital while doing his end of term examination at school. But now the son is

grown up and keeps distance from her leaving her perplexed and afraid of him.

Petrushevskaya narrates their relationship through these lines:

The mother didn't know how to approach him now; she was afraid of being hurt afresh, of reopening old wounds by trying to get closer, while every time he calmly moved away and became yet more aloof. Sometimes it's true, he'd chat to her for a while about this and that, mainly about the books he'd been reading. And every time she became so immersed in these conversations, entered in to them so eagerly. Latched on so keenly to his every word that he began to feel stifled and uncomfortable in his role of a adored son and would distance himself again, moving off and leaving her perplexed and afraid of herself ("A Case of Virgin Birth" 20).

In this context, it is evident that the mother- son relationship in this story is a threat to the holy connection between mother and son. Here, Petrushevskaya narrates the emotional distance the son keeps with his mother that arises mother a sense of guilty. In this story the author presents the mother who exploits her son for her own existence which is against the cultural definitions of motherhood. In his childhood, the mother treats the son without any special consideration. She stopped paying attention to him and he sensed that she felt burdened by his superiority; she had some grown up business of her own which he was not yet old enough to deal with. The narrator of the story is an outsider and interventions can be reflected in these lines:

Once, it's true, she stopped paying attention to how he was behaving towards her and asked him straight out to accompany her to hospital. She had been

upset since the morning, when he was getting ready for school; instead of making him scrambled eggs as usual, she just lay there drowsy-eyed looking out of the window. When he got back from school, he felt a bit piqued because he sensed that she no longer felt burdened by his superiority, she had some grown up businesses of her own which he wasn't yet old enough to deal with. And that in general he knew very little about her and that there were other things in her life besides him ("A Case of Virgin birth" 21-22).

In this story, Petrushevskaya depicts the mother who is free to act upon her sexual desires. According to this perspective she did many abortions in her life. As Simon de Beauvoir considers childbirth is not a 'trap' for her. Thus, the mother in this story exploits the myth of 'good' mother with her erotic desires. She broke the monogamy of marriage and live single but had many affairs and sexual relationships. Petrushevskaya presents the mother in this story as a woman with erotic as well as maternal desires, the two desires often as odds. The mother negotiates two potentially desperate part of her life- the maternal with concentration on responsibility and nurturing her child and the erotic with its concentration on self-gratification through the pursuit of adult interest and sexual pleasure. She is trying to balance her maternal duty and her love life. In terms of the historical good or bad mother stereotypes, the mother in the story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' represents something in between. While Anna in 'The Time Night' is exploited by her children for their own existence, the mother of the story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' is a single mother who exploits her son for her own existence. Through these characters Petrushevskaya confirms Butler's idea that the motherhood is culturally



constructed and it should be liberated from the shackles of paternal law. According to her, the liberation is ‘neither to its “natural” past, nor to its original pleasure, but to an open future of cultural possibilities’ (Butler 119). Through her stories Petrushevskaya opens new cultural possibilities of motherhood.

The story ‘Another Land’ also depicts a single mother who lives with her little daughter in an apartment by hiding from the friends and relatives. She is a drunkard who gets separated from her husband. The story opens with the narrator’s concern about a single mother headed family especially when the mother is a drunkard. The narrator’s concern about how the lives of mother and daughter are going, can be seen as the overall concern of society when a woman lives alone with her child. The anxiety of the narrator can be seen in the story and it is as follows:

Who can say what life is like for a quite woman addicted to drink, who lives hidden away from everyone in a one room apartment with her child? Who knows what it’s like for her night after night, no matter how drunk, to gather up all the little things her daughter needs for kindergarten, so they should all be to hand in the morning? She still has traces of beauty in her face- arched brows, a slender nose, but her daughter’s all listless, pale and fat; she doesn’t even resemble her father, for her father has bright blonde hair and bright red lips. Usually, the little girl sits and plays quietly on the floor while her mother drinks, sitting at the table or lying on the divan. Then they both go to bed and turn out the light and in the morning get up as if nothing had happened and turn through the frost and the dark to the kindergarten (“Another Land” 80).

Through these words, the narrator shares the anxieties of the society about the life of the mother and child and how the mother gathers up the daily needs. The patriarchal society defines a family as headed by man and the power rests on him alone and they see the single mother families as a 'broken' one. An ideal family is a family in which legally married couple sharing some responsibilities such as the adult male in paid employment; his earning provides the economic basis of the family- house hold and the adult female's primary responsibility is to care for the husband, household and children (Smith 52). This gender roles assigned by the society is overthrown in this story Another Land. Even though the mother in the story is jobless, alcoholic and she could not think of her daughter's meal at home and they live their life. The narrator describes the routine of the mother and the child at home:

In the old days she wouldn't have dreamt of opening the bottle before her daughter fell asleep, but later the whole thing became much simpler, everything took its natural course, because what did it matter to the little girl, after all, whether her mother was drinking tea or medicine. And little girl really doesn't mind at all; she sits on the floor playing with her old toys, and there's not a soul in the world who knows how the two of them live, how the mother keeps calculating over and over, and decides in the end there's no harm done if the money that should have been spend on dinner goes instead on a bottle of wine- the little girl gets fed at the kindergarten, and she herself can make do without (" Another Land" 81).

Through the portrayal of mother in this story Petrushevskaya subverts the ideals of 'good' and 'bad' mother by portraying an idle mother addicted to alcohol. According to Jung 'good mother' is a universal archetype. Archetypes are markers of collective unconsciousness and these archetypes are universal ideas that transcend culture and tradition (Hadley 24). In literature this archetype of 'Good mother' already had a meaning. They are already imbued with, nurturing characteristics, patience, empathy, and selflessness. The negative archetype of a bad mother is also fully formed. Bad mother are especially recognized by their destructive, selfish and detached parenting. The mother in this story is breaks the 'already existed' image of 'good and bad Mother' (Hadley 25). According to Butler's performative theory proliferation of gender roles happens with the culturally informed ways of performing. The mother in this story breaks such gender performances.

The mother in the story does not feed her child enough at home but takes her to kindergarten where the child gets food and somehow managed to gather up all the little things her daughter needed for kindergarten. Those who live without the conscience of society naturally had to face the auditing of the society. Such critical reviewing is also faced by this small family of mother and daughter. Night is the time when mother and daughter are together at home and people have no idea where they both go during the day. According to the people of the society they came from 'another land' where nobody knows about their life. The narrator says:

So they economise, switch off the lights and go to bed at nine o' clock in the evening, nobody knows how they both fall asleep the minute their heads touch the pillow, to return once again to that other land, whence the early

morning they'll both come back, in order to run, who knows where, down the dark, frosty street when in truth they'd do better never to wake at all ("Another Land" 81-82).

As a representative of the society, the narrator thinks that this small family lives a private life hiding from everyone and not within the confines of the definitions of a family by the society. According to Kate Millet family is patriarchy's chief institution. In her view family is 'mediating between the individual and the social structure and serves as an agent for larger society. Family encourages its own members to adjust and conform to social norms' (Women and Marxism)<sup>45</sup>, inculcating and internalizing in them, patriarchal ideologies and attitudes towards the categories of role, temperament and status and this is carried out through socialization. But this family lives away from the society and by denoting their private space as an 'other land' indicates that this family is separated and not fit to the larger society. The mother and daughter are not ordinary people because they are coming from an 'Another Land' and the narrator thinks that it is better to never wake at all to return to this ordinary world. However, the mother and the child are not aware of such talks. They live their life as normal.

For the mother and child, they live their own life without bothering about others. The mother spends her money for a bottle of wine without any food and the little girl was fed at kindergarten and at home, she sits quiet and plays with her old dolls while her mother drinks. This was the routine of the family and for them it is as quite natural and normal. In this story Petrushevskaya presents a family headed by a single mother without much social contact which the society thinks as unnatural

but for the members of the family it is quiet natural. Here, the author destroys all the definitions of an ideal family and ideal motherhood through this story and saying neutrally that our society is made up by including such people and families. Butler's idea of subversion is possible through 'liberation' to the 'open future of cultural possibilities 'can be seen in the story.

Petrushevskaya presents different types of people from the society in a very unique way in her stories. The speciality of her stories is that they do justice to the social reality. In the story 'Xenia's Daughter', she depicts the life of sex workers. As an introduction of the story the author gives a brief note about prostitutes as a subject matter in literature and how the authors treated them in literature. It shows the prejudice of the society about prostitutes, that they would not have pity on them. The authors adopt high position and assuming the role of judges and they defend and prosecute the sex workers. It shows the discrimination to women that there is no offence charged to men who is the client. Prostitution is the "embodiment of patriarchal male privilege" i.e. it is the "male domination exercised through the medium of sexuality" (Scoular). When historically looking patriarchy defines prostitution as a profession of sin and only women are punished for the offence. According to the radical feminist thought prostitution is the violation of women's human right and postmodernism considers prostitution as a work or choice of sex. Petrushevskaya's text shows both the traits of feminism and postmodernism. While the sex worker Xenia chooses prostitution as her work even without expecting any payment. Her daughter chooses it not only for money but also as her choice and she is able to react when someone exploits her moods.

Petrushevskaya's sex workers are not particularly feminine. Prostitution is a profession where beauty plays a great role in the determination of earning through sex work because males prefer women who are more attractive (Cunningham). Feminine beauty ideal is a socially constructed phenomenon. The patriarchal system has a major role to play in the construction of an ideal feminine body and the myth created by the patriarchal society keeps women constantly occupied with the predicament of how to look (Wolf). They assure that a women's most important asset is attractiveness and something women should strive to achieve and maintain. Femininity was to be concentrated in and shown through the body as the slim, groom and sexy. Women should try to obtain these ideals in order to be considered beautiful by society's standard. But such views are debunked through the portrayal of Xenia; a sex worker who is not particularly qualified with the feminine beauty concepts. The author describes her:

And indeed whose heart- even in those most steeped in prejudice- would not be wrung with pity at the sight of a whore, one who in Russian cries out to be called *prostushka* -a simple soul, a poor bareheaded creature. Mind you, this one does have a scarf of sorts on her head, a crude rough thing like an old felt boot, pushed to the back of her head so all her hair draggles down. That's what you'd have to call her- a *prosthushka*: a bit on the fat side, a wee bit short, no Madame Universe, unlike some of those women- thoroughbred champions with great broad shoulders and withers and narrow waists and legs plump in the calf and tampering at the ankle (Petrushevskaya 90).

Through the depiction of the physical features of Xenia, Petrushevskaya not only shatters the single ideal entity of woman but also rejects the monotonous body identity. According to Beauvoir, ‘it is civilization as a whole determines’ the gender. (273) I.e. gender is cultural construction. The society influences women to conform the female expectations. It means that women unconsciously learn through the process of socialization to place themselves secondary to men and are conditioned by society to behave as women are expected to behave. At the same time, Butler argues that there is no such fixed gender, that is, one who becomes a woman is not necessarily female. Therefore the human body has no monotonous identity. According to her “body is a situation’ and ‘there is no resource to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings” (Butler 12). Xenia was a fat and short woman who does not qualify the feminine beauty concepts. Petrushevskaya’s characters break society’s expectations not only in outward beauty but also in character. Her characters resist the conditioning of the society. In prostitution women are the sellers and men are the clients and prostitution sees the female body as a commodity for sale, destined to be subject to the needs and demands of the customer. The author says about this captivity of a prostitute in this story as:

For being a whore means you can’t despise anyone, old or young or plagued with pox; a whore can’t turn a soul away- she can’t, she’s not allowed, perhaps doesn’t wish to. How turn away someone who’s come bearing gifts? Who’s come, not just any how, but with something for her a bottle or money or fancy underwear; someone who gift or no gift- wouldn’t dream of going

elsewhere, wouldn't deign to look at someone else; so else where the doors get closed and locked and the dust and cobwebs are left to gather ("Xenia's Daughter" 93).

In this story, Xenia's daughter breaks this unwritten rule of the society because she does the job of sex work as her choice. The author says that the sex workers demand respect, their feelings, mood and whims should be addressed. The author tells: "... these moods- you just have to kiss the lock on the door and go along home, not take it as an insult, just a case of desire frustrated, love unconsummated, sadness at the chance of a holiday missed- just that" ("Xenia's Daughter" 94). They believe that they have the right to shut their door and throw the customers out.

Xenia's daughter strikes a bottle at the head of a policeman because he is the representative of the law. The author justifies this action that law took no account of anyone's whim, or any one's natural depression or words such as 'go to hell.' Petrushevskaya presents her women characters as strong as to attack the policeman, the representative of law who disregard the mood and natural depressions of sex worker women. When she was arrested and led to the court room, the policeman escorted her wearing an expression which shows the misogynistic attitude of the people towards sex workers. As Simon de Beauvoir refers women in second sex that she is the absolute 'other', prostitution has become a mere consequence of women's otherness. The society is not ready to see sex work as their work or their choice. because the majority of the workers are women and men are the customers. The social stigma attached to sex work is powerful. Sex workers are widely considered



as marginalised and eyesore to the ‘mainstream’ public. Such approach to the sex workers can be seen in this story, when Xenia entered the courtroom to see convicted her daughter. They all know Xenia and her daughter because most of them are their customers. The author narrates the scene as:

They all watch eagerly and feast on this great misfortune. (not in the sense that they enjoy it no, although there’s a bit of that too, somewhere they’re glad to witness this unique spectacle, so natural, so true to life it sends a shiver down your spine, with all the details no one could have invented, the mother prostitute rush to the daughter prostitute, right on the cue with the cigarettes and the biscuits, because the daughter had nothing to eat since lunch- and they’ll feast their eyes...(“Xenia’s Daughter” 92).

Here, the author exposes the pseudo morality of the society. They gathered to see Xenia and her daughter not with the love or sympathy but to enjoy their misfortune. Misogyny works on sex workers at its peak.

As a daughter of a prostitute, Xenia’s daughter has gone through the social labelling from the very younger age. According to the American sociologist Dalton Conely, individuals subconsciously notice how others see or label them, and their reaction to those labels over time from the basis of their self-identity (Conley). It means that a person’s self-identity changes to fit their behaviour which society imposed upon them, i.e. this labelling is a social construction. The society sees Xenia and her daughter simply as “a whore to bring up another whore” even though the mother had no intension to bring her daughter to her path, the daughter chooses her mother’s path. But her manifestation was entirely different from her mother. She

breaks the social expectations of a sex worker, that she cannot despise anyone or even not allowed to react to their exploitations. Xenia's daughter challenges that expectation from very young age by biting children who bullied her at school. Later she attacked the policeman who interferes in her private space for check-up without considering her disposition.

In the story 'Father and Mother', Petrushevskaya discusses the issues of a married woman. The mother in the story raises her voice and protests against the gender hierarchy in family. The mother lives with numerous children and the father escapes every morning for his job and reappeared in the family only after eleven o'clock at the night. The whole day the mother and her little children spend at the home with hunger. Her husband is working away from home and having sex with many women and does not look after her wife or children or give them due consideration. It makes the mother furious and is not ready to suffer this neglect and reacts strongly. The author describes: "The mother went further and further in her righteous fury, she was quite capable of turning up at the officer's mess to find him and start kicking right there on the spot..." ("Xenia's Daughter" 100). As Simon de Beauvoir observes the gendered issue regarding married woman is severe. According to her, married woman's function in family is to satisfy a male's sexual needs and to take care of his household. Man may bed with slaves, concubines, mistresses, prostitutes, but he required respect certain privilege of his legitimate wife (Beauvoir 417). Even though the mother's situation is not different, she is not ready to admit such gender hierarchies.

As a home maker, the mother never gets an equal dignity from her husband.

According to Simon de Beauvoir

A man is socially an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does for the group. We have seen why it is that reproductive and domestic role to which women is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity (Beauvoir 416).

The husband in the story is the provider and the wife and children live under his cost. Therefore, he does what he wants to do not even considering his wife's protest. And the wife is advised by the neighbours to scare him away and turn him off for good. But the wife is not willing to admit her indignity. She fights to explore the truth, destroys the follies of her husband who hides his mistakes in front of the society and tries to create an illusion of a happy family. In marriage institution men demand the virginity and righteous fidelity of women and she is allowed no direct influence upon the future or on the world. She reaches out towards the social group only through her husband as intermediary. The mother in the story questions the marriage institution that frees men from virginity and chastity. She feels she had been in a trap that she was surrounded on all sides by disgust and disdain, while everyone, she feels, meanwhile, pities her husband and tries to guard him from her. She runs after him every morning to stop him but he escapes and it makes her to hate her husband even keeps her children away from him. She never admits him near her children. The author explains the grotesque image of the father:

just look at their depraved father, fresh out of someone else's bed with the flush still on her cheeks, their father who'd just been kissing God knows who with his stinking gob, that filthy crater of his, and now came thrusting his sobering lips at his clean little girls that he'd no doubt be happy to go with as well-and so on so forth ("Father and Mother" 100).

The mother is not afraid of the society as the father do. When she raised her voice, the father terrified that the neighbour would find them out. But the mother told everything to everyone.

In this story the author presents a woman who is trying to destroy the follies of her husband who tries to create an image of a happy family in front of the society. She does not try to stand up to the society by pretending to be a perfect wife or house wife. She exposes her husband's misbehaviour in front of the society, which is the cause of the destruction of her entire family, and destroys the falsehood of a happy family that he was trying to create. She has no fear that this will tarnish her status in the society. She believes on her own right and is not ready to create a false image of a happy family.

The traditional gender roles cast men as decision makers and women as the dutiful followers. But the narrator in the story 'Our Crowd' takes a brilliant decision to assure her child's future in the hands of his father, before her imminent death, by making him a victim of child abuse. Here, the story reflects Butler's postmodernist notion of gender that 'gender identity is performativity constituted'. Refusing fixities, Butler sees gender as provisional, shifting, contingent and performed. The mother in the story did not validate her gender identity as a fixed one and thus she

subverts the gender roles prescribed by the society. Patriarchy limits the primary duty of a woman in family is the rearing and caring of children. They define motherhood as the embodiment of love, care, nurturing and sacrifice. The responsibility of raising a child is vested in mothers and if she fails, she is considered a 'bad mother. In this story the father used to beat the child for his habit of eating food without chewing and dropping food all over his trousers and wetting bed, but it becomes unnatural and vicious when the mother did the same. At this point, the narrator breaks patriarchal definitions of 'woman' who is intelligently and emotionally weak. Petrushevskaya presents the paradox of motherhood defined by the patriarchal society but the mother transforms her child from a real child, one who eats sloppily and wets his bed, into a victim and saved by his father and his group of friends. Here, the mother is a sensible woman who is aware of the reality and is willing to sacrifice her own 'good image' for the sake of her son's future. Here Petrushevskaya liberated the maternal body from the paternal law and created a new possibility of motherhood as Butler says.

In short, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya as a dominant voice of Perestroika and Glasnost, portrayed women as the centre characters in her stories. But her treatment of women makes her different from her contemporary writers who wrote women issues as their core theme. While her fellow writers treated women as a single entity and wrote about the lives of women struggling to take on the Soviet- imposed feminine task of balancing career and family in a feminist perspective, Petrushevskaya approached the women issues in a postmodern perspective by rejecting the feminist idea of 'being gendered'. Petrushevskaya rejects the male

female dichotomy as conceptualized by the feminists and follows the Butler's concept of humanity without gender. According to Butler's performativity theory, 'gender is a doing' (33) and by undoing it, humans can live a free and equal life based on humanity without the labels of gender. Even though Petrushevskaya portrayed women as the centre of her stories, they never consolidate their gender identity and they live freely without considering society's gender norms. Butler's way of humanism by undoing gender can be seen in Petrushevskaya's stories.

Petrushevskaya's women characters never consolidate their gender identity as 'feminine'. Therefore, her women characters are stigma to the role models created by the official literature promoted by the Soviet government. They are the victims of the economic scarcity, poverty, hunger and issues of communal life prevalent in the late Soviet Russia and they are from the different sections of the society as well. Therefore, woman in each story is different. Anna in the story 'The Time: Night' is a poet and a struggling mother in the midst of poverty and desolated family. Mother in "A Case of Virgin Birth" is a single mother who feels rejected by her grown up son, Xenia in 'Xenia's Daughter' is a sex worker, mother in 'Our Crowd' is an intelligent woman who is suffering from a sever disease, mother in "Another Land" is an alcoholic woman and the mother in "Father and Mother" is a struggling house wife who is cheated by her husband. All these women characters bear different status and facing different situations in life. While analysing Petrushevskaya's stories on the basis of the postmodern gender theory of Judith Butler, that "if one is woman, not all one" her women characters did not confirm a 'single' identity but transcends the multiple attributes.

The enslavement of women begins with the man centred heterosexual family. According to the conventional thought, man centred family is the ideal family and the Soviet society also promoted the heterosexual family. As a revolt to this idea Petrushevskaya presented matriarchal families, in most of her stories. Anna's family in *The Time: Night*, families in the stories of 'A Case of Virgin Birth', 'Another Land' and the family of Xenia in 'Xenia's Daughter' are matriarchal families. Through these stories Petrushevskaya emphasizes that not only men but also women can manage the family. Here, her women characters surpass the gender norms of the society. Petrushevskaya approves the humanist position of Butler which proclaims gender is an attribute of a person not a fixed one. Petrushevskaya's women characters subvert the gender roles by the continuous performances. This view rejects stable identities and fixities, there by breaks the concept of 'ideal family' headed by man defined by the patriarchy.

Petrushevskaya's women characters shatters monotony of the body identity as proposed by Judith Butler. They challenge the sexiest notions and beauty measures defined by the patriarchy. Petrushevskaya's women characters are intelligent, sensible and beyond the beauty measures of the patriarchy. They break society's expectations not only in outward beauty but also in character. In the story 'Our Crowd' the author breaks the patriarchal definitions of woman who is intelligently and emotionally weak. Femininity was to be concentrated in and shown through the body- The slim, groom and sexy; and women should try to obtain these ideals in order to be considered beautiful by society's standard. But such views are

debunked through the portrayal of Xenia in the story 'Xenia's Daughter'; a sex worker who is not particularly qualified the feminine beauty concepts.

Petrushevskaya subverts the gender role assigned to woman by the Soviet Government in her stories. According to the Soviet vision an ideal women should have to take care of home as well as career. Petrushevskaya's characters are not working women or intellectuals. They choose their career as they wish and many of them are jobless. They ignore the role proposed by the society according to one's gender. Anna in the 'Time: Night' is a poet. In 'Xenia's Daughter', Xenia and her daughter are sex workers. The women characters in the stories like 'Another Land', 'A Case of Virgin Birth', 'Father and Mothe'r and 'Our Crowd' are jobless. Petrushevskaya presents her women characters as contradictory to the ideal 'New Soviet Women' who manage their home and work outside home for the development of their nation. By undoing gender, her women characters challenges the gender roles thus creates a gender free world where one can live freely without bothering the gender norms of the society. It shows Petrushevskaya's postmodern thought on gender identity and her vision of humanism.

Petrushevskaya depicts the most 'disturbing mothers' in her fiction. Motherhood is the great myth shattered by Petrushevskaya through her women characters. She confirms Butler's view on motherhood that maternal instinct is not true but imposed by the society. According to Butler's theory, motherhood is an utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual origin and by rejecting the heterosexual family Petrushevskaya subverts ideal mother image of loving, caring and self-sacrificing mothers in her stories. Petrushevskaya's mothers are dominant



voices in her stories because as Judith Butler says ‘they are liberated from the shackles of paternal law’. Thus she creates varied possibilities of motherhood. Through her works Petrushevskaya builds an inclusive society where people of different genders live together instead of stereotypes. By presenting single mothers Petrushevskaya rejects the heterosexual notion of family. In her stories she never mentioned men as a cause of women’s issues. Her women characters are never subordinated by the male characters. Petrushevskaya addresses the women issues without considering men as the suppresser as the feminists usually did. Her resolution for solving the gender issues of women rest in the undoing of gender roles as explained by Judith Butler. She envisions the society where people can live freely and equally without acting gendered performances.

**Endnote**

<sup>1</sup>Domostroi is 16<sup>th</sup> century Russian set of household rules, instructions and advice pertaining to various religious, social, domestic and family matters of the society. The author is unknown and the core of domostroi is the value tended to reinforce obedience and submission to God, Tsar and Russian Church.

**Work Cited**

- Balan, Sergiu. "M Foucault's View on Power Relations." *ResearchGate*, 2010.  
[www.researchgate.net/publication/321161337](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/321161337).
- Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. Jonathon Cape, 1956.
- Bordieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Sanford University Press, 2001.
- Butler, Judith. *The Gender Trouble*. Routledge, 1999.
- Butler, Judith. "Willing the Impossible: An Interview with Judith Butler." Interview by Ray Filar, 25 July 2014.
- Chaudhury, Jharna. "Postmodern/Post-mortem Human Body-Parts: Grotesque Subject in The Melancholy of Anatomy." *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1-7, DOI: 10.21659/rupkatha.v13n4.30.
- Conley, Dalton. *You May Ask Yourself*. Bartleby.com,  
[www.bartelby.com/essay/Dalton-Conely-You-may-Ask-Yourself-Summary-PC97YFQKPT](http://www.bartelby.com/essay/Dalton-Conely-You-may-Ask-Yourself-Summary-PC97YFQKPT).
- Cunningham, Scott. "The Role of Beauty in the Organization of Prostitution Markets." 2018. <https://www.scunning.com/files/obesity-20-pdf>.
- Groshev, Igor V. "Gender Perception of Power." *Sociological Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, 5-20, DOI: 10.2753/SOR1061-015441015.

- Grossi, Reneta. "Romantic Love- A Feminist Conundrum?" *The Feminist Wire*, 2013. <https://thefeministwire.com/2013/09/feminist-critiques-of-love/>.
- Groz, Elizabeth. "Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism." 1996. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24439181>.
- Hadley, Heidi Lyn. "Good Mother/Bad Mother: The Representation of Mothers in Printz-Award-Winning Literature." *ResearchGate*, 2018, pp. 23-34. [www.researchgate.net/publication/327546244-The-Representation-of-Mothers-in-Printz-Award-Winning-Literature](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/327546244-The-Representation-of-Mothers-in-Printz-Award-Winning-Literature).
- Muff, Rabecca. "Contemporary Russian Women Writers Rejecting Definition in Literary Rebellion." Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2008.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *The Time: Night*. Translated by Sally Liard. Pantheon, 1992.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *A Case of Virgin Birth*. In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 17-27.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Another Land." In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 80-82.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Xenia's Daughter." In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 90-97.

Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Father and Mother." In *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 98-103.

Smith, Alexandra. "In Populist Clothes: Anarchy and Subversion in Petrushevskaya's Latest Fiction." *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1997, pp. 107-125. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23806798](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23806798).

Scoular, Jane. "The Subject of Prostitution." University of Strathclyde, 2011. <http://fty.sagepub.com>.

Wolf, Naomi. "The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women." *Semantic Scholar*, 1990.

Wood, Julia T. "Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender." *Dokumen.pub*, 2019, <https://pages.nyu.edu/jakson/causes.of.gender.inequality/Readings/wood%20-%20Gendered%20Media%20-%202019.pdf>

Youkhanna, Nina. "A Chorus of Women: An Exploration of the Feminine in 19th and 20th Century Russian Literature." *The Comparative Literature Undergraduate Journal*, 2022.



## Conclusion

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya was a prominent Russian writer who lived through the Soviet period, which greatly influenced her life and creative works. During the Soviet era, Petrushevskaya faced various challenges due to her family's background and the political climate. Petrushevskaya's artistic journey was met with obstacles as well. She established in Russian literature when censorship was fully abolished as a result of Glasnost and Perestroika during the Gorbachev era. Before that period, many significant changes happened in Russian literature when censorship was partially eradicated during Khrushchev era and the following stagnation period. The works of previously banned talented writers like Alexander Solzhenitsyn began to appear in Soviet official journals during the political thaw of Nikita Khrushchev. The following era of Leonid Brezhnev later known as the 'Era of Stagnation', re-implemented the censorship. However, what makes, this period greater is that the 'women writers', who were hitherto neglected in the literary world, entered and dominated the literary scene. I. Grekova and Natalia Baranskaya are the prominent among them. The main themes of such writers were the problems faced by the working women who struggled to take on the Soviet- imposed feminine task of balancing career and family in their daily lives. However, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya didn't get her works published during this period and what sets Petrushevskaya apart from these writers is her completely different themes and characters.

Petrushevskaya's depiction of woman is intervened with her own life experiences in Soviet Russia. When analyzing the life of Petrushevskaya, it is clear

that the discrimination she had to face in her life during the Soviet period is not based on her gender but based on the socio political identity of her family as "enemy of the people". Therefore, her experiences as a member of an unprivileged category, during the period are not identical with the experience of any of the 'Soviet woman' of the period. While her neighbours in the communal apartment 'The Metropol Hotel' live in relatively better atmosphere, Petrushevskaya's family faced terrible discrimination from the Party authority and even lost their house and belongings, falls into ultimate poverty and migrated to Kuibyshev without anything. Therefore, her life at Kuibyshev as a young girl was a resistance against any kind of dominance: dominance within the family and street. She believed that freedom is much important in life. Her longing for freedom can be evidently seen in her later life in Moscow as a school girl who hates communalism and regular inspections. Her strange profile as the relative of 'enemy of the people' caused discrimination from school and summer camps she attended and that made her childhood intolerable.

When Petrushevskaya entered into the field of writing, she portrayed the life of the common people like her own family which was marginalized from the society. Life was intolerable for her characters that live in extreme poverty and material hardships. Her works debunk the false hype of the Soviet Government about their wealth, well organized communal life and gender equality. Her portrayals of such themes were the reasons for her ban during the 1960s and 70s. Though she started writing in 1968, she had to wait more than a decade for her works to be published. The biggest irony is that, it was the period of the second



wave feminism which was launched with the publication of Betty Friedan's 'Feminine Mystique' (1963) which is against the traditional gender roles in society and stop sex discrimination. Petrushevskaya's stories were rejected because she wrote about the miseries of Soviet life particularly the struggles faced by women. She depicted the themes of poverty and domestic violence. Soviet authority was never interested in women's experiences. Petrushevskaya's stories were women centered but they did not represent the ideal women as envisioned by the Soviet Government.

In pre-revolutionary Russia, a group of feminists demanded equal rights for women in all walks of life. But after revolution, feminism was considered a bourgeois movement and the Soviet Government strategically incorporated the 'women question' demanded by social democrats as a part of social revolution, into the party framework. A Marxist-Leninist strategy for solving the women question gradually took shape and their main aim was implementing their strategy of getting women to work outside home. Therefore, they tactically created an ideal working woman image 'The New Soviet Woman' who is super woman to handle the household and career simultaneously and the model was promoted through their official publications. Soviet government offered childcare, education and other necessary services but never fully implemented them. Therefore, women had to play double roles of both worker and housewife. This double burden of balancing work and family life by the Soviet women became the theme of writers like I. Grekova and Natalia Baranskaya and many other writers of the period. These writings contributed to the 'everyday Narratives' Russian literature. The writings included in

this category are unintentionally contributed to maintain the gender binaries in the society. Gender and every day are inseparable because the family as a male dominated institution imposed certain responsibilities to women like, child caring, maintaining the house etc. At the same time women had to work outside the home. This double burden of women is the main theme of 'every day narratives'. These writers wrote against the Soviet vision of ideal woman in a feminist perspective. They debunked gender roles instructed by the Soviet authority and the impractical model of 'New Soviet Women'. But Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's treatment of women is entirely different.

Even though Ludmilla Petrushevskaya portrayed women as the central characters in her stories, Petrushevskaya's woman characters are from different realm of society and their struggle for life under the socio political discrimination and the pathetic atmosphere of poverty and hunger are different. Therefore, their gendered experiences are not identical. Here, Petrushevskaya confirms Butler's view that gender issue cannot be approached on the basis of women as single entity but intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. While analysing Petrushevskaya's women characters on the basis of this theory of Butler, they are different and never surpass that common identity but rather transcend multiple attributes because they are from different class, regional and sexual categories.

Motherhood is the major theme depicted in most of Petrushevskaya's stories. But Petrushevskaya's women characters are not the typical mothers defined by the patriarchal society or the Soviet government. In 'The Time: Night' the protagonist Anna loves her children but she constantly makes clashes with her children for exploiting her for food and housing. Through the portrayal of Anna, Petrushevskaya challenges the most celebrated gender role assigned to women as the loving and self-sacrificing mother. Petrushevskaya's another story 'A Case of Virgin Birth' also presents a mother who rejects all the gendered notions of motherhood. The woman in this story is not ready to fall into that trap of motherhood because motherhood is not the ultimate goal of her life. Through these characters Petrushevskaya rejects the idealized image of motherhood by concurring Butler's idea of motherhood as "the utterly constructed status of the so called heterosexual origin" Petrushevskaya confirms the Butler's idea that the motherhood is culturally constructed and it should be liberated from the chains of patriarchal law. According to her the liberation is 'neither to its "natural" past, nor to its original pleasure, but to an open future of cultural possibilities.'" Through her stories Petrushevskaya opens new cultural possibilities of motherhood.

Petrushevskaya's women characters challenge the gender notions of patriarchal society about their intelligence, sense and wisdom. In the story 'Our Crowd' the author breaks the patriarchal definitions of woman who is intelligently and emotionally weak. The protagonist in the story is intelligent to point out mistake in an aeronautical project and emotionally strong enough to beat her son brutally in front of her friends. For the patriarchal society, Intellectual women were convicted

as unfeminine since a woman's emotion was valued over her intelligence because intelligence is being associated with the men. Petrushevskaya presents the protagonist as liberated from the gender norms of the society. The characteristic features of the protagonist never consolidate her gender identity. Thus, it validates Butler's idea that gender is performative.

Petrushevskaya's characters did not prove their gender identity or bothered about the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal society. She shattered the idea of gender itself by shattering the Soviet imposed gender roles. Petrushevskaya treated gender in a postmodern perspective as Butler says gender is an act or doing and by undoing it people can live equal life based on humanity without the labels of gender. This humanism of Butler can be seen Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's stories. Her stories reflect Butler's thought of 'all possibilities of being human must keep open. The postmodern thought of there is no objective reality can be seen in her gender portrayal. Her women characters confirmed the postmodern gender theory of Butler that gender issues cannot be approached on the basis of women as a single entity. While analysing Petrushevskaya's women characters on the basis of butler's theory, they do not qualify that single ideal entity, but transcends the multiple attributes.

Butler's thought on body identity can also be seen in Petrushevskaya's depiction of woman's body. Butler not only rejects the gender identity but also rejects the monotony of the body identity. Theories of Simon de Beauvoir are also used in this study to substantiate diverse aspect of gender and body depicted in the works of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya which is against the so called feminist thought. Simon de Beauvoir argues that 'man' made woman 'the other', i.e. female body is

marked within the masculine discourse, whereas the masculine body in its conflation with the universal remains unmarked. Here, Beauvoir emphasises the asymmetry between the body of a man and woman. But Judith Butler rejects this concept of body identity. Butler conceptualizes that gender, body identity and entity, all happens with the performativity. Petrushevskaya's story 'Xenia's Daughter' approves Butler's idea of rejecting the sovereign identity of human body. Butler's concept of rejecting gender and body identity can be evident in Petrushevskaya's stories. In 'The Time: Night' Petrushevskaya portrayed the grotesque body which is beyond the gender divisions. She substantiates Butler's corporeal humanism base on the precariousness and vulnerability of human body while applying Butler's Performative theory on motherhood that 'mothers are defined not primarily by biological function but their culturally encoded lived realities'. Her mother characters open new possibilities of motherhood. Mother characters in the stories 'The Time: Night', 'A Case of Virgin Birth' and 'Father and Mother' validate Butler's thought that maternal instinct is not true but imposed by society. Petrushevskaya rejects the idealized image of motherhood by concurring Butler's idea that the motherhood is the construction of heterosexual society. Most of her mother characters are single mothers or separated. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya presented marital relationships not as a legal contract but as a mutual adjustment for the survival. She rejects the institution of marriage where man exercises the power. She approves Pierre Bourdieu's view that marriage is the exercise of power in the form of love. Extramarital affairs and separation are common theme in her stories.

Petrushevskaya also rejects the male-female dichotomy and oppositional binaries, which were conceptualized by the feminists, and follows Butler's concept of humanity without gender. She is rejecting the monotonous identity of the woman body. Her characters open all possibilities of being human without being conscious of gender or gender roles. Here, Petrushevskaya takes a humanist-feminist position similar to Judith Butler's. According to Butler, a substantive person is the bearer of various essential and non-essential attributes, and gender is an attribute of a person who is characterized essentially as a 'pregendered substance' or 'core', called the person, denoting a universal capacity for reason, moral deliberation, or language. This idea of Butler can be seen as the characteristic feature of Petrushevskaya's woman characters. Petrushevskaya portrays a gender less society where people can live an equal life without being conscious of their gender identity or gender role assigned by the society.

## **Recommendations**

The present study focuses on how Petrushevskaya shatters the stereotypical images of women in her short fiction and her narratives are analysed within the light of postmodern gender theories. The study opens a wide range of possibilities for further studies in the same area. Major among them as follows:

**Comparative Analysis of Petrushevskaya's Works with her contemporaries:** Instead of focusing solely on the depiction of womanhood in Petrushevskaya's short fiction, there is a further possibility of expanding the analysis by comparing her works with her contemporary authors from inside and outside Russia. This comparative approach would allow to explore how her depiction of womanhood may vary from the authors of the same period.

**Reception and Impact of Petrushevskaya's Fiction:** Investigate the critical reception and impact of Petrushevskaya's works, specifically concerning the depiction of womanhood. Examine how her narratives have been received by readers, scholars, and feminist critics, and analyze the ways in which her portrayal of womanhood has influenced the broader literary landscape or feminist discourse.

**Sociological Perspective:** Consider Petrushevskaya's literary works as a specimen for the analysis of gender-based issues faced by women in society. Examine how the re-reading of Petrushevskaya's narratives can influence to eradicate the gender inequality and stereotypical images and narratives prevalent in society. This approach would add a sociological dimension to the study.





## Bibliography

Adams, Amy Singleton. "The Blood Of Children: Petrushevskiaia's 'Our Crowd' And The Russian Easter Tale." *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 56, no. 4, Forum: Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, 1887–1950), pp. 612-628. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/24392617](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24392617).

Arens, Katherine. "When Comparative Literature Becomes Cultural Studies: Teaching Cultures through Genre." *The Comparatist*, vol. 29, May 2005, pp. 123-147. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26237106](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26237106).

Armstrong-Buck, Susan. "Reviewed Work(s): Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought by Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1985, pp. 199-202. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23262604](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23262604).

Balan, Sergiu. "M Foucault's View on Power Relations." *ResearchGate*, 2010. [www.researchgate.net/publication/321161337](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/321161337).

Bartlett, Rosamund, and Anna Benn. *Literary Russia: A Guide*. Overlook Duke work, 2007.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press, 2002.

Basu, Sankar. *Culture and Civilization of the USSR*. Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1984.

Beauvoir, Simon De. *The Second Sex*. Everyman's Library, 1995.

- Benjamin, Jessica. "Gender-Normative Privilege." *Bonds of Love*, p. 183.  
[www.amptoons.com/blog/archives/2006/09/22/the-non-trans-privilegechecklist/](http://www.amptoons.com/blog/archives/2006/09/22/the-non-trans-privilegechecklist/).
- Berberova, Nina. "Vladislav Khodasevich-A Russian Poet." (1952): Vol. 11, No. 2 (Apr., 1952), pp. 78-85. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/125657](http://www.jstor.org/stable/125657).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Sanford University Press, 2001.
- Bromley, Jonathan. *Russia 1848-1917*. Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2002.
- Brown, Clarence. *The Portable Twentieth Century Russian Reader*. Penguin Books, 1985.
- Brown, Deming. *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin*. Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Brown, Edward J. *Russian Literature Since Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Brym, Robert J. "Sociology, Perestroika, and Soviet Society." *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, vol. 15, no. 2, Spring 1990, pp. 207-215. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3340754](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3340754).
- Buckley, Mary. "Women in the Soviet Union." *Feminist Review*, no. 8, Summer 1981, pp. 79-106. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/1394929](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1394929).
- Butler, Judith. "Willing the Impossible: An Interview with Judith Butler." Interview by Ray Filar, 25 July 2014.
- Charette, Caitlin C. "The Redemption of Vice: The Role of the Virtuous Prostitute in Dostoevsky's Russia." (2014).  
[digitalcommons.providence.edu/dostoevsky\\_2014/11/](http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/dostoevsky_2014/11/).

Chaudhury, Jharna. "Postmodern/Post-mortem Human Body-Parts: Grotesque Subject in The Melancholy of Anatomy." *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 1-7. DOI: 10.21659/rupkatha.v13n4.30.

Clawson, Robert W. "Political Socialization of Children in the USSR." (1973): *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 4, Dec. 1973, pp. 684-712. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2148165](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2148165).

Colebrook, Abigail Bray and Claire. "The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment." (1998): *Signs*, vol. 24, no. 1, Autumn 1998, pp. 35-67. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3175671](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175671).

Conley, Dalton. *You May Ask Yourself*. Bartleby.com. [www.bartelby.com/essay/Dalton-Conely-You-may-Ask-Yourself-Summary-PC97YFQKPT](http://www.bartelby.com/essay/Dalton-Conely-You-may-Ask-Yourself-Summary-PC97YFQKPT).

Connor, Walter D. "Alcohol and Soviet Society." *Slavic Review*, vol. 30, no. 3, Sep. 1971, pp. 570-588. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2493544](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2493544).

Cornwell, Neil. *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Cunningham, Scott. "The Role of Beauty in the Organization of Prostitution Markets." 2018. [www.scunning.com/files/obesity-20-pdf](http://www.scunning.com/files/obesity-20-pdf).

Vogel, David L., et al. "Confirming Gender Stereotypes: A Social Role Perspective." *Sex Roles*, June 2003, [www.researchgate.net/publication/226774739](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/226774739).

- Devika, J. *Kulastheeyum Chandappennum undayathengane*. Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, 2018.
- Dietz, Paul Gregory, and Barbara Dietz. "Soviet Perceptions of Economic Conditions during the Period of Stagnation: Evidence from Two." (1991): *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/152520](http://www.jstor.org/stable/152520).
- Dzirkals, Lilita. "Glasnost and Soviet Foreign Policy". A Rand Note, 1990. [www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3008.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3008.pdf).
- Edmonson, Linda. *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Emerson, Carly. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Russian Culture*. Edited by Tatiana Smorodinskaya, Karen Eveans-Romaine, Helena Goscilo. Routledge, 2007.
- Engel, Barbara Alpern. "Engendering Russia's History: Women in Post-Emancipation Russia and the Soviet Union." *Slavic Review*, vol. 51, no. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 309-321. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/249953](http://www.jstor.org/stable/249953).
- Engel, Barbara Alpern. *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2004.
- Everet-Hayness, La Monica. "Prostitutes Seen as 'Paradoxical Figures' in Russian Literature." University of Arizona, 2017. [news.arizona.edu/story/prostitutes-seen-paradoxical-figures-russian-](http://news.arizona.edu/story/prostitutes-seen-paradoxical-figures-russian-)

literature#:~:text=Lucey%20argues%20that%20writers%20%22imagine,many%20judicial%20and%20medical%20authorities.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia."

*The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 65, no. 4, Dec. 1993, pp. 745-770. *JSTOR*,  
[www.jstor.org/stable/2124540](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2124540).

---. "Culture and Politics under Stalin: A Reappraisal." *Slavic Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, Jun. 1976, pp. 211-231. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2494589](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2494589).

Frank, Peter. "Gorbachev and the 'Psychological Restructuring' of Soviet Society." *The World Today*, vol. 43, no. 5, May 1987, pp. 85-87. *JSTOR*,  
[www.jstor.org/stable/40395932](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395932).

Freeborn, Richard. *The Russian Revolutionary Novel: Turgenev to Pasternak*. Cambridge UP, 1982.

Gardiner, Henry Adams, editor. *A Cyclopaedia of Female Biography Consisting of Sketches of All Women Who Have Been Distinguished by Great Talents Strength of Character Piety Benevolence or Moral Virtue of Any Kind Forming a Complete Record of Womanly Excellence or Ability*. Groombridge and Sons, 1857.

Gawande, Dale Bachman Flynn and Atul. "'Grappling with Moral Decisions': An Interview with Atul Gawande." *Writing on the Edge*, vol. 22, no. 2, Spring 2012, pp. 8-20. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/43157454](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43157454).

- Georgievna, Svetlana. "Mythologization of The Concept of Femininity In The Russian Philosophy And Culture." *Revista de Letras*, vol. 56, no. 1, Janeiro/Junho 2016, pp. 167-184. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26460001](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26460001).
- Glass, Becky L, and Margaret K. Stolee. "Family Law in Soviet Russia, 1917-1945." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1987. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/351982](http://www.jstor.org/stable/351982).
- Gooding, John. "Perestroika as Revolution from within: An Interpretation." *JSTOR*, vol. 51, no. 1, Jan. 1992, pp. 36-57. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/131245](http://www.jstor.org/stable/131245).
- Gorbachev, Mikhail. "The Impetus for Change in the Soviet Union." Interview conducted by Commanding Heights, 23 April 2001.
- Gorsuch, Anne E. "'A Woman is Not a Man': The Culture of Gender and Generation in Soviet Russia." *Slavic Review*, vol. 55, no. 3, Autumn 1996, pp. 636-660. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2502004](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2502004).
- Grant, Judith. "Is the Personal Still Political?" *JSTOR*, vol. 5, no. 3, Autumn 1993, pp. 404-411. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/4316294](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4316294).
- Greene, Toby W., and Diana Clyman. *Women Writers in Russian Literature*. London: Praeger, 1994.
- Groshev, Igor V. "Gender Perception of Power." *Sociological Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 5-20. DOI: 10.2753/SOR1061-015441015.
- Grossi, Reneta. "Romantic Love- A Feminist Conundrum?". *The Feminist Wire*, 2013. [thefeministwire.com/2013/09/feminist-critiques-of-love/](http://thefeministwire.com/2013/09/feminist-critiques-of-love/).

Groz, Elizabeth. "Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism." *JSTOR*, 1996.

[www.jstor.org/stable/24439181](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24439181).

Hadley, Heidi Lyn. "Good Mother/Bad Mother: The Representation of Mothers in Printz-Award-Winning Literature". *Research Gate*, 2018, pp. 23-34.

[www.researchgate.net/publication/327546244-The-Representation-of-Mothers-in-Printz-Award-Winning-Literature](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/327546244-The-Representation-of-Mothers-in-Printz-Award-Winning-Literature).

Hayes, Ryan, and Karen L. *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Hunton, Vasilisa. "Lyudmilla Petrushevskaya Bravely Exposing the Depth of Human Sufferings During the Soviet era and Beyond." B.A Dissertation, Skemman.Is, June 2019. [skemman.is/bitstream/1946/32892/1/VasilisaHunton-4.pdf](http://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/32892/1/VasilisaHunton-4.pdf).

J.A. Cuddon. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.

Jay, Nancy. "Gender and Dichotomy." *JSTOR*, vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 38-56. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3177669](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177669).

Johnson, Emily D. "Today, Twenty Years after the Collapse of the Soviet Union: Russian and East European Literature." *World Literature Today*, vol. 85, no. 6, November/December 2011, pp. 32-33. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/41310381](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41310381).

Johnson, Maya. "Women and Children First: Domestic Chaos and the Maternal Bond in the Drama of Liudmila." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol. 34, 2020.

- Joseph, Sarah. *Masculine of the Virgin*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Jowett, Garth S., and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. Sage, 2015
- Kachurin, C. Musya Glants, and Pamela. "SPECIAL ISSUE: Culture, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War." *JSTOR*, [www.about.jstor.org/terms](http://www.about.jstor.org/terms).
- Kelly, Katriona. *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992*. Clarendon Press, 1994.
- . "An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing 1977-1992." Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Kizenko, Nadieszda. "Feminized Patriarchy? Orthodoxy and Gender in Post-Soviet Russia." *Signs*, vol. 38, no. 3, Spring 2013, pp. 595-621. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/668516](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/668516).
- Kolesnikov, Andrei. "RUSSIAN IDEOLOGY AFTER CRIMEA." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2015. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13015](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13015).
- Kotkina, Irina. "Utopian Literature and Utopian Political Thinking in Present-Day Russia." *The Russian Review*, vol. 75, no. 4, October 2016, pp. 559-561. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/43919635](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43919635).
- Lenin, V.I. "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government." E-copy, Marxist Internet Archive, 1918, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/x03.htm>.
- Lindbladh, Johanna. "The Quest for Narrative Identity: A Textual Analysis of Petrushevskaya's 'The Wall' and 'The Story Teller'." *Slavica Lundensia*, vol. 24, 2009, pp. 121-144. <https://journals.lub.lu.se/sl/article/download/10011/8447/23829>.



- Liovetsky, Mark. *50 Writers: An Anthology of 20th Century Russian Short Stories*. Academic Studies Press, 2011.
- "Ludmilla Petrushevskaya." *World Literature Today*, 2010, p. 5.
- Lukin, Yuri. *Lenin and Literature*. Raduga Publishers, 1988.
- Marsh, Rosiland. *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Gender and Russian Life*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Marsh, Rosiland. "New Mothers for a New Era? Images of Mothers and Daughters in Post-Soviet Prose in Historical and Cultural Perspective." *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 107, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1191-1219. JSTOR, doi.org/10.5699/modelangrevi.107.4.1191.
- Matthews, Emily Schuckman. "The (D)evolution of the Prostitute in 'Russian Beauty'." *The Russian Review*, vol. 74, no. 3, July 2015, pp. 435-451. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43662297.
- McCall, Leslie. "Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism, and Conceptions of Social Order." *Theory and Society*, vol. 21, no. 6, Dec. 1992, pp. 837-867. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/657646.
- McForan, D. W. J. "Glasnost, Democracy, and Perestroika." *International Social Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1988, pp. 165-174. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41881835.
- Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1995.

Millet, Kate. Chapter 2 of *Sexual Politics: Theory of Sexual Politics*. *Sexual Politics*, 1968.

[www.marxist.org/subject/women/authors/millet-kate/theory.htm](http://www.marxist.org/subject/women/authors/millet-kate/theory.htm).

Moi, Toril. "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture." *New Literary History*, no. 4, Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change, Autumn 1991, pp. 1017-1049. JSTOR,

[www.jstor.org/stable/469077](http://www.jstor.org/stable/469077).

Moser, Charles A. *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*. Press Syndicate of Cambridge University, 1996.

Muff, Rebecca. "Contemporary Russian Women Writers Rejecting Definition in Literary Rebellion." Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2008.

Murfin, Ross, and Supriya M. Ray. *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

N. Elaati, Abdulazim. "POSTMODERNISM THEORY." (2016): READS 217,474.

[www.researchgate.net/publication/303812364](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/303812364).

Perova, Natasha, and Andrew Bromfield. *New Russian Writing: Women's View*. Moscow: Glas Publishers, 1992.

Novikov, Tatyana. "Reviewed Work(s): *Immortal Love* by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and Sally Laird." *World Literature Today*, vol. 71, no. 2, Italian Literature Today, Spring 1997, pp. 411-412. [www.jstor.org/stable/40153178](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40153178).

- Oh, Irene. "The Performativity of Motherhood: Embodying Theology and Political Agency." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, vol. 29, no. 2, Fall/Winter 2009, pp. 3-17. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23562795](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23562795).
- Pankhurst, Jerry G. "Soviet Society and Soviet Religion." *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 28, no. 3, Autumn 1986, pp. 409-422. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23917837](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23917837).
- Penguin History of Modern Russia from Tsarism to Twenty-first Century. London: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Peterson-Iyer, Karen. "Prostitution: A Feminist Ethical Analysis." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 14, no. 2, Fall 1998, pp. 19-44. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/25002334](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002334).
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "A Case of Virgin Birth." *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 4-17.
- . "Among Friends." *The Baffler*, no. 25, 2014, pp. 96-106. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/43307906](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43307906).
- . "Another Land." *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 72-80.
- . "Father and Mother." *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 91-98.
- . "Give Her to Me." *The Baffler*, no. 19, 2012, pp. 128-33. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/43307592](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43307592).
- . "Complete interview with Ludmilla Petrushevskaya." Interview by David Garza. *Kirkus Review*, 2013. [www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/complete-interview-ludmilla-petrushevskaya/](http://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/complete-interview-ludmilla-petrushevskaya/).

- . *A Girl from the Metropol Hotel: Growing up in Communist Russia*. Penguin, 2013.
- . *Immortal Love*. Pantheon Books, 1995.
- . "Our Circle." *Immortal Love*, Pantheon, 1995, pp. 309-312.
- . *There Once Lived a Girl Who Seduced Her Sister's Husband and He Hanged Himself: Love Stories*. Penguin Books, 2013.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. *There Once Lived a Mother Who Loved Her Children, Until They Moved Back: Three Novels About Family*. Penguin Books, 2014.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "This Little Girl." *Immortal Love*. Pantheon, 1995, pp. 226-232.
- Petrushevskaya, Ludmilla. "Xenia's Daughter." *Immortal Love*. Pantheon, 1995, pp. 84-90.
- Pirzada, Shazia. "Gorbachev's Party Plenum." *Strategic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, Spring 1987, pp. 11-13. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/45182713](http://www.jstor.org/stable/45182713).
- Podaskaya, Anastasia. *Woman in Russia: A New Era in Russian Feminism*. Verso, 1994.
- Polowy, Teresa. "Twenty Years Later: Russian Literature and Literary Studies Since 1991." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol. 53, no. 2/4, June-Sept.-Dec. 2011, pp. 527-544. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/41708355](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41708355).
- Prins, Irene Costera, and Baukje Meijer. "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Signs*, vol. 23, no. 2, Winter 1998, pp. 275-286. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3175091](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175091).
- R.J., Kalpana. *Feminist Issues in Indian Literature: Feminism and Family*. Prestige Books, 2005.

- Racioppi, Linda, and Katherine O'Sullivan See. "Organizing Women before and after the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia." *Signs*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1995, pp. 818-850. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3174884](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174884).
- Reeves, Madeleine. "'And Our Words Must Be Constructive!': On the Discordances of Glasnost' in the Central Asian Press at a Time of Conflict." (2016), pp. 77-110. [journals.openedition.org/asiecentrale/3259](http://journals.openedition.org/asiecentrale/3259).
- Reiman, Michal. "About Russia, Its Revolutions, Its Development and Its Present." *Prager Schriften zur Zeitgeschichte und zum Zeitgeschehen*, vol. 10.
- Rhevsky, Nicholas. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Ritchey, Joseph. "Eyewitness: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya." *World Policy Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 16-20. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/27870314](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27870314).
- Rotkirch, Kristina, and Anna Ljunggren. *Contemporary Russian Fiction: A Shortlist Russian Authors Interviewed by Kristina Rotkirch*. Glas Publishers, 2008.
- Rotsky, Leon. *Literature and Revolution*. Edited by William Keath, translated by Rose Strunsky, Heymarket Books, 2005.
- Rubins, Maria. *Redefining Russian Literary Diaspora, 1920-2020*. UCL Press, 2021. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv17ppc6w.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv17ppc6w.8).

- Samuels, Ellen. "Critical Divides: Judith Butler's Body Theory and the Question of Disability." *Feminist Disability*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2002. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/4316924](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4316924).
- Schuster, Alice. "Women's Role in the Soviet Union: Ideology and Reality." *The Russian Review*, vol. 30, no. 3, Jul. 1971, pp. 260-267. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/128134](http://www.jstor.org/stable/128134).
- Scoular, Jane. *The Subject of Prostitution*. University of Strathclyde, 2011. <http://fty.sagepub.com>.
- Sheidman, N.N. *Russian Literature 1995-2002 on the Threshold of the New Millennium*. University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Shukla, Ankitha. "Depiction of Women in Literature through Ages." December 2016.
- Smith, Alexandra. "In Populist Clothes: Anarchy and Subversion in Petrushevskaya's Latest Fiction." *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1997, pp. 107-125. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23806798](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23806798).
- Smith, Martin Seymore. *Guide to Modern World Literature*. The Macmillan Press, 1985.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A. "The Essential Characteristics of the Russian Nation in the Twentieth Century." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 370, Mar. 1967, pp. 99-115. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1038056](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1038056).
- Stolee, Becky L. Glass, and Margaret K. "Family Law in Soviet Russia, 1917-1945." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 49, no. 4, Nov. 1987, pp. 893-902. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/351982](http://www.jstor.org/stable/351982).

- Summers, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, and Anna. "How Much Women Know." *The Baffler*, no. 27, 2015, pp. 191-195. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/43959035](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43959035).
- Sutcliffe, Benjamin Massey. "Liudmila Ulitskaia's Literature of Tolerance." *The Russian Review*, vol. 68, no. 3, Jul. 2009, pp. 495-509. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/20621052](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20621052).
- Sutcliffe, Benjamine. "The Prose of Life: Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin." 2009. *Research Gate*, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37699684>.
- Szörényi, Anna. "Rethinking the Boundaries: Towards a Butlerian Ethics of Vulnerability in Sex Trafficking Debates." *Sage Publications, Ltd.*, no. 107, 2014, pp. 20-36. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/24571887](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24571887).
- Tay, Alice Erh-Soon. "The Status of Women in the Soviet Union." *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, vol. 20, no. 4, Autumn 1972, pp. 662-692. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/839036](http://www.jstor.org/stable/839036).
- Vijaya, Veena. "Predicament of Female in Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina." *International Journal Of Humanities And Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2020, [www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index](http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index).
- Wagar, W. Warren. "Utopian Studies." *Utopian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2003, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/20718566](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20718566).
- Wallach, Ruth. "Sonechka and Other Stories by Ludmila Ulitskaya." *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 43, no. 4, Winter 1999, pp. 713-715. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/309428](http://www.jstor.org/stable/309428).

- Weikart, Richard. "History of European Ideas." *Printed in Great Britain*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1994, pp. 657-672.
- Whitson, Kathy J. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- William, Beate Kraus, and Jennifer Marston. "The Gender Relationship in Bourdieu's Sociology." *SubStance*, vol. 29, no. 3, Issue 93: Special Issue: Pierre Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 53-67. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3685561](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3685561).
- Williams, Alatair Koho. *The Twentieth Century Russian Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Williams, Joan C. "Reconstructive Feminism: Changing the Way We Talk About Gender and Work Thirty Years." *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, vol. 21, 2009, pp. 79.
- Wines, Michael. "Vladimir Dudintsev, 79, Dies; Writer Dissected Soviet Life." *New York Times*, July 30, 1998, Section D, Page 19.  
[www.nytimes.com/1998/07/30/world/vladimir-dudintsev-79-dies-writer-dissected-soviet-life.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/30/world/vladimir-dudintsev-79-dies-writer-dissected-soviet-life.html).
- Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. Semantic Scholar, 1990.
- Woll, Josephine. "The Minotaur in the Maze: Remarks on Lyudmila Petrushevskaya." *World Literature Today*, vol. 67, no. 1, 1993, pp. 125–30. JSTOR, [doi.org/10.2307/40148873](https://doi.org/10.2307/40148873).



Wood, Julia T. *Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender*. Dokmen.pub,

2019. [pages.nyu.edu/jakson/causes.of.gender.inequality/Readings/wood%20-](https://pages.nyu.edu/jakson/causes.of.gender.inequality/Readings/wood%20-%20Gendered%20Media%20-%202019.pdf)

[%20Gendered%20Media%20-%202019.pdf](https://pages.nyu.edu/jakson/causes.of.gender.inequality/Readings/wood%20-%20Gendered%20Media%20-%202019.pdf)

Youkhanna, Nina. "A Chorus of Women: An Exploration of the Feminine in 19th and 20th

Century Russian Literature." *The Comparative Literature Undergraduate Journal*,

2022.

Zink, Andria. "What is Prostitution Good for? Dostoevsky, Chernyshevsky, Tolstoy and the

Women Question in Russian Literature." *The Dostoevsky Journal*, 2006.

[Accademia.edu](https://www.academia.edu).

Zoilkowski, Margaret. "Review." *World Literature Today*, 1995.

Zuidervart, Lambert. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

[Plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno).