Mothers and Daughters: Family Dysfunction in Post-Soviet Literature and Life
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
Master's Thesis
Crystal S. Alawi
04/29/15
Honor Pledge: On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.

Introduction:

This master's thesis offers an in-depth analysis of mother-child relations in post-Soviet social history and literature. Ultimately demonstrating the destructive effects of the state's advocacy of patriarchal family dynamics, this thesis explores literary interpretations of this socio-cultural phenomenon. The breakdown in mother-child relations through the imposition of traditional maternity comprises a central component of this thesis. In the contextualization of trials and tribulations confronting parent-child relations, special focus has been given to maternal figures, who shoulder the primary burden of childrearing. Fatherhood, however, is also considered to provide further insight into the composition and development of the family unit. For its primary literary component, this thesis addresses the works of the prominent post-Soviet author, Liudmila Ulitskaia, and her recommendations for improving mother-child relationships. Her experiences as a woman and a mother in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras enhances her ability to convey the troubled experience of Russian family life during the transition years.

Five central parts comprise the core of this interdisciplinary study. Chapter one considers the combined historical, literary, psychological, and sociological significance of parents and children in Russian culture. This section establishes the relevance of this persisting family identities and themes, while illustrating the long-standing relationship between the social institution of the family and the state. Part two provides a detailed description of the compositional nature of the Russian family on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Soviet institutional frameworks, changing gender roles, and household structures inform the reader's understanding of shifting political

frameworks for transitioning to the post-Soviet era. The works of Ulitskaia's contemporaries are briefly discussed in this section to illustrate the initial changes taking place in parent-child relations in early transition literature and society.

The third chapter of this thesis directly addresses the transformation of mother-child dynamics following the Soviet collapse. This section describes the elimination of family support services that fundamentally reshaped maternal roles within traditional confines. Compounded by the reemergence of patriarchal attitudes, and national demographic crises, the restructuring of maternal roles and identities accelerated during these volatile years in the wake of the Soviet Union. This section also considers women's reactions to ideological shifts in gender roles, and conceptions of motherhood. Furthermore, chapter three demonstrates the state's advocacy of obligatory and traditional maternity did not resolve the post-Soviet family crisis, and this failure only intensified pervasive dysfunction in mother-child relations.

Chapter four offers a literary treatment and interpretation of Ulitskaia's literary fiction, including: *Sonechka* (1992), *Medeia i eë deti* (1996), "Pikovaia dama" (1998), and "Orlovy-Sokolovy" (2003).[1] This section primarily considers Ulitskaia's alternative recommendations to the state's perception of ideal maternity. Her comparative depiction of willing, and unwilling maternal figures supports her position that motherhood is only appropriate for women who fully embrace the responsibilities of caring and providing for their children. Ulitskaia's works account for post-Soviet family hardships such as social

[1] The ALA-LC transliteration system will be employed throughout this paper. However, certain sources and proper nouns that do not adhere to this style will be maintained in their original transliteration system. This tactic has been employed to correspond to the linguistic background of a general audience.

orphanhood and poverty, despite the fact that many of her works are set in in the Soviet Union. Her awareness and discussion of these issues bolster her position as an informed purveyor of family conflicts during the transition period. This chapter will focus primarily on her depiction of and her prescribed resolution for improving this familial relationship.

Finally, the fifth chapter of this thesis features my overarching conclusions regarding mother-child relations in post-Soviet literature and society. The findings derived from my readings allow me to gauge the resonance of Ulitskaia's works in the post-Soviet cultural context, taking into account their broader relevance for the future of Russian family life. This chapter offers an outline of proposals for additional areas of research that would further develop and enhance this thesis.

Chapter one: Parents and Children in Russian Culture

The theme of parentage occupies a central position in the Russian national consciousness. A parallel examination of real and fictional family structures in Russian history and literature reveals complexities and dysfunction that invites further scholarly analysis. While the importance of families may seem obviously significant in Russia's cultural narrative, this topic occupies a minor position in historical and literary studies. Consequently, this chapter will explore the role of this social institution in historical and literary frameworks. Russian family structures have undergone several reconfigurations throughout its far-reaching institutional history, as a result of cultural, social, and political developments. The nature of parent-child relations is intrinsically connected to these phenomena. Although this thesis is primarily focused on mother-child relations, it is first necessary to address the general significance of parenthood in Russian culture through an interdisciplinary approach. This chapter will discuss the origins of parental themes in the Russian national consciousness to inform the historical and literary contexts, as well as related disciplines, such as politics, culture, sociology, etc.

Many scholars have observed maternal qualities in Russia's national identity. Joanna Hubbs identifies maternal motifs in the context of Russia's geographical composition. These motherly associations appear to have emerged during the period of ancient Rus'. The land's life-giving force inspired this parental symbolism, as Hubbs states, "The land was called Mother, and her physical features--natural or man-made--were also given maternal epithets" (xiii). While the Russian homeland is frequently referred to by the feminine classification of *rodina,* or in more explicit maternal terminology through the use of *rodina mat',* the nation's paternal identity is equally

palpable. This masculine national identity is commonly referred to as *otechestvo.* Teofan Prokopovych is credited with introducing this word into the Russian lexicon in the fifteenth century (Bushkovitch 93). In recent history, this term for fatherland became omnipresent during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). Indeed, paternal phraseology is evident in the very title of this armed conflict, which is known in Russian as *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina* (Schultz 149). The importance of parentage in the national consciousness is significant as a construct of personal identity. This is evidenced in the nominal form, *otchestvo*, the "patronym or name derived from his [or her] father" ("Russian Family Names" 76). The patronymic fuses parent-child relations and communicates a direct linkage between the father and his offspring. The significance of this identity construct and cultural motif is reflected in literary works such as F. M. Dostoevskii's, *Podrostok* (1875).[2]

The use of domestic terminology for national symbols reveals the importance of parentage in Russian culture. The pervasive use of parental themes, moreover, in national identity constructs denotes the relevance of the family in Russian life. While it is clear that parent-child dynamics are significant in Russian culture, this topic remains largely neglected in scholarly discourses. A comprehensive treatment of parent-child relations that incorporates extensive aspects of culture, history, and literature has yet to receive adequate attention from scholars in the field of Russian studies. The institution of the family is typically treated through specific historical periods (e.g. Imperial, Soviet, and

[2] Dostoevsky's protagonist, Arkadii Dolgorukii, struggles to reconcile his identity as an illegitimate son with his position as the legal offspring of his mother's husband. Arkadii strives to determine his own identity through his connections to his spiritual father (Makar) and his biological parent (Versilov).

post-Soviet).[3] Analyses of this topic in various disciplines are inevitably shaped by the existing historical treatments of family structures. While the formulation of parent-child analysis remains possible within the current confines of such scholarship, addressing the gap in this area of cultural studies would provide scholars with an informed and overarching concept of the Russian family. Although there is a dearth of exhaustive literature on parent-child dynamics, scholars can explore historical texts and literary observations to define its general characteristics within the Russian cultural context. A close study of historical documents reveals the patriarchal qualities that embody Russian family life. The enduring legacy of male empowerment can be detected in critical primary source works, such as the ancient *Domostroi*, which illustrates the foundation of the patriarchal family structure, and details its influence on parent-child dynamics. An 1891 edition of this illustrious household guide proselytizes maternal responsibility for childrearing. This is notable in the following passage, as a husband informs his wife, "Your parents and I thought of whom would be best to select for the care of the home and the children and we chose-I [chose] you, and your parents [chose] me" (*Domostroi* 78).[4] In addition to its pertinence in the realm of household affairs, the publication of the *Domostroi* served as a catalyst for popular social discourse regarding parent-child relations, as evidenced through the manifestation of parenting manuals and childrearing literature in imperial Russia.

[3] The tendency to treat parent-child dynamics in a historical framework appears, notably, in the scholarship of Richard Stites and Barbara Alpern Engel. These canonical works tend to dominate the subject matter. These two authors attempt to incorporate subfields of Russian studies into their analysis, however their analyses remain based on historical periods and events.

[4] "я и твои родители думали о томъ, кому бы лучше всего вѣрить заботы о домѣ и дѣтяхъ и выбрали- я тебя, твои родители меня" (*Domostroi* 78).

Memoires from the imperial period inform scholarly understanding of the *Domostroi's* influence on Russian family structures. Upon recalling the fear-inspiring power of her father, Elizaveta Petrovna Yan'kovoi, a 17th century gentlewoman recollects that, "And after all of the maxims of the ancient *Domostroi*. They were preserved in the patriarchal manner of provincial life" (Mal'kovskaia 128).[5] Such revelations indicate the acceptance of patriarchal attitudes derived from the edicts of the *Domostroi,* despite the projected power imbalances it created within Russian households. The cultural significance of the *Domostroi* remains relevant in twenty-first century Russia, too, as its teachings have become gradually ingrained in parenting roles (Pouncy 357).

In addition to these personal accounts, Russia's political history reveals the state's attempts to influence family structures to accommodate its ideological agendas. The patriarchal ethos established by the *Domostroi* in parent-child relations was not exclusively applied to private, domestic spaces. The relationship between the state and the masses is frequently characterized as a father-child dynamic, in which the masses occupy the metaphorical position of offspring to the paternal state (Baehr 42, 115). This phenomenon was firmly established during tsarist times and has continued into the post-Soviet period. Stephen Baehr identifies the paternalistic relationship between the tsar and his people in a letter by Nikolai M. Karamzin to Aleksandr I, whom he describes as "the father of the fatherland, the second creator of your subjects" (44). This tradition was upheld during the Soviet era, as Iosef Stalin's cult of personality led to the creation of his image as the "father of all peoples" (Cassiday and Johnson 699). The position of political leaders as father figures is exercised in modern politics, as well. Beth Holmgren

[5] "А ведь правила-то стародавние, домостроевские. Так они сохранились в патриархальном образе жизни провинции" (Mal'kovskaia 128).

recognizes, for example, the "paternalist ethos" that operates as an intrinsic element of the Putin administration (538). The consistent use of politicized parent-child dynamics indicates the cultural appeal, and importance of parentage in Russian society.

In addition to modeling patriarchal culture, the state's revisions of family policy laws have influenced the nature of parent-child dynamics throughout the twentieth century. Perennial legal modifications led to frequent fluctuations in parental roles and obligations. A significant shift in parental roles transpired upon the enactment of the 1918 Bolshevik Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship, and was later reinforced by the 1926 Family Law Code (Gorsuch 637; Stites 19). This legislation encouraged families to adopt liberal perspectives regarding the emancipation of women, thereby disavowing traditional, patriarchal structures. Additionally, the state sought to establish "utopian forms of collective family life," which would reduce the importance of biological families, and encourage inclusive familial behavior to all members of society (Stites 23). The state actively supported the creation of subsidized childcare facilities to alleviate women of maternal obligations in order to monopolize female attention for the holistic strengthening of the Communist Party. Consequently, ideal mothers were no longer expected to fulfill the "maternal myth" trope as defined by Jenny Kaminer, which will be discussed in the literary component of the chapter (Kaminer 4). The disregard for this former construct of ideal maternity subsequently liberated Soviet women from the "huge burden of mythological and ideological baggage," formerly associated with motherhood (Marsh, 2012, 1194).

Although the combination of female emancipation and the liberalization of family policy appealed to the socio-political objectives of the newly formed Soviet state, they

resulted in unforeseen and derisive consequences for parent-child relations. Child abandonment and homelessness became commonplace due to the family crisis, and changing conceptions of parental responsibilities (Stites 19). Ultimately, this liberal approach to parent-child relations was abandoned during the 1930s, as the state strove to ameliorate the decline in birth rates by providing financial incentives to families with larger households (Kaminsky 70-71). The implementation of strict anti-abortion laws was similarly enacted to encourage growth in Soviet demographics (Kaminsky 71). The state attempted, furthermore, to impose initiatives to improve family stability through the reversal of Soviet family policy laws of the 1920s. This tactic made divorce difficult to obtain and families were forced to remain intact despite domestic strife (Stites 23). Although familial stability was threatened due to the Great Terror under Stalin, these conservative measures remained in place until the 1960s, in the state's attempt to prevent the destruction of family life that occurred during the 1920s (Thurston 553; Stites 23; Yvert-Jalu 123). While Soviet family policy ultimately reverted to traditional family values, the concepts of ideal parenthood became increasingly ambiguous.

The ideal form of Russian motherhood underwent significant and contradictory changes throughout the mid to late Soviet era. According to Kaminer, the conflicting constructs of ideal Soviet motherhood are best illustrated through propaganda posters that emerged during the Great Patriotic War. Irkali Toidze's renowned poster, '*Rodina-mat' zovet!*' features a robust woman summoning the populace to aid the war effort, "with a defiant arm cast upward against a backdrop of bayonets" (Kaminer 19). This assertive female figure sharply juxtaposes Toidze's illustrations of "mothers…helplessly clinging to innocent babies and terrified children while under assault by fascists" (Kaminer 19).

While Soviet rhetoric and media endorsed independent and empowered working women, the reemergence of patriarchal family dynamics resulted in the cult of "maternalism" (Stites 23). Mothers were ultimately confronted with conflicting duties such as household obligations, and meeting production demands in the workplace (McKinney 39). These services remained in place throughout the majority of the Soviet period, yet women still struggled to fulfill both professional and domestic responsibilities. The cult of "maternalism" and the challenges women faced within the domestic context was reinforced throughout the Soviet period, via artistic illustrations of women as victims of marital strife, as they were consistently depicted as "purement et simplement abandonée" (Jobert 182). Thus, women still struggled to fulfill their dual, demanding roles as mothers and working members of Soviet society (Stites 23).

While the role of motherhood became increasingly dynamic throughout the twentieth century, fathers experienced a decline in their parental power within Soviet households. Despite the fact that Soviet leaders evoked masculine strength through their symbolic roles as national father figures, the egalitarian orientation of Communism resulted in the Bolshevik's attempts to dismantle "la 'tyrannie' du père et de l'époux," which signaled the culmination of absolute paternal authority (Berelowitch 29). The quality of father-child relations was diminished further as a result of the Great Patriotic War, as mothers were faced with additional childrearing responsibilities, while men served at the front or suffered from casualties that claimed the lives of 27 million Soviet citizens (Kaminer 112; Bellamy 2). In cases of living fathers, their influence on the lives of their offspring were further denigrated in cases of divorce. Excluding rare instances, mothers were often automatically granted custody of children, and presided over paternal

visitation arrangements (Yvert-Jalu 129). Thus, paternal interactions with children of divorced unions were contingent upon the willingness of the mother to include biological fathers in their children's upbringing.

The state's partiality toward maternal figures resulted in fathers occupying marginalized and temporary roles in the daily lives of their children during the late Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Although some cultural associations such as *Literaturnaia gazeta* attempted to bolster the position of divorced fathers, they yielded limited results (Yvert-Jalu 129). While some state initiatives were implemented to improve father-child dynamics, fathers largely remained peripheral participants in family structures throughout the second-half of the Soviet era. This status quo has continued into the post-Soviet era, as women uphold "the primary responsibility for child care, and men play only a supplementary role" (Vannoy et al. 87). Ultimately, Russian mothers and fathers underwent role reversal within family structures following the imperial era. The former experienced emancipation and increased domestic responsibility, while fathers were alienated from their families, and underwent a reduction in their influence and authority within the home.

While historical analysis reveals the patriarchal structure of Russian family dynamics, literature offers insights into social responses to idealized constructs of parent-child relations. This information is accessible through an examination of childrearing guides, many of which preached patriarchal values of the conservative *Domostroi* throughout the late imperial period. Manuals such as Raida Varlamova's *Semeinyi magazin* (1856) outlined the duties of and acceptable forms of motherhood, which entailed running an orderly household, and supervising children, while simultaneously

advocating absolute paternal authority within the home.[6] In addition to the support of patriarchal structures, the increasing volume and growing readership of parenting guides attest to the level of importance that family relations held in Russian social discourses. While childrearing manuals offered parents direct guidance during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the subject of parent-child relations also permeated the creative realms of literary fiction.

Literary works inform our understanding of family values and dynamics, and express conceptions of ideal parenthood. Mid-nineteenth century literature marks the turbulence that challenged the conservative status quo of parent-child relations. Authors of fiction devoted their literary works to this issue, as social changes such as the "woman question", the emancipation of the serfs, and progressive socialist thought reconsidered the patriarchal order of imperial society, and by extension, family relations. I. S. Turgenev's *Otsi i deti* (1862) serves as a watershed for the literary discussion of parent-child interactions, and intergenerational conflicts within families. Turgenev was joined by his contemporaries, such as Dostoevskii and L. N. Tolstoi who offered their readership alternatives of family dynamics through the construction of idealized, parental models. In addition to constructing positive parental figures, nineteenth-century authors used their literary works as an instructive guide for negligent parents or for those who did not conform to society's perceptions of positive parenthood. This trend is most notable in Tolstoi's work *Anna Karenina* (1877) and Dostoevskii's *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (1880).

[6] Varlamova's manual is representative of the popular beliefs surrounding household dynamics and parental roles in the late imperial period. Child rearing guides such as *Mat' Vospitatel'nitsa* (1900) echo Varlamov's patriarchal attitudes.

While fiction writers did not provide explicit maxims for parenting as does the *Domostroi* and its offshoots, their works employ cultural and religious symbols to establish and reinforce positive and negative parental roles. According to Kaminer, the fatal consequences of not adhering to the "maternal myth," are tested and developed in *Anna Karenina* (Kaminer 46, 50). Kaminer identifies the "maternal myth" an intrinsic aspect of Russian parenting and gender culture. Anna's inability to conform to the maternal myth of "the beneficent, self-sacrificing Russian mother" is met with the loss of her son and ultimate suicide (Kaminer 4). Furthermore, Tolstoii uses attractive and selfless maternal figures such as Dolly Oblonskaia to underscore Anna's position as a negligent mother. As observed by Susan Fusso, Dostoevskii similarly insinuates paternal unsuitability in the case of Fëdor Karamazov, which is established through the biblical citations of Colossians (116). In this passage, Fëdor is reminded of his paternal obligations, such as the responsibility for not provoking offspring, an activity in which he incessantly participates despite the growing alienation of his sons (Fusso 116). Here, Dostoevskii relies on the reader's biblical knowledge to interpret Fëdor as destructive, and as an example to be avoided. More importantly, Fëdor symbolically becomes the victim of patricide, thereby demonstrating the unsustainability and fatal consequences that are derived from such antagonistic paternal figures.

As observed by Kaminer and Rosalind Marsh, the literary tradition of constructing and defining both ideal and flawed parental models, has continued into the late-twentieth century, as illustrated by Anatolii Kurchatkin in *Babi dom* (1986), Liudmila Petrusehvskaia's *Vremia noch'* (1992) and Ulitskaia's *Sonechka* and *Medea i eë deti*. Their collective works address a combination of positive and negative parental

figures, during periods of family and political crises such as *perestroika* and the transition from socialism to democracy. These authors continue to implement the maternal myth and patriarchal models in their works, indicating the continued relevancy of idealized parents in Russian culture. More importantly, the domestic troubles that plagued families during the late imperial and Soviet eras have extended into the post-Soviet period and are reflected in notable literary works. Overwhelming maternal responsibility for childrearing, coupled with paternal absenteeism and/or alcoholism characterized Russian family life during the 1990s (Rimashevskaia 81). The erosion of social infrastructure financial constraints, and the popularization of patriarchal culture made the transition increasingly challenging for Russian families who struggled to navigate the early years of the post-Soviet world. These complex conditions have inevitably shaped mother-child dynamics.

An analysis of mother-child relations during the early post-Soviet period must consider household structures on the eve of the transition, in addition to evaluating socio-economic changes that reshaped maternal roles and family dynamics. Furthermore, literary representations of mother-child relationships must also be evaluated, as these interpretations will enhance our understanding of family dynamics in the post-Soviet context. A study of these diverse factors will contribute to an analysis of Russian family structures during the transition period.

Chapter two: The Russian Family on the Eve of Transition (1980-1991)

This thesis is primarily concerned with the nature of mother-child dynamics in post-Soviet era literature and society. It is first necessary, however, to examine the institution of the family in the immediately preceding period. Such analysis more adequately informs our assessment of the Russian family's adaptability to the post-Soviet transition, and the subsequent affect it had on mother-child relationships. This chapter will address literary and social responses to the disintegration of parent-child dynamics in the final years of Soviet power (1980-1991). An examination of Soviet parenthood, with particular attention to mother-child relations remains central to this chapter, as these dynamics bear considerable importance in the post-Soviet component of this thesis. This chapter demonstrates that the socio-political reevaluation and transformation of Soviet parenthood ultimately destabilized the institution of the family during the 1980s, leaving it vulnerable to discord on the eve of transition, and unprepared for the socio-economic challenges ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The manifestation of Soviet public discourse regarding parent-child dynamics resulted from the liberalizing effect of *glasnost'* under Mikhail Gorbachev.[7] The revelations surrounding social orphanhood and the power imbalance amongst parents in Soviet households similarly contributed to the popularization of this topic in socialist society (Waters 123).[8] It was within these contexts that established concepts of ideal

[7] *Glasnost'* is frequently translated as the voicing of opinions surrounding economic, social, political, issues which became synonymous with greater openness in Soviet society (Cohen 7).

[8] According to Natalia Rimashevskaia, a child becomes a social orphan in the following circumstances: "when a court order takes parental rights away from a parent, parents refuse to fulfill parental functions (they receive prison terms or act asocially), or the family does not have the income to support a child" (94). Ultimately, social orphanhood

parenthood were openly challenged. Prior to the 1980s, mothers occupied an exalted position in Soviet culture, and the taboo of critiquing these women was apparent to all members of society. Foreign marriage counselors observed the revered position of the single-mother in the Soviet Union, as they remarked, "[the single-mother] was such a privileged person that you didn't dare utter a word of criticism of her" (McKinney 44). Indeed, the respected position of maternal figures was fully supported by Soviet propaganda efforts, which "sang its praises and glorified [motherhood]" (Kaminer 112). Maternal agency was deemed necessary, as women acquired more authority in the domestic domain due to the overwhelming absence of males during World War II (Kaminer 112). This long-standing reverence of motherhood was subject to severe scrutiny during the 1980s, when the revelations of dysfunctional relations between mothers and children became widely known.

The dilemmas in parent-child relations were reflected in social orphanhood. Alarming reports emerged surrounding this phenomenon, indicating that, "70,000 children were in homes because parental care had been ruled unsatisfactory by the authorities," or due to parental willingness to relinquish their children to these institutions (Waters 129). Although both sexes were deemed responsible for childrearing, mothers were to "blame for the high number of children abandoned to the homes," stemming from their perceived responsibility and authority within domestic spaces (Waters 129). Little consideration was initially given to the financial strains that compelled many mothers to relinquish their children to these state agencies (Waters 129). Social orphans, however, were not unique in their domestic tribulations. Children who remained in the care of their

---

involves the relinquishment of a child despite the fact that either one or both parents may be living.

parents were similarly subjected to emotional trauma, as they witnessed "bickering parents," who created disharmonious household environments (Pearson 80). Parental frustrations with material conditions were projected onto their children, thereby eroding the quality of family life (Pearson 80). Ultimately, these revelations made during the late Soviet period illustrated the suffering of children resulting from parental inadequacy and dysfunction.

Although mothers enjoyed state support throughout the Soviet era, scholars contest the sincerity of public adulation for the women who wielded power within the household. According to Leonid Bezhin, post-war mothers assumed aggressive and intimidating qualities, as he describes corresponding scenes in Soviet families: "the mothers gave orders, dominated, were capricious, collapsed in hysterics, while the fathers remained silent and the sons suffered" (Kaminer 112). The domineering position of matriarchs in the household was evident through definitions of ideal Soviet family life, which was characterized as when "the husband was sober and agreed with his wife" (Issoupova 83). The characterization of ideal mothers as independent and authoritative figures became equated with undesirable members within the family and Soviet society. This change in attitude toward maternal figures is most notable in the treatment of single mothers.

The negative association with single motherhood became commonplace during the 1980s. Due to their position as unmarried mothers, it is likely that these women enjoyed maximum authority and autonomy within their own families. As the popularity of domineering mothers declined, single mothers faced additional hardship and role transformation as they became associated with parasitism due to their acceptance of

supplementary state benefits (McKinney 44). While there were instances in which some women confirmed the basis for these suspicions, these exceptions did not account for the real material difficulties experienced by the vast majority of Soviet mothers (Waters 129). Thus, their standing as self-sacrificial or sympathetic figures warped into one of avarice. Furthermore, the growing popularity of conservative rhetoric led the Gorbachev administration to support the conventional two-parent households, which further undermined the social acceptability of single mothers. Indeed, the diminishment of women's powerful roles is mirrored in rhetoric denouncing Soviet feminism, which is said to have "deformed women's nature" by discouraging "overt displays of femininity" (Marsh, 2012, 1200). Thus, Soviet maternity was reshaped to comply with traditional values and gender roles.

Although state services such as childcare facilities continued to provide mothers with support, the conservative orientation of the Gorbachev administration resulted in the advocacy of women returning to the home to cure "social ills" (McKinney 45). Motherhood would be ostensibly transformed into the function of domestic saviors by "preventing them [their husbands] from becoming alcoholics or emasculated drones," while protecting their children by "preventing them from becoming drug abusers, prostitutes, or juvenile delinquents" (McKinney 45). The Central Committee reinforced this transformation in maternal roles as they initially advocated reforms that would have "relieved [mothers] from work in production so that they could spend more time with children" (Waters 128). Transforming the identity of mothers as simultaneous workers and domestic agents ultimately led to expectations of increased paternal authority and financial responsibility.

The decline in maternal power was paralleled by the rising importance attributed to fathers in the late Soviet era. Scholars have illustrated the limited role played by fathers in preceding Soviet periods, citing, "estrangement from domestic and caring work meant that they were only weakly integrated into the Soviet family" (Ashwin and Lytkina 193). Sergei Kukhterin asserts that the marginalization of paternal roles can be attributed to their susceptibility for creating domestic instability through "alcoholism and violence" (83). The phenomenon of "fatherlessness" became a central issue in dialogues surrounding family structure during the 1980s. According to Landon Pearson, fatherlessness in the final years of the Communist era was distinct from earlier periods due to the fact that fathers simply "abandoned them [their offspring] or become separated from them through divorce" (86).[9] While the popularity of traditionalist values proscribed greater paternal agency within the home, women raised their expectations of their male partners "without doing much to change men's behavior" (Utrata 1307). Soviet fatherhood entered an evolutionary stage, as men struggled to fulfill new domestic expectations of involved paternal behavior despite the ingrained marginalization of fathers in Soviet family life. It is likely that mothers were forced to compensate for paternal figures during this time, thereby continuing their responsibilities for work and childrearing.

As parents attempted to fulfill their newly defined roles, social debates emerged surrounding the existing dysfunction in parent-child dynamics. Many identified the state's inability to "provide the material and moral prerequisites of normal family life" as

[9] Prior to the 1980s, fatherlessness was a common aspect of post-war family dynamics due to high civilian mortality as a result of the Second World War (Bellamy 2).

a significant influence on Soviet families (Waters 123).[10] In an attempt to create greater family stability, government-sponsored manuals on childrearing were published in order to aid parents in the task of raising their offspring (Pearson 82). State financial support bolstered initiatives that endeavored to improve family life, such as the Soviet Children's Fund (Pearson 75). Despite these efforts, Pearson argues that the state was unable to reconcile Soviet family life with their recommendations, as the responsibility for childcare rested largely on the "well-educated and career-minded female population," that envisioned their identity beyond the confines of motherhood (85).

Soviet mothers responded to the crisis in parent-child relations in the *samizdat'* publication of *Zhenshchina i Rossia* (1979). Marsh identifies this work as a primary example of the tribulations entailed in Soviet motherhood, in addition to its "exceptional critique of the patriarchal nature of Soviet society" (2012, 1198). Marsh does not discuss how this work was received by the general public; however, the analysis provided by Elizabeth Waters allows us to surmise that *Zhenshchina i Rossia* represented attitudes that were more sympathetic to mothers than what had been generally promoted during the final years of the Soviet era. While non-fiction anthologies attempted to illustrate the hardship experienced by mothers, literary works captured the overarching complexity and abusive qualities of mother-child relationships. Petrushevskaia is one such author who attempts to reconcile the dual nature of Soviet mothers, illustrating them as conflictingly "terrifying" and self-sacrificial (Marsh, 2012, 1205, 1207). This interpretation is notable

[10] This condemnation of the state was made during the late 1980s upon the realization that mothers were being unjustly blamed for placing their children in orphanages due to their inability to support their children financially (Waters 123).

in her short story "Novye Robinzony" (1989).[11] This work best reflects the challenges that shaped mother-child relations during the 1980s, while effectively promoting the maternal myth through its unflattering portrayal of women who shun this model.

The need for reliable parents is a reoccurring theme throughout "Novye Robinzony". Petrushevskaia uses this short story to respond to social discourses regarding parental roles, conveying both nurturing and negligent mothers, as well as absentee fathers. "Novye Robinzony" features a family who faces death due to the harsh conditions of their surrounding environment.[12] Consequently, children occupy a position of heightened vulnerability, as these circumstances threaten their survival, and their well being remains contingent upon parental goodwill. The narrator's mother embraces maternal duties as she adopts abandoned orphans despite her limited means, and the friction it creates within the family dynamic. Her resolution to protect foster children irrespective of her husband's disinclination as "father went to live in the forest" bolsters her position as an ideal, self-sacrificial maternal figure (Petrushevskaia 419).[13] Although the departure of the narrator's father is also motivated by his desire to build a new settlement for his family, Petrushevskaia appears to be alluding to the abandonment of children by paternal figures (Petrushevskaia 19). Although the narrator's father temporarily abandons his growing household, his voiced disdain for additional paternal responsibilities echoes the domestic dilemma posed by fatherlessness to Soviet family

[11] "Novye Robinzony" is but one example of family turmoil in Petrusheskaia's works. Marsh lists Petrushevskaia's novel *Medeia* (1990) as a work that similarly addresses this issue (Marsh, 2012, 1200).
[12] The narrator and her family remain unidentified. It is possible that Petrushevskaia employs this anonymity in order to demonstrate that all families could experience these tribulations.
[13] "ушел жить в лес" ("Novye Robinzony" 19).

structures. While it is clear that Petrushevskaia doesn't idealize this sole father figure due to his distaste for paternal identity, she compares diverse maternal figures to illustrate her preference for women who embody the maternal myth.

In addition to her identification of the narrator's mother as an ideal maternal figure, Petrushevskaia addresses the ailments associated with Soviet motherhood through her illustration of greedy and unsuitable maternal figures. The first account of such unattractive maternal figures involves a succession of unreliable mothers within the same family. Petrushevskaia presents an orphaned child of a mother who committed suicide, and is placed in the care of her grandmother, who is not only described as physically repulsive but also "only an alcoholic as well" (Petrushevskaia 419).[14] Furthermore, the author's use of successive maternal inadequacy in relation to this orphan's family life supports Marsh's analysis that trauma within Russian families are cyclical, thereby contributing to the sense of inescapable domestic turmoil (Marsh, 2012, 1208).

In addition to the maternal inadequacies demonstrated in this work, the degradation of children by their caretakers is demonstrated through the monetary value assigned to offspring. This financial preoccupation signifies the emotional devaluation of children within the parent-child relationship. This is instanced in Petrushevskaia's short story, as the orphaned child's only surviving relative locates her in order to "to wheedle money out of us for the little girl and the pram" (Petrushevskaia 420).[15] This literary depiction references ostracized single mothers and caretakers, accused of having children out of financial motivations and at the prospect of receiving state benefits. These women are eventually met with death in "Novye Robinzony", thereby indicating that maternity

[14] "только еще пьющая" ("Novye Robinzony" 19).
[15] "выманивать деньги за девочку и за коляску" ("Novye Robinzony" 19).

motivated by materialism and dismissal of the maternal myth is unsustainable. More importantly, these examples of maternal deficiencies underscore the perversion of mother-child dynamics, as children are vulnerable to the avarice of their biological family members.

Although Petrushevskaia's short story includes beneficent maternal figures, her inclusion of indifferent and incapable mothers illustrates the fragility of mother-child dynamics during the late Soviet era. The transformation of ideal maternal roles by Soviet society contributed to the volatility of family life, as women struggled to adapt to new expectations of becoming devoted and subdued mothers. This challenge was exacerbated as Russian fathers struggled to become involved parents following decades of paternal marginalization. This considerable evolution of parental identities made family life increasingly precarious upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, as families struggled to navigate the new socio-political landscape, while coping with their new domestic identities. Thus, it is evident that the institution of family was in a state of flux upon the eve of the transition due to these transformations regarding ideal parental behavior, making mother-child relations increasingly vulnerable in the face of the emerging post-Soviet era.

Chapter three: The Russian Family Crisis: Maternal Expectations and Limitations

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the fundamental and forced restructuring of Russian family dynamics. The adoption of traditional family roles was deemed necessary for the survival of Russian households following the elimination of state-funded social services and nationwide financial strain. This resulted in critical changes in maternal roles. This chapter illustrates that despite the reversion to conservative family models, the fluctuation of parental expectations and the absence of state support rendered mothers unable to respond to the needs of their children during the transition period, which compounded the post-Soviet family crisis.[16] This chapter also emphasizes the continued responsibility placed on mothers for childrearing, thereby illustrating the limitations of the popular dual-parent system. Finally, this analysis provides the context for Ulitskaia's literary prescriptions for maternal figures in response to the post-Soviet family crisis.

The unexpected dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the disorientation of millions of Russians who struggled to acclimate to their new national identity. The simultaneous collapse of social infrastructure and the implementation of "shock therapy" destabilized the nascent socio-economic framework of the Russian Federation (Rimashevskaia 82). While Russians struggled to adjust to Western economic and political concepts, their daily survival was challenged by inflation, elevated food prices,

[16] This paper ascribes to N. Lovtsova's definition of the family crisis which, although formulated to describe the late Soviet era, also reflects the entails the: "sharp degradation of the welfare of many families, a decline of fertility, as well as a deterioration of moral standards, the growth of children and youth homelessness, neglect, crime, and a growing number of social orphans" (Chernova 79). Although this thesis is primarily concerned with parent-child relations, the factors listed by Lovtsova contribute to the quality of family dynamics.

rising criminal activity, and political volatility (Adelman 20; Twigg and Schecter 5). Amidst this social turmoil, Russian families were "badly affected by the overall degradation of the social sphere" and were suddenly expected to function as an independent institution (Klimantova 5).

The state's relinquishment of ideological and financial responsibility for Russian families can be traced to the birth of the post-Soviet era. The Soviet regime's interventionist tendencies in household affairs disintegrated after 1991, as evidenced in post-Soviet family policy, which asserts, "arbitrary intervention by anyone into the family is inadmissible" (Butler and Kuravea 202).[17] The ideological distancing of the state from family life was paralleled by the decline in funding for this social institution (Lokshin 1095). The elimination of free social services such as childcare and education financially destabilized post-Soviet families, as they could no longer rely upon the state to bear childrearing expenses (Rimashevskaia 83, 86). The eradication of state financial support during the transition period was acutely felt by post-Soviet families, as they were already weakened by the financial hardship experienced during *glasnost'* and *perestroika* (Butler and Kuraeva 196-197).

The transformation of the family from a state controlled entity to an independent institution proved challenging to post-Soviet Russians, as they were obligated to fulfill their own domestic needs amidst extreme socio-economic turmoil (Rimashevskaia 86). Lidia Prokofieva and Lolita Terskikh capture this polar shift in domestic responsibilities as they contextualize this institution's evolution during the transition period: "under the traditional State paternalism, behaviors were strictly regulated from above, whereas in the

[17] This quotation is in reference to the 1996 Family Code.

present economic context, individuals are required to take personal initiatives" (483). The state's retreat from domestic affairs forced Russian families to adapt their household dynamics to meet the socio-economic challenges of the 1990s. This ultimately led to the transformation of parental roles, with considerable changes for maternal figures.

Under the Soviet regime, mothers were able to actively participate in the workforce due to "a wide range of government-subsidized childcare programs, such as nurseries and preschool, kindergarten, and afterschool programs" (Lokshin 1095). The eradication of these benefits contributed to the popularization of two-parent and patriarchal models.[18] The emergence of this traditionalism challenged the domineering and self-sufficient positions occupied by women during the Soviet era. This is evidenced by the renewed importance attributed to paternal figures in post-Soviet culture. Ol'ga Issoupova asserts that paternal advocacy was undertaken by the Russian media, which evoked the attitude of "Fathers, return to the family!'" (42). The combination of economic strain and conservative rhetoric attributed greater importance to paternal figures as financial providers, or "breadwinners," coupled with increased involvement in household affairs (Ashwin and Lytkina 189). These constructs led to the pervasive perception that "it is now financially impossible to have children without male support, especially given the erosion of state benefits" (Issoupova 47). These attitudes reinforce the decline in maternal economic power and influence within family structures. Fathers were expected to assume fiscal responsibility for the household, in response to the elimination of social services and the ensuing economic crisis (Issoupova 42). However,

[18] Scholars have observed that this conservative response was a challenge to the "double-burden" during the Soviet era (Marsh, 2012, 1191). However, this change in parental roles was ultimately created by the economic pressures of the transition period, as opposed to the popular denunciations of Soviet ideology.

the emphasis on parental financial responsibility resulted in unforeseen instability in Russian family life. Fiscal hardship led some parents to work up to "70-hour weeks," and led to instances of "higher numbers of abandoned newborns and homeless children" (Rimashevskaia 88). Thus, the elimination of state services and economic instability of the post-Soviet era invariably detracted from the critically needed parental presence within the home.

The motivation for increased male economic and emotional participation in the household was observed in women's literature, such as the journal *Materinstvo*, which asserts, "As soon as the economy became market-oriented, it required the development of traditional male qualities" (*Materinstvo,* no. 1, September 1996: 91, as cited by Issoupova 42). While some households experienced relief from severe financial pressures due to male involvement, paternal emotional contributions in household dynamics remained limited. Kukhterin asserts that father-child relations have undergone varied changes upon the restructuring of parental identities. Kukhterin's interviews with Russian fathers indicate that "Relations between father and son have changed…now, well, they're not over-familiar, but they are too open" (85-86). These report suggest that fathers and sons have yet to achieve emotional balance in their relationships, despite the popular movement for increased paternal participation within the home.

While Kukhterin's analysis acknowledges an increase in paternal importance in regard to household finances, he also recognizes that "some men are carrying on as before, leaving women in control, a small minority are experimenting with a nurturing role" (85). While it is clear that levels of paternal activity in household dynamics improved in some instances during the transition, the culture of absent fatherhood

continues to prevail in post-Soviet society (Rimashevskaia 91). This aspect of paternal roles has proven difficult to overcome in the post-Soviet age, and childcare consequently remains the sole responsibility of mothers, as fathers have not made the transformation into complete participants in the household (Kukhterin 85). This is of particular relevance, as the period of socio-economic upheaval has left children increasingly vulnerable and in need of parental care.

The renewed importance of paternal figures in family dynamics was paralleled by the change in maternal expectations during the transition. The elimination of free social services that women depended on during Soviet times, and its exorbitant cost during the 1990s led to a "55.1 percent" decrease in kindergarten and nursery enrollment (Lokshin 1095). Thus, the combination of unaffordable childcare services and the popularity of traditional family structures ultimately signified that "the full burden of the everyday care of children shifted to mothers" (Rimashevskaia 86). The designation of mothers as full-time caregivers signaled a departure from Soviet maternal identity, which featured responsibilities outside of the home. As men experienced difficulty adapting to their new paternal roles, it proved equally challenging for women to relinquish their emancipated positions and progressive ideology, which contributed to the "growth in tension within families, and permanent conflict, destabilization, violence, and discrimination in the family" (Rimashevskaia 89). Russian women were challenged in their attempt to obtain professional positions as, "the female work force has become less competitive" due to the domestic challenges they faced in post-Soviet society (Rimashevskaia 82, 88). Thus, women were compelled to accept their domestic and marginalized identities within the family.

The reemergence of patriarchal culture resulted in unforeseen consequeneces, as the overwhelming challenges and duties associated with maternity deterred many women from having children, thereby solidifying the negative association with motherhood in the post-Soviet period (Issoupova 43). The unappealing aspect of maternal roles was underscored by the unavailability of "the use of mutual aid within kin network" as a childrearing support was not available to all households, as elderly members of the population faced "the necessity to continue to work after retirement" (Rimashevskaia 91).[19] Thus, it became clear that mothers were forced to bear the responsibility for childcare, regardless of the hostile environment this created for their offspring, or the economic burden that this posed to the household. While conservative values overtook family life, some women attempted to resist its demanding and restrictive attributes.

Although mothers were encouraged to tend to their childrearing duties, this sole preoccupation was untenable for single-mothers who were forced to contend with raising their offspring devoid of state and paternal support. Consequently, these women were compelled to work multiple jobs in order to meet their financial demands (Prokofieva and Terskikh 492). The state's inability to enforce alimony payments in the early 1990s exacerbated the financial strain experienced by single mothers (Prokofieva and Terskikh 492). [20] Although Prokofieva and Terskikh do not indicate how these circumstances affected mother-child relations, it appears unlikely that single mothers were available to frequently tend to the emotional needs of their children due to their work demands. The hardship experienced by single mothers seemingly encouraged the two-parent system,

[19] This phenomenon was widespread in both Soviet and post-Soviet eras (Kukhterin 81; Prokofieva and Terskikh 487).
[20] Prokofieva and Terskikh acknowledge that even in successful cases of alimony payments, these funds often proved insufficient for childrearing expenses (492).

however, families who complied with this domestic model were still unable to cope with their financial demands. Indeed, two-parent households were similarly engulfed by poverty that was previously the domain of single parent or large families (Prokofieva and Terskikh 486). Thus, both traditional and non-conformist households struggled to adapt to parental expectations and economic pressures during the transition period.

The inability of parents to cope with childrearing responsibilities in the early post-Soviet era amidst these circumstances is reflected in the soaring figures of social orphanhood in the early post-Soviet period. According to Judith McKinney, estimates suggest that, "90 percent-of children in Russian orphanages qualify as 'social orphans'" (52). McKinney asserts that the offspring of single mothers were prone to social orphanhood due to the severe economic strain (52). While some parents willingly relinquished their children due to financial pressures, cases of extreme household dysfunction led children to "run away from home to escape abuse or neglect, in others the authorities have terminated parental rights" (McKinney 52). Studies on parent-child relations in the early post-Soviet era continuously indicates that "parents are also treating children unfairly and lack an understanding of ways to approach such issues as a crisis in relationships with their children" (Rimashevskaia 93). These widespread parent-child conflicts confirm the underlying dysfunction of post-Soviet families amidst the socio-economic turmoil of the 1990s.

Parent-child dysfunction became a well-known phenomenon through mass media outlets. The vilification of maternal figures featured prominently in these cases, which were frequently documented in the early post-Soviet press (Issoupova 45). These articles focused on the "unjust treatment of children found in articles concerning abandonment,

child murder including that carried out by mothers, child prostitution, the sale of children, and other forms of criminal use of children by parents or guardians" (Issoupova 45). Although Issoupova does not indicate whether these parental crimes resulted from economic deprivation, they underscore elements of severe distress in mother-child relations. The emphasis on harmful mothers also suggests the perceived importance attributed to maternal figures by Russian society, despite their reduction of power in household dynamics as a result of the two-parent system and patriarchal culture.

In addition to the socio-political discourse surrounding post-Soviet family life, fiction writers explored mother-child relationships in their publications. The evaluation of maternal roles in literary works reflected the unstable nature of family dynamics. In addition to focusing on post-Soviet families, writers also commented on this institution in the Soviet context, often to the chagrin of maternal figures. Marsh identifies this phenomenon in the works of Olga Slavnikova and Petrushevskaia, who render disturbing and abusive images of mothers in Soviet families (Marsh, 2012, 1207, 1210). In accordance with the growing interest in family themes in literature, mother-daughter relationships became appeared in the works of post-Soviet authors such as, Mariia Arbatova and Svetlana Vasilenko (Marsh 2012, 1199, 1206, 1219). According to Marsh, this post-Soviet literary examination of mother-daughter relations indicates a departure from the Soviet preoccupation with parent-son dynamics (Marsh, 2007, 307). More importantly, the emergence of these works and familial themes signaled the transcendence of "family chronicles by exponents of the 'new women's prose'" (Marsh, 2012, 1195). The pervasive use of mother-child themes in literature parallels the relevance of this aspect of family dynamics in post-Soviet culture.

While the rising prevalence of mother-daughter relations in literary works echoed popular anxiety surrounding family life, the fixation with maternal roles by fiction authors reveals the enduring relevance of motherhood in Russian culture.[21] This is of significance as socio-political forces ceaselessly supported the position of powerful fathers throughout the 1990s.[22] The prevailing treatment of mothers in post-Soviet literature may serve as recognition of the overwhelming maternal responsibility for childrearing during the transition despite the preference for two-parent and patriarchal households. However, these literary treatments are not entirely sympathetic, and reveal complex assessments of mother figures. This is evidenced in Marsh's identification of "matrophobia" in post-Soviet literature (Marsh, 2012, 1217). These "matrophobic" tendencies reflect the intergenerational conflicts of post-Soviet families, as daughters "have certainly hoped to avoid the struggles of their mothers' generation, and few have wished to have a large family" (Marsh, 2012, 1200). This anti-maternal tendency corresponds to the social phenomenon of reevaluating the positive illustration of mothers in Soviet literature and society (Marsh, 2012,1202).

In contrast to the despairing treatments of mother-child dynamics, Ulitskaia provides readers with ideal maternal figures in her literary works. Her identification of the socio-economic challenges faced by Russian mothers during the transition, and her liberal approach to parent-child relations provides readers with viable alternatives to conservative state rhetoric and patriarchal culture. Ulitskaia's focus on maternal roles is

[21] Marsh provides the reader with an extensive list of female writers who address parent-child dynamics in their works. She doesn't identify male authors, which suggests that women are experiencing a heightened awareness of their gender and maternal roles.
[22] The preference for traditional parental roles continues under Vladimir Putin, whose government pursues a pro-natalist policy and conforms to conservative interpretations of gender (Marsh, 2013, 192).

of significance due to its minimized importance in comparison to fatherhood during the post-Soviet era. The subsequent chapter will analyze Ulitskaia's recommendations for improved-mother child relations in post-Soviet family life.

Chapter four: Liudmila Ulitskaia's Willing Motherhood in Post-Soviet Patriarchal Culture

The cultural and socio-economic upheaval in post-Soviet Russia exacerbated mother-child relations. The increased prevalence of child abandonment and social orphanhood, combined with evolving conceptions of acceptable maternity, contributed to turmoil within the institution of the family. State policy makers emphasized the importance of motherhood, as they encouraged the return of women to the household in response to the post-Soviet family crisis (Marsh, 2012, 1200). Although official policy initiatives and traditional values did little to resolve family dysfunction, literary fiction evolved to fill the ideological vacuum of the post-Soviet world, and offered diverse solutions and recommendations for improving mother-child relations. Ulitskaia's works advocate willing motherhood as an alternative to the traditional and obligatory motherhood advocated by political and conservative groups. This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the stabilizing and destructive effects of willing and unwilling motherhood on parent-child relations as depicted in the following works by Ulitskaia: *Sonechka*, *Medeia i eë deti*, "Pikovaia dama", and "Orlovy-Sokolovy". The ensuing analysis explores the premise that Ulitskaia's treatment of unwilling motherhood provided preferable, and more viable alternatives for women as opposed to those recommended by the state, which largely upheld the status quo of traditional cultural attitudes.

As demonstrated in chapter three, the reemergence of patriarchal values resulted in the popularization of maternal roles for Russian women in the post-Soviet landscape. The reinterpretation of parental duties and the demographic crises led politicians to

emphasize maternal duty by "exhorting women to have children" (Marsh, 2012, 1218).[23] The growing transformation of women into maternal figures represents an intrinsic aspect of early post-Soviet culture, as young girls were compelled to enroll in household courses, and receiving instruction for becoming "a good housewife, a devoted wife, and an altruistic mother" (Marsh, 2012, 1200). Throughout the transition period, Russian motherhood became increasingly perceived as a compulsory role for women, as fathers were charged with financial responsibility for the household and often entered family life with varied success. Post-Soviet motherhood was forced through the two-parent system, patriarchal culture, and the absence of childcare services.

While state advocacy of motherhood as a national duty, and an alleviating force on the family crisis yielded few results, post-Soviet era literary fiction offers new approaches for improving mother-child relations in the early post-Soviet era. The popularization of this subject matter appears in family chronicles, which serve as the popular medium for female writers interested in parent-child representations (Marsh, 2007, 307). Indeed, this literary form is implemented in Ulitskaia's works, as she relies on fictional family histories to recount both the stabilizing and detrimental effects of willing and unwilling motherhood on offspring.

Prior to assessing Ulitskaia's advocacy of willing motherhood for improved mother-child relations, it is first necessary to identify the maternal figures presented in her works. Close readings of Ulitskaia's novels reveal two distinct maternal types: willing (stabilizing) and unwilling (destabilizing) mothers. Ulitskaia's emphasis on

[23] Although Marsh recognizes this tendency as a hallmark of the "Putin-Medvedev era," the return of women to their maternal roles began in the final years of *glasnost'* and *perestroika*, as demonstrated in previous chapters (Marsh, 2012, 1218).

willingness discounts the traditionally perceived importance of biological relations regarding maternal aptitude or dedication to childrearing duties. The minimalized importance attributed to biological maternity may serve as Ulitskaia's attempt to counter the "tendency to privilege biological motherhood over social motherhood" (Issoupova 46). Ulitskaia's development of maternal characters focuses primarily on their willingness to bear the emotional burden necessary for the care of offspring, regardless of their biological connections. Thus, Ulitskaia effectively dismisses traditional concepts surrounding ideal motherhood, such as that of biological maternity, through her idealization of women that accept their roles and responsibilities toward their charges, regardless of any blood relationship to their children.

Ulitskaia's resolution for mother-child relationships in post-Soviet society is based primarily on willing motherhood. This seemingly simplistic resolution is antithetical to patriarchal post-Soviet culture, in which women are expected to embrace their maternal duties and roles. Through her literary works, Ulitskaia effectively illustrates the stabilizing effect of willing maternal figures on their offspring. These idealized maternal characters are pervasive throughout her novel, *Medeia i eë deti.* The inclusion of a woman and her children immediately alerts the reader to the significance of family themes in this work. The inclusion of an intricate family tree following from this overtly maternal centric tone emphasizes the importance of the numerous, surrogate offspring in the life of Medeia Mendez, a childless widow and matriarch of a large extended family.

As observed by Marja Rytkonen, Medeia willingly accepts her maternal position in her adolescence when faced with the premature deaths of her parents (Rytkonen 67).

Although this unexpected parentage forces Medeia to sacrifice her personal desires, she fully accepts the burdens of childrearing for her remaining siblings. This marks the beginning of Medeia's lifelong role as a surrogate mother. Rytkonen observes intrinsic qualities in Medeia's character, which strengthen her position as an ideal maternal figure, such as her selection of a caretaking profession as the village nurse (67). Her capacity for nurturing is evidenced through the medical assistance she enthusiastically provides to her neighbors and ailing husband, Samuel (Romanovskaia 93).[24] Thus, Medeia's sense of maternity is embodied in all aspects of her life, thereby transcending her assumed responsibilities toward her family.

Although initially dismayed by her infertility, Medeia embraces her role as the Sinoply family matriarch. Her willingness to serve as a maternal figure to her siblings following the unexpected loss of their parents, provides these surrogate offspring with the support that makes it possible for them to continue their lives in relative normalcy following the abrupt family crisis. Medeia's willingness to care for her siblings during familial and political turmoil serves as a positive model to post-Soviet Russians who were unable to fulfill emotional or monetary obligations toward their offspring (Twigg and Schecter 5).[25] She extends her maternal protection by making her ancestral Crimean home constantly available as a safe haven to her numerous descendants. In this manner, she serves as a force of physical stability through her residency in her hometown. (*Medeia i eë deti* 14). According to Benjamin Sutcliffe, Medeia's physical presence in the

[24] Ulitskaia also uses medical professions in her short story "Pikovaia dama" in application to Anna, who must provide her indifferent mother with the maternal care that she herself did not receive from Mur.
[25] Medeia assumes these childrearing burdens on the eve of the Russian Revolution (*Medeia i eë deti* 35; Ulitskaya, 2002, 29).

Crimea bears considerable historical importance, as her home offers her family shelter from "the horrors of the Russian twentieth century" (Sutcliffe, 2009, 128). Thus, her general permanency offsets the turbulences that characterize the personal lives and political instability faced by her relatives.[26]

In addition to providing physical comfort, Medeia espouses emotional support to her extended family. Ulitskaia's narrator directly addresses the skepticism surrounding Medeia's ability to direct maternal care to her non-biological children, as he states, "although what kind of love a childless woman has for other people's children is uncertain" (Ulitskaya, 2002, 7).[27] However, Ulitskaia's ideal dispels the importance of biological maternity, as she is determined to nurture her family members irrespective of her personal grievances toward them. This commitment to her maternal position is reflected in the care she extends to her sister Aleksandra following her daughter's suicide. Despite Aleksandra's affair with Samuel, Medeia is able to put aside her personal grievances to comfort her sister in her time of need. Her well-developed maternal consciousness makes it impossible for Medeia to withhold maternal compassion after learning of her sister's grief. Her maternal willingness allows her to transcend the transgressions inflicted upon her.

Similarly, Ulitskaia's ideal remains undeterred in providing Nike, the child of this tryst, with the familial privileges expounded to her other relatives. Her ability to provide emotional and material support to her surrogate offspring ultimately provides

---

[26] Indeed, Medeia only leaves her village rarely, and typically only in circumstances of personal bereavement such as her discovery of her husband's extramarital affair (*Medeia i eë deti* 208; Ulitskaya, 2002, 198-199).

[27] "Какова бывает любовь к детям у бездетных женщин, трудно сказать" (*Medeia i eë deti* 14).

Medeia's family with the fortitude necessary to secure its survival into the post-Soviet age. Thus, *Medeia i eë deti* illustrates the calming effect that willing maternal involvement has on mother-child relations during periods of political and emotional volatility, which currently challenge post-Soviet families.

While Ulitskaia demonstrates the beneficial results of willing motherhood in *Medeia i eë deti*, her work *Sonechka* directly addresses how the same parenting approach can resolve specific tribulations faced by post-Soviet families, most notably social orphanhood.[28] Ulitskaia's protagonist, Sonechka, is devoted to her childrearing responsibilities upon the birth of her only biological offspring, Tan'ia. As observed by Sutcliffe, "she exchanges books for *byt,"* thereby redirecting her consuming intellectual energies toward her maternal passions (Sutcliffe, 2009, 610). Like Medeia, Sonechka applies her maternal sensibilities beyond the realm of the biological and into the sphere of surrogate motherhood, as demonstrated by her eagerness to adopt the orphaned Iasia. Indeed, her intrinsic desire to provide Iasia with maternal support is apparent in their first encounter, "Only Sonechka was a little disappointed. Her heart having already gone out to Tanya's friend for all she had suffered, she was not expecting to see, in the place of a woebegone Cinderella, this tastefully attired beauty with eyeliner, radiating all the sweetness of a fair-skinned Slav maiden" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 46).[29] Despite the fact that Iasia's prepossessing character deviates from Sonechka's maternal expectations, her

[28] In this work, Iasia can be interpreted as a product of social orphanhood. Iasia has living relatives but is forced to survive on her own until her adoption into Sonechka's family, and her eventual return to Poland (*Sonechka* 68, 124-125; Ulitskaya, 2005, 38, 70).
[29] "Несколько разочарована была Сонечка. Заранее отозвавшись на трудную судьбу Таниной подруги, она не была готова вместо золушки-замарашки увидеть нарядную красотку с подведенными глазами" (*Sonechka* 81).

adoption in the household provides the protagonist with the "the illusion that her family had increased, and she did grace the table…And Sonechka would blissfully and bring out the shallow glass dishes of stewed fruit" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 51).[30] Adoption is illustrated as a mutually beneficial deed to Ulitskaia's readership, as Sonechka fulfills her desire to expand her family, while simultaneously ending Iasia's existence as an impoverished orphan.

Although Iasia's adoption creates discord in Sonechka's marital life through her affair with her adopted mother's husband, these two women, nevertheless, achieve a strong foster mother-child relationship. This intimacy is apparent in the shared physical proximity between Sonechka and her foster daughter following the latter's Oedipal experience: "Jasia was clinging to Sonya's hand the whole time like a little child. She was an orphan and Sonya was her mother" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 68).[31] This protective mother-child imagery is further developed as the narrator indicates, "Jasia…clung to large, shapeless Sonechka, peeping out from under her arm like a fledgling peeping out from under the wing of a penguin" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 69).[32] The absence of Sonechka's biological child during her husband's funeral makes it possible for the solidification of this mother-daughter bond, through "Jasia replacing daughter Tanja" (Salys 449). Sonechka's maternal orientation endures into old age as she arranges Iasia's emigration

[30] "иллюзию увеличения семьи и украшало застолье-так естествешно и мило она держалась за столом…А Сонечка блаженно улыбалась и ставила на стол низенькие стеклянные вазочки с компотом" (*Sonechka* 91).

[31] "Яся держала все время Соню за руку, вцепившись как ребенок. Была она сирота, а Соня была мать" (*Sonechka* 119).

[32] "Яся…лепилась к большой и бесформенной Сонечке выглядывала из-под руки, как птенец из-под крыла пингвина" (*Sonechka* 121).

to Poland, in order to procure medical care and familial relations for her foster daughter. Her beneficence is ultimately rewarded through the acquisition of "her other daughter, Jasia" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 71).[33] (*Sonechka* 127). Although Sonechka is devoid of physical filial care in her final years, she is granted a peaceful existence, which she experienced in her pre-marital youth. What is more, Iasia provides her foster mother with emotional support as "she [Sonechka] is constantly being invited [by Iasia]" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 71).[34] In this significant regard, Ulitskaia demonstrates the positive effects rendered by willing maternal surrogacy, and its ability to resolve the challenges of post-Soviet social orphanhood.

Ulitskaia's advocacy of willing motherhood in contrast to obligatory maternity is bolstered through her depiction of the damage inflicted on children by unwilling mothers. These detrimental maternal figures are presented in both "Pikovaia dama" and *Medeia i eë deti.* In the latter work, Ulitskaia conveys the self-destructive consequences of indifferent mothers. This characteristic is largely attributed to Medeia's niece, Masha, whose obsession with her extramarital affair, and poetic compositions contribute to her suicide, carried out in a delirious state by jumping to her death from her apartment's balcony. Masha's decision to yield her maternal duties to her mother-in-law is critiqued by this traditional maternal figure, as she exclaims, "Of course not! You don't care two hoots about your husband and child! If you want to know what that's called-" (Ulitskaya, 2002, 282-283).[35] Masha's inability, or unwillingness, to receive parenting feedback

---

[33] "вторая девочка, Яся" (*Sonechka* 127).
[34] "постоянно зовет" (*Sonechka* 127).
[35] "Конечно! О муже и ребенке ты не беспокоишься! Если хочешь знать, как это называется...(*Medeia i eë deti* 291).

underscores her detachment from her maternal consciousness and identity. The description of her son's vulnerability through his physical positioning and unconscious state at the simultaneous moment of Masha's suicide indicates the problematic consequences of inattentive mothers in Ulitskaia's works.[36] Ultimately, Masha's inattentive treatment of her maternal duties results in the disturbance of her child's family life, while directly compromising her own survival.

While it is clear that unwilling mothers suffer from their parental misdeeds, Ulitskaia emphasize the emotional trauma and fatal consequences inflicted upon their offspring. This phenomenon is best illustrated in her short story, "Pikovaia dama". This short story is relevant due to its setting in the post-Soviet era, and its concentration of exclusive maternal responsibility for family life and childcare.[37] Ulitskaia's selection of the post-Soviet period makes it possible for readers to evaluate mothers from three different generations, as each woman represents a distinct political era of Russian history (Mur: imperial, Anna: Soviet, Katia: Post-Soviet). Maternal behavior bears considerable importance in this work, due to the general absence of paternal figures.

Ulitskaia's infamous antagonist, Mur, dismisses her maternal role. This results in family upheaval, and parent-child role reversal, as her daughter, Anna, assumes the caretaking responsibilities that her mother scorns. The perversion of mother-child dynamics forces Anna to sacrifice her own maternity and marriage to suit her mother's

---

[36] Arik sleeps in the same "в этой детской позе" (fetal position) as his father, underscoring his childlike characterization and continued dependency on his mother (*Medeia i eë deti* 308, 310; Ulitskaya, 2002, 299).

[37] Ulitskaia doesn't provide the reader with an explicit year to frame the historical positioning of the short story, however, it is possible to inference this post-Soviet setting. This is ascertained through Anna's references Mur's longevity as she states, "Mama, thank heaven, has even outlived Marxism" ("Pikovaia dama" 273; Ulitskaya, 2005, 86).

preferences. The reader is informed of the disintegration of Anna's domestic life as she describes the limitations placed upon her living arrangements due to her mother's demands: "It was out of the question. She [Mour] hated him [Anna's husband]. He kept on living in Ostankino until he left" (Pikovaia dama 86)[38]. In addition to the restrictions made on Anna's marital life, Mur's requirement of Anna's maternal care ultimately threatens the latter's survival.

While it is clear that Mur's indifference to her maternal duties compromises Anna's emotional fulfillment, she also poses a literal danger to her daughter's life through her demanding and maternally perverse character. The manifestation of subconscious violence permeates this mother-daughter dynamic, evidenced through Anna's perception of her mother: "When she [Anna] reached adulthood she psyched herself up like a boxer before a bout with a stronger opponent, not aiming to win but only to lose with dignity" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 77).[39] This passage emphasizes the deviation of ideal mother-daughter relations as Mur serves as a combatant, rather than a nurturing force in Anna's life. More importantly, this imagery suggests Anna's awareness regarding Mur's injurious capabilities, and ultimately foreshadows the former's premature death while contending with her mother's forceful requests. The narrator notes Anna's dedication to her caretaking position in her final living moments, as "She fell forward without letting go of the cool carton, and the light slippers came off her strong

[38] "Об этом и речи не было. Она [Мур] его [муж Анны] ненавидела. Он так в Останкине и жил до самого отъезда" ("Pikovaia dama" 274).

[39] "она [Анна], как боксер перед встречей с сильнейшим противником, настраивалась не на победу, а на достойное поражение"[39] ("Pikovaia dama" 195)

stoutly Germanic feet" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 109).[40] Anna's grip on the milk indicates her commitment to her filial servitude, as she attempts to preserve the material item that Mur demands, despite the fatal repercussions such devotion exerts on her own life.

Despite her daughter's untimely death, Mur continues to serve as a destabilizing force in parent-child dynamics. Although Kat'ia, Mur's granddaughter, confronts her domineering stance by slapping her across the face, she ultimately inherits her mother's position of servitude as, "Katya walked past her to the kitchen, slit open the carton, and slopped the milk into the cold coffee" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 110).[41] More importantly, Mur's ability to outlive her daughter despite her advanced age, and to transform Katia into her subsequent caretaker illuminates the perversion of this inverted mother-child dynamic. Mur's maternal detachment and invocation of role reversal jeopardizes the survival and personal contentment of her female descendants, thereby illustrating the victimization of offspring by unwilling mothers.

Because Ulitskaia's overarching resolution for post-Soviet family life is rooted in willing maternity, she discusses the importance of women independently determining their entry into motherhood. This subject is treated in her short story, "Orlovy-Sokolovy". Ulitskaia's protagonist, Tan'ia, engages in "her annual autumn abortion," so that she may continue her education and seemingly uncomplicated relationship with Andrei (Ulitskaya,

[40] "Она упала вперед, не выпуская из рук прохладного пакета, и легкие шлепанцы соскользнули с ее сильных и по-немецки прочных ног" ("Pikovaia dama" 298)

[41] "Катя прошла мимо нее, на кухне вспорола пакет и плеснула молоко в остывший кофе" ("Pikovaia dama" 245).

2005, 205). [42] The narrator indicates that these procedures are initially unpleasant for Tan'ia and her boyfriend; however, their discomfort remains limited as "No thoughts about the baby entered their highly organized minds." (Ulitskaya, 2005, 200).[43] Indeed, Tan'ia's dismissal of childrearing duties echoes the struggle and reluctance of post-Soviet women to embrace the tribulations of motherhood, while men assume powerful positions through their status as breadwinners (Kukhterin 88). Tan'ia's dismay at her limited options becomes a subject of concern in her discussions with Andrei, as she states: "Oh, I get it. You go for the postgraduate place and I go for a baby and changing diapers" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 89).[44] Tan'ia's aversion to this patriarchal construction of motherhood and family life informs the reader's understanding of the unpopularity of traditional family structures amongst contemporary Russian women.[45] Furthermore, Tan'ia's consistent negative association with maternity suggests her initial unsuitability for motherhood.[46]

---

[42] "осенний аборт" ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 144). Tan'ia's timely autumnal abortions serve as a metaphor for barrenness, as she ultimately terminates each of these pregnancies as the deadness of winter approaches. Contrastingly, her decision to keep her child upon her impregnation during the summer underscores the phenomenon of seasonal and symbolic fertility in this short story ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 154; Ulitskaya, 2005, 212).

[43] "Мысль о ребенке даже не приходила в их высокоорганизованные головы" (Orlovy-Sokolovy" 137).

[44] "Ага. Тебе аспирантура, а мне девочка с пеленками"[44] ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 149)

[45] The imposition of traditional family structures on independent and assertive women is made increasingly apparent as Andrei states: "Ты дура, Танька. Я же муж. Ты на меня ставь." ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 149). Translation: "You are so silly, Tanya. I am the man, for heaven's sake. Rely on me." (Ulitskaya, 2005, 208)

[46]Tan'ia's unpleasant associations with motherhood is most noticeable prior to her final abortion, as she informs Andrei of her pregnancy: "Кажется, я опять влипла" ("Orlovy-Sokolovy"149). Translation: "I think I'm up the creek again" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 209)

Although Tan'ia ultimately bears children with another partner, she arrival at this decision independently, as she states, "And this time I am going to have the baby" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 212).[47] While it is clear that Tan'ia's acceptance of motherhood is motivated by spite for Andrei, this pregnancy is distinct from her previous experiences with him, as it remains devoid of the external pressures exerted by her partner or surrounding maternal figures, such as Andrei's mother, whose assistance in Tan'ia's previous abortion arrangements was overshadowed by the fact that "[She] was more aware than most of the amazing powers and capricious fragility of this feminine equipment" and as she eventually "made her disapproval clear" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 201, 204).[48] Thus, Tan'ia's evolution into a willing maternal figure through her ability to determine her entry into motherhood underscores Ulitskaia's advocacy of maternal willingness in childrearing.

Unlike *Medeia i eë deti* and *Sonechka,* the female protagonist in "Orlovy-Sokolovy" is not as overtly idealized in her maternal role, even though she eventually adopts the principles of willing motherhood. However, Tan'ia and Andrei ultimately identify an "ideal family" among their associates (Ulitskaya, 2005, 204).[49] While few details are provided regarding this idealized family, they "agreed to take them and be responsible for them" (Ulitskaya, 2005, 216).[50] Although Tan'ia embraces motherhood,

[47] "И вот теперь-то я рожу" ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 154).

[48] "знала, как удивительно сильна и капризно крупка вся эта женская машинерия" and "их пожурила" (Orlovy-Sokolovy" 139, 142).

[49] "идеальная семья" ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 142).
[50] "взяла их [сыновей Таньи] с собой, на свою ответственность" ("Orlovy-Sokolovy" 159)

the ideal family's eager assumption of her childrearing duties, in addition to that of their own, corresponds to Ulitskaia's recommendation of willing parenthood.

The stabilizing effect of willing maternal figures in Ulitskaia's works emphasizes the dangers posed to both mothers and their offspring as a result of unwilling, or forced motherhood. Unable to provide their children with the maternal care they require, the disregard for their parental roles leads to imbalances in the mother-child dynamic, and detrimental relations within the overall family structure. Thus, Ulitskaia's works ultimately depict motherhood as an appropriate and beneficial occupation for women who are prepared to assume the responsibilities and tasks of childrearing, as depicted in the idealized characters of Medeia and Sonechka. This advocacy of willing motherhood directly challenges the state's endorsement of maternal duty, in spite of contingent circumstances, and the traumas associated with unwilling motherhood threaten the already weakened institution of the family in post-Soviet Russian society.

Chapter five: Conclusions

While the early post-Soviet era (1991-2000) is renown for its socio-economic collapse, the institution of family underwent an extreme, destabilizing transformation. The reemergence of patriarchal culture and financial strain led political forces to encourage the return of women to domestic spaces and traditional maternal roles. In many cases, financial limitations provided women with few alternatives to their position as caretakers, regardless of their unsuitability as full-time childcare providers. The state's conservative recommendations, however, were unable to prevent the continued destabilization of Russian families throughout the 1990s. In response to the state's inability to ameliorate household tensions, literary fiction provided readers with alternative approaches to the troubled state of mother-child relations. This chapter offers conclusions regarding the past and future conditions of mother-child relations in post-Soviet literature and society. A brief summary of my findings will be provided, in addition to proposals for further topics of research for the enhancement of this study.

The institution of the Russian family appears most vulnerable during periods of economic and political upheaval. The cyclical effect of familial instability has occurred following two notable and similar moments in twentieth century Russian history: the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet collapse. These events radically changed the roles and structures of mothers and children. Feminist rhetoric, which guided Soviet family policy and dynamics, was quickly abandoned during the nascent transition period. As observed by Marsh, the popular dismissal of the "over emancipation of women by the Soviet state" by conservative figures diminished the independent position previously

enjoyed by women (Marsh, 2012, 1200). Thus, Russian family structures underwent fundamental reconstruction twice during the course of the twentieth century.

The socio-political demand for traditional family structures reshaped mother-child relations, as conservative maternal identities and duties were increasingly impressed upon women. Russian mothers were encouraged to relinquish their autonomous positions by relying upon male financial support, and directing their energies attention to domestic and childrearing activities rather than pursuing professional careers (Marsh, 2004, 91). As Holmgren observes, women became marketable as domestic agents, as "Mail-order-bride agencies" featured "women who seek to please their husband-providers in matters…domestic" (536). While Holmgren acknowledges that Soviet era feminism achieved limited success in achieving women's emancipation, it is clear that post-Soviet women have become largely associated with and evaluated on their positions as wives and mothers.

The radical identity shift from working mothers to primary caregivers has yielded mixed reactions. While some women "expressed general agreement" with the negative interpretation of Soviet female identity and relief from "the double or even triple burden to which they were subjected by state socialism," others have chafed at the limited prospects imposed by obligatory maternity (Marsh, 2012, 1200; Marsh, 2004, 97). Many Russian women have experienced difficulty adjusting to their marginalized role following decades of feminist rhetoric and state support under Soviet power. As demonstrated in chapter two, women devoid of male financial and emotional support are simply unable to fulfill the domestic ideals propagated by conservative members of post-Soviet culture. Thus, a palpable tension exists between socio-political expectations and maternal

aspirations, realities, and constraints. Furthermore, the absence of social services have increased maternal pressures, as women must bear complete responsibility for their offspring due to the exorbitant cost of childcare facilities in the post-Soviet age. Consequently, women are forced to contend with a decrease in domestic power, while coping with mounting childcare responsibilities.

While maternal pressures intensified within the home, the state advocates traditional gender roles to achieve their political aims. Declining birth rates contribute to the state's support of patriarchal culture. Women are subsequently tasked with improving birth rates responsibility by having more children and accepting their maternal identities. This domestic role is ascribed with female patriotic duty and minimizes the importance of maternal willingness in favor of the nation's demographic interests. Indeed, this sentiment is expressed by Russian policy makers such as Valentina Matvienko who acknowledged the vital importance of "the demographic problem as an actual threat to national security" (Cited in Rotkirch et al. 353: Reut, 2006). The sense of urgency surrounding maternal support of Russia's demographic outlook has intensified throughout the post-Soviet era, culminating with the Vladimir Putin's ascension to power. Putin's conservative trajectory and desire to resolve the demographic crisis are expressed in his family policy initiatives to increase Russian birth rates (Rotkirch et al. 351).

While it is clear that state advocacy of obligatory motherhood is primarily concerned with the preservation of the Russian population and patriarchal culture, mother-child relations have suffered from considerable strain throughout the transition period. Anna Rotkirch asserts that the state's preoccupation with improved demographics

have led to the neglect of "fostering the growth of qualities and qualifications of parents, gender-equal parenthood, improvement of childcare, family-friendly working conditions and maternity-care systems" (356). This disregard for improved parental behavior is echoed in Issoupova's findings, which directly address the widespread cases of child abuse committed by maternal figures in the early post-Soviet era. In addition to interpersonal dysfunction, parents with children appear directly vulnerable to material hardship during the transition period, as Michael Lokshin observes, "Poverty rates among families with children were increasing in the first half of the 1990s" (1107). The increased instances of willing or forced relinquishment of parental authority echo the instability that imbues parent-child relations in the post-Soviet era (McKinney 52).

Russian writers responded to the state's inability to resolve the turmoil that characterized mother-child relationships through their literary fiction, which offered alternative solutions to this socio-cultural problem. This topic soon became "one of the most common themes in… and women's fiction" (Marsh, 94, 2004). Ulitskaia's works thoroughly address the challenges that face mothers and children during the early post-Soviet era. In her publications, Ulitskaia discusses the phenomena of social orphanhood, willing and unwilling motherhood, and the inversion of parent-child roles. More importantly, these literary treatments illustrate the harmful consequences resulting from unwilling and obligatory motherhood. Ulitskaia's cautionary tales illustrate that motherhood is not a role suited to all women. This interpretation is most notable in her short story, "Pikovaia Dama". Thus, Ulitskaia's advocacy of willing maternity provides a liberating alternative to the confining challenges and traumatic consequences engendered

by obligatory and traditional motherhood, thereby directly challenging the state's promotion of patriarchal family structures.

Although Ulitskaia's association with popular women's literature and treatment of of "*byt* resonated with readers", it remains unlikely that her interpretation of post-Soviet maternity will be adopted by Russian audiences (Sutcliffe 19). The strengthening of conservative social and family values in post-Soviet culture discourages the popularization of Ulitskaia's recommendations for parent-child relations. Ulitskaia's early publications on women's roles and family life during the 1990s coincided with a period of greater social discourse following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which appears to be discouraged in this second half of the post-Soviet era. The conservative outlook of political stakeholders is mirrored in artistic realms, supporting Marsh's observation that, "concepts of gender-although by no means widespread or popular-flourished more in the 1990s than they have in the twenty-first century" (Marsh, 2013, 192). Thus, it is unlikely that Ulitskaia's recommendations will be applied to contemporary Russian life.

In addition to the patriarchal culture advocated by the state, the absence of a strong feminist or women's movement undermines the adoption of Ulitskaia's alternative for mother-child relations. The state and conservative groups actively denounce feminism in post-Soviet society, as many critics claimed that Soviet renditions of women's emancipation "deformed women's nature, [by] denying their 'femininity'" (Marsh, 2012, 1200). According to Marsh, feminist groups in Russia represent attitudes that have "little acceptance in Russian society and has minimal political impact" (Marsh, 2004, 108). While Russia's male-dominated society discourages the progressive women's

movements, some Russian women are also disillusioned by feminist ideology, "which meant in practice that they were obliged both to work full time for negligible pay and to shoulder the bulk of the domestic chores" (Marsh, 2004, 108). In conjunction with the growing unpopularity of feminism and its limited resonance in post-Soviet society, women are unlikely to occupy politically powerful positions that would make it possible for them to achieve change through policy reform, as this is considered to be a male profession (Marsh, 2004, 95).

Although a substantial feminist movement is absent in Russian society, Marsh asserts that Russian women are constantly confronted with "concrete changes in everyday life" in regard to their gendered and socio-economic position (Marsh, 2004, 112). The reintroduction of traditional gender roles is likely to be most challenging for older generations of Russian women entrenched in emancipatory, "Soviet ideology" (Cited in Marsh, 2004, 104: Zdravosmyslova 1996). While these women struggle to reconcile themselves with post-Soviet gender constructs, minority elements of young women in the opposition movement express similar distress regarding women's exclusive allocation to maternal roles. This tendency is evident in protest art groups such as Pussy Riot, which challenges the state's attempts to impose conservative values onto Russian women and society. Indeed, the recent trial and imprisonment of Pussy Riot's members invoked debate surrounding the role of women post-Soviet society. The imprisonment these internationally recognized women underscores the challenging conditions faced by those who strive to alter post-Soviet gender roles.

Following these conclusions, the socio-political and literary aspects of this study can be expanded to enhance the depth of this paper. While this thesis focuses primarily

on the early post-Soviet period (1991-2000), the extent of this study can be extended to encompass the second half of the era (2000-2015). An analysis of mother-child relations under the respective administrations of Putin and Dmitri Medvedev would establish a comprehensive history of post-Soviet motherhood and family life. A close examination of family policy initiatives from the inception of the Russian Federation dating to present day would create a chronological narrative and historical framework for improving scholarly understanding of this social institution and its challenges in the post-Soviet context. Furthermore, this thesis could be expanded to include diverse households, such as those led by homosexual parents. Such analysis would address an underrepresented topic in the field, while simultaneously providing insight into the extent and limitations of conservative values in Russian family life.

In addition to the further development of the socio-political components of this thesis, the literary aspects of this paper can be broadened to include relevant, critical themes from Ulitskaia's works. A discussion of inherited maternal traits and incestuous relations would enhance the treatment of literary mother-child representations presented in this study. Oedipal incidents in Sonechka and Medeia *i eë deti* require further scholarly analysis, as they yielded family breakdown, but diverged in maternal reaction in these two works. These abnormal episodes suggest an added perversity and corruption in parent-child relations, which must be explored further to improve our understanding of post-Soviet family dynamics. Furthermore, the literary analysis of this thesis could be broadened in scope by treating Ulitskaia's notable contemporaries such as Arbatova and Vasilenko, who provide unique dimensions and literary interpretations of mother-child relations. Their literary recommendations for parent-child relations would make it

possible to determine how women writers formulate their resolution of the Russian family crisis.

Ultimately, this thesis provides a detailed, but preliminary discussion of the complex triad relationship between literature, family life, and socio-politics. As two decades have now passed since the inception of the post-Soviet era, and scholars have now reached an appropriate juncture in time that makes objective research on this topic approachable. The subject of mother-child relations will gain increasing relevance as the current conservative political regime continues to solidify its influence over post-Soviet culture and gender relations. Thus, additional research must be conducted in order for scholars to fully understand the comprehensive characteristics of mother-child dynamics in the post-Soviet era.

Bibliography

Adelman, Deborah. *The" children of Perestroika" come of age: young people of Moscow talk about life in the new Russia*. ME Sharpe, 1994.

Ashwin, Sarah, and Tatyana Lytkina. “Men in Crisis in Russia The Role of Domestic Marginalization.” *Gender & Society* 18.2 (2004): 189-206.

Baehr, Stephen L. *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-century Russia: Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture*. Illustrated ed. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991. *Google Books*. Web.

Bellamy, Chris. *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War*. Vintage, 2008.

Berelowitch, Wladimir. "Modèles familiaux dans la Russie des années 1920." Ed. Basile Kerblay. *L’évolution Des Modèles Familiaux Dans Les Pays De L’Est Européen Et En U.R.S.S.* Vol. 9. Paris: Institut D'études Slaves, 1988. 25-40. Print.

Bushkovitch, Paul. "Fatherland in Russian Culture (Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)." *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* (2008-2009): 93-103. *University of Virginia Library*. Web. 22 Jan. 2015.

Butler, Amy C., and Ludmilla G. Kuraeva. "Russian family policy in transition: implications for families and professionals." *Social Service Review* 75.2 (2001): 195-224.

Cassiday, Julie A., and Emily D. Johnson. "Putin, Putiniana and the question of a post-Soviet cult of personality." *Slavonic and East European Review* (2010): 681-707.

Chernova, Zhanna. "New Pronatalism?: Family Policy in Post-Soviet Russia." *REGION: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 1.1 (2012): 75-92.

Cohen, Stephen F. *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers*. WW Norton & Company, 1990.

Domostroi Sil'vestrovskago Izvoda. Sankt Peterburg: I. Glazunova, 1891. Haiti Trust. Web. 24 Apr. 2015.

Fusso, Susanne. *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky*. Reprint ed. Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2008. Print.

Gessen, Masha. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. Penguin, 2014.

Gorsuch, Anne E. "" A woman is not a man": the culture of gender and generation in Soviet Russia, 1921-1928." *Slavic Review* (1996): 636-660.

Holmgren, Beth. "Toward an Understanding of Gendered Agency in Contemporary Russia." *Signs* 38.3 (2013): 535-542.

Hubbs, Joanna. *Mother Russia: the feminine myth in Russian culture*. Indiana University Press, 1993.

Issoupova, Olga. “From Duty to Pleasure? Motherhood in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia.” *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*. Ed. Sarah Ashwin. London: Routledge, 2000. 30-54. *University of Virginia Library*. Web. 03 Feb. 2014.

Jobert, Véronique. “Modèles familiaux dans la Russie des années 1920.” Ed. Basile Kerblay. *L’évolution Des Modèles Familiaux Dans Les Pays De L’Est Européen Et En U.R.S.S.* Vol. 9. Paris: Institut D'études Slaves, 1988. 179-189. Print.

Kaminer, Jenny. *Women with a Thirst for Destruction*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2014. Print. Studies in Russian Literature and Theory.

Kaminsky, Lauren. "Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union." *Central European History* 44.01 (2011): 63-91.

Klimantova, G. "The family in the process of the transformation of Russian society." *Russian Education & Society* 44.4 (2002): 53-60.

Kukhterin, Sergei. “Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-communist Russia.” *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*. Ed. Sarah Ashwin. London: Routledge, 2000. 71-89. *University of Virginia Library*. Web. 03 Feb. 2014.

Lokshin, Michael. "Household childcare choices and women’s work behavior in Russia." *Journal of Human Resources* 39.4 (2004): 1094-1115.

Mal'kovskaia, T. N. "MNOGOLIKOST' SEM'I XVIII V. I EE TsENNOSTI." *Sem'ia I Vlast' v Rossii XVII-XVIII Stoletii*. Moscow: CheRo, 2005. 125-51. Print.

Marsh, Rosalind. *Literature, history and identity in post-Soviet Russia, 1991-2006*. Peter Lang, 2007.

--. "New Mothers for a New Era? Images of Mothers and Daughters in Post-Soviet Prose in Historical and Cultural Perspective." *Modern Language Review* 107.4 (2012): 1191-1219

--. "The Concepts of Gender, Citizenship, and Empire and Their Reflection in Post-Soviet Culture." *The Russian Review* 72.2 (2013): 187-211.

--. "Women in Contemporary Russia and the Former Soviet Union." *." Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition*. Ed. Robert E. Miller and Rick Wilford. N.p.: Routledge, 2004. 87-112. *Google Books*. Web. 6 Apr. 2015.

McKinney, Judith Record. "Lone mothers in Russia: Soviet and post-Soviet policy." *Feminist Economics* 10.2 (2004): 37-60.

Pearson, Landon. *Children of glasnost: growing up Soviet*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990.

Petrushevskaia, Liudmila S. "Novye Robinzony" Moscow: Vagrius, 1989. PDF.

Pouncy, Carolyn Johnston. "The Origins of the Domostroi: A Study in Manuscript History." *Russian Review* (1987): 357-373.

Rimashevskaya, Natalia. "Family and Children During the Economic Transition." *Social Capital and Social Cohesion in Post-Soviet Russia*. Ed. Judyth Twigg and Kate Schecter. Illustrated ed. Armonk: M.E. Sharp, 2003. 74-97. Print.

Romanovskaia, O.E. and Iu. G. Semikina. "Tema Materinstva v "Zhenskoi" Proze (na materiale proizvedenii L. Petrushevskoi, L. Ulitskoi, I. Polianskoi, O. Slavnikovoi, M. Arbatovoi)." Zhurnal Fundamental'nykh I Prikladnykh Issledovanii (2009): 91.

Rotkirch, Anna, Anna Temkina, Elena Zdravomyslova. Who Helps the Degraded Housewife?.
European Journal of Women's Studies, SAGE Publications (UK and US), 2007, 14 (4), pp.349-357.<10.1177/1350506807081884>.<hal-00571313>

"Russian Family Names." *The Journal of Education* 86.3 (1917): 76-77. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 24 Apr. 2015.

Rytkonen, Marja. "Memorable Fiction: Evoking Emotions and Family Bonds in Post-Soviet Russian Women's Writing." *ARGUMENT: Biannual Philosophical Journal* 1 (II (2012): 59-74.

Salys, Rimgaila. "Ljudmila Ulickaja's Sonečka: Gender and the Construction of Identity." *Russian Literature* 70.3 (2011): 443-466.

Schultz, Majken, ed. *Constructing Identity in and around Organizations*. Vol. 2. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Stites, Richard. "The Family and the Russian Revolution." Ed. Basile Kerblay. *L'évolution Des Modèles Familiaux Dans Les Pays De L'Est Européen Et En U.R.S.S.* Vol. 9. Paris: Institut D'études Slaves, 1988. 15-24. Print.

Sutcliffe, Benjamin. "Mother, Daughter, History: Embodying the Past in Liudmila Ulitskaia's Sonechka and The Case of Kukotsky." *The Slavic and East European Journal* (2009): 606-622.

--. *The prose of life: Russian women writers from Khrushchev to Putin*. Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

Twigg, Judyth L., and Kate Schecter, eds. *Social capital and social cohesion in post-soviet Russia*. ME Sharpe, 2003.

Ulitskaia, Liudmila. *Medeia i eë deti*. Moskva: Eksmo, 2009. Print.

---."Orlovy-Sokolovy." *Pervye i Poslednie*. Moskva: Astrel', 2011. 132-63. Print.

---."Pikovaya dama." *Pervye i Poslednie*. Moskva: Astrel', 2011. 191-244. Print.

---.*Sonechka*. Moskva: Eksmo-Press, 2001. Print.

Ulitskaya, Ludmila. Trans. Arch Tait. *Medea and Her Children*. New York: Schocken, 2002. Print.

---.*Sonechka*. Trans. Arch Tait. New York: Schocken, 2005. Print.

Utrata, Jennifer. "Keeping the bar low: Why Russia's nonresident fathers accept narrow fatherhood ideals." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70.5 (2008): 1297-1310.

Vannoy, Dana, ed. *Marriages in Russia: Couples during the economic transition*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999.

Waters, Elizabeth. "'Cuckoo-mothers' and 'apparatchiks': Glasnost and Children's Homes." *Perestroika and Soviet Women*. Ed. Mary Buckley. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992. 123-41. Print.

Yvert-Jalu, Hélène. "L'évolution de la divortialité en Union Soviétique depuis 1965." Ed. Basile Kerblay. *L'évolution Des Modèles Familiaux Dans Les Pays De L'Est Européen Et En U.R.S.S.* Vol. 9. Paris: Institut D'études Slaves, 1988. 123-133. Print.